

## **INTRODUCTION**

## 1. Introduction

This thesis is an investigation into the practice of conservation of historic areas, particularly where the practitioners are strangers to the area of the study. It is structured as a voyage of discovery, in a similar manner that the writer experienced when involved with archaeological work in Syria. This consisted of ten campaigns of archaeological activity spanning over twelve years. During these periods I visited a number of archaeological sites and traditional urban centres, and observed the growing activity in conservation and rehabilitation. Although, as a conservation architect, the historic urban environment first caught my attention, it was the conservation of both the archaeological and urban sites that awakened concerns in both the physical work that had or, in some instances, had not been done, and the presentation of the sites to foreign visitors, that formed the nucleus of this study. During this time the factors that comprise this thesis – conservation, authenticity, culture and national identity, as revealed in ancient historical sites and present day urban centres – began to take root. The first focus of concern was rethinking the purpose of area conservation.

During the second half of the twentieth century conservation has grown to become a generally accepted world-wide phenomenon. The many facets of the world's patrimony, together with the diversity of cultural conventions have resulted in conservation philosophy and practice becoming a discipline of great complexity. Beginning primarily as a Western phenomenon,<sup>1</sup> practitioners have focused on the physical aspects of conservation, but have generally overlooked the discipline's vital *raison d'être*, the cultural aspects. Often taken for granted, cultural traditions and practices that influence the form of the built environment provides clues not only to the understanding of the culture itself, but more importantly, direction for correct conservation practice. Not negating the many varied and compelling reasons for conservation, this thesis approaches the relationship of conservation within a cultural context. One compelling argument for this approach is that of cultural identity.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Western" is used in this thesis to denote Western European culture and economic development in contrast to the oriental or Eastern counterpart. Western has been taken as preferable to the terms "developed" and "underdeveloped."

This growing realisation of national identity in the face of the threatening envelopment of globalisation has been one major inducement for the increasing practice of conservation of the world's built heritage. As early as 1961, Ricoeur in *History and Truth* commented that the phenomenon of universalisation constituted a form of subtle destruction of traditional cultures and “the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind.”<sup>2</sup> Frampton, commenting in terms of modern architecture and cultural identity, refers to critical regionalism in purely practical and functional terms together with some form of “anti-centrist consensus—an inspiration at least to some form of cultural, economic and political independence.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, his critical regionalism relies on a self-conscious cultivation based on earlier cultural paradigms. He posits this as an alternative to the understanding of vernacular architecture being spontaneously produced as a product of climate, culture, myth and craft.<sup>4</sup> This thinking is a product of the 1960s, but towards the latter part of the twentieth century, the understanding of cultural identity has been seen in exactly those values of former social structures and their cultural roots, containing their beliefs, myths and crafts. It is this realisation that has led to the continual rise of conservation as a means of preserving national identity.

The belief that a historic environment is a reflection of the culture that produced it has resulted in historic buildings becoming icons of nationalism. Although single monuments receive particular attention in this respect, it is often the historic urban environment rather than the collection of single and often isolated monuments that truly represents historical continuity. In Europe following World War II, some individual countries reconstructed their historic urban centres precisely for the essential reaffirmation of their nation. Warsaw is a notable example of this action. Although the mediaeval centre is an almost total replication, it has been entered on the World Heritage List for its recognition of national and social

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 276.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: a Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 313.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

reinstatement.<sup>5</sup> Many countries, as can be witnessed in the African and Asian continents, have, during the twentieth century, thrown off the yolk of colonialism, and as an essential part of their rehabilitation have turned to their traditional urban centres for national assurance and identity.<sup>6</sup> Conservation of historical urban centres is thus an integral part of this growing nationalism, and from this has arisen those aspects that are considered to be essential to the identification, preservation and presentation of national identity.

## **2. Background to the Study**

The first concern was through the presentation of archaeological sites. Syria is rich in an ancient patrimony that reaches back many millennia. Dating far back into prehistory, it is the more recent sites that confirm advanced civilisations in the built heritage, such as Mari and Ebla, both from the early third millennium BCE, that capture the imagination of tourists. The few tourist books available rarely extend further back than this era. Archaeologists have been slow to conserve their sites during the early part of the twentieth century; the focus of study at that time was on correct excavation techniques and the collection and interpretation of the site. More recently the responsibility of retaining as much of the original material of the site as possible has become a significant part of the archaeological process.

Area conservation has its roots as far back as 1852 in France with the focus on visual quality or “monumental perspectives,”<sup>7</sup> and the first comprehensive legislation for area conservation came with the Malraux Act of France in 1962.<sup>8</sup> But the urban sites in Syria, showing strong French influence, strengthened my concerns that area conservation did not often consider social and cultural factors,

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<sup>5</sup> The UNESCO citation reads: During the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, more than 85% of Warsaw’s historic centre was destroyed by Nazi troops. After the War, a five-year reconstruction campaign by its citizens resulted in today’s meticulous restoration of the Old Town, with its churches, palaces and market place. It is an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>6</sup> Amini Maturi, “The conservation of the African architectural heritage” in Derek Lindstrom (ed.) *Monumentum* (Guildford, UK: Butterworth Scientific Limited, vol.27, no.3 and 4, 1984), 181, and 275. It is notable that both vernacular and colonial architecture are included together as examples of historical and cultural continuity.

