Cultural Heritage Management: A Possible Role for Charters and Principles in Asia

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A number of countries now have charters or principles to underpin approaches to conserving and managing cultural heritage resources. Notably, there is growing interest in their adoption in the Asia-Pacific region. Paralleling this is the development of university courses in heritage management and tourism in the region. Charters help to define the critical notion of significance which must try to embrace both the tangible and the intangible. Critical to the existence of charters and conventions is the process of establishing and assessing values. In Asia, integrity of heritage places and their continuing authenticity are fundamental concerns, particularly as the notion of heritage embraces traditions, and everyday places. This paper sets out to review current interest in cultural heritage and the various charters we use to assess significance and to offer comment on them with particular reference to heritage management in Asia.

Keywords: Asian Heritage; Intangible Heritage; Values; Integrity; Significance; Authenticity

History and/or Heritage

Over the past two decades there has been a surge of popular interest internationally in social histories, in cultural heritage, and in heritage management. The attraction of heritage places fuels the lucrative tourism industry, domestically and internationally, where visiting heritage places, museums, events and cultural festivals is a major industry. McKercher and du Clos record that something like 240 million international journeys annually involve some element of cultural tourism. The link between heritage and tourism is inescapable but prompts the question as to how far should this
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Richard Engelhardt (UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific) recently expressed this somewhat forcibly:

... to preserve heritage only because you want to sell it to some foreign visitors is completely, completely the wrong strategy—it will never work. It will only lead to the simple deterioration and falsification of the heritage and everyone will end up unhappy and poorer for it ... My opinion is that the preservation of heritage and culture has nothing whatever to do with tourism. If you are preserving heritage as a tourism product, this is not the preservation of heritage, this is the development of a tourism product; and perhaps you would be more well advised to develop a theme park from scratch out of concrete.\(^2\)

This is an oversimplified critique: tourism and heritage are linked, not least economically for most Asian countries. It begs the question of how places and monuments and objects are presented to tourists. Colonial Williamsburg is substantially a re-creation popular with tourists, but this does not detract from its potential to inform people on history and develop heritage values. Muang Boran, an artificial historic park in Bangkok developed as a vignette of all aspects of Thai lifestyles and settlements is a theme park, but has the potential to be informative and provoke the imagination (see Figure 1).

What is needed in Asia is a synergy between heritage and tourism with improved modes of interpretation and presentation of sites to cater for a range of tourists from

**Figure 1** Floating Market, Muang Boran, Bangkok: Re-creation of Reflection of Traditional Thai Life along the River. Photo: K. Taylor.
the informed to the novice. Management involving locals as well as professionals, and management informed by tourist experience of the site, are critical factors. Equally there is the need for management practices and machinery geared to local conditions, not based on sophisticated Western technology. Sullivan describes such an approach based on workshop discussions involving a range of stakeholders at Yungang Caves in China. It may be that tourism can be a powerful force in maintaining traditional places in Asian cities and countryside as ordinary places where lifestyle, traditions and fabric are supported by tourist spending.

Conversely, claims for spurious tourist developments based on notions of beautifying a place can be culturally destructive and lead to an impoverished visitor experience. In a recent case in the old city area of Rattanakosin, Bangkok, a local government plan to create a tourist park surrounded by various monuments involved clearing of traditional shop houses and a local group of people, the Mahakarn Fort community. They objected and found support from the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Thailand joined in 1999, and from local NGOs. This was to no avail; the unnecessary tourist park is to proceed and tourists lose the opportunity to experience a local traditional lifestyle that enriches the experience of Bangkok. This example smacks of a globalised, sanitised approach. But it also raises an interesting question: would a comprehensive assessment of the area and its varied heritage resources based on a conservation plan arising from a charter have led to a different result?

It is essential that visitors’/tourists’ needs, domestic and international, in terms of site planning and interpretation at heritage places in Asia are considered as part of the conservation management process. Whilst one may appreciate the sentiment that ‘If there is one thing more hateful than another it is being told what to admire and having objects pointed out to one with a stick’ surely the rider that ‘Of all noxious animals the most noxious is the tourist’ is destructive. So what is the attraction of our and other people’s history and heritage, why do we desire to conserve heritage places, and what intellectual and analytical mechanisms can we use to assist us?

Whose Values?

