



## Origins and influence of the *Nara document on authenticity*

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the origins and influence of the Nara document on authenticity (Nara, Japan, 1994) on conservation attitudes and approaches in the particular context of the World Heritage Committee's operations and beyond, into the workaday world of conservation.*

### **Assessing the impact of the *Nara document***

This paper looks briefly and selectively at how the concept of authenticity was treated in the three decades prior to the Nara meeting. It then looks at the influence of the *Nara document* by reviewing the results of several key regional follow-up meetings that applied the themes of Nara in a particular regional context (San Antonio for the Americas, Great Zimbabwe for Africa, and Riga for Eastern Europe). The paper concludes by looking at a number of the challenges that remain before the World Heritage Committee and the larger conservation field in attempting to strengthen the use of the authenticity concept in meaningful ways in conservation practice.

The *Nara document on authenticity* marked a watershed moment in modern conservation history. Agreed to by those participating in the Nara meeting in 1994, it was the first effort in the 30 years since the *Venice Charter* to attempt to put in place a set of internationally applicable conservation principles. Yet while reflecting an important international consensus, the *Nara document* also marked the final stage of the move from belief in universal international absolutes, first introduced by the *Venice Charter*, toward acceptance of conservation judgments as necessarily relative and contextual. However, both of these perceived gains have been recognized primarily in hindsight. The originators of the Nara meeting had more

prosaic benefits in mind. They wished simply to extend the range of attributes through which authenticity might be recognized in order to accommodate within it mainstream Japanese conservation practices –namely the periodic dismantling, repair and reassembly of wooden temples– so that Japan would feel more comfortable about submitting World Heritage nominations for international review (Stovel, 1995: xxxii-xxxvi). This objective was accomplished by returning to a framework more in tune with the framework from which the World Heritage test of authenticity had originally emerged (including the integrity requirement, which had underlain analysis of historic properties for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in the United States) and its inclusion of dynamic, or process-based, attributes (Stovel, 1995: 393-398).<sup>1</sup> While the Nara meeting did produce a more broadly-drawn technical framework for authenticity analysis, the *Nara document* at a more profound level also created the conceptual conditions to legitimize Japanese (and many other culturally imbedded) conservation practices by recognizing that

*all judgments about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong* (Nara document, 1995: xxiii).



**ISE SHRINE.** One of the sources of the Nara meeting was the feeling of Japanese conservation professionals that their approaches to conservation were misunderstood. The example most cited was the false contention in many Western publications that the Japanese ritually rebuilt replicas of their temples on adjacent sites every twenty years -a practice in fact limited in modern times to one Shinto shrine, the Ise Shrine, seen here. *Image: Public domain.*

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<sup>1</sup> This article describes in some detail the American origins of the World Heritage test of authenticity.



**RESTORATION OF WOODEN TEMPLE.** Fearing that World Heritage nominations would be judged within Eurocentric frameworks, the Japanese were also concerned that existing widespread conservation practices –such as the top-to-bottom periodic dismantling and reassembly of significant religious structures– would also be misunderstood by Western evaluators. *Image: Herb Stovel, 1993, ©ICCROM.*

The Nara discussions also laid to rest a number of long-standing technical delusions that had limited the possibility to use authenticity in practical ways to guide decision-making.

The first of these scientific delusions to be corrected was the idea that authenticity was a value in its own right, though some of those present during the Nara meeting made this argument. Natalia Dushkina of ICOMOS Russia, for example, suggested that the material (form, setting, techniques) and the non-material (function, use, tradition, spirit) “used to be the bearers of authenticity in a monument” and that “they transmitted authenticity to us and thus are relative to it” and, therefore, “authenticity is a value category of culture” (Dushkina, 1995: 310). Annex 4 of the version of the *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention* prepared by the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee in March 2003 stated the following:

*Authenticity is not a value itself. Properties do not merit inscription on the World Heritage List simply because they are greatly authentic; rather, inscribed properties must demonstrate first their claim to “outstanding universal value,” and then demonstrate that the attributes carrying related values are “authentic,” that is, genuine, real, truthful credible.<sup>2</sup>*

The distinction being made here is that authenticity choices can be understood as reflective of the values of those doing the choosing, but do not themselves constitute heritage values. The second scientific clarification involved refuting the contention that authenticity could be understood as an absolute. Insistence on an absolute approach is still present in the current

<sup>2</sup> Herb Stovel, from commentaries included in Annex 4, *The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, version prepared by the Advisory Bodies (draft, unpublished, March 2003).

