

Learning from Japan: Authenticity and the Longevity of Built Heritage

Oliver Ray-Chaudhuri, 767067990, oray668@aucklanduni.ac.nz

The international heritage community is becoming increasingly aware of the Eurocentricity of its founding documents. New charters and agreements pledge for cultural relativism and community agency rather than the universalism of the 20th century. The exposure to the Western world of different approaches to heritage less fixated on material authenticity has introduced new opportunities for how we conserve buildings. This research surveys the historical context of authenticity and draws on three case studies in Japan to understand how an example of non-Western conservation philosophy is employed in practice. The paper suggests that although conservation processes are contingent on specific cultural values, aspects of the broader notion of authenticity exemplified in Japan could inform Western heritage philosophy and extend the lifespan of built heritage.

Keywords: authenticity; Japan; longevity; heritage conservation; cultural relativism.

1. Introduction

Heritage buildings are important repositories of meaning for communities worldwide, who attribute a vast range of values to the structures that make up their spatial context. However, global heritage philosophy has grown out of a conservation movement that has overwhelmingly privileged heritage buildings' material values over other values. A growing awareness of the Eurocentricity of heritage conservation in the past three decades prompted the publication of documents that argue instead for cultural relativism and suggest a wider lens through which to view assessments of authenticity.

The conservation practice of temples and shrines in Japan can provide an example of how broadening classifications of authenticity can potentially extend the lives of important buildings. The intention of this research is to investigate how the broader notion of authenticity exemplified in Japanese conservation philosophy could inform the longevity of heritage buildings in a Western conservation context. Through analysing the broader values by which authenticity is gauged in a range of case studies in Japan, the potential for broadening these criteria in the Western conservation context can be understood. Essentially, this research considers whether a looser

emphasis on material authenticity and a greater appreciation of the intangible values of our heritage, as understood in Japan, could help preserve buildings for future generations.

2. Methodology

A literature review was carried out to understand the development of authenticity in international heritage philosophy and the differing perception of this concept in Japanese conservation practice. The review was followed by the selection and analysis of case studies that typified some of the differing values in heritage conservation in Japan.

To identify relevant literature, a search of databases and a university library catalogue tool was conducted, using keywords including “authenticity/heritage conservation,” “eastern/western/conservation,” and “japan/heritage conservation.” The main databases used were Taylor & Francis Online and Scopus. Searches were limited to peer-reviewed articles, and the only books selected were those from reputable publishers such as Routledge and Springer. Conference proceedings were also used. Since the research is concerned with conservation on a relatively philosophical level, heavily scientific or technical literature was excluded.

The literature found was assessed, and irrelevant sources discarded. Literature deemed less relevant included writing focused on urban planning and tourism, although information was drawn from the broader realm of cultural heritage where similar ideas of authenticity are discussed. The reference lists of important sources were searched to identify other applicable publications. International heritage documents such as the Venice Charter and the Nara Document on Authenticity were read to understand the milestones in conservation thinking on a global scale.

Case studies were identified which represent ways of conserving or restoring buildings that privilege modes of authenticity other than the material. The buildings selected were limited to those in Japan and used in this research as an example of non-Western conservation practice. The literature review was the dominant source for the selected case studies since literature discussing 'Eastern' concepts of restoration often cite Japanese practice as an example. Buildings chosen for inclusion in the analysis were those with ample information about the processes and values of the conservation process. For these reasons, all three of the case studies selected were prominent temples or shrines. The case studies will be compared based on the cultural values privileged in their conservation, the conservation practices employed to enable longevity and how they exhibit a broader notion of authenticity.

Both the literature review and the case study research were limited by the author's restriction to English language publications. Many references to the selected case studies were in Japanese, and so it is possible important information could have been inaccessible or written from an overly Western perspective.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Authenticity and the Venice Charter

In charting the development of authenticity in the Western conservation context, it is necessary to understand how heritage ideas have evolved over the past two centuries. A wide body of literature exists discussing the historical events and impetuses contributing to modern heritage philosophy.

