Introduction: Voices from the periphery: the Burra Charter in context

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Philosophy, principles and practice
The Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter is 25 years old this year. This special birthday issue of Historic Environment traces the origins of the Burra Charter from its adoption in 1979, through its revisions in 1981, 1988 and 1999, to its current status sitting alongside other internationally recognised cultural heritage charters. It has been an astounding success story, and the papers in this issue provide valuable personal insights from many of the people involved in making it happen. They help provide an understanding of the broader international context in which the Burra Charter is located, a context that is not always well appreciated. Indeed, the nature of heritage charters in general is sometimes misconstrued. The students and the new practitioners (even some not so new practitioners) I meet in Australia and Asia often ask what the various internationally recognised conservation charters tell them to do. This is an impossible question to answer; indeed, the question is wrongly framed. The charters are not sets of hard and fast rules. They are statements of general principle, reflecting particular philosophical positions about the past and the role the past plays in the present – as well as about our role as present custodians of the environment and our responsibilities towards the future.

As Tracy Ireland remarks in her paper on the use of the Burra Charter at the Port Arthur archaeological site:

It is crucial that we constantly reflect on why we do things the way we do in heritage, and how our practices have been shaped. Sometimes the original rationale behind practices become obscured or forgotten and procedures are accepted as simply the normal, natural or only way of doing the job.

Over the period since the World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972, there have been many significant shifts in philosophical positions, policy approaches and professional practice relating to the conservation of cultural heritage places. These shifts reflect the fact that the world’s heritage is extremely diverse and that both the notion of heritage and the ways regarded as appropriate for its protection vary from one culture to another, from one part of the world to another. They also reflect the fact that our views about what is important to protect, and how to do it, have changed over time. Most of these shifts have followed lengthy debate and they focus on the nature of selection criteria and the key concepts of significance and authenticity.

How does the Burra Charter fit into this evolutionary pattern? This introductory editorial essay tracks the emergence of the various international charters and reflects on the issues they were seeking to address as well as the way they have influenced conservation practice. In some ways the story of the charters reflects a tension between core and periphery; that is, between the Eurocentric approach to conservation as encapsulated in charters and other statements of principle coming out of Europe – the ‘core’, the place where cultural heritage conservation first emerged as a concerted effort by governments, communities and professionals – and other parts of the world – the ‘periphery’, where cultures are different and where European philosophical attitudes and practical approaches seem misplaced.

Venice Charter
As is well known, the first major statement of principles was the ‘Venice Charter’, the popular name given to the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites which was drafted at the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments

THE VENICE CHARTER: INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS AND SITES

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.

It is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.

By defining these basic principles for the first time, the Athens Charter of 1931 contributed towards the development of an extensive international movement which has assumed concrete form in international documents, in the work of ICOM and UNESCO and in the establishment by the latter of the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property. Increasing awareness and critical study have been brought to bear on problems which have continually become more complex and varied; now the time has come to examine the Charter afresh in order to make a thorough study of the principles involved and to enlarge its scope in a new document.

Accordingly, the Ilnd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, which met in Venice from May 25th to 31st 1964, approved the following text:

...
held in Venice in 1964. It has become so closely associated with the 'international best practice' advocated by ICOMOS that many people assume it was prepared by that organisation. In fact, ICOMOS was not established until the following year. The context in which the Venice Charter was drawn up is significant. This was post-war Europe. Those who drew it up were concerned that restoration practice in Europe in the early post World War II years, when the task of post-war reconstruction was huge and urgent, meant that decisions about historic structures were too often hastily made without a full understanding of their character.

Despite the specificity of its origins, it became the benchmark for principles governing architectural conservation and restoration for over 30 years and remains unrevise to this day. It still stands today as a basic document establishing standards for historic preservation. The Venice Charter principles flowed through into the World Heritage listing process when it developed after 1972. Cultural properties are included in the World Heritage List only if they meet the so-called 'test of authenticity' in both a historical and material sense; that is, 'the site must genuinely represent or symbolise the criteria for which it has been listed and the tangible components of the site must genuinely date from the period that gave the site its significance'.