National Register of Historic Places practice for evaluating integrity: “Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not” (Andrus and Shrimpton, 2002). While this approach may have been present in the original American concept and subsequently grafted onto World Heritage practice, it is now accepted in World Heritage circles that authenticity analysis is very much concerned with relative measurement. Natalia Dushkina illustrated this in her paper for Nara:

*Authenticity can be easily diagnosed, when each of its bearers will be examined independently of each other. It is different, when all the components are studied simultaneously. This pattern provides for a partial loss of authenticity in each of them (e.g., Material authenticity is intact, but the function has changed, there is a loss of the original form, etc.). The examination has a relative character and can add to the dissonance of the whole. Here it is necessary to find the threshold before which the monument authenticity is not yet lost and can be perceived as it is (Dushkina, 1995: 310).*

The March 2003 Advisory Bodies’ version of Annex 4 of the *Operational Guidelines* confirmed this view by suggesting that “Authenticity is not an absolute qualifier. It is meaningless to state that such and such a property is ‘undeniably authentic.’ Authenticity is a relative concept and must always be used in relation to the ability of particular attributes to express clearly the nature of key recognized values.”<sup>3</sup>

The third scientific clarification involved challenging the idea that authenticity had to be present in all attributed areas (that is, in relation to those all possible attributes expressing or carrying defined heritage values relevant to World Heritage analysis –form, design, setting, etc.–) for a site to be considered authentic. Early discussion of the four authenticities of the World Heritage test of authenticity –design, material, setting and workmanship, themselves adapted from the integrity requirements for nominating sites to the National Register of Historic Places maintained by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior– acknowledged that these qualities were to be treated “as a composite”<sup>4</sup> (Stovel, 1995: 395). While ICOMOS Secretary General Dr. Ernest Allan Connally argued for this interpretation in dealing with World Heritage sites when the first version of the test of authenticity was defined in 1977. Current practice in nominating sites to the National Register of Historic Places argues the contrary, namely that

*retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant (Andrus and Shrimpton, 2002).*

The fourth scientific clarification focused on improving understanding of the importance of authenticity. Never mentioned in early conservation debates, a focus on “why” has helped give precision to the articulation of the “how.” While the *Venice Charter*, without accompanying explanation, merely suggests that monuments should be preserved “in the full richness of their authenticity,”<sup>5</sup> the *Nara document* devotes articles 4, 9 and 10 to the “why.”

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<sup>3</sup> Stovel, from commentaries included in Annex 4, *The Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Connally in a number of personal interviews with the author preceding the Nara meeting on authenticity confirmed that in his view authenticity had to be present in all of the attributes –material, design, workmanship, setting– for a site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

<sup>5</sup> Preamble to the *International charter for the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites (Venice Charter)*. The *Venice Charter* was adopted by the II International Congress of Architect and Technicians of Historic Monuments, held in Venice in 1964. ICOMOS, since its founding in 1965, has acted as the custodian of the *Venice Charter*.

4. In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity.

9. Conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods is rooted in the values attributed to the heritage. Our ability to understand these values depends, in part, on the degree to which information sources about these values may be understood as credible or truthful. Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning, is a requisite basis for assessing all aspects of authenticity.

10. Authenticity, considered in this way and affirmed in the Charter of Venice, appears as the essential qualifying factor concerning values. The understanding of authenticity plays a fundamental role in all scientific studies of the cultural heritage, in conservation and restoration planning, as well as within the inscription procedures used for the World Heritage Convention and other cultural heritage inventories (Nara document, 1995: xxi-xxii).

Ultimately perhaps the most important benefit of the Nara discussions was the impetus given to dozens of similar discussions in countries and regions around the world and the optimism that these discussions would carry the technical focuses of the Nara discussion to new heights in subsequent years. Regional meetings were held in Africa, Europe, the Americas, and in many countries around the world, including at least three in my country, Canada. By my count more than 50 national and regional authenticity workshops, seminars, and colloquia have been held since 1994. Authenticity has become the principal metaphor of engagement for conservation debates for close to a decade and a half now, and this interest continues; the government of China held a major expert meeting in Beijing in May 2007 to review conservation practices at some of the World Heritage sites in Beijing. Guo Zhan, current Vice President of ICOMOS for China, recently stated that his goal in organizing the meeting was to do for China what Nara had done for Japan.<sup>6</sup>

But for all of these meetings, the *Nara document* seems to have fallen short of the aspirations of many of its framers. While the many subsequent meetings helped root treatment of authenticity in the local cultural contexts called for in the *Nara document*, for the most part they have not moved the authenticity discourse down the path toward practical application or beyond understandings in place before Nara, nor have they helped address the two significant issues skirted by Nara.<sup>7</sup>

This need for a practical approach to authenticity had been signaled well before Nara in Jukka Jokilehto's chapter "Treatments and authenticity" in *Management guidelines for world cultural heritage* (Jokilehto, 1993: 59-75). Here Jokilehto demonstrates conceptually how the evidence of the four authenticities present in the original test of authenticity—materials, workmanship,