The increasingly unified approach of international heritage documents and charters can be traced back

to the 19th century when John Ruskin's writings and William Morris' Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) challenged the prevailing practice of restoration. Ruskin and the SPAB stressed the importance of material authenticity in telling the story of the life of a building and strongly opposed unessential interventions or alterations (Glendinning, 2013). Their work influenced the resolutions of the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments in 1931, which is considered the first attempt to establish international guidelines for restoration (Ohba, 2017). The Athens Charter did not use the word 'authenticity' but emphasised a preference for the use of original material and allows reconstruction only in the form of anastylosis (the re-establishment of original fragments) (ICOMOS, 2011).

A defining moment in international heritage conservation occurred in 1964 when the Venice Charter was published. The charter developed the principles of the Athens document, ruling out reconstruction and stating the purpose of restoration as being to "preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument [...] based on respect for the original material and authentic documents" (ICOMOS, 1964, p. 2). 'Authenticity' is only mentioned once, concerning the need to bequeath monuments "in the full richness of their authenticity" ((ICOMOS, 1964, p. 1). However, the charter's content refers purely to the treatment of the material fabric as the vessel through which "richness" is achieved.

3.2. The Nara Document

The end of the 20th century saw increasing dissatisfaction with the Venice Charter and the idea of authenticity it presented. There was a growing awareness of the Eurocentric focus of international heritage discourse and its failure to represent the values of many conservation practices outside that context (Cameron & Inaba, 2015). For example, Chung (2005) discusses the imposition of Western cultural values on international conservation philosophy as endangering the spiritual sensibilities of heritage processes in East Asia.

The Nara Document on Authenticity, published after a meeting of international experts in 1994, resulted from this discontent and represented an attempt to better depict the diversity of heritage processes. A key criticism of the Venice Charter was the emphasis on the material authenticity of heritage

places, with no consideration given to socio-cultural contexts which prioritise other, more intangible values (Toshiyuki, 2014). The Japanese government was fundamental in organising the meeting, intending to align the document more closely with their understanding of authenticity (Stovel, 2008).

An experiment often recounted in the literature to explain the challenges of authenticity is the Ship of Theseus, initially proposed by Plutarch in the 1st century A.D. (Boccardi, 2019; Khalaf, 2021; Starn, 2002). The puzzle questions whether a timber ship, which has had each of its components replaced over an extended period, is still the same ship when no parts remain (Rose, 2020). It is of significance to this topic because it suggests that factors beyond the material can convey the authenticity of an object or building.

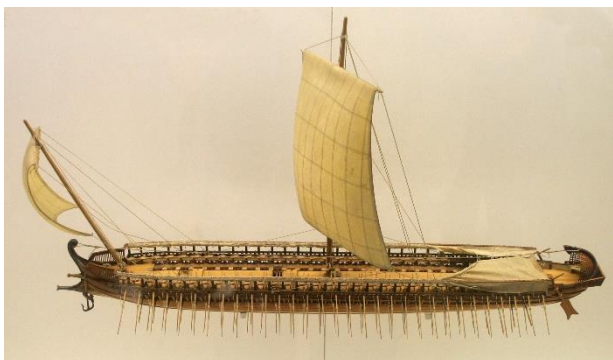


Figure 1 - Paradox of replacement: a model of an ancient Greek trireme. From (*Big Think*, by Deutsches Museum, 2018, Retrieved 2021, June, 9, from <https://bigthink.com/philip-perry/this-ancient-thought-exercise-will-have-you-questioning-your-identity>).

The Nara Document abandoned efforts to create international guidelines that united differing perceptions of authenticity in favour of recognising the diversity of cultural values that influence heritage practice globally (Falser, 2010). Article 7 of the document states that “all cultures and societies are rooted in the particular forms and means of tangible and intangible expression which constitute their heritage, and these should be respected,” while Article 11 acknowledges it is “not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria” (ICOMOS, 1994, p. 46-47).

Despite an acceptance of the cultural specificity of heritage values, the Nara Document offers examples of the sources from which authenticity could be determined, listing “form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling,

and other internal and external factors” (ICOMOS, 1994, p. 47).

Boccardi (2019) distinguishes between the characteristics of a heritage site (the objective elements inherent to it) and its cultural value (the things attributed to it by people). The Nara Document essentially expands on the categories of cultural value that can be attributed to a building and acknowledges that these values can vary in different cultural contexts. Therefore, authenticity came to be understood not as a description of the originality of material but as a measure of how well the building fulfils the values attributed to it.