<sup>7</sup> Adrian Stungo, “The Malraux Act” in *Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute*, (London: 1972), vol. 58, no. 8. 358.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 359

but rather concentrated on the physical aspects of historical evidence as the only necessity for a conservation program.

This opened several lines of thought. The first was the notion that social/cultural factors are vital as identity indicators for the recognition of the past and present, and as directives for the future. The necessity to retain and enhance these factors is therefore paramount. The second line of thought was that conserving the built heritage alone would not necessarily result in the conservation of the society and its culture. This assumption could result in a form of conservation determinism, similar to that of early to mid twentieth century architectural thinking.<sup>9</sup> The third line of thought considered the guidance given by the various charters for conservation, particularly those for historic areas, regarding social and cultural factors together with physical conservation. For programs involving conservation experts from other countries to be successful, the understanding of social and cultural factors are vital, and hence proper guidance given by the charters essential.

The last line of thought was the necessity to narrow the focus of the investigation to one specific issue that encapsulated the several notions of concern. The question arose: what is an important factor when considering cultural identity, the cultural continuation of the society, the conservation of the society's material heritage, and the presentation of these factors to visitors of other nations? The answer came from the mandatory requirement of the World Heritage Organisation for its listing process. A nominated place need only satisfy one of the six listed criteria, but *shall* satisfy the proof of authenticity for a place to be entered on the World Heritage List. It was taken here that the identity of a nation should require that the evidence of its nationhood be justifiably credible, and hence meets the proof of authenticity.

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1984), 9-10.

### 3. Aims and Method

The aims of this study are to examine contemporary practices of heritage conservation, analyse their assumptions and theories, and critique their guiding instruments, the charters. It also aims to identify the inadequacies of the charters with regard to ethics and morality and to work towards the articulation of a code of ethics for urban conservation. The study adopts a cross-cultural perspective to assess the merits, validity and agency of the most recognised charters, to discuss their various adaptations, particularly in the Syrian context, and to reveal their Eurocentric focus and indifference to cultural concerns.

The study is grounded in an understanding that area conservation is based on social and cultural factors as well as physical evidence of the built environment, to ensure that it truly presents the historical evidence of the past, the development of the past to the present, and forms direction for continued development to the future, as a demonstration of the society's cultural identity.

The study focuses on the notion of authenticity that has been an issue of debate since the Nara Conference on Authenticity in 1994. Although arising from, and specifically aimed at, World Heritage Listing, authenticity is recognised as a complex issue dependent on cultural understandings. The study adopts the view of the Nara Document that authenticity judgements may be linked to a great variety of sources of information, such as form, design, materials, function, traditions, techniques, use, location and spirit that are context-related. It articulates a wide scope for conservation practices at the architectural, urban and archaeological levels, negotiating the breadth and depth of authenticity issues beyond the Nara Document sources. The study promotes a dynamic view of authenticity, one that acknowledges socio-cultural change with its inevitable impact on the conditions and conservation of historic environments. The ethical code this study presents places the responsibility on the conservator for the involvement of the resident society to ensure continued conservation and stewardship as their seal of identity.

The study argues that both the *Venice Charter, (1964)* and *Burra Charter,(1999)* being the most recognised conservation instruments, are pitched at individual

monuments. It critiques the widely held assumption that maintains applicability of these Charters to area and urban conservation. It draws attention to the paradox that while these Charters address some ethics of conservation their scope are limited to individual buildings, whereas the Charters concerned with urban and area conservation, like the *Washington Charter*, are inadequate with regards to ethical and cultural issues. By articulating a code of ethics for urban conservation, the study attempts to bridge a significant gap.

The study draws on, and contextualises its arguments in, the rich and varied archaeological and urban heritage of Syria, a country that is still coming to terms with the practices, implications and problems of heritage conservation.

The methodology adopted is a critical analysis of the conservation Charters and the literature that is directly related to their formulation, dissemination, adaptation and adoption. The critical analysis is conducted within a theoretical framework defined by three core notions: authenticity, change and ethics. The crux of the analysis is to show that, on the one hand, authenticity hinges on change, and on the other, authenticity judgments are ground in ethics.

The analysis is conducted in five stages. First, eight sites in Syria are selected to discuss their cultural heritage significance, as examples of conservation practices and the presentation of their cultural identity of the region. Second, a critical examination is conducted of the various charters and regulatory instruments that direct and steer conservation practice, and for their potential to give proper guidance to the practitioner to ensure that conservation areas adequately reflect the cultural identity of the inhabitants. Third, a critical examination of the application of the concept of authenticity in conservation practice is conducted, an important factor in conservation and the presentation of cultural identity. Fourth, an examination of change and development in the context of authenticity follows as a vital requirement for the continuation of social and cultural development. And fifth, an examination of the ethics of practice in area conservation concludes the analysis to ensure that social/cultural factors form a mandatory component of the conservation process.

## Sites

All sites were visited and critically assessed, firstly regarding the success of their physical conservation; and secondly, as a segment of that conservation, how successfully the message of the sites, particularly in relation to their part in supporting cultural identity, has been conveyed to the viewer. Three books were consulted to assist in this assessment: Afif Bahnassi's *Guide to Syria* (1989), Ross Burns' *Monuments of Syria* (1992 and 1999), and Warwick Ball's *Syria: A Historical and Architectural Guide* (1994 and 1998). All three authors are archaeologists, and although written for tourism purposes, they bring an academic procedure and knowledge rarely encountered in general tourism books.