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<sup>6</sup> Guo Zhan, e-mail to the author, March 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Many of those who have discussed the authenticity question with me before and since Nara have occasionally expressed some boredom with the continuing emphasis given the practical application of authenticity, preferring the stratospheric flights of fancy that linking authenticity to identity, memory, and human existence can sometimes produce. It is important, however, to remember that the authenticity debate, in a World Heritage context, began with the need to examine the adequacy of assessments about conservation practice in one country, Japan.

design, and setting— helps define the aim of treatment and its implementation. The challenge of defining conceptually the possible forms of evidence offered by various attributes offers a useful analytical tool for making clear authenticity judgments and anticipates the proofs of authenticity mentioned in the *Declaration of San Antonio*. However, the illustrations used by Jokilehto are uneven and not fully developed. For example, while for materials evidence is usefully defined to include attributes of “original building material, historical stratigraphy, marks made by impact of significant phases in history and the process of aging (patina of age)” (Jokilehto, 1993: 66) for workmanship, *evidence* is understood to include uniquely “substance and signs of original building technology and techniques” (Jokilehto, 1993: 67) which seems to overlook the material evidence of the hand of the original or later craftsman – surely a key focus of any effort to retain the full testimony of craftsmanship. Nevertheless, this chapter was a major step forward in the field at the time by suggesting how authenticity could be measured in tangible ways, as an aid to conservation decision-making.

One of the two major issues skirted in the *Nara document* was how to ensure that acceptance of cultural context as essential in assessing conservation actions, and approaches would not result in efforts to cloak arbitrary or *ad hoc* decisions within the all-forgiving mantle of cultural context. Many post Nara commentators have complained that the *Nara document* has given license to unscrupulous practitioners to do what they wish without the need to account for or justify their actions in that local cultural context. This problem could have been avoided by an article within the *Nara document* which might have read

*The acceptance of the need to judge conservation activity within its local cultural context does not remove from conservation project proponents the need to ensure their proposals respect the heritage values around which local consensus has been developed, the information sources associated with these, and locally recognized processes of heritage transformation.*

The second major issue skirted during Nara was a definition of authenticity. Given the reticence of Raymond Lemaire (primary author of the *Venice Charter* and, later, co-author of the *Nara document*) to pursue a definition, the framers of the *Nara document* followed the time-honored *World Heritage Convention* tradition of treating important concepts, such as outstanding universal value, without defining them. However, even without a definition, the annual need for States’ Parties to show that their World Heritage nominations meet the test of authenticity has extended acceptance of the concept’s relevance to countries and cultures that in Nara complained that they did not have a word for authenticity, and slowly, a working definition has found its place. That definition concerns the quality of communication of defined heritage values through the significant attributes carrying these values. This definition that eluded the Nara wordsmiths, has found its way into various documents and papers in use in the World Heritage context, including presence as a part of the draft *Operational Guidelines* in development in late 2003-early 2004, and confirms the sense of the American integrity from which the World Heritage concept of authenticity was born in 1976: the ability of a property to convey its significance.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> For five heady months, this definition was also in the late 2003-early 2004 draft *Operational Guidelines* before the then-president of the World Heritage Committee was alerted to a potential Advisory Body coup and pulled the plug on this radical contribution. An interim draft version of the *Operational Guidelines* worked on by the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre fairly intensively from November 2003 to March 2004 advanced treatment of authenticity beyond that currently found in the *Operational Guidelines* of 2005 (Stovel, 1995: 393-398).

### Pre-Nara: considering authenticity from 1964 to 1993

To more fully appreciate the changes in thinking and practice that have resulted from the *Nara document*, it is useful to understand what was meant by *authenticity* when the *Venice Charter* was written in the 1960s and to trace changes in its use since then. As many commentators have noted, *authenticity* was used in the preamble to the *Venice Charter* without qualification because, in the European-expert world on whose shared precepts the charter was built, authenticity was understood by all in the same way.

*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 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.*

The first known appearance of *integrity* in formal systems for preservation in the United States occurs in the 1953 National Park Service Administrative Manual, where integrity is described as “a composite quality connoting original workmanship, original location, and intangible elements of feeling and association.”<sup>9</sup> This made-in-the-USA concept of integrity traveled to Europe in the valises of then-ICOMOS Secretary General Ernest Allan Connally and his assistant and full-time representative in Paris, Ann Webster Smith, for the first meetings of fledgling World Heritage Committee of experts in 1976 and 1977. There, the concept was adopted by the World Heritage Committee but renamed *authenticity*, thanks to Raymond Lemaire’s insistence on extending authenticity beyond concern for the original, which in essence protected the existing conceptual frameworks of the European conservation world. The result was a World Heritage test of authenticity, which was applied to four related physical attributes: design, material, setting, and workmanship. During the World Heritage preparatory expert meeting of March 1977 in Paris, Connally noted that Lemaire proposed changing *integrity* to *authenticity* “out of concern that the rule might seem to restrict eligibility of monuments to those with purity of original design or form.” While Connally was dubious of intent (his notes state “the old polemic put to rest – did not want to revive it”), Lemaire prevailed, and American *integrity* became World Heritage *authenticity*. Given the American definition of *integrity* (the ability of a property to convey its significance), the change of vocabulary has not generally caused any problems in application of the concept in the World Heritage context.

