

**CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION**  
**Interactions between Theory and Practice**  
**In memoriam Alois Riegl (1858-1905)**

Proceedings of the International Conference of the  
ICOMOS International Scientific Committee for the Theory and  
the Philosophy of Conservation and Restoration

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## Table of Contents

WILFRIED LIPP, MICHAEL S. FALSER <i>Preface of ICOMOS Austria to the Vienna Conference</i>	5
PAOLO DEL BIANCO <i>Preface of the Foundation Romualdo Del Bianco, Florence</i>	9
NIELS GUTSCHOW <i>Foreword of the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context", Heidelberg University.</i> <i>Towards a transcultural discourse in conservation and restoration. Review and outlook</i>	11
<b>SESSION 1</b>	
<b>Pillars of conservation. Reflections on its European roots</b>	
JUKKA JOKILEHTO <i>The idea of conservation. An overview</i>	21
CHRISTIANE SCHMUCKLE-MOLLARD <i>Viollet-le-Duc and his followers. French theories in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries</i>	37
PETER BURMAN <i>Ruskin's children. John Ruskin, the 'Good Steward', and his influence today</i>	47
ANDREAS LEHNE <i>Georg Dehio, Alois Riegl, Max Dvořák – a threshold in theory development</i>	69
URSULA SCHÄDLER-SAUB <i>Teoria e metodologia del restauro. Italian contributions to conservation in theory and practice</i>	81
<b>SESSION 2</b>	
<b>Doctrinal texts in review. From European standards to global issues</b>	
BOGUSŁAW SZMYGIN <i>Formal analysis of doctrinal texts in heritage protection</i>	97
ANDRZEJ TOMASZEWSKI <i>From Athens 1931 to Venice 1964. History and actuality</i>	107
MICHAEL S. FALSER <i>From Venice 1964 to Nara 1994 – changing concepts of authenticity?</i>	115
DUNCAN MARSHALL <i>The Burra Charter in an international context – the implications of international doctrine for practice in Australia</i>	133

## SESSION 3

## Perspectives from the ICOMOS Scientific Committees

ZBIGNIEW KOBYLŃSKI <i>Contemporary archaeological heritage management: conflicts between research, preservation and presentation</i>	143
CHRISTOPH MACHAT <i>The vernacular between theory and practice</i>	159
IRMELA SPELSBERG <i>Cultural landscape – an expanding notion and its challenges for conservation</i>	173
NATALIA DUSHKINA <i>The “challenge of change” and the 20<sup>th</sup>-century heritage</i>	187
ERZSÉBET KOVÁCS <i>Theoretical and practical issues of conservation in the context of tourism</i>	201

## SESSION 4

## Conservation philosophy in today's transcultural reality

JÖRG HASPEL <i>Contrast versus context. A conflict between the authenticity of the past and the authenticity of the present?</i>	215
GAMINI WIJESURIYA <i>Conservation in context</i>	233
GIORA SOLAR <i>Conservation and religion</i>	249
DINU BUMBARU <i>Communities, communications, conservation philosophy</i>	257
WILFRIED LIPP <i>The cult of authenticity in the age of fake</i>	269
EDUARD SEKLER <i>In praise of principles</i>	277

Dedicated to Alois Riegl in the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth (1858-1905)*An Alois Riegl gewidmet an seinem 150. Geburtstag (1858-1905)*

ANDRZEJ TOMASZEWSKI <i>In memoriam Alois Riegl (in English)</i>	289
<i>In memoriam Alois Riegl (in German)</i>	291

## Information about the authors

293

**Wilfried Lipp***ICOMOS Austria***Michael S. Falser***ICOMOS Austria**Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context”, Heidelberg University***Preface of ICOMOS Austria to the Vienna Conference**

Theory and practice are often considered to be two different things and this shows in the controversy both sides engage in. The advocates of practice reproach the exponents of theory of being too theoretical and the theorists claim that practitioners do not have an understanding that encompasses the totality of the subject. Numerous examples provide evidence of the tension between the seemingly different positions.

The arts make up one such field. For example, having ‘knowledge’ of art on the one hand and being able to ‘understand’ the ‘meaning’ of art on the other end up as contrary positions: these are occupied by the art connoisseur who is an intimate expert of works of art on the one side and the proponents of the ‘right attitude’, the access to experiencing the secrets of art on the other.

Conservation is – to a large extent – a mixed bundle of applied disciplines and seems to be therefore primarily a field of practice. In this context the long tradition of artists and restorers begins in the Renaissance with Raphael – acknowledged as the father of conservation – who was in charge of conserving antique structures in Rome. For hundreds of years it was practical experience which counted as one of the leading principles guiding restoration work.

However in the interpretation of art both the theory of restoration and that of conservation ask for the ‘right attitude’ when dealing with monuments and sites. It is a question of the meaning of restoration which comprises all the difficult perspectives of originality, authenticity, integrity, totality, fragment, retouch, cleaning, etc.

Thus in reality theory and practice do not exist in splendid isolation, but are rather connected to each other in many ways. Theoretical views influence and change practice; innovation and technical developments feed back into theory. Furthermore by acknowledging a multiplicity of practices, colourful variations resulting from the diversity of specific cultural traditions allow pluralistic methods to become a part of the repertoire of conservators. New perspectives are opened and by looking over the broad shoulders of theory and experience that the forefathers of modern conservation Alois Riegl, Georg Dehio and John Ruskin among others provide us, we can accept the challenges of the future. Conservation and restoration theory and practice therefore are not rigid norms but evolve with time and differ across the world. And not to forget – both theory and practice depend on the prevailing social, political and eco-

Michael S. Falser<sup>1</sup>

## From Venice 1964 to Nara 1994 – changing concepts of authenticity?

This paper discusses the *Nara Conference of Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention* that took place in the historic town of Nara, Japan in 1994.<sup>2</sup> The *Nara Document on Authenticity*, which was elaborated at the Nara convention, was introduced in the same year in a *Preparatory Workshop* in Bergen, Norway<sup>3</sup>, and discussed in a broader sense in an ICOMOS Italy Conference in Naples.

The first part of this paper focuses on how the term 'authenticity' was first introduced in the *Charter of Venice* of 1964<sup>4</sup> and then developed its definition until 1994 in relation to the *World Heritage Convention*. The second part introduces the *Nara Document* itself and re-examines the published proceedings of the *Nara Conference* by presenting five thematic clusters that formed around the complex term of 'authenticity'.

### *From Venice 1964 to Nara 1994: the development of the term 'authenticity'*

*Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of the human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.*

Preface of the Venice Charter, 1965

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Mr. Knut Einar Larsen and the *Riksantikvaren* (Norway) for important help and information material. This paper will be published also in German, see: FALSER, MICHAEL S.: Von der Charta von Venedig 1964 zum Nara Document on Authenticity 1994 – 30 Jahre „Authentizität“ in Namen des kulturellen Erbes der Welt. In: CSÁKY, MORITZ; UHL, HEIDEMARIE (eds.): *Die Erfindung der Authentizität*. Wien 2009.

<sup>2</sup> LARSEN, KNUT EINAR (ed.): *Nara Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention*. Nara/Japan 1-6 November 1994. Proceedings with an Editorial Group consisting of Jukka Jokilehto, Raymond Lemaire, Kanefusa Masuda, Nils Marstein and Herb Stovel. Published by UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Agency of Cultural Affairs Japan, ICCROM, ICOMOS. Trondheim 1995.