In many ways the Venice Charter was a forward-looking document. For instance, it saw monuments in their setting, giving impetus to the move to conserve historic precincts and conservation areas. It saw art works as often contributing to the significance of buildings - that is, not just the physical fabric of the building itself. But Jukka Jokilehto says that its main contribution was the development of a critical approach to conservation restoration of historic properties, and especially the strict distinction made between 'what was historically true and genuine and what was a modern addition or replica'. This put the concept of 'authenticity' at centre stage. In general, an emphasis was placed on maintaining and caring for existing structures. It advocated the important principle of minimum intervention.

Importantly, it says that restoration should aim 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. ...' (Art. 9). Reconstructions were to be strictly limited. Ruins should stay as ruins, a view that grew out of early nineteenth-century Romanticism and was reinforced by the neo-Gothic revivals later in the century. In fact, the Venice Charter only allows 'anastylosis', that is, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts (Article 15). The Charter requires that any material used to bind together the dismembered parts should be clearly recognisable.

Now, this interpretation of authenticity suits well the conservation of the stone, brick and other durable materials, especially as found in classical archaeological sites and monuments. By contrast, the Venice Charter is much less suited to dealing with structures built of wood that, due to the ravages of humid climate, woodworm and fire, has to be replaced on a periodical basis. Nor does it meet the needs of indigenous peoples in other parts of the world for whom the significance of buildings and sites depends on factors other than or additional to the physical fabric.

A major criticism has long been that the Venice Charter is too Europe-focused and indeed it is a creature of the time and place in which it was drawn up. Of course it has shortcomings when applied in other parts of the world and to other kinds of heritage. The Venice Charter does highlight some of the common problems we all face in protecting our cultural heritage, but there is also considerable variation around the world in how these problems are perceived and dealt with. Sheridan Burke's paper outlines some of the early efforts by Australian and other members of ICOMOS to revise the charter. This task proved too difficult and the need for evolving principles and accommodating a world outside Europe has been met in other ways. One way has been to supplement the Venice Charter through the development of ICOMOS instruments such as the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage. A second way has been the development of national and regional statements. This began in the 1970s and it continues today - a trend that is probably becoming stronger, with more and more parts of the world - currently India, England, Myanmar, Philippines - developing or contemplating their own charters.

**Burra Charter**

One of the first major breaks from the Venice Charter occurred in Australia with the adoption in 1979 of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. With the full name of The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, it was revised in 1981 and 1988 with a third, major revision in 1999. It builds on the Venice Charter principles, most notably in its advocacy of a cautious approach to change (minimum intervention): 'Do as little as possible, as much as necessary'. However, as John Mulvaney recollects in his paper, there were already 'stirrings in Australian cultural life around the time overseas interests drew up the 1964 Venice Charter. They resulted from diverse community interests, but impinged upon national objectives a decade later'. It is fair to note, too, that in developing the charter, Australia ICOMOS was considerably influenced by the heritage work being done in the 1970s by the United States National Parks Service. Nevertheless John outlines the landmark events taking place in Australia that have shaped the heritage practice across the nation. This includes especially the formation of the Hope Inquiry into the National Estate under the Whitlam Government in 1973 and notes that the Hope Report, published the following year, was at odds with the Venice Charter in seeing monuments not just as fabric but as bearing witness to and deriving meaning from their historical context and current setting.