The approach adopted for World Heritage had become the norm in Europe by the following decade. Stefan Tschudi-Madsen’s paper “Principles in practice,” presented at the 1984 APT conference in Toronto, is representative of the best of evolving European thinking in the mid-1980s. His paper explores five different areas of authenticity: material, structure, surface, architectural form, and function (Tschudi-Madsen, 1985: 17). Material, structure, and form recall the earlier four tangible authenticities of World Heritage, but Tschudi-Madsen also includes “surface” and “function,” both of which he describes as problematic, but whose dynamic qualities anticipate some of the discussions in Nara. Surface, described as the inevitably changing skin of a building, pits the practical necessity of scraping and renewing paint layers and replacing worn building components (e.g., roof tiles) with the effort to maintain “age value, the proof of authenticity” (Tschudi-Madsen, 1985: 18). Tschudi-Madsen suggests that there is a conflict between

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<sup>9</sup> A. Connally, personal notes (untitled) on UNESCO document CC-76/WS/25, reporting on a meeting of World Heritage Advisory Bodies and World Heritage Committee representatives in Morges, Switzerland, 19-20 May 1976, author’s files. Connally’s notes also report on the development of integrity in the American system: Connally also notes that in the late 1950s and early 1960s, he promoted a broader concept of integrity than that first articulated in 1953, which promoted inclusion of integrity of design and setting in the American system.

*the aesthetic demands of material structure and surface on the one hand, and the need for authenticity on the other (...) a conflict between an intentional evaluation –an evaluation conditioned by the original intention of the monument– and an historic evaluation based upon the document as a source of information –a document. It is very difficult to take a stand either for or against in such a conflict; one appeals to sentiment, the other to knowledge (Tschudi-Madsen, 1985: 19).*



**URNES STAVE CHURCH.** A Norwegian church inscribed on the World Heritage List, illustrates the many interrelated aspects of authenticity cited by Stefan Tschudi-Madsen in architecturally important buildings: surface, material, form, structure, and function.  
*Image: Herb Stovel, ©ICCROM.*



In speaking of function, he notes that “the principle of authenticity often gives way to practical solutions because it becomes a question of, to be or not to be, for the monument” (Tschudi-Madsen, 1985: 19). Tschudi Madsen’s speculations about these conflicts reveal the tension between prevailing conventional assumptions that authenticity resided in survival of original material and design intent and the emerging conviction that authenticity resided in what a selection of attributes rooted in the particular place and circumstances-specific values of a historic place might reveal.

As already noted, Jukka Jokilehto’s 1993 chapter “Treatments and authenticity” consolidates earlier thinking within a defined process for authenticity analysis and provides a tangible reference useful for Nara. Here Jokilehto suggested that treatment strategies for cultural-heritage sites “must maintain authenticity” by maximizing retention of “historical material,” by ensuring “harmony with original design and workmanship,” by not allowing “new additions to dominate over the original fabric but respecting the archaeological potential,” and (citing the *World Heritage Operational Guidelines* in place at the time) meeting “the test of authenticity in design, material, workmanship or setting (and in the case of cultural landscapes their distinctive character and components)” (Jokilehto, 1993: 59). Jokilehto introduces a process for defining appropriate treatment whose “first priority is to establish, safeguard, and maintain the cultural resource values for which a World Heritage site has been included on the List” and which seeks to ensure that “all conservation treatments (e.g., protection, consolidation or restoration) guarantee the protection of the authenticity of the heritage site, prolonging the duration of its integrity and preparing it for interpretation” (Jokilehto, 1993: 60). Jokilehto defines a set of treatment approaches ranging from protection to anastylosis and then discusses the implications of each possible treatment with respect to authenticity of material, design, workmanship, and setting. In the end, this approach leads the analyst to understand the need for particular operations at a microscale: preventing, revealing, replacing, removing, consolidating, maintaining, reinforcing –all taken together providing a detailed, authenticity-based prescription for needed intervention.

