

# ***Authenticity* and Architecture**

## **Representation and Reconstruction in Context**

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Robert Curtis Anderson  
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**Promotores:**

prof. dr. K. Gergen

prof. dr. A. de Ruijter

**Overige leden van de Promotiecommissie:**

prof. dr. V. Aebischer

prof. dr. E. Todorova

dr. J. Lannamann

dr. J. Storch



*Robert Curtis Anderson*

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**Cover Images (top to bottom):**

**Fantoft Stave Church, Bergen, Norway**

*photo by author*

**Ise Shrine Secondary Building, Ise-shi, Japan**

*photo by author*

**King Håkon's Hall, Bergen, Norway**

*photo by author*

**Kazan Cathedral, Moscow, Russia**

*photo by author*

**Walter Gropius House, Lincoln, Massachusetts, US**

*photo by Mark Cohn, taken from: UPenn Almanac, [www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes](http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes)*





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## Abstract

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Architecture is about aging well, about precision and *authenticity*.<sup>1</sup>  
- Annabelle Selldorf, *architect*

Throughout human history, due to war, violence, natural catastrophes, deterioration, weathering, social mores, and neglect, the cultural meanings of various architectural structures have been altered. This continuous change in our social environments is evidenced by the destruction of countless cities during WWII, the terrorist attacks on the *World Trade Center* in NYC, and in recent memory by the damage and loss created by the earthquake and tsunami in Japan and the Philippines, to name just a few. Our environments are constantly being altered, and these changes contribute to the disruption of our sense of continuity, our memories, and our shared meaning. Our reactions to these changes and the subsequent construction of multiple

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<sup>1</sup> David Netto, "The Form Mistress", *Wall Street Journal*, April 28, 2011, [online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704495004576265481351056202](http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704495004576265481351056202), (accessed on September 3, 2013).

narratives also vary according to the layers of cultural, historic, and artistic identity that have been disrupted. Among the various aspects of life, that have been challenged, are our perceptions of the *authentic*. We ask ourselves: What is now the “*real*”? What is the same as it once was? What has been made false? What has been erased? What is fantasy or fiction? What is our shared history?

What do we mean when we look at buildings and claim them to be *authentic*, real, or original? In asking this question, we begin to challenge the notion of *authenticity* and its various interpretations. Furthermore, what we come to identify as *authentic* in architecture and culture is rarely very original, and more often comprised of reconstructed narratives and a collusion of collective memories created to serve certain cultural, political, and artistic purposes. These competing claims and definitions are especially important to understand the multiple perspectives presented, and in challenging biases, fixed constructs, and preconceived meanings.

While collective memory and archival evidence may be primary sources for constructing the meanings of architectural structures and settings, sometimes repression and forgetting are required. In such cases, people reduce or omit portions of their complex histories to a single narrative for many reasons, including touristic appeal. Their traditions, history, and cultural events may be selectively omitted or marginalized, thus, suppressing the richness that came before.

Of particular interest to this research are the varying layers of relationships found in collective memory, archival evidence, and *invented traditions*. This research examines how they intersect in the creation (and re-creation) of the target’s identity,

history, and significance. To what extent does the target achieve *authenticity*? In considering these complex issues, the preliminary focus will be on a number of architectural examples in America, Europe, and Asia that address varying aspects of *authenticity* through reconstruction and restoration. This initial investigation will then culminate in an in-depth exploration of the notion of *authenticity* in relation to the *Fantoft Stave Church* in Norway and the *Ise Shrines* in Japan.

By studying these seemingly disparate examples, I hope to generate a discourse in the design community, primarily, as to both the merits (and lack thereof) of various representations and reconstructions in their respective contexts, and the nature of *authenticity*.





## Preface

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[You] begin to realize that the important determinant of any culture is after all – the spirit of place.<sup>2</sup>

- Lawrence Durrell

Each architectural period has typically adopted, incorporated, and revived aspects of previous cultures, styles, and technologies, progressively building upon that which came before. For example, the architecture of the ancient Romans, which has traditionally been identified by vaults and arches, was in actuality culturally influenced by earlier Greek interpretation and style (and one could even take that further back to the Egyptians and even further to the Sumerians). Regardless of its identification as Greek or Roman, its architectural meaning can often be varied and subjective, and based on a host of variables, even in the act of creation.

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Durrell, *Spirit of Place*, (London, England: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1969), 156.

Cultures throughout history have also created meaning through their buildings and landmarks, and architects have always shared a vision that later could be stereotyped as belonging to them or their community as a whole. The creation and interpretation of architecture has typically incorporated value judgments, metaphorical inspirations, personal perceptions and tastes, historical contexts, cultural assumptions, and research into various functional requirements. A key component of determining the various functional requirements in the design process is architectural programming, the preparatory research that addresses sociological, contextual, and psychological issues of various user groups crucial to a building's success.

According to architect Robert Hershberger, author of *"The Architecture Student's Handbook of Professional Practice"*:

Architectural programming is the thorough and systematic evaluation of the interrelated values, goals, facts, and needs of a client's organization, facility users, and the surrounding community.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout history, architectural programming has also played an important "story-telling" role, as a repository of traditions and cultural ideas, passed down through the centuries by reflecting and documenting its social context. For example, the Greek revival movement in America (ca. 1820-1845) was architecturally fashioned in honor of the first democracy, Greece, as an aspiration of America's newfound democracy and as a form of national legitimacy on the world stage.

Architectural historians are well aware of this programmatic relationship between individual meaning and value and a building's social setting and context. Put simply,

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Hershberger (for the AIA: American Institute of Architects), *The Architecture Student's Handbook of Professional Practice*, (Chichester, England: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2009), section 6.3.



this meaning of an architectural structure cannot be traced to just one aspect of experience, but must take into account a range of layered ideas, images, feelings, memories, and so on, that contribute to the experience as a whole. Architectural programming thus allows architects to look at those diverse layers that contribute to the broader experience of the structure. Even to the untrained eye, by examining architectural forms, one can become aware of external (socio-cultural) and internal (programmatic and aesthetic design) influences. This broader awareness in architecture is often referred to as the *genius loci*, or *spirit of place*.

Social constructionism (a micro-social theory of how knowledge is constructed to make sense of the social world) opens an additional way of understanding the meaning of architecture. It invites exploration of the ways in which individuals or societies “construct” or perceive their surrounds. Social constructionism emphasizes the variety of ways social meaning is created, institutionalized, and made into tradition. Entering into these social understandings and perceptions of architecture are matters of history, aesthetics, nostalgia, myth, and commercialism. A social constructionist inquiry (of questioning *taken-for-granted* assumptions and singular perspectives) may reveal a diverse layer of voices and issues, and enable us to recognize various cultural biases.

One such bias in architecture, of significance to this study, centers on issues of *authenticity* and the associated origin stories that often simplify the complex history and lineage of architectural object, place, or period, in order to suppress the many dissociated and disconnected meanings that have contributed to its existence. An architectural object, similar to a painting, offers multiple viewpoints into understanding, and if isolated from its cultural and historic context, can begin to feel meaningless. Just

pinpointing an *authenticating* origin source may simplify a context, but it can also oversimplify a rich history of what transpired over time. A building has meaning by how it was used and experienced by a community, and not just by the intentions of the individual who created it.

So why is the concept of *authenticity* so important? According to Michael Drew, who writes for the “*Huffington Post*”:

We live in an age when people are moved less by spectacle and more by what they consider to be actuality – what feels real.<sup>4</sup>

In architecture (as with other disciplines), what *feels real* relies on various tangible complexities that are interpreted through a myriad of social and cultural traditions, related to time and place (often described as the *spirit of place*). It also has much to do with defining the integrity and identity of a building (a form of mental encoding), and what it represents to the viewer.

This encoded essence, in architectural *authenticity*, is primarily situated in how its deliberateness and intentionality is constructed through experiences, and subsequently how it contributes and relates to various social or cultural traditions. Architect, Darnie Rajapaksa, in “*Authenticity in Architecture: an Examination of the Theoretical Background and its Application*”, provides an analogous example:

There is for virtually everyone a deep association with the consciousness of the environment where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particularly moving experiences. This association seems to contribute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security [and] a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Drew, “The Argument for Authenticity in Popular Culture”, *Huffington Post*, March 4, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Darnie Rajapaksa, *Authenticity in Architecture: an Examination of the Theoretical Background and its Application*, <http://dl.lib.mrt.ac.lk/theses/handle/123/251>, Abstract, (accessed on October 2, 2013).

This emphasis on orientation, in identifying *authenticity*, is also very important in the phenomenological writings of the Norwegian architect, Christian Norberg-Schulz, who is interested in the various sensory perceptions that are produced by and contribute to the built environment.<sup>6</sup> Norberg-Schulz also believes that the dialogue of experiences, between people and buildings, and among cultures (both internal and external), can greatly define architecture.<sup>7</sup> For Norberg-Schulz, our *authentic* existence, with regard to architecture, is then phenomenologically located in the experiences and sensory perceptions of our social and physical environments.

The goal of this present writing is twofold; first to demonstrate how processes of social construction and elements of architectural programming create a broad, multi-layered perception of *authenticity* in the creation, generation, and interpretation of architecture. The second goal is to explore how a range of unique voices has influenced social understanding and perceptions of architecture.

In this dissertation, the *Fantoft Stave Church* in Norway and the *Ise Shrines* in Japan are two specific reconstructions from very different parts of the world. They will be examined in the context of *authenticity* and its broader understanding and application. By comparing these seemingly disparate examples, a discussion will be generated – relevant to the design community and other interested participants – so that future design decisions and interpretations may encompass a greater understanding of diverse public needs and complex historically shaped spaces.

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<sup>6</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1996, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Sam Sudy, "Heidegger, Norberg-Schulz, Pallasmaa: Writing, Theory, and Discourse About Architecture", *Arch 607 Option II Seminar: Blog*, <http://blogs.uoregon.edu/arch607/>, University of Oregon, (accessed on October 2, 2013).



### **Grand Narratives and *Authenticity***

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[Be] suspicious of single perspectives, which, like grand narratives, provide totalizing accounts of a world too complex to be reduced to a unified point of view.<sup>8</sup>

- Martin Jay

Quite often the West *claims* an authoritative right and historical lineage to its art and architecture, and deems contributions made by other cultures as less significant than its own. Overall this constitutes a form of marginalization. This cultural imperialism is not just limited to an external East-West divide, for it even exists regionally within the regions of the West. For example, when EuroDisney was completed at the outskirts of Paris, there were internal cries of inappropriateness to this seemingly foreign-born and artificial style of architecture. The French frowned upon this transported American commercialism and architecture and viewed it as “*culturally*

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, (London, England: University of California Press, 1994), 545.

*insensitive*”,<sup>9</sup> and as a superficial product of American consumerism, wholly lacking in French style and pedigree. In effect, it was *inauthentic* to European ideals.

This seemingly condescending attitude toward the *inauthentic* (as well as American architecture and culture, in general) is disingenuous in light of European examples of WW II reconstructions, architectural revivals (*i.e.*, Gothic Revival, Neo-Classicism, etc.), and post-historicized recreations, in both the West and the East. One might say that we have here a form of suspended historical amnesia, one that contradictorily strives for both nostalgia and a simultaneously *fixed-in-time* urban ideal or building form that transcends historical and temporal context.

### **Highclere Castle: Jacobean or Elizabethan?**

With regard to the issue of suspended historical amnesia, one might take for example Highclere Castle, the manor house featured in the BBC television series, “*Downton Abbey*”. Many people assume it to be an ancient castle, passed down through the generations. However, Highclere Castle was built in 1839 by Sir Charles Barry (architect of the British Houses of Parliament), and was constructed in the highly collaged *Jacobethan* style. This Victorian period amalgamation is properly classified as a mixed English Renaissance revival style of the much earlier Jacobean and Elizabethan styles (of the late 16<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries); hence the name *Jacobethan*.

The manor house gives current visitors and television viewers the impression

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<sup>9</sup> Henry A. Giroux and Grace Pollock, *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 184.

that the castle is historically much older than it is, and is therefore not seen as an idealized recreation. This intentional confusion, colluded between the architect and the owner, is primarily brought about by the carefully replicated architectural attributes of the Jacobean and Elizabethan periods, in the *Jacobethan* revival style, thus giving owners the allure of aristocratic status with a sense of social legitimacy (and read as a form of architectural *authenticity*). Put simply, if one could not attain an historic house in the name of the family and status, the replication of one was just as acceptable.

While revivals and reconstructions have often proliferated the architectural landscape without cause for concern as to plagiarism or *authenticity*, the notion of an architectural replica or replacement can often challenge historical contexts, perspectives, narratives, and *authentication*. Is the public aware of the discrepancies posed by these structures, and is that awareness important to the historical and social narrative being told at historic properties? Sometimes it is, and other times not.

### **Dilemmas in Reconstructions and Reinterpretations**

From an American perspective, a hypothetical parallel scenario, with regard to *authenticity* and suspended amnesia, would be to recreate the World Trade Center in a pre-9/11 context. In fact, there were calls for just such a reconstruction of the towers, proposed by numerous architects and city planners.<sup>10</sup> A reconstruction of this magnitude would be misleading and a revisionist oversimplification of the site and the architectural lineage and history of the towers. How would visitors see the new towers,

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<sup>10</sup> Keith B. Richburg, “Rebuilding at World Trade Center Site Long Delayed”, *Washington Post*, Friday, September 11, 2009.

as original or reconstructed? Would one experience the structure as *authentic*, if that was of concern, and what would the benefit be, and to whom? What meanings are imbued?

The concern for historical accuracy, narrative depiction, and *authenticity* in architectural sites is also evident, for example, in the rebuilding of war-ravaged Dresden and Warsaw's *Old Town*; the controversial re-invented and replicated interpretations of historical life at *Colonial Williamsburg* (realized by John D. Rockefeller Jr.); *the Paul Revere House*, in Boston; the historicized creation of the Japanese trading village of *Okage Yokochō*, along the Oharai-machi (newly built by the confectionary company Akafuku, as a marketing tool); the ritually perpetual destruction and rebuilding of the *Ise Shrines*, in Ise-Shi; the *Fantoft Stave Church*, in Bergen, Norway; and the countless *Skansens* (open-air architecture museums) that dot Scandinavia. Last to mention, are the many iconic and presumed historic churches that have also been resurrected in and around Red Square in Moscow.

When applied to either Western or Eastern traditions, I would argue that any authoritative and privileged notion of *authenticity* in architecture – or fixed notions of an uninterrupted architectural lineage – is damaging to the full breadth of a building's history and context. With regard to historic architectural elements it is historically and culturally misleading, as well as disguising and confusing, to reconstruct experiences into a simplified narrative without accounting for the discontinued discrepancies in a building's timeline. An equivalent condition is best demonstrated by Walt Disney's *Epcot Center*, a theme park and cultural fair, guised as a Utopian city of the future, and



monikered from the acronym of its full name: *Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow*.

Furthermore, this *so-called* Disneyfication, in the recreation and reconstruction of history through architectural examples, pervades all cultures, despite its most vocal critics. Perhaps the previously mentioned examples and their settings are meant to reconnect or *nostalgize* our past, and to legitimize the allure of the *authentic*.

### Origin Myths and *Authenticity*

This search for the *authentic* in architecture parallels the *classical* myth of the origins of architecture as defined in ancient times by the Roman architect Vitruvius, in his pivotal treatise *Ten Books on Architecture*. Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen subsequently idealized the Vitruvian myth for architects in his depiction of the *Primitive Hut (Adam's Hut in Paradise)*, in the frontispiece of Marc Laugier's "*Essay on Architecture*".



"*Primitive Hut (Adam's Hut in Paradise)*", by Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen, from: "*Essay on Architecture*" 1755, by Marc Laugier

The rediscovery of Vitruvius' work, in the scriptorium of Charlemagne's palace, during the Carolingian Renaissance of the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, had a far-reaching influence on the design of various structural elements and proportioning systems employed by the many architects of the Renaissance. This influence subsequently fueled the rise of Neo-Classicism in the Age of Enlightenment. The appeal of Vitruvius' work to Neo-Classical architects can also be seen as a search for

meaning, order, and a response to the developing crisis of modernity, and a world fraught with anxiety, turmoil, warfare, and destruction.

Accordingly, Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture* contains several origin myths, based upon the conjectured origins of assembly and communication in society, and suspiciously attributed to the accidental discovery of fire by prehistoric man. In Book II, Chapter I, Vitruvius states that:

In the assembly... they were led to the consideration of sheltering themselves from the seasons, some by making arbours with the boughs of trees, some by excavating caves in the mountains, and others in imitation of the nests and habitations of swallows, by making dwellings of twigs interwoven and covered with mud or clay. From observation of and improvement on each other's expedients for sheltering themselves, they soon began to provide a better species of huts. It was thus that men, who are by nature of an imitative and docile turn of mind, and proud of their own inventions, gaining daily experience also by what had been previously executed, vied with each other in their progress towards perfection in building.<sup>11</sup>

Vitruvius is outwardly suggesting that mankind has a primeval need to establish its roots, very much in the manner of a biblical *creation narrative*. Both share metaphorical similarities in suggesting that what originates in nature is more *authentic*. His position also functions to explain and moralize secular experiences as both sacred and divine, in line with the ideology and teachings of a pre-Enlightenment church.

Consequently, our secularized post-Enlightenment search for meaning and *authenticity* can be seen as a response to the broader crisis of modernity. Lionel Trilling, in "*Sincerity and Authenticity*", suggests that because the word *authenticity*:

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<sup>11</sup> Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *The Architecture of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in Ten Books (Ten Books on Architecture)*, translated by Joseph Gwilt, Book II, Chapter I: 'Of the origin of building', (London, UK: Priestley and Weale, 1826), 38.

has become part of the moral slang of our day [and] points to the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existences and of individual existences [defined as both *reality* and *being*].<sup>12</sup>

Trilling implies that we have lost a sense of *existence* and *meaning* in our cultural traditions and their associated references, and that our current search is to find identity and continuity with our past. Reminiscent is the origin quest of the Bible and the state of purity suggested by the setting of the Garden of Eden.

Pulitzer Prize winning architecture critic, Ada Louis Huxtable also comments on this condition, in "*The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion*", that:

To lose history is to lose, place, identity, and meaning. But continuity can be achieved only if the past is integrated into the contemporary context in a way that works and matters. Our awareness and appreciation of historic buildings and neighborhoods must be coupled with a sensitivity to and desire for their continued relevance and use, for their "connectedness," for the way they bridge the years and the continuum of social, cultural, urban, and architectural history.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout her book, she offers many interesting observations on this issue; however, more important is the notion that historical continuity and *authenticity* must be physically apparent and tangible in architecture. Multi-layered complexities contribute to a richer and more *authentic* meaning of the *spirit of place*.

## Conclusion

As I propose, attempts by various critics, historians, and leaders to declare what is or is not *authentic* in architecture and its contextual setting, are not only misguided,

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<sup>12</sup> Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 93.

<sup>13</sup> Ada Louis Huxtable, *The Unreal America*, (New York City, NY: The New Press, 1997), 25.

but they can adversely discredit those who are judged as *inauthentic*. According to the controversial architectural sociologist Andrew Potter, in “*The Authenticity Hoax*”:

there really is no such thing as authenticity, not in the way it needs to exist for the widespread search to make sense. Authenticity is a way of talking about things in the world, a way of making judgments, staking claims, and expressing preferences about our relationships to one another, to the world, and to things.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, the significance and meaning of what is or is not deemed *authentic* can differ greatly across various cultural, religious, and social groups. The historical timelines and the inherent values of those histories must be carefully observed from multiple viewpoints and experiences, to determine the full diversity of what constitutes *authentic* meaning. For this inquiry, all of these circumstances are worth further investigation and scrutiny.

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax*, (New York City, NY: Harper Collins), 2010, 13.

## **The Social Construction of Architecture**

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[The] very notion of architecture is a construct that comes from Europe, and from Europe of the last few centuries at that. As soon as I start looking at the buildings of other places, other times, and counting them as 'architecture' (with or without the capital A) I am subsuming them within a category invented in Europe. By even acknowledging that they are architecture, I am judging them according to Western criteria of architectural excellence; I am appropriating them into the Western-constructed category 'architecture', a category that is governed by a Western canon of rules and criteria.<sup>15</sup>

- Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne

In the study of architecture, the Western Canon has for centuries dominated much academic thought and research. The Western Canon is a constructed narrative, and in the minds of some architectural historians it is a concept that has often excluded alternative cultural and architectural voices.

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<sup>15</sup> Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking*, (New York City, NY: Routledge), 2006, 171.

The collective cultural works produced in Greece, Italy, France, and England has typically defined the Western Canon (though many would even object to this selective geographic categorization). Despite this tradition, there are critical dissenters. Bernard M. Knox, in “*The Oldest Dead White European Males and Other Reflections on the Classics*” offers objections against the perceived universality of the Western Canon:

Advocates of multiculturalism and... feminism, among others, have denounced the traditional canon... that has so long served as the educational base for Western societies, repudiating it not only as sexist and racist but even as the instrument of ideological *Gleichschaltung* [authoritative coordination] used by a ruling class to impose conformity.<sup>16</sup>

The Western Canon, through its many years of compounded academic research and enquiry, and as specifically defined by the Classics, has come to reframe architecture and its history. This is at the exclusion and expense of the East and its corresponding narratives and cultures. Yet, even the terms East, West, as well as the Western Canon, are Eurocentric by its geographic reference and denotes an authoritative religious overtone in its canonical listing of perennial cultural and historic treasures, deemed to be of universal importance to all. Ultimately, the Western Canon, and its related histories, is just another form of cultural privileging, in which “all competitive voices are either suppressed, or shown to be wrong.”<sup>17</sup>

The Canon also poses a deeper issue, with regard to constructed realities. According to Chris Lawrence, in an article titled, “*Thinking Makes It So*”:

We have a conundrum. On the one hand an artistic canon is as flimsy as the emperor’s new clothes – only there because people say it is there. On

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<sup>16</sup> Bernard M. Knox, *The Oldest Dead White European Males and Other Reflections on the Classics*, (London, England: W. W. Norton and Company, Ltd.), 1993, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction*, (London, England: Sage Publications, Ltd.), 2009, 66.

the other hand it is rock-solid. Western culture is a huge and irremovable component of the world we all inhabit, with a large part of why our world is the way it is being due to the 'Western canon', or at least to an inter-related set of Western canons. If the canon or canons had been different, our world would have been different and so would we.<sup>18</sup>

This brings about a very fascinating example that reframes and challenges *taken-for-granted* assumptions.

## The Narrative of Neo-Classicism

In New England, and throughout the U.S., we often romanticize the town green surrounded by picket fences and white painted wooden churches in the *Greek revival style* (ca. 1830). As a still fledgling democracy in the 1830's, the U.S. looked back to the temples of ancient Greece, the first democracy, for prowess and architectural inspiration. At this same time in Europe, much of the ancient world was also being rediscovered and analyzed, and adapted to a host of Neo-Classical buildings.

Jump ahead to the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when various scientific investigations into the original colors of ancient architecture were revealed by microscope in the pores of these stone buildings. For



*Parthenon frieze (with and without added color), Athens, Greece, 438 B.C., taken from: [timetrips.co.uk/parthenon.htm](http://timetrips.co.uk/parthenon.htm)*

centuries, archaeologists and architects assumed that buildings like the Parthenon, in Athens (see image above), were as white as the stone on the ruins. Previously, many

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<sup>18</sup> Chris Lawrence, "Thinking Makes It So", *The Journalist*, v. 1.9, <http://thinkingmakesitso.wordpress.com/2010/04/02/canon-to-the-right-of-them/>, (accessed on August 2, 2013).

scholars conjectured that if Michelangelo's sculptures during the Renaissance were not painted, then classical architecture must follow the same constructed logic of being pure white. Clearly this was mistaken!

In New England, as with elsewhere in the world, architecture followed the accepted pre-existing Neo-Classical narrative, without scant thought to the idea that buildings did not have to be only in white. Re-imagine a New England town green, flanked by buildings with the re-discovered colors of the Parthenon. A different constructed narrative and architectural history would certainly have pervaded. Therefore, universal truths, like the Western Canon, must certainly be challenged.



*New England Town Green (in situ and in Parthenon Colors), rendered image created by author*

In architecture, as with other disciplines, research into stories and alternate influences provides for a more encompassing and richer understanding of architectural context, rather than the motives and biases of historical reframing. The diversity of information gathered can also offer a valuable tool for future reflection on design and its history.



## The Architectural Appropriation of Western Icons

Another example of the permeating bias and strength of the Western Canon is noted in the current design of many copycat satellite towns in China, all of which bear a distinctively European look.

Interestingly, this appropriation is due in

part to the demands of a developing consumer and tourism culture in China; as well as being hampered by a variety of government travel restrictions, and Western allure.



Left: Venice in China (note the Chinese billboard), and Right: Venice, Italy, taken from: "Copycat Construction", The Financial Times, January 25, 2013.

Ruth Morris, in "Why China Loves to Build Copycat Towns", for the BBC radio magazine-show *The World*, notes that:

Thames Town was built as part of Shanghai's "One City, Nine Towns" scheme, which saw a cluster of satellite towns built around the city, each in a different international style. Elsewhere in China, there is a replica Eiffel Tower, a mock Tower Bridge – even a recreation of Stonehenge. And last year, a replica of the entire Austrian alpine village of Hallstatt sprung up in the province of Guangdong. The original is a UNESCO World Heritage site.<sup>19</sup>

Curiously, why would China elect to build recreations of iconic European architectural sites, such as *Hallstatt*, Austria, *Paris*, France, and *Venice*, Italy, especially with such a rich architectural heritage of its own? While China is "well



Left: Hallstatt, Austria, and Right: Hallstatt Reimagined, Guangdong, China, images taken

<sup>19</sup> Ruth Morris, "Why China Loves to Build Copycat Towns", *The World* (BBC and Public Radio International), [www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23067082](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23067082), (accessed on June 30, 2013).

known for its pirated DVD's and fake iPhones"<sup>20</sup>, the replicated cultural icons may speak more to a rebalancing and reclaiming of power, in its competition with the West, by engaging in the cultural currency and architectural icons of its global rivals.

Jack Carlson, in "*China's Copycat Cities*", for the magazine *Foreign Policy*, confirms this strategy:

The ancient parallels for these copycat projects suggest that they are not mere follies, but monumental assertions of China's global primacy.<sup>21</sup>

So strong is the draw and appeal of the Western Canon, that it has come to eclipse the narratives and traditions of other nations, as a form of cultural imperialism, especially in light of the acceptance that China has given to Western cultural traditions. In many respects, these are *invented traditions* and a construct of China's worldview of itself.

One could even infer that China feels that the Western socio-political economic stage is where to compete, rather than have the West compete on the Chinese stage; somewhat dangerous and dismissive of the cultural and architectural heritage of China's *Forbidden City* in favor of copies of *Venice*, Italy or *Hallstatt*, Austria.

Architectural appropriation is not exclusive to the Chinese. Vivien Burr, in "*Social Constructionism*", also notes that there is an:

implicit or explicit imperialism and colonialism in which western ways of seeing the world are automatically assumed to be the right ways, which it then attempts to impose on others.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ruth Morris, "Why China Loves to Build Copycat Towns", *The World (BBC and Public Radio International)*, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23067082](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23067082), (accessed on June 30, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Jack Carlson, "China's Copycat Cities", *Foreign Policy*, [www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/11/29/chinas\\_imperial\\_plagiarism](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/11/29/chinas_imperial_plagiarism), (accessed on November 29, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Vivien Burr, *Social Constructionism*, (Hove, England: Routledge), 2003, 7.

Imposed and disconnected historical narratives are not limited to any one culture. At the founding of the U.S., many new public buildings began to emulate the grand manors of Europe, with compositions collaged and comprised of a variety of details.

Some public buildings are even blatant copies of well-known structures in Europe, such as the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee, constructed in 1897, as a full-scale replica of the



*Parthenon, Nashville, Tennessee, Dins moor and Hart, 1897, taken from: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon,\\_Nashville.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Parthenon,_Nashville.JPG)*

ancient Parthenon in Athens, Greece. While originally built as a trade and industrial fair focal point for the Tennessee Centennial and International Exposition, it was built to reflect both the communal and worldview that Nashville has of itself as the *Athens of the South*. World Fairs are themselves emblematic of the various symbolic and constructed meanings employed in the marketing of fair structures, similar to the many attachments associated with the Parthenon in Greece, and its siting on the Acropolis.

As with both China and Tennessee, the reproduction of significant European architectural works appears to be more of a collective economic vision among developers, and a bias influenced by the dominance of the Western Canon towards cultural icons, but it could also be seen as a government ideal to sway local traditions and impressions. Besides the lens of economics, both instances are also embedded with a multitude of additional meanings, both individually and communally, and are thus clearly demonstrative of architectural forms that are socially constructed.

## Constructed Meaning and the Achievement of Community

Sheila McNamee, a professor of human communication and social constructionist theory, outlines the concept of social construction in her work, *“Research as Social Construction; Transformative Inquiry”*:

The main premise of social construction is that meaning is not an individual phenomenon. It is not located in the private mind of a person, nor does one person unilaterally determine it. Meaning (and thus reality), to the constructionist, is an achievement of people coordinating their activities together.<sup>23</sup>

McNamee, with regard to social traditions, further adds that social constructionism:

urges us to attend to the traditions; the communities, the situated practices of the participants at hand – that is, to the local understandings – in identifying what becomes real, true, and good. To attend to traditions, communities, and situated practices requires a constant flexibility on the part of those involved. Where the purpose of modernist theory and practice is to solve problems... the purpose of social construction, as a discursive option, is to explore what sorts of social life become possible when one way of talking and acting is employed instead of another. The constructionist alternative is a relational discourse.<sup>24</sup>

The meaning embedded in an architectural structure is comprised of multiple layers formed by the history and traditions of various communities. Architecture has historically been an achievement of a community or an individual; a statement of value as a testament or memorial. While developed in this context, the architectural experience has always been communal.