The Report recommended, as Max Bourke recalls, that 'early consideration should be given to Australia becoming a member of...ICOMOS'. It also recommended that Australia ratify UNESCO's newly adopted World Heritage Convention. Both
recommendations were acted upon, setting the stage for more major involvement by Australian heritage professionals in the development of the international heritage system. Jane Lennon was also present in these early events and her paper in this issue of Historic Environment pays tribute to David Yencken's role, as chairman of the newly formed Australian Heritage Commission, in promoting the creation of an interdisciplinary professional body in the historical area. He chaired the inaugural meeting of the Australian national committee of ICOMOS in October 1976, where decisions about its internal structure were made. Within a year, Jane notes, it had been decided to set up a sub-committee to consider reviewing the Venice Charter in the light of Australian needs and to use this as the basis for establishing a set of national criteria for restoration and conservation that could be used by the AHC and other government conservation agencies. James Semple Kerr picks up the story from February 1979 in his paper.

One of the most important innovations for which the Burra Charter is noted was to make use of the term ‘place’ instead of ‘monument’ and ‘site’. Jim Kerr sees this as part of the effort to adopt a ‘neutral or multidisciplinary approach...which would avoid defining the fields of architects, engineers, archaeologists, historians etc’. It was also partly inspired by the wish to accommodate the concern of many practitioners that the cultural heritage value of a structure or object was commonly enhanced by the setting within which it was found and that the setting itself was an integral part of that which has been assessed as being of cultural heritage value. It was also introduced to allow for those situations where traditional values and intangible aspects were more important than the physical fabric, and where cultural values are attached to natural landscape features. Another major change that came with the

Charter revisions was that a conceptualized representation of the conservation process has been included along with the insistence that heritage professionals must undertake a ‘Conservation Plan’ for all projects before physical work can commence. And, most importantly of all, from the initial 1979 meetings, an emphasis was placed on the need for a ‘thorough understanding of the significance of a place before policy decisions can be made’.

It was always intended that the Burra Charter would be fluid and change with the times. It has now been through three revisions, the last and most significant approved by the Australia ICOMOS membership in November 1999. A revised illustrated Burra Charter was published in 2004. The 1999 version makes a special effort to accommodate the fact that Australia is a multicultural nation and that the differing cultural values of the various population groups need to co-exist. This echoes the earlier Australia ICOMOS Code on the Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places, 1998, and was reinforced by the Statement on Indigenous Cultural Heritage (November 2001). But adopting the revision was to prove difficult, with an initial draft having been rejected two years earlier, as explained by Richard Mackay who participated in the first meeting to discuss the proposed revision in Launceston in May 1994. Marilyn Truscott was Australia ICOMOS President in the late 1990s and her paper outlines the negotiations necessary to guide the revised charter through to its final endorsement by the Annual General Meeting in November 1999. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour, though some Indigenous Australians outside the organisation maintain that the revision could have gone further. Perhaps the next revision will.

The Burra Charter is now accepted by authorities as the code of practice and used in job advertisements for heritage consultants. As Caitlin Alien comments in her paper, it is widely credited as having been responsible for an extraordinary improvement in professionalism and process. It is also well known and respected in conservation circles outside Australia, with translations into Indonesian, French and Spanish being available on the Australia ICOMOS web site. The Burra Charter was originally adopted about the same time as the US Secretary of the Interior introduced the Standards that became the basis of conservation work in that country. Since then ICOMOS Canada and ICOMOS New Zealand have adopted similar documents known as, respectively, the Appleton and Aotearoa charters. These New World societies have in common the fact that they all result from the settlement/invasion of territories previously controlled by what have become indigenous minority groups. In heritage terms they all need to adapt to multiculturalism and the need to find ways of, if not sharing heritage, at least acknowledging and respecting the heritages of the various component population groups.

**Nara Document on Authenticity**

At the 1992 Santa Fe meeting of the World Heritage Committee it was recommended that the criteria used for listing cultural heritage properties and for authenticity and integrity be reconsidered ‘with a view to their possible revision’. This led to the 1994 ‘Nara Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention’, at which a new charter, the Nara Document on Authenticity, was adopted. This time it was East Asia’s and particularly Japan’s turn to be heard.

