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World Heritage New: Evaluating the Past, Present, and Future of UNESCO's Cultural Policy Program

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“World Heritage Now: Evaluating the Past, Present, and Future of UNESCO’S Cultural Policy Program,” held at the University of Pennsylvania, September 28-9, report submitted by Brian Daniels, University of Pennsylvania, danielsb@sas.upenn.edu

Over forty years ago, the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) evaluated cultural policies among its member countries in order to determine what issues should be addressed by the international community. Two key international conventions, the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Cultural Property and the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, emerged from this process. Both have been instrumental in a variety of ways: shaping contemporary discourse about culture; generating new national laws and policies; encouraging new entitlements and rights to culture; providing a market for global tourism and economic development; and reframing how the field of anthropology relates to the idea of culture itself. Although the two Conventions fundamentally affected the management of cultural sites and the protection of cultural property generally, their interrelationship rarely been considered. We also know little about their historical impact. Were their original goals met? Have they been turned to unanticipated purposes? What have been their unforeseen consequences?

The fortieth anniversary of the 1972 UNESCO Convention presented an ideal opportunity to address these questions. To this end, twelve scholars gathered for a conference convened at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, supported through funding from the University of Pennsylvania’s Office of the Vice Provost for Research, Global Engagement Fund, and University Research Foundation; the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology; and the Pogo Family Foundation.

Conference discussions reflected the global and idiosyncratic reach of UNESCO’s cultural policy. J. P. Singh (George Mason University) framed the conference with a thesis that UNESCO’s most durable influence in cultural heritage work was in the mobilization of global cultural networks. Aiming to create a culture of peace in the wake of World War II through science, education, cultural programming, and communication, UNESCO worked to connect the high ideal of universal cultural value with viable in-country institutions and networks. Noel Salazar (University of Leuven) observed that while the 1972 Convention did not formally address tourism, world heritage sites garner attention because they can be presented as tourist destinations and revenue-generating opportunities for local economies. While economic benefits are never assured, increasing heritage tourism has prompted reassessment of what constitutes sustainable tourism. Brian I. Daniels (University of Pennsylvania) argued that the 1970 and 1972 Conventions were part of a broad effort to make museums places that realized UNESCO’s mandate for mutual, intercultural understanding. Under the UNESCO rubric, museums transformed into diplomatic actors, working toward the goal of providing universal access to cultural heritage and becoming the forums where national populations learned about their own identities and those of other countries. Jane Levine (Sotheby’s and Columbia University) noted that impact of the 1970 Convention on the art market; a significant shift in thinking occurred among sellers, dealers, and collectors,

who became increasingly sensitized to the need for secure legal title and reliable histories of their purchases. Undesirable market behavior has not disappeared entirely, but there has been considerable reduction in illicit trade in cultural materials. Taking the view of a historic preservation practitioner, Randall Mason (University of Pennsylvania), examined key moments of envisioning heritage geographies prior to UNESCO's effort, arguing that there has been a gradual expansion in imagining what constitutes a heritage landscape over the past two centuries.

Two presentations focused on specific legal ramifications of the 1970 and 1972 Conventions. Patty Gerstenblith (De Paul University) argued that states have implemented the 1970 Conventions in four different ways: through across the board import restrictions on commonly looted cultural property; through country-to-country bilateral agreements restricting the import of certain kinds of cultural property; through a hybrid legal regime influenced by the 1995 Unidroit Convention (an expansion of the 1970 Convention overseen by the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, which aimed to facilitate the restitution of cultural property by shifting the burden of proof of legitimate ownership to the buyer and thus remains controversial); and through a minimalist approach that only restricts the importation of already inventoried cultural material. Sophie Vigneron (University of Kent) noted that the 1972 Convention did not necessarily add a new layer of protection to heritage sites, but rather required signatories to amend their laws in order to guarantee a measure of effective protection. In a discussion of laws in the United Kingdom and France, Vigneron noted that both implemented the 1972 Convention by marginally amending their existing regimes of protection of built heritage.