Thus we find multiple subjective meanings and experiences, with little necessary consensus. The meaning is not the possession of the individual, but of society and its multiple traditions. These traditions, too, are reinvented over time, and thus the

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<sup>23</sup> Sheila McNamee, “Research as Social Construction: Transformative Inquiry”, *Saúde & Transformação Social (Health & Social Change)*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 14.

meanings found within the structures. It is an *invented tradition*, constructed of those various layers

## Norwegian Romanticism and the Construction of *Authenticity*

With regard to *invented tradition*, and the numerous layers of context and meaning that accompany these fictions, the architecture and the history of Norway is a good example to consider. Norway geographically resides just outside of the strict geographic definition of the Western Canon, only becoming independent in 1905, from Sweden (and previously Denmark), after striving for years to find its own voice, politically, culturally, and artistically. Norway's search for independence also coincided with the National Romantic style and period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



Map of Norway, drawing by author

National Romanticism, in the Scandinavian countries, is primarily defined by the cultural and artistic expression of various social and political aspirations, at a time of great social and political change, informed by iconic and ancient cultural precedents, believed to be representative of the spirit of the people. Experimental in its expression of these ideals, Norwegian architects took cues from its medieval architectural forms, and struggled through their version of National Romanticism. During this time, and removed from the primacy of the developing Western Canon of continental Europe, Norwegian artistic and architectural forms prompted much debate in the construction of what was to be deemed an *authentic* national and cultural identity. Various national

groups had their respective points of view on Norwegian identity, with the context often dependent on the framing of cultural issues pertinent to those groups and their respective historical and political settings.

Language, art, architecture, and literature were reanalyzed and reclaimed through cultural filters believed to erase the imposed cultural, historical, and political layers of Swedish and Danish rule. This outside imposition and occupation were also deemed corruptive in the determination of an *authentic* Norwegian tradition. To many, the search for a purely Norwegian expression of culture was of utmost importance to the burgeoning new nation. As a result, Norwegians turned to the medieval period for architectural and artistic inspiration, which was believed to offer the most original and outwardly *authentic* national ideas, free of the many externally imposed and constructed layers of meaning.

The *stave church*, from the Middle Ages, is a specific example of an iconic and original Norwegian design. It was during the National Romantic period that the *stave church* came to inspire a multitude of new building forms in Norway because of its similar structural and aesthetic detailing. This new style became known as *dragestilen* (the dragon style), a form of Norwegian architecture reconciled from medieval elements. This style also drew upon other external cultural identities, including the alpine

architecture of Switzerland and numerous other vernacular wooden buildings of



"Gol Stave Church", Gol, Norway, replica ca. 1980, photo by author



northern Europe. This hybridization with Swiss architecture clearly demonstrates an *invented tradition*, and a practicality for similar mountainous environments.

Architectural historian and theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz notes, in “*Nightlands: Nordic Building*”, that *dragestilen*:

was not a replication of its Swiss prototype. Neither the chalet of the Alps nor the farmhouses of Emmental and Simmental were imitated directly, that is, as gestalt; the Swiss traits consisted instead in a formal and constructive vocabulary that could be assembled in various ways and accommodate the character of a foreign place. Indeed, the style manifested itself differently from country to country, though its basic features remained. The reference... was thus of a general nature.<sup>25</sup>

In many respects, *dragestilen* is an *invented tradition*, in that it was created from an amalgamation of the initial inspiration of the Norwegian *stave church* along with ideas taken from Swiss chalet buildings, Danish baronial estates, Finnish log cabins, and Russian turreted churches. Today, *dragestilen* architecture is considered one of the most *authentic* cultural forms, identifiable with Norway. The Dalen Hotel, is a good example of *dragestilen*, especially in its use of layered rooflines, deep covered porches, and crested dragons, all reminiscent of the medieval *stave church*.



"Dalen Hotel", Dalen, Norway, 1894, architect: Haldor Larsen Børve, (example of *dragestilen*), photo by author

<sup>25</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1996, 123.

Barbara Miller Lane in “*National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*” furthers the discussion on *invented tradition*:

The ideas of... ‘invention of tradition’ and of the desire for an ‘imagined community’ are especially useful in understanding the eagerness of National Romantic architects to [plunder] the earliest periods of the national past and their willingness to incorporate among the sources of their architecture a mix of medieval and pre medieval traditions. The emphasis on the importance of regionalism to the formation of national feeling also helps in understanding the role of domestic architecture within the National Romantic Movement.”<sup>26</sup>

It was this *authentic* national feeling that many architects strove to realize in the development of *invented traditions*.

### ***Invented Traditions***

To understand the important contribution that *invented tradition* offers to the discussion on architecture and *authenticity*, we must define the concept further. The concept of *invented tradition*, was first developed by historian and social theorist Eric Hobsbawm, in “*The Invention of Tradition*”:

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by... accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to [implant] certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas the complexities of an architectural *invented tradition* are not explicitly specified by Hobsbawm, other than as a cultural phenomena, an *invented tradition* can

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<sup>26</sup> Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 2000, 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, editors, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 1983, 1-2.



also be looked at as another attempt to determine *authenticity* and origins, in part due to constructed collected memories, and parallel to what Hobsbawm calls *continuity* with the past.

Perhaps *continuity* is a key element in determining an *authentic* architectural legacy. In Norway, the issue of *continuity* is somewhat contradicted by the fact that many *stave churches* have been rebuilt or reconnected. This disputable *continuity* is very much the case with *the Fantoft Stave Church*, in Bergen, which was destroyed by arsonists in 1992, and then subsequently rebuilt following the traditional building methods and materials. This chronological break



Old Postcard of the *Fantoft Stave Church*, undated and unknown photographer

with the past is what often challenges the *authentic* nature of the *Fantoft Stave Church* in the minds of its visitors. This is a curious conundrum in Norway in light of the many cultural and artistic traditions that have been re-invented and re-appropriated, and which have suffered from various discontinuities with the past.

In Norway this desire for an autonomous social identity during the National Romantic period allowed for the development of many new traditions. Among the various constructed traditions was the invention of a wholly Norwegian language (see image at right) from the root language of the Vikings: Old Norse (and separate from Swedish and Danish), the creation and documentation of various stories and folk tales from the literary traditions of their respective regional



**"New King Wants New Language"**  
Boston Transcript, 1905, taken  
from: [nordic-drifter.tumblr.com](http://nordic-drifter.tumblr.com)

communities, and a new revival style in architecture. A jolt of energy was given to old forms in the creation of a modern sovereign identity.

Influenced by a variety of reexamined societal values and national reinterpretation, traditions that had been assumed dead in Norway, seemed revived and uniquely celebrated during the National Romantic period; they were influenced by a variety of reexamined societal values and national re-interpretations. Previously static and older forms (seen as *taken-for-granted*) now begin to bear new ideas and hold richer meanings for a modern society. Clearly, the *social construction* of architectural meaning becomes apparent in the context of the broader and deeper search for Norwegian identity within the multiple layers of cultural history and traditions.

### **Shinto Tradition of Rebirth and Renewal in Japan**

In Japan, a similar *socially constructed* tradition of building exists at the Shinto site of the much-revered *Ise Shrines*, which were originally appropriated and adapted from granary structures. They are considered by many historians to be “the most important buildings in Japan’s early agrarian society”,<sup>28</sup> dissociated from their original use as granaries. Removed from their original



*Ise Shrines, Naiku, Ise-shi, Japan, taken from: savingjapan.net*

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<sup>28</sup> Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: Non-Western Perspectives*, (Boston, MA: Wadsworth), 2006, 92.

intended use, the buildings are now immersed in religious symbolism based on agrarian customs, in addition to many other diverse cultural and historic layers.<sup>29</sup>

According to the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony, the shrines would be built and rebuilt on adjoining sites every twenty years, as has been the custom for over 1200 years, with few exceptions. This rebuilding is done in deference to the ritual of *wabi-sabi*, which is a Japanese worldview and awareness of incompleteness, the cycle of death and rebirth, and the impermanence of all things.

From an aesthetic point of view, according to Leonard Koren, in “*Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets, and Philosophers*”:

Wabi-sabi is the most conspicuous and characteristic feature of traditional Japanese beauty and it occupies roughly the same position in the Japanese pantheon of aesthetic values, as do the Greek ideals of beauty and perfection in the West.<sup>30</sup>

While often described as an aesthetic principle, *wabi-sabi* is also roughly translated into English as *rustic*, and in that context is a misnomer, though there is no direct translation from the Japanese. Apart from its aesthetic application, *wabi-sabi* is also a philosophical construct that typically refers to more subjective and phenomenological spatial features (not limited to architecture), and it can offer a more appreciative awareness as part of a spiritual journey. Graphic designer, Chris Bird, notes that:

*wabi-sabi* is a [type of] training, where the student of *wabi-sabi* learns to find the most simple [of] objects interesting, fascinating, and beautiful.

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<sup>29</sup> The removed and dissociative use of the granaries at the *Ise Shrines* is similar to the architectural form of the Roman basilica, which had programmatically served as a public assembly and law court during Roman times, and then later re-appropriated as a Christian church after the fall of Rome; hence the current use of the term *basilica*. The basilica, as with the *Ise Shrines*, can also be seen as an *invented tradition* in architectural practice.

<sup>30</sup> Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets, and Philosophers*, (Point Reyes, CA: Imperfect Publishing), 2008, 21.

Fading autumn leaves would be an example. *Wabi-sabi* can change our perception of our world to the extent that a chip or crack in a vase makes it more interesting and gives the object greater meditative value. Similarly, materials that age such as bare wood, paper, and fabric become more interesting as they exhibit changes that can be observed over time.<sup>31</sup>

Over time, the repercussions of weathered materials on the *Ise Shrines* are perceived minimally due to the repeating cycle of the *Shikinen Sengu* rebuilding ceremony, and tied to each successive generation passing along the various cultural, architectural, and building traditions to the next collective generation. This ritualized practice is also interpreted as the perpetual renewing of cultural and religious symbolism.

As is the case with the Shinto religious tradition, the concept of weathering, rebirth, and renewal is embedded in the constructed ritual cycles of both *wabi-sabi* and the *Shikinen Sengu ceremony*. Therefore, the reconstruction and symbolism in these buildings over time may also be interpreted as a means to unify society and honor historical perceptions, as a form of religious, spiritual, or social consensus. According to Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow, in their book, “*On Weathering*”:

The temporal structure of building can be compared to a person’s experience of time. At every moment in one’s life earlier times of infancy, childhood, youth, and all other stages up to now are still present, increasing in number yet unchanged and familiar, and subject to redefinition and appropriation. Never is one’s past not present, nor is the individual’s past ever cut off from the tradition of one’s culture and the time of the natural world.<sup>32</sup>

With the *Ise Shrines*, the societal collusion and acknowledgement of the constant physical rebuilding of the weathered materials transcends time and the materiality of the

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<sup>31</sup> Chris Bird, “Signature”, *cbirdesign blog*, August 15, 2009, [www.cbirdesign.com/blog/signature](http://www.cbirdesign.com/blog/signature) (accessed on October 2, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1993, 112.

architecture, to the symbolism of the ritual. Therefore, the *Ise Shrines* come to be revered for how they embody social values and traditions, rather than self-expression and the physical components of the actual built form.

## Constructed Narratives in America

There are many examples of American architecture that over time have come to form new symbolic meanings and attachments, adapting and transcending the initial form and its history. Of particular note is the *Paul Revere House* in Boston, MA, which was restored to the date of about 1680, a century before and a story shorter than when Revere lived in the house. This setting gives visitors a somewhat erroneous historical context and impression that the patriot may have once lived in this environment, despite the historical and temporal discrepancies.



*Paul Revere House*, restored to the date of ca. 1680, Boston, MA, photo by author

The *Paul Revere House* in its current form is nonetheless revered (pun intended), as an *invented tradition* and symbolism of American history, and very much an *authentic* experience, but not for how accurate its architectural form is tied to Revere. In 1902, the initial committee on restoration had decided to restore the house to around the 1680's, when the house was first built, and also to a form of when it was only two stories tall.

The confusion lies in that by 1770, when Revere first lived in the house it had an

added third floor, and would certainly not have been recognized by Revere and his family in its current restored state. The restoration does, however, offer a hybrid and iconic representation of colonial architecture, deemed more appropriate to an invented and constructed image of Revere than of a specific colonial time period. Visitors typically leave with no sense of Revere's *authentic* historical environment.

Besides the *Paul Revere House*, other instances of this constructed *authentic* experience based on invented historical traditions are exemplified by various historically themed and created town museums, such as *Strawbery Banke (NH)*, *Colonial Williamsburg (VA)*, *Olde Sturbridge Village (MA)*, and *Plimoth Plantation (MA)*, all misleadingly fashion an historical continuity and narrative for social purposes. In effect, they become constructed narratives for specific target audiences, with many historical omissions in order to meet a specific social need or function.



*Strawbery Banke, Portsmouth, NH, photo taken by: Joe Watts, flickr.com/photos/joewatts/8112482031*



*Plimoth Plantation, Plymouth, MA, photo by author*

With regard to constructed narratives, the example of *Colonial Williamsburg* is both well known and controversial. Since the original colonial town of Williamsburg, VA, had fallen to arson, decay, and ruin following the Revolutionary War and the removal of the state capital to Richmond, VA, not much had remained by the time of the 1930's. It was at that time that the Rockefeller family (John D. Rockefeller Jr. and Abby Aldrich





*Colonial Williamsburg, Governor's Palace and Duke of Gloucester Street, 2012, photos by author*

Rockefeller) had stepped in with funds and contracted for the entire town to be *faithfully* and *authentically* rebuilt, reconjected and idealized as a pseudo-historical colonial whole. *Colonial Williamsburg* had become “a sanitized restoration project that took most of the messiness and complexity out of history.”<sup>33</sup> In fact, the architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable wrote, in “*The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion*”, that:

Williamsburg is an extraordinary, conscientious and expensive exercise in historical playacting in which real and imitation treasures and modern copies are carelessly confused in everyone's mind... Partly because it is so well done, the end effect has been to devalue authenticity and denigrate the genuine heritage of less picturesque periods to which an era and a people gave life.<sup>34</sup>

In *Colonial Williamsburg*, Rockefeller, along with various administrators, architects, and conservators, had curiously decided to restore the town to just one narrative of colonial American life, which did not include the perspective of African Americans,



*African American Baptist Meetinghouse, Williamsburg, VA, 2012, photo by author*

<sup>33</sup> Carol Rifkind, “Faking It”, *Metropolis*, Issue: December 1997/January 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Ada Louise Huxtable, *The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion*, (New York City, NY: The New Press), 1997, as referenced from a *NY Times* article, published on September 22, 1963.

especially with regard to slavery and the life of many free African Americans from that historical time period. Since the 1970's, there have been many attempts to rectify the initial sanitized perspective with more inclusive displays and architectural restorations that tries to show a more diverse colonial American experience.

## Constructed Narratives in Europe

There are many variations on the idea of a constructed narrative in architecture outside of the United States. In Russia, during the 1930's Stalin had ordered the destruction of many prominent buildings on Red Square, in Moscow, to make way for various Soviet administrative activities. Two particular buildings, the *Kazan Cathedral* and the *Resurrection Gate Church* (both from the 17<sup>th</sup> century), were razed in order to allow for an office building (in the former) and modern day tank participation in May Day parades on Red Square (in the latter). While the two buildings were a great loss to the fabric of the famed city square, thankfully Stalin never got around to fulfilling his desire to raze the colorful and iconic *Cathedral of St. Basil's*.



*New Kazan Cathedral, Moscow, 2007, photo by author*

In an interesting turn of events, by the 1990's, President Putin and other officials, in a seemingly nostalgic coup of historical *re-invention*, looked to restore the perimeter of Red Square to a previously fixed narrative in time, by removing the Soviet-bloc architecture that came to replace the razed buildings. Today, these replicated churches



flank the square as *authentic* copies in a revived narrative, conjured up from historical images and memories; and are now revered by the people as much as Russian icons.

Besides the two faithfully replicated churches, one of the most significant resurrected and reinvented projects of the restored narrative image of Moscow was the reconstruction of the *Cathedral of Christ the Savior*.<sup>35</sup> Under the guise of Stalin's massive urban renewal plans for Moscow, and fueled by various anti-religious ideologies, the cathedral was initially razed to make way for the building of the *Palace of the Soviets*. However, according to Svetlana Boym, in "*The Future of Nostalgia*":

the war interrupted Stalin's intentions to build the palace... [and instead] of the cathedral and the Palace of Soviets there remained for two decades a hole in the ground, the foundation for future utopias.<sup>36</sup>

For years, Moscow tried to reintegrate the empty site adjacent to the Kremlin, without success. It was not until 1994 that the Mayor of Moscow decided to resurrect an exact copy of the *Cathedral of Christ the Savior*, "in reinforced concrete."<sup>37</sup>

The replica of the cathedral is misleading in light of the new materials that inform otherwise. While the form of the new cathedral hazily reconstitutes historical memory, you can easily determine that it is not the original, much like the previously mentioned *Paul Revere House*, in Boston.



*New Cathedral of Christ the Savior, Moscow, 2007, photo by author*

<sup>35</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, (New York City, NY: Basic Books), 2001, 100.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 105.

There is a sense of deception given away by the new materials and the crispness of form, in that one can't quite readily accept this historical re-

invention. Bas-relief panels in the tympanum (see image above), while hand-carved in the original stone façade, give way to newly installed metal sculptural panels that in some cases feel temporary and less integrated.



*New Cathedral of Christ the Savior, tympanum bas-relief, Moscow, 2007, photo by author*

In Poland there are many examples of resurrected narratives, created by the massive urban devastation that had occurred in Warsaw during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the various planned destructions by the Nazis and Russians during WW II (including the Siege of Warsaw in 1939, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943, and the Warsaw Uprising in 1944), there was a concerted rebuilding effort after the war to restore the *Old Town* (Stare Miasto), the *Town Square* (Rynek), and the *Royal Castle* (Zamek Krolewski), all of which had been repeatedly leveled. Alistair Horne, in “*Warsaw’s Heroic Cityscape*” describes the reconstruction efforts:



*Old Town (Stare Miasto), Warsaw, 2007, photo by author*

It was the first section of the city that, immediately after the war, the impoverished Poles set to rebuilding, passing bricks by hand along a human chain. In the History Museum concealed within eight linked houses on the Rynek, guides will explain how, from old drawings and particularly paintings by the Venetian Bernardo Bellotto, a 17th-century square was reconstructed with total fidelity.<sup>38</sup>

In a similar manner to *Colonial Williamsburg* and the *Cathedral* in Moscow, the people of Warsaw saw the paradoxical and overriding need to rebuild and reconnect the

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<sup>38</sup> Alistair Horne, “*Warsaw’s Heroic Cityscape*”, *NY Times*, published on August 17, 2003.

past with their present. Of concern though, is the implied sense of *authenticity* (referred to by Alistair Horne as *fidelity*), which unbeknownst to the typical tourist and visitor provided a somewhat disconnected and nostalgic representation of Warsaw.

Parallel to the rebuilding in Poland, Germany has also been rebuilding its disconnected narratives since the war by reconnecting elements of both past and present conditions of its fragmented history. Of particular note is the city of Dresden, located in the former Soviet-controlled East Germany, which is rebuilding and transforming its image at a very fast pace.

Historically, the city has been built and rebuilt on multiple occasions starting in 1685 following a massive fire, after numerous bombing raids during WW II, and most recently reconfigured along Soviet ideas on urban renewal and design. According to Mark Jarzombek, in “*Disguised Visibilities: Dresden*”, these multiple perspectives in the cumulative history of Dresden have shown that the:



*New Memorial Rubble Wall, Dresden,*  
photo by author

history of Dresden is... not only a history of multiple ‘Dresdens,’ but also a history of the problematic interweaving [and intertwining] of overlapping and competing narratives about its past and future.<sup>39</sup>

Due to the many ruptures and reconfigurations of the city fabric, urban planners (not just in Dresden) are often faced with a complexity of meanings and erasures when rebuilding the city.

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<sup>39</sup> Mark Jarzombek, “Disguised Visibilities: Dresden”, *Memory and Architecture*, edited by: Eleni Bastéa, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press), 2004, 51-52.

In the rebuilding efforts of Dresden, the most notable reconstructed narrative has been the leveled *Frauenkirche Cathedral*; “left abandoned... [in a] heap of blackened stones”<sup>40</sup> during WW II. The new cathedral even includes charred stone fragments from the rubble pile (selected by means of computer modeling), as a reconnection to its past, but somewhat controversial in that it removed the memorial aspect of the rubble pile, familiar to so many for so long.



*Frauenkirche Cathedral, Dresden, 2012, photo by author*

There has been a steady sifting through of historical architectural layers in Dresden. This has included elements from its medieval past, to the *Synagogue* and *Jewish Ghetto*, to the baroque masterpiece of the *Zwinger*, and finally to the modernist governmental buildings of the Soviet occupation. A varied history indeed!

All rebuilding and urban design decisions pose various obstacles, and associated maneuverings, that pertain to human atrocity, memory, religion, culture, political sway, and consensus, with regard to the issues of reestablishing civic identity and projected re-presentation. According to Nicholas Howe, in “*Kilroy in Dresden*”, he notes that:



*Dresden, urban disconnect and the random placement of the Soviet-bloc Palace of Culture, photo by author*

Dresden is certainly not building monuments to the passing of the twentieth century, as is Berlin, with its grand constructions by the likes of

<sup>40</sup> Mark Jarzombek, “Disguised Visibilities: Dresden”, *Memory and Architecture*, edited by: Eleni Bastéa, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press), 2004, 55.



Daniel Liebeskind and Frank Gehry. Instead, it is rebuilding, restoring, refurbishing, always returning.<sup>41</sup>

In most cities, change is more gradual and less dramatic. In light of the ruptures of WW II and the subsequent political and social changes, Dresden's confrontation with its past is more pointed. In Dresden's plans for the future, the rupture and healing, once ascribed to the city, can no longer afford to marginalize its past, but it must move towards an acknowledgement and integration of its past, present, and future.

### Constructed Narratives in Japan

Not far away from the entrance to the Naiku shrine, located between the two *Ise Shrines* in Ise is *Okage Yokocho*, the historicized creation of a Japanese Edo-era trading village, reconjectured along the Oharai-machi street. While there are some older buildings from the original town incorporated with the new, it was primarily built by the confectionary company Akafuku as a marketing tool, and has done much to revitalize the area. A Western equivalent of *Okage Yokocho* is that of a cathedral town for pilgrims.



*Okage Yokocho, Ise, photo by author*



*Okage Yokocho, Ise, photo by author*

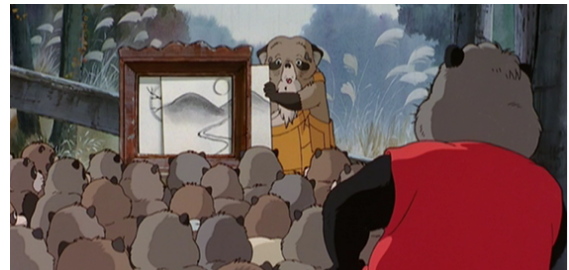
The recreated Edo-era village runs parallel to the Isuzu River on an 800-meter

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<sup>41</sup> Nicholas Howe, "Kilroy in Dresden", *Dissent*, Issue: Spring 2001, 87.

long stone paved street, and is lined with traditional Japanese houses with gabled roofs and shoji screened entrances. The main street of the village terminates at the Uji Bridge, leading to Naiku, the inner shrine of the two *Ise Shrines*.

Today, *Okage Yokocho* is teeming with tourists and pilgrims and offers many souvenir shops, restaurants, and local specialty shops. Brett Fyfield, who writes a blog for Rainbow Hill Language Labs, describes a gathering for *kamishibai* (or *paper play*, a form of storytelling for children that uses picture



*Pom Poko*, animation still of a kamishibai performance, taken from: [absoluteanime.com/pom\\_poko](http://absoluteanime.com/pom_poko)

scrolls or boards in a framed stage), which was being performed at the main cultural center of the village:

As the large crowd dispersed there was a small gathering forming closer to the back of the main stage. There was a paper play (紙芝居 | かみしばい) just about to begin so we took our seats. The performer, in *yukata* and *geta*, told the story of Shiro-kou, a dog from the Gunma prefecture.

In Edo period Japan, it was quite popular for people from all over the country to make... the pilgrimage to Ise, and in the space of as little as 50 days over 3 and a half million people would arrive. Most of them on foot. Those that couldn't make it due to illness or injury would send some one in their stead to retrieve charms [from the village], some times they would send their dogs. Shiro-kou was one such dog.

In this new media era of television, internet, and games, the paper play seems a rather archaic and simple form of entertainment. Compared with books... story telling goes much deeper. The oral tradition is so important to the maintenance of culture. It's not just simple entertainment, but more importantly it conveys Japanese culture in a way that I'd like to see continue.<sup>42</sup>

*Okage Yokocho* is a thriving and busy urban setting, more in keeping with *Old*

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<sup>42</sup> Brett Fyfield, "Edo Period Japan Comes Alive at Okage Yokocho", *Rainbowhill Language Labs blog*, July 10, 2010, [rainbowhill.blogspot.com/2010/07/edo-period-japan-comes-alive-at-okage.html](http://rainbowhill.blogspot.com/2010/07/edo-period-japan-comes-alive-at-okage.html) (accessed on October 7, 2010).

*Town*, Warsaw, in that it is not treated as a museum, as is the case with *Colonial Williamsburg* and *Plimoth Plantation*. While still an *invented tradition*, of some sort, it is not a created environment where none had existed before. Its meaning is socially constructed by its various uses and reuses, as evidenced by its financial success.

What makes *Okage Yokochō* more interesting is the notion of keeping oral traditions alive, as mentioned with the *kamishibai* performance. In many respects, architecture is a visual tradition, often incorporated in the multitude of layered oral traditions that are passed from generation to generation. Constructed narratives are also an important aspect of sustaining oral traditions, regardless of the motives. However, it is just as important to be aware of the history of those traditions.

### ***Authenticity By Suggestion***

To complete this discussion, it is interesting to study quite a different approach to the reconstruction of historic architecture, and perceived *authenticity*. Consider the abstracted interpretive site of Benjamin Franklin's home, called *Franklin Court*, in Philadelphia, designed by architect Robert Venturi.



*Franklin Court*, Philadelphia, PA, by Robert Venturi, 1976, taken from: [upenn.edu/almanac/volumes](http://upenn.edu/almanac/volumes)

According to Caroline R. Alderson, in “*Responding to Change: Changing Perspective on Approaches in Historic Setting*”, *Franklin Court* is described as follows:

Among the earliest and most noteworthy American abstractions is Robert Venturi's 1976 steel outline of Benjamin Franklin's house on the site

where it once stood in Philadelphia. Painted steel posts and beams trace wall and roof edges, framing the mass of the 1765 house to the extent that surviving historic descriptions permit. Portals on the “floor” inside the house invite visitors to look deep underground into the archeological remains of Franklin’s privy, wells, and foundation. By differentiating the interpretive approach from that of surviving and well-documented landmarks, the skeletal “ghost house” makes a meaningful cultural contribution without conjecture.<sup>43</sup>

At *Franklin Court*, the visitor is not subjected to either conventional or imposed material representations, but rather to a condition of gestalt (or a linear gap-filling), in which the visitor is invited to create an understanding and impression of a building. In effect, the physical material is removed from the narrative interpretation, but there is still conveyed an aura of *authenticity*. For Robert Venturi, the meaning draws upon a type of *authenticity* constructed from the preconceived iconography of colonial architecture.

This emphasis on mental construction (as a gestalt form of linear gap-filling) echoes some of the philosophical dilemmas posed by Joseph Kosuth’s work titled, “*One and Three Chairs*”. As one may ask, is the *idea* of the chair (or for example *Franklin Court*) any less real than the physical manifestation? Art historian Marilyn Stokstad, in “*Art History*”, addresses this particular issue in Kosuth’s work:

Joseph Kosuth abandoned painting in 1965 and began to work with language, under the influence of... linguistic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Kosuth believed that the use of language would direct art away from aesthetic concerns and toward philosophical speculation. His “*One and Three Chairs*” invites such speculation by presenting an actual chair, a full-scale black-and-white photograph of the same chair, and a dictionary definition of the word chair. The work thus leads the viewer from the physical chair to the purely linguistic ideal of “chairness” and invites the question of which is the most “real”.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Caroline R. Alderson, “Responding to Change: Changing Perspectives on Appropriate Change in Historic Settings”, *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2006, 28.

<sup>44</sup> Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall), 2008, 1160.



Kosuth's "chair" is not signified by the written definition of chair, the photographed chair, or the physical representation of chair, but by what is more freely constructed in the mind, of what a "chair" is, which is unique to each visitor. In this case, the construct they have of a chair would seem determined by the layers of



*Three Chairs*", by Joseph Kosuth, 1965, taken from: [quizlet.com/17747329](https://quizlet.com/17747329)

their own traditions.<sup>45</sup> The same would apply to *Franklin Court*, in which one mentally constructs what an American colonial era structure would look like.

With both *Franklin Court* and Kosuth's work the transcendence occurs when the physical realm is removed from the representative, thereby allowing the visitor or observer to interpret the ideas freely, without imposed expectations and limitations.

