

Perspective in Northeast and Southeast Asia towards the Implementation of the Global Strategy

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Yukio Nishimura
Former Vice President, ICOMOS and
Professor, University of Tokyo

Does World Heritage List Represent the Wide Spectrum of Heritage in the World?

The main idea of so called 'Global Strategy' as I understand, is to improve the three imbalances remaining in the World Heritage List, they are, one, imbalance between cultural and natural heritage, two, imbalance among the regions, and three imbalance among the category of the properties.

I do not go into the discussion of the first imbalance between cultural and natural sites in this presentation because this Workshop primarily deals with the cultural heritage only.

The second imbalance, namely imbalance between Europe/North America and other regions, is based upon the history of the World Heritage Convention, or more precisely, the history of the formation of the idea of the World Heritage itself. As you know, the concept of the World Heritage was initiated by the Western countries. Therefore the terminology and concept of the heritage was also heavily influenced by the Western thoughts.

For example, most of the cultural properties in the West were made of stone or brick. Therefore, it was quite natural for them to regard that idea of authenticity stems from that of material. While, in the East, building materials may include wood, bamboo, earth and other organic materials. Then it may be difficult to understand the authenticity of these buildings from the material point of view, which could lead to underestimate the importance of the cultural properties of the East.

Imbalance among the category of the listed properties has the same reason. Since the European cultural tradition well represents in the World Heritage List because they are familiar to the professionals and officers concerned for a long time, while the cultural legacy in the East is not very familiar to them. Therefore, it is quite natural that the cultural properties in the West have been better recognized and received better reputation than the cultural properties of the rest of the world.

How to Improve the Imbalance

The next question is, therefore, how to improve these three-fold imbalance in the World Heritage List.

Basic requirement is that the state party of the East should prepare statutory protection and management system in their national legal framework. This is more or less prerequisite for the nomination of the World Heritage Site for the consideration of the possible inscription.

Next strategy to improve the imbalance is to widen the scope of the concept of 'Heritage' to include many cultural properties that may be new to the Western eyes. At the same time, we should revise the idea of authenticity and integrity to cover the Eastern cultural properties.

With these tools, we should elaborate to expand the tentative list in each state party's jurisdiction.

How to widen the View of 'Heritage'

Subsequent question will be how to widen the view of 'Heritage' to accommodate Eastern viewpoint.

Originally, there had been only three types of categories for the cultural properties in the World Heritage Convention; monuments, sites and groups of buildings. In the early 1990's, new idea of cultural landscape had emerged and eventually it was included in the category of the World Cultural Heritage. This is because some of the newly nominated cultural properties cannot be classified as any of the conventional three categories.

This fact gives us a valuable lesson; we should develop the new scope of the 'Heritage' by studying the thematic framework of the properties, which may lead to a new typology of the cultural heritage. To develop the view by conducting a thematic study is crucial for the improvement of the imbalance.

What is the Thematic Framework?

In order to carry out a new thematic study, ICOMOS study on the gap of the World Heritage List, entitled 'The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future, published by ICOMOS in February 2004 gives a good cue to the framework. In the ICOMOS Gap Report, the cultural heritage is divided into six categories; ie. expressions of creativity, cultural association, spiritual responses, utilizing natural resources, movements of peoples, and developing technologies.

In particular, cultural association such as intangible aspects of the heritage, utilizing natural resources such as agriculture and fishery, and movements of peoples such as cultural routes are of great possibilities for Asian countries to further develop their idea for the new cultural heritage.

Thematic studies for these new field is strongly needed for the improvement of the imbalance. And these studies can lead the thematic framework to new typology of the cultural heritage such as cultural landscape, industrial heritage, sacred mountains, 20th architecture, and shared heritage.

Authenticity and Integrity

Newly revised Operational Guidelines slightly changed the idea of authenticity. Originally, the test of authenticity means four different tests, namely material, design, workmanship and setting. However, through a long discussion in the early 1990's on the concept of authenticity, which led to the Nara Documents on Authenticity in 1994, clearly stipulated other type of authenticity to include for consideration. They are; form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feelings; and other internal and external factors. These terms are all employed in the new Operational Guidelines in February 2005.

As for the integrity, it used to be applied only to the natural sites. On the other hand, in the new Operational Guidelines, the conditions of integrity should be applied not only to the natural nominations but cultural ones. This is because the idea of cultural heritage has grown so extensively that the test of

authenticity was not enough to value. In particular, when we cope with wider areas or industrial systems, we should consider their integrity as well as authenticity.

Integrity should be divided into three phases; that is, functional, structural and visual integrity. We have to elaborate the wide spectrum of the integrity concept to re-discover valuable cultural heritage in our surroundings.

Nominations and Credibility

Finally, we should pay attention to the recent trend of the nominations of World Cultural Heritage. When we observe the current nominations, we can see several key indicators in it.

First, there has been growing number of serial nominations and thematic nominations, which require extensive comparative studies by the nominating state parties. Again this is the direct outcome of the growing concern to develop new ideas for the heritage.

Secondly, there are another tendency to delineate wider context and consequently wider buffer zones, which may lead the manageability questions.

Thirdly, it is obvious that there remains a fundamental question in the World Heritage List; whether it is possible to evaluate the outstanding universal value by the individual national body that nominates the site. Some sites that are related folklore culture or a certain ethnic groups or traditional skills do not necessarily or cannot follow the single country nomination process. Transboundary nomination should be considered as one of the remedy not only to improve the imbalance of the List but also to enhance the universality of the evaluation process of the sites.

I hope that this presentation may help the workshop participants to have an overview of the Global Strategy and its implementation. Thank you for your attention.