However, they say very little about the condition of the sites, and even less about their conservation. This is not surprising, (such matters are generally not considered to be of interest to tourists), but the effects of the conservation techniques do transmit confusing messages. Other books, specifically written by the archaeologists themselves regarding their sites, also say little if anything about conservation. These include Paolo Matthiae, *Ebla: An Empire Rediscovered*, (1980) and Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura Europos*. (1979) Others like M. I. Rostovtzeff *Dura Europos and its Art*, (1938) give valuable and interesting description, but no information for conservation. Some of the sites are now beginning to be conserved, in an attempt to save the little that is left.

Ebla and Mari are recognised as two very significant archaeological sites, reaching their apogee at approximately the same period (2500-1900 BCE). Both sites have similar conservation problems but have been treated in quite different ways that have, in turn, produced further conservation problems. Ain Dara and Dura Europos are two archaeological sites that have also presented conservation problems, but the conservation answers employed have given rise to further questions regarding the effectiveness of the techniques and the success of their capability of transmitting their cultural message.

Bosra was a very special case, but recent conservation measures have reduced its importance to that of a commonplace example. It consists of a broad coverage of historical examples beginning as an Early Bronze Age settlement (c3000 BCE),



reaching a high point during the Nabatean and Roman periods, and continuing through the Byzantine and Arabic periods (c100 BCE – c700 CE), to the Crusades. The archaeological remains, however, were not the only factors of special significance at this site. The extent of the ruins served as a place and background for a squatter settlement using the ruins as the basis for their habitation. However, during the course of the production of this thesis, the inhabitants were evicted from the ruins. The opportunity for a unique cultural presentation was lost in favour of a usual ancient site presentation.

The remaining three sites, Damascus, Aleppo and Maalula, are three of the four sites in Syria that have been entered on the World Heritage List. They are included as examples of urban conservation, and the part they play in denoting cultural identity. The Old City of Damascus, sometimes further designated as “within the ancient walls,” provides an example of conservation based on a “single-building” method. Currently there is no attempt at area conservation, but rather the accumulation of single examples. Outside the city walls the expanding urban fabric is subject to conservation studies, particularly those by the German Archaeological Institute (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Damaskus). Their study *Damascus: Testimony of a City in Change. A Survey of Late Ottoman Building*, (1997)<sup>10</sup> is an insightful survey of the history of this precinct, but does not extend to conservation. The historical significance of the Old City within the walls and this adjacent precinct, evidenced through their fabric, provide sufficient content for this thesis, and a contrasting example to that of Aleppo.

The Old City of Aleppo, currently, under the combined efforts of the German and Syrian Governments, has an ambitious program of urban conservation that has begun. Written information for this is limited to the slim public booklet *Old City of Aleppo: A Changing Process Influenced*, and the associated document for the conservation practitioners *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the Old*

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<sup>10</sup> Stefan Weber, “Damaskus: Zeugnisse einer Stadt im Wandel. Ein Survey zur spätoomanischen Baugeschichte (1808-1918)” in Klaus Stefan Freyberger and Stefan Westfalen, (eds.), *Zehn Jahre Ausgrabungen und Forschungen in Syrien, 1989-1998* (Damaskus: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Damaskus, 1999).

*City of Aleppo*.<sup>11</sup> This programme extends beyond the northern and eastern boundaries of the ancient walls, with an urban approach rather than single buildings as in the Damascus example. The built fabric and its intended conservation are studied for their contribution to the cultural identity of this ancient city.

The last example is the village of Maalula, approximately 60 kilometres north of Damascus. It is a special village with a strong linguistic heritage and unusual built heritage. The cultural identity of the inhabitants has remained over two millennia, but is now threatened with extinction as the Arabic language replaces their ancient Aramaic. Apart from the small mention that it receives in tourist books there has been nothing published on this village.

### **Charters**

Throughout the thesis the general use of the term “charters” is used to denote those documents such as Charters, Recommendations, Guidelines, or Declarations, each drafted to direct consideration to some aspect of conservation. During the examination of these documents for this study, I identified that they form a three-tiered system, similar to the planning system of aims/objectives/policies. (Appendix 6) The first tier is concerned with conservation philosophy and theory being the aims of conservation; the second tier centres on the objectives and principles of conservation being the methods of achieving the philosophical aims; and the third tier, the practical policies and guidelines for achieving the objectives. For example, in urban conservation this system is easily seen in the first tier, the UNESCO *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas*; then the second tier, the ICOMOS *Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (The Washington Charter)*, and the third tier, *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the Old City of Aleppo*.

With the growth of Globalisation, and the concomitant rise of the World Heritage Organisation in recognition of the value of the collective patrimony of the world, it has been recommended that conservation principles be established on an

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<sup>11</sup> Both produced through Jens Windelberg, (ed.) *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the Old City of Aleppo* (Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) 1997).

International basis.<sup>12</sup> The numerous charters produced by UNESCO and ICOMOS serve two purposes: they present a distillation of conservation philosophy, and provide directives for conservation practice. This is to ensure that the common heritage of the world is maintained on equal standards, and that major monuments and sites may fulfil standard criteria regarding their recognition when entered on the World Heritage List.

