

**‘Heritage and Societies:
Toward the 20th Anniversary of the Nara Document and Beyond’
Conference Report**

A three-day conference, ‘Heritage and Societies: Toward the 20th Anniversary of the Nara Document and Beyond’, took place in Himeji City on 3-5 November 2012. The Conference was organized jointly by the Agency of Cultural Affairs of Japan and Himeji City under the initiative of Professor Toshiyuki Kono (Kyushu University). As the title of the conference suggests, a number of experts were invited to discuss recent developments in the cultural heritage protection field. The conference was organized to celebrate the 40-year anniversary of the adoption of the 1972 UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (hereinafter ‘WHC’) and the approaching 20-year anniversary of the ‘Nara Document on Authenticity’, which was adopted in 1994.

The Nara Document was a milestone for the formulation of the notion of authenticity of heritage. This document marked a conceptual shift which allowed the inscription of wooden buildings in the World Heritage List. (Without this document, it would not have been possible to inscribe the Ise Shrine because it is rebuilt every 20 years, a tradition that has continued for more than a millennium). In addition, the Nara Document had a significant normative impact, so the Operational Guidelines for the WHC were revised in 2005. Yet since then there has been an obvious need for further discussion with regard to the meaning of authenticity and integrity of heritage, its implications for heritage management, the relationship between authenticity and social change as well as the involvement of communities in the identification of value heritage and management of the heritage.

The conference began with a session on ‘Philosophy of Cultural Heritage’. The first presentation was given by Professor Keiichi Noe, a professor of philosophy at Tohoku University. Professor Noe proposed the following taxonomy of conservation: (i) physical appearance and (ii) people’s memories. He noted that both cultural and natural heritage have their value and meaning because of the memories attached to them. Professor Noe also introduced a notion of ‘*fūdo*’, which in Japanese philosophy signifies the relationship between memories and the landscape. In the case of ‘*fūdo*’, which literally means wind and soil, climate can only have its meaning if both the objective and subjective elements are taken into consideration. The natural landscape, weather or the natural geographic setting only have a meaning if they are considered together with their social environment. In order to illustrate how the notion of ‘*fūdo*’ could be applied

in practice, Professor Noe put forward several examples. For instance, the beauty of a mountain has been historically ascribed by the ancestors. If they did see not the beauty of the mountain, the mountain would be material. Once the beauty of the mountain is discovered, it is then reflected in paintings or literature. Hence, landscapes obtained their beauty when people started to communicate with the environment. In the Japanese context, a similar evolution can also be observed, especially if one considers the impact of Chinese paintings in shaping human consciousness of the beauty of mountains. Another example of the interaction of natural setting and social environment is narrative. Narratives reflect history; however, history is not an accurate restoration of facts but a reflection of inter-subjective memories in the community. It will comprise the common ground of historical consciousness, a sense of belonging to a community. Professor Noe also touched upon the relationship between conservation and inter-generational ethics and justice, pointing out that current generations are responsible for preserving the world heritage for future generations.

The second presentation was made by the President of ICOMOS, Mr Gustavo Araoz, who discussed the issue of a conservation philosophy and its development. Mr Araoz introduced the background of the WHC, which was adopted at a time when heritage sites had been often destroyed by natural and manmade forces. In order to establish some sort of international standards for the conservation and restoration of the monuments and sites, the so-called Venice Charter was adopted in 1964. Mr Araoz explained the six underlying principles of the Charter and current controversies surrounding them. One of the main problems is that the Venice Charter adopts a static as well as curatorial approach to conservation which may no longer be appropriate for certain places. In addition, Mr Araoz pointed to the increasing role of stakeholders (such as communities) and the difficulties associated with their identification. Even though the role of communities has been recognized in the Operational Guidelines of the WHC, their role remains limited. Accordingly, Mr Araoz explained the paradigm shift related to conservation which has moved from restoration and repair to expansion of the functionality of the place. Similarly, the Nara Document could be considered to foster a functional notion of authenticity, with heritage including many other values.