<sup>3</sup> LARSEN, KNUT EINAR; MARSTEIN, NILS (eds): *Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention*. Preparatory Workshop, Bergen (Norway), 31 January-2 February 1994. Published by the Riksantikvaren (Directorate for Cultural Heritage) Norway. Trondheim 1994.

<sup>4</sup> See the Charter of Venice, in: [http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/venice\\_e.htm](http://www.international.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.htm). The proceedings of the Charter of Venice in: <http://www.international.icomos.org/publications/homme.htm> (both accessed 9.2009).

*The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.*

Article 9 on Restoration, Venice Charter, 1965

After a multi-national congress on conservation issues in Paris during the World Exhibition in 1889<sup>5</sup>, the *International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments* at Athens in 1931 formulated for the first time an international guideline-catalogue on restoration: the so-called *Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments*<sup>6</sup> addressed the need for the establishment of international organizations for monument restoration, which was a major achievement long before the establishment of the UNESCO in 1946. However, the term 'authenticity' was not used in 1931.

The second congress of this type was convened in 1964 and led to the *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*, or the *Venice Charter*. For the first time, the term 'authenticity' was introduced in an international context in the charter's preface, but without any theoretical explanation in any of the following 16 articles. However, exactly thirty years later, the term 'authenticity' took centre stage at the *Nara Conference*. Organized in two separate workshops and published in four different books in 1994, this conference produced altogether more than eight hundred pages of highly theoretical proceedings from more than two dozen international authors. According to Raymond Lemaire from Belgium, who had been witness to the conference in 1964, the participants of the *Venice Charter* had regarded a deeper discussion of the term 'authenticity' as superfluous, since their common understanding of conservation basically referred to European material heritage built of stone: in 1964, 20 participants of a total 23 came from Europe (including the Italian chairman Piero Gazzola). The only non-European participants from Mexico, Tunisia and Peru could do little more than observe an overwhelmingly European conference. Interestingly, the only participant of the conference with an Asian name was Hiroshi Daifuku of UNESCO, at a time when the *World Heritage Convention* was not even drafted yet.

The crucial transformation of the term 'authenticity' from a European context into a global, or rather universal reference point for conservation was not achieved at the conference in Venice, but a year later with the founding of ICOMOS, which adopted the *Venice Charter* as its founding document. Additionally, the global applicability of the term 'authenticity' was supported by UNESCO, who installed ICOMOS as its institution for world heritage evaluation and directly linked the newly global def-

<sup>5</sup> The *Congrès Officiel International pour la Protection des Œuvres d'Art et des Monuments* took place between the 24<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> of June in 1889 under the guidance of the *Institut de Droit International*, see: Ministère du Commerce, Exposition Universelle Internationale de 1889: Congrès Officiel International pour la Protection des Œuvres d'Art en temps de guerre. Procès-verbaux sommaires par Ch. Normand. Paris 1889.

<sup>6</sup> See the *Charter of Athens* of 1931, in: [http://www.icomos.org/docs/athens\\_charter.htm](http://www.icomos.org/docs/athens_charter.htm) (accessed 9.2009).

inition of the *Outstanding Universal Value* of cultural and natural heritage in its *World Heritage Convention* of 1972<sup>7</sup> with its *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* in 1977. Whereas the term 'authenticity' was not mentioned in the UNESCO Convention itself, its *Operational Guidelines* of 1977 introduced the so-called *Test of Authenticity* under the four criteria of design, materials, workmanship and design.

*The property should meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship and setting; authenticity does not limit consideration to original form and structure, but includes all subsequent modifications and additions over the course of time, which in themselves possess artistic or historical values.*<sup>8</sup>

Operational Guidelines (1977), § 7

Until today, the *Operational Guidelines* were revised approximately 12 times. Their latest version of 2005 inflated the former 27 paragraphs to 290 paragraphs.<sup>9</sup> 15 years after the first version of the *Operational Guidelines* of 1977, the *World Heritage Committee* recommended a revision of the criteria of authenticity in 1992:

*A critical evaluation should also be made of the criteria governing the cultural heritage and the criteria governing authenticity and integrity, with a view of their possible revision. The World Heritage Centre should, in consultation with ICOMOS, organize a meeting of experts in accord with the decision already made during the fifteenth session of the World Heritage Committee.*

World Heritage Committee, 16<sup>th</sup> session (Santa Fe, USA, December 1992), § 19

Basically, there were two impulses that triggered the re-examination of the authenticity/integrity concept: firstly, the definitions of cultural heritage had significantly broadened. Affected were the concept (from the monumental and best-superlative heritage to that of ordinary, community-based etc.), the heritage typologies (now including industrial, vernacular, commercial etc.), the scale (from monuments to cultural landscapes) and the perception of time (from a static, material perception of existing fabric versus that of a dynamic perception). Secondly, the strategy of ICOMOS was criticized for its "over-elaboration of methodologies"<sup>10</sup>. Subsequent charters brought thematic, national and regional adaptations to the *Venice Charter*, such as the *Florence Charter for Gardens* (1981), the *Washington Charter for Historic Towns* (1987) or the *Burra Charter for Places with Cultural Significance* (1979, revised 1999)<sup>11</sup> and, at the same time, offered

<sup>7</sup> See the UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972, in: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf> (accessed 9.2009).

<sup>8</sup> The original Operational Guidelines of 1977, in: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide77a.pdf> (accessed 9.2009).

<sup>9</sup> See the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of 2005, in: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide05-en.pdf> (accessed 9.2009).

All modifications of the Operational Guidelines, in: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines> (accessed 9.2009).

<sup>10</sup> HERB STOVEL, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 393.

<sup>11</sup> See the *Burra Charter – Australia ICOMOS charter for the conservation of places* (1999), in: <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html> (accessed 9.2009).

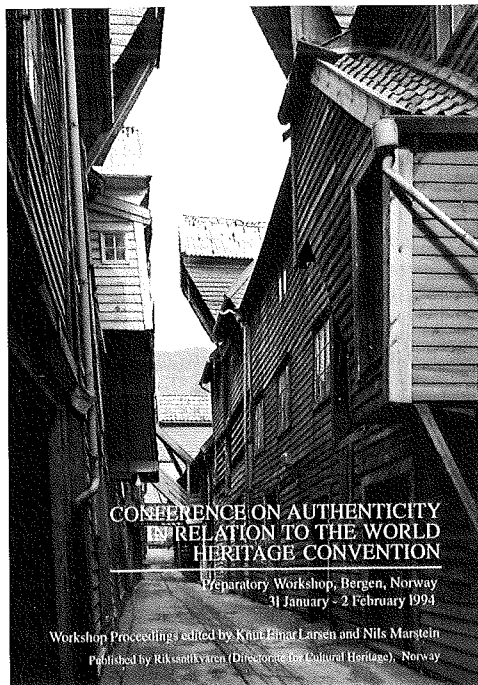


Fig. 1. Publication of the *Preparatory Workshop* in Bergen 1999. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar; Marstein, Nils (eds.): *Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention*. Preparatory Workshop Bergen, Trondheim 1994, cover)

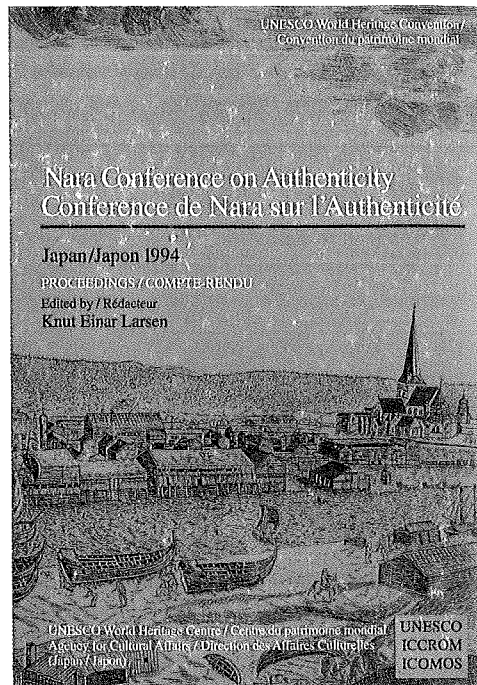


Fig. 2. Publication of the conference proceedings of the *Nara Document on Authenticity* in Nara 1994. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar (ed.): *Nara Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention*. Proceedings. Trondheim 1995, cover)

a new, comprehensive 'Code of Ethics', that regrouped the typological diversifications around their central theoretical core and thus allowed for a more flexible application of the concept of authenticity in all its regional, both static and dynamic value configurations.