In considering such matters there is a fundamental question: ‘Whose values are we addressing and whose heritage is it?’ As one of the reviewers of this paper rightly raised, it is very tendentious. In the Asian context it is critical that Western conservation canons that inform various charters are not imposed imperiously on these cultures. The globalising tendency of the practices of international organisations such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM, and ICCROM is a powerful one. They lay ‘down international standards for professional practice—“world best practice”—in the cultural heritage field as well as influencing thinking in those fields in less direct ways’. But they also stand accused of ‘imposing a common stamp on culture across the world and their policies creating a logic of global cultural uniformity [by seeking] to impose standards of “good behaviour” onto Member States and other states’.
One outcome that universality of practice and imposition of standards can cause is that local values may be overwhelmed. This may be exacerbated by those practitioners educated outside Asian countries returning with Western-inculcated information systems. In this connection the expansion of heritage education programmes in the Asia-Pacific region is welcome. There is a need to ensure that a move to uniformity is challenged on these programmes and that students are challenged to think locally as well as being aware of global trends and practice. The latter is important because standards set by international agencies have improved professional standing of cultural heritage management. Nevertheless, a considerable body of literature over the past 10 years has criticised cultural globalisation, paralleled with a view that cultural relativism privileging local communities is more equitable than global standardisation. Edward Said was influential in building an intellectual framework for such ideas and the post-modern/cultural relativism critique of the high art/high aesthetics approach to heritage conservation. Documents such as the Australian Burra Charter try to avoid such an approach, but the inclusion of such values as ‘aesthetic’ leave lingering doubts, as discussed below.

The growth in popular heritage consciousness relates to the values people put on knowing about the history of events, places, and people through time, and not just distant history but the present. A notable phenomenon of this movement is that it is not centred solely on physical places or objects but is inclusive of their meanings. It has also passed from an earlier concentration on iconographic national sites and monuments privileging the rich and famous to include ordinary, everyday places where the notion of the ordinarily sacred applies. Ordinarily sacred places are those that reflect our relationships with places that have meaning because we, or our ancestors, have connections with them. Place making, and all it means to us, promotes a powerful feeling of belonging and a strong sense of place. Many sites in Asia, even where a national icon is concerned, embrace ordinary, everyday landscapes. A notable and timely example is Borobudur near Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This World Heritage Monument, the structure itself evoking for most visitors sheer awe, sits in a cultural landscape of stunning character and one can feel the palpable relationship between the monument and its setting as part of a Buddhist cosmology (see Figure 2).

Heritage is now a popular movement. It is socially inclusive and universal. We find comfort in looking back. Historic places, events, and even people from the past become surrogates that contain reassuring continuity for us. But is ‘the past thus conjured up … largely an artefact of the present’, as David Lowenthal claims:

However faithfully we preserve, however authentically we restore, however deeply we immerse ourselves in bygone times, life back then was based on ways of being and believing incommensurable with our own. The past’s difference is, indeed, one of its charms: no-one would yearn for it if it merely replicated the present. But we cannot help but view it and celebrate it through present-day lenses.

Continuing this line of thought, it follows that heritage values defy objective analysis. The tangible fabric of heritage places and objects is capable of objective quantification, but it is the values we attach to places and objects that are the fuel of the fire of heritage.
The growing understanding of this in Asia is a significant factor that needs to be underlined often with local and city governments. Many of heritage’s data are social factors where personal and collective memory inhere and cannot be defined scientifically. What has occurred, where and when in history, can be studied objectively (there may be differences of opinion on verification of facts or whether something occurred), but it is the ‘who was involved’ and the ‘why they did things the way they did’ that fascinate people. Much of this can be, and is, open to interpretation. The result is that we get a sense that we could have been involved and this is what underscores much of the popular appeal of heritage. Notwithstanding the apparent dichotomy between objective and subjective analysis, this is where charters and principles are intended to help in establishing the significance of a heritage place.