An expert World Heritage meeting on the evaluation of potential nominations of historic canals to the World Heritage List took place at Chaffey’s Locks along the Rideau Canal, near Ottawa, Ontario, in September 1994, just three months before the Nara meeting. The discussion focused in part on how to apply the test of authenticity to heritage canals, understood as linear corridors with the characteristics of cultural landscapes. The meeting report presented to the World Heritage Committee devotes an annex to the technical analysis of authenticity:

*It was felt useful to expand the aspects of authenticity examined from the four currently noted in the Operational Guidelines, to associate these with criteria or indicators which could suggest how authenticity of canals might best be measured in relation to each of the aspects considered and to examine these within a time continuum including project planning, execution, and ongoing use. It was felt important to stress that the resulting matrix was not meant to be used in a directive or mechanistic fashion, but to provide a guiding framework for consideration of a range of evidently interdependent factors, and ultimately to provide an integrated overview of these various factors (UNESCO-World Heritage Centre, 1994).*



**RIDEAU CANAL.** The authenticity of the operating locks on the Rideau Canal, a historic Canadian canal inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2007, rests on the retention of original design forms rather than original wooden material, now decayed and replaced many times. *Image: Public domain.*

The matrix was meant to define potential indicators of authenticity within an array of attributes relevant to the heritage typology being examined and to verify relevance of these indicators in a time framework focused on design conception (plan), design implementation (execution), and long-term operations (use). The use of this matrix was intended to show how a multifaceted effort to measure the authenticity of complex heritage could support exploration of possible approaches to treatment.

	PLAN	EXECUTION	USE
1. <u>Intentions – Objectives</u> - decipherable - documentation - intellectual context			
2. <u>Know-how</u> - transmissions - technological context			
3. <u>Environment – physical surroundings</u> - validity of canal - environment links - implications of know-how (2) - implications of materials (4)			
4. <u>Materials</u> - conservation			
5. <u>Design – restoration</u> - periods decipherable - influences - documentation			
6. <u>Uses – restoration</u> - continuity of uses - congruence - interruptions in uses and functions			

**MATRIX FOR AUTHENTICITY.** This matrix was produced as an appendix to a report on the 1994 World Heritage expert meeting on historic canals held at Chaffey's Locks on the Rideau Canal. It illustrates how, for a particular type of heritage (canals), a range of authenticity indicators may be developed and used in authenticity assessment at different phases of project and property management. From the *UNESCO World Heritage Committee report on the expert meeting on heritage canals (Canada, September 1994)*, WHC-94/CONF-003/INF.10. Table: ©UNESCO-World Heritage Centre.

### Post-Nara: meetings, influences, and consolidation within the World Heritage system

While many significant authenticity discussions in many different contexts took place after Nara, perhaps the most significant of these were meetings in San Antonio, Texas, in 1996 (bringing together experts from the Americas and resulting in the *Declaration of San Antonio*); in Great Zimbabwe in 1999 (bringing together experts from Africa); and in Riga, Latvia, in 2000 (bringing together 100 experts from Eastern Europe and resulting in the *Riga charter on authenticity and historical reconstruction in relationship to cultural heritage*).

The Interamerican Symposium on Authenticity in the Conservation and Management of the Cultural Heritage, supported by US/ICOMOS and the Getty Conservation Institute, took place in San Antonio in March 1996 and brought together a large group of energetic participants from almost all ICOMOS national committees of North, Central, and South America to debate the application of the concepts of Nara. The meeting adopted the *Declaration of San Antonio*, which discussed the relationship between authenticity and, in sequence, identity, history, materials, social value, dynamic and static sites, stewardship, and economics. Review of the document 11 years later reveals the degree to which it was rooted in the need to affirm the special cultural character of the region as a basis for understanding its authenticity.

*Within the cultural diversity of the Americas, groups with separate identities co-exist in the same space and time and at times across space and time, sharing cultural manifestations, but often assigning different values to them. No nation in the Americas has a single national identity; our diversity makes up the sum of our national identities. The authenticity of our cultural resources lies in the identification, evaluation and interpretation of their true values as perceived by our ancestors in the past and by ourselves now as an evolving and diverse community (ICOMOS, 1996: Art. 1).*

The Declaration also suggested extending the “proofs” of authenticity to include reflection of its true value, integrity, context, identity, use, and function. This was an effort to link directly to earlier Nara discussions in order to identify appropriate proofs relative to redefined “information sources,” but these results were simply reported without efforts to situate them within the larger framework of Nara. The Declaration concluded with a well-intentioned but seemingly futile effort to rewrite many of the articles of Nara; this effort has had no impact on later revisions of the *World Heritage Operational Guidelines*, which have incorporated portions of text verbatim from the *Nara document*.