## In Conclusion

Varying forms of re-creation and re-presentation continue to pose dilemmas for historical restoration and reconstruction projects, preservation specialists, and the public with regard to what is "real" or *authentic*. Thus, architecture as experienced and represented is more the outcome of an *invented tradition* or cognitive social construction, than its material fabrication. The interpretation of *architecture* is variably

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<sup>45</sup> Related to the philosophical discussion described by Jacques Derrida, pertaining to the word "*dog*" as a signifier of that particular animal, but not of any particular species, trait, or for that matter a specific dog. Taken from: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Stephen Morton, (New York City: NY: Routledge), 2003, 17.

subjective, dependent on the context, and best understood by the traditions, history, and multiple narrative constructions of the local culture and the public.

As Walter Benjamin offers, in “*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*”:

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura.<sup>46</sup>

In subsequent chapters of this dissertation, to further explore these varying constructed narratives and their subjective contexts, two specific structures from very different parts of the world (Japan and Norway), will be compared. This comparison will also explore how each context share and differ in socially constructed characteristics, as influenced by their cultural and religious origins. The discussion will also include how these two structures are perceived as *authentic*, or not, in the context of their respective communities (within and from the outside).

Lastly, this discussion will also point out how social, cultural, and historical influences overlap many countries and how they contribute to and influence decisions on design. The focus again will be on the two examples in Norway and in Japan: the *Fantoft Stave Church* and the *Ise Shrines*, respectively.

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<sup>46</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, (London, UK: Fontana) 1968, 220.

### ***Authenticity, Memory, and Truth***

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If you seek authenticity for authenticity's sake you are no longer authentic.<sup>47</sup>

– Jean-Paul Sartre

Throughout the centuries, architectural design has been influenced by social constructs and formed notions of *authenticity*. *Authenticity* seeks to establish what is “real”. Subsequently, an *authenticating* source establishes ontological precedence. Some propose that the drive to achieve originality and *authenticity* is a dominant force in architectural thought and practice; with architects often competing for a lasting legacy in their work, much like the parental ownership ascribed to the birth of a child.

This originating is problematic as it relies upon a misconstrued understanding of architecture's ontological potential. For example, to suggest that a particular work of architecture succeeds in being *authentic* is to insist that an idealized past or origin has

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<sup>47</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Notebooks for an Ethics*, translated by David Pellauer, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), 1992, 4.

been made present. Often, a concern for *authenticity* has motivated historic preservation, but sometimes the growing critique will be that the work is seen to be “mock-historical”, “fake”, or “not real”, positioning it in a very polarized construct.

## Origin Stories and the Legitimization of the Real in Art and Architecture

This search for *authenticity* is corroborated by the commonly held myth ascribed to the origin of architecture (as created by and from nature), best exemplified by Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen's engraving, “*Adam's Hut is Paradise*” (sometime known as the Vitruvian primitive hut), and made famous as the frontispiece to Marc-Antoine Laugier's book, “*Essay on Architecture*”. This obsession, by many architectural historians and theorists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is often attributed to a privileged grip that the Western Canon has had over Europe, especially in the exclusion of other cultures and alternate histories. The dominance of this privileged *authenticity* is still felt to this day.



“*Primitive Hut*” (*Adam's Hut in Paradise*), by Charles-Dominique-Joseph Eisen, from: “*Essay on Architecture*” 1755, by Laugier

Periodically, *authenticity* designates a specific set of attitudes that are imposed on architectural projects. It implies a state of ontological superiority over secondary imitations and ideas. Architecture provides a point of view; it's an expression that has built values. Sometimes, architecture also causes us to look in another direction, transforming our sense of who we are and what is “real”. This challenge to our perceptions is a constant debate among many artists and architects.

Jen Hall, an artist and professor at the Massachusetts College of Art, discusses built values and the notion of originality, and what is “real”, in her web bio. She states:

As a child, I bounced back and forth between my grandfather, who descended from a clan of Hudson Valley School artisans and made his living by creating flawless copies of famous paintings, and my mother, who was a television producer in New York City. I remember when one of my grandfather's paintings was sold by some unsavory dealer – as an original. At eight years of age, my job became painting his name in liquid lead on the canvas before it was gessoed. Being the honorable forger that he was, my grandfather could then guarantee that his original copy of an original master was secured forever in the annals of art duplication history.<sup>48</sup>

With regard to her grandfather, the built value comes from her family heritage, and is without judgment. The relevant issue of *authenticity*, is also without judgment, and conveys a truth of its own.

In a related but separate conversation, Hall elaborates further on the notion of *authenticity* and what is “real”:

Authenticity is the degree to which one is true to one's own character. The question in philosophy is if there is anything that can be authentic, as everything is also part of other things. I would say it is the same in architecture – each style or design is on the shoulders of what came before. So is authenticity possible in anything we make?<sup>49</sup>

*Authenticity* is a matter of one's particular experience and there can be no universal tradition that is shared by everyone in a particular place or circumstance. Of course, a sense of heritage will vary among cultures and individuals. From that, social constructs are formed and begin to determine for the architect, and the artist, what is “real” and *authentic*.

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<sup>48</sup> Jen Hall, *My education in illusion began very early.*, <http://www.jenhall.org/about.html>, (accessed January 26, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Personal conversation with Jen Hall on: January 5, 2013.

Furthermore, *authenticity* is also thought of as something that is bestowed by observers rather than being intrinsically generated, or even noticed or cherished, by people or things designated by others as being *authentic*. For example, people who play Cajun music in Louisiana don't care if they are *authentic*; they are just doing what they have always have done. To that extent, a grandmother's ethnic cooking is *authentic* to her grandchildren, but to her she was just *cooking*.

We bestow *authenticity* for so many reasons; to legitimize our own viewpoints (or our authority in having them), to classify, to feel as though we belong. In general, it's in the eye of the beholder, it's subjective, and *authenticity* is not physically embodied in the object itself. In that sense, it's an intensely human social construct. Which is why we're so quick to spot posers, or feel so strongly about what is or is not *authentic*. It touches upon our own sense of self, and that aura of security in our environment of people and objects.

### ***Invented Tradition as a Tool in Social and Architectural Preservation***

For many, *authenticity* also forms historical continuity and lays the foundation for *invented traditions*. Preservationist approaches must also be clearly analyzed with regard to bias and historical privileging. As previously mentioned, this revisionist historical biasing has lead to the current condition of civilization being defined by a 19<sup>th</sup> century fixation and adherence to the Western Canon, as though the West has been the only arbiter of cultural and artistic history. Robert Nelson, in "*The Art Bulletin*" notes this predominantly European bias in culture and art, in that:

this grand Western narrative, known in the trade as “Pyramids to Picasso,” is isolated from the United States and other geographical categories... [When] North America is the first continent to be appended to art history’s aging but ever vital canonical core. South America, Asia, and Africa follow behind.<sup>50</sup>

Preservationists and historians also adhere to and collude in the dominance of certain cultural and political presences. Determining cultural prominence is unfortunately often left to a few, which continues to perpetuate the marginalization, and even the eradication, of others.

Japonica Brown-Saracino, in “*A Neighborhood Never Changes: Gentrification, Social Preservation, and the Search for Authenticity*”, documents many of these marginalizing attitudes. Brown-Saracino particularly explores this issue in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and various other smaller communities in the U.S., set against the romantic and nostalgic attachments of old-timers and preservationists against newcomers and gentrifiers. She concludes that:

One way in which social preservationists articulate what they value about their place is through...*origin stories*: elaborate and rehearsed narratives of how they came to live where they live that rest on the notion that some places are more authentic than others.<sup>51</sup>

Automatically, from the position of the historian and preservationist, a proprietary stance is often constructed to enforce a narrative of *authenticity*, or historical continuity, through perceived or constructed *origin stories*. This historical discrepancy is very apparent in Hugh Trevor-Roper’s article, “*The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland*”, which resituates the history of the Scottish kilt.

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<sup>50</sup> Robert S. Nelson, “The Map of Art History”, *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 79, Issue 1, 1997, <http://www.questia.com> (accessed on May 2, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Japonica Brown-Saracino, *A Neighborhood That Never Changes: Gentrification, Social Preservation, and the Search for Authenticity*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press), 2009, 81.

Whereas tartan – that is, cloth woven in a geometrical pattern of colours – was known in Scotland in the sixteenth century (it seems to have come from Flanders and reached the Highlands through the Lowlands), the philibeg – name and thing – is unknown before the eighteenth century. So far from being a traditional Highland dress, it was invented by an Englishman after the Union of 1707; and the differentiated ‘clan tartans’ are an even later invention.<sup>52</sup>

The narrative constructed by both origin stories and the bias of the Western Canon, and by its own self-created definition, already begins to polarize and marginalize other cultures and their identifiable achievements, through historical reframing and privileging. As with the case of the Scottish kilt reframing can be a complete fabrication, an *invented tradition*, and not at all *authentic*.

According to Eric Hobsbawm, in “*The Invention of Tradition*”,

‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by... accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to [implant] certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.<sup>53</sup>

Whereas the complexities of an architectural *invented tradition* are not specified in Hobsbawm’s assessment, other than as a cultural and formalistic approach, an *invented tradition* can also be applied to the varying notions of tradition, and subsequently to the notion of *authenticity*, with regard to constructed and collected memories.

Barbara Miller Lane, in “*National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*”, adds that:

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<sup>52</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland”, *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, editors, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 1983, 18-19.

<sup>53</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, editors, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 1983, 1-2.



Historians of nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Scandinavian countries have shown that the origins of national feeling are not necessarily associated with the bourgeoisie but often result from a coalition between intellectuals and farmers. Most innovative are Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson, who offer definitions of modern nationalism as subjective and self-created, as based on an *invention of tradition*, or the desire for an *imagined community*.<sup>54</sup>

Often, the collusion and collective consciousness of a society can pervade many historical time lines to construct a perceived reality appropriate for a time period.

### Claims of Truth and *Authenticity*

In the same context as *invented tradition*, there appears to be some confusion in the use of the term *authenticity*, similar to the intentional manner that political humorist Stephen Colbert wields in the self-created word *truthiness*, on the satirical late-night U.S. television program, “*The Colbert Report*”.

Colbert’s use of the word *truthiness* has become intentionally indefinable, vague, and subjective; and very much a comedic vehicle for targeting and debunking perceived universal truths in the news, and very much a *de facto* part of his comedy routine.



“*Truthiness*” (from: *The Colbert Report*), taken from: [secularstudents.org/sites/default/files/WordTruthiness.jpg](http://secularstudents.org/sites/default/files/WordTruthiness.jpg)

Take for example advertisements that make claims about ‘*authentic taste*’, ‘*authentic travel experiences*’, being ‘*authentically made*’, and ads that offer a ‘*certificate of authenticity*’ for your gold and jewelry, all of which take on a variety of meanings in

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<sup>54</sup> Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 2000, 12.

order to appeal to consumer demands and concerns. All are subjective, and dependent on its respective context for verification, if that can be done at all.

The use of intentionally vague language is a primary branding tool of marketers and advertising executives, to appeal to a much broader audience. Consumers cannot be grouped into specific response categories and it is not possible to create a universal understanding of a



"Authentic and Transparent" by Tom Fishburne, marketoonist.com, taken from: cursivecontent.com/

product, especially with such a demographically diverse audience. Therefore, products are oftentimes branded with intentionally vague or multiple meanings to allow consumers to create their own attached value of worth and *authenticity*.

Due to the proliferation of marketing ploys that try to confuse an item's worth and *authenticity*, many art dealers and galleries now also use a 'certificate of authenticity' to make buyer's of art more comfortable with proof of the artworks perceived originality, value, and validity. According to Charles Lindholm, in "*Culture and Authenticity*":

The technical expertise used to determine a painting's history stands very much at odds with the second process of authenticating art; establishing correspondence. For this type of accreditation, a painting may be considered an original if it is certified as such by experts who are believed able to recognize the artist's paintings without the aid of the technical means outlined above. These aesthetically sensitive authorities use their expertise, taste, and intuition to determine if the... art objects are original, real, and pure; they are what they purport to be, their provenance and authorship are... verified; their essence and appearance are one.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Charles Lindholm, *Culture and Authenticity*, (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing), 2008, 15-16.

For many investors today, this valuation method of *authenticity* staves off the mark of forgery. This is especially so in the work of Dutch forger Han Van Meegeren, who was able to fool Reichsmarschall Hermann Goering, during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, with what was believed to be an



Forged Johannes Vermeer by Han Van Meegeren, titled “*Christ with the Woman Taken in Adultery*”, found in the collection of Hermann Goering, ca. 1940.

*authentic* painting by Johannes Vermeer titled “*Christ with the Woman Taken in Adultery*”. Van Meegeren had created most of his works in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continued to fool many noted art historians, who specialized in the work of Vermeer, until his arrest in 1945, as a perceived Nazi collaborator in the selling of original Dutch cultural items. Only upon his arrest did he confess to the forgeries, thereby clearing his name of the charges.

In the Netherlands, where Van Meegeren is still a household name, the story of the wily Dutchman who swindled Hermann Goering continues to raise a smile.<sup>56</sup>

Anecdotally, this brings to mind a visit to the *Antiques Road Show*, the antiques appraisal show for American Public Television that was filmed in Boston in 2012, to which I brought an iridescent decorative bowl with a Tiffany label on the bottom. As a family friend gave this to my partner and me, I was so sure that this was an *authentic* and original Tiffany Favrile bowl. When it was appraised, I was informed that it was an equally original Loetz decorative bowl, from Bohemia, that an antiques dealer may have inadvertently placed a Tiffany label on.

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<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Lopez, *The Man Who Made Vermeers: Unvarnishing the Legend of the Master Forger Han Van Meegeren*, (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing), 2008, 2.



*Loetz Bowl (ca. 1905) with Tiffany Favrile Glass Label (ca. 1890), photo by author*



*Tiffany Favrile Glass Label, detail of bowl bottom, (ca. 1890), photo by author*

It was an *authentic* Tiffany label (ca. 1890) on an *authentic* Loetz bowl (ca. 1905), so I was not disappointed about the appraisal, or learning that it was an attempted Tiffany forgery. I was now more interested in the history of this unusual bowl, as it held a memory and a unique narrative of its own.

### **The Relativism of *Authenticity***

While the identification of a potential forgery decisively questions our previously evolving notions of *authenticity*, perhaps the “*Oxford English Dictionary (Second Edition)*” can offer a new direction in this broader search for understanding of what is deemed to be *authentic*. *Authentic* is defined as:

The quality of being authentic, or entitled to acceptance; true in substance; professes in origin or authorship as being genuine and real.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press), Vol. I, 1989, 796-797.

Again, who determines these traits and by what standards? What societal constructs allow this understanding to take place? Perhaps the current resurgence in the need for an *authentic* life is just one of the many voices that lay claim to one's search for meaning and an individual sense of *authenticity*.

The range of values and meanings associated with *authenticity* can be difficult to ascertain, due to its subjectivity, and quite often offers a definition full of contradictions. One definition describes *authenticity* as being "of undisputed origin"<sup>58</sup>, while another offers it as having an "origin supported by unquestionable evidence".<sup>59</sup> These are definitions that ascribe to an unwavering and absolutist position. *Authenticity* can provide a host of alternative meanings that are less absolute in light of constructed viewpoints, which can never be fixed or absolute. As the memory and recollection of that point of view is always in motion and changing, it reflects the variables of that society and its culturally constructed meanings.<sup>60</sup>

## **Collective Memory and Nostalgia**

Memory (and specifically *collective memory*) can act as an agent of repackaging or rebranding many architectural narratives relative to the constructed fragments and its recollection of history, tied to the various social, political, and religious interests of its various individuals or groups. Consequently, both *authenticity* and Stephen Colbert's

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<sup>58</sup> Apple Inc., *Dictionary: Version 2.1.3 (80.4)*, 2005-2009, definition of: "*authentic*".

<sup>59</sup> Collins English Dictionary, *dictionary.com*, Harper Collins, 2009, definition of: "*authenticity*", (accessed on August 29, 2012).

<sup>60</sup> J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press), Vol. I, 1989, 796-797.

notion of *truthiness* act as relativisms, in which truth and validity can offer no definitive position or point of view. The degree of *authenticity* affixed to architecture (as with other disciplines) is clearly relative and suspect, especially with regard to the irregularity of collective memory and cultural context, as there can be no consensus in society for an absolute meaning.

M. Christine Boyer derives the support for this argument, in addition to its sociological foundation, from the work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, as referenced in “*The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*”. Halbwachs, Boyer writes, had claimed as early as the 1920’s, that:

collective memory exists only as long as it is part of the living experience of a group or individual, but when that continuity with the past is ruptured, history comes into play. History fixes the past in a uniform manner; drawing upon its difference from the present, it then reorganizes and resuscitates collective memories and popular imagery, freezing them in stereotypical forms. Utilizing its distance from the past, history sets up a fictional space manipulating time and place, and re-presenting facts and events.

Memory, Halbwachs argued, stands opposed to this narrative history, for memory always occurs behind our backs, where it can neither be appropriated nor controlled. Collective memory, moreover, is a current of continuous thought still moving in the present, still part of a group’s active life, and these memories are multiple and dispersed, spectacular and ephemeral, not recollected and written down in one unified story.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, collective memory and any attempt to define its *authenticity* as an absolute agreement, fixed to a particular moment or past, is relegated to an exercise in nostalgic romanticism. It tries to be fixed and absolute, but can subsequently marginalize experience.

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<sup>61</sup> M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1996, 66-67.

Expanding on this idea, Adam Sharr, in “*Heidegger for Architects*”, discusses how existential philosopher Martin Heidegger’s work was often used to marginalize various cultures and people. Sharr states that:

Heidegger’s vocabulary of authenticity validated and reinstated a romantic complacency. Worse, its polarizing authenticity claims enabled a continuation of the fascist mindset... [in that] authentic architecture subscribes to that model and inauthentic architecture does not. In the scheme of [Theodore] Adorno’s critique, the ultimate authenticity claims are those of the Nazi racist policies, which determined with murderous consequences who was ‘authentic’ and who wasn’t. Any claim to authenticity, then, must raise powerful questions about who is given the authority to determine what is authentic, why and how.<sup>62</sup>

Asking questions in the determination of *authenticity*, and who is creating that understanding, is very important to uncovering the various layers of its construction.

Nostalgia is an important layer of information that comes to help construct and interpret our understanding of life and what is *authentic*. Greg Dickinson’s critical analysis of the 1998 movie “*Pleasantville*”, titled “*The Pleasantville Effect*”, elaborates further on the impact of nostalgia toward architectural space:

We need to explore the intersections among the varieties of texts we bring with us to particular spaces. Suburbia cannot be thought of exclusively in terms of its architecture, built environment, or aesthetic design. Instead, [it] is also suburbia as imaged and imagined across wide-ranging texts.<sup>63</sup>

Architecture is engaged in a complex relationship, in that it has multiple intersections and experiences placed upon both it and the viewer. In the context of this layered understanding of *authenticity*, one perspective alone is not valid without a host of contrasting and supporting interpretations. In both architecture and society, there are

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<sup>62</sup> Adam Sharr, editor, *Heidegger for Architects*, (New York City, NY: Routledge), 2007, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Greg Dickinson, “The Pleasantville Effect: Nostalgia and the Visual Framing of (White)Suburbia”, *Western Journal of Communication*, Vol. 70, No. 3, July 2006, 214.

a variety of tangentially related points of view that makes it difficult to consider a cohesive and simplified *authentic* identity.

D. H. Lawrence, the European novelist, poet, playwright, and painter, wrote in "*Studies in Classic American Literature*," that:

Every continent has its own great spirit of place. Every people is polarized in some particular locality, which is home, the homeland. Different places on the face of the earth have different vital effluence, different vibration, different chemical exhalation, and different polarity with different stars: call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality.<sup>64</sup>

The quest for a universal understanding of *authenticity* seems futile. There is no universal tradition that is shared by everyone in a particular place. There are some traditions that transcend national boundaries, but everyone who resides in that nation does not automatically share them.

While there is no universal understanding in society and contextually situated cultures, the obverse of collective memory does need to be addressed. This is not to confuse universal understanding with collective memory. Universal understanding is the whole-of-the-community as *one* voice, whereas collective memory is the *one* voice contributing to the whole, which tends to respect the diversity of its various individuals. Where a potential problem lies is when that collective memory dictates an absolute memory, that simplifies and suppresses alternate voices. An example of a dictated and suppressed collective memory is painfully demonstrated in the erased history and culture of the Jews during WW II, by the Nazis who sought a racial purity and origin, in

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<sup>64</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, (New Delhi, India: Atlantic Publishers), 1995, 16.



which many synagogues were demolished, desecrated, or recommissioned for alternative uses.

The caution with collective memory is that it is a collection of fluctuating elements from a multitude of individuals, with different fragmentary recollections, that tries to construct a simplified understanding or world view of their current environment or historical setting, related to those selected memories. From a sociological context, John Assmann and John Czaplicka, in "*Cultural Memory and Cultural Identity*", further this position, based on the work of Maurice Halbwachs, in that:

No memory can preserve the past. What remains is only that "which society in each era can reconstruct within its contemporary frame of reference." Cultural memory works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation. True, it is fixed in immovable figures of memory and stores of knowledge, but every contemporary context relates to these differently, sometimes by appropriation, sometimes by criticism, sometimes by preservation or by transformation.<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, cultural memory is also relative and can't be seen as absolute or universal.

Martin Heidegger, the controversial existential philosopher, often addressed collective memory and any attempt to define its *authenticity* as an absolute agreement, by belittling it as a futile exercise in nostalgic romanticism and origination theories. This is quite fascinating, in light of the many contentious alternate uses for Heidegger's work, which typically and historically tended to suppress, marginalize, and demonize various social and cultural groups, rather than idolize them. Heidegger's work, during WW II, more often:

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<sup>65</sup> John Assmann and John Czaplicka, "*Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*", *New German Critique*, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies, Spring-Summer 1995, 130.

raised questions in Germany and abroad, not only of Germany's future, but also, and again, about the... shaping of a national identity and the strategic uses of collective memory<sup>66</sup>.

## Conclusion

In summary, *authenticity* can come to be used and misused through a variety of constructs, including, but not limited to: cultural values, *invented tradition*, political, social, and religious understandings, historical continuity (as opposed to origins), and collective memory. The broader and more inclusive notion of *authenticity* ultimately addresses the differences and similarities between cultures and even within the same culture; and again, there is no absolute.

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<sup>66</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Philosophical and Political Writings*, Manfred Stassen, editor, (New York City, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.), 2003, xv.

### **Cultural Tourism, Conservation Practices, and *Authenticity***

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The effect of resonance does not necessarily depend upon a collapse of the distinction between art and non-art; it can be achieved by awakening in the viewer a sense of the cultural and historically contingent construction of art objects, the negotiations, exchanges, swerves, and exclusions by which certain representational practices come to be set apart from other representational practices that they partially resemble. A resonant exhibition often pulls the viewer away from the celebration of isolated objects toward a series of implied, only half-visible relationships and questions: How did the objects come to be displayed?... How were they originally used? What cultural and material conditions made their production? What were the feelings of those who originally held the objects, cherished them, collected them, possessed them? What is the meaning of the viewer's relationship to those same objects when they are displayed in a specific museum on a specific day?<sup>67</sup>

– Stephen Greenblatt

In the context of *authenticity*, Stephen Greenblatt's use of the term *resonance* is similar to Walter Benjamin's concept of *aura*, in that they convey the necessary

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<sup>67</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder", *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, editors, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press), 1991, 45 (referenced in a Stephen Greenblatt lecture I attended at IDSVA, the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, Spannocchia, in Rosia, Italy, June 8, 2010).

sociological relationships of phenomenological condition and experience, as a factor in determining what is *authentic*. In architecture, the sociological questions on space are just as relevant as the questions on aesthetics, which tend to dominate architectural criticism and relevant physical and tangible discussions. These questions are even more important to ask with regard to architectural restoration, reconstruction, and conservation, and the creation of a deeper understanding, than what is presented by just the surface of the structure.

### **Addressing Marginalization and *Authenticity* Through Declaration**

Architectural conservation often describes the architectural interventions applied to the prolongation of built structures and corresponding building materials, in the service of preserving a cultural heritage. Conservation also addresses design integrity in the context of history, customs, and societal traditions. With any architectural design, the form alone cannot determine the type of conservation undertaken. Conservation practices must also take into consideration a host of other conditions, including the building and site, to convey what viewers would take to be *authentic* experiences.

The concept of *authenticity* is also integral to understanding the various governing approaches in conservation efforts. According to the “*Nara Document on Authenticity*”, drafted in 1994, by the intergovernmental organizations UNESCO (*United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization*), ICCROM (*International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property*), and ICOMOS (*International Council on Monuments and Sites*), it was determined that it was

very important to include a more comprehensive understanding of cultural diversity and cultural heritage in the conservation of decaying or disappearing cultural artifacts. It was also important to address the issue of post-modernist relativism with regard to meaning and the concept of *authenticity*.<sup>68</sup> In the Preamble of the “*Nara Document on Authenticity*” (or “*Nara Document*”), a founding tenet addresses the following:

In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity.<sup>69</sup>

This “*consideration of authenticity*”, mentioned in the “*Nara Document*”, was meant to address the various problems that arose with the previous “*Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*” (Venice Charter), from 1964, and the “*Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*”, from 2003.

The most prevalent issue that was unaddressed by the “*Venice Charter*” affected numerous historic sites in Asia, in which social customs and traditions were tied to architectural rebuilding practices, most notably the reconstruction of the *Ise Shrines*, every 20 years, according to Shinto religious traditions. For years, the Japanese Government tried to get the shrines listed as a *UNESCO World Heritage Site*, but under the “*Venice Charter*” and a heavy Western bias against reconstructions and new construction, where there were no original materials used in the rebuilding, the shrines were categorized as *inauthentic*.

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<sup>68</sup> Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation*, (New York City, US: Routledge), 2013, 429.

<sup>69</sup> UNESCO, ICCROM, and ICOMOS, *Nara Document on Authenticity*, (Nara, Japan: Agency for Cultural Affairs), 1994.

According to Miles Glendinning, Professor of Architectural Conservation at the University of Edinburgh, and in his book, *“The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation”*:

the proposed accession to the [Nara] Convention by Japan, whose government was worried that its distinctive heritage practices would not be easily accommodated by the Western-dominated corpus of conservation theory, triggered an energetic burst of debates and meetings.<sup>70</sup>

During the Convention, the primary charge of the *“Nara Document”* was to address the various *World Heritage Site* applications denied by the *“Venice Charter”*. The most notable problems in the *“Charter”* were articles 6 and 7, irreconcilable with many national and cultural interpretations on *authenticity*, which stated:

**Article 6.** The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and color must be allowed.

**Article 7.** A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interest of paramount importance.

The *“Nara Document”* Convention was to also address the relativisms apparent in the use of the terms *authenticity*. Due to the strict definition of the term, a *“Test of Authenticity”* was adopted as opposed to a *“Condition of Integrity”*. In an ICCROM position paper by Jukka Jokilehto, in collaboration with Joseph King, it was noted that:

The demand to pass the test of being authentic can be understood as the requirement to be genuine, i.e., the nominated resource should be truly what it is claimed to be. As identified in the *Nara Document*, this aspect of “genuineness” could have many parameters including, “form and design,

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<sup>70</sup> Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation*, (New York City, US: Routledge), 2013, 429.

materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors."<sup>71</sup>

Thus, thirty years after the “*Venice Charter*”, Raymound Lemaire, principle co-author of the “*Charter*”, reflected in a 1995 article about the “*Nara Document*” revisions, for the “*ICOMOS Scientific Journal*”, that:

Charters are fashionable. They are considered to contribute to directing action. However, they never contain more than the minimum on which the majority has agreed. Only exceptionally do they cover the whole of the issue, which concerns them. This is the case with the Venice Charter.<sup>72</sup>

Clearly, Lemaire’s relativistic readdress saw the original “*Charter*” article as inflexible, and the definition of *authenticity* too limiting, as it came to marginalize many structures and *World Heritage Site* applications, by its Western bias towards *authenticity*.

## **Challenges to *Authenticity***

Senior Lecturer in Architecture, Timoticin Kwanda, in his dissertation “*The Interpretation of Cultural Heritage: the Living Authenticity and the Sense of Place*”, also picks up on the relativistic paradigm and European bias of the *authentic* as addressed by Lemaire. Kwanda specifically references Warsaw, and the previously mentioned historic *Old Town*, to demonstrate the imbalance of application. Kwanda notes that:

The concept of authenticity in this inclusion is attributed to the reconstruction of the Old Market Place [of Warsaw, Poland] and adjacent group of buildings as bearing witness to the will of the people deeply

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<sup>71</sup> Jukka Jokilehto, with John King, “Meeting on Authenticity and Integrity in an African Context”, *ICCROM Position Paper*, (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: ICCROM), 1998, (accessed on October 1, 2013).

<sup>72</sup> Raymond Lemaire, “ICOMOS - un regard en arrière, un coup d'oeil en avant”, *ICOMOS Scientific Journal*, (Paris, France: ICOMOS), July 11, 1995, (accessed on October 1, 2013).

rooted in their past and to the scientific excellence of restoration, [and] not to what had existed previously as a medieval town.<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, the bias toward physical materials as a form of tangible *authenticity* clearly shows an exception to the rule.