Heritage is not our prime or sole link with the past. History maintains a significant role. But has the lure of heritage overtaken history as a prime way of recovering the past, as Lowenthal ventures to suggest?12 Perhaps such academic concerns are not overly important. What is significant is that heritage values, and reaching back into the past, have achieved remarkable popularity. Heritage is appealing and fashionable; it has the distinction now of embracing ideas of everyday ordinary heritage of people, events and places through time. People want to know about their history and want it interpreted in such a way that it suffuses their need for memory connections. Notably also in the enthusiasm for ordinary places there is a growing worldwide interest in the

Figure 2  Borobudur in its Cultural Landscape Setting. Photo: K. Taylor.
heritage of cultural landscapes, urban and rural, which reflect everyday lives and ways of living. This includes not just places from history but places that are part of vital day-to-day contemporary living such as Georgetown in Penang or Chiang Mai in Thailand. Here, past and present fuse and give a reassuring sense of the stream of time.\(^\text{13}\)

This celebration of the ordinary has found a resonance in Asia. It was stressed, for example, at the launch of Indonesian Heritage Year 2003 in January in Yogyakarta. It continues what Bambang Bintoro Soedjito, then Deputy Chair for Infrastructure with the Indonesian National Development Planning Agency, had said four years previously:

> For us, the most important expressions of culture at this time are not the monuments, relics and art from the past, nor the more refined expressions of cultural activity that have become popularized beyond Indonesia’s borders in recent years, but the grassroots and very locally specific village based culture that is at the heart of the sense of community. And that sense of community, perhaps more than that of the individual has been a strong shaping and supportive influence in times of trouble, through turbulence and now in strengthening a confident sense of identity as we combine heritage with a society opened to the opportunities of the world.\(^\text{14}\)

Soedjito’s sentiment on expressions of everyday heritage links comfortably with current international notions of the significance of cultural landscapes and ideas of the ordinarily sacred.\(^\text{15}\) Pivotal to this is the realisation that, in addition to our national cultural heritage icons, it is the places, traditions, and activities of ordinary people that create a rich cultural tapestry of life, particularly through our recognition of the values that people attach to their everyday places and concomitant sense of place and identity. Identity is critical to a sense of place—\textit{genius loci}—for people. Relph, in \textit{Place and Placelessness}, aptly summarises this in his proposal that ‘identity of place is comprised of three interrelated components, each irreducible to the other—physical features or appearance, observable activities and functions, and meaning or symbols’ (see Figure 3).\(^\text{16}\)

So both tangible physical identity and intangible identity related to existential distinctiveness and human experiences are inextricably interwoven with place meaning.

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**Figure 3**  Place Identity and its Components. Adapted from Relph (\textit{Place and Placelessness}).
and significance for people. So, in cultural heritage management, the key issue is whose culture we are presenting and why. Also fundamental to the issue in Asia, and with consequences on options for charters and conventions, is the manner in which most Asian cultures have a spiritual view of what is culturally valuable from the past; the past lives on in memory of people, of events and of places through time rather than concentrating on the material fabric which can change or be replaced. Thus the traditional skills employed in replacement are also integral to heritage value. Some years ago, Wei and Aass set out the Asian approach in a provocative paper in which they proposed that time is seamless and the cumulative spiritual and physical contributions of various generations are valued. Accretions of change and repair to fabric are accepted as the norm without detracting from the spirit of the place. From this perspective there are ramifications for the preparation of charters and principles for cultural heritage conservation and management relevant to Asian cultures.

Heritage, then, is what we absorb from the past and is part of the growing dependence we have on the past where we may in fact falsify history. Do, for example, historical re-creations falsify history? Here a comparison between Port Arthur in Tasmania (Australia) and Williamsburg in the USA is instructive. Interpretation and presentation at Port Arthur, focusing on the stabilised ruins of the colonial penitentiary and other buildings which stand in mute testimony to the cruelty of the prison system for the convicts shipped out from Britain and the sombrely forbidding landscape setting, are highly evocative (see Figure 4). The atmosphere created reflects what J. B. Jackson eloquently calls 'The Necessity for Ruins'. In contrast, Williamsburg relies on a vivid

Figure 4  Penitentiary, Port Arthur, Tasmania. Photo: K. Taylor.
re-creation of the whole cultural landscape in a sanitised history version of what the colonial town would never have looked like. But in the end does it matter? I think not, in that the stories told at Williamsburg draw people into learning about their history and thereby developing heritage values.