Another significant regional meeting concerning authenticity and integrity in an African context was organized by the World Heritage Centre and held in Great Zimbabwe on May 26-29, 2000. The publication resulting from this meeting featured an extraordinarily rich set of case studies and observations from 18 speakers who looked at issues arising from maintaining authenticity and integrity in the management of cultural and natural heritage in Africa (Saouma-Forero, 2001). Unlike many other meetings on authenticity that followed Nara, the Great Zimbabwe meeting did not result in adoption of a document or charter. However, the synthesis report prepared, as with the report of the San Antonio meeting, strongly affirmed the special nature and character of heritage of the region—in this case, Africa—and included some suggestions about how this understanding could be better taken up in World Heritage operations. Concluding remarks by World Heritage Committee member and meeting organizer Dawson Munjeri were directed at the World Heritage Committee and its ability to recognize what was most important about African World Heritage nominations. Munjeri “stated firmly that the world’s resolve in genuinely addressing the issue of imbalance on the World Heritage List will depend very much on how the issue of cultural criterion (vi) is dealt with. The African voice is unequivocal in this issue, ‘criterion (vi) must stand in its own right.’”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, Feb. 2005. Para 77. Criterion (vi) is described as follows: “(vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria).”

The meeting publication also included a set of recommendations, which, again like San Antonio, included possible improvements to the text of the *Nara document* including identification of management systems, language, and other forms of intangible heritage among attributes expressing authenticity, and a strong suggestion of the need to give greater emphasis to the place of local communities in a sustainable heritage management process. Perhaps because of the strong involvement of the World Heritage Centre in organizing this meeting, the recommendations concerning these new attributes have all been included in authenticity information sources in the 2005 version of the *World Heritage Operational Guidelines*.

The *Riga charter on authenticity and historical reconstruction in relationship to cultural heritage*, developed in the World Heritage City of Riga, Latvia, in 2000 with the leadership of ICCROM, was a regional meeting focused on a particular aspect of authenticity, that of reconstruction (Stovel, 2001: 241-244). The meeting had been convened to confront a sudden proliferation of “in-authentic reconstructions” in the newly liberated former Soviet Union republics where the search for symbols of statehood often seemed to result in the re-creation of former monuments with little or no regard for historical pertinence, accuracy, or context. The conclusions of the *Riga charter* clearly reflect the discussions of Nara, including a definition used in the Nara meeting but not included in the document (“authenticity is a measure of the degree to which the attributes of cultural heritage [including form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other factors] credibly and accurately bear witness to their significance”). The *Riga Charter* also includes a conclusion sympathetic to Nara, which in part states that “replication of cultural heritage is in general a misrepresentation of evidence of the past, and that each architectural work should reflect the time of its own creation, in the belief that sympathetic new buildings can maintain the environmental context.” While the *Riga Charter* seems not yet to have found its way into standard sets of World Heritage doctrinal texts, it has been accepted as a key reference in numerous countries outside the Baltic region, including Greece, where it has been used in assessing reconstruction strategies for the Parthenon, and in the UK, where it has been accepted as a key document underlying the English Heritage *Policy statement on restoration, reconstruction and speculative recreation of archaeological sites including ruins* (2001). This Policy Statement notes that participants at a regional meeting in Eastern Europe agreed that the *Riga Charter* “has wider application (...) and that the Charter reestablishes the presumption against reconstruction except in very special circumstances and reiterates that it must in no way be speculative.” (English Heritage, 2001).

Slowly, with the aid of the visibility and credibility conferred by the conclusions of these and other related meetings, the *Nara document* has begun to find official acceptance in the World Heritage world.

During the 1999 International General Assembly of ICOMOS, held five years after the *Nara document* was first adopted, the document was formally adopted by an ICOMOS General Assembly and became a part of the body of doctrine supported and promoted by ICOMOS. In practice, the *Nara document* had been used since the mid-1990s by the Advisory Bodies, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and the World Heritage Committee informally in the analysis of nominations to the World Heritage List. The most recent revision of the *World Heritage Operational Guidelines* (begun in 1999 and authorized in 2005) formally incorporated the conclusions of Nara to guide articulation of the section on authenticity. Indeed, several of the articles of the *Nara document* are now reproduced nearly verbatim within the 2005 *Operational Guidelines*: article 80 of the *Operational Guidelines* reproduces most of article 9

of Nara, and article 81 reproduces –nearly word for word– article 11 of Nara. Article 82 of the *Operational Guidelines* borrows heavily from article 13 of Nara but extends the Nara list of “information sources” (form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors) to include management systems, and language, and other forms of intangible heritage derived from the conclusions of the Great Zimbabwe meeting.<sup>11</sup>



**BLACKHEAD'S HOUSE.** The late 1990s reconstruction of Blackhead's House, in the World Heritage site of Riga, Latvia, on a prominent site in the town's central square, helped shape discussions that led to the adoption of the *Riga charter*, establishing the limits and conditions within which such reconstructions should be considered appropriate in conservation frameworks. *Image: Herb Stovel, ©ICCROM.*

<sup>11</sup> Interim draft version of the *Operational Guidelines* worked on by the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre fairly intensively from November 2003 to March 2004 advanced treatment of authenticity beyond that currently found in the *Operational Guidelines* of 2005. Articles from the *Nara document* were retained within an Annex to the *Operational Guidelines* on authenticity, and the Guidelines themselves were limited to process-based commentary and advice to States Parties on identifying and evaluating authenticity in preparing nominations and assessing state of conservation.