Several papers examined specific instances of the application and problems related to the idea of universal world heritage standards. Ian Hodder (Stanford University) discussed the inability of cultural heritage to translate into a viable form of rights activism in Turkey, noting that one difficulty of the rhetoric of universal heritage is that it threatens to establish false expectations. Christina Luke (Boston University) demonstrated the importance of boundary-making to the production of ideas about heritage, using the Gediz Valley in Turkey as an extended example. In this case, such activity has been a focus of U.S. cultural diplomacy over the 20th century. Based upon fieldwork in the Yucatan, Mexico, Richard M. Leventhal (University of Pennsylvania) challenged the idea of universal heritage, maintaining that contemporary Maya communities eschew the more obvious archaeological remains of the ancient Maya in favor of 19th century heritage sites that represent a more meaningful heritage to their communities.

Presenters also considered the future role that the UNESCO Conventions might play in cultural policy. Morag Kersel (DePaul University) emphasized the value in conceiving of objects as internationally circulating "ambassadors." Noting that cultural exchange can be achieved through various means, Kersel emphasized a tradition of UNESCO frameworks that predated both Conventions to advocate for long-term loans and leases as ways to increase the international movement of cultural objects. Lynn Meskell (Stanford University) offered a sobering assessment of the politics surrounding the World Heritage Committee, which oversees implementation of the 1972 Convention. Meskell cautioned that increasing factional bloc politics between states, a dire economic situation following withdrawal of US funding from UNESCO, and the overt challenges

posed against expertise and shared decision-making threaten to undermine the legitimacy of the World Heritage Committee and its ability to act.

“The Study of Jewish Biological Difference After 1945,” October 15-16, hosted by The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG), report submitted by Jonathan Marks, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, jmarks@uncc.edu

The conference was organized by Veronika Lipphardt (MPIWG) and Amos Morris-Reich (Haifa), and sponsored by Minerva-Gentner, which aims to increase the contact between Israeli scholars and those of other nations (and which had not previously supported history of science). The organizers intended the conference to focus “on the history of scientific accounts of Jews in the life sciences after the end of World War Two,” and was especially timely, given the appearance of recent full length works by two geneticists (David Goldstein, *Jacob’s Legacy*; and Harry Ostrer, *Legacy*) and an anthropologist (Nadia Abu el-Haj, *The Genealogical Science*). Three themes emerged during the presentations: (1) trans-World War II narratives of Jews and genetics (Veronika Lipphardt, Anne Cottebrune, Alexander von Schwerin, Amir Teicher, Felix Weidemann), (2) the development of the field of human genetics in Israel (Raphael Falk, Nurit Kirsh, Snait Gissis, Amos Morris-Reich); and (3) contemporary issues of genomics and Jewish identity (Petter Hellström, Yulia Egorova). The discussants were Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Paul Weindling and Jonathan Marks. Discussions about publication are underway.

“Colonial Governmentalities Workshop,” held at the Institute of Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney, October 31st to November 1st, report submitted by Ben Dibley, University of Western Sydney, B.Dibley@uws.edu.au

The literature on governmentality in colonial contexts is well developed. Less attention has been paid to the materialities through which particular forms of colonial rule are exercised—the focus of this workshop, which emphasized how collecting cultures were implicated in the rationalities of government in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century colonial situations. Participants examined the different kinds of knowledges—such as anthropology, archaeology, and folklore studies—associated with practices of collecting, and the roles these played in shaping forms of colonial rule, such as those of settler, conquest, or neo-conquest colonialism. Organized around paired papers, the workshop was led by Tony Bennett, Institute of Culture and Society (ICS), University of Western Sydney (UWS). It was part of an Australian Research Council Discovery Project, “Museum, Field, Metropolis, Colony: Practices of Social Governance.” (For an overview of this project, see http://www.uws.edu.au/ics/research/projects/museum_field_metropolis_colony.)

Henrika Kuklick (University of Pennsylvania) and Tony Bennett presented the first paired papers. Both focused on the practice of anthropology and its relations with colonial governance. Each offered distinctive accounts on the materialities of ethnographic fieldwork, advancing contrasting conceptualizations of anthropological practices and their folding into relations of government. Kuklick argued that, in contradistinction to laboratory science, anthropology was a form of work that shared in the methods of field sciences, which she characterized as more historical than experimental, with knowledge witnessed, rather than manufactured. Like other field scientists, anthropologists had to negotiate with administrative regimes, but their