In the same year of the *Santa Fe Recommendation* of 1992, Japan signed the ratification of the *UNESCO World Heritage Convention*. The Japanese Agency for cultural Affairs agreed to the approach of Herb Stovel, then ICOMOS's Secretary General from Canada, to host an international conference on authenticity in November 1994 in the historic town of Nara, where Japan had just nominated its first World Heritage Site, the Buddhist and wooden temple complex of *Horyu-ji*. With sponsoring from ICOMOS Canada, the *Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage* agreed to host a preparatory workshop in February of the same year, in the historic town of Bergen, where an industrial colony of wooden workers' houses had already become a World Heritage site in 1979. Knut Einar Larsen, professor at the Norwegian Institute of Technology and specialist on the architectural heritage of Japan, became the scientific coordinator and chief editor of the *Bergen Workshop* and the *Nara Conference* (Figs 1, 2).

Between the events of Bergen and Nara, both of which focused on the problem of authenticity in relation to the *World Heritage Convention*, ICOMOS Italy organized an

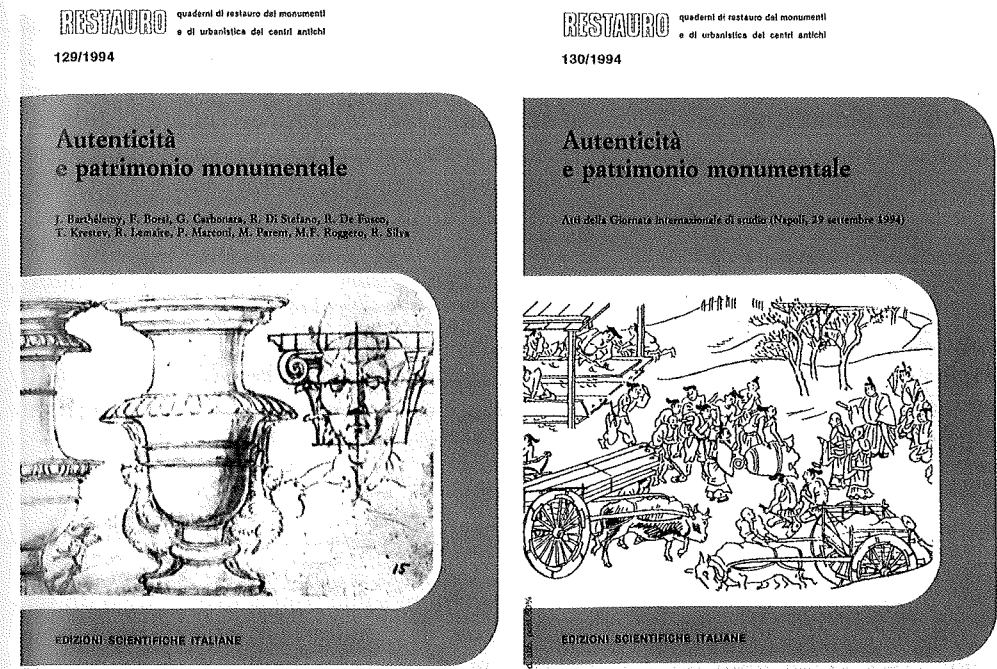


Fig. 3. Publications of the conference *Autenticità e patrimonio monumentale* in Naples 1994 (photo: Restauero, *Quaderni di restauro dei monumenti e di urbanistica dei centri antichi*, 23, 129/July-September 1994 and 130/October-December 1994, covers)

international workshop *Autenticità e patrimonio monumentale* in Naples (Fig. 3) with a more general approach that looked beyond World Heritage.<sup>12</sup>

If Bergen still presented a more European forum of experts (11 out of 14), the list of 45 participants of the *Nara Conference* (with 37 conference proceedings) stood in clear contrast to that of the *Venice Charter* 30 years earlier: this time, 24 delegates came from the UNESCO-section Europe/North America, seventeen from Asia/Pacific countries (8 from Japan alone), 2 from Africa, and 2 from Latin America/the Caribbean. However, there was no representative from the Arab States. The 45 participants in Nara drafted the *Nara Document on Authenticity*. The general reporter of the conference, Raymond Lemaire (Belgium) and Herb Stovel (Canada) edited the final version. The document features 13 paragraphs. Four of them form the preamble and focus a) on a greater respect for cultural diversity in daily conservation practice, b) on respecting socio-cultural values of all societies when the "Test of Authenticity" is applied, c) on its founding document, the *Venice Charter* of 1964, including its necessary extension and d) on the changes in the course of globalization, homogenization, aggressive nationalism, minority suppression and the conservation of humanity's collective memory. Four paragraphs are devoted to the imperative of "Cultural Diversity and Heritage Diversity" explicitly

<sup>12</sup> Restauero. *Quaderni di restauro dei monumenti e di urbanistica dei centri antichi*, 23, 129 (July-September 1994) and 130 (October-December 1994).

demanding respect for other cultures in their varying “particular forms and means of tangible and intangible heritage expressions”, whose responsible protection is primarily the responsibility of the particular cultural, but also international community. The final five paragraphs form the section “Values and Authenticity”. While conservation of cultural heritage was rooted in the knowledgeable, if constantly changing understanding of the values of its different and evolutionary information sources, authenticity was, in reference to the *Venice Charter*, defined as the “essential qualifying factor concerning values” of cultural heritage, its conservation and restoration. The “Test of Authenticity” from the *Operational Guidelines* was broadened so as to consider artistic, social and scientific information sources, including form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors. The two appendices of the *Nara Document* contained “Six suggestions for follow-up”, as well as definitions for the terms “conservation” and “information sources”.<sup>13</sup>

#### *The Bergen Workshop and the Nara Conference: five major topics of discussion*

The central argument of this paper is that apart from some papers that focused on the European development of the term ‘authenticity’, the conference revolved around five major topics: 1) Pluralism, diversity, respect and public access, 2) Process, contemporary dynamics and living heritage, 3) Post-colonialism, euro-centrism and indigenous identities, 4) Cultural relativism in heritage strategies, and 5) Essence, message and reconstruction in post-modernity.