In line with this International approach, co-operation and assistance has been recommended for countries seeking aid for conservation work.<sup>13</sup> Suggested measures include education, information, seminars, and travel and study scholarships. It is also explicitly stated that multilateral or bilateral co-operation should be co-ordinated for the implementation of large-scale conservation, restoration and rehabilitation projects.<sup>14</sup> Appendix I of the *Nara Document on Authenticity* suggests “Approaches should also build on and facilitate international co-operation ... in order to improve global respect and understanding for the diverse expressions and values of each culture.”<sup>15</sup>

The most influential of conservation charters is the *Venice Charter*, and investigation into conservation projects discussed throughout this study has found it to be quoted and used virtually as the only conservation Charter. It therefore forms a significant part of the examination and reference point in this thesis. To this is added a second influential Charter – the *Burra Charter*. This was drafted specifically for Australian use, and influences Australian practitioners for conservation in overseas countries as well as in Australia. It has also attracted considerable attention and reference throughout the world.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore examined in this study because of this recognition. In addition, it is the Charter

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<sup>12</sup> *The Venice Charter: International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (Paris: International ICOMOS, 1964), Preamble.

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas* (Paris: UNESCO, 26 November 1976), Article 54.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Article 54(e).

<sup>15</sup> Herb Stovel, “Appendix I: Nara Document on Authenticity” in Knut Einar Larsen, (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), xxv.

<sup>16</sup> For example, the Singaporean urban conservation document *Objectives, Principles and Standards for Preservation and Conservation* (1993), and the ICOMOS National Committees of the Americas document on Authenticity – *The Declaration of San Antonio* (1996). It also received several complimentary remarks during the Nara Conference on Authenticity (1994).

that I have been associated with since its inception in 1979, and as such has influenced my attitude towards conservation, a matter of importance when critically assessing sites in Syria. Its Articles are far more incisive than those of the *Venice Charter*, and hence require a more critical consideration regarding their application.

Both the *Venice Charter* and the *Burra Charter* claim to be applicable for urban conservation. The UNESCO *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas*, drafted in 1976, gives a good background of conservation philosophy. This emphasises the importance of understanding social and cultural requirements within the cultural context of the project. As a tier one document, it goes far beyond the practical issues of conserving the fabric, but realises the important issues of economic feasibility, the participation and education of the inhabitants, and the importance of stewardship for the success of urban conservation projects.

But it is asserted that these factors are lost in transference to the second-tier documents. Second tier charters, particularly the Venice and Burra Charters, focus particularly on material factors. This is understandable, as they have been drafted to assist the conservator in the practical application of conservation techniques. The omission of social and cultural factors continues through to the third-tier documents, and runs the serious danger of being overlooked in practical application. As argued in this study, conserving the physical fabric of historical buildings may not always be sufficient to recapture the essential qualities of the building or area that will truly reflect those factors that exemplify the continuing culture of the society and remain as true examples of the past and provide confident pointers to the future. The charters convey an expectation that the conservation of the built environment will automatically lead to the continuation of the resident society and its culture. This well-meaning approach is tantamount to a condition that could be called “conservation determinism.” This study argues that the reverse is more likely to be true: that as dynamic social and cultural aspects develop, they are manifest through the built environment, and that only by addressing social and cultural factors first can the built heritage rightly reflect those elements that illustrate cultural identity. Conservation then, should follow

this path: first the understanding and involvement of the society as giving direction to the conservation of the built fabric. This is of greater importance when conservation schemes are implemented outside the practitioner's own social context.

The complexity of urban conservation can be appreciated from the three tiered system, just by the number of charters that have been drafted for urban and area conservation. Each type of settlement has its own specific problems, and these are reflected in the different charters that have been produced. *The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns*, (1975) This recognises the social and cultural factors that make up a town's character, and calls for their safeguarding, not only for their cultural and aesthetic appeal but particularly for their social function, as the natural meeting place of the urban community and as a diversified habitat. It continues that "The preservation of historic towns, their rehabilitation and adaptation to present day needs thus form an essential part of any genuine policy for the human habitat."<sup>17</sup> As well as this charter, ICOMOS in collaboration with the International Union of Architects (UIA) has produced resolutions from a joint seminar on the *Integration of Modern Architecture in Old Surroundings* (1974). This faces the problem of new uses in historic centres, and the careful design and care required for harmonious integration. A companion document is the joint ICOMOS – UNESCO *A New Life for Historic Towns* (1976). This is concerned again with new uses and their effect on the fabric of historic towns, which are seen to be the basis of the urban and functional layout of existing and future towns. The list continues with ICOMOS *Resolutions on the Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns* (1975). The dates are significant, as the years 1974 to 1976 were crucial in Europe for the burgeoning practice in urban conservation.<sup>18</sup>

These documents are all first tier documents. They set out the problems and concerns in relation to the historic fabric and the associated social and cultural factors. The real test is how well their resolutions have been transferred to the

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<sup>17</sup> ICOMOS *The Resolutions of Bruges: Principles Governing the Rehabilitation of Historic Towns* (Bruges: May 1975), Article 6.