Kwanda also cites various examples to support his argument: the old wharf (Bryggen), Bergen, Norway; the Asante vernacular buildings (of Ashanti architecture), Kumasi, Ghana; and the traditional wooden architecture of Old Rauma, Finland; all of which demonstrate degrees of *authenticity* despite the varying levels of tangible material



*Bryggen Model, Bergen, Norway, image by author, 2005*

evidence. While these structures have had extensive reconstruction and replacement work done over the centuries, the restoration work has not been seen as having contributed to any perceived loss of experiential, tangible, or material *authenticity*.<sup>74</sup>



*Asante (Ashanti) Traditional Vernacular Buildings, Kumasi, Ghana, ca. 18<sup>th</sup> century, taken from: ghanaexpeditions.com*



*Old Rauma, Finland, ca. 15<sup>th</sup> century, taken from: raumars.org*

The various repairs or changes made to a building over time, without sacrificing

<sup>73</sup> Timoticin Kwanda, *The Interpretation of Cultural Heritage: the Living Authenticity and the Sense of Place*, (Singapore: National University of Singapore, Department of Architecture Dissertation), 2007, 3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



the cultural use and importance, speaks to a condition of preservation called “*progressive authenticity*”. Specifically deliberated by the Nara Conference, with regard to the East-West divide apparent in *authentic* sites, the concept of “*progressive authenticities*” is defined by Pamela Jerome, in her article “*An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation*”, for “*APT Bulletin*”, as:

the layers of history that a cultural property has acquired through time are... considered authentic attributes of that cultural property.<sup>75</sup>

The *authentic* quality of these structures is derived more from its cultural and sociological significance, which is protected, respected, and reinforced by their inclusion on the UNESCO list of *World Heritage Sites*. This shift toward respecting intangible cultural heritage has been developed by UNESCO, in both the 1998 “*Proclamation of Masterpieces on the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*” and in the 2003 adoption of UNESCO’s “*Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*”, is specifically defined in Article 2, of the Convention, as follows:

The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.<sup>76</sup>

For UNESCO, “intangible culture heritage” is defined to include: oral traditions and expressions; performing arts; social practices, rituals, and events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship. This varies

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<sup>75</sup> Pamela Jerome, “An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation”, *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 39, No. 2/3, 3-4.

<sup>76</sup> UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003.

greatly from the traditional “tangible” understandings, in what we call “brick and mortar” and more physical representations, which is more common.

## **Progressive *Authenticity* and Weathering**

With regard to architectural design, what is being addressed is the issue of weathering, in that buildings will of course age and change over time, from their original form. David Leatherbarrow and Moshen Mostafavi, in their book “*On Weathering*”, address this problem specifically, by criticizing the fact that architects often avoid the ramifications of weathering in buildings. According to Leatherbarrow and Mostafavi:

Weathering marks the passage of time. This time is not a moment of a pre-occupancy photograph; time’s passage in architecture includes a building’s inception, construction, and inhabitation. The... consideration of the time and weathering brings the project closer to a condition of actuality based on its potential transformation through time.<sup>77</sup>

Typically, architects do not base their designs on future historic consideration, though they do take into consideration the effects of weathering, and with perhaps a little nod toward posterity. Anecdotally, when the *Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities* (SPNEA), now known as *Historic New England*, acquired the Gropius House, in Lincoln, Massachusetts, from Ise Gropius, wife of



*Gropius House*, by Walter Gropius, Lincoln, MA, 1938, image from: Archives of Historic New England, Boston, MA.

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<sup>77</sup> Mostafavi, Moshen and David Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1993, 112.

the Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, she reported that both she and her husband would have been:

amused to think of the Gropius House as a New England “antiquity”, as years before it had been barely tolerated as a curiosity, or worse, an abomination.<sup>78</sup>

To Gropius, the design of his home, and its use of unconventional materials, was not about the determination of a new style, as so many sought to ascribe for posterity, but rather the establishment of a new way of living and construction, to meet the demands of an evolving modern life. It was more pragmatic in its approach, based on the programmatic needs of the family, and as a tool for design. While many saw the house as a stylistic convention, Gropius sought to free it of the less creatively progressive stylistic cycles that had pervaded architecture for centuries, and without posterity.

## Origin, Legacy, and the Myth of Architect as God

Architects and artists often fantasize about their buildings, and legitimize their designs, as legacies that live on beyond their deaths, much like the creative ambitions of an author or painter, which equates architects with gods. This distinction, as creator, has often been heralded throughout history. Art historian, Laurie Schneider Adams, in “*A History of Western Art*”, discusses this



“*God as Architect*”, from:  
Bible Moralisée, Reims,  
France, ca. 13<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Gittleman, *Gropius House History*, [www.historicnewengland.org/historic-properties/homes/Gropius%20House/gropius-house-history](http://www.historicnewengland.org/historic-properties/homes/Gropius%20House/gropius-house-history), (accessed on December 21, 2012).

point, parallel to the creation of art and architecture:

The fine line between reality and illusion, and the fact that gods are said to create reality while artists create illusion, have given rise to traditions equating artists with gods. Both are seen as creators, the former making replicas of nature and the latter making nature itself.... Artists have been compared to gods [and gods] have been represented as artists. In ancient Babylonian texts, God is described as architect of the world. In the Middle Ages, God is sometimes depicted as an architect drawing the universe with a compass.... Such legends are in the tradition of the supreme.<sup>79</sup>

Over the centuries, society has been driven to traditions and notions of creation and origin, through various demonstrations of *authenticity*, power, rivalry, and sublimation; as one over the other. Each representation is reminiscent of mankind's desire for immortality and a lasting legacy, symbolic of the creation, heritage, and parentage of birth. This is similar to Michelangelo's often quoted statement on how his works of art *were* his children.

Again, Laurie Schneider Adams further notes that:

One powerful motive for making art is the wish to leave behind, after death, something of value by which to be remembered. A work of art symbolically prolongs the artist's existence. This parallels the pervasive feeling that by having children one is ensuring genealogical continuity into the future. Several artists have made such a connection. In an anecdote about Giotto, the fourteenth-century Italian artist, the poet Dante asks why Giotto's children are so ugly and his paintings so beautiful; Giotto replies that he paints by the light of day and reproduces in the darkness of night.<sup>80</sup>

The enduring drive to establish creative primacy and architectural origin may be more a demonstration of the struggle to determine authority and legacy; and one who can establish *authenticity*. Once again, it falls into the category of marginalization, in that it is at the exclusion of others. This genealogical continuity and domination also contrasts

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<sup>79</sup> Laurie Schneider Adams, *A History of Western Art*, (New York City, NY: McGraw-Hill), 2001, 5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

and negates Stephen Greenblatt's notion of "awakening in the viewer a sense of the cultural and historically contingent construction of art objects",<sup>81</sup> which is very important to this discussion.

Establishing origin does not have to mean placing aesthetics, culture, and history at odds; locked in a power struggle. Sometimes it acts as a reference point, or datum, for experiencing and retrieving other important aspects of research. For example, origin stories are very useful in the context of urban planning, development, marketing, and tourism.

### **Conservation, Tourism, and *Authenticity***

With regard to *authenticity* and historic sites, the context of setting can change the experience of the architecture, depending on its programmatic use, reconstruction, and overall history. Siri Myrvoll, in "*Strategies for Preserving the Historic Identity of Bergen*", suggests that:

the basis for planning and development must originate in knowledge of the historic city structure and the elements vital to the city's identity. Documentation of historic structures and incorporating their main features on an overall scale in planning would... put a stop to the continuous conflicts between protection and large-scale urban development... and maintain the quality of the centuries-long traditions, while promoting and strengthening the living city.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder", *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, editors, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press), 1991, 45 (referenced in a Stephen Greenblatt lecture at IDSVA, Spannocchia, in Rosia, Italy, June 8, 2010).

<sup>82</sup> Siri Myrvoll, "Strategies for Preserving the Historic Identity of Bergen", *Historic Cities and Sacred Sites: Cultural Roots for Urban Futures*, Ismail Serageldin, Ephim Shluger, and Joan Martin-Brown, editors, (Washington, DC: The World Bank), 2001, 55-58.

More importantly, various alternative viewpoints must always be factored in, for sometimes the search for *authenticity* might be at the expense and exclusion of other valid positions and considerations.

For example, at *Colonial Williamsburg*, in Virginia, the initial reconstruction of the town in the 1920's favored a certain historic and romanticized perspective of Colonial life, of privileged white landowners, which in turn brought about the irreplaceable destruction of a number of buildings through eminent domain, and later determined to be of significance to the African American narrative and their experience pertaining to Colonial times. With American colonial history stereotypically biased toward the white European experience, the narrative of *authenticity* drew light upon marginalized narratives, to provide a more inclusive and *authentic* experience for tourists.

In a less devastating but necessary choice, at the old wharf district of Bryggen, in Bergen, Norway, the alleyways and streetscapes of the historic wharf buildings needed to comply with various present-day fire codes, due to the many devastating fires over the years. This meant that fire suppression systems had to be installed, to protect the buildings and the throngs of tourists to this UNESCO *World Heritage Site*, regardless of the devices' intrusion on *authenticity* and aesthetic accuracy.



*"Bryggen in Bergen"*, July 2005, pencil drawing by author

There are various legal guidelines and safety codes that need to be followed in any attempt to preserve *authenticity*. Caroline R. Alderson discusses this point in

*“Responding to Change: Changing Perspectives on Appropriate Change in Historic Settings”:*

The basic premise... is that the value of a significant historic structure rests in its authenticity. Guidelines... [such as the Venice Charter, the Nara Document, etc.], stress protecting authenticity through repairs that conserve original materials and design, scientific methods that ensure historically accurate restoration, regulations for protecting historic settings, reversible alterations, and respectful new construction that distinguishes new from old. With regard to context, the Venice Charter (the principle source for the guidelines that followed) is unequivocal: Article 1 defines the historic monument as embracing “not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development, or an historic event.” The same holds true for “modest works of the past, which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time” as... “great works of art.”<sup>83</sup>

While UNESCO is concerned with preserving architectural *authenticity* and promoting tourism, many tourists have their own ideas of what constitutes *authenticity*. The tourism industry often markets the concept of *authenticity* by offering a constructed historical perspective, which as mentioned previously, can exclude alternative narratives, identities, and traditions.

Greg Richards, a professor of cultural tourism at Tilburg University, expands upon the balance of tourism, *spirit of place*, and *authenticity*, in “*Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*”, and writes that:

In the tourist industry, there has also been a growing realization that local identities and distinctiveness can also provide the basis for tourist products. For example, the Sense of Place Toolkit, produced by the Wales Tourist Board, advises on the creation of tourism products based on the “sense of place” or “authentic essence of place” reminding users that, “our everyday life is someone else’s adventure”.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Caroline R. Alderson, “Responding to Change: Changing Perspectives on Appropriate Change in Historic Settings”, *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 2006, 23.

<sup>84</sup> Greg Richards, *Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*, (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press), 2007, 3.

Similarly, the Singapore architect, Hock-Beng Tan reported in “(Re)Presenting the Vernacular / (Re)Inventing Authenticity: Resort Architecture in Southeast Asia”, that:

To attract the ever-increasing number of tourists, entrepreneurs and tour operators often use traditions and heritage, both authentic and manufactured, for mass consumption. Resorts are building types that are precisely tailored to fulfill this need. Being intrinsically contrived, many of them are now paradoxically being marketed for their architectural merits, which are being hailed for their “authenticity”.<sup>85</sup>

Consider again the marginalizing example of *Colonial Williamsburg*, which is often deemed to be a great American historical attraction, and a model for preservation efforts. Yet, *Colonial Williamsburg* has been repeatedly criticized as an inferior restoration, at the expense of a hyper-realized tourist destination. Sharon Bohn Gmelch, professor of cultural anthropology at Union College, offers her own impressions on *Colonial Williamsburg* in, “*Tourists and Tourism: A Reader*”:

It is commercially designed and operated tourist simulations (i.e., theme parks) that particularly irk certain contemporary social philosophers. Critics such as Umberto Eco and Jean Baudrillard see them as disturbingly modern, or we should say postmodern and as uniquely American phenomena. In an article on Colonial Williamsburg, critic Ada Louis Huxtable describes the restoration cum amusement environment as nothing less than the start of a “quintessentially American” process of replacing reality with “substitution”. Huxtable is disturbed that it works all too well and detrimentally. She is also disturbed that theme park simulations are unabashed in their enthusiasm for the quality of the recreation: “nothing in [the theme park] is admired for its reality, only for the remarkable simulation that is achieved; the selective manipulation of its sources is a deliberate expressive distortion that is its own art form.”<sup>86</sup>

Dean MacCannell, anthropologist and Professor of Landscaping at UC Davis, also agrees with Gmelch, in his article “*Staged Authenticity*” (as included in Richard

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<sup>85</sup> Hock-Beng Tan, “(Re)Presenting the Vernacular/(Re)Inventing Authenticity: Resort Architecture in Southeast Asia”, *TDSR*, Vol. V1, No. 11, 1995, 26.

<sup>86</sup> Sharon Bohn Gmelch, *Tourists and Tourism: A Reader*, (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press), 2004, 121.



Sharpley's and Philip Stone's "*The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*"), and states that:

Increasingly, western tourists turn to recollections of 'experience' and 'authentic' tourism encounters. Usually, 'alternative tourism' is understood to involve some kind of search for authenticity and there is growing contentious debate in tourism academia over the extent to which authenticity matters.<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusion

In summary, *authenticity*, with regard to tourism, often becomes a matter of perception. Experience and values are at play, where legitimacy is determined by the individual visitor's understanding of identity, history, and design. It involves a subjective degree of resonance and aura, related to experience, by the various aesthetic and social conditions presented. It is also a legal construct that determines the environmental health, welfare, and safety of visitors to architectural sites.

Lastly, *authenticity* can also offer a contrived setting at the expense of alternate experiences, to appeal to the commodification of branding and marketing. Each position must be carefully maneuvered, to ensure dynamic possibilities, and avoid static absolutes that marginalize and regress.

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<sup>87</sup> Dean MacCannell, "Staged Tourism", *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, editors, (Bristol, England: Channel View Publications), 2009, 133.



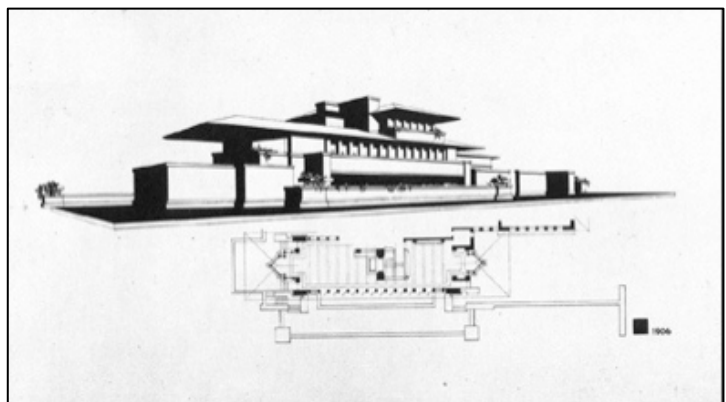
### ***Authenticity, Appropriation, Copies, and Replicas***

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Where do architects and designers get their ideas? The answer, of course, is mainly from other architects and designers, so is it mere casuistry to distinguish between tradition and plagiarism?<sup>88</sup>

– Stephen Paul Bayley

In architecture, the search for the *authentic* can take on many different forms and directions. A perplexing example of this multi-directional perspective cautiously references the work of American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Here we find a conundrum on the meaning of inspired original.



*Robie House*, by Frank Lloyd Wright, Chicago, IL, 1905, image from: <http://pc.blogspot.com/2006/05/robie-house-frank-lloyd-wright.html>

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<sup>88</sup> Stephen Paul Bayley, *Commerce and Culture: From Pre-Industrial Art to Post-Industrial Value*, (New York City, NY: Harper Collins Publishers), 1989, chapter 3.

Among Wright's most enduring early to mid-career forms were those associated with the Prairie Style, which took inspiration from the prairie plains of the American Midwest. Wright's most iconic work in this genre, was the Robie House, from 1910 (see image on previous page), on the south side of Chicago, which came to epitomize the elongated roof forms, an open floor plan lifestyle, ribbon windows, centralized hearth, and the pivotal claim to *breaking the box* of static academic designs, all elements strongly associated with his Prairie Style designs. As a result of its success, the Prairie Style was widely adapted and appropriated by the popular and affordable bungalow style for mail-order catalogue homes, as well as in the burgeoning suburbia, which contributed in part to the cookie-cutter propagation of split-level ranch houses.<sup>89</sup>

## DeStijl and Adaptation

The success of Wright's Prairie Style homes also attracted the attention of Ernst Wasmuth, a publisher in Berlin, who wanted to create a monograph portfolio of Wright's architectural work to date. Carter Wiseman, in "*Twentieth-Century American Architecture: The Buildings and Their Makers*", adds that the:

Wasmuth Portfolio... appeared in 1911, and had a powerful effect on a number of leading progressive architects who saw it.<sup>90</sup>

As such, Wright's work was often appropriated and adapted by many European Modernists working in the DeStijl Movement of architecture, including Gerrit Rietveld, Robert van t'Hoff, and Theo van Doesburg, who as Carter Wiseman continues:

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<sup>89</sup> Carter Wiseman, *Twentieth-Century American Architecture: The Buildings and Their Makers*, (New York City, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.), 2000, 98.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

saw in Wright's clean lines and simplified forms a beacon of reform [*sic*: re-form]. Indeed, one need only compare the work of the Dutch *De Stijl* movement with Unity Temple [and the Pettit Mortuary, among others,] to see how closely some Europeans were reading Wright's message of planar manipulation and spatial exuberance.<sup>91</sup>

Given the time period, and right before the outbreak of WW I with strained communications across the Atlantic, Wright's work was often easily appropriated and adapted, without clear credit.<sup>92</sup> It was a creative act in architecture that had never previously been questioned.

This is most evident in the *Villa Verloop* from 1915, in Huis-ter-Heide, Utrecht, the Netherlands, by Robert van t'Hoff, which has an uncanny and striking similarity to Wright's *Pettit Mortuary Chapel*, from 1907, in Belvidere Illinois.



*Villa Verloop*, by Robert van t'Hoff, Huis-ter-Heide, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 1915, taken from: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_van\\_'t\\_Hoff](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_van_'t_Hoff).



*Pettit Mortuary Chapel*, by Frank Lloyd Wright, Belvidere, IL, 1907, taken from: [waymarking.com/waymarks/WM11TR\\_Pettit\\_Memorial\\_Chapel](https://waymarking.com/waymarks/WM11TR_Pettit_Memorial_Chapel)

This level of appropriation has always been an element of architecture's creative history (as in art), going back to as far as the Renaissance designs of Andrea Palladio, if not earlier, in the adaptation of Greco-Roman architectural ideas in the design of his

<sup>91</sup> Carter Wiseman, *Twentieth-Century American Architecture: The Buildings and Their Makers*, (New York City, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.), 2000, 104.

<sup>92</sup> R. Stephen Sennott, editor, *Encyclopedia of 20th-Century Architecture*, (London, England: Fitzroy Dearborn), 2004, 349.

villas. However, there is a gray area with this type of inspiration and appropriation, bordering on the level of plagiarism; and considered very rare for the present day.<sup>93</sup>

Considering the clear appropriation of Wright's work in Europe, and the questionable legality of architectural copyright issues related to plagiarism in the architectural community, the artistic practice of appropriation in art can be somewhat difficult to relate to architectural practice. The legal tone of plagiarism is often dismissed and overlooked in the application to – and context of – art, especially where architecture is more typically positioned in line with engineering, than as an art. This discussion will consider appropriation as it is applied to architecture.

## **Appropriation versus Plagiarism**

Carol Strickland and John Boswell, in "*The Annotated Mona Lisa*", address the origin and evolution of appropriation in Post-Modernism, against Modernism, in:

the art object as a hand-made original. This... was supposed to... [stress the importance of] the product of an artist's gradual progress. Forget progress, said the Post-Modernists, for whom *new* did not automatically equate with *improved*. The future of art lay in the past more than the individual imagination. Artists began to appropriate images from diverse sources, as Pop artists had done, but drew on art history and mythology as well as the mass media. They combined preexisting images with their own... or presented the appropriated images as their own.<sup>94</sup>

Again, the earlier issue of mankind as creator, and any biblical reference to the notion of "*in god's own image*" seems apparent, with regard to appropriation and originality.

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<sup>93</sup> Montgomery C. Schuyler, Matlack Price, and Herbert D. Croly, editors, "Architectural Piracy: A Flagrant Case of Plagiarism", *The Architectural Record*, vol. 35, no. 1, Serial no. 184, January-June 1914, 30.

<sup>94</sup> Carol Strickland and John Boswell, *The Annotated Mona Lisa*, (Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel: A Universal Press Syndicate Company), 1992, 190.

However, there is little controversy today over the use of appropriation in art, now that it has, according to Marilyn Randall in *"Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit, and Power"*, "become fully institutionalized as a form of contemporary art."<sup>95</sup>

Among the artists working in this mode are Barbara Kruger, Richard Prince, and Sherrie Levine. Specifically, in Kruger's construct of appropriation or *taking*,<sup>96</sup> it is the physical act of alteration by cropping, rearranging, reposing, captioning, and redoing that bears significant reevaluation in its application toward architecture.



*"Plagiarism is..."* by Barbara Kruger, 1989.

Architecture, in its current mode, appears to be strictly defined by intentions of *authenticity*, originality, and legal concerns for plagiarism. However, Kruger's notion of *taking* has occurred repeatedly in architecture, outside the definition of plagiarism, and is not always met with the same rigor of the artistic definition.

In this same line of thought, is the work of Sherrie Levine, as noted by Elisabeth Sussman, in *"The Last Picture Show"*:

The act of appropriation of imagery from existing sources was radically extended... to the fine arts by Sherrie Levine in 1981, when she began to take pictures of famous fine art photographs [such as those created by Edward Weston and Walker Evans], without any manipulations of the source. In 1981 Rosalind Krauss wrote that an artist such as Levine had entered 'the discourse of the copy... developed by a variety of authors, among them Roland Barthes [who characterized] the realist as certainly not a copyist from nature, but rather a *pasticheur*, someone who makes copies of copies'. When Levine rephotographed an Edward Weston

<sup>95</sup> Marilyn Randall, *Pragmatic Plagiarism: Authorship, Profit, and Power*, (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press), 2001, 253.

<sup>96</sup> Barbara Kruger, *"Taking Pictures"*, *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*, (Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishing), 2003, 1042.

photograph of a male boy's torso her act was scarcely any different from Weston's, whose own image was ultimately also a kind of copy of Greek sculpture.<sup>97</sup>

In very much the same way, architecture has always been absorbed with the notion of the original, and the *pasticheur*. Witold Rybczynski, Professor of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, notes in "*When Architects Plagiarize: It's Not Always Bad*", that architects have always been:

trying to re-create the buildings of ancient Rome. The fact that most of these [ancient] buildings lay in ruins meant that designers had to do a lot of creative reconstruction, but that didn't alter the principle learning from – and copying – the past. Invention was necessary, but it was not the most important factor.<sup>98</sup>

This replication, or copies of copies, according to Jan Verwoert, in "*Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art*":

can be understood as one of the most basic procedures of modern art production and education. To cite, copy, and modify exemplary works from art history is the model for developing art practice [very much in the manner that] neo-classicist tendencies have always championed.<sup>99</sup>

All forms and styles of architecture eventually succumbed to this mode and act of production and education, regardless of their own perceived originality or importance. While Modernist architects clearly rejected the historicist appropriations of the Victorian age before them, Post-Modernist architects were equally as critical of the Modernists repeating the same condition.

Witold Rybczynski continues, in that while the:

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<sup>97</sup> Elisabeth Sussman, "The Last Picture Show", *Appropriation*, edited by David Evans, (London, England: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 2009, 94.

<sup>98</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *When Architects Plagiarize: It's Not Always Bad*, [www.slate.com/articles/arts/architecture/2005/09/when\\_architects\\_plagiarize.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/architecture/2005/09/when_architects_plagiarize.html), (accessed on: September 14, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> Verwoert, Jan, "Living with Ghosts: From Appropriation to Invocation in Contemporary Art", *Art and Research: A Journal of Ideas, Context, and Methods*, vol. 1, no. 2, Summer.



first generation of Modernists wanted to upset the apple cart and devise a new language of design... they, too, took imitation [and appropriation] for granted. How else to explain all those flat roofs, white plastered exteriors, and factory-sash windows? When pioneers such as Mies van der Rohe made discoveries, they belonged to everyone; it was a sign of esteem when other architects copied his steel and glass curtain walls. And once a discovery was made, architects stuck to it. '*I don't want to be original,*' Mies is supposed to have said, '*I want to be good.*' Design was too serious to be left to idiosyncratic imagination.<sup>100</sup>

As always, the intent and separation of pastiche from appropriation in architecture must be carefully analyzed, with regard to *authenticity* and any potential legal issues pertaining to plagiarism. However, there are situations that are less clear.

There are a few curious architectural oddities surrounding the issue of appropriation that challenge this discussion. The first is Robert van t'Hoffs *Villa Verloop*, as previously mentioned. However, the architect that most often comes to mind is Czech architect Antonin Nechodoma, and specifically his successful architectural practice in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from 1912 until 1928.

## **Antonin Nechodoma**

Dotting the landscape of Puerto Rico are dozens of Prairie Style residences bearing striking resemblances to Wright's designs, some to the point where Nechodoma has been out-rightly accused of plagiarism, instead of appropriation. Jorge Rigau, in "*Puerto Rico 1900: Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the Hispanic Caribbean 1890-1930*", states that:

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<sup>100</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *When Architects Plagiarize: It's Not Always Bad*, [www.slate.com/articles/arts/architecture/2005/09/when\\_architects\\_plagiarize.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/architecture/2005/09/when_architects_plagiarize.html), (accessed on: September 14, 2012).

Such likenesses, it must be admitted, are too close to be ignored. The architect – who in later years went on record condemning the copying of plans as ‘architectural prostitution’ – plagiarized many of Wright’s designs: façades, fragments of plans, detailing, and even furniture. For Nechodoma’s Casa Roig project, in Humacao, Puerto Rico (1919), he seems to have literally traced Wright’s perspective for the Burton S. Westcott house in Springfield, Ohio (1907).<sup>101</sup>

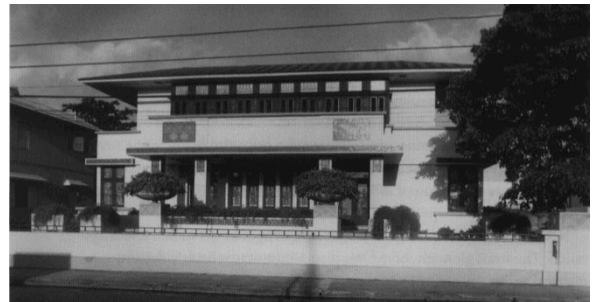
Condemning as the evidence is for Nechodoma’s traced blueprints, the realization of these structures (though Wright-based), bears a little deeper investigation.

Given that there is no documentation to substantiate these claims against Nechodoma, even though Wright had vacationed in Puerto Rico, the issue of separating plagiarism from appropriation and inspiration becomes difficult. This accusation is also supported by the fact that Nechodoma was in possession of a copy of the *Wasmuth Folio*, which documented Wright’s work up until that time.

From the outset of his new locale and practice, Nechodoma began designing contextually and sustainably in the bungalow motif, and gradually developed his own personal expression. In fact, his early works were far removed from anything that Wright had published in the *Folio*; however, the Bungalow Style was clearly a precedent in his later adaptations of the Prairie Style.



*Westcott Residence*, by Frank Lloyd Wright, Springfield, OH, 1908, taken from: [farm2.staticflickr.com/1372](http://farm2.staticflickr.com/1372)



*Casa Roig*, by Antonin Nechodoma, Humacao, PR, 1919, taken from: [nechodoma.tripod.com/3.htm](http://nechodoma.tripod.com/3.htm)

<sup>101</sup> Jorge Rigau, *Puerto Rico 1900: Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the Hispanic Caribbean 1890-1930*, (New York City, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.), 1992, 110.

Thomas S. Marvel, in “*Antonin Nechodoma: The Prairie Style in the Caribbean*”, notes that, for Nechodoma:

The popular principles of the bungalow gave him the direction toward an appropriate architecture for Puerto Rico and the Wasmuth Folio gave him the style... he needed to give it form. In retrospect, he could not have chosen a better model to use, as it adapted beautifully to a Caribbean setting. When he used the folio, he copied the perspectives and modified the floor plans behind the main façade for each particular client. Twelve of his projects have been identified as having design origins in the folio of Wright.<sup>102</sup>

For example, the previously mentioned Casa Roig, for which Nechodoma had literally traced Wright’s perspective of the Westcott Residence, in Springfield, Ohio, fits this category best. While the implication of the direct tracing appears to be a form of plagiarism, given the exact nature of the presentation drawings, the two buildings couldn’t be further apart in other details, both on the interior and exterior.

An example lies in Nechodoma’s treatment of the Roig façade, which is far more in response to the tropical climate. Here, he added deeper covered terraces for shade and rain run-off, as well as projecting balconies that connected the interior and exterior more directly, which provided Nechodoma with “a prominent surface for mosaics”.<sup>103</sup> These are all factors that give Nechodoma’s work a sense of originality and authorship, if it is so desired. It may even be construed as being *authentic* to the environment.



**Casa Roig, detail, by Antonin Nechodoma, Humacao, PR, 1919, taken from: [farm6.staticflickr.com/5211](https://farm6.staticflickr.com/5211)**

<sup>102</sup> Marvel, Thomas S., *Antonin Nechodoma: The Prairie Style in the Caribbean*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida), 1994, 98.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.



**Korber Residence**, by Antonin Nechodoma, San Juan, PR, 1917, photo by author.



**Dana House**, by Frank Lloyd Wright, Springfield, IL, 1904, taken from: [peterbeers.net/interests/flw\\_rt/Illinois/Dana](http://peterbeers.net/interests/flw_rt/Illinois/Dana)

The Korber Residence gives the strongest indication of a Wright aesthetic. Clearly based on the Dana House, in Springfield, Illinois, the Korber residence is probably the most well known of Nechodoma's work, due to its prominent urban location, lush tropical setting, and its easily confused association with Wright.