#### *1. Pluralism, diversity, respect and public access*

The terms ‘pluralism’ and ‘diversity in heritage’ were addressed from a typological and a social point of view. In an attempt to update the *Venice Charter*, ‘heritage diversity’ now veered away from the material authenticity of European-based conservation standards for substantially durable materials, such as stone or brick, to include less durable materials such as wood, straw and earth. The turn towards materials other than stone also called for a widened appreciation of vernacular, popular, informal and pre-industrial building styles as well as industrial and mass-produced heritage types. This paradigmatic turn in heritage typologies also necessitated a new evaluation of the “holistic representation of cultural heritage resources” (Fig. 4), away from strictly material-based to non-material aspects, such as know-how and techniques (one paper discussed the authenticity in winemaking), ritual techniques and skills, language (including oral history), religion, music and dance. This ‘immaterial backdoor’ had considerable consequences, for example, some papers promoted the heritage of the “Modern Movement”

<sup>13</sup> “*Conservation*: all efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement. (Cultural heritage is understood to include monuments, groups of buildings and sites of cultural value as defined in article one of the World Heritage Convention). *Information sources*: all material, written, oral and figurative sources which make it possible to know the nature, specifications, meaning and history of the cultural heritage.” Appendix II, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. xxv.

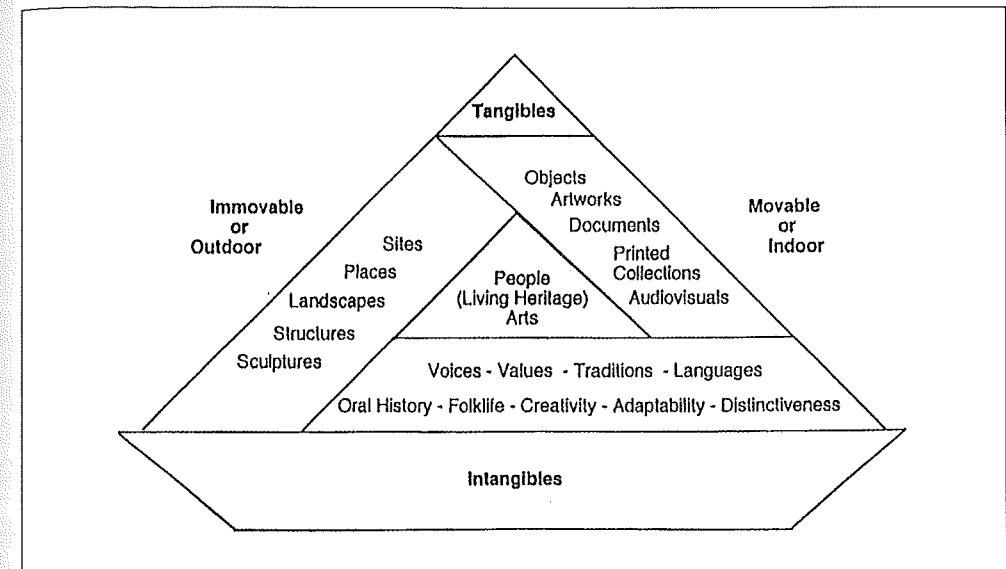


Fig. 4. A holistic representation of cultural heritage resources (copyright A. Galla und P. Yu). (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar (ed.): *Nara Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention. Proceedings*. Trondheim 1995, p. 318)

for its “authenticity of the concept (i.e. the social and cultural intentions)”<sup>14</sup> or spoke about interests for “national identity”<sup>15</sup>; other contributions introduced the term “cultural tourism”<sup>16</sup> without any elitist attitude. With this new, pluralistic expansion of heritage expressions, some participants spoke about a new “ecology of culture”<sup>17</sup> and a “democratisation as professional vulgarization of both the analysis and the presentation of the meaning”<sup>18</sup>.

With repeated reference to the pluralistic *Burra Charter* of 1999 (see next paper by Duncan Marshall) and relating efforts in Canada and Australia, an important focus was put on the terms ‘respect’ and ‘dignity’. This meant a new ethical approach combining established expert standards with dialogue-orientated grass-roots democracy, which considered “citizens’ role as conservation agents for the cultural heritage”. Only then, so the argument, the entire notion of heritage would become “accessible to all”<sup>19</sup>. The termi-

<sup>14</sup> H.A.J. HENKEL, N. TUMMERS, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 328.

<sup>15</sup> DAVID LOWENTHAL, in: LARSEN 1994 (note 3), p. 36; YUKIO NISHIMURA (p. 181), ELIAS MUJICA (p. 235), DINU BUMBARU (p. 280), all in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2).

<sup>16</sup> SAMIDI, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 391.

<sup>17</sup> NATALIA DUSHKINA, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 307.

<sup>18</sup> HERB STOVEL, in: LARSEN 1994 (note 3), p. 101.

<sup>19</sup> DINU BUMBARU, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 279. Or as Marc Laenen put it: “The process may need expert guidance from outside in order to provide a reference in the debate for the assessment. It is fundamental, however, for the same essence of cultural authenticity, that the process be carried out with the full initiative and responsibility of the inhabitants in order to guarantee coherence and due attention to the culture itself”. MARC LAENEN, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 357.

nology of “access to and participation in cultural heritage” originated in the 1976 UNESCO document *Nairobi Recommendation on participation by the people at large in cultural life and their contribution to it*.<sup>20</sup> 18 years later, the Belgian representative, Jean-Louis Luxen, formulated the paradigmatic turn towards pluralism most strikingly: “Why searching for a universal value? Is it not pluralism itself that is the one and only true universal value?”<sup>21</sup>

### 2. Process, contemporary dynamics and living heritage

The terms ‘respect’ and ‘dignity’ were discussed in relation to the introduced term ‘living heritage’, which focused on both the contemporary relevance of heritage, and its dynamically changing character in all forms of social frames and (im)material manifestations. The “legitimate usage” of heritage was to be widened from its “narcissistic regard” (Choay): expert and class-leading access to the overall “living memory of people”<sup>22</sup> should now also integrate economical and ethnical minorities with their living traditions. However, the perception of evolutionary processes and continuous changes was as much applicable to traditional communities as it was to modern societies. In both extremes, authenticity and development had to be evaluated and appreciated together. That also applied to modern conservation issues of historic gardens, cultural landscapes and cities alike. Heritage was to be evaluated as a living “expression in its continuity of social and cultural functions”; its preservation had to go hand in hand with “sustainable human development”<sup>23</sup>. Accepting heritage in its dynamic character, which constantly “builds up layers of social and cultural stratigraphy”<sup>24</sup>, also brought two implications to the discussion: Successive generations would constantly re-interpret ‘heritage qualities’ of any type, which, therefore, had to stay re-interpretable. Secondly, the selectively labelled *World Heritage* was to be constantly evaluated by ‘post-inscription monitoring’.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Postcolonialism, Eurocentrism and indigenous identities

Even if the ‘postcolonial’ aspect of heritage preservation was not explicitly formulated in the *Nara Document*, critique of the Eurocentric transfer of preservation standards through colonisation was strongly emphasised in several presentations. The *Venice Charter* was unequivocally characterized as a historic, European document, the “basic philosophy” of which had to be reconsidered because of “the progress made in the knowledge and perception of other cultures and conservation standards of the global community during the 1990s and in the conservation needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”<sup>26</sup>. Françoise Choay (France) was the only European speaker who entirely focused on the concept of “historic monuments” as a purely European creation that was not to be confused with “anthropological

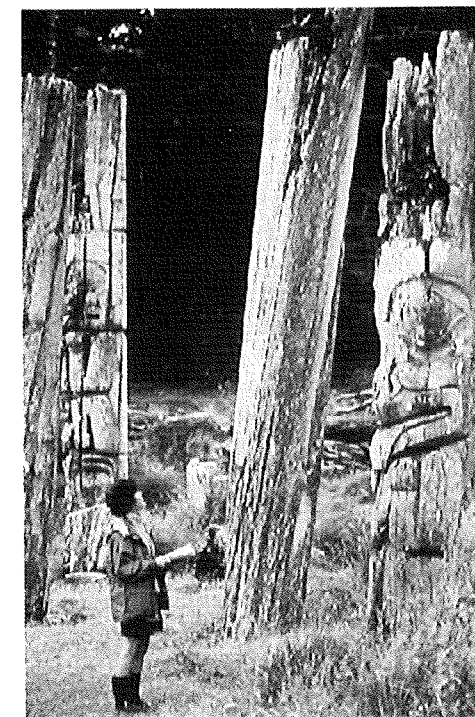


Photo 2. Anthony Island, Canada

Anthony Island, Canada, with its totem and mortuary poles, offers a unique testimony of the cultural life of the Haida Indian hunters and fishermen who once lived on the North Pacific coast.