<sup>18</sup> For example, European Architectural Heritage Year, 1975, from which came Sherban Cantuzino (ed.), *Architectural Conservation in Europe* (Bedford: The Architectural Press, 1975).

next tier of charters. *The Washington Charter* (1987) is the direct descendant of the UNESCO *Recommendations*, but it is asserted in this thesis that it falls very short of social and cultural requirements. The ICOMOS *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage* (2000) is a recent charter, drafted to answer specific urban concerns. This refers briefly to cultural values and the traditional character of vernacular settlements, and as a document for urban settlements, considers it necessary to establish principles “in addition to the *Venice Charter*.”<sup>19</sup> It contains seven brief guidelines for the practitioner, and as such is included in the second tier category. But for actual assistance to practitioners, particularly those from outside countries, this document provides some good philosophical backing but little practical guidance.

It will be seen that urban charters fall very short in guiding practitioners in the field of conservation. Even though they have been drafted in the form of urban charters, it is to the *Venice Charter* and *Burra Charter* that practitioners turn for guidance.

Conservation practice in Syria makes little reference to international charters. Archaeological work is required to conform to the *Régime Des Antiquités En Syrie: Decret – Loi No. 222 (1963)*. Conservation work in the Old City of Damascus has its own regulations: *Method of Restoration and Reconstruction/Rebuilding of the Old City within the Walls. – Parliamentary Act No. 862*. Neither Syrian document makes reference to other charters for compilation. The *Venice Charter* forms the basis of the *Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the Old City of Aleppo*, as this project is a joint German/Syrian venture, with the documentation being produced through Germany. Each of these documents is included in the critical assessment of the charters.

### **Authenticity**

Social and cultural factors present a wide and complex area to be canvassed, so it was essential for this thesis to focus the argument on one particular aspect. This

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<sup>19</sup> ICOMOS *Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage* (Mexico: 2000), Introduction.

had to be an important factor in the consideration of both conservation and cultural identity. Authenticity was chosen to be this factor. It is not a new concept in conservation, but until the 1990s its importance has been taken for granted without realising its cultural determination. As a word, it has appeared in several charters, such as the *Venice Charter*, but it is argued that, although unnamed, it has also formed the basis of conservation processes in other charters, for example the *Burra Charter*. In each of these cases, authenticity is directed to the fabric, and the wider cultural understanding of the term has not been appreciated.

This is not without justification. In the Western world the emphasis of conservation focuses on the authenticity of the physical fabric as evidence of history. An essential part of this evidence is that it should be genuine, reliable and believable, which in the Western world constitute some of the attributes that signify “authentic.” So in physical terms, the components forming this evidence should impart a message that confirms this authenticity.

Authenticity has been mainly associated with conservation since the production of the *Venice Charter* in 1964. The concept passed into the criteria for World Heritage Listing in 1976, with the mandatory requirement that, in addition to the six criteria, each nominated property shall “meet the test of authenticity in design, material, workmanship or setting.”<sup>20</sup> It was this requirement that highlighted the cultural misunderstandings regarding the concept, resulting in the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Japan, 1994. The insistence in retaining the concept was considered justified as an obligatory criterion for maintaining the credibility of the World Heritage Convention and the World Heritage List. It was stated at the conference, that the “ways and means to preserve the authenticity of cultural heritage are culturally dependent,” and that “preservation experts are forced to clarify the use of the concept ... within their own cultural spheres.”<sup>21</sup> Although this was understood in this context to refer only to the listing process, the necessity for credibility in general conservation practice further justifies its obligatory status. If the cultural identity of a nation is to be read in its built

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<sup>20</sup> UNESCO, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Paris, UNESCO, 1976), Article 24 b i.

<sup>21</sup> Knut Einar Larsen, (ed.), “Preface” in *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), xiii.

environment, it is essential that that environment be an authentic representation of the nation's culture.

The proceedings of the conference, *Nara Conference on Authenticity*, reveal the complexity of the concept, a matter of no less complexity when applied to building or area conservation than when considered for listing purposes. The discussions at the conference did not extend to the practical application of conservation to ensure that authenticity was maintained during the conservation process. Some of the numerous aspects of authenticity were identified which, on further study, indicates the inadequacy of the charters, with their focus on material factors, to satisfactorily maintain authenticity of the society and its culture.

The *Nara Document on Authenticity*, the official statement that arose from the conference, is a declaration of a succinct set of statements. It acknowledges that judgements of value and authenticity could not be based on fixed criteria, but rather suggests that judgements could be linked to a variety of sources of information. Six groups of sources are suggested in the *Document*.<sup>22</sup> These six groups of aspects permit "the elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined."<sup>23</sup> The Nara conference called for further consideration to be given to the application of authenticity in relation to other aspects of conservation. In response, the Secretary General of ICOMOS called for regional participation in the international debate on the subject.

*The Declaration of San Antonio* (1996) arose in response to that call, following previous thought and debate in each of the regions of the Americas. This is a most valuable document as it presents the first distillation of the thoughts of practitioners who need to grapple with the concept on a practical basis. It presents a step forward in the authenticity debate, as it focuses on "preservation," that is, on a much broader scope than just World Heritage Listing criteria. It is confirmed in *The Declaration* that the understanding of authenticity is culturally focused and

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<sup>22</sup> Raymond Lemaire and Herb Stovel (eds.), "Nara Document on Authenticity" in Knut Einar Larsen, (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), xxiii.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiii.



is one aspect of conservation theory that illustrates the Eurocentric attitudes of world conservation authorities. The structure of *The Declaration* reflects a more practical approach to authenticity, not through the sources of information as set out in the *Nara Document*, but rather to eight aspects that could form the basis of conservation assessment for heritage value. In addition, the delegates identified five examples of indicators, which, although pointing to more practical directives would be subject to more site-specific contexts.