Where Wright left the Dana House rather plain, on the exterior, Nechodoma saw it "as an opportunity to enrich the exquisite lines of the house with a glazed tile pattern",<sup>104</sup> giving the façade a more colorfully rich effect. Nechodoma added many new elements to the façade, including soffit beams and stained glass windows, influenced, in Nechodoma's own words, "by the gorgeous and vivid colors of the tropical growth".<sup>105</sup>



**Korber Residence**, detail, by Antonin Nechodoma, San Juan, PR, 1917, taken from: [prairieschooltraveler.com](http://prairieschooltraveler.com).

Jorges Rigau places the discrepancies and disputes, with plagiarism and originality, in the following context:

<sup>104</sup> Marvel, Thomas S., *Antonin Nechodoma: The Prairie Style in the Caribbean*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida), 1994, 138.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

Nechodoma's contribution to Puerto Rican architecture is usually attributed to his adaptation or introduction of Wright's Prairie Style to the tropics, implying that his false assumption of authorship might be pardonable.<sup>106</sup>

However, among architectural historians, Nechodoma's work has always been charged with a dismissive verdict of plagiarism, especially given the condemning evidence of the traced presentation drawings that he employed on a few of his projects.

Apart from the drawings, the only known issues of constructed plagiarism in Nechodoma's built works may be attributed more to the decorative details he had employed. He often used Wright inspired urns, art glass, and banding details, albeit in a slightly distorted manner, which in turn brings about a smile of acknowledgement, that this *is* Wright, but at the same time it is *not*.

Nechodoma's work, in all but a few instances, transcends the criticism of plagiarism into the broader context of relevant phenomenological experiences. What has become clear is the *authentic* representation and response to the environment, style, culture, and geography of Puerto Rico that Nechodoma brought about in his own adaptation of the Prairie Style.

These structures clearly had their origins in the Prairie Style idiom, but appropriated in a wholly original guise, no different than the work of Barbara Kruger or Sherrie Levine. However, the question will still persist as to Nechodoma's desire to follow in a very iconic and recognizable style.

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<sup>106</sup> Jorge Rigau, *Puerto Rico 1900: Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the Hispanic Caribbean 1890-1930*, (New York City, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.), 1992, 112.

## Conclusion

Based on the various examples previously discussed, and with questions posed by the validity of adaptation and appropriation on *authenticity*, it has become apparent that a deeper architectural investigation should follow, with regard to contextual, environmental, and phenomenological conditions, in light of adapted work from Nechodoma and the DeStijl movement.

Two very distinct cultural, sociological, and architectural examples that call into question these various issues, and that potentially contribute toward the discussion of relativity of *authenticity*, copies, and replicas, away from polarizing absolutes, are the *Fantoft Stave Church*, in Bergen, Norway, and the *Ise Shrines*, in Ise-Shi, Japan. As test cases, both examples will be able to share valuable insight into various analytical distinctions, and as a future tool for architects and designers.

### ***Authenticity Reconstructed: the Fantoft Stave Church, Bergen, Norway***

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The stave church has a structure similar to that of a boat. Its details are identifiable in terms of nautical handicrafts. The mast is its column and the boom its beam, while the common apertures have a similar order of precision. History was embodied in its construction, while the idea of the church flowed to all places. The message was geographically independent. The voyage became a mental one, a personal conversation between man and God. The symbol it represented could reach beyond the horizon – the borderline of the unknown. It developed into the sign of the undiscovered. Every force in man strove to overcome this insecurity and it was the fear of the unknown that prompted its construction.<sup>107</sup>

- Sverre Fehn

In Norway, the towering and mythic stave churches invoke a sense of mystery, awe, and joy. With their visual appeal and interpreted iconic history, they share an association with religion, politics, and tradition and offer what appears as a discontinued historical timeline.

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<sup>107</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz and Gennaro Postiglione, *Sverre Fehn: Works, Projects, Writings, 1946-1996*, (New York City, NY: The Monacelli Press, Inc.), 1997, 256.





*Fantoft Stave Church, 2012, photo by author*



At one point in Norway's history, there were about 900 or more of these medieval wooden stave churches in existence, which through the ages have succumbed to various church expansions, replacements, or fires. The number now stands about 28 or 30. Of those churches, outside the official heritage count, is the *Fantoft Stave Church*, located in Bergen, Norway. The *Fantoft Stave Church* has historically been classified as a relocated original, until it was intentionally destroyed by arson in 1992. In the years that followed, it was reconstructed and to this day it is still seen as an important historical site, drawing many tourists.

Besides its traditional history, and the abundance of souvenir tourists, the stave church has also come to be associated with its infamous fire, which has sparked interest in the heavy metal music community as a site of "dark tourism", due to the convicted arsonists association with a heavy metal band. Additionally, the site also has a developing post-modernist fascination and newfound interest with trauma-scapes and disaster sites.<sup>108</sup>

Some of my earliest and fondest memories are associated with childhood trips to the *Fantoft Stave Church*. I still remember the excitement of my first trip to the church in 1977, accompanied by my grandmother and her brother, my great uncle Ivar. I still have the rounded-edge photograph I took that day (see image at right). Many questions popped into my young mind when I



*Fantoft Stave Church, 1977, photo by author*

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<sup>108</sup> Lutz Kaelber, "New Analyses of Trauma, Memory, and Place in Berlin and Beyond: A Review Essay", *Canadian Journal of Sociology Online*, May-June 2007, [www.cjsonline.ca/pdf/traumamemory.pdf](http://www.cjsonline.ca/pdf/traumamemory.pdf), (accessed on June 12, 2012), 3.

snapped that picture, such as: Why was it located on the outskirts of the city... in the woods... away from downtown Bergen... and in such a remote location?

After the devastating fire, and the announced plans for reconstruction, I held the opinion that the church would never be the same. I had assumed that the reconstruction would never embody the same space of memory and meaning that it had previously held for me. My assumptions were wrong.



*Fantoft Stave Church ruins, June 6, 1992, taken from: Bergen Tidende*

Many people still come, from all over the world, to visit the reconstructed church. They take in its beautiful setting, walking among trees and mossy rocks that outline the long, meandering woodland path. The *Fantoft Stave Church* is still nationally identified, drawing tourists for its valued symbolism and historic nature.

However, while the church still has a draw in many tourist circles, many locals today still carry the trauma of its loss, and trivialize its reconstruction, as just a mere copy or replica. It is quite fascinating, that for a monument that was originally moved to this site in 1883, as a garden folly for a wealthy estate owner, its loss is tied more to a history of a little more than a hundred years at this location. What must the inhabitants of Fortun, the original location of the church, have thought about its move to Bergen in 1883? Its



*Fantoft Stave Church, Fortun, before relocation to Bergen, in 1883, taken from: Bergen Tidende*

subsequent conjectured reconstruction, to a form unlike its state in Fortun, would certainly have been seen as a loss. Or was it?

Is the fact that today it is a replica, and reconstructed, diminish any of the experiential qualities of *authenticity* or originality? This all depends on how one frames the issues of perception and representation, related to time, aesthetics, and tradition.

### **Background: the Landscape of Norway and the Stave Churches**

Norway is an extremely long and mountainous country, dotted with jagged peaks and cliffs, and penetrated by long fjords that extend deep into the interior of the country. It is no exaggeration, that in 1777, E. M. R. Mandt, in his “*Historical Description Over Upper Telemark*”, most evocatively described Norway “as one enormous rock, riven with valleys”.<sup>109</sup>

From a phenomenological point of view, the architectural historian Christian Norberg-Schulz, in “*Nightlands: Nordic Building*”, offers the following observations:

It is architecture’s task to enable dwelling, and this task is satisfied by building in resonance with the given place.<sup>110</sup>

In Norway, Norberg-Schulz continues:

the mountain mass still coheres, and therefore the valley emerges as rift. The fjords in the west are likewise but waterfilled.... Here, one lives not in an extensive, open environment but between high walls; and although Norway is larger and more vigorous than its... [neighbors], it seems smaller because it lacks prospect. It is only when one is on top of the mountains that prospect becomes panorama.... But it is down in the valley that everyday life takes place... that our being in space is determined by a tension of above and below. In valleys, we are below; this is our place of dwelling, where we create... our existence.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Engelbret Michaelsen Resen Mandt, *Historisk Beskrivelse Over Øvre Telemarken*, (first published: 1777, reissued: Oslo, Norway: Espa), 1989.

<sup>110</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1996, 15.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-32.

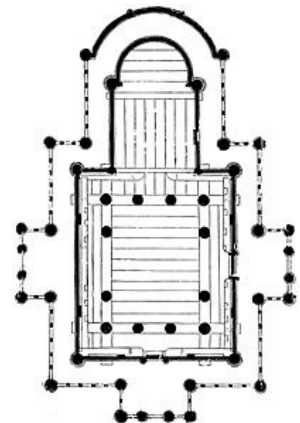
In this framed context, how does one design and build architecture in the context of the Norwegian landscape? In response to the *tension... above and below*, for Norberg-Schulz, architecture must be a reciprocating expression of the environment.<sup>112</sup>

Stave churches are amazing structures that challenge our understanding of architectural form and technology. At the outset, they appear to be very massive and solid buildings, but in actuality, they are comprised of many overlapping thin layers that envelop space, in a manner similar to Russian Matryoshka nesting dolls; in which each volumetric wall layer is protected by the next.



**Borgund Stave Church,**  
Borgund Norway, ca. 12<sup>th</sup> ,  
century, photo by author

The innermost wall surrounds the largest space of the nave and frames the structural core for the telescoping central roof. Each successive wall provides a structural support, seating, ambulatory space, or protection for the layer below, with the projecting roof gables defining the dramatic external shape. Each successive layer provides various circulations spaces, called ambulatories, connected to various program elements of church ritual, either internally or externally.



**Plan of Borgund Stave**  
**Church, Borgund Norway, ca.**  
**12<sup>th</sup> century, taken from:**  
**“Stave Churches in Norway”,**  
**by Gunnar Bugge**

Many of the architectural details follow Romanesque or Norman stylizations, combined with a distinctive diamond-shaped and layered wood shingle pattern on the gables, to wick the water and snow away faster, and which in turn gives the building an

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<sup>112</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1996, 35.

overall appearance of thatch. According to Laurie Adams Schneider, in “*Art Across Time*”, the:

points of the gables, like the prows of Viking ships, were decorated with animal heads, usually dragons.<sup>113</sup>

Its exterior form is most memorable, in contrast to Norway’s dramatic mountainous landscape, and is best described by the Danish author, Martin A. Hansen, in his historical tale, from 1959, of the “*Serpent and the Bull*” (“*Orm og Tyr*”):

One does not quickly comprehend the idea in such a building. Myriad roofs and gables compel the glance wildly upwards, till it springs from the spire to the heavens, piercing javelin-like. The church is a living, fantastic creature – wild, darkly glowing black, umber, ochre, gold; here and there, scaly like a monster, the shingles. It is foreign, demonically agitating, diabolically confounding. In the first instant, one asks oneself if this is at all architecture; in the next, the strange structure stands totally still, not heavily resting, but hovering as if weightlessly. The eye has yet to decipher its lines, let alone understand its construction. Nothing is clear, but one understands when the eye has captured its dramatic theme; everywhere elements stretch and dissolve and radiate from the building; or rather, it is both tensive and liberative in relation to the great landscape around.... On the high broad door surrounds of very small doors, graven ornament flows in powerful motion. Also within, carvings and painted decoration sprout forth like a living stream on obscure surfaces... There comes but little sunlight into the stave church. Some still have original windows, small round peepholes high up under the rood of the nave. The weak light is split by roofwork and sinks like a dim atmosphere into the room.<sup>114</sup>

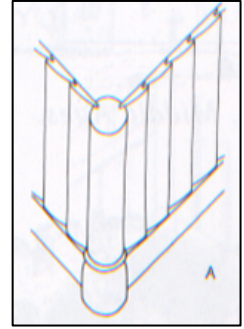
The small peepholes are reminiscent of stars in the vast night sky. They also remind one of the oar holes on a Viking ship, for which the roof structure clearly evokes the hull of a boat. Many metaphorical connections can be made, much like an architectural Rohr-Schacht test.

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<sup>113</sup> Laurie Schneider Adams, *Art Across Time*, (New York City, NY: McGraw-Hill), 1999, 396.

<sup>114</sup> Martin A. Hansen and Sven Havsteen-Mikkelsen, *Orm og Tyr*, (Copenhagen, Denmark: Wivel), 1959, 278ff.

Norway's stave churches fall into a number of stylistic categories, with regard to building form and artistic derivation in its architectural decoration. However, the most recognizable construction element is the post and beam. This type of construction technique typically utilizes load-bearing masts (or posts) and staves (much like the vertical staves of a barrel), to enclose the church nave. In this manner, the name stave church is then somewhat of a misnomer, in that it is the weighty and tall masts that most visitors remember, and not the stave walls.



**Mast and Stave,**  
detail, taken from:  
"Stave Churches in  
Norway", by Gunnar  
Bugge

When Christianity was brought to Norway in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it was the stave churches that eventually replaced the Pagan temples. It was through the royal subjects of the Norwegian kings Olaf Trygvason and Olaf Haraldson (later to become Saint Olav) that Christianity came to be accepted and disseminated. A period of church construction gradually took over the country. These churches of convenience were primarily governed and influenced by local farmers, who were guaranteed secular provisions.

As Jerri Holan comments, in "*Norwegian Wood: A Tradition of Building*":

Yet, rooted in a tradition that was deeply connected to nature, the medieval Norwegian culture did not experience irreconcilable conflict between the old mythology and Christian concepts but instead grew into Christianity... Pagan beliefs were never formal concepts; they were practices continuously being developed, and the Norwegians easily substituted the excitement of mass worshippings with Christian services. Gradually, Christ was considered the more powerful deity although old gods still existed in popular belief and superstition.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Jerri Holan, *Norwegian Wood: A Tradition of Building*, (New York City, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.), 1990, 103.

It is for this reason that many of the architectural decorations associated with stave churches, took on various Pagan animal and floral forms and symbolism. The dragonhead forms that crown the roof and the interlacing pattern of gripping beasts that adorn the portal door surrounds are most recognizable, among other details.

As Holan continues:

The freedom and skill with which the Norwegians blended European traditions with their own rich, zoomorphic Viking art gave the churches their unique ambience: it allowed the builders to match their creations precisely to the vision and forces of their own world.<sup>116</sup>

As a seafaring nation, many of the construction techniques employed nautical motifs, such as ribs in the upside-down hull roof framing, curved bracket details, and tiny oar hole windows; all typical of Viking longship construction.<sup>117</sup> However, there were other construction details, such as the lace collar, the quadrant brackets (in the form of St. Andrew's Crosses), the ground frame, and the stone foundation (to avoid rot), that overall came to ensure structural stability and weatherproofing.<sup>118</sup>

While the roofline may be the most memorable detail, Christian Norberg-Schulz asks us again to challenge our perceptions of what we see:

What, then, is the true distinguishing feature of the stave church? To find it, we need to look to the roof rather than at the ground – and that is indeed natural in a church. Under the roof, then, we find a sort of “lace collar” of stiffening spandrels, which in concert with the frame of staves, forms a raised baldachin. The effect achieved by the varying number of staves that are carried from this collar downward to the ground is sometimes more, sometimes less centralized, though all are in principle centralized spaces. The baldachin structure is the stave church's basic gestalt, and its interior is accordingly quite different from that of the Early

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<sup>116</sup> Jerri Holan, *Norwegian Wood: A Tradition of Building*, (New York City, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.), 1990, 113.

<sup>117</sup> Gunnar Bugge, *Stave Churches in Norway*, (Oslo, Norway: Dreyer Forlag), 1983, 10.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Christian nave. It is thus erroneous to state that “the Norwegian columnar stave church is the stone basilica retold in wood, without the least trace of any older domestic element.” In order to retell, one requires a language, and it is evident that the stave church had just such a language at its disposal – namely, a highly developed building method... stemming from older local building, most likely from the... pagan temple.<sup>119</sup>

This language and retelling are crucial points in uncovering the multiple layers of narrative and context that embody the full story of the *Fantoft Stave Church*. One important retelling, stems from the period of its initial relocation from Fortun to Bergen.

### **J. C. Dahl and the Establishment of the Skansen in Norway**

J. C. Dahl, the painter and historian, is widely credited with being the father of the Norwegian preservation of antiquities movement. He is known to have provided the documentation of various farm buildings and stave churches that came to be widely published in Europe, and that later came to establish the cultural and historical credibility of Norwegian architecture. In turn, this widely disseminated, exported, and romanticized view of Norway sparked much interest in travel and tourism to the region.



*Vang Stave Church*, documented for J C Dahl, drawing by F W Schiertz, 1841

In effect, vernacular architecture became a form of touristic advertisement and currency for Norway. During the era of the Grand Tour of Europe, Norway began to attract new visitors, and as a result many of its cultural products were also exported to various World Fairs and Trade Shows. Barbara Miller Lane, in “*National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*”, suggests that:

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<sup>119</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1996, 83.



This interest in wood architecture as national expression and the growing knowledge of this tradition in Scandinavia led to the construction of wood exhibition pavilions by the Swedes and Norwegians at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1867.<sup>120</sup>

As was also the case in Paris, World Fairs often sought the exotic and unknown in order to attract visitors and attain stature.

A parallel situation existed for a variety of European monarchs who purchased and sought out many of these early Norwegian structures, as follies for their estates, in order to demonstrate power and wealth. This is very much the case with regard to the fate of the Kongnæs Reception Hall, now located in Potsdam, Germany, as well as the Vang Stave Church, which was sold and shipped by J. C. Dahl (in a last minute preservation effort) to Karpacz, Prussia (now Poland), only to be placed as an architectural trophy at the mountain estate of the Prussian King, Frederick William IV.



*Vang Stave Church, Karpacz, Poland, photo by author.*

While Dahl's preservation efforts were unsuccessful in keeping the Vang church in Norway his other documentations were effective and sparked much interest that according to Barbara Miller Lane, Herman Major Schirmer, a lecturer in Oslo:

sent his students to the mountains and valleys north and west of Oslo to draw traditional farm buildings and stave churches.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 2000, 37.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

With a revived interest in these cultural treasures, King Oscar II of Norway was inspired, in 1881, to relocate and preserve the Gol Stave Church to his estate at Bygdøy, in Oslo, along with a number of other saved farm buildings. This group of buildings eventually led to the establishment of the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk Folkemuseum), the primary repository of cultural



*Gol Stave Church, Norsk Folkemuseum, Oslo, taken from: [scandinavianheritage.org](http://scandinavianheritage.org)*

history in Norway, with an extensive collection of architectural and artistic artifacts comprised from all of the social groups and regions of Norway. It is recognized as the world's first open-air architectural museum (more widely known as a *Skansen*).

Miller Lane further adds that:

The investigations of the 'Schirmer School' stimulated the further expansion of these collections. King Oscar's group of buildings then grew into Europe's first 'open-air museum' [contrary to Stockholm's claim], an assemblage of farmsteads and medieval churches intended to reveal the whole range of popular culture as it had existed in the Middle Ages (and, it was thought, since prehistoric times). The collections at Bygdøy ultimately came to be part of... [the] national folk museum.<sup>122</sup>

At about the same time, Dahl had also arranged for the sale and relocation of the *Fantoft Stave Church* to Fredrik Georg Gade, the American consul for all of Western Norway, who had it moved and re-erected from Fortun to his estate at Fantoft, in Bergen, under the supervision of his son-in-law, and antiquarian, Anders Lorange.

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<sup>122</sup> Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 2000, 40.

Prior to Dahl's and Schirmer's reframing the value of these cultural and vernacular treasures, they were primarily seen as old-fashioned, unwanted, and subsequently without cultural value, which led to the dwindling numbers. However, as Marian C. Donnelly, in "*Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries*", writes:

After 1814, a wave of enthusiasm for Norway's cultural heritage arose, otherwise the stave churches remaining then might not have survived at all. Our knowledge of them would have been limited to representations in painting or other arts, which would have been enigmatic at best. Much of the credit belongs to the painter Johan Christian Dahl (1788-1857), who in addition to painting the Norwegian landscape took great interest in the preservation of Norwegian architecture.<sup>123</sup>

The preservation of these buildings promoted a newfound interest in the heritage of Norwegian architecture. Architects working in revival styles now had a solid foundation to work from, both in documentation and with the many examples being preserved at open-air architecture museums.

Norway believed it was securing its history for the future, but there were many critics to this approach. As the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893 was said to have set architecture back in the U.S. (with an abundance of Neo-Classical forms on modern iron framework), the same could also be said for the open-air museums in Scandinavia.

### **Criticism, *Invented Tradition*, and National Identity in Norway**

Most of the criticism towards open-air architecture museums, and the various means of preservation, grew out of a concern for architectural conjecture and invention,

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<sup>123</sup> Marian C. Donnelly, *Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 1992, 36.

which was being employed by many untrained and novice historians during the infancy of the Norwegian independence movement. While many buildings were accurately restored, many critics saw other reconstructions as fanciful inventions of architecture and of a romanticized culture. In many respects, *authenticity* was dismissed over accuracy, for profit and nostalgia, especially in Norway's search for national identity.

In Norway, these *invented traditions* also parallel the founding of the nation and the development and search for an autonomous culture, language, literature, arts, and architecture. This search also coincided with a European National Romanticism, which made an indelible impression upon the Scandinavian countries, especially Norway. While Norway struggled through its own version of Romanticism, it prompted much debate over a culturally relevant form of nationalism. In the same respect, Romanticism was also the perfect outlet, under the guise of nationalism and politics, for the reinvention and re-creation of Norwegian traditions and architectural practices.

It was not unreasonable then for Norway, ruled by Denmark until 1814 and then by Sweden until 1905, to be caught up in Romanticism while searching for national identity. Politically shared by its neighboring states, the change in government created enough insecurity to reawaken a retreat into folk traditions, art, and culture, in order to secure a sense of what was truly Norwegian.

In this spirit, a number of cultural and historical societies had developed to conduct searches that recognized specific Norwegian cultural attributes and artifacts related to music, literature, art, and architecture. Many of these societies looked to the peasant and folk cultures of inland Norway. Architects of this period also shared in this

search, in an effort to expand their architectural ideas to meet popular and nostalgic demands. Again, Barbara Miller Lane writes that:

The rural and peasant inspirations... referred not only to an archaic past but also to the architects' concern for the new lower classes of the late nineteenth century... whom they idealized as the common man of the future.<sup>124</sup>

Architects and early Romanticists liked to think that the symbolism of the peasant and farmer was closest to, what Oscar J. Falnes in "*National Romanticism in Norway*" refers to as a Norwegian "*primeval purity*".<sup>125</sup> To some extent, this paralleled the investigations into the origins of architecture, which was a popular topic in universities throughout Europe. It was also at this time that many academics and scholars in Norway began to craft a new nation through art, architecture, language, and literature, linked to a romanticized heritage and stature that referenced and glorified the Vikings and the Middle Ages.

As a result of this intense cultural search and preservation, to ward off the loss of many historical and architectural heritage sites, the universities sought to preserve as much information as possible on the storytelling, crafts, and building traditions associated with the remaining medieval farmsteads (or *tun*) and churches, which in turn stirred nationalistic emotions and fueled a romanticized and nostalgic history. They sought to recreate and invent experiences that offered as close to an *authentic* heritage as possible. The *Fantoft Stave Church* was clearly a product of this symbolic intervention toward *invented tradition*.

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<sup>124</sup> Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 2000, 6.

<sup>125</sup> Oscar J. Falnes, *National Romanticism in Norway*, (New York City, NY: Columbia University Press), 1933, 57.

## The *Fantoft Stave Church* and Black-Metal Arsonists

The destruction of the *Fantoft Stave Church*, by black-metal arsonists on June 6, 1992, has been a difficult subject matter for many Norwegians trying to cope with the cultural loss. According to Kieran James and Christopher Tolliday, in “*Structural Changes in the Music Industry: a Marxist Critique of Public Statements Made by Members of Metallica During the Lawsuit Against Napster*”:

This church burning, more than any other, has become an enduring symbol of Norwegian black-metal [culture] both within and outside it. The claimed ideology behind the burnings has been that Norwegian churches are often built over the top of pre-Christian heathen sites of religious significance. Therefore, the black-metallars perceive that they are fighting a 1,000 year-old religious war similar to the religious-political conflict in Northern Ireland between Roman Catholics and Protestants.<sup>126</sup>

While possessing this ideological claim is not a crime in Norway, acting upon it, is.

Varg Vikernes, of the black-metal music group *Burzum*, was the first to take action on this ideology, in the infamous burning of the *Fantoft Stave Church* in 1992. It took two years to track down Vikernes, but he was eventually charged with arson (and other related crimes) and sentenced to 21 years in prison, the maximum sentence equivalent to a life-sentence in Norway. Unfortunately, his recent release, after serving 21 years, has been a traumatic reminder and has caused a National legal predicament.

What was puzzling to many, about Vikernes' heinous crime, was that his steadfast rationale for burning the church was based on the premise that the grounds of Fantoft were of religious significance. In fact, the grounds were not original to the siting

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<sup>126</sup> Kieran James and Christopher Tolliday, “Structural Changes in the Music Industry: a Marxist Critique of Public Statements Made by Members of Metallica During the Lawsuit Against Napster”, *International Journal of Critical Accounting*, Issue: Vol. 1, Nos. 1/2, 2009, 151.

of the church, since it was moved to Bergen from Fortun, a little over 170 miles away. In this respect, many saw it as an illogical and totally senseless act of destruction.

The destruction of the stave church, by arson, is reminiscent of *Kinkakuji* (the Temple of the Golden Pavilion), in Kyoto, Japan, when it was torched in 1950, by Hayashi Yoken, a 22-year old monk at the temple. Amaris Ketcham, in “*When You Meet the Buddha, Kill the Buddha*”, elaborates on Yoken’s crime:

Yoken was a stuttering Buddhist acolyte whose father constantly swore that the Temple of the Golden Pavilion was the most beautiful building in the world. In 1950, Yoken burned down the six-century-old temple. He said “antipathy against beauty” drove him to destroy it. He expressed no regrets.<sup>127</sup>

Overall, for visitors, there is a tinge of darkness associated with both sites. At the *Fantoft Stave Church*, for some visitors, interest is out of curiosity, and for a few others it is sadly out of admiration of Vikernes, especially with the black-metal community in Norway. This element of *dark tourism* has prompted the Norwegian government to retrofit many historic structures with fire prevention systems and surveillance devices. In some cases, this retrofitting has been detrimental to the aesthetics of the building, especially when sprinkler pipes and cameras interfere with the illusion of the historical setting and *the spirit of place*.

Nonetheless, for the majority of foreign tourists, a visit to the *Fantoft Stave Church* is more for touristic consumption, its pastoral setting, and its curious medieval architectural form. It also offers a variety of constructed memories and associations, in its newly recreated manifestation.

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<sup>127</sup> Amaris Ketcham, “When You Meet the Buddha, Kill the Buddha”, *Bark*, June 15, 2012, [thebarking.com/2012/06/when-you-meet-the-buddha-kill-the-buddha/](http://thebarking.com/2012/06/when-you-meet-the-buddha-kill-the-buddha/), (accessed on January 3, 2012).

## The *Fantoft Stave Church*, Bergen, and Tourism

For the Bergen area, the *Fantoft Stave Church* provides a much more pastoral link for tourists, to that heritage, outside of the traditional medieval urban sites of downtown, such as *King Håkon's Hall* (with its reconstructed gothic roof truss), *Rosenkrantz Tower* (within the walls of the *Bergenhus* fortress), *St. Mary's* (with



*Interior of Håkon's Hall, Bergen, Norway, ca. 13<sup>th</sup> century, photo by author*



*Detail of Bird's Eye View of Bergen, ca. 16<sup>th</sup> century, by H. Scholåus, (L to R): Håkon's Hall, Rosenkrantz Tower, St. Mary's Church, and Bryggen, taken from: "Bergen I Fokus", by Willy Haraldsen and Gunnar Hagen Hartvedt*

masonry details tied to *Durham Cathedral*, in England), and *Bryggen* (the old wooden wharves of the Hanseatic League, protected by UNESCO).

Many guidebooks offer varying narratives of the church, with descriptions that try to entice tourists for the long journey out from the city. The "*Lonely Planet: Norway*" guidebook, offers a promising description as follows:

The Fantoft stave church, in a lovely setting (which goes by the name 'Paradis' south of Bergen, was built in Sognefjord around 1150 and moved to the southern outskirts of Bergen in 1883. It was burned down by a Satanist in 1992, but it has since been painstakingly reconstructed. The adjacent cross, originally from Sola in Rogaland, dates from 1050. From Bergen take any bus leaving from platform 20, get off at the Fantoft stop on Birkelundsbakken and walk uphill through the park for about five minutes.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Anthony Ham and Miles Roddis, editors, *Lonely Planet: Norway*, (London, England: Lonely Planet Publications Ltd.), 2005, 183.



“*Fodor’s Norway*”, is even more descriptive, with a brief history and key targeted words on the fanciful architectural details, to fire the interest of the tourists:

During the Middle Ages, when European cathedrals were built in stone, Norway used wood to create unique stave churches. These cultural symbols stand out for their dragon heads, carved doorways, and walls of staves (vertical planks). Though as many as 750 stave churches may have once existed, only 30 remain standing. The original stave church here, built in Fortun in Sogn in 1150 and moved to Fantoft in 1883, burned down in 1992. Since then, the church has been reconstructed to resemble the original structure. From the main bus station next to the railway station, take any bus leaving from Platform 19, 20, or 21.<sup>129</sup>

Many guidebooks also try to draw visitors out, by the lure of a combined visit with other attractions. “*Rick Steve’s Snapshot: Norway*” suggests driving, to avoid hassles:

If you plan to visit Edvard Grieg’s Home and the nearby Fantoft Stave church, now is the ideal time, since you’ll be driving near them and they’re a headache to reach from downtown. Both are worth a detour if you’re not rushed.<sup>130</sup>

Of course, ever since the *ByBanen* (trolley system) was completed in 2012, it is now easier to get to the church by public transportation.