The main elements of this World Heritage site consists of wooden structures, houses and different types of totem poles, which deteriorate heavily in the course of time. No measures are taken by the native people to stop the natural degradation. Every generation of young people will remember the old tradition and carve new totems.

Fig. 5. Western researchers in front of traditional heritage? Totem poles on Anthony Island, Canada. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar (ed.): *Nara Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention*. Proceedings. Trondheim 1995, p. 11)

universality”, but was rather a Eurocentric application of UNESCO-standards in the process of the “Westernization of our whole planet”<sup>27</sup>.

The representatives from all non-European continents addressed the (post)colonial problem related to history and heritage. Herb Stovel (Canada) criticized the identity construction of the two European founding nations as “too simplistic” for Canada and discussed the European approach of material-based preservation measures of native totem poles (Fig. 5) and argued for a “cultural mosaic” of “recent immigration patterns and native populations”<sup>28</sup>. A presentation on the Andean countries of South America focused on their archaeological, pre-colonial heritage. The reconstruction of this ancient heritage was introduced as a useful way of boosting national identity and history, which, since the Spanish conquest of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, had been “culturally superimposed” and consequently erased from history books by colonial “historical falsification, denigration and

<sup>20</sup> Nairobi Recommendation on participation by the people at large in cultural life and their contribution to it” (1976), in: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0008/000813/081325eb.pdf> (accessed 5.2009).

<sup>21</sup> JEAN-LOUIS LUXEN, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 373.

<sup>22</sup> FRANCOISE CHOAY, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> MARC LAENEN, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 351.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>25</sup> TAMÁS FEJÉRDY (p. 215), ELIAS MUJICA (p. 240), all in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2).

<sup>26</sup> BERND VON DROSTE, ULF BERTILSSON, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> FRANCOISE CHOAY, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), pp. 109, 299f.

<sup>28</sup> HERB STOVEL, in: LARSEN 1994 (note 3), pp. 113f.

alienation"<sup>29</sup>. Two talks on Kenya and Egypt discussed the "colonial bias towards the history of Africa"<sup>30</sup>, the heritage of which the "European school of thought"<sup>31</sup> had long regarded as primitive and unworthy, the recent scientific appreciation and consequent entries on the *World Heritage List* notwithstanding. The "Westernization"<sup>32</sup> of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was also blamed for having destroyed cultural continuities in Islamic societies on the African continent. The representatives from the Asia/Pacific region were primarily concerned with the revision of 'colonising' heritage strategies from Europe. A speaker from New Zealand explained how British colonization had eroded Maori cultural identity, which previously had been constructed through immaterial rituals.<sup>33</sup> The Australian representatives problematized the "greatest trauma" of their country, caused "by the impact of white settlement"<sup>34</sup>, and called for actual preservation efforts in the context of indigenous Aboriginal, but also of Mela-, Poly- and Micronesian heritage. The *Australian ICOMOS Charter for the preservation of places – Burra Charter* of 1999 was described as a new era "beyond the dichotomy of hegemonic occidental and subaltern oriental discourses"<sup>35</sup>.

Japan took a special position in these postcolonial discussions. Its representatives regarded their country, which had never experienced European colonization, as a unique example in Asia, where no "European suzerains"<sup>36</sup> imposed their protection measures. Instead, European models were voluntarily imported from the 1870s onwards and consequently incorporated into a new amalgam of Japanese heritage conservation and protection strategies.

Just as the term 'authenticity' emerged from the *Charter of Venice* in 1964 without any further comment, three new, likewise imprecise terms were introduced at the *Nara Conference*: 'globalisation', 'post-modernity' and 'cultural relativism'. While the term 'globalization' was mentioned already in the preamble of the *Nara Document*, but hardly discussed at the conference, the two other terms – 'cultural relativism' and 'post-modernity' – were introduced in the preface as the two pillars of a new international preservation doctrine by the scientific coordinator of the *Nara Conference*, Knut Einar Larsen. The connotations of these two terms were to play an important, but nevertheless problematic role during the conference.

*The Nara Document reflects the fact that the international preservation doctrine has moved from a Eurocentric approach to a post-modern position characterized by recognition of cultural relativism.*<sup>37</sup>

Knut Einar Larsen, Preface of the *Nara Document of Authenticity*, 1994

<sup>29</sup> ELIAS MUJICA, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), pp. 236f.

<sup>30</sup> KATANA, ABUNGU, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 159.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> SALEH LAMEI, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 361.

<sup>33</sup> EREATARA TAMEPO, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), pp. 168f.

<sup>34</sup> JOAN DOMICELJ, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 301.

<sup>35</sup> AMARESWAR GALLA, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 315.

<sup>36</sup> NOBUO ITO, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> KNUT EINAR LARSEN, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. xiii.

#### 4. Cultural relativism in heritage strategies and the risk of stereotypes

It was not by accident that Larsen quoted the term 'cultural relativism' and that he coordinated the *Nara Conference*, since he was one of the few experts who combined European ideas on conservation with a deep understanding of Asian, particularly Japanese restoration techniques. At the *Bergen Preparatory Workshop*, he addressed the "problems of operating with cultural universals" and suggested the "building on the expertise of the social sciences to analyze the problem of cultural understanding"<sup>38</sup>.

As regards the discussion of authenticity standards between eastern and western traditions, Japan, as the host of the conference, seemed to be an ideal choice of location for two reasons: Firstly, Japan, always projected a certain nearness to Europe, since it represented the only non-occidental country that could nevertheless be counted among modern, western industrial nation. Therefore, the supposed 'understanding of Japan' always played a crucial role in the understanding of the state of Eurocentrism itself. Secondly, having a conference about authenticity seemed especially challenging in Japan, since the term

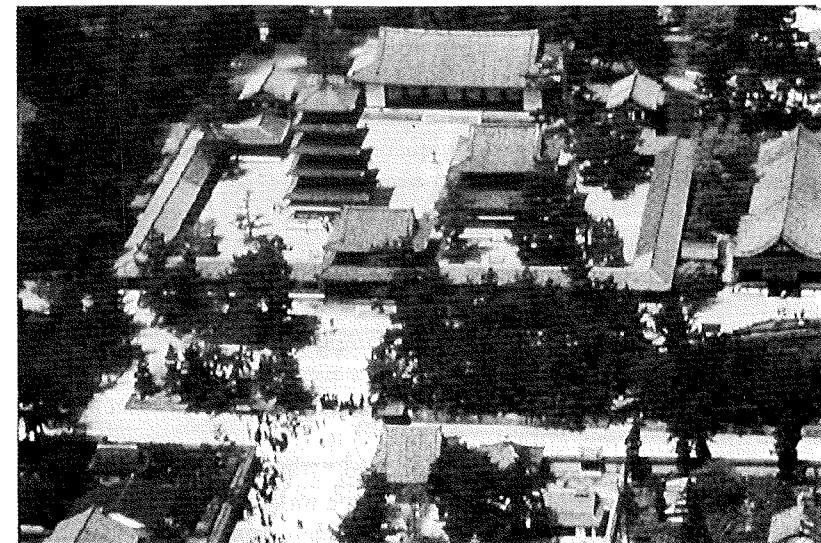


Photo 3. Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area, Japan

The Buddhist monuments in the Horyu-ji area are masterpieces of wooden architecture, the oldest of their type in Japan. Maintenance and conservation work is carried out continuously since the 13th and 17th centuries, including total or partial dismantling, repair and reconstruction. The notion of authenticity is here less that of authenticity of materials than authenticity of function and tradition.