Again the context is pertinent: the UN and UNESCO had adopted their protection of ‘cultural diversity’ campaign; the
The Nara Document On Authenticity

Preamble

1. We, the experts assembled in Nara (Japan), wish to acknowledge the generous spirit and intellectual courage of the Japanese authorities in providing a timely forum in which we could challenge conventional thinking in the conservation field and debate ways and means of broadening our horizons to bring greater respect for cultural and heritage diversity to conservation practice.

2. We also wish to acknowledge the value of the framework for discussion provided by the World Heritage Committee’s desire to apply the test of authenticity in ways which accord full respect to the social and cultural values of all societies, in examining the outstanding universal value of cultural properties proposed for the World Heritage List.

3. The Nara Document on Authenticity is conceived in the spirit of the Charter of Venice, 1964, and builds on it and extends it in response to the expanding scope of cultural heritage concerns and interests in our contemporary world.

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.

The heritage profession was increasingly interested in saving ‘living cultures’, there was a growing concern about Eurocentrism in the global heritage system, accompanied by a growing assertiveness on the part of East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa to voice their concerns. In UNESCO, the United States, United Kingdom and Singapore had departed, leaving Japan as the largest funding source, with consequences when it came to finding a replacement for the retiring Director-General, Federico Mayor, later in the 1990s. The new DG, Japanese Koichiro Matsuura, has made it part of his platform to shift the UNESCO system into the field of intangible heritage.

As Dr Nobuo Ito, a long-time leading figure in ICOMOS, World Heritage and Venice Charter circles, wrote in a 2000 paper: ‘We, Asian experts in charge of the conservation works...were much troubled’ in the years leading up to the Nara conference and wanted some changes. What were the concerns? These revolved around the definition of authenticity, which in the Venice Charter was judged primarily in terms of the building fabric, and with the principle of minimum intervention. These were seen as inappropriate for countries where the main building material is timber, which suffers, as we have said previously, from humid climatic conditions, insect infestation and destruction from fire. Buildings required extensive restoration, even rebuilding, from time to time.

Ito was delighted by the ‘Principles for the Preservation of Historic Timber Structures’ drawn up by ICOMOS’s International Scientific Committee for Timber and approved at the ICOMOS General Assembly in Mexico City in 1999. These recognised that, in certain circumstances, minimum intervention can mean that preservation or conservation may require complete or partial dismantling and subsequent reassembling, although it also asserted that such intervention should, by preference, use traditional methods. What a beautiful modification of the Venice Charter it is!’ Ito wrote, ‘We hope similar flexible and practical principles would be adopted for the structures made of other materials’.

But cyclic restoration or rebuilding was also appropriate in many cultures for religious and commemorative buildings since keeping structures in good repair was an important way of showing respect to the ancestors, gods and heroes to which the buildings were dedicated. In such societies, the emphasis is on ‘living cultures’, and maintaining the uses to which buildings are put, is more important than the fabric itself. Keeping these ‘values’ alive is a more critical issue than whether the timber is original or not. Keeping the skills alive that are needed to rebuild is also a primary consideration, as, also, is the very practice of cyclic restoration. Furthermore East Asia insisted, as Ito puts it, that ‘the primary responsibility belongs to the countries concerned’ and that ‘respect to the sovereignty of member states’ must be embodied in World Heritage processes.

The result of this ‘system turmoil’ was the Nara Document on Authenticity which sets forward the principle that each nation should develop conservation approaches that are appropriate for its own cultural context. This apparently unobjectionable principle is, in fact, essentially more radical than anything in the Burra Charter. Despite its revision and widening conception of ‘significance’, the 1999 version of the Burra Charter still reflects a focus on original fabric; the 1994 Nara Document allows for non-fabric based approaches and for ‘authenticity’ to be defined in terms of continuing intangible practices and meanings.

Hoi An Protocols

Sometimes, however, the Nara Document has been used to justify destructive practices on the grounds that ‘we know best what is good for us’. In his paper, Ken Taylor refers to the Document’s ‘woolly nature’. He interprets the current development by the UNESCO regional office in Bangkok of the regional set of guidelines known as the Hoi An Protocols as an attempt to clarify further the ground rules for conservation practice in Asian heritage places. A conference, held in Hoi An, Vietnam in 2001 and bringing together experts from the region and beyond, adopted the initial draft and a more complete draft was released for comment in November 2003.