**PALACE OF THE GRAND DUKE.** The reconstruction of buildings that could act as symbols of newfound national identity was a common tendency in the former republics of the Soviet Union, as here with the reconstructed Palace of the Grand Duke in the World Heritage city in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2003. While an argument could be made for the reconstruction of Blackhead's House on a site vacant since World War II (see image of Blackhead's House, Riga), the reconstruction of the Vilnius Palace is more questionable: the reconstruction was achieved at the expense of portions of a 200-year-old Russian barracks, and the facades of the reconstructed palace were based on very limited iconographic evidence. *Image: Herb Stovel, ©ICCROM.*

### Post-Nara: future challenges

The search for authenticity over the last 15 years may not have fully brought about the desired shared clarity of meaning and use, but it has certainly highlighted the apparent importance of the quest. This paper has attempted to analyze the most relevant observations about meaning and use of the concept of authenticity made before, during, and subsequent to the development of the *Nara document*, in order to trace the main lines of thinking in the debate and in particular to suggest what role the use of this concept could play in contemporary conservation analysis and decision making. A number of important challenges remain, however, in efforts to bring use of authenticity to greater effectiveness in conservation thinking and decision-making.

One of the most visible challenges, particularly evident in the World Heritage context, is the limited understanding of the concept in those preparing nominations, in spite of the long-time, expert focus on improving processes for evaluating authenticity for World Heritage. Each year ICOMOS finds itself forced to interpret or rework what States' Parties submit in the name of authenticity in nomination documents, because the submissions often limit analysis of authenticity to meaningless statements such as "this property is unquestionably authentic." In other cases, the State Party has not caught up to the *Operational Guidelines*. For example, even though World Heritage authenticity was born in practice in the U.S., the current National

Park Service guidelines for preparation of possible future nominations to the World Heritage List note mistakenly that authenticity resides in the survival of “original material.”<sup>12</sup> These problems lie in the frameworks used nationally for analysis, which often ignore the available cues in the *Operational Guidelines*, or, as seen above, the references used are out of date. These problems demonstrate the difficulty of transmitting the nuances of an expert debate to the operational level in meaningful ways.

In my view, improvement could be gained by developing reference models showing tangible authenticity indicators of the state of conservation of historic places, along the lines of the frameworks introduced during the World Heritage Rideau Canal expert meeting of 1994 and also explored by Jokilehto in the chapter on treatments and authenticity.

The search for monitoring measures and indicators has become a major preoccupation of those in the conservation field over the last 15 years. This emphasis is a reflection of the growing commitment to improving management frameworks for care of cultural heritage through the use of monitoring, which is understood as a key component of the management process. Treated as a word that expresses conservation goals –maintaining and enhancing authenticity– the concept of authenticity provides a significant opportunity to define indicators in very tangible ways.

The opportunity to move in this direction is already in place. The recent World Heritage expert meeting on Benchmarks and Chapter IV of the *Operational Guidelines* (April 2007)<sup>13</sup> focused on the importance of using understanding of authenticity and integrity in monitoring state of conservation. Recommendation Number One states that “The World Heritage Committee should formally adopt a monitoring framework for World Heritage sites which is rooted in the outstanding universal value of the sites.” Recommendation Number Four further notes that the statement of outstanding universal value “should include the qualifying conditions of authenticity/integrity, specific attributes or features of the site which carry its outstanding universal value.”<sup>14</sup>

A second challenge is the need to close the gap between the results of technically proficient approaches to maintaining authenticity in the transformation of buildings having recognized heritage importance and the tourism driven transformations that trivialize this experience.

The search for authenticity has always had the power to move heritage professionals charged with shaping various historic elements of their environment, but it has also had the power to touch members of the public who seek to find meaning in their cultural environment. In fact the public is no less discerning than the professionals and no less interested in experiencing cultures and cultural manifestations in their fullest authenticity. Heritage professionals should

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<sup>12</sup> Application for inclusion of a property in the U.S. World Heritage Tentative List, National Park Service, photocopy, author’s files.