The Conference continued with a presentation by Ms Marta de la Torre, a consultant to the US Cultural Advisory Committee. In her presentation, Ms De la Torre discussed a controversial issue of cultural values and conservation. Namely, in light of the six principles enshrined in the 1964 Venice Charter, it may be questioned how new values challenge the concept of conservation. When the Venice Charter was adopted, heritage was associated with the memory of the past, and the value was believed to reside in the material. However, recent societal changes have notable ramifications to the understanding of value. For instance, value could be ascribed by those who have an interest in a certain object (e.g. Robben Island where Nelson Mandela served his prison sentence was inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1999). In addition, values are multiple (e.g. Hagia Sophia); they change over time and can conflict with other values. In light of

such considerations, five implications should be further considered: (i) it is not possible to protect all values; (ii) it is hardly possible to identify 'neutral values', for the values to be protected will in most cases depend on those who have (political) power; (iii) preference given to one set of values may adversely affect other values; (iv) future generations may have different approaches to what is considered valuable at the present time; and (v) universal values are not possible.

The presentations raised numerous questions for the plenary session. The lead discussant, Professor Yukio Nishimura from Tokyo University, reiterated the main concepts addressed in the previous presentations: dynamism of collective memory, community and shared values, as well as the notion of '*fūdo*' which reflects the interaction between a human being and the environment. According to Professor Nishimura, the challenging task concerns the functioning of the (static) notion of outstanding universal value. In this regard, he emphasised the possible need to draw a line between international and local levels. In addition, Professor Nishimura emphasised that even though concepts such as 'change', 'community', 'situational ethics' and 'narrative' appear attractive, they are at the same time vague and thus difficult to apply in practice. In reaction to the previous statements, some other participants of the conference supported the idea of maintaining more vague and dynamic concepts which became possible after the adoption of the Nara Document. Arguably, such an approach helps understand that heritage has a more profound intangible aspect. Professor Nishimura further continued by highlighting the increasing role of communities in determining value, while other speakers addressed the involvement of other stakeholders (such as experts).

The second session was entitled 'Heritage and Social Aspects'. Professor Neil Silberman from the University of Massachusetts discussed the relationship between social change and heritage conservation. He started the presentation by noting that the Nara Document aimed at changing a Eurocentric approach to heritage conservation and questioned whether culturally embedded values could be incorporated in the notion of outstanding universal value. Professor Silberman also discussed the inter-relationship between economic development and the protection of heritage in which increasing wealth fosters cross-border tourism and visits to historical sites. From this perspective, heritage could even be considered an alternative industry for revenue generation as well as a tool for local development. At the same time, heritage is a medium for conflict (e.g. the Sarajevo library) as well as for the struggle for political power. Professor Silberman also analysed a number of controversial issues. He stressed that the history of heritage has been 'top-down', i.e. authoritative, and identification of what is authentic implies continuity and an unchanging understanding of what heritage is. While this is true in a homogenous society, the processes of globalisation raise new questions, especially if one is aware of the fact that discontinuation of the past has become characteristic to this world.

Professor Luca Zan from Bologna University addressed the issue of heritage conservation from the viewpoint of economic interests. In order to crystallize the relationship

between heritage and economics, he suggested distinguishing three different levels of analysis: macro, meso and micro. The macro level of economics is occupied with understanding the variety of economic organizations across space and time. However, this level of research is not well developed because economics does not take archaeological research into account as a body of knowledge. Yet this field opens the possibility of studying how heritage contributes to economic development. In this respect, the issue of overexploitation, the appropriation of economic values by external groups and the balance between use and conservation could be further elaborated. The meso level of economics looks at the heritage sector as an integrated sector, i.e. a chain of activities that take place in the heritage sector (e.g. preservation, archaeological excavation, conservation, research or museum presentation). Studies in this level could contribute to coordination between the different actors in the chain or a comparison of the heritage chain across countries. At the micro level, economics focuses on the sustainability and feasibility of projects at the individual sites or museums. In this respect, Professor Zan emphasised the importance of setting up a kind of business model for management of the heritage (government structures, reporting procedures, information disclosure, etc.).

A set of considerations concerning the limits of the Nara Document and practical problems concerning the heritage management in Bhutan were presented by Ms Nagtsho Dorji (Head of the Division for Conservation of Heritage Sites, Department of Culture of Bhutan). Ms Dorji explained that even though some buildings are very old, their maintenance has been very dynamic. Interestingly, the notion of community in the Bhutanese context is rather specific and involves not only people, but also monks, owners or political bodies who may be using the site. This explains why local sites are closely related to the communities: administrative and religious bodies often use the same building (*dzong*), which may also have living functions. Moreover, as the number of activities related to buildings increases, there is obviously a need to alter the buildings. Changes to the structures of buildings are often subtle and not always evident. Yet recently, increasing exposure to outside countries has led to more frequent adoption of novel technologies. Changes may also be facilitated by natural events (fires, earthquakes or floods). On such occasions, buildings are often subject to major renovations. The changes that have been in process since 1980s are not that subtle any more. Especially after big disasters, traditional building techniques are challenged by supporters of modern materials. Therefore, the dilemma facing the government of Bhutan is whether a more progressive understanding of authenticity should be adopted. Nevertheless, Ms Dorji noted that the government is seriously considering possible avenues to convince local communities to keep traditional structures. The situation is even more controversial because a strict policy limiting the possibilities of building modern structures may have adverse effects (e.g. buildings which no longer meet the needs of the people may be simply abandoned).