3.3. After Nara: Nara + 20 and Cultural Relativism

The adoption of the Nara Document had a significant impact on heritage conservation, encouraging a transfer of agency to local communities rather than value being judged exclusively by conservation professionals (Poulios, 2015). It also influenced the broadening of authenticity and value classifications in other international heritage documents, including the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the 1999 revision to the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (Araoz, 2013).

However, gaps have been identified that still remain in global heritage discourse, and an anniversary meeting of experts gave birth to the Nara + 20 document in 2014 (Holtorf, Cornelius & Kono, 2015). Holtorf et al. described the renewed document as “a call for further discussion, research, and development of certain new and often controversial concepts and approaches to heritage conservation” (p. 140). Nara + 20 notes that the concept of cultural heritage develops over time and can be subject to multiple or evolving stakeholders (ICOMOS Japan, 2014). The constant evolution of these factors means that authenticity should be understood as a quality contingent on cultural concepts and therefore should be assessed periodically rather than only once. If heritage values are understood by Boccardi (2019) as things attributed to a building by people, then changing socio-cultural contexts will also change assessments of authenticity.

3.4. Dangers of the East/West Dichotomy

In the past decade, a growing body of literature has argued that the claimed division between Western and Eastern ways of thinking that prompted the Nara Document has become unproductive in international heritage dialogue. Additionally, some authors draw attention to similarities between heritage conservation practices in the two parts of the world to temper overly divisionist attitudes.

Taylor (2015) discusses the danger of reducing conservation philosophy to 'West' and 'East' or 'Intangible' and 'Tangible'. He notes that a heritage site is a medium for transmitting values attributed to it by a community or a culture — the protection of the site is motivated by a desire to maintain these values. The way in which the site embodies value is, Taylor explains, influenced by both the environmental and material context. Therefore, the cyclic renewal seen today at Ise Shrine and in the past throughout Japan is necessitated not purely by spiritual belief but also by the practical issues of building with untreated timber in a humid and warm environment.

Winter (2014) argues that an overemphasis on the differences between Eastern and Western heritage practices stemmed from a dissatisfaction with the application of universal values in Asia and a desire from that part of the world to amplify their cultural values in resistance. He warns against division spurred by broader geopolitical agendas as disregarding "more nuanced, fine-grained understandings of regional, cultural, religious and local variations in conservation practice" (p. 135).

Both Gao and Jones (2020) and Forster, Thomson, Richards, Pilcher and Vettese (2019) highlight similarities between Eastern and Western approaches to heritage conservation. Gao and Jones draw parallels between the importance of oral histories and genealogical connections for relating communities to architecture in Scotland with the spiritual character of Chinese architecture. They also point to the frequent maintenance of stone buildings by skilled craftspeople in Europe as being comparative to the restoration of wooden buildings in Asia. Forster et al. suggest that there are fundamental ideas of permanence in both Eastern and Western conservation philosophies, citing the pattern book, legibility in repair and respect for aged surfaces as common practices between the two regions.

3.5. Japanese Building Conservation in Practice

Japanese conservation practice was presented as a key example of the broader understanding of authenticity in Eastern heritage processes in the discussions preceding the Nara Document. There is a wide range of literature covering Japanese conservation philosophies but little about the potential for it to be transferred outside that country.

The history of conservation legislation in Japan began in the 19th century with the Meiji Restoration, which ended the reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate and opened Japan up to the Western world (Jinnai, 2017). However, concerns about the influence of Western ideas on Japanese culture soon led to a series of government interventions in the handling of cultural objects. A decree for the protection of antiquities in 1871 was followed by the distribution of subsidies for temple conservation in 1880 and the introduction of the Ancient Temples and Shrines Preservation Law in 1897 (Inaba, 2009). The law established a register of significant buildings and promoted the reinstatement of a buildings original appearance when conducting conservation work (Stubbs & Thomson; Park, 2013). It was expanded in 1950 by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, which still exists in amended form today (Boyle, 2019).

Inaba (2009) emphasises that from this period, the primary factor in architectural conservation in Japan has been the material authenticity of the building being conserved. He notes that the primary indicator of authenticity for inclusion on the national register is the value of existing material.