The Hoi An Protocols start from the position that we need to understand well the various regional approaches and why they...
have emerged. The protocols will be a valuable tool in the region when finally promulgated, clarifying the critical linkage between conservation philosophy and practice and putting some boundaries around the way that the Nara Document may be used. They nevertheless have, at least in the 2003 draft, some problems. To take one example, they borrow clauses from the Australian Burra Charter, but these are taken out of context and lose their interdependency. On the other hand, the Burra Charter's conservation process is not included; nor do the methodologies recommended by the Protocols start by identifying the significance of a place before moving on to decide the appropriate conservation actions. 13

**China Principles**

In 1997, the Chinese State Administration for Cultural Heritage (SACH) commenced work with the American Getty Conservation Institute and the Australian Heritage Commission to create another national charter - one that would meet the specific needs of China. The Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China, containing 38 concise articles and a longer Commentary, were promulgated by China ICOMOS in late 2000. An English translation, including the Commentary and an English-Chinese Glossary, was published by the Getty in 2002 to provide wide international access to the China Principles that are designed to guide the protection of China's extraordinarily rich cultural heritage of 300,000 nationally registered sites and 99 'Historically and Culturally Famous Cities'. 14

What philosophical position does the China Principles represent? Again, as Neville Agnew, Martha Dernas, Sharon Sullivan and Kirsty Allenburg explain in their joint paper on the genealogy of the China Principles, the document draws explicitly on the Burra Charter, as well as the experience of Australia and the United States in heritage conservation matters. 15 It stresses the need for a site management process that revolves around the assessment of the site's significance (Art 5) and the maintenance of authenticity (Art 2). A process flow chart is included in the Commentary. The setting of a heritage site must be conserved (Arts 24, 34). The principle of minimum intervention is upheld (Art 19), as, too, are respect for the fabric and the need to keep records of all restoration works (Art 21). A building that does not exist should not be reconstructed (Art 25); nor should alterations to the historic condition be made for 'cosmetic purposes or to attain completeness' (Art 23). Major restoration, such as the complete disassembly of the structure, should be taken with caution (Art 32) but may be justified where the structure needs to be returned to 'a stable condition through the use of essential reinforcing elements or the repair or replacement of damaged or missing components'.

There are a number of important differences, however, including the restriction of heritage values to three categories - historical, artistic and scientific (Art 3), compared with the Burra Charter's five categories - aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual. This appears to reduce the ability to reflect the heritage of minority groups, for whom site significance may lie in associative meanings, or the co-existence of values. The China Principles do not cover intangible heritage values. Article 18 specifies that the elements of a heritage site must not be relocated except 'in the face of uncontrollable natural threats or when a major development project of national importance is undertaken' (Art 18). Given that China ICOMOS is not independent of the national government in the way that Australia ICOMOS is, then it is likely that negotiations over the fate of heritage sites threatened by national development projects will be done 'behind the scenes' rather than publicly.

The implementation of the China Principles will be difficult for a number of reasons. The Chinese people are generally unsympathetic to the minimum intervention approach. As mentioned, in societies such as China, Korea and Japan, there is little popular sympathy with the view that the patina of time is valuable; the preference is for well-kept, clean and tidy places. To the European eye, buildings and monuments in these countries sometimes appear 'over-restored'. Due to the size and cultural richness of China, it is perhaps inevitable that there currently exists a wide range of attitudes and approaches to heritage site management, presenting a major task of achieving common standards. There is a widespread lack of knowledge about the China Principles and scepticism about their applicability and implementability. At the local level, decisions impacting upon heritage are made by municipal officials who are also under pressure to achieve municipal development goals. The challenge for China ICOMOS is to ensure that governments at all levels in China accept the China Principles as the way to proceed and that site management plans translate them into practice. As Neville Agnew et al. say, above all there will be need for 'an integrated national policy that over-rides the artificial separation (by no means unique to China) of authority and responsibility that different ministries exercise over essentially inseparable categories of heritage'.