<sup>13</sup> Benchmarks and Chapter IV of the *Operational Guidelines* (Paris, April 2-3, 2007). WHC-07/31.COM/7.3. 31st Session of the World Heritage Committee, Christchurch, New Zealand, June 23-July 2, 2007. See [<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2007/whc07-31com-73e.doc>].

<sup>14</sup> The conclusions of the Cambridge meeting on World Heritage monitoring of 1993, held 14 years earlier, differ from those of the Paris 2007 meeting on benchmarks only in matters of detail: “The expert meeting defined systematic monitoring more precisely as the process of the continuous repeated observation of the condition) of the site, the identification of issues that threaten its conservation and World Heritage characteristics and values, the identification of actions and decisions to be taken, and the reporting of the findings of monitoring and the resulting recommendations to the appropriate authorities, the World Heritage Bureau and the Committee and the cultural and scientific communities.” See [[whc-93-conf002-4e\[1\].pdf](#)]. Although the World Heritage meeting report does not cover this, most of the papers presented by both cultural –and natural– heritage experts focused on the clear definition of heritage values as the starting point for effective monitoring, and several, including mine, looked at the use of the tangible attributes described in the “qualifying conditions” as a jumping off point for such monitoring activity.



identify opportunities to include those guiding the larger experience of place in communities (for example, those involved with development of tourism) in these debates, rather than continuing to debate authenticity exclusively among themselves. Of course, while the goal of such a dialogue may not be easy to achieve (the very presence of tourists in a visited spot alters the authentic local quality of the place), certainly today this dialogue is hardly present. If the World Heritage Committee Periodic Reporting system reports that many managers of sites on the World Heritage List cannot articulate their site's outstanding universal value, then can we expect more from a region's tourism managers? Perhaps the World Heritage Committee could be encouraged to organize a series of regional workshops bringing tourism and conservation professionals together to develop some possible place-specific model approaches for communicating the importance of authenticity within the tourism field.

A third challenge, and perhaps the most important, is the continuing need to apply authenticity to sites understood as wholes, rather than just to fragments of the sites. This need responds to our ever-expanding views of what constitutes cultural heritage and the growing challenge to work within systemic, holistic, and integrated frameworks in managing cultural heritage. These emerging frameworks integrate concern for culture and nature, for the big picture offered by a cultural-landscapes approach, for integrating tangible and intangible heritage, for linking the living and the spiritual to the physical, and finally (in the name of authenticity) for defining indicators that focus on the big picture rather than on fragments of that reality.

These challenges were already identified in 1999 in Great Zimbabwe by Dawson Munjeri, who stated:

*that the essence of the notion of authenticity is culturally relative. In traditional African societies, it is not based on the cult of physical objects ('the tangible') and certainly not on condition and aesthetic values. In these societies, the interplay of sociological and religious forces has an upper hand in shaping the notion of authenticity (Munjeri, 2001: 18).*

Munjeri further referred to the concept of integrity, which emphasizes "'wholeness', 'virtuosity', unfettered by perceived organic and inorganic human and non-human intrusions" (Munjeri, 2001: 18). In addressing the implications of the issue of integrity for cultural landscapes, Munjeri wrote:

*How can such integrity be recognisable when there are no boundaries traditionally demarcating the world of the Creator from that of humanity and from that of nature? In the area around the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage site, constant problems have arisen when its boundaries have been asserted and legally enforced against a surrounding community who have always known that 'Duma harina muganhu' (the Duma have no boundary). The solution lies in recognising that indigenous communities are at heart, ecosystem people integrally linked to the ecosystem they inhabit. They are part of the integrity equation. It is they who can sanction utilitarian space and through their systems of checks and balances are the underwriters of that integrity. It is in this context that their customs and beliefs need to be encouraged and reinforced (Munjeri, 2001: 19).*

Munjeri concluded by stating that "in dealing with the issue of authenticity and integrity, one cannot but accept the powerful influence of the spiritual realm; all else is incidental" (Munjeri, 2001: 147).

Although Munjeri uttered these words almost a decade ago, they accurately anticipated the complex, multifaceted world of the authenticity-integrity discussion emerging in the World Heritage domain and beyond. He eloquently pinpointed the need to define new, more holistically-based frameworks for evaluating authenticity and its companion concept, integrity.

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, speaking in 2006 of the role of UNESCO, stated that "In the face of the attempts to rewrite history that are currently at work, I can but recall in the most emphatic manner that it is our moral duty to analyze the past and to pass it on without falsification, alteration or omission." While Matsuura was moved to make this statement in reference to attempts "to call into question (...) the reality of the Holocaust or of any other crime against humanity," his words provide a telling and clear reminder of the relevance of the quest for authenticity within the contemporary development of human society.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, public statement on 13 December 2006. Press communiqué available on the UNESCO Website [<http://portal.unesco.org/en>].

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