Elsewhere in the book, Steves’ is a bit more generous with the geographical context, as to why one should really pay a visit:

This huge, preserved-in-tar stave church burned down in 1992. It was rebuilt and reopened in 1997, but it will never be the same. [The stave church is situated] in a quiet forest next to a mysterious stone cross, this replica of a 12<sup>th</sup>-century wooden church, though no better, than others covered in this book. But it’s worth a look if you’re in the neighborhood, even after-hours, for its atmospheric setting.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Emmanuelle Alspaugh, editor, *Fodor’s Norway*, (New York City, NY: Random House), 2006, 115.

<sup>130</sup> Rick Steves, *Rick Steves’ Snapshot: Norway*, (Berkeley, CA: Avalon Travel Publishing), 2010, unnumbered pages in book.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., unnumbered pages in book.

A very mixed message is sent between the two descriptions: *come*, but *don't come*! To make matters worse, the guidebook wrongly promotes the site with a picture of the Gol Stave Church, in Oslo.

“*Motoring in Norway*”, one of the most well-known motoring tour books on Norway, by Erling Welle-Strand, was able to list the *Fantoft Stave Church* as 2 stars out of 4, as to interest of visiting; with the star system being an extremely reliable rating system that determines the worthiness and historical relevance of a site visit.

★★ Fantoft stave church at Fantoft. Probably from c. 1150, rest[ored], and moved from Sogn in 1883, rebuilt after a fire.<sup>132</sup>

Unfortunately, some guidebooks, like “*Rough Guides*”, have even omitted a visit to the church. This is in part due, perhaps, to the younger audience these guides appeal to, with a cost- and time-conscience student focus. The long journey and steep admission costs for both sites can be prohibitive to many on a budget. However, as most stave churches are located much further inland, and remotely, this is the most accessible for tourists who feel their visit to Norway would be incomplete without seeing and experiencing one.

Many of the current guidebooks are also fascinated by the 1992 fire, especially as referenced by the earlier *Satanist* remark, in “*Lonely Planet: Norway*”. The infamy of the conflagration, and other noteworthy curiosities, is also of interest.

“*Eyewitness Travel Guides: Norway*” is equally intrigued by the 1992 fire, but also offers a lengthy description of the seemingly unusual great effort involved in relocating many of these churches:

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<sup>132</sup> Erling Welle-Strand, *Motoring in Norway*, (Oslo, Norway: Nortrabooks), 1997, 186.

Fantoft Stavkirke (stave church) was originally built in Fortun in Sogn county around 1150. It was moved to Fantoft in 1883 where it was embellished with dragon finials and high-pitched roofs. In June 1992 the church was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt within three years.

It was not uncommon for Norway's wooden stave churches to be relocated. Often they were transported by sea as it was more practical than using country roads. Vang Stavkirke [stave church] in Valdres, for example, was sold to the king of Prussia. In 1842 it was driven across Filefjell mountain to Sogn from where it was shipped to Germany [now Poland].<sup>133</sup>

There are also many other more involved descriptions that try to convey a broader historical context of the *Fantoft Stave Church*, tailored to various interests. However, one of the most lengthy written is Willy Haraldsen and Gunnar Hagen

Hartvedt's "*Bergen I Fokus*" ("*Bergen in Focus*"),

which offers multiple paragraphs on its history, in various sections of the book:



*Fantoft Stave Church, Bergen, Norway, from: "Bergen I Fokus", photo by Willy Haraldsen*

The stave church at Fantoft is named after its geographical location. It was originally built in Fortun in the inland reaches of Sogn around 1170. It was reconstructed and extended during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but then was left to ruin. Consul Fredrik G. Gade saved the building by purchasing it and having it rebuilt as a true Medieval church. On a copy of a burial mound in front of the church, a stone cross was erected, moved from Tjora graveyard in Jæren. From 1903 when the church was consecrated, it has been used for religious ceremonies. The photo above shows the stave church before it was set on fire and burned to the ground in 1992. Its reconstruction, completed in 1997, has been funded mostly by private individuals and is a true reconstruction of the original Fantoft stave church.<sup>134</sup>

Elsewhere, Haraldsen and Hartvedt's description continues with more detail, tailored toward art and architectural historians, and with an odd promotional at the end:

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<sup>133</sup> Snorre Evensberget, *Eyewitness Travel Guides: Norway*, (London, England: Dorling Kindersley Limited), 2003, 170.

<sup>134</sup> Willy Haraldsen and Gunnar Hagen Hartvedt, *Bergen i Fokus*, (Laksevåg, Norway: Tourist Photo), 2000, 56.

One of the most striking architectonic aspects of the stave churches is the roof construction. There is no standard design for the stave churches – they all have a great number of unique details and features, and local artists were given free reign. The dragon style is a common feature, and the inspiration for the spire on Fantoft stave church. It may seem strange to have dragons on religious buildings, as they are most commonly seen in mythology and Norse legend, and seen as the devil's envoy in the Bible. J. C. Dahl, a Bergen-born painter, brought stave churches to light in his book of paintings published in 1837. Until then, the buildings had been left to ruin. The stave churches are popular with tourists and for weddings.<sup>135</sup>

Finally, in a side note directed toward tourists, there is a more condensed historical narrative, written in a much more grammatically curt and chopped style, than the previous pages:

### ***Fantoft Stave Church***

A stave church in Fortun in Sogn, dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was dismantled in 1879 and sold to Consul F. Gade in Bergen who, in 1883, had it re-built at Fantoft, just south of Bergen. It was then restored to what was believed to be its original design, using Borgund Stave Church as a model. The original church bells from the old Fortun Stave Church were used in a newly built church on the same site in Fortun, whilst a shrine from the 13<sup>th</sup> century was moved to the historical museum in Bergen.

In 1916, the Fantoft Stave Church was sold to Jacob Kjøde, a shipowner in Bergen.

During the night of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1992, the Fantoft Stave Church was completely burnt down. In 1993, the Kjøde family started the rebuilding of a copy of the church, using the foundations of the previous one.<sup>136</sup>

As one can see, there are many different narratives and voices, with varying positions of interest, looking to stand out in an oversaturated tourism market. Overall, the guidebooks depict multiple perspectives and opportunities, to meet the a-la-carte demands of visitors to the *Fantoft Stave Church*, which attempts to promote an aura or resonance of *authenticity*, despite the presumed loss represented by the replica.

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<sup>135</sup> Willy Haraldsen and Gunnar Hagen Hartvedt, *Bergen i Fokus*, (Laksevåg, Norway: Tourist Photo), 2000, 57.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

The presumption is that the setting, the experience of the space, the traditional construction techniques and materials, and the fragmentary remains of the original, are negated by an acknowledgement of the replica's existence, as though someone spoiled the theatrics of a magician's act by figuring out the secret. There is no awe or suspension of logic, in the visitor's response. Despite the strict adherence to traditional building methods and materials in its reconstruction, the church seems to suffer in its touristic and cultural draw, perhaps as a condition of its perceived *authenticity*, or lack thereof.



*Fantoft Stave Church* interior reconstruction, Bergen, photo by author

From a social constructionist point-of-view, the *Fantoft Stave Church* is all of the perspectives described above, and more. The diversity of voices is very apparent from this small sampling of guidebooks. No singular narrative offers a definitive or absolute perspective on visiting the stave church. None have an unconditional hold on what is true or *authentic* at the site; with each guidebook *listing* presenting itself as a condition of polyvocality, and allowing for varied interests and approaches. Unresolved, however, is the fact that the *Fantoft Stave Church* is not as popular as it once was, other than to the obligatory cruise ship tour group. The answers can perhaps be drawn out from the site interviews that follow, in comparison to the similarly reconstructed buildings that were previously discussed.

## ***Fantoft Stave Church: Interviews***

To promote further discussion on issues of *authenticity*, *invented tradition*, and social constructionism relative to architecture, I conducted several interviews (in person) on the *Fantoft Stave Church*. I chose the following interviews, from a larger amount of participants, due to the diversity of intriguing stories, narratives, backgrounds, and interests. The interviews were as follows:

***Nina Karlsen***, Directory Manager and Librarian of Local History at Bergen Main Library  
***Marie-France and Dominique***, French Tourists, from Hurtigruten (coastal cruise ship)  
***Dutch Student Tourists***, Four Students, the Netherlands  
***Ulrich and Kristofer Metz***, Tourists (father and son), Römhild, Germany  
***Lorna and friend***, Tourists, the Netherlands  
***Britt and friend***, Tourists, Belgium  
***Tim Fabrice Coucheron and Betine Pettersen***, Guide and Staff, *Fantoft Stave Church*

Here is the abridged text, from a selection of interviews, of what transpired or was discussed:

### **Interview 1, Recording 169:**

***Nina Karlsen***, Directory Manager and Librarian of Local History at Bergen Main Library

RA: You, mentioned earlier, that you used to play around [the *Fantoft Stave Church*] when you were a child?

N: Yes. But I have not been back since the fire.

RA: Why is that?

N: It's not the same. It's not my church. It's like when you spend time with someone or something, when it's gone, it's gone. I don't need to go back to see it, to know what happened to it. I remember enough of what I want to remember. I remember the wishing stone. I remember the interior. You have good memories that you hold on to. My parents lived nearby. Even after the church burned, I avoided the new road to the church, to get to my parents home.

RA: Your story about not going back to visit is very interesting to me, and I'd like to write about that. May I ask your name?

N: Nina. But you know, I have only been inside the church once as a child because it was owned privately, by the Gade family, and used as a chapel. But you know about the controversy. Some people say, “ahhh” (inquisitively), as the church that burnt down was from 1883. So it’s not the original one from Fortun. It’s nothing like it. You’ve seen pictures?

RA: Yes. It was very plain and simple and the steeple was moved in towards the center.

N: And they based it on another church.

RA: From Borgund. Yes.

*My reflections on the interview:*

What was interesting about Nina’s interview was her strict adherence to a momentary recollection of a childhood experience that would prevent her from returning to the Paradis neighborhood. This was in part due to the changes brought about by the fire, as well as a fear of projecting those changes into her memories, or having them altered. Stating that it was not her church, and “*not the same*”, was very telling of the assurance she demanded of those memories, and her unfailing constructed identity with the area.

The other noteworthy aspect was her reference to a *controversy* over the initial 1883 restoration of the church. The word *controversy* seemed a bit strong, from her, but in hindsight this seemed appropriate due to the context of her position as Directory Manager and Librarian of Local History, for all of Bergen. It spoke volumes to her excitement and enthusiasm for sharing uncommonly known facts about the church, and a deeper, more scholarly, and meaningful discussion that only she as a librarian could appreciate and offer. Perhaps there was even a bit of fun in our sleuthing through older newspaper articles and archived reserves.

**Interview 2, Recording 176, 177, 178, and the end of 180:**

**Marie-France and Dominique**, French Tourists, from Hurtigruten (coastal cruise ship)

M: Do you know where the Stave Church is?

R: Yes. I am going there too. You can follow me... Where did you hear about the church? Was it from a guidebook?

M: No. We just read it somewhere, and well, we are going to see it... And you are a student?

RA: I am a professor and a student.

M: Ah. Dominique is a teacher as well. Of geography. Is this the first time you go there? (Pointing uphill in the direction of the stave church.)

RA: No, I've been there many times.

M: And why you go again?

RA: I am writing about it. It was rebuilt after a fire in 1992.

M: 1992. Yes, we read about that.

RA: 20 years ago. My first time here was in 1977.

M: It is this path to the forest? (There is concern in her voice, and I am not sure why at the time.)

RA: Yes. You see, no signage, just the path. No signs.

M: Are there lots of people?

RA: Yes.

M: When I ask, they say it is easy.

RA: Well, it is in a way, for Norwegians who hike a lot, but I agree it is not easy to find. See, here, is a small sign covered with stickers, but it is too small. It is minimal. This dirt path is one of the old roads to Bergen.

M: Ahhh.

RA: You see up behind, to the left, it continues.

M: So much rain... It's Catholic?

RA: No, Lutheran. But it started out as Catholic, in the Middle Ages. The only thing from that time is the gateway and canopy.

M: Ah, yes, the gate. How much is original?

RA: The rest of it is reconstructed.

M: Ah, and the decorations?

RA: They are newly built, since the fire. You can see the dragonheads and dragon skin on the roof...

M: Ah, gargoyles, as Notre Dame de Paris.

RA: Oui. Like Notre Dame.

M: (Laughs.)

RA: Do you see the diamond roof shingles and the dragon tales?

M: Yes.



RA: And here at the base is the Norman capital on the column.

M: Yes.

RA: You can see the pagan gargoyles and the Christian cross.

M: A mix.

*My reflections on the interview:*

What was interesting about my interview with Marie-France and Dominique was the curiosity of questions, back and forth, both personally and about the church. This may have been in part due to the chance encounter, their being unfamiliar with me (as a stranger), with the area (which was deserted), and perhaps a fear of being *mugged* on a deserted forest path.

This alternative reasoning was only brought up, when I detected a sense of concern in her voice. I considered this last thought only because some of their questions were perhaps to establish assurances as to my character and their safety (as I am a very tall and large man). I may have sensed it at the time, but I am not completely sure if it affected my line of questioning, or if I became more focused on acting like a tour guide, from that moment on. I certainly felt more self-conscious.

I generally tend to not engage or consider those types of suspicious questions, when I am in Norway (and not that I go around naïvely either), but I may be projecting that on to the conversation, having grown up in New York City and all too familiar with similar past dialogues.

From an architectural perspective, I was intrigued by their questions on how much of the church was original. I sensed that they were making many parallels and connections to buildings back home in France, especially when comparing the dragonheads to gargoyles.

Additionally, when I had asked Marie-France and Dominique, before our walk, about why they wanted to visit the stave church, they informed me that this might be the only one they could visit on their vacation, as they were tourists on the Hurtigruten (the postal boat that doubles as a cruise ship for tourists and locals), which has limited stops along the coast of Norway. There are no other stave churches that one can visit from the cruise, and they had only read about the *Fantoft Stave Church* in a tourist guide.

### **Interview 3, Recording 183:**

#### ***Dutch Student Tourists*, Four Students, the Netherlands**

RA: I noticed that you are just going to look at the church from the outside. Are you going to go in?

D: No. We want to see a real one.

RA: You've already intrigued me by your statement. You see I am writing my dissertation about visitors to the church, as well as a comparison to other buildings. So I am very curious as to why this is not real to you?

D: Ahhh... Because it was rebuilt in 1992.

RA: Yes.

D: And it is real, but we are visiting other places in Norway as well, and I'd rather go to one that is really old. Like 1400's, instead of 20 years old.

RA: Ok... [but] most of the buildings you might see in Norway, and the materials of those buildings... have been replaced over many years.

D: Yes. That is true.

RA: So, basically, they are rebuilt anyway, over time, little by little. So perhaps there is little left of the older originals, except for a few pieces. And I realize that this is rebuilt all at once. So the only reason I ask, revolves around the issue of *authenticity* and its perception. Is it *authentic* or not? And what is *authentic* to you, based on your earlier distinction of what is real? Which is what I am trying to draw out. I am questioning it myself, and would love your comments.

D: No, this is good. This is interesting. There is a big difference between restoration and replacing completely. When it's done over time, it is done with the old parts still there. And every hundred years, something gets replaced. It has a lot more *authenticity*, than this one, which is completely rebuilt, at once. My feeling is that it is a

lot more different than older buildings. But of course not all old buildings are completely old, but I think it is different when it is done over time and it is done bit by bit, because then the other parts are left like it was. Instead of building a complete new one, as though it could have been ordered in China. (He laughs at his own comment.) Even though it was built here. My feeling is that this is just something I can build at home.

D: In your back yard. (Another laughs.) Have you seen another restored one?

RA: Yes, I just saw one in Gol that replaced the one that was moved to Oslo, to the open-air architecture museum there.

D: This is good. It's like we get a free lecture. (Laughs.)

RA: Am I offering too much information?

D: No, no. This is what we wanted. (There is more discussion on the various building changes.)

RA: So, they've all had something done to them over time. Perhaps from your earlier definition of *authentic*, the most *authentic* would be Borgund. Which is up in the Sognefjord. It is said that Fantoft is perhaps based on Borgund.

D: Ahhh, now that is the one we now want to go to.

RA: So, do you know why this one was torched?

D: Satanists.

RA: Well, yes. (Further discussion on the details and history of the trial and the arsonists prison time, follows.)

### *My reflections on the interview:*

What was interesting about my interview with the Dutch students was their immediate dismissal of the buildings classification as “real” due to various preconceived factors, but also their receptiveness and



*Dutch Students, photo by author*

adaptability to the various conditions, meanings, restraints, and restrictions as to what could be construed as *authentic*. When engaged with the church's history, in what they deemed a “lecture”, only then did it further capture their attention and reconsideration. The preconceptions they had about the *Fantoft Stave Church*, based on various tourist information or other sources, still led them to make a trip to see the building, despite its

perceived lack of *authenticity*. This informed me more of their curiosity, rather than a full dismissal of the church.

What was also fascinating was the discussion and quasi-acceptance of temporal and material issues as a factor in determining and contributing to the *authenticity* of an architectural site. There appeared to be some allowance away from their static definition of *authenticity*, when other factors are taken into consideration. Most importantly to the Dutch students was the difference between restoration and replacement, be it over time or all at once. These slight discernments seem to be critical to one's definition of *authenticity*, but they are not absolute and open to interpretation based on the various layers of complexity that an architectural site has.

While a cultural and sociological component were not major factors to the students, in this interview, it could be assumed that it was in the realm of possibility, based on their openness to new ideas in the discussion, as well as the range of issues that the students were personally drawn to and engaged by. While the church does not offer an easily digestible core narrative, for touristic consumption, this shift in appreciation and in reinterpretation, as to what was “real” and *authentic*, became apparent in the context of religious and cultural reasons for rebuilding.

#### **Interview 4, Recording 185, 186, and 187:**

***Ulrich and Kristofer Metz***, Tourists (father and son), Römhild, Germany

RA: Where are you from?

U: From Germany.

RA: (I go about explaining the history of the building in detail.)

K: Is it used as a church today?

RA: For special occasions only. They have weddings here, and occasionally a service. But it is not used as a church regularly.

U: Does somebody know how they made [conducted] the mass? Is it somewhere written down, in this time?

RA: It is a Lutheran church today, but at the time there would have been a bishop associated with the liturgy from the Catholic mass. Many of the earlier churches started out as pagan temples, and then when Christianity arrives in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, they relied on a priest who would go from town to town, to conduct services.

U: What is pagan?

RA: The worship of nature, animals, and various gods or spirits in the environment, during the medieval period, if not earlier. What do you say in German?

U: *Nature religion.*

RA: When Christianity arrives, Christ is added as one more god. Over time, the pagan tradition disappears or it is absorbed.

U: But it doesn't go away from itself. (Laughs.)

RA: (Laughs.) That's true, it is still here.

U: Today, it is like the feeling for religion is returning to its roots.

RA: Yes, the materiality of it...

U: Yes, the materiality of it and not the spirit. That's ok.

K: It's not so much spirit anymore.

RA: But it's a different kind of spirit. It's still the trees and the forest that are here.

U: Mmmm. So why are you here, as an American?

RA: As a part of my research, I am comparing them to a series of Shinto shrines in Japan. (I go about explaining the other building in detail, and its rebuilding, which follows in the subsequent chapter.) Perhaps the Japanese aren't looking at the material, but the spiritual, and I think your point is very interesting, in that to the Japanese this material is immaterial, and that it's more about the spirit.

U: I think that is true.

RA: But perhaps, by what you are saying, the Norwegians haven't gotten to that realization, about this building; that it's really not about the material.

U: Mmmm.

RA: That the spirit is still in this building.

U: It's similar to the pictures they make with sand (sand mandalas), in Nepal, in which they spend many weeks making. And then the hard work of days and weeks, and then they destroy everything at once. It's more about the spirit of doing and making, it's important. Not to hold it for years and years.

RA: Yes, that they can let go of it is important. This issue of destruction and spirit, I am also questioning with regard to the Frauenkirche, in Dresden, as well. There is a sense of spirit there too, but I am not sure of the difference.

U: Mmmm. No. But it's a big action of some Dresden people. It was started by a musician to collect money from all over the world, with the parts of the old church. The walls are dotted.

RA: Yes, in a random black and white mix.

U: I don't know. I think, sometimes old, sometimes not.

RA: It feels forced upon the church.

U: Forced?

RA: Contrived, perhaps. It feels like... it was made that way, in that it was pushed instead of allowed to become.

U: Yes. Pushed. Not naturally. Not grown.

*My reflections on the interview:*

What was interesting about my interview with Ulrich and Kristofer was the notion of spirituality and materiality, for both of them, in the context of meaning, which they brought up, and how meaning is constructed in the mind and by connections. While Ulrich was more interested in the spiritual meaning of the church, Kristofer was more interested in the workings of the material form. Both sought a means to connect to the building and the people, from their own perspectives.



*Ulrich and Kristofer Metz,  
photo by author*

An important part of their experience at the stave church was the impression they tried to construct in their minds of the building to the site, very much in the same manner that they had while traveling in the Geiranger fjord, which is located quite a bit north of Bergen. At the outset, there is an element of the sublime in trying to comprehend the expanse of the fjord and their relative location to the fjord sea level while being on top of the surrounding mountains, in a phenomenological sense relative to experience and context. The Geiranger fjord is a nebulous maze of inlets and cliffs

that makes the method of piecing the natural environment all together (in the same manner as gestalt theory), all the more difficult. Ulrich and Kristofer's relative location to their surroundings seemed important, and the same could be said for their experience with the stave church.

They tried to imagine the meaning and spiritual connection of the church and the people to the landscape, as well as to the original religious content of the service in history, even though all of these elements were embedded in the churches original location in Fortun, and not to Bergen. To Ulrich and Kristofer, the church still held a symbolic and spiritual power despite being deemed a reconstruction.

For many visitors and tourists in unfamiliar locations, recalling a memory – be it symbolic or spiritual – allows someone to affix and ascribe a personal connection from their own experiences to an unfamiliar or new place and its reframed historical setting. It provides a sense of the familiar, in the unfamiliar. An attempt to piece together disconnected memories, or parts, is similar to the use of gestalt theory (as employed in aesthetics), in which we try to perceive something in its totality. Perhaps gestalt theory is subconsciously used to establish a new relationship and context with a place, in order to provide familiarity. It also forges a visual connection and visual conversation between the viewer and a place, reminiscent of the *genius loci*, or *spirit of place*.

### **Interview 5, Recording 190:**

***Lorna and friend***, Tourists, Norway

L: Even if you are not a religious person, you can still admire the beauty of the architecture. Whether you are a religious person or not really doesn't matter. Is it still in use as a chapel?

RA: For private things, yes. They have weddings and occasional services.

L: Ok. Because I noticed there were a lot of apartment buildings over there. How long did it take to rebuild?

RA: It took about 5 years.

L: Did they use donation money?

RA: There was money from the state and private donations. It was put together, as best they could.

L: Ah yes.

RA: They used the traditional construction techniques, with no nails. The only exception were the pews, as they were made later with nails. The original church would not have had pews, as they would have stood in the middle, and I believe the perimeter benches were set-aside for the elderly.

L: Oh yes.

RA: And the window up near the altar on the left... perhaps it's a myth or legend, it is not known for sure, but supposedly the window was used for those who were considered unclean, such as those with leprosy or for pregnant women. That's not clear.

L: I am not sure if it was this church or another, but there was supposed to be a leprosy door.

RA: I am not sure, but perhaps there is something similar at the leprosy museum, in Bergen.

*My reflections on the interview:*

What was meaningful about my interview with Lorna and her friend was their interest in the secular and ritualistic aspects of the building related to architectural programming and use. Their interest appeared to be fueled by information from either a guidebook or website, which constructed their overall visit and impression of the church towards myths, anecdotes, and narratives.

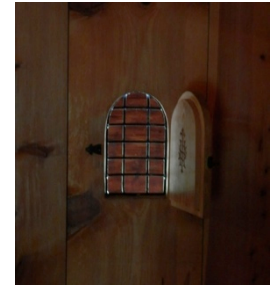


*Lorna and friend, photo by author*

Their contextual understanding was also determined by the church's relationship to the surrounding neighborhood of apartment buildings, perhaps in hopeful optimism that the church was still used as part of a community or religious practice. One got the



sense that this optimistic curiosity was in response to their earlier cry of “*what a waste*”, in learning of the arson as though the surrounding community might have neglected or abandoned the church before, and perhaps again after the fire. This personification of the building could also be reinforced by their curiosity in finding the “leprosy door”, to attach a sense of care toward various parishioners, as well as the building.



*Leprosy Door, and for those deemed to be “unclean” by the church,*  
photo by author

## Interview 6, Recording 193 and 194:

***Britt and friend***, Tourists, Belgium

B: The interior has paintings?

RA: Yes, it once had decorative paintings on the inside. I can show you some pictures from a book that has photos of the original decorative paintings. You can see the beautiful floral artwork called *rosmaling* (or *rose painting*). There were also original Viking runic inscriptions on the walls.

B: In a Christian church?

RA: Well, yes, Christianity came late to Norway, in around the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

B: So the church was here before?

RA: Yes and no. Other stave churches may have started as pagan temples. So when Christianity was brought to Norway, Christ was just one more god. Initially, the stave churches held a hybrid mix of religious traditions, for some time, until Christianity became the dominant religion. Many of the people did not want to let go of their traditional beliefs. I am trying to see how people perceive and understand rebuilt buildings, and what that means to them. (I add more personal discussion and explanation, along with my observations and comparison to the *Ise Shrines*.) To the Japanese, their rebuilt shrines are still original, but it's the tradition that's original and not the material. But the stave church is also rebuilt, with the same traditions and customs, yet it seems to not be treated the same way. There is an interesting difference that perhaps exists between the east and the west.

B: Mmmm. That is an interesting point.

RA: To me it's still original. It's not physically original, but it still symbolizes another kind of original, with the same materials and the space that it holds and embodies.

But this was the first one I had ever seen, so it stays with me, like a first love. When it burned, it was obviously very sad, but at the same time it is a bit like a phoenix, and very much a form of transcendence. For some reasons, many Norwegians dismiss the building. It is not included on the official list of stave churches.

B: Because it is not original anymore.

### *My reflections on the interview:*

What was interesting about my interview with Britt and her friend was the notion of memory, which they brought up, and how constructs of the mind are really in motion, forever changing, and dependent on the context of one's memory. I was also interested in their discussion on what is original, in the context of the



*Britt and friend, taking pictures among a group of other tourists, photo by author*

official list of stave churches, as determined by various Norwegian heritage organizations and the government, and by its preservation status, or lack thereof.

The other interesting discussion came from the parallel analogy Britt and her friend pointed out, with regard to repairs made in a home, and the layers of repairs that go into making it new or restored. This analogy, of the home and its respective layers, is similar to a later discussion with Shoichiro “Susuke” Hattori, interviewed for the *Ise Shrines*, in Japan.

### **Interview 7, Recording 181 and 182:**

***Tim Fabrice Coucheron and Betine Pettersen***, Guide and Staff, *Fantoft Stave Church*

RA: When was the first time you saw the church?

T: At the beginning of this summer.

RA: And you?

B: Just today.

RA: And what do you think of the building?

B: Oh, it's beautiful. It's nice and old, in a new way.

RA: There are only a few older pieces left [from before the fire], such as the gateway, the wishing stone, and the cross.

T: And the metal here. (Points to the door hardware.)

RA: Oh really. I didn't know that. Just here. That's interesting. It looks rather new. How much can you answer about the building?

T: Yes, I can speak about the first one, from Fortun, and some of the original pieces, that the roof is an upside down Viking ship, and pretty much that it's brand new.

RA: I am writing about this building in the context of another building in Japan. (I go about explaining the other building in detail, and its rebuilding.) The Japanese treat it as original, and it is to them, in the tradition and craftsmanship of building over time. It's not about the physical material building, but more about the way that people build it, exactly the same each time, in the same manner. So the Japanese say that it is original, but with regard to Fantoft and the 1992 fire, is it considered original to you?

T: So, then, you can actually say that this is original.

RA: Yes, for some reason the terms *copy* and *replica* can have a negative association, which perhaps lessens the essence of the building, to some extent.

T: Yes.

RA: To me, it is original, because the architects who built it used the traditional methods and tools, in the way that it would have been built.

T: That is very interesting. It is in the memory too.

RA: Yes. Earlier today, I spoke with a librarian at the main library, and she used to live around the corner from here, with her parents, and she used to come here a lot when she was a little girl, when the original was here, whatever original is...

T: (Laughs.)

RA: And she said that she would never come back here again, because she wants to keep the memory alive, as is. She doesn't want to visit the new building. I said to myself, isn't that interesting, that she has a negative connotation of the new building. Much like the negative association people have of it being a copy. It's still a very pretty building, in a beautiful forest setting.

T: Yes. I would still say it is original, because the wood used to rebuild it was over 400 years old, already, from Sogn.

RA: Yes, absolutely. They used the same building methods, and materials, and the only difference, is that it is no longer used as a church, other than for special occasions, like a wedding. Unless you know of something else?

T: Sometimes there are services here. Not every Sunday though.

RA: I noticed that around the back there are some charred pieces. Did they save some of the pieces from the fire?

T: Yes.

RA: I've never seen that before. That's the first time. It's really very interesting to me. Are there more pieces stored away?

T: Maybe. I can look.

RA: Perhaps in the storage shed, over there.

T: I can take a look.

RA: May I come along?

T: Yes. (Tim walks to the shed.) Here's the key.

RA: (Laughs.) That's a big key. May I take a picture?