Its specificity, as opposed to the more general scope of the six groups of aspects of the *Nara Document on Authenticity*, was the deciding factor that the latter presented a better structure for this thesis. The *Nara Document* states that these sources *may* include the six groups of aspects, so again the open-ended nature of the whole authenticity argument is highlighted. These groups are discussed, but in addition, two other aspects are included, forming Chapters 4 and 5. These are Change and Development, and Ethics and Morality.

Few articles and books refer specifically to authenticity in the built environment. Most references are negatively directed, that is, in referring to other attributes which, if not “correct” or “right” will lead to a breach of authenticity. From Donald Horne’s *The Great Museum* (1984), through David Lowenthal’s *The Past is a Foreign Country*, (1985) to Ada Huxtable’s *The Unreal America* (1997), all deal with problems of the presentation of history and its acceptance in the present day. These point to issues beyond mere fabric.

The emphasis of the charters on retaining original fabric has potential to lead to freezing an area in a preferred timeslot. Khosla succinctly states, “A series of charters has been drawn up to define the principles of freezing the past.”<sup>24</sup> The question remains, however: can change and development be accomplished while retaining the authenticity of the historic fabric?

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<sup>24</sup> Romi Khosla, “The Persistence of Pre-Modernism: The Search for Authenticity in Central Asia, Tibet, India, and Nepal,” in Faroog Ameen, (ed.), *Contemporary Architecture and City Form: the South Asian Paradigm* (Mumbai: Marg, 1997), 64.

## Change

That change is an essential attribute in the urban context for the continuation of a developing society is not a new revelation. But it follows that as society should form the basis for conservation, the presentation of the culture should reflect this development and continuity. This thesis asserts that conservation should present the evidence of history through the built environment together with the current direction being taken by society. Current ancient cities, such as Damascus and Aleppo, are living examples of a constantly developing society, with some of their earlier history still to be found etched in the fabric.

The mark of a dynamic culture is its ability and necessity to evolve over time. Jokilehto quotes Bergson stating that this evolution will produce a constantly changing picture of that culture showing a variety or diversity seen as enriching rather than diluting its cultural expressions and traditions.<sup>25</sup> He continues that the more similar people are to each other, the more the differences between them seem to matter,<sup>26</sup> an important consideration in determining identity.

Diversification will produce differences even within the same peoples, which over time can make the past seem strange, even foreign. Lowenthal, quoting L.P.Hartley refers to this, as “The past is a foreign country... they do things differently there.”<sup>27</sup> Lowenthal justifies this later saying “the past seems in some ways more foreign, less accessible, than other cultures.”<sup>28</sup> But this diversification produces an impelling argument, that the more society changes, the more vital is the necessity for those elements of the historic built environment that are the evidence of its cultural identity to be conserved. A vital part of this search for identification is the desire to retain evidence of the past as the living proof of their cultural heritage.

This becomes a most delicate balancing act, the creation of the new with the retention of the old. The problems of design of infill architecture then become

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<sup>25</sup> Jukka Jokilehto, “Authenticity: a General Framework for the Concept” in Knut Einar Larsen, (ed.) *Nara Conference on Authenticity*, (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Japan. 1995), 25.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>27</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), xvi.

<sup>28</sup> David Lowenthal, “Changing Criteria on Authenticity” in Knut Einar Larsen (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Japan. 1995), 122.

paramount and are many and varied. The attempts to control new development through such methods as design guidelines are rarely successful. Much more study needs to be done in this area, but is a major subject beyond the scope of this thesis, and should form the basis of further study.

Regarding continuity and change, Mark Jones of the British Museum, writing about conservation of art in general, states “Now a new concept in authenticity is emerging which encourages us to accept that objects have a continuing history, that they are damaged and repaired, cleaned and restored, and that their state records not only the moment of creation but also a whole subsequent sequence of events.”<sup>29</sup> This is equally true for the built environment, but it becomes essential that the remaining historical evidence be presented, together with the new and reused environment, in a manner that clearly shows the development of the settlement and the society to the present day.

The fact that a society still remains in its historic settlement is a sign that it is still operational, even though its development may be losing momentum. Responsible conservation processes should include the continuation or improvement of the settlement’s economic development to ensure continuation of the society. This study asserts that the correct approach to area conservation may be better served through the conservation of the society and its culture.

The Aga Khan Award publications *Architecture for a Changing World* (1992), contain a variety of attitudes towards conservation projects and development. As some members of the jury are often notable Western architects, the attitudes and opinions presented can often be Western in emphasis. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1995) and Samer Akkash’s *Identity in Exile* (1998), reflect on Western impressions of Eastern cultures. Sherban Cantacuzino and his several books on the reuse of buildings, for example, *Re/Architecture: Old Buildings/ New Uses* (1989) and “Continuity and Change: Architecture and Development in the Islamic World – an Introduction” in *Architecture in Continuity: Building in the Islamic World Today* (1985), also bring a Western approach to Eastern issues.

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<sup>29</sup> Mark Jones, “Why Fakes” in Mark Jones with Paul Craddock and Nicolas Barker (eds.), *Fake? The Art of Deception* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1990), 14.