In Japan, the most significant divergence from prevailing Western conservation practice is the disassembly and reassembly (*Kaitai Shūri*) of important buildings, covered in detail by Fukuda (2017). *Kaitai Shūri* has been in practice for centuries, but since the 1897 Law has been carried out by engineers and accompanied by scholarly surveys and restoration reports about the disassembled components (Fukuda, 2017). The method has been necessary because of the extensive use of wood in Japanese architecture, which decays at a much quicker rate than the stone heritage of Europe. However, like Western practice, the aim is generally "to preserve as much of the historical fabric as is feasible" (Henrichsen, 2017, p. 271).



Figure 2 - A 19th century rebuilding ceremony at the Ise Grand Shrine. From (Utawaga Kuniyoshi, (1847-1852), *Ise Daijingu sengyo no zu* (Depiction of the Relocation of the Grand Shrine of Ise). Woodblock print. The British Museum: London.)

4. Case Studies

4.1. Ise Grand Shrine

The Ise Grand Shrine played a vital role at the Nara Conference in enabling Japanese delegates to explain how their conservation practice sometimes prioritised other values beyond the material in classifying authenticity. The shrine is known for its cyclical reconstruction process, called *Shikinen Sengū*, a tradition extremely rare today but once practised at temples throughout Japan (Inaba, 2009).

Reconstruction has occurred every 20 years since the establishment of the tradition in around 690 C.E. and involves the complete renewal of sixteen wooden shrines. (Adams, 1998). *Shikinen Sengū* is closely entwined with the Shinto religion and is motivated by the need to move the *kami* (deity) who lives in Naikū (the inner shrine) to a new home built on an identical site adjacent to the current shrine (Henrichsen, 2017; Reynolds, 2001). The reconstruction lasts eight years and incorporates over thirty Shinto rituals marking important steps in the construction process, such as the harvesting of trees

and installation of sacred building elements (Adams, 1998). Vital is the involvement of hundreds of thousands of worshippers, who travel from throughout Japan to take part in ritualised construction duties (Akagawa, 2016). One activity is the *Oshiroi ishi mochi-sai*, in which the worshippers each place a white pebble onto the ground around the new buildings (Adams, 1998).

A wide variety of traditionally trained craftspeople and carpenters are employed at Ise, and the cyclical reconstruction is a key element of the education of younger workers and transfer of traditional knowledge (Tange & Noboru, 1965). Naikū is constructed of a jointed wooden structure with a thatched roof and has been built to the same specifications each cycle, with entirely new material (Adams, 1998).

The Ise Grand Shrine demonstrates a conservation process that does not prioritise material authenticity. Instead, of greatest importance are the techniques used, and rituals followed in reconstructing each of the shrine buildings to an identical design over 1300 years. The reconstruction is situated

within a broader religious practice and embodies important Shinto themes such as purity and renewal (Henrichsen, 2017). Despite the new materials used in the latest reconstruction, the structures still elicit a sense of great reverence from followers of the Shinto religion and retain authenticity for that community.

Shikinen Sengū has enabled the longevity of an important religious site for over a thousand years. The successive rebuildings have meant that an ancient architectural style has been retained, and the traditional craft skills needed to execute it transferred in great detail down through generations. Additionally, an ancient religious practice has been perpetuated and able to continue in the same spatial context, at a site that otherwise would be subject to great material degradation.

4.2. Founder's Hall at Hokekyo-ji Temple

The Soshidō (Founder's Hall) at the Hokekyō-ji Temple in Chiba is notable for the significant alterations carried out on the material fabric over its lifetime. Built in 1678, the hall incorporated timber from a 14th century building that previously sat on the site. The Soshidō was damaged in an earthquake and then rebuilt in 1868 with large beams added for reinforcement (Larsen, 1994).

In 1987, repair work began on the building which initially involved partly dismantling the roof (Henrichsen, 2017). However, the presence of rot and sinking ground conditions meant that a complete disassembly was proposed to repair the pillars and foundation (Larsen, 1994). The roof was partly disassembled by the time wooden tablets found on the site revealed that the hall had undergone significant rebuilding in 1741 (Henrichsen, 2017). The original roof structure was found to be “two parallel gabled roofs, each with a ridge-beam” instead of the high single gabled roof previously thought to be original (Larsen, 1994, p. 123).