T: Yes. It's handmade. (Tim unlocks the padlock, unlaces the tent, and enters.)

RA: It looks like it is just a storage workroom (where tar is stored for recoating the roof).

T: They haven't recoated the building now, in about 4 years. Which is why the other side is a lighter color. It should be done every second year.

*My reflections on the interview:*

What was interesting about my interview with Tim and Betine was the notion of memory, which they brought up, and how constructs of the mind are really an impressionable documentation of our perceptions and experiences. It is much like Joseph Kosuth's previously mentioned art work, "*One and Three Chairs*". For Kosuth, the truth of what a *chair* is depends on the context, the relations between the various contexts, as well as an alternate impression bound in the space between, of what is unsaid or undefined.



*Tim Fabrice Coucheron, with church key, photo by author*

Therefore, the relativism of what is *authentic* or original, cannot be forced upon the *Fantoft Stave Church*, as each visitor brings to it their own experiences and impressions, that allows truth to be defined on its own. I found that Tim and Betine were so gracious and generous with their time to unearth and entertain the various layers possible within the existing narrative, and to reciprocally co-construct new meanings with others.

I was very happy to be able to redefine that worldview for myself; to allow it to be dynamic and unfold on its own. I was taken aback by Tim's comment on the age of the lumber (over 400 years old) being used to reconstruct the current church, and wondered if perhaps it was a felled older tree or reclaimed from another building. To some extent, it told me of the attention to detail that the architects of the new church took to demonstrate an element of *authenticity* and respect for the layers of history towards what had transpired with this building and on this site before; in its relocation from Fortun, to the Gade family, and then to the present day. It honors an *authenticity* of place and spirit, for what architectural historian Christian Norberg-Schulz calls the *genius loci*,<sup>137</sup> a context he has often written about in relation to the Norwegian landscape.



*Charred fragments from the Fantoft Stave Church, photo by author*

## Conclusion

Christian Norberg-Schulz, as quoted by Gunila Jivén and Peter J. Larkham in “*Sense of Place, Authenticity, and Character: A Commentary*”, describes the *genius loci*, or *spirit of place*, on four thematic phenomenological levels, followed by their application or observance of:

the topography of the earth's surface; the cosmological light conditions and the sky as natural conditions; buildings; symbolic and existential meanings in the cultural landscape.

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<sup>137</sup> Gunila Jivén and Peter J. Larkham, “*Sense of Place, Authenticity, and Character: A Commentary*”, *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2003, 71.

The natural conditions of a place are understood as being based on features in the topographical landscape, including a cosmological and temporal perspective that includes continual changes of light and vegetation in the annual cycle. These characteristic rhythmic fluctuations contrast with the stability of physical form. This is the *genius loci* as a place in nature that we have to interpret when we are changing our built environment.<sup>138</sup>

This distinction is to be essential for the discussion of architecture and *authenticity*, in the context of social constructionism, for each phenomenological level is relative to the experience of the viewer and participant. No singular vision or perspective is forced upon another.

As Kenneth and Mary Gergen have discussed, in various workshop lectures and in the book "*Social Construction: Entering the Dialogue*":

Human history bears enormous scars resulting from the attempts of one group to force their truth – about god, justice, the master race, or the nature of evil – unto others. The point is especially important in current world conditions where various cultural beliefs are thrown into increasing conflict, and where there is a strong tendency in Western culture to believe its truths are superior to others. If we are to live together peacefully on the planet, it is important that no particular group feels justified to obliterate all dissenting realities.<sup>139</sup>

This forced truth feels familiar in the context of the 1992 arson (and the motives behind it), but also for how tour leaders and visitors construct and frame their understanding and perception of truth in the various contexts. The degree of separation between arsonists and tourists may seem extreme, but the resulting conflict between both exclusion and inclusion must also respect the micro- and macro-truths of those narratives, and more.

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<sup>138</sup> Gunila Jivén and Peter J. Larkham, "Sense of Place, Authenticity, and Character: A Commentary", *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2003, 71.

<sup>139</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary Gergen, *Social Construction: Entering the Dialogue*, (Chagrin Falls, OH: Taos Institute Publications), 2004, 93.

To artistically paraphrase and recast Joseph Kosuth's art, "*One and Three Chairs*", as "*One and Three Churches*" (plus more!), the various constructed identities of the *Fantoft Stave Church* must also work towards a broader worldview and perspective with regard to the relativism of truth, originality, and *authenticity*.



"*One and Three Chairs*", by Joseph Kosuth, 1965, taken from: [quizlet.com/17747329/modern-art-final-flash-cards/](https://quizlet.com/17747329/modern-art-final-flash-cards/) "One and

Perhaps, in a Western context, this crisis of identity may be caused by the fact that visitors and tourists alike want a more streamlined and easily digestible core narrative. This seems too simplistic and dismissive of an answer, and in conflict with similar experiences at other reconstructed sites, especially those that have reconciled a variety of deeper wounds and joys. The next section begins to address the deeper questions that move us beyond the progressive trajectory set up by issues of *authenticity*, plagiarism, replicas, and originality, into the realm of the copy.





### **Renewed Authenticity: the Ise Shrines (Geku and Naiku), Ise-shi, Japan**

The Ise Shrine has been a special subject of interesting discussions about architecture, which is at the opposite end of the spectrum in regard to the question of where the indicators of authenticity are located. Ise's authenticity is found in its design and in the ritual reconstruction process. Ise is clearly not part of any category in which architectural authenticity is found in the material.<sup>140</sup>

- Nobuko Inaba

The country of Japan is comprised of several thousand islands, and is comparable in area and size to California or Germany. Its islands are eighty-percent mountainous and covered with a dense layer of forest. Due to its extremely volatile terrain (from earthquakes to tsunamis), and great variation in climate (ranging from sub-tropical in the south to arctic in the north), a greater worldview has developed in its relation to nature.

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<sup>140</sup> Nobuko Inaba "Authenticity and heritage concepts: tangible and intangible – discussion in Japan", *Conserving the Authentic: Essays in Honour of Jukka Jokilehto, edited by Nicholas Stanley-Price and Joseph King*, ICCROM Conservation Studies, vol. 10, (Rome, Italy: Ugo Quintily S.p.A.), 2009, 157.

This worldview has stemmed, according to George Verghese in “*The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design*”, from:

continual and uncontrollable natural upheavals occurring over thousands of years [that] have left the Japanese with the utmost respect for natural phenomena. It has also left them with a lack of choice regarding their actions, as the entire environment is in a state of dramatic conditions. As this ability, for the Japanese, to clearly make a selection in their environment is deprived [by many geographic constraints], they would then choose the non-physical state of imagination and symbolism to be explored [in their religious practices]. Since they felt that they had no choice in their environmental conditions, they moved away from the European dichotomy of “either-or” to that of ‘this-and-that’. Again, this... ethos is essential to understand, in relationship to their approach to design.<sup>141</sup>

It is a strongly held belief that nature has always been the driving force behind architectural form in Japan. Though not a literal translation of the natural form, it is an inspired creative response to nature that playfully integrates with the more haptic and phenomenological experiences applied to typically hardened architectural forms.



*Ryōanji Temple, Rock Garden, Kyoto, Japan, photo by author*

Japanese gardens are a clear demonstration of this reverential practice. Instead of trying to create a forced sense of nature, the Japanese developed an ideal of nature, composed in harmony with the diverse geographic and climatic conditions of the country, as well as embracing a cooperative and interactive architecture. Both the garden and the building are in mutual relationship with each other, and equally dependent on the other. It demonstrates a symbiotic intertwining of the two, at a richer and deeper meta-level.

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<sup>141</sup> George Verghese, “*The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design*”, *IDEA Journal*: (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association Journal), 2003, 164.

William Alex, in “*Japanese Architecture*”, addresses the architectural components of this issue with regard to the Japanese house and nature. To Alex, a:

direct response to nature on the domestic level would consist of sliding open a series of room-height paper-covered partitions [shoji screens], for example, even in the dead of winter, to admire nature’s landscape or its symbol, the garden, beside his house.<sup>142</sup>

While this is a far too simplistic architectural description, of a complex relationship, the interconnectedness of both the interior and exterior begins to demonstrate a deeper phenomenological approach to design that parallels Christian Norberg-Schulz’s previously mentioned notion of *genius loci*,<sup>143</sup> or *spirit of place*.

To the Japanese, *genius loci*, is also known as *Ma*; translated as an awareness of place making. Both *genius loci* and *Ma* come to

inform a variety of architectural and environmental responses, depending of the unique natural and regional conditions of the island. This is most evident in the design and site location of various shrines.



*Itsukushima Shrine, Miyajima Island, Japan, photo by author*

Guenter Nitschke, in “*MA: The Japanese Sense of Place in Old and New Architecture and Planning*”, elaborates on the concept of *Ma* in Japan:

<sup>142</sup> William Alex, *Japanese Architecture*, (New York City, NY: George Braziller), 1963, 12.

<sup>143</sup> Gunila Jivén and Peter J. Larkham, “Sense of Place, Authenticity and Character: A Commentary”, *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2003, 71.

Nature is the basis of all systems of order, man accepts it as the controlling element – contours, natural falls, river beds, and ravines determine the boundaries and divisions, roads, the form of villages and buildings. Man acts... as an extension to nature... and discovers the order of an organic, constantly changing universe. This... intuitive grasp of nature is replaced by perception and a conscious application of her principles.<sup>144</sup>

Nitschke further describes this Japanese assimilation of *Ma*, as having the unique ability to combine:

the dualities object/space, time/space, objective-outer world/subjective-inner world... [as] the basis of their traditional architecture... where *Ma* is more subjective (imaginative) than objective (physical).<sup>145</sup>

This synthesis and dialogue of dualities, that Nitschke draws out, is key to making parallels with social constructionist theories, in that all entities must act together in collaboration to create a meta-reality.

Again, Verghese suggests, much like Nitschke, that:

this deeply embedded relationship to nature is not only focused on the various entities honored in nature, but also on the transitory relationship of continual natural change. As an island people, basically isolated, the Japanese have continuously focused for over 2000 years on wood as a medium for design and construction, mostly for non-load bearing efforts. The Japanese in every aspect of their culture have exploited wood and paper, materials with a low thermal capacity, ideal for the warm and humid climate. This indicates a deep-seated preference on the part of the Japanese for the living and the transitory, for the change of seasons, indeed for things in their raw state, as also... seen in Japanese cuisine.<sup>146</sup>

This all-embracing reverence for the natural, as represented by the environment or in raw materials, is also apparent in the centuries-deep connection between the people, the land, and the Shinto religion.

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<sup>144</sup> Guenter Nitschke, "MA: The Japanese Sense of Place in Old and New Architecture and Planning", *Architectural Design*, March 1966, 152.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> George Verghese, "The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design", *IDEA Journal: (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association Journal)*, 2003, 164-165.

## Shintoism

The syncretic or layered duality of Shintoism, compatible with other religious and secular beliefs, is reflected in its many practices, rituals, and customs. Kara J. Hamer, in her published essay on “*The Contribution of Shintoism to Contemporary Spirituality*”, provides a primer on Shintoism:

The history of Shintoism is almost as long as the history of Japan itself and has lived this long inside of the Japanese psyche, hearts, and minds. However, Shintoism has had to share the religious circle with Buddhism, Confucianism, and now Christianity. Buddhism and Confucianism have amalgamated with Shintoism to form what can more appropriately be called a philosophy than a religion. Shintoism has become the fibers of what the Japanese people are and has shaped their attitudes towards life... [and] is the basic and fundamental way in which the Japanese people exist. It is easy to see then that Shintoism has transcended religion and has become more of a spiritual culture and a philosophy of life to the Japanese as a whole.<sup>147</sup>

Ronald E. Dolan, in “*Japan: A Country Study*”, also offers the following observation:

Shinto (Way of the Gods) is the term used to refer to an assortment of beliefs and practices indigenous to Japan that predate the arrival of Buddhism, but have in turn been influenced by it. The Shinto worldview is of a pantheistic universe of *kami*, spirits or gods with varying degrees of power.<sup>148</sup>

The very early inhabitants of Japan were thought to have assigned the gods, or *kami*, to the various natural experiences and phenomena they came in contact with. Motoori Norinaga, a well-known scholar of Shinto, and as quoted by Masaharu Anesaki in “*History of Japanese Religion*”, questions the attributes and character of the *kami*:

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<sup>147</sup> Kara J. Hamer, “The Contribution of Shintoism to Contemporary Spirituality”, *Essays on Shinto: Images of Japanese 'Kami' in the Eyes of Foreign Students, Volume I*, edited by the International Shinto Foundation, Yoshimi Umeda, Director General, (Tokyo, Japan: the International Shinto Foundation), 2002, 17.

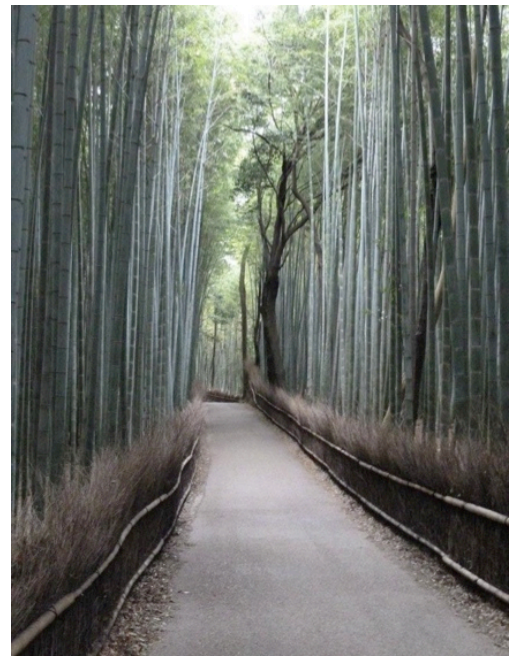
<sup>148</sup> Ronald E. Dolan, editor, *Japan: A Country Study*, (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office), 1992, chapter: Shinto.

I do not yet understand the meaning of the term *kami*. Speaking in general, however, it may be said that *kami* signifies, in the first place, the deities of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient records and also the spirits of the shrines where they are worshipped.

It is hardly necessary to say that it includes human beings. It also includes such objects as birds, beasts, trees, plants, seas, mountains, and so forth. In ancient usage, anything whatsoever which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power, or which was awe-inspiring was called *kami*.<sup>149</sup>

The Shinto tradition's all-encompassing approach toward honoring and respecting nature becomes self-evident, and it is ingrained in the greater Japanese world-view, emanating from its rich historical setting. In the Shinto religious tradition, caring for the spirit of the environment and nature is of utmost importance and the responsibility of mankind.

According to Motohito Yamakage, in "*The Essence of Shinto*", this spiritual and environmental



Arashiyama Bamboo Forest, Kyoto, Japan,  
photo by author

care is also dictated by the communal trust and belief that mankind must:

live within nature rather than attempting to dominate or destroy it. In Shinto, heaven, earth, and humanity are different manifestations of one life energy.<sup>150</sup>

For the Japanese, the *kami* also offer a value system that grounds spiritual well being with "*the well being of the natural world*",<sup>151</sup> and for which they are tied to the island nations origin stories associated with the natural environment.

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<sup>149</sup> Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion*, (Tokyo, Japan: Tuttle Publishers), 1963, 22.

<sup>150</sup> Motohito Yamakage, *The Essence of Shinto*, (Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha International), 2006, 14.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 15.

Edwin O. Reischauer, author of *"The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity"*, offers an interesting parallel of the connectedness of the *kami* to that commonly held history affected by the formation of a Japanese origin story:

A mythology concerning the deities, reminiscent of early Greek mythology, explained the creation of the Japanese islands and tied the origins of the imperial line to the sun goddess, the supreme *kami*.<sup>152</sup>

While origin stories can be problematic, through static modes of nostalgia and fixed temporal constructs, the creationism narrative linked to the *kami* acts supportively.

George Verghese, in *"The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design"*, offers a transcendent position to this particular duality in Shintoism:

The transitory nature of the Japanese ethos is also embedded in their concepts of time. History in Japan is not noted in terms of the Gregorian calendar, but rather, as in medieval times, on the rule of the Shogun, or later, on the coronation of the present emperor. The Shinto religion also extends this sense of renewal, as witnessed through the continual disassembly and construction every 20 years of the Ise Shrine, one of the most sacred Shinto shrines. Also within the Shinto beliefs system, there is the reaffirmation of the passage of time with the movement through a Torii gate that symbolizes an entry into a sacred precinct, which in turn symbolizes a rebirth and renewal that connects both nature and society.<sup>153</sup>

While Shintoism is clearly reflected in the spiritual and physical interconnectedness of society, and its environment, tied to various phenomenological experiences, this condition is also very much a part of the various customs that further connects and reconnects the Japanese to their past, present, and future, in honoring the cycles of life.

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<sup>152</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, *The Japanese Today: Change and Continuity*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 1999, 207-208.

<sup>153</sup> George Verghese, "The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design", *IDEA Journal*: (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association Journal), 2003, 165.



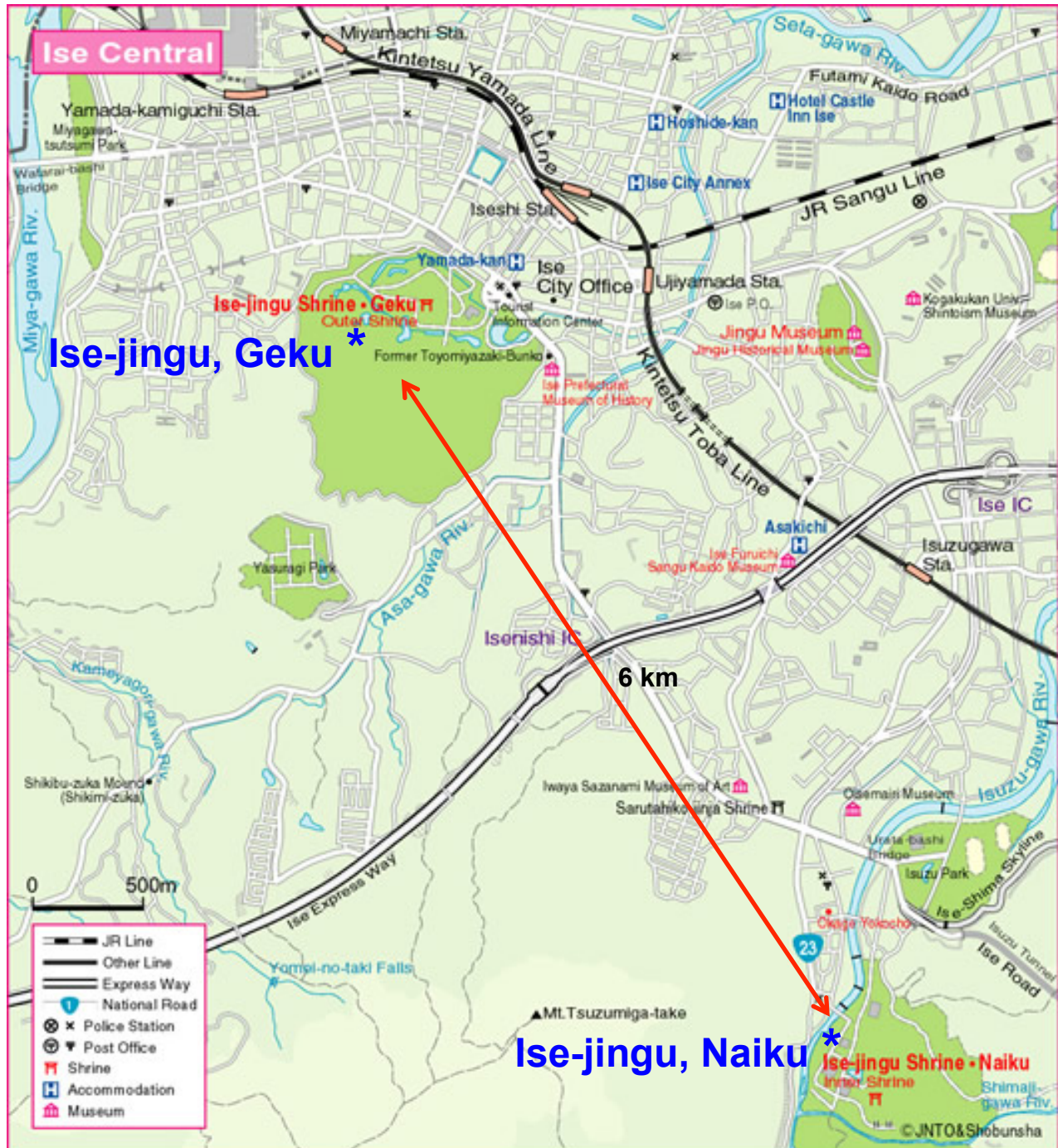
## **The *Ise Shrines*: Perception and *Authenticity***

The *Ise Shrines* are not particularly well known to most Westerners, but they do represent one of the most complex of sacred sites in Japanese religious, vernacular, and national culture. They are also of great importance to both Japanese religious and architectural history. Many articles on the shrines do not adequately represent the magnitude of the site. Overall, the shrines are comprised of two separate forested compounds, with about 125 buildings scattered throughout both sites, of which the two most important are the Outer Shrine (Geku) and the Inner Shrine (Naiku), both located about six kilometers away from each other, in the town of Ise-shi, Mie prefecture, Japan.



*Aerial View of the Ise Shrine, Naiku, showing the old and new buildings, taken from: [savingjapan.net/2011](http://savingjapan.net/2011)*





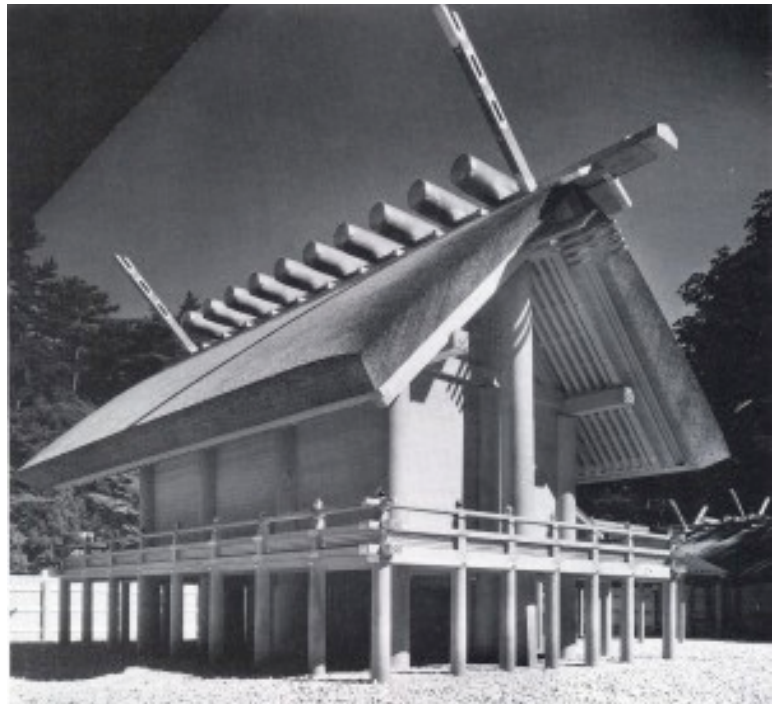
Map of the Ise Shrines, Ise-shi, Mie prefecture, Japan, taken from a Tourist Brochure, from the Japan National Tourist Board

The *Ise Shrines* are infused with an enormous amount of respect in Japanese culture, for they come to embody a form of collective memory, ingrained in the national consciousness of their culture, traditions, and history. Jonathan M. Reynolds, in "*Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition*", sets the historical context:

According to the *Nihon shoki* (or *Nihongi*), a chronicle of the history of Japan... the emperor... instituted a practice of regularly rebuilding the shrines at Ise... [which have] been rebuilt approximately every twenty years up to the present day... The shrine maintains two adjacent sites and alternates the site with each rebuilding... viewed as an act of sacrifice – as a gesture... [of] unwavering commitment to the shrines.<sup>154</sup>

While the imperial origin myth of rebuilding is seductive, the origin of the rebuilding ceremony is more likely tied to the notion that early worship sites, in Japan, were temporary, and that the prevailing belief was that the “*gods came to Earth for brief visits at a time... so there was no need to build them permanent homes.*”<sup>155</sup>

The architectural style of the shrines is known as *yuiitsu shinmei zukuri* (an ancient Japanese architectural style), unique to the Mie prefecture as well as to most shrine architecture. Its form is said to be the purest and simplest style of Shinto architecture, dating back to the *Kofun* period (250-538 B.C.).



*Ise Shrine, Naiku (Inner Shrine) main sanctuary based on the form of an ancient rice granary, taken from: library.osu.edu*

The shrine's form is based on traditional Japanese rice granaries (or rice warehouses), which have raised floors, end pillars, gabled roofs with thatch, and are

<sup>154</sup> Jonathan M. Reynolds, “Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition”, *The Art Bulletin*, Issue: Vol. 83, No. 2, June 1, 2001, 316-317.

<sup>155</sup> Jonathan Glancey, *The Story of Architecture*, (New York City, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing Inc.), 2000, 107.

constructed from hand hewn and planed unfinished wood. How the religious shrines came to take on the form of granaries is conjectured from the idea that locals would have prayed to the *kami* (gods) “*to fill their storehouses with rice and other crops*”.<sup>156</sup>

With regard to architectural embellishment, the only distinctions between the sanctuary buildings are that there are typically an even number of metal-tipped *katsuogi* (or roof purlins) at Naiku, and an odd number of *katsuogi* at Geku, that extend beyond the upper part of the gable.<sup>157</sup> There are also bargeboards along the roofline that “*project up from the roof and cross to form a pair of forked finials*”<sup>158</sup> which later came to be a defining characteristic of Shinto shrines.

### **The *Shikinen Sengu* Ceremony and the *Ise Shrines***

From most of the articles and descriptions of the shrines, one tends to believe that the Inner Shrine (Naiku) is the only shrine building to be regularly rebuilt at the site, during the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony. However, there are a few of the other auxiliary shrine structures that are also rebuilt at the Inner Shrine compound, each with two adjacent sites (one occupied and one empty), to accommodate the alternate rebuilding ritual of *Shikinen Sengu*, every twenty years.

More surprising, is the revelation that the less written about Outer Shrine (Geku), located some distance away (but the first to be approached by visitors traveling by

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<sup>156</sup> Jonathan Glancey, *The Story of Architecture*, (New York City, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing Inc.), 2000, 107.

<sup>157</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Jingu: The Grand Shrine of Ise*, (Ise-shi, Japan: Jingu Kaikan), 1952, 38.

<sup>158</sup> Jonathan Glancey, *The Story of Architecture*, (New York City, NY: Dorling Kindersley Publishing Inc.), 2000, 107.



train), also employs the same rebuilding process for four of its structures, as opposed to just the three at the Inner Shrine (Naiku).

The Shinto ritual of *Shikinen Sengu*, or the “rites of renewal”<sup>159</sup>, is the primary foundation ceremony for the building and rebuilding of the *Ise Shrines* (Geku and Naiku) every 20 years on adjacent plots of land, for the last 1200 years, and parallels the previously mentioned honoring of the rebirth and renewal evident in every day activities. At Geku and Naiku, there are numerous shrine sites that are also comprised of two identical adjacent plots of land, one with a structure and the other empty.



*Ise Shrine, Naiku secondary shrine building, showing the shrine building (right) next to the empty adjacent site (left), photo by author.*

The continuity of place and the protection of the *kami* are both very important, to the Japanese, in the transference from the old structure to the newly built structure (on the empty adjacent site), as a part of every *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony. For many Shintoists, there is a great importance placed on tradition and continuity in society, which stems from a set of values that promotes



*Ise Shrine, Naiku (Inner Shrine) new construction for the Shikinen Sengu under plastic, photo by author*

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<sup>159</sup> Rosemarie Bernard “Mirror Image: Photographic and Televised Mediations of Ise’s *Shikinen Sengu*”, *Religion and Media*, edited by Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, (Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press), 2001, 339.

cleanliness and renewal. Hence, the term *sengu*, in *Shikinen Sengu*, which refers to the relocation, repair, or construction work done on a shrine building as a part of its time-honored upkeep. According to Dustin Kidd, author of the website “*Shimane: Home of Japanese Mythology*”:

there is a spiritual aspect to *sengu* as well. By making the shrine new again, a *sengu* symbolizes a renewal of power and vitality for the deity [or *kami*] of that shrine.<sup>160</sup>

Rosemarie Bernard, in her article titled “*Mirror Image: Photographic and Televised Mediations of Ise’s Shikinen Sengu*”, also speaks to this metaphysical concept:

Throughout much of [Japanese] history, the *Shikinen Sengu* rites have occupied a special place in the performance of symbolic power. In contemporary Japan, they remain a multivalent symbol in the imagination of culture and tradition.<sup>161</sup>

This concept is *extremely* important to understand, in the context of Shintoism and the topic of *authenticity*, especially in examining the *Ise Shrines*, of both Geku and Naiku.

The *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony is a major religious and ritualistic project, for which the *Ise Shrines*’ planned 2013 ceremony has had over 8 years of prior preparation, work, and material resourcing. While most Shinto shrines at one point or another have conducted this ceremony, today the *Shikinen Sengu* is limited to just a select number of shrines in Japan, apart from the *Ise Shrines*. This limitation is due in part to the various religious and ritualistic activities, as well as great financial commitment.

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<sup>160</sup> Dustin Kidd, “What is Sengu?”, *Shimane: Home of Japanese Mythology*, [www.japanesemythology.jp/sengu/](http://www.japanesemythology.jp/sengu/), (accessed on October 28, 2012).

<sup>161</sup> Rosemarie Bernard “Mirror Image: Photographic and Televised Mediations of Ise’s Shikinen Sengu”, *Religion and Media*, edited by Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, (Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press), 2001, 340.