Interpretation forms a significant part of the conservation process. The initial survey of an area should reveal the evidence confirming the heritage significance of the place. The interpretation of this evidence should form the basis of the practical conservation processes so that the place will be a true presentation of the historical facts confirming identity. Presentation will, in turn, evoke an interpretive response from the viewer. The credibility of presentation then rests on the correct and unambiguous information that is imparted to the viewer.

Again, information on interpretation and presentation are few. Examples exist but mostly in the form of architectural criticism, particularly when presentation forms a major part of the tourist industry. The problems associated with tourism and authenticity are extensively discussed in Boniface and Fowler's publication *Heritage and Tourism in 'The Global Village'*.<sup>30</sup> In the same publication, quoting Turner and Ash: "Tourism is, everywhere, the enemy of authenticity and cultural identity."<sup>31</sup> Boniface and Fowler continue "such interactions have inbuilt potential to debase both presenter and onlooker,"<sup>32</sup> (their emphasis). These quotations point to two major issues addressed in this thesis: the necessity for the presentation of a place's heritage to be as accurate and as honest as possible, in order to maintain credibility, both for the visitor and the local inhabitants; and that the local inhabitants must be involved at all stages of the conservation process for the correct understanding, interpretation and presentation of their cultural heritage.

However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider tourism and its many facets with the detail that they deserve. This also is a large topic requiring its own specific study. The objective of this thesis is to consider the conservation issues that need to be addressed in order to meet the authenticity and cultural identity ideals separate from tourism concerns.

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<sup>30</sup> Priscilla Boniface and Peter J. Fowler, *Heritage and Tourism in 'The Global Village'* (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. Boniface and Fowler are referring to sentiments expressed in Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London: Constable, 1975), 197.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

But within the consideration of presentation, a second and subtler aspect of this topic is here proposed that has not in the past been considered. I have referred to it as passive presentation: the message that is conveyed to the viewer through the condition of the site as a result of the action, or inaction, of the conservator. Decisions, whether unself-conscious or deliberate, will reflect the cultural understanding of the conservator. It may be that the culture is ignored in the pursuit of an imagined aesthetic result, or it may simply be an ignorance of the impact of the decisions made.<sup>33</sup> Jokilehto, writing of authenticity in conservation, cites examples where a copy may replace an original, and justifies this action: “As a result of threats caused by air pollution and the risk of accelerated weathering, copies have since become increasingly accepted as a way to allow placing the originals under shelter.”<sup>34</sup> But a further justification for this action is needed when presenting the final result. In the absence of correct interpretive material, viewers may be led to believe that what they are seeing is the original object. Although it may be unintentional, the wrong message may be imparted unless the viewer is told otherwise. Such examples can lead to the viewer feeling cheated should the truth be known at a later time, and the authenticity of other examples called into question.

Misunderstandings are highlighted when conservators come from different cultural backgrounds to that of the subject country. First, the different understanding brought as part of their cultural baggage, and secondly, when the project is completed they return to their own place, and the responsibility of the ongoing maintenance is forgotten, or unable to be continued.<sup>35</sup> In these cases the good intentions of the conservator may be at odds with the reality of the site and the potential message that could have been conveyed. Hence, the authenticity of

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<sup>33</sup> Gerald Cobb, *English Cathedrals: The Forgotten Centuries* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980). The book is dedicated to ten selected English cathedrals that have undergone considerable restoration and change from 1530 to the present day. There is no doubting the confidence or honest intention of the works, but not all of the results were successful in presenting the historic fabric as intended by the original builders or architects, and much confusion has arisen as a result.

<sup>34</sup> Jukka Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999), 296.

<sup>35</sup> As expressed by Dr. Sultan Muhesen, Director of Antiquities in Syria, Damascus Museum. His concern was aimed specifically at the Italian archaeologist’s methods of the conservation of Ebla. Referring to the constant need to replaster the mud brick construction, he asked, “What happens when they go back to Italy? We don’t have the resources to continue with this form of conservation.”

the fabric may not be reflected in the ongoing presentation. This relies not only on the given information, but also by the passive presentation imparted through the conservator.

Deliberate misrepresentation for reasons other than presenting the historic evidence is a more serious matter. This may be for political, personal or national reasons.<sup>36</sup> This brings the matters of truth, morality and ethics further into the conservation debate.

### **Ethics**

Article 6 of the *Nara Document on Authenticity* states: “Cultural heritage diversity ... demands respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems. In cases where cultural values appear to be in conflict, respect for cultural diversity demands acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties.”<sup>37</sup> The *Cultural Diversity Code: Code of Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places* produced by Australia ICOMOS in 1998, is one step in acknowledging this statement. It provides direction for the management of conservation practice where different cultural values exist and contain the potential for conflict.<sup>38</sup> This is a significant contribution to the problem of conservation practice in a cultural context, but still leaves some areas of concern unresolved. For example, the *Code* tackles the emotional issue of balancing the differences between varying and opposing values assigned to a heritage place by differing cultural groups. However, it does not include the ethical practice of a conservator during the practical application of conservation work. Authenticity often sits awkwardly between the conservator’s intentions and actions, the presentation of the messages that the place ought to impart, and the obligation to the inhabitants during and after the period of the project. This recognises a moral responsibility of the conservator to the society, its heritage and cultural identity.