Since this double gable style of roof was extremely rare, only surviving in one other building, a decision was made to reconstruct the roof in this original style. While some parts of the original structure remained intact, the architects relied heavily on the other extant example, the Main Hall of Kibitsu Jinja Shrine (built in 1425), to define the specifics. Approximately 80% of the wooden components in the building were from the 17th century, but due to decay half had to be replaced with new timber to

match the originals. Timber was worked using traditional techniques similar to those used originally. An interior extension from 1931 and the reinforcement beams from 1868 were also removed in the reconstruction (Larsen, 1994).

The rebuilding of the Soshidō is an example of the widespread practice in Japan of returning heritage buildings to their original form, in this case viewed from a broader view of the value the building brings to the technical history of Japanese architecture. Authenticity was understood here as being tied to the original form and design of the building rather than the palimpsest of alterations made over its lifetime. However, formal authenticity can be called into question because the reconstruction relied on conjecture and so resembles neither the original nor the 18th century rebuild perfectly.

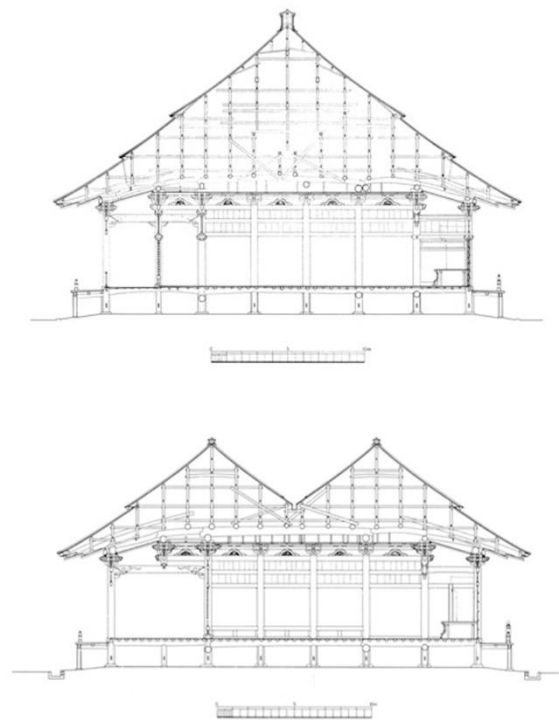


Figure 3 – The Founder's Hall at the Hokekyō-ji Temple before (above) and after (below) the rebuilding of the original roof form. From *(Authenticity in Architectural Heritage Conservation* (p. 267), Eds. N. Gutschow & K. Weiler, 2017, doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-30523-3_12).

4.3. Golden Hall at Hōryū-ji Temple

The Golden Hall (Kondō) of the Hōryū-ji Temple is considered the oldest surviving wooden building in the world, despite a history of dismantlements and reassemblies (Larsen & Marstein, 2016). Initially

built in the seventh century, the Buddhist hall is part of a site with almost fifty other monuments (UNESCO, n.d.-a). In 1993 UNESCO inscribed this site on the World Heritage List, citing the “masterpieces of wooden architecture” and their role in the history of both art and religion (UNESCO, n.d.-a). The Kondō employs a timber structure of columns that support the brackets on which the tiled roof is built (Kaneta, 1980).



Figure 4 – The Golden Hall at the Hōryū-ji Temple. From (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, by Andy M., n.d., Retrieved 2021, June, 9, from <https://www.britannica.com/art/Japanese-architecture/images-videos#/media/1/719164/242133>).

During World War II, the upper section of the hall, including the roof, was dismantled so repair work could be carried out (Larsen, 1994). Analysis of the dismantled wooden members and historical documents showed that the building had been disassembled and rebuilt with partially new material in the 1100s, in 1374 and in 1603 (Larsen & Marstein, 2016). The disassembly stalled when problems were experienced removing some of the original interior wall paintings, and in 1949 a fire broke out in the temple complex (Stubbs & Thomson, 2017). The lower sections of the building, which had not been dismantled, were severely damaged and the wooden components were charred to a depth of three centimetres (Larsen & Marstein, 2016).

Officials decided to reconstruct the Kondō to its original form, based on the extensive documentation done during the WWII deconstruction and archival information (Larsen, 1994). The desire to return to the original form is characteristic of Japanese heritage conservation after the first law was passed in the late 19th century (Henrichsen, 2017). The burnt lower section was dismantled, moved to a concrete warehouse nearby and rebuilt. New timber was used to reconstruct the lower part on the original site, and the members dismantled in WWII were reconstituted

in their original positions to form the upper part of the hall. Carpenters used the same wood (Japanese cypress) as used originally and employed many of the traditional tools and methods practiced in the seventh century (Larsen & Marstein, 2016).