Fig. 6. Buddhist monuments in the *Horyu-ji* Area in Nara, Japan. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar (ed.): *Nara Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention*. Proceedings. Trondheim 1995, p. 12)

<sup>38</sup> KNUR EINAR LARSEN, in: Bergen 1994 (note 3), p. 73.



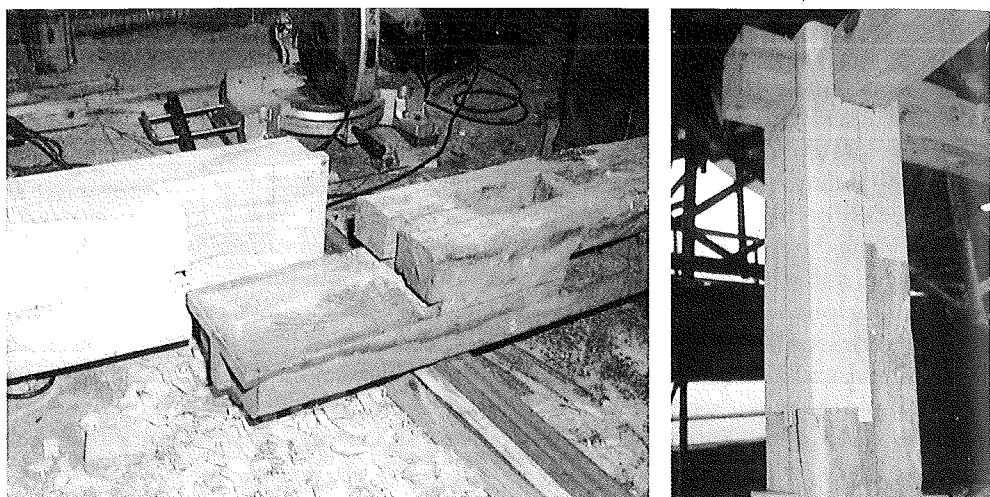


Fig. 7. Partial repair techniques in Japanese wooden temples. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar: Architectural preservation in Japan. Trondheim 1994, p. 152)

itself did not exist in Japanese and other Asian languages. The more European representatives tried to understand exclusive Japanese restoration and ritual building techniques, the more the risk of stereotyping a Japanese uniqueness emerged, both from the perspective of the foreign-outside (European) as well as the own-inside (Japanese).

As mentioned above, Japan had just ratified the *UNESCO Convention* and had nominated its first site, the Buddhist temple complex of *Horyu-ji* in Nara, in 1992 (Fig. 6). At the centre of Nara discussion about authenticity was the issue of the repairing traditions of Japanese temple structures through careful dismantling and reassembling. Larsen gave a detailed presentation about this issue during the *Bergen Workshop*. He focused on the crucial differentiation between a) the religious event at the one single Shintoist temple of Ise, where the whole structure was totally rebuilt in identical form as a ritual act in a vicennial circle and b) the widespread repairing techniques for all other Japanese wooden historic buildings, the historic material and patina of which was preserved as skilfully as possible (Figs 7-10). As far as this second type was concerned, the very limited and carefully documented replacement of rotten wooden joints, the branding of newly inserted material with the date of insertion and even the state-subsidized and law-protected traditional restoration techniques including their living experts were quite close to the modern understanding of European heritage protection. However, despite Larsen's careful differentiation, the stereotypical idea of the Asian concept of "traditional continuity" (?) through "traditional repair, mythical restoration"<sup>39</sup>, ritual repetition and immaterial craftsmen's know-how for supposedly "oriental shrines", influenced the discourse of UNESCO's and ICOMOS' European representatives. Consequently, western speakers

<sup>39</sup> JUKKA JOKILEHTO, in: Bergen 1994, pp. 11f, quoting the term of *restauration mythique*, from: de CAUTER, L.; DE CLERQ, L.: Chronos et le torse du Bevédère. Propos sur les paradoxes du rétablissement, in: Restaurations, formes de rétablissement. Liège 1993, pp. 95f.

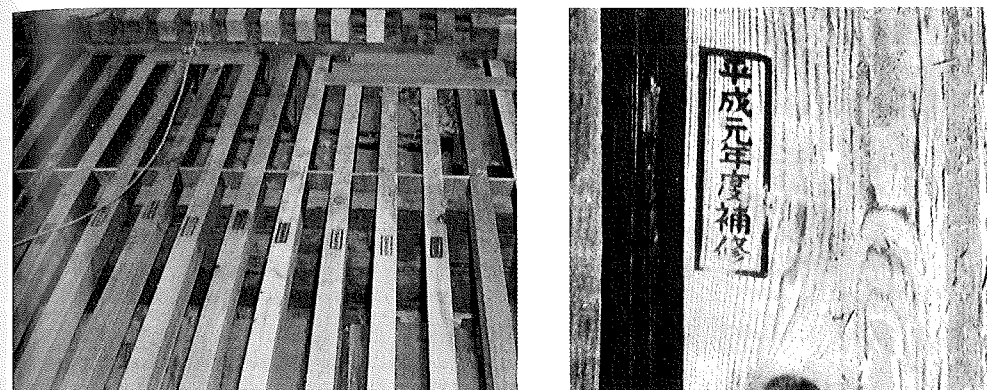


Fig. 8. Branding of newly inserted repair elements in Japanese wooden structures. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar: Architectural preservation in Japan. Trondheim 1994, p. 140)