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<sup>36</sup> Examples such as the museum presentations in Communist Europe described in Donald Horne, *The Great Museum* (London: Pluto Press Limited, 1984), can be compared with similar American examples in Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (London: Picador, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Raymond Lemaire and Herb Stovel (eds.), “Nara Document on Authenticity” in Knut Einar Larsen (ed.), *Nara Conference on Authenticity* (Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 1995), xxii.

<sup>38</sup> *Cultural Diversity Code: Code of Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places* (Australia ICOMOS Incorporated: 2000).

Until the Nara Conference, the debate of authenticity had become during the twentieth century, almost the sole property of philosophical writers. Heidegger's *Being and Time* examines authenticity in his own idiosyncratic understanding of the concept, following on from previous philosophers such as Kirkegaard. This brought in its wake a number of reactive responses, for example *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being* by Herman Philipse, a kinder response than Adorno's *The Jargon of Authenticity*, and the approachable discourse by Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*. These are but a few of the writings that have expanded the concept of authenticity to become, even within a single culture, an adjective so esoteric and complex that its understanding has become obscure.

Each of the philosophical arguments in this small sample revolve around authenticity as understood in terms of "true self" and "being," and carries a strong moralistic message. It is this moralistic base that underlies the discussion of professional ethics, a growing concern in the management of issues involving diverse values. This study considers the applicability of this concept, not only when applied within a country comprised of diverse cultures, such as in Australia, but particularly in the cases of practitioners from one country operating in another of a different culture.

Morality in architecture and related cultural property is an old issue. David Watkin's *Morality and Architecture* was, in 1977, a recent addition to an already canvassed topic of truth and honesty in architecture, for example, that argued by Ruskin in his *Seven Lamps of Architecture*. In other areas of cultural property, particularly that of moveable heritage, fakes and forgery of material artifacts, together with the spurious presentation of history, renders the true presentation of the place, witnessed through the physical evidence, extremely difficult, or at best, highly suspect. In many areas, past actions of artists – Beckett's *FAKES: Forgery and the Art World* (1995); architects – Huxtable's *The Unreal America* (1997); archaeologists - *The Piltdown Forgery* (1955) of J.S. Weiner, and *The Piltdown Papers* (1990) of Frank Spencer; and reaching back to the reconstructions of Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos, all help to bring the acceptance of heritage presentation to the brink of disbelief. In addition, history has the ability through its

representation to be subversive. Lowenthal's earlier book *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), and Horne's *The Great Museum* (1984), have both explored the use of history to impart idealism and false nationalism. Lowenthal's later book *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1997), carries the history theme into the realm of heritage conservation, and exposes some of the anomalies and misrepresentations that can be levelled at history in the attempt to promote a noble cause. This situation, which is condoned often for the greater good, but equally often for monetary gain or subversive reasons, can place unfair pressure on the practitioner.

The time for a greater application of ethics in the field of conservation is nigh, and its current recognition is timely with the growing practice of ethics in architecture and its allied professions. *Ethics and the Built Environment* (2000), edited by Warwick Fox, is a good distillation of ethical thought. However conservation of the built environment is not included in Fox's publication. The recently produced *Ethical Commitment Statement for ICOMOS Members (Paris, January 2002)*, is another step in the ethical direction, but its focus is towards professional practice. This document calls throughout for the practitioner to act in an honest and impartial manner, but does not lay specific stress on the matters highlighted in this study regarding area conservation.

This thesis seeks to fill this gap, with reference to this *Ethical Commitment Statement* and matters referred in the *Cultural Diversity Code: The Code of Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places*, and in relation to the grey areas of morality. Given the wide extent of ethical concerns, discussions, within the context of this thesis, are focused on two main issues. The first issue is the responsibility and relationship of the practitioner with the local people, encouragement to them for the continued use and development of the area, their education for the understanding and continuing maintenance of the area's historical evidence, and the necessity for their commitment and responsibility for these actions. The second is the professional responsibility regarding impartiality and honest presentation.



This study also fills gaps identified between the various tiers of the charters, and answers considerations arising from the study of authenticity as seen in context of development. This is presented as a draft Code of Ethics for recognising social and cultural factors in area conservation. It is hoped that this Code could take its place in a reconsideration of the various urban and area conservation charters, and in the mean time be a companion code to the Australian and International ICOMOS codes.

#### **4. Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is structured in the manner in which the issues were confronted. Part 1 presents the eight sites that were chosen to illustrate the issues discussed throughout this study. Although many sites were visited, these were selected as representing a cross section of the heritage significance of Syria.

Part 2 critically examines the various charters in relation to social and cultural concerns, and their adequacy in providing direction for social and cultural factors. This exercise highlights the shortfall between the several tiers of the charters.

Part 3 investigates authenticity, and its application in urban and area conservation, and its relation to social/cultural matters. This leads us to Part 4, which considers the necessity of change and development in urban areas, and the implications of this to the concept of authenticity. This, however, raises further issues of ethics and morality, and the part they play in interpretation and presentation of each site. To this is added Part 5, which looks at the ethics of conservation practice beyond professional ethics to the necessity of involving the local population through participation, education and stewardship for the continued success of the conservation process.

The thesis concludes with a short Part 6, being a draft Code of Ethics specifically answering the issues raised in this study.