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WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

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**Comparative and Related Studies
carried out by ICOMOS, 1992-1996**

I THE RATIONALE OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The Preamble to the 1972 World Heritage Convention affirms that "... parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole." The basic criterion for inclusion on the World Heritage List of "outstanding universal value" first appears in the next paragraph of the Preamble.

Responsibility for the identification of properties for inclusion on the List rests with the World Heritage Committee (Convention, Article 11). In this work it may call upon advisory bodies (Articles 13.7, 14.2), among them the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

Nowhere in the text of the Convention is there a definition of "outstanding universal value." However, the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (WHC/2/Revised January 1996) state (para 24) that cultural properties will be considered to be of outstanding universal value if they meet one or more of six criteria, which are set out in this paragraph.

It is self-evident that there can be no absolute definition of "outstanding universal value" so far as cultural properties are concerned. Archaeology has shown that human cultural diversity began to manifest itself as early as the Palaeolithic period. Only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has there been a reversal of this diversification and the evolution of any form of homogenized global culture. It may be claimed with some justification that every cultural property is unique. However, some form of selection procedure is essential if the spirit of the

Convention is to be realized in the World Heritage List. The World Heritage Committee has wisely declined to apply a *numerus clausus* policy (*Operational Guidelines*, para 6(iv)). Instead, it has recognized that the concept of "universality" embodied in the Convention must be interpreted through the medium of a series of geocultural and temporal categories. These have been the subject of considerable study in the past five years through the Global Study and the Global Strategy.

Within these categories a further process of selection must be applied. This requires the identification of those properties within each category which conform most closely with the inscription criteria (*Operational Guidelines*, para 24). For this purpose it is axiomatic that a process of comparative evaluation must take place, in order to guide the World Heritage Committee in its work.

In this connection it must be stressed that the objective is not to identify a single representative of each category. Any such action would be impracticable, invidious, and against the spirit of the Convention. The selection of a single Greek temple, Gothic cathedral, or Buddhist temple to represent the entire corpus of such properties is manifestly impossible, not to say undesirable. The objective must be to ensure that the most outstanding and representative properties in each of the categories of cultural property identified as being viable and valid are inscribed on the World Heritage List. This constitutes the epistemological basis for the work of ICOMOS and others in the field of comparative studies.

II METHODOLOGY

i Background

According to the procedure laid down in the Convention, nominations to the World Heritage List may only be made by States Parties, in respect of properties on their own territories (Article 3). As a consequence each State Party has initiated a wholly understandable process of identifying those cultural properties on its territory of which it is justifiably most proud.

The World Heritage Committee encourages States Parties to implement a preliminary screening procedure. In submitting tentative lists, they are required to provide "... a justification of the outstanding universal value ... taking account of similar properties both inside and outside the boundaries of the State concerned" (*Operational Guidelines*, para 8). It is further suggested that "Within a given geocultural region, it may be desirable for States Parties to make comparative assessments for the harmonization of tentative lists and nominations of cultural properties" (*op cit*, para 9).

This requirement is repeated in the *Operational Guidelines* in respect of nominations of individual properties. Paragraph 12 specifies that "When nominating properties belonging to certain

well represented categories of cultural property, the nominating party should provide a comparative evaluation of the property in relation to other properties of a similar type...." Section G "Format and content of nominations" specifies under e) Justification for inclusion on the World Heritage List that the reasons for which the property is considered to meet one or more of the criteria must be stated and an evaluation provided "of the property's present state of preservation as compared with similar properties elsewhere" (para 64). However, the requirement for a comparative evaluation of the cultural significance is not incorporated into the standard printed form, with the result that not all nominations are accompanied by this information.