The history of the Golden Hall represents some of the challenges of working with old timber buildings which have necessitated conservation techniques in Japan that differ from those accepted in the Western world. An expanded notion of authenticity is adopted here, allowing material to be replaced in favour of the continuity of the spiritual and societal functions of the place. However, it also highlights the rigour with which these conservation techniques are used to minimise the loss of the original fabric of the building.

At the Hōryū-ji Temple, material authenticity has been prioritised, but other cultural values also drawn on to support the site's longevity. It is estimated that “no more than fifteen to twenty per cent of the original materials exist in the present Hōryū-ji Kondō” (Larsen & Marstein, 2016, p. 15). Despite this, in their World Heritage List nomination for the Hōryū-ji site, ICOMOS representatives stated that “Japanese conservation practice conforms with established principles of authenticity in design, materials, techniques, and environment” (ICOMOS, 1992, p. 4). The only way to maintain the cultural values of the building was by sacrificing the material authenticity where necessary.

5. Discussion

Japanese conservation philosophy played an important role in conveying an alternative to the Eurocentrism of international heritage documents in the discussions preceding the Nara Document of Authenticity. The Ise Grand Shrine was presented at the 1994 conference, and attention was drawn to the practices of disassembly, reassembly and cyclic reconstruction in Japan. However, despite these practices dominating the global perception of Japanese conservation, such explicit challenges to the material authenticity priorities of the Venice Charter were only found in relation to valuable religious buildings. Nonetheless, the treatment of these buildings can help illustrate how a broader notion of authenticity could be employed in conservation practice to extend both the lifespan and social value of our buildings.

The expanded notion of authenticity expressed in the Nara Document was achieved by allowing for a wider range of cultural values (attributed by people) to be ascribed to the characteristics (inherent features) of a heritage building (Boccardi, 2019). Authenticity can be understood as the extent to which the characteristics collectively embody the values attributed to the building. All three of the case studies can be considered to rely on an expanded notion of authenticity to facilitate their conservation, however the cultural values ascribed to each of the buildings in relation to their heritage significance varies.



Figure 5 – A view of the Naikū of Ise Grand Shrine from the alternate site. From (*Ise, Prototype of Japanese Architecture* (p. 82), by Yoshio Watanabe, 1965, Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press.).

Common throughout the examples is the spiritual importance of the structures within functional temple or shrine sites. At the Naikū of Ise Grand Shrine, authenticity is judged based on how well the structure performs its spiritual function as the home of the deity who lives there. Due to the importance of purity to the Shinto religion and the natural decay of untreated wood, it is deemed necessary to reconstruct the shrine every 20 years so the structure can continue to fulfil its purpose. This spiritual authenticity is

deemed more important than the retention of historical material, which is all replaced. Similarly, after the Kondō at Hōryū-ji Temple was rebuilt after a fire, the continuation of religious activities meant the building was considered to retain the spiritual values it had previously embodied. The Soshidō at Hokekyō-ji Temple is significant because although used as a site of Buddhist religious practice, the radical renovation was motivated instead by a desire to return the building to its original form. The values attributed to the Soshidō are to do with the historical significance of the rare original roof form.

The expanded notion of authenticity understood in the three case studies allowed for significant disassemblies and reconstructions, which have contributed to the longevity of the structures. This practice has contributed to the retention of traditional craftsmanship and technical knowledge of ancient construction techniques to an extent that is rare globally. At the Ise Grand Shrine, the cyclical reconstruction has also contributed to keeping spiritual traditions alive. In this sense, the longevity of the structures at Ise (and to a lesser extent at Hōryū-ji and Hokekyō-ji) is in a symbiotic relationship with the longevity of the religion it supports. This suggests that an important element of longevity is the sociocultural context for its role in imbuing a building with cultural value, which in turn motivates conservation. An expanded notion of authenticity alone is insufficient to ensure longevity.