**Where to next?**

Joan Domicelj, who convened the first national cultural heritage conference in Beachworth in 1978, writes in her brief paper that 'The system is in place; the base work complete' and
challenges us with her question 'Can we now move on?'. Hers is a useful reminder that we should not become too starry-eyed. Yes, the Burra Charter has been refined and the legislation articulates more neatly than ever between various levels of government. But, she warns, Australia still has 'profound environmental and cultural problems' and new imagination and skills are needed.

So, where to next? Caitlin Allen concludes her paper by observing that many heritage professionals are 'pushing for further development of technical skills, revision of guidelines and further focus on the "profession"'. This is a necessary direction for Australia ICOMOS to take, though Caitlin adds a cautionary note that 'if we are unwary and fall into the trap of being too precious and inflexible, excluding non-professional methods and viewpoints, we seriously run the risk of being seen as a hindrance or an irrelevancy'. Another avenue, not canvassed in the papers but dear to the hearts of ICOMOS professionals focused on heritage matters. Throughout the region there is a need to resolve land ownership issues and to compensate land owners for foregoing other economic uses in order to conserve heritage. This, of course, is not essentially different from other parts of the world except that it probably slower and less susceptible to pressure exerted by central governments. It is difficult for communities to come to the realization that their land and heritage are more than just of local interest and that they could be of interest to the world.

But their heritage reflects a living culture, a unique combination of customary law elements (including customary land ownership), the primacy of intangible heritage and an emphasis on the spiritual and associative meanings of places. Much of their heritage can be conceptualised as cultural landscapes - the 'Vanua' concept in Fiji, land and culture linked - though some Pacific Islanders, like some Indigenous Australians, may object to evaluating and ranking places, and to the idea implicit in much of the international debate about cultural landscapes that the traditional culture has died out and is 'archaic'. In Australia, as Sharon Sullivan points out, despite the initial Australia ICOMOS efforts to adopt a wide definition of cultural heritage that would allow Aboriginal heritage to be included and the more sympathetic wordings in the 1999 revision, some members of the Aboriginal community argue that the application of the Burra Charter to their heritage places is a 'form of cultural imperialism, or at least a form of post-colonial impertinence or insensitivity and an attempt to co-opt Aboriginal heritage as part of the construction of an Australian national identity'.

In the case of the Pacific Islands, indigenous heritage professionals are aware that they need to give voice to the region. An initial list of 21 professionals from nine Pacific countries ready to form a regional ICOMOS grouping - ICOMOS Pasifika - has now gone forward (August 2004) to Paris. Supplementing the work being done by the Pacific Islands Museums Association (PI MA), ICOMOS Pasifika will help ensure the region's concerns are better articulated, understood and incorporated in decision-making at the core. There is potential for the Burra Charter to act as a model from which a more specific ICOMOS Pasifika charter can be created. Ken Taylor's paper refers to the Burra Charter as 'a charter for all seasons' but warns about the dangers of borrowing. He is right in insisting that care has to be taken to ensure that moves towards uniformity of practice do not overwhelm local values and approaches.