One of the principles enunciated by the World Heritage Committee for the evaluation of nominations is that "Each cultural property, including its state of preservation, should be evaluated relatively, that is, it should be compared with that of other sites of the same type dating from the same period, both inside and outside the State Party's borders" (Operational Guidelines, para 59). This requirement is referred specifically to ICOMOS, as the advisory body charged with carrying out the evaluation of cultural nominations, in paragraph 61 (c): "ICOMOS is requested to make comparative evaluations of properties belonging to the same type of cultural property."

ii The Global Strategy

At its 15th meeting in 1991 the World Heritage Committee called for the preparation of strategic guidelines for the future implementation of the Convention. An expert group that met twice during the course of the following year prepared a report (WHC-92/CONF.002/4) that was presented to the 16th meeting in December 1992 at Santa Fe (USA). One of the goals that it identified was "completion of the identification of the world heritage," with the objective of completing "the global study and appropriate thematic studies." The recommendations of this report were adopted, with minor revisions, by the Committee.

The concept of a global study was first discussed as early as 1984. The project was taken up again in 1993 by the governments of Greece and the USA, in association with ICOMOS, and a proposal was submitted to the 17th meeting of the Committee in Cartagena (Colombia) in December 1993, advocating a "bottom-up" programme, based on a series of interlocking thematically and geoculturally based studies prepared by selected expert groups. At the same meeting a paper (document WHC-93/CONF.002/8) was submitted by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre proposing an alternative strategy, based on "several global thematic studies, on a geographical and trans-regional basis rather than an historico-cultural one," involving "new partners from various fields and specialized organizations, as well as a wider geographical and cultural origin, especially from non-Western countries." This was accepted by the Committee and a working group set up "to prepare a conceptual framework for a global study, in order to advance in defining a

concept and a methodology which could be widely accepted by the scientific community." This group met in Paris in June 1994 and its recommendations were presented to the Committee at its 18th meeting in Phuket in December 1994 .

The Committee accepted the recommendation that the project should be named the , 'Global Strategy for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention." It passed from a typological approach to one "that reflects the complex and dynamic nature of cultural expression." Imbalances and gaps in the World Heritage List would be identified and considered in their broad anthropological context through time, in two main areas: Human coexistence with the land and human beings in society.

Since that time a number of regionally based meetings have been held addressing broad topics of this nature.

iii ICOMOS practice

Since 1982 ICOMOS has played a leading role in the development of the World Heritage List through a series of comparative studies. These may be classified as a. pre-emptive and b. reactive, and have utilized a number of the internal and external ICOMOS networks.

a Pre-emptive studies

This class of comparative study has been initiated by ICOMOS, occasionally with the support or at the request of a State Party to the Convention, in response to a perceived or anticipated demand. They fall into several categories, which may broadly be classified as follows:

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|---------------------------|---|--|
| Regional thematic | - | Islamic sites in North Africa and Asia |
| | - | Archaeological sites in the Mediterranean Basin
[organized in association with ICOMOS National Committees and national governments] |
| General thematic: | - | Historic cemeteries |
| | - | Cultural itineraries

[organized in association with ICOMOS National Committees and national governments] |
| Specialist thematic | - | Historic canals [with TICCIH] |
| | - | 20th century architecture [with DoCoMoMol] |
| Commissioned from experts | - | Jesuit missions in Latin America
[J O Gazaneo] |
| | - | Gothic cathedrals [P Kurmann] |
| | - | Crusader castles [N Faucherre] |

The historic canals study forms part of the wider ICOMOS/TICCIH programme on the industrial heritage, which will be producing several reports in the coming triennium.

b *Reactive studies*

These are reports commissioned by ICOMOS when new nominations are received for which no comparative study is already in existence and where there is no depth of expertise within the ICOMOS Bureau or its International Scientific Committees. The extensive network of ICOMOS contacts is consulted and an individual or individuals with specialist knowledge and experience (who need not necessarily be ICOMOS members) are identified.

In all cases the expert or expert group is given a precise brief regarding the type of property and the geocultural area that it should cover

The results of these studies take various forms. Some are no more than indicative, consisting of simple lists of sites and monuments within the category and/or region identified by an expert group as being of outstanding value. Others are more detailed, with extensive graphic backup material and methodological introductory material. It is intended to publish some of the latter category in the coming years in the *ICOMOS Occasional Papers on World Heritage* series, starting with the TICCIH canals study. Copies of others may be obtained by States Parties and other interested parties on application to ICOMOS.