Professor Cornelius Holtorf from Linnaeus University (Sweden) discussed the social ramifications of the notion of authenticity and the role of heritage in people's lives.

Rather than focusing on the object *per se*, Professor Holtorf invited an investigation of the relationship between heritage and people. He provided data showing that more people are keen on visiting theme parks than archaeological sites. This led to a question of continuity, which seemingly forms the cornerstone pillar of the Venice Charter and to some degree also the Nara Document. According to Professor Holtorf, rather than focusing on property, the demands of people should be taken more cautiously. Therefore, instead of age, one should look to the 'past-ness' in the eyes of beholder. This could be an emancipated view of authenticity that focuses on people. In practice, different ways may result in the experience of past-ness. Several conditions may reveal past-ness (rather than age and time), including social authenticity (resulting from social processes that lead to the perception of past-ness); those who use the site; the feeling of past-ness alone; or the atmosphere that is sought more than the site itself. In other words, Professor Holtorf suggested that the important factor is the sensation itself and not what produces the sensation. Having illustrated such an approach with some examples, Professor Holtorf suggested that the social perception of past-ness fascinates and mobilizes people.

The idea of past-ness facilitated the discussion among the other participants. For instance, Professor Michael Turner suggested taking a rather cautious approach and being wary of 'crossing red lines'. If a very flexible approach is adopted and the focus is shifted towards what people appreciate most, then new sites other than the heritage sites will possess past-ness qualities as well. Ms Harriet Deacon commented that such 'out-of-the-box' views as 'past-ness' raise a number of thought-provoking questions about world heritage and intangible heritage, fantasy worlds and reality.

The plenary discussion after the second session was led by Professor Koji Mizoguchi from Kyushu University. Professor Mizoguchi distinguished three layers of globalisation: (i) globalisation of economy; (ii) globalisation of cultural industries; and (iii) globalisation of lifestyle. These three aspects are not only extremely enabling, but they also pose certain dangers and anxiety. Professor Mizoguchi noted that globalisation signifies the drive which is destroying national boundaries and communal interests in the use of heritage. Yet in the context of the existing legal framework, such interests could be mediated through the interaction of nation states. This further implies the need to define the custodianship of a particular community to be attached to a particular heritage. As for the globalisation of the economy, Professor Mizoguchi noted that it not only brings benefits but also creates danger in terms of heritage management (e.g. cheap tourism may increase the number of tourists, but the situation could become hardly manageable). With regard to lifestyle and heritage, Professor Mizoguchi noted that transformation is inevitable and heritage is no longer indigenous. Accordingly, Professor Mizoguchi suggested imposing some kind of definitional constraint upon the notion of authenticity to avoid losing the history as a wellspring of resource and lessons. This makes it necessary to think about the psychology of heritage.

Professor Michael Turner joined the discussion by emphasizing that on a scale between universal and particular, it would be more advisable to extend the scope of the Nara Document (rather than replacing it). He noted that in 1992, the drafters of the Nara Document were concerned with the intangible dimension, but the current focus should be on its temporal extension. Ms Harriet Deacon concurred with the views expressed previously and raised a few additional points: the relationship between time and change, authenticity and change and the question of *who* should decide. The latter point appears to have been in the Nara Document. The further discussion revolved around the question of 'authentication of value' and possible bottom-up and top-down approaches that could be adopted for that particular purpose.