This expanded notion of authenticity allows the disassembly and reconstruction of building parts to occur more radically than accepted in a Western context. However, these techniques are also closely intertwined with the widespread use of timber in Japan, as opposed to the predominance of stone and masonry in a European context. It is unrealistic to believe that Japanese heritage practice can be directly transferable with the technical improbabilities of disassembling a heritage stone building.

Instead, in Western heritage contexts where material is less easily manipulated, considering how well the building performs its socio-cultural role as much as how authentic the material is could help ensure the survival of built heritage. Allowing material to be renewed or adaptations made to ensure a building can maintain a continuous role in society could help perpetuate the cultural values associated with it. This has already been recognised by UNESCO, who in 2007 added the Sydney Opera

House to the World Heritage List (UNESCO, n.d.-b). They acknowledged that the interior of the building could be changed to accommodate the evolving technology associated with its role as a performing arts center, a fundamental feature of the assessed 'Outstanding Universal Value' (ICOMOS, 2007). Several authors (Gao & Jones, 2020; Forster, Thomson, Richards, Pilcher & Vettese, 2019) note that similarities between Eastern and Western conservation philosophy and maintenance and adaptation are already established practices in the international heritage framework.

In a global environment of climate and economic precarity, the significant use of resources and money implicated in the vicennial rebuilding of the Ise Shrine should not be broadly replicated. Rather, a greater appreciation for intangible values could mean that buildings are better cared for and are allowed to accommodate the change which will ensure their continued use.

In parts of the world where buildings have been traditionally built with more ephemeral materials, such as South East Asia, Africa and parts of South America and Northern Europe, Japan's disassembly and reconstruction practices could be more directly transferable. The use of wood, mud or thatch means that these types of renewals could be supported but have been historically disapproved within the Eurocentricity of international heritage guidance.

Additionally, allowing broader notions of authenticity to be considered in classifying heritage buildings could have significance for the postcolonial agendas of many countries. In regions such as New Zealand and the South Pacific, indigenous worldviews already prioritise intangible aspects of heritage over the material authenticity of sites of significance (Serrano, 2012). However, the vast majority of conservation in these areas concerns European heritage sites. If rebuilt or renewed indigenous heritage sites were allowed to be assessed with the broader notion of authenticity of Japanese conservation philosophy, it could aid in elevating and affirming the value of these communities.

Ultimately, the heritage philosophy of the three Japanese case studies is unique to the spiritual (Shinto and Buddhist) ideas and social context of Japan. The Nara + 20 document extended thinking about authenticity to understand it as contingent on specific cultural concepts, meaning methods in one part of the world will never be fully transferable to

another. The value of the Nara Document was in expanding the considerations of authenticity to support cultural differences, so learnings from Japan should only be applied where they complement the existing cultural values of that place.

6. Conclusion

This paper sought to explore how a broader notion of authenticity could inform the longevity of heritage buildings in a Western conservation context. A literature review was conducted to understand the historical background of authenticity, and three case studies from Japan were assessed to understand the practical application of this subject. The research has shown that the practice of disassembly and re-assembly associated with Japan's heritage philosophy abroad is today confined to a small number of important religious structures. Nonetheless, the three case studies help illustrate a wider range of cultural values that can be attributed to a building.

It was found that an expanded notion of authenticity in heritage conservation philosophy is insufficient unless accompanied by a socio-cultural context which can imbue a building with the cultural value necessary to assess alternate modes of authenticity. All three of the case studies have spiritual importance to religious communities, but in other contexts, it will be necessary for heritage buildings to be situated within a context capable of continuously ascribing and receiving value to them.

Additionally, the wider understanding of authenticity in Japanese conservation is transferable at varying levels to heritage in the rest of the world. Allowing the disassembly and reconstruction of buildings could help greater inclusion in the heritage realm of valuable buildings in parts of the world where more ephemeral materials are common. It could also play a role in expanding heritage lists to include more indigenous sites in postcolonial contexts and help elevate those underrepresented communities. In places where the materiality of heritage is less easily altered, a focus on the role a building fulfils in wider society could support the longevity of that heritage.

The cultural values attributed to buildings vary widely throughout the world. Understanding that authenticity is tied to these values rather than purely the originality of material can allow a greater appre-

ciation of a wider range of heritage places and ensure they can continue to provide those values to their communities.

Future work could include a greater classification of the range of values attributable to built heritage and an investigation into the existing presence of these in a Western conservation setting.

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