III COMPARATIVE AND RELATED STUDIES (CULTURAL HERITAGE) 1992-1996

i **Introductory**

This list covers only studies related directly to the World Heritage Convention carried out since 1992. Earlier ICOMOS studies completed from 1982 onwards cover Islamic sites in Africa and Asia, Jesuit missions in Latin America, archaeological sites in the Mediterranean basin, Crusader castles, colonial architecture in Latin America, traditional architecture of oasis towns in the Arab world, historic sites in Asia, Gothic cathedrals, and the architectural heritage of European university towns.

ICOMOS has been involved in many other general studies relating to the protection, conservation, and management of the cultural heritage since its foundation in 1965. The many aspects of the subject covered in recent years have included cultural tourism and the impact of social change on the cultural heritage.

ii *ICOMOS projects*

a **Completed**

1992 Pueblo sites in Mexico and the USA (ICOMOS HQ, Mexican and US National Committees)

Wooden churches in northern Europe (Norwegian National Committee)

- 1993** Traditional villages in the Carpathian basin and its immediate surroundings (ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages - CIWIH)

Jesuit missions in the Guayra region of South America (J O Gazaneo)

- 1994** Historic cemeteries (Polish National Committee) - Wroclaw Conference

European colonial settlements in south and southeast Asia (Sri Lanka National Committee) - Colombo meeting

Cultural itineraries (Spanish National Committee with the support of the Government of Spain) - Madrid meeting

- 1995** Brick Gothic cathedrals and great churches in northern Europe (H Andersson for Danish National Committee)

19th and 20th century "company towns" (TICCIH)

Historic canals (TICCIH)

Historic bridges (TICCIH)

20th century cultural heritage (Finnish National Committee) - Helsinki Conference

- 1996** 20th century cultural heritage (Mexican National Committee with Universidad Autonoma Mexicana) - Mexico City meeting

b In progress (1996)

Historic railways (TICCIH)

Non-ferrous mining sites (TICCIH)

c Projected or proposed

Castles and other fortified sites in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and northern India

Castles in central and eastern Europe

European planned colonial settlements in North America

Spanish and Portuguese colonial towns in the Americas

Industrial heritage: food production (TICCIH)

Prehistoric sites in West Africa

Early historic sites and monuments in West Africa

Gothic secular buildings in the Mediterranean region

iii *ICOMOS contracts with other NGOs*

Industrial heritage (The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage - TICCIH)

Twentieth century architecture (International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites, and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement - DoCoMoMo)

Note So far only three detailed lists have been received from TICCIH, but three others have been initiated (see above). A detailed methodology has been agreed with DoCoMoMo and work is under way on the lists. In addition, partial reactive studies have been carried out in connexion with specific nominations to the World Heritage List: eg early iron-working sites; the Bauhaus sites in Weimar and Dessau.

iv *ICOMOS involvement with other relevant projects*

1992-93

Cultural landscapes (with France, Germany, UNESCO World Heritage Centre) - La Petite Pierre; Schorfheide

1992-94

The Global Study with Greece, USA) - Paris; Colombo

1994

Authenticity (with UNESCO, ICCROM, Norwegian and Japanese National Committees) - Bergen; Nara

Rice-terraces in Asia (with Philippines National Commission of UNESCO, UNESCO World Heritage Centre) - Manila Banaue (PreParatory meeting)

Global Strategy (UNESCO World Heritage Centre)

Heritage canals (Government of Canada) - Chaffey's Lock

1995

Ironmaking industrial landscapes (Government of Sweden, Jernkontoret) - Norberg

Rice-terraces in Asia (Philippines National Commission of UNESCO, UNESCO World Heritage Centre) - Manila, Banaue

Non-monumental landscapes in the Pacific region (Australian National Committee, Commonwealth Government) - Sydney, Blue Mountains

Global strategy for sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, Government of Zimbabwe) - Harare

1996

Evaluation of general principles and criteria for nominations of natural World Heritage sites (UNESCO, IUCN, Government of France) - Parc National de la Vanoise, France

European cultural landscapes (UNESCO, Government of Austria) - Vienna.

Global strategy for sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, Government of Ethiopia) - Addis Ababa.

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