The third part of the Conference was devoted to the relationship between heritage and sustainability. A comprehensive comparative analysis of the existing documents from the viewpoint of sustainability was presented by Ms Carolina Castellanos. Ms Castellanos noted that the management of World Heritage sites is founded on three notions: sustainability, authenticity and integrity. Although authenticity is a key notion in several important international documents, the remaining unanswered question is whether different local groups share the same perception of authenticity. In this connection, Ms Castellanos raised a number of related questions: How is authenticity related to social context and development? Does authenticity exist only with regard to physical matter or could it also be applied to process? As for the application of Operational Guidelines, the issue of authenticity is considered in light of the following elements: form and design; material and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management system; spirit and feeling of place; continuity; etc. Nevertheless, in the opinion of Ms. Castellanos, several areas remain nebulous. For example, the role of individuals in evaluating authenticity is not clear. In addition, the methods of assessment and expression of authenticity are also not uniform. Ms Castellanos also shared some additional insights about the interaction between authenticity and sustainability. She noted that there may be instances of conflict between the need to promote sustainable (economic) development and conservation. As part of a normative agenda, Ms Castellanos suggested that conservation may support sustainable development. Yet it is imperative to draw short-term and long-term goals which would include respect for the environment, economics, people and culture. Since there is no single recipe for conservation, Ms Castellanos emphasised the need to think locally and adapt policies for regional needs; moreover, she advocated for a dynamic notion of heritage which should contribute to the transfer of what is considered heritage to future generations.

Professor Mike Turner from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design discussed community participation in the management of urban heritage. Professor Turner challenged the Nara Document by looking at it not from an authenticity perspective but from the angle of diversity; he also addressed the challenges to urban heritage posed by vandalism and the profound variety of interests which influence the management of

urban heritage. Professor Turner emphasised the issue of spreading vandalism in cities and the need to understand what is good and what should be improved. In his opinion, cities should adapt to the changing cultural landscapes and implement innovative approaches to the creation and use of space. Professor Turner also addressed another delicate issue of the relationship between time and space and noted that cities must learn to create the maximum possible by having the minimum necessary. He introduced the concept of 'betweenness' between time and space as a component part of the city, 'voluntary withdrawal' from the managerial authority and the notion of 'layering' which has been employed (only) by archaeologists. Professor Turner also highlighted the fact that there is a demand for 'witness areas' which could eventually open the potential for change in non-changing parts of the city.

The last presentation was given by heritage consultant Ms Harriett Deacon on the relationship between communities and experts in defining the significance of tangible and intangible heritage. In her presentation, Ms Deacon highlighted the relationship between states, communities, experts and NGOs as solved in the WHC and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage ('ICH'). Ms Deacon noted that the communities are often referred those in need of assistance, and heritage is a normative tool which could justify intervention. As for community involvement, she suggested following the ladder of citizen participation developed by Arnstien which helps to identify the differences between the two Conventions: the WHC posits communities in the consultative and the educational stage whereas the ICH affords the communities a more focused role. In addition, Ms Deacon noted that it is necessary to consider what role the communities are in fact playing in the identification and management of heritage. Under the ICH, the participation of the community and its consent in the identification and management of the heritage is very explicitly required. Yet the WHC remains an agreement between the states, which means that the interests of the communities are represented only indirectly (i.e. through the state). As regards identification and value – the notion of 'outstanding universal value' – the WHC reflects the value to the international community, whereas under the ICH, value is associated *within* and *for* the community. The issue of value is closely related to another controversial question of the involvement of experts. Ms Deacon stressed that the notion of authenticity in the WHC as defined by experts is not welcomed in the Committee for Intangible Heritage because the Committee explicitly sees it as defined by the communities. Hence, there is anxiety about how to deal with the definitions of value by communities in Operational Guidelines under the WHC. Ms Deacon concluded that the two Conventions are normative instruments that can help establish good practice by promoting community involvement in heritage management and the determination of authenticity. In fostering greater community involvement, one has to recognise the relationships between states, communities and heritage professionals. Yet the notion of 'inclusiveness' requires recognising that people have different interests and may not (wish) to agree – not just because communities have different views among themselves, but also because

heritage professionals and states see different things that they want to protect. Ms Deacon suggested clearly defining new roles for heritage professionals, as well the clarification of processes that take place on national and international levels.

At the end of the conference, the 'Himeji Recommendation' was adopted. The Recommendation calls for the examination of other possible approaches to cultural diversity and heritage, and suggests further investigation of the viability of concepts such as 'fūdo'. The Recommendation also highlights five areas which should be the subject of further inter-disciplinary discussions: (i) values and authenticity; (ii) definition of authenticity and integrity; (iii) credibility of sources; (iv) involvement of the communities; and (v) heritage and sustainable development. The full text of the Recommendation is available at nara2014.wordpress.com/himeji-recommendation_ and the reports presented at the Conference will be prepared for publication in 2013.

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