What this summary of charters illustrates is that the core does in fact listen; it absorbs new ideas from the periphery into its mainstream arguments. For instance, the Burra Charter's shift away from fabric to a more general consideration of 'significance' and from monument, building and site to the general concept of 'place' has become generally accepted around the world. The extension of the heritage concept from monuments and small historic sites to broader historic precincts and whole towns and cities has helped, meaning that preservation had to be balanced with keeping urban areas viable as places of residence, work and recreation. Advocacy of cultural landscape by the Africans, Australians and New Zealanders has been successful, although much more work still needs to be done to give stronger status to the 'associative landscapes'. It remains unsatisfactory that this form of heritage, which is so fundamental to the heritage of the Pacific, is tucked away in World Heritage Committee and ICOMOS classifications under 'Cultural landscapes, parks and gardens'.
There can be no doubt that the next revision of the Burra Charter will move further into the realm of intangible heritage values, partly because much international conservation activity is now responding to UNESCO’s adoption in 2003 of the Intangible Heritage Convention, which followed on from UNESCO’s 1999 Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Mankind. By greatly strengthening the role of association, spiritual meanings and symbolism in the World Heritage system, this will have a flow-on effect at national and local levels, both in terms of government policy and professional practice. Tracy Ireland provides an example of the latter in her paper on the applications of the Burra Charter to management of the Port Arthur archaeological site where she analyses the tensions between the archaeologist’s role as ‘fabric technician’ and her/his role as site interpreter. This is part of Tracy’s continuing research into the relationship between historical archaeology, heritage and nationalism – research demonstrating that ‘modes of practice had tended to limit archaeologists’ participation in interpretations of material culture, places and landscapes which are key sites for contested mythologies of identity and nation’. She concludes on an optimistic note:

Recent amendments to the Burra Charter go a long way towards further acknowledgment of the cultural and social construction of concepts of heritage value. The scene is therefore set for archaeologists to creatively build on this solid legacy to explore new techniques for balancing their roles in conservation and interpretation.

In the international discourse, not only can an increasing awareness be seen of the need to incorporate intangible values in heritage site management but also to involve local communities in the management of World Heritage and other heritage sites if they are to be sustainable in the long run. An international conference run by the Dutch ICOMOS Committee in May 2003, for example, had this as its theme, arguing that in today’s context in which cultural diversity is celebrated and preserved, we need to investigate the ‘possibilities of safeguarding local traditions, indigenous knowledge and other aspects of intangible cultural heritage’. The key to this was to ensure that the ‘values and practices of local communities, together with traditional management systems, are respected, encouraged and accommodated in modern management plans’. Another conference planned for 23-29 October 2004 in Nara, Japan, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Venice Charter and 10th anniversary of the Nara Document, takes another step that makes easier the recognition of the kinds of heritage found in the Pacific. It proposes to adopt what will be called the ‘Yamato Declaration on a Holistic [Conservation] Approach’, advocating that it is time to bring the separate boxes of natural and cultural, tangible and intangible back into a single container.

Critics might argue that this acceptance of ideas from the periphery is simply a new act of appropriation and colonisation – required to ensure maintenance of the core’s dominant position. More likely, it is the result of the core of the international heritage system expanding from Europe to encompass North America and Japan. China is looming as a major player in the heritage field as in economic and other spheres, with the next ICOMOS General Assembly scheduled for Xian in 2005. In the sense that the differences in conservation approach are being narrowed, the periphery is shrinking. Even so – and let’s be guardedly optimistic and not be too starry-eyed – there is still a need for the remaining communities on the ‘periphery’ to argue for recognition of their own heritage values and approaches – for the slow process of adopting the global system’s processes to the facts of a culturally diverse world.

Endnotes
1 This paper is partly based on the ‘UNESCO: An Agency of Cultural Globalisation?’ research project funded by an Australia Research Council Discovery Grant.
3 Of the 32 persons who took part in the drafting committee, the only non-Europeans were Mustafa Z discontinous, Victor Penitenti (Peru) and Hiroshi Del Luca (Japan), but employed in UNESCO, Paris.
5 This slogan, which appears in the Burra Charter video and other promotion of the charter, is embedded in the Charter’s Preamble: ‘do as much as necessary to care for the piece and to make it usable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained’ (p.1).
10 Ito 2000: 3.
16 This list was compiled during the UNESCO training workshop for Pacific Islands heritage managers conducted in Nieuw, August 2004, by Deakin University’s Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific, with the support of Australia ICOMOS.
18 My insertion.

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