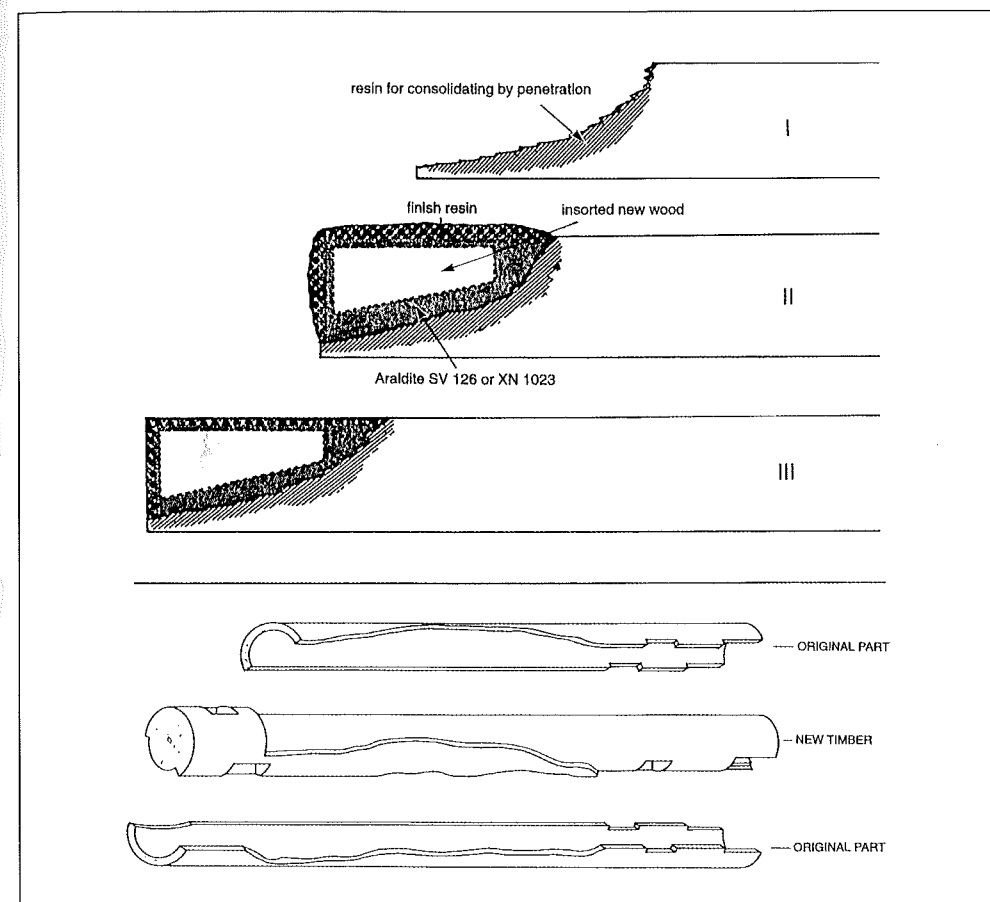


Fig. 9. Minimal repair work on historic building elements in Japan. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar: Architectural preservation in Japan. Trondheim 1994, p. 94)

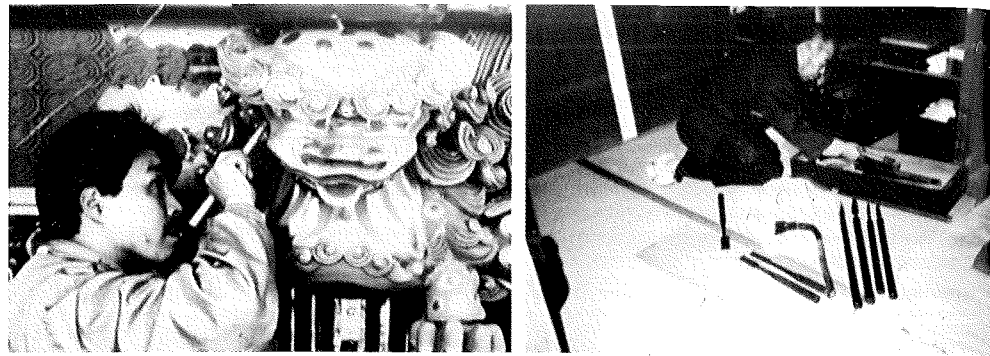


Fig. 10. Immaterial heritage in conservation: knowledge in colour repair work and wood carving techniques in Japan. (photo: Larsen, Knut Einar; Marstein, Nils [eds.]: Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention. Preparatory Workshop Bergen. Trondheim 1994, pp. 72, 73)

interpreted the “enunciation of conservation practices in Japan”<sup>40</sup> as focusing more on authenticity of techniques and workmanship than on substance and material authenticity. Subsequently, the singular case of the Shinto temple of Ise was used by Europeans to stake so-called modern European “heritage dogmatism” and “fetishism of the materialized and ancient objects” – along with a European-wide “identity crisis by a loss of a competence in building and living”<sup>41</sup> – against a supposedly new and therefore non-Eurocentric “memorial value”: an “immaterial authenticity consisting of the symbolic efficiency of both a memorial power and a savoir-faire”<sup>42</sup>.

*In short, the aim of repair and restoration is to bring the building back to a neat condition again. I hope you understand that Japanese people appreciate an old but neat state of buildings.*<sup>43</sup>

Nobuo Ito, Authenticity inherent in cultural heritage in Asia and Japan

*Ise Shrine [which is] reconstructed in the same form and with the same materials [...] as part of a religious ceremony: a special case, but also an extraordinary example forms the authentic message, the authentic spirit of the monument.*<sup>44</sup>

Michael Petzet, The test of authenticity and the new cult of monuments

Even if the Japanese experts themselves (in six presentations) constantly pointed out the clear difference between the single case of Ise and the rest of Japanese traditions of material-based restoration techniques, it seemed that they voluntarily followed the European trend by self-stereotyping the traditional, “cyclical culture”<sup>45</sup> of Japan and Asia as

<sup>40</sup> HERB STOVEL, in: BERGEN 1994, p. 106, also quoting: FEILDEN, BERNARD; JOKILEHTO, JUKKA: Management Guidelines for World Heritage Sites. Rome 1998.

<sup>41</sup> FRANCOISE CHOAY, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), pp. 113f.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>43</sup> NOBUO ITO, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 43.

<sup>44</sup> MICHAEL PETZET, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), pp. 87, 89.

<sup>45</sup> HIROYUKI SUZUKI, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), pp. 399f.

“rice-cultivating, stock farming and agricultural societies”<sup>46</sup>: a stereotype that Japan itself had imported for itself from European scholars decades before. Using Ise as a single case, but referring to the Buddhist-related renewal techniques in a differentiated argumentation, the Japanese criticism of material “sophistry”<sup>47</sup> in European heritage doctrine combined with the often simplified and summarizing statements of the Japanese speakers unintentionally provoked a very problematic reception by their European counterparts. This problem of a cultural-relativistic, comparative application of different cultural phenomena without keeping a clear conceptual distance between the self and the other (as shown in the citation above), became palpable in the discussion topic at the *Nara Conference*, which will be discussed next.

##### 5. Essence, message, reconstruction and the term post-modernity

*Indeed even a mere copy of a monument that no longer exists materially can be an authentic piece of remembrance [...] the authentic message of the monuments [is] the superordinate term for our “test of authenticity”.*<sup>48</sup>

Michael Petzet, The test of authenticity and the new cult of monuments

*A reconstructed past seems more genuine; for real history is always full of deceptions. [...] The authentic is always out of date [...] The replacement of collective memory by history undermines authenticity [...] the post-modern subversion of authenticity: smudging boundaries between fact and fiction into faction.*<sup>49</sup>

David Lowenthal, Criteria of authenticity

As pointed out in the last four discussion topics, the variety of immaterial aspects of ‘authenticity’ played a central role in the *Nara Conference*. However, two of the most controversial terms were ‘essence’ and ‘message’ in combination with ‘reconstruction’ and ‘post-modernity’. Especially two European presentations exemplified the range of critical opinion even among European experts: the talk given by English professor David Lowenthal at the *Bergen Workshop*, and the presentation by Michael Petzet (Germany), then president of ICOMOS *International*, given at Nara. Petzet proclaimed “postmodern pluralism’s” “new cult of monuments” that is manifested in the authorization of “authentic reproductions”. Petzet’s “Present-day”-valued “objects of remembrance” being part of the “remembrance of history” stood against Lowenthal’s stated trend of the “perversion of authenticity” through a “postmodern devaluation of originality and truth” in the “post-modern pastiche” of reconstructed “stage-sets”. It is an interpretation of this paper that these two papers clearly demonstrated how the intercultural authenticity approach in Nara mirrored the very discussion about a paradigmatic change of the operational time modi in monument preservation: between memory (German: *Gedächtnis*) and remembrance (German: *Erinnerung*), a monument as a historic object of collective memory

<sup>46</sup> NOBUO ITO, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 38.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> MICHAEL PETZET, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), pp. 87, 89.