**Charters and Principles**

What is or can be the role of charters and principles in assessing the values we assign to cultural heritage places and their management? Fundamental to the process is the notion of significance. It is a difficult word to elucidate readily. A dictionary definition is ‘concealed or real meaning’. But this suggests more ambiguity, because, in heritage management, we are invariably dealing with concealed meanings. These must be elucidated through subjective assessment and analysis of objective data and cultural traditions that govern the way people have done things to shape their surroundings, creating the cultural places and landscapes we attempt to assess.

The fundamental role of charters is to offer statements or principles and guidelines for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance where conservation is regarded as an integral part of the management of these places. Charters may therefore be seen to have a professional ethics role in guiding the conduct of cultural heritage conservation practice. They invariably now address what is meant by such things as heritage values, conservation, significance, and the steps involved in the heritage conservation planning process. ‘Every country now has national legislation to protect its heritage, but not all have a guiding methodology for effective implementation of conservation practice’ suggests that there is scope for more countries to design charters.

*The Venice Charter, 1964*

The International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, known as the Venice Charter, arose from an International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in Venice in May 1964. Its focus is ancient monuments and buildings, reflecting the somewhat narrow scope of conservation in the 1960s, although it must be acknowledged that the Charter recognises that such buildings and monuments reflect age-old traditions and human values. It consists of a series of 16 Articles that define ancient monuments and set out guidelines for their treatment. Notably, it does acknowledge that the concept of such structures embraces the setting of architectural works as evidence of a particular civilisation, significant development or cultural event. Hence there is an attempt to acknowledge cultural context and there is reference to more modest works of the past as well as works of art. There are guidelines on restoration and the extent to which conservation works may extend. Emphasis is on physical fabric rather than social meanings, but the Venice Charter is the forerunner of other documents and marks an increasing concern about conserving the past for the present and future.
The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance

Commonly referred to as the Burra Charter, this document proposes that it ‘sets a standard of practice for those who provide advice, make decisions about, or undertake works at places of cultural significance including owners, managers and custodians’. It consists of 34 Articles covering such items as:

- Definitions.
- Conservation Principles.
- Conservation Processes.
- Conservation Practice.

It then has detailed Guidelines on:

- Establishing Cultural Significance.
- Development of Conservation Policy.
- Procedures for Undertaking Studies and Reports.

An important aspect of the Burra Charter is that it uses the term ‘place’ to define cultural heritage resources underpinning the concept of place as a cornerstone of Australian heritage practice. Place means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works and may include components, contents, spaces and views. Critical to this is the notion that place involves human activity and associated cultural traditions that have guided the activity/activities and its/their outcome. The term ‘place’, with associated cultural context and meaning, is less limiting than the notion of a monument, site, or building. The concept of place links integral components together and puts them into context with their cultural and intellectual background of which they are a product.

The importance and efficacy of the Charter as a basis for adaptable, systematic and replicable study is well established in Australian practice and recognised internationally. Its method of identifying data is objective. Evidence of existing material culture—buildings, plantings, structures, open space, land-use patterns—can be seen as physical objects. They are tangible patterns and components of the landscape that can be recorded and protected. But equally important are the intangibles—the traditions, beliefs and ideologies that have created the patterns and components and which give them meaning. Reputable analysis of the data and evaluation of significance therefore inevitably involve value judgements through the process of interpretation and presentation of the meanings of places.

The Guidelines to the Burra Charter present a philosophy and methodology for conservation which link management of places of cultural significance to the assessment of cultural values and the preparation of a statement of significance. Particularly notable for cultural landscapes is that the management and assessment process has been geared to address living sites where a sense of continuity, interrelationships and layering are recognisable. It therefore recognises and embraces the meaning of places as well as physical components and structures. The Guidelines to the Burra Charter define cultural significance as:
… a concept which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past or enrich the present, and which will be of value to future generations.

The Guidelines propose that the concept of cultural significance is understood through a process of identification and assessment of relevant information, followed by its analysis and the development of a conservation policy and strategy. An important step is the preparation of a succinct statement of significance that summarises the assessment and analysis stages. The statement should state clearly why the place is of value. In assessment of information and its analysis to decide significance, the Charter recommends that significance means the following values for past, present or future generations:

- aesthetic value to do with sensory perception;
- historic value relating to historic events, figures, event, phases;
- social value embraces the qualities for which a place is a focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment;
- scientific value depends on the importance of data, on rarity, quality or representativeness and ability to contribute substantial information.

It is recognised in Section 2.6 of the Charter that other value categories may be developed to understand a place better. I have found that additional evaluation and statement of the following may be useful in conservation studies.

**Interpretive value**

The ability of a place to inform and enlighten us on social history, promote a sense of place feeling, create links with the past; it is an understanding of where things have occurred, what has occurred, when they occurred, who was involved and why things occurred. It enhances the feeling of participation—we could have been involved—in the making of a particular place.

**Associative value**

The ability to put into context what has occurred and who promoted the actions; this value hinges on a knowledge and understanding of the way our predecessors have been involved in place making. It is a powerful human value related to our need to understand past human actions and the people who participated. It is very much a sense of a link with the past and the resultant values and meanings people attach to places. This value meshes with social value. Both underpin and emphasise the focal position of meaning and symbolism of places in cultural heritage management practice.

**Integrity**

This relates to the survival of components and patterns in the landscape and physical evidence from earlier periods. It is a means of establishing historic identity and
contributes to a sense of the stream of time (continuity) and links with the past through into the present. Integrity relates to tangible criteria such as design and materials and intangibles such as association and setting.\textsuperscript{20}

It is recognised in practice that one of the vexing questions associated with the Charter is that of thresholds. How significant is significant? At what benchmark does a place have value and significance, and for whom? Can we qualify value and significance and should we try? Significance is itself a human judgmental value, difficult to quantify, particularly by ranking it. Value and significance are concepts that do not sustain empirical analysis and objective quantification. We can substantiate that a building or historic landscape/district is a rare example of its kind and to lose it would lessen our material culture. But non-material culture, the traditions and practices that have created the places we value and give them meaning and the memories they entail are more difficult to rationalise and protect.

Significance and value are as much an outcome of the traditions and practices that have created the places we value and which encode them as memory places with meaning as they are an outcome of physical material fabric. The Guidelines to the Burra Charter propose (para. 3.3) that ‘The validity of the judgements will depend upon the care with which the data is collected and the reasoning applied to it.’ A statement of significance should be ‘clear and pithy, expressing why the place is of value’ (para. 3.4). It is this aspect of traditions and practices that has particular relevance to application of a Charter in an Asian context—a matter to which I shall return below.

The Burra Charter value that poses problems is that of aesthetic value.\textsuperscript{21} The Charter refers to criteria to do with sensory perception: form, scale, colour, texture and material of the fabric. It becomes confused with the Western history of aesthetics and particularly the 18th-century notion of aesthetics being equated with beauty and good taste. It maintains an unjustified high art/high aesthetics architectural imperative. Australia ICOMOS claims that the 1999 version deals better with intangible values and place meaning. The Charter may certainly be used to address these matters, but this takes skill and determination to adapt it. Aesthetic concerns are equally those dealing with experience and this can and does cover the ordinary everyday places that we may not usually refer to as beautiful. But why not? For many they are the places imbued through experience with a sense of belonging and sense of place where knowledge of ways of doing things is critical. Conversely, aesthetic value can be significant where it is expressed in architectural or landscape design terms as an achievement of a recognised high order of excellence; examples would include parts of the Grand Palace complex in Bangkok or the Taj Mahal in India.

Sullivan and Pearson similarly indicate concerns that the Burra Charter, after earlier revisions to the 1988 version, still encouraged undue concern with maintaining historic fabric.\textsuperscript{22} This is particularly in relation to its description of conservation practice. The 1999 version of the Charter still maintains this emphasis, reflecting its parent in the Venice Charter and the Western dogma of authenticity of historic fabric. The terms ‘fabric’ and ‘authenticity’ will be discussed below after discussion of the next document prepared specifically for China.
Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China (China ICOMOS)

These principles were drawn up in co-operation with the Australian Heritage Commission and the Getty Conservation Institute (California). They take the Burra Charter approach of identification and conservation of values and American experience to create a coherent set of guidelines specifically for China, meeting the needs of an Asian culture. This is recognised in the way heritage values are described (see below). In the Introduction, Zhang Bai, Deputy Director General of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACHS), states that China began in 1950 to undertake a national inventory and initial assessment of significance of cultural sites and that there are now 300,000 registered sites. Of these, county, provincial, and autonomous regional and municipal authorities have designated 7,000 as the most significant with 1,268 of these in a national category (National Protected Sites) on the basis of historical, artistic, and scientific values. Additionally there are 99 historically and culturally famous cities. Cumulatively, these are seen as a record of China’s historic development and the creativity of its people, being an integral part of the country’s culture and history. The sites are regarded as forming a basis for understanding the past and a foundation for the future.