<sup>49</sup> DAVID LOWENTHAL, in: LARSEN 1994 (note 3), pp. 45, 57.

(German: *kollektives Gedächtnis*) can be described as a multi-optional container of a constantly growing stratigraphy of time, material and pluralistic remembrances (these can vary). Out of this container of layered memory, every generation can have its own access to always actual messages (not only one imposed message as was described by Lowenthal's "fact and fiction into faction") without modifying the "full richness" of the monument for future generations. This, to a large extent, was Alois Riegl's major argument in his essay *The Modern Monument Cult* (1903) that featured his concept of the *Age-Value*-interpretation. On the contrary, the postmodern version of Petzet's "New Cult of Monuments" tried to define a monument as an object of present day- (i.e. newness-) value which could also be fabricated by reconstructions of the intended form, desired message (then only one single message is possible and this cannot change anymore) and interpreted essence. This strategy was criticised by Lowenthal, because it cuts off future generations from an ongoing, ever-new and multi-optional questioning of the monument by "replacing collective memory with history". This newly constructed history (Lowenthal's "faction") would, in its utterly popularized consequence, always provide a better version of the past: "If authenticity continued to promise impossible perfection, its real virtues would succumb to post-modern disrepute."<sup>50</sup>

#### Conclusion and contemporary relevance

*Understanding is not the self-identification with the other, which dissolves the distance to it, but rather the becoming acquainted in the distance, which lets the other appear as the other and the foreign at once.*<sup>51</sup>

Helmuth Plessner, *With other eyes* (1953)

In a first step, this presentation briefly summarised the development of the term 'authenticity'. The term went unmentioned in the *Athens Charter* of 1931, but was used once in the *Venice Charter* of 1964. This paper pointed out that it was not so much that charter itself, but its adoption as the founding document of ICOMOS in 1965, which converted the European term 'authenticity' into a global, even universal reference for heritage preservation. With the first version of the *Operational Guidelines for UNESCO World Heritage* in 1977, the term became operational, with four criteria of design, materials, workmanship and setting. The frequent revision of the guidelines, along with a growing number of more specializing charters, necessitated a re-examination of the globalized and confusing concept of 'authenticity'. The *Nara Conference on Authenticity* in 1994, which had been prepared in two workshops in Bergen and Naples, answered that need. The thirteen paragraphs of the *Nara Document* marked an important paradigmatic turn that corrected the elitist search of an all-uniting authenticity concept and instead moved towards

<sup>50</sup> DAVID LOWENTHAL, in: LARSEN 1995 (note 2), p. 124.

<sup>51</sup> Translation by the author, original quote: "Verstehen ist nicht das sich Identifizieren mit dem Anderen, wobei die Distanz zu ihm verschwindet, sondern das Vertrautwerden in der Distanz, die das Andere als das Andere und Fremde zugleich sehen lässt." In: PLESSNER, HELMUTH: *Mit anderen Augen*, in: IBID., *Zwischen Philosophie und Gesellschaft. Ausgewählte Abhandlungen und Vorträge*, Bern 1953, p. 215.

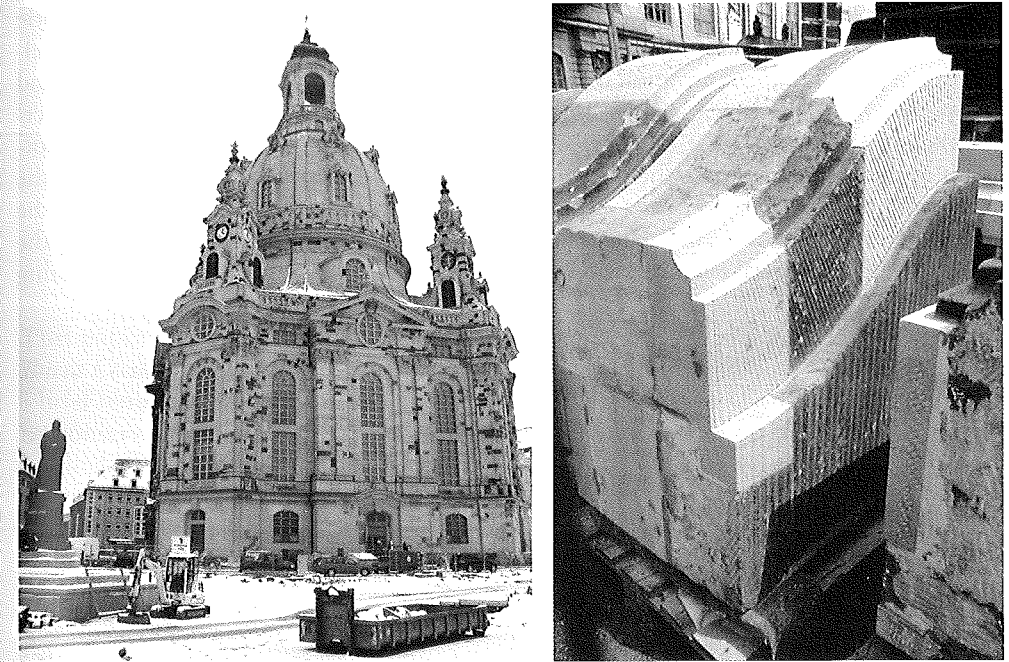


Fig. 11. Collage of authenticity: original and added stone elements re-assembled for a so-called *archaeological reconstruction* of the Frauenkirche in Dresden. (photos: Michael S. Falser 2006 and 2002)

a global respect for cultural diversity with increased flexibility for regional interpretations of authenticity.<sup>52</sup>

In a second analytical step, this paper grouped five different discussion topics that surrounded the monolithic term of 'authenticity'. During the Nara conference, there was an overall consensus regarding three of these topics, 1) Pluralism, diversity, respect and public access, 2) Process, contemporary dynamics and living heritage and 3) Postcolonialism, Eurocentrism and indigenous identities. The other two were (and still are today) controversial: 4) Cultural relativism in heritage strategies and 5) Essence, message and reconstruction in post-modernity. By discussing the core issue of the Japanese dismantling and reassembling techniques of temple structures, this paper demonstrated how the cultural-relativistic interpretation and definition of 'own' and 'foreign/other' conservation traditions between East and West created problematic stereotypes. If cultural understanding had been interpreted correctly (see quote above of the philosophical anthropologist Helmuth Plessner), the ritual reconstruction of Shintoist Ise temple would have never created such a controversial stir and at the same time postmodernist attraction among European preservationists. On the other hand, the *Nara Conference* brought to the surface post-modern strategies of building reconstruction that had originated in the

<sup>52</sup> It is important to mention that the concept of authenticity was integrated in the so-called *Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage* that was signed again in Nara in 2004.

European 1980s and, to this day, occupy contemporary theory and practice of historic preservation. David Lowenthal may have been right stating that behind all these new relativistic tendencies in conservation one has to look very closely at the specific cultural and temporal contexts of heritage objects. One example for such a specific (in this case German) context is Petzet's post-modern commitment to monument reconstructions (quoting it in the same sentence as the case of Ise in Nara 1994), which emerged parallel to the preservationist conflict after the German Reunification of 1990 (Fig. 11): this was the time when the controversial discussion about the strategies of 'authentic collages' for the so-called 'archaeological reconstruction' of the *Dresdner Frauenkirche* was in its beginning stages.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For this specific German discussion see: FALSER, MICHAEL: *Zwischen Identität und Authentizität. Zur politischen Geschichte der Denkmalpflege in Deutschland*. Dresden 2008.