Of particular note is that the Chinese document is presented as professional guidelines that sit firmly within the existing framework of laws and regulations relating to the conservation of heritage sites. They are seen, therefore, as providing guidance for conservation practice as well as the main criteria for evaluating results. The Principles document is in two parts. The first part consists of 38 ‘Articles’ covering:

- General Principles.
- Conservation Process.
- Conservation Principles.
- Conservation Interventions.
- Additional principles.

The second part is a ‘Commentary on the Principles’ under 16 headings covering such matters as what conditions must be fulfilled for a site to be designated as a heritage site; retention of historic condition; social and economic benefits; assessment; conservation management plans; conservation process; management, maintenance, and interpretation; restoration; reconstruction; treatment of setting; archaeological sites; and commemorative sites. It is a comprehensive document and includes a helpful English–Chinese glossary where the Chinese interpretation of English terms is presented.

Article 1 establishes that heritage sites are the immutable physical remains that were created during the history of humankind and that have significance. In the glossary the literal meaning of ‘significance’ in Chinese is ‘value’. Article 3 determines that the heritage values of a site reside in its:

- historical value;
- artistic value;
- scientific value.
The assessment process (Article 11) consists of determining the values of a site, its state of preservation, and its management context. Section 2.3.1 in the Commentary comprehensively sets out what each of the values means. In this it is more comprehensive and embracing than the Burra Charter, particularly in the way it addresses intangible cultural context aspects of historical and artistic values, as given below.

**Historical value**

This derives from reasons behind construction—and here immediately are intangible associations—and how the site authentically reflects historical reality; associated with significant events and figures and how the historic setting (see below) reflects these; how the site reflects customs, traditions or social practices (again important intangible values); ability of the site to supplement documented records; unique or rare qualities or representative of a type.

**Artistic value**

This derives from architectural arts including spatial composition, decoration, aesthetic form; landscape arts of cultural, urban, and garden landscapes, as well as vistas comprising ruins; sculptural and decorative arts; immovable sculptural works; creative processes and means of expression.

Two words expressing inherent fundamental cultural heritage values are ‘authenticity’ and ‘setting’. In particular, authenticity may have different nuances in Asian cultures to Western cultures, hence its notable inclusion in the Chinese Principles. In the glossary, authentic/authenticity literally mean true + fact/real. Article 23 proposes that artistic value derives from historic authenticity, and Section 2.3.1 that historical value derives *inter alia* from how a site reflects historical reality authentically. A synonym for setting in the glossary is landscape and presumably embraces the notion of cultural landscape reflecting how and why people have shaped their landscape or environment according to their ideologies. Article 24 directs that the setting—reflecting significant events and activities—of a heritage site must be conserved. Here there are comparisons with the Burra Charter, where setting means the area around a place and may include the visual catchment (Article 1.12). A guide to Treatment of the Setting is set out in Section 14 of the Principles and forms the basis for good site planning at heritage sites. Site planning is a process often not well understood in heritage management and calls for expertise able to respond to the *genius loci* of a site or place as well as an understanding of cultural heritage management issues. Many sites around Asia, for example Borobudur quoted above, are compromised by poor site planning where such ancillary facilities as car parks, visitor centres and facilities are sited incorrectly and where visual and physical intrusion from adjacent land uses may be abrupt and distracting to the setting and enjoyment of the heritage place.

The import of authenticity connects with the Asian approach to renewal of physical fabric. This is where replacement of fabric is acceptable because the significance of the place resides primarily in its continued spiritual meaning and symbolic value related to
everyday use rather than pre-eminence of the fabric itself. It is expressed by Wei and Aass (‘Heritage Conservation East and West’) in the following commentary:

Consequently, in the field of conservation of monuments such as Qufu, the Forbidden City or Cheng De, the allowing of continuous repairs or even rebuilding all respect this concentration on the spirit of the original monument. Although the physical form may change, the spirit and purpose of the original is not only preserved as a continuity, but can be enhanced through contributions of succeeding generations.\(^{23}\)

Nevertheless there are explicit guidelines in the China Principles on maintenance, major and minor restoration, and reconstruction (Article 28 and Sections 10–13).

**The Nara Document and Hoi An Protocols**

In recognition of the significance of authenticity in cultural heritage management the drafting of *The Nara Document on Authenticity*\(^{24}\) aimed to challenge conventional thinking in the conservation field. It acknowledges the framework provided by the World Heritage Committee’s desire to apply the test of authenticity in ways that accord full respect to the social and cultural values of all societies in relation to cultural properties proposed for the World Heritage List. The Nara Document is a tacit acknowledgement of the plurality of approaches to the issue of authenticity and that it does not reside primarily in Western notions of intact fabric. It is an attempt to explore an ethos that acknowledges local traditions and intangible values. Logan suggests rightly that the Nara Document was ‘a powerful voice from the periphery, a veritable watershed’.\(^{25}\)

The Nara Document acknowledges the need to respect cultural diversity and all aspects of belief systems. It proposes that authenticity judgements may be linked to a variety of information sources. These may include form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions and techniques; location and setting; and spirit and feeling. The Document points out that use of these sources permits elaboration of specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of a cultural heritage place. Nevertheless, it has been misused within Asia to suit nationalist ideals (which are just as imperial as earlier Eurocentric or Americanised ones), possibly because of its generalised nature. It made a virtue of being non-specific.

The draft *Hoi An Protocols* document promulgated in 2000 by UNESCO is an attempt to rectify the woolly nature of the Nara Document. The sub-title of the Protocols, ‘Professional guidelines for assuring and preserving the authenticity of heritage sites in the context of the cultures of Asia’, is an important statement of the recognition of diverse and enduring cultural identities in Asian countries. The protocols recognise the impact of tourism in Asia and effects on restoration and presentation of heritage places for tourism purposes. The document includes a series of definitions that draw considerably on the Burra Charter. The inclusion of a section on Asian Issues is welcome, particularly in the mention of Indigenous and minority cultures and the need to find ways of interpreting sites within an appropriate context as a way of engaging visitors.

The Protocols are an attempt to ‘underscore the inter-relatedness of practices for the conservation of the physical heritage sites, the intangible heritage and cultural
landscapes'. Whilst they have potential to be a valuable guide, the separation of cultural landscapes from archaeological sites; historic urban sites/heritage groups; and monuments, buildings and structures in the section ‘Site Specific Methodologies for Asia’ is confusing. Indeed, it seems misleading in that cultural landscapes are the overall umbrella under which everything else sits.

Conclusion

The Nara Document on Authenticity and Hoi An Protocols lead to a concluding discussion of relevance in the Asian context. Both refer to the need to determine authenticity in a way that respects diverse cultures and encourages cultures to develop analytical processes and tools specific to their nature and needs. In this they will have various matters in common, including the advisability of ensuring multidisciplinary collaboration; ensuring attributed values are representative of a culture and diversity of interests; and the need to update authenticity documents in the light of changing values and circumstance. In other words this means that no particular group(s) should be privileged over others who are cultural stakeholders in the heritage place. It also means ensuring that cultural context is fully appreciated and that there may need to be a change in how a place or site is recognised and interpreted.

Given that Charters and Principles set the basis for conservation practice, and the widening understanding of authenticity, it is timely that Asian countries have their own documents to address regionally meaningful management of the rich tapestry of Asian cultural heritage places and living traditional environments. The Indonesian Network for Heritage Conservation and ICOMOS Indonesia have jointly issued a preliminary document. It eloquently stresses the heritage of Indonesia as the legacy of nature, culture, and saujana, a weave of the two. INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) in New Delhi is preparing a charter specifically for India that addresses a philosophy of conservation, concepts of living heritage, vernacular heritage and other categories with an Indian context. There will be others.

Further food for thought is that the Burra Charter in Australia also links to themes in history at national and state levels that guide heritage studies. These outline major themes in history that have shaped the way things have been and are done and help heritage students and managers to interpret historic places. They summarise human development of an area or region with associated human values. It is important to recognise that such themes contribute intellectually to ideas of significance and to national identity. Themes may be national, regional or local; some may have international connections such as travel and migration. The richness of themes that could inform Charters or sets of Principles for various Asian countries is boundless.

Notes

References