According to Dominic McIver Lopes in “*Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan*”:

More than thirty other shrines are regularly rebuilt. Kasuga Taishi in Nara is rebuilt every thirty years, Kamo Mioya Jinja in Kyoto every fifty years, and Nukisaki Jinja in Gumma Prefecture every thirteen years, for instance. Many more are rebuilt on an irregular schedule – Izumo Taishi in Shimane Prefecture, which rivals Ise Jingu in Shimane Prefecture, has been rebuilt twenty-five times. Buddhist monasteries and temples are also rebuilt as needed – for example, Kofukuji in Nara has now been taken down to its foundations and is slated for completion in 2010.<sup>162</sup>

As mentioned before, the number of shrines restricted from rebuilding is due in part to the great financial cost of replacing the impermanent materials, and also because of the limited availability of those resources.

Again, Dominic McIver Lopes adds:

Traditional Japanese vernacular architecture characteristically features wood, paper, and other relatively ephemeral building materials, which are allowed to weather, and traditional houses are rebuilt every few decades. Thus tourists in Japan are struck by the absence of old town centers – Kyoto’s Gion district being a well-known exception. Almost all the historic sites that attract visitors have been rebuilt several times. Kinkakuji, which is perhaps Kyoto’s best-known site, was burnt to the ground in 1950, rebuilt in 1955, and regilded in 1987 – but nobody regards this as remarkable or as diminishing the site’s value.<sup>163</sup>

The ongoing nature of decay, brought about by the ephemeral materials, and the subsequent rebuilding and repair relies heavily on the continuity of various architectural and social traditions that are passed down from one generation to the next, of carpenters, craftsmen, and lay leaders.

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<sup>162</sup> Dominic McIver Lopes, “Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 65, No. 1, Special Issue: Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics, Winter 2007, 80.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

The elaborate details of the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony begins eight years before completion, with the initial ceremony called *Yamaguchi-sai* and the final ceremony of completion called *Mikagura*. For the 62<sup>nd</sup> rebuilding of the *Ise Shrines*, *Yamaguuchi-sai* started in 2005 and *Mikagura* was held in October of 2013.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Ceremony Name</i>	<i>Attended By</i>
<b>2005</b>		<b>Yamaguchi-sai</b>	<b>Emperor</b>
This ceremony is to offer prayers to the <i>kami</i> who reside at the foot of the mountains in order to obtain permission to enter and cut the sacred wood that is to be used as the core pillar of the new sanctuary.			
<b>2006</b>		<b>Okihiki-zome-shiki</b>	
This ceremony marks the start of pulling the timbers into the sanctuary. Shinryomin, people who live on the land once owned by the Shrines, transport the wood into both Naiku and Geku.			
		<b>1<sup>st</sup> Okihiki-gyoji</b>	
In this ceremony, the wood to be used for the <i>Shikinen Sengu</i> is brought to the sanctuaries. For the Naiku, it is pulled via the Isuzu River, and for the Geku it is pulled over land on carriages called <i>okihikiguruma</i> .			
<b>2007</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Okihiki-gyoji</b>	
This ceremony continues the rituals of the 1 <sup>st</sup> <i>Okihiki-gyoji</i> in 2006.			
<b>2008</b>		<b>Chinchi-sai</b>	<b>Emperor</b>
This ceremony is to offer prayers of consolation to the <i>kami</i> who dwell at the site where the new sanctuary is to be built.			
<b>2009</b>		<b>Ujibashi-wat Ari-hajime-shiki</b>	
This ceremony is to celebrate the completion of the rebuilt Uji Bridge, which is also reconstructed every twenty years.			
<b>2012</b>	<b>March</b>	<b>Ritchu-sai</b>	
This ceremony is to erect the first pillar for the main sanctuary.			
	<b>March</b>	<b>Gogyo-sai</b>	<b>Emperor</b>
This ceremony is to install the <i>gogyo</i> , or metal plates, to ward off evil spirits under the gables at either end of the main sanctuary's roof. The ceremony is held on the same day at the <i>Ritchu-sai</i> .			
	<b>March</b>	<b>Joto-sai</b>	
This ceremony is to lift up the ridgepole of the main sanctuary building.			
	<b>May</b>	<b>Nokitsuke-sai</b>	<b>Emperor</b>
This ceremony is for the thatching of the roof with miscanthus grass.			
	<b>July</b>	<b>Iraka-sai</b>	
This ceremony is to install the metal ornaments on the crossbeams of the main sanctuary, and other parts.			

**2013 August Oshiraishi-mochi-gyoji**

This ceremony is to place the *oshiraishi*, or white pebbles, on the sacred grounds around the new sanctuary, by the people of Ise city or by worshipers coming from all over the country.

**September Mito-sai**

This ceremony is to make the hole in the key for the sacred door of the new building.

**September Mifunashiro-hono-shiki**

This ceremony is to place the *Mifunashiro*, or sacred box for holding the symbol of the *kami*, in the main sanctuary.

**September Arai-kiyome**

This ceremony is to purify the new building with sacred water.

**September Shin-no-mihashira-hoken**

This solemn ceremony is to place the *shin-no-mihashira*, or sacred core pillar, at the center of the main sanctuary.

**September Kotsuki-sai**

This ceremony is to consolidate (or bind) the base of the pillars of the main sanctuary.

**October Gochin-sai Emperor**

This ceremony is to celebrate the completion of the sanctuary building and to offer prayers to the *kami* who dwell at the foundation of the newly reconstructed sanctuary, and to make the ground stable.

**October Onshozoku-shinpo-tokugo**

This ceremony is to confirm that the newly made clothing and treasures offered to the *kami*, by the Emperor, are in accordance with tradition.

**October Kawara-oharai**

This ceremony is to purify the new made clothing and treasures offered to the *kami*, along with the *Saishu* (the most sacred priestess), *Daiguji* (the supreme priest), and other priests.

**October Okazari**

This ceremony is to decorate the inside of the new building with a part of the new apparel and sacred treasures, in order to prepare it for *Sengyo*, the main transfer ceremony of the symbol of the *kami*.

**October Sengyo Emperor**

This ceremony is to transfer the symbol of the *kami* from the old to the new building. It is the culmination of all *Shikinen Sengu* ceremonies. During this ceremony the *Yata-no-Kagami*, or sacred mirror (one of the Three Sacred Treasures / Imperial Regalia), is transferred from the old to the new shrine at midnight.

**October Omiike**

This ceremony is to serve the first sacred food to the *kami* in the new building after the *Sengyo* ceremony.



*Yata-no-Kagami*  
(sacred mirror),  
taken from:  
[greenshinto.com](http://greenshinto.com)



**October      Hohei      Emperor**

This ceremony is conducted by Imperial envoy, to offer sacred silk and other sacred materials to the *kami*, the day after the *Sengyo* ceremony.

**October      Komotsu-watashi**

This ceremony is to transfer some sacred treasures that were left in the former sanctuary to the *Saihoden*, or western treasure house, on the new compound.

**October      Mikagura-mike**

This ceremony is to offer sacred food to the *kami* before the *Mikagura* ceremony.

**October      Mikagura      Emperor**

This ceremony, comprised of special ceremonial music and dance, is conducted by court musicians of the Imperial Household. *Mikagura* takes place the night after the *Sengyo*.<sup>164</sup>



*Ise Shrines, Shikinen Sengu, Left: Chinchisai ceremony, Center: Kawara-oharai ceremony, Right: Sengyo ceremony at midnight, transferring the sacred mirror to the new building, photo from Jingu Administration Office, [www.isejingu.or.jp](http://www.isejingu.or.jp)*

Throughout the *Shikinen Sengu* reconstruction ceremony, ancient customs and building traditions are strictly adhered to. These traditions are accompanied by various rituals in the honoring of the materials used (see image at right), as well as in the associated building techniques employed. Some of the rituals involve as many as one hundred thousand participants.

The rebuilding and removal process allows for a continuity of ancient Japanese culture, history, and craftsmanship, passed on to future



*Hinoki trees being transported down the Isuzu River, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Okihiki-gyoji ceremony, from: "Jingu: The Grand Shrine of Ise", 1952.*

<sup>164</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *The 62<sup>nd</sup> Regular Removal of the Grand Shrine of Ise: Shikinen Sengu*, (Tokyo, Japan: Japan National Tourism Organization), 2012, [www.jnto.go.jp](http://www.jnto.go.jp), (accessed January 12, 2012).

generations. As architect Hayahiko Takase points out, in his lecture from 2009, the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony allows the shrines “to be forever new and forever ancient”<sup>165</sup> at the same time.

Of the materials required for the *Ise Shrines*, more than 15,000 hinoki cypress trees are felled from specific dedicated hinoki forests throughout the country, along with “900 meters of silk, 3.75 kilograms of gold, and 260 kilograms of lacquer.”<sup>166</sup> According to Dominic McIver Lopes in “*Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan*”:

Some might seek out the meaning of the *sengu* in its rationale, but there is no widely accepted explanation of the practice. According to one theological explanation, Shinto requires that *kami* be lodged in fresh and beautiful shrines; according to another, the *sengu* articulates Shinto doctrines of purity and renewal. According to a broader cultural explanation, the *sengu* embodies *mujukan*, an awareness of the transience of life, nature, and artifacts. The close relationship between Ise... and the imperial household suggests a political explanation, that in undertaking the enormous, recurring expense of the *sengu*, the [Imperial] household renewed its unwavering commitment to the shrine and thus its national authority. Architectural explanations have also been proposed: the *sengu* ensures that the skills needed to maintain the shrine are passed down from one generation of artisans to the next, for it maintains the purity of building materials and preserves ancient architectural forms. However plausible or implausible these explanations [are], the *sengu* is a fact.<sup>167</sup>

George Verghese, in “*The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design*”, offers an alternate perspective toward the *Shikinen Sengu* to address some of the discrepancies and perceptions that this parallel rebuilding process causes:

The notion of change that is part of the transitory nature of Japanese culture is rooted in their comprehension of cyclical natural change, with the land and the building site being the only things that virtually have a

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<sup>165</sup> Hayahiko Takase, *Lecture Note: The Grand Shrine at Ise*, (Tokyo, Japan: Nibei), Lecture presented at: Japan Study Club, September 29, 2009, [www.culturalnews.com/?p=1171](http://www.culturalnews.com/?p=1171), (accessed January 14, 2012).

<sup>166</sup> Dominic McIver Lopes, “Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 65, No. 1, Special Issue: Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics, Winter 2007, 79.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

lasting value. Buddha sitting firmly on the ground under a Bodhi tree, in which the open canopy overhead protects but also permits a transitory space below can be seen as a strong symbolism of this spatial paradigm. The traditional Shoin house is a clear manifestation of Buddhist beliefs in which the house is seen as a temporary dwelling.<sup>168</sup>

This is very much the case in Tokyo today, where the average life span of a building is about 20 years, unless it is of some physical or historical significance.

Guenter Nitzsche, in “*The Disease of Time: Restoration versus Renewal in Japan*”, writes more closely to the various issues related to rebuilding, restoration, and renewal:

the rebuilding rites of Shinto shrines... renew... [and] recharge... depleted energy... [However,] there is a great difference between restoration and renewal... in terms of human action: restoration has a physical dimension, renewal has religious implications.

Restoration... is integral to a linear or historical understanding of time... in terms of events along an irreversible time sequence... [countered by] a deep desire to freeze something to some arbitrary point in time, conceptually, like in our efforts of writing and re-writing history, and architecturally by legally freezing important buildings at one particular authentic point in history... [to] heal the disease of time.

Renewal is integral to a cyclic or seasonal understanding and feeling of time, prevalent in... cultures who still live more in unison with nature;... With such vision, time seems reversible and the human being renewable, since the human being here experiences himself as sustained by a larger, as we would say, global energy than his own limited one.<sup>169</sup>

By addressing both restoration and renewal, as integral to spiritual and ritualistic practices, the *Ise Shrines* avoid the fixed, locked, and constructed nostalgia of history.

Through the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony, the shrines act more as a living record of various Japanese religious, social, and building traditions and as an alternative view of

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<sup>168</sup> George Verghese, “The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design”, *IDEA Journal*: (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association Journal), 2003, 166.

<sup>169</sup> Guenter Nitschke, “The Disease of Time: Restoration versus Renewal in Japan”, *Architecture of the Month*, May 2006, accessed from: [www.east-asia-architecture.org/aotm/index.html](http://www.east-asia-architecture.org/aotm/index.html), (accessed on May 2, 2012).

memory and re-creation. Therefore the shrines are more representative of the diversity of opinions and outlooks in Japanese society.

With ritual, the buildings and adjoining sites are purified, building materials renewed, and all preserve the original historical design established in the third and fourth centuries. So why are the buildings seen as *original* and not perceived as re-created copies? William Alex, in “*Japanese Architecture*” attempts to address this issue, through the complexity of its additional and circumstantial layers:

The new Shrines, although identical with the old ones, are not considered a replica of Ise, but are Ise re-created in a process [that] reveals Shinto's understanding of nature which does not make monuments, but lives and dies, always renewed and reborn.<sup>170</sup>

Another aspect of the shrines layers, “*renewed and reborn*”, may have more to do with honoring its long and enduring complex history, far too difficult to reduce to a simplistic narrative.

As mentioned earlier, an interesting perception of the shrines is that they are both old and new, in every rebuilding: both 1200 years old and 20 years new at the same time. John Lienhard, in the College of Engineering, at the University of Houston, asks the larger question: “Why do they do it?”,<sup>171</sup> in the blog: “*Engines of Our Ingenuity*”:

The 20-year cycle gives us a clue. Craftsmen enter the cycle of building twice. The first time they're novices – learning the ancient skills that could so easily perish in a steam-driven, electric-powered, and electronically informed world.

The second time, they're the experts, training a new cadre and sustaining old beauty. The shrine of Ise keeps a whole set of fragile arts intact – century in and century out.

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<sup>170</sup> William Alex, *Japanese Architecture*, (New York City, NY: George Braziller), 1963, 18.

<sup>171</sup> John H. Lienhard, “No. 876: A Moving Shrine”, *Engines of Our Ingenuity*, [www.uh.edu/engines/epi876.htm](http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi876.htm), (accessed on October 12, 2013).

Now the renewed shrine opens. Three thousand guests cleanse themselves in the sacred Isuzu River and join the ceremony of moving Amaterasu's mirror. And I know why they do this every 20 years. It's one thing merely to see such beauty. But to have the joy of recreating your own artistic heritage twice in a lifetime – that's treasure beyond even the cost of this gesture.

The... Japanese have done more than just preserve the Mona Lisa or Chartres Cathedral. They've taken a piece of the artist's soul into their own lives as well. And that is reason enough to do this... extravagant thing every 20 years.<sup>172</sup>

This syncretic duality of the *Ise Shrines*, in that they are both very old and very new at the same time,<sup>173</sup> is very much in keeping with social constructionist views on multiple perspectives and challenging taken-for-granted beliefs. In the same line of reasoning, the shrines can also be perceived as both copies and originals, from an inclusive perspective, with no distinction between the two.

With the *Ise Shrines* there is always conveyed a sense of historical *authenticity* and a leap of faith through ritual, due in part to the distance created in history by time and the temporary aspect of its form. The issue may be more about collective transcendence in that the *Ise Shrines* reciprocally offer societal *rites of renewal* and cleansing. Overall, the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony continues to provide an historical and ritualistic continuum that involves multiple layers of association and interconnectedness between society, the architecture, and the environment.



*Naiku Priest, Ise Shrines, Ise, Japan, photo by author*

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<sup>172</sup> John H. Lienhard, "No. 876: A Moving Shrine", *Engines of Our Ingenuity*, [www.uh.edu/engines/epi876.htm](http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi876.htm), (accessed on October 12, 2013).

<sup>173</sup> Botond Bogнар, "What Goes Up Must Come Down: Recent Urban Architecture in Japan", *Harvard Design Magazine* 3, 1997, 4 and 7.

## The Complex Association of the Emperor and the *Ise Shrines*

There is a fascinating dilemma posed by the Imperial family's connection to the *Ise Shrines*, in that it may offer some additional layers of discussion pertaining to *authenticity*, continuity, and transcendence. The shrines' association with the Imperial

family stems, from an early account of divine Imperial origin through the *kami*, in the second oldest book on Japanese history called the *Nihon Shoki* (The



"Amaterasu out of the Cave", taken from: [onthebridgeway.wordpress.com](http://onthebridgeway.wordpress.com)

Chronicles of Japan). While many *kami* are associated with the *Ise Shrines*, the primary goddess for whom the shrine is dedicated to is Amaterasu-omikami, goddess of the sun and the universe. The goddess Amaterasu-omikami is also believed to be the grandmother of the first Emperor, Jimmu, thereby establishing the divine ancestry for the Emperor of Japan. Amaterasu-omikami is represented as both wisdom and honesty through the Imperial Regalia of the Sacred Mirror (or *Yata no Kagami*) and protected at Ise. The divine connection of Amaterasu-omikami to the Imperial family also speaks to the importance of continuity associated with the *Shikinen Sengu* rebuilding at the *Ise Shrines*, and as a part of the Japanese national consciousness.

The story of the establishment of the shrines goes back to around the year 4 B.C. in which Yamato-hime no Mikoto, daughter of Emperor Suinin, was on a spiritual journey to find a permanent place to worship the sun goddess Amaterasu-omikami.



After wandering the countryside near Nara and Mount Miwa, for almost 20 years, Yamato-hime no Mikoto chose Ise after being drawn by the voice of the goddess. Amaterasu-omikami had declared to Yamato-hime no Mikoto that, “*The province of Ise, of the divine wind, is... a secluded and pleasant land. In this land I wish to dwell.*”<sup>174</sup> Yamato-hime no Mikoto proceeded to have a shrine erected in Ise, thus providing a direct physical connection with Amaterasu-omikami for the Imperial family.

It was during the reign of Emperor Temmu, the 40<sup>th</sup> emperor of Japan, that the current form of the shrine at Naiku was first erected, with the first *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony carried out under his wife, Empress Jito, in 692. Subsequently, the *Ise Shrines* were established (along with 15 other shrines) as royal sites of patronage and pilgrimage under Emperor Murakami, in the year 965, which required direct communication and guardianship for Amaterasu-omikami and the other *kami*.

This royal link with the *Ise Shrines* is also historically documented in Japan’s most well known work of literature, “*The Tale of Genji*”, written by Murasaki Shikibu (also known as Lady Murasaki), in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It is often referred to as the world’s first modern novel, which follows the life of Hikaru Genji, the son of a Japanese Emperor. Of particular note in “*The Tale of Genji*”:

From His Excellency he had news of his little son, too, and although he missed him very much, he did not worry unduly, because.... Genji had also sent a messenger to the Ise Shrine, and he had one from there as well.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> W. G. Aston, *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, (New York City, NY: Routledge), 2011, 176.

<sup>175</sup> Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, (New York City, NY: Penguin Books), 2001 edition, 241-242.

Other than the ancient history that existed between the Emperor and the *Ise Shrines*, the more modern history associated with extreme nationalism, during WW II, often brings about differing narratives and discussions. Prior to WW II, Tze M. Loo in “*Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise*” notes that:

Textbooks and teaching manuals... for soldiers, and texts about the imperial family sought to explain Ise Shrine’s relationship to Japan and how ordinary Japanese people should relate to it. Hiroike Chikuro’s *Ise Jingu* is one example of these attempts to elaborate Ise’s new significance. Emphasizing that the relationship between Ise Shrine and the Japanese national essence was an ‘intellectual, moral, educational, political, legal and religious issue’ that every Japanese citizen must know about, Hiroike explained the origins of Japan’s national essence as the origins of Ise. In Hiroike’s text and others of a similar vein, ‘Ise Shrine’ and ‘Amaterasu’ become virtually indistinguishable.<sup>176</sup>

Tze M. Loo continues that:

In an expanded edition of *Ise Jingu* published in 1915, Hiroike tied [the] Ise Shrine to the expansion of Japan’s national essence (shorthand for the expansion of empire) and argued that this... depended on the unity of the people with the imperial will.<sup>177</sup>

However, the Japanese military had pretty much usurped the power of the Emperor, who was opposed to military adventures, by leading the public with propaganda into thinking that it was the will of the gods, at Ise, who were really directing the Emperor and the country to war. Furthermore, Dominic McIver Lopes in “*Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan*”, notes that the Emperor:

had never thought of himself as divine. The whole idea that he was any different from any other humans would have seemed to him arrogant and presumptive, even had [the wars’] sponsors been men of sincerity, for he was a modest and unassuming person. He was resentful, too; for he did not need to be told that what the militarists wanted was someone who

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<sup>176</sup> Tze M. Loo, “Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise”, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: Vol. 11, No. 3, 2010, 377.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 378.



could be presented as a god to the multitude but manipulated as a puppet by the men in power.<sup>178</sup>

While not entirely without fault, Emperor Hirohito realized how much the Japanese people and the Imperial family had been deceived by the military and how the power of the gods at Ise had been misused during the war. After surrendering to U.S. forces, the Emperor made an immediate visit to the *Ise Shrines* to publicly renounce the divinity of the Imperial throne, to rectify the perceived damages to the image of the shrines, as well as to end state-sponsored Shintoism, which was proving to be problematic to the American Occupation Authorities of Japan.

This is not to say that the change and rehabilitation of the *Ise Shrines* image was self-directed. Some argue that the change was primarily due to the U.S. led Occupation Authorities, which had issued the *Shinto Directive*, ordering the separation of Shintoism and the state. This separation also brought about an end to the direct funding of various Shinto shrines by the Imperial family, which in effect put an end to state-funded Shintoism. Other shrines, such as the *Yasukuni Shrine*, became privately funded so as to not have to relinquish its



Yasukuni Shrine, Tokyo, Japan, taken from:  
[gohistoric.com/images/slides/a5/7795](http://gohistoric.com/images/slides/a5/7795)

association with war and honoring those who died in service to the Emperor. It was not until some time later, that the Emperor began to make secularized visits to the *Yasukuni Shrine*, in order to distance the Imperial family from controversy and previous held attachments and associated meanings.

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<sup>178</sup> Leonard Mosley, *Hirohito: Emperor of Japan*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall), 1966, 133.

By the beginning of the late 1950's, without Imperial affiliation or funding, the *Ise Shrines* had also begun to take on new narrative associations and meanings to distance themselves from the nationalistic tendencies of various WW II military leaders, who had come to usurp the power of the Imperial family and the nation. After the war, many of the religious and ideological qualities associated with the *Ise Shrines* were rebranded to complement other religious beliefs, in a more syncretic fashion. This shift also allowed the shrines, and in effect the Imperial family, to be recast into a more sympathetic national and cultural role.<sup>179</sup>

In an interesting historical side note to the issue of continuity, Tze M. Loo, in "*Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise*", reflects that:

perhaps the most telling marker of these continuities was Hirohito's visit to Ise Shrine in June 1952 to inform Amaterasu of the end of the American Occupation and restoration of Japan's sovereignty.<sup>180</sup>

In a parallel manner of continuity, many historians have tried to reframe the various elements of the shrines' complex vernacular heritage and building traditions away from nationalistic associations, without turning their backs on the difficult historical realities of the buildings, caused by the war. Joshua M. Reynolds, in "*Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of a Japanese Tradition*", notes this complex legacy, in that:

The shrines at Ise emerged from World War II bearing a complex historical legacy. For many this was a terrible burden, but some recognized valuable opportunities, seeing aspects of the shrines' history that could be utilized to promote new cultural practices.<sup>181</sup>

It is through this particular reframing of Ise's complex historical legacy that social

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<sup>179</sup> Tze M. Loo, "*Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise*", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: Vol. 11, No. 3, 2010, 381.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Jonathan M. Reynolds, "*Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition*", *The Art Bulletin*, Issue: Vol. 83, No. 2, June 1, 2001, 316.

constructionist principles become most clear; in that alternative perspectives on extremely difficult situations and circumstances become apparent.

### **The *Ise Shrines* and UNESCO: Issues of *Authenticity* and Narrative Constructions**

With the *Ise Shrines*, the Japanese people have had to come to terms with and transcend a complex and difficult history, full of multiple overlapping narratives (*i.e.*, religious, militaristic, touristic, social, and political histories and revisions). In essence, the people have had to accept the conditions of the shrines' past in order to balance out its current place in time against a variety of historical accounts and narratives.

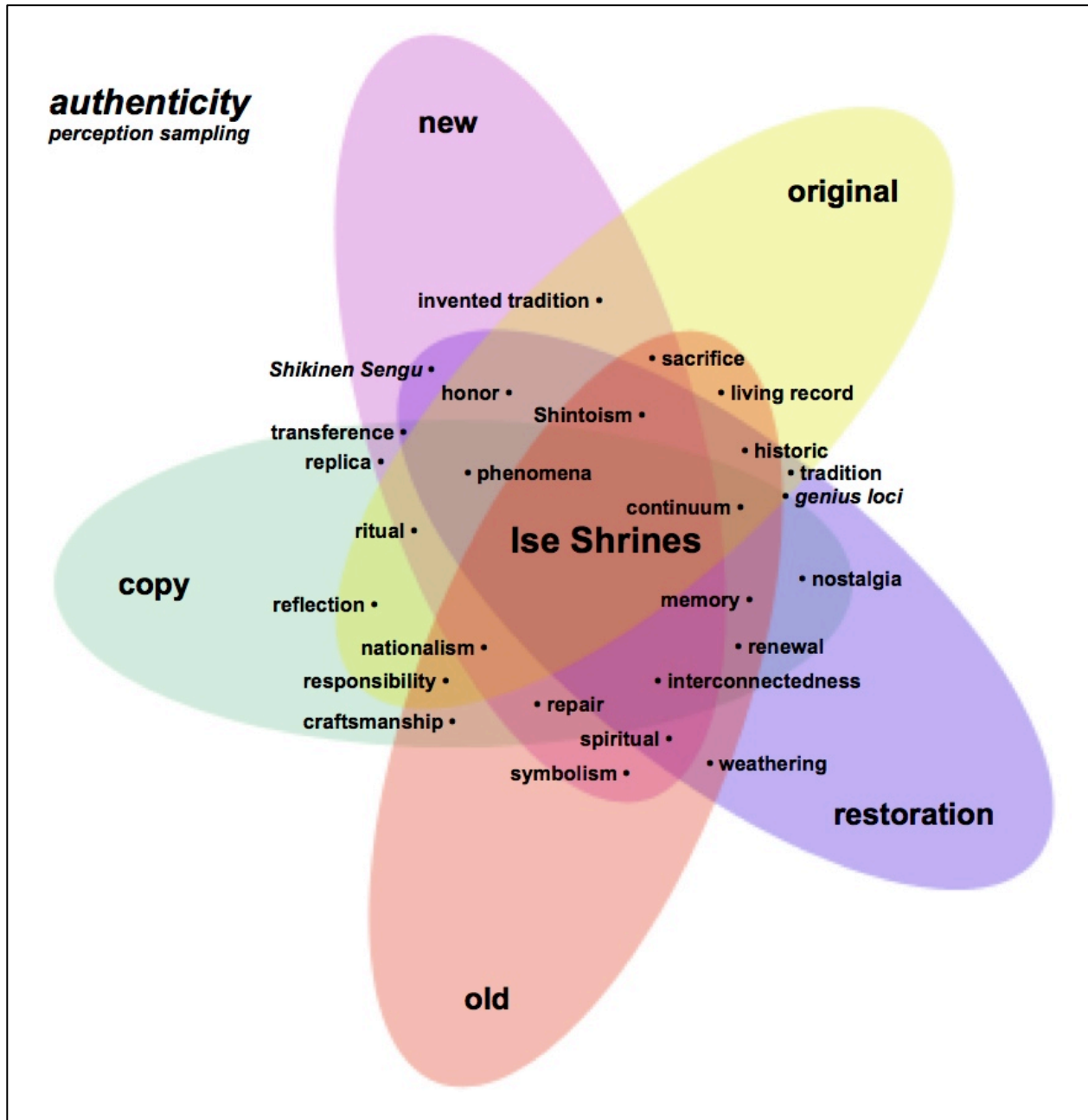
Dominic McIver Lopes, in "*Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan*", addresses the notion of multiple narratives and inclusive perspectives, related to the *Ise Shrines*, which developed over the course of time, and then as a parallel comparison to a few other architectural examples. McIver Lopes notes that:

Copies of a building are not instances of a work. To see a replica of the Seagram Building is not to see the Seagram Building, and to see a reconstruction of the Parthenon as it was in 300 BC is not to see the Parthenon. We cannot appreciate Europe's great architecture by means of a trip to Las Vegas. Thus architectural works contrast with multiple-instance works like Beethoven's sonatas: to hear any performance of the Opus 11 Piano Sonata is to hear the sonata.

[Therefore]... a building is a material object individuated as common sense individual objects like tables and chairs. It is made up of parts, each part roughly identical to a bunch of molecules, and it comes into existence when the parts are assembled.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Dominic McIver Lopes, "Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 65, No. 1, Special Issue: Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics, Winter 2007, 81.



*Authenticity: Perception Sampling of the Ise Shrines, diagram created by author*

When McIver Lopes' point (that multiple narratives and perspectives come "*into existence when the parts are assembled*"<sup>183</sup>) is applied to the discussion on *authenticity*, the common elements can then be represented in a Venn diagram (see image above).

<sup>183</sup> Dominic McIver Lopes, "Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 65, No. 1, Special Issue: Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics, Winter 2007, 81.

The diagram begins to show a *selected* intersection of multiple perceptions and relationships, pertaining to *authenticity*, but this time through the filter of architecture, and specifically the issues drawn out from the example of the *Ise Shrines*.<sup>184</sup>

While Venn diagrams are primarily used in mathematics, to establish logical relations in sets, they can also be used to demonstrate the psychological principles of gestalt, in that every element is related to another, to construct a more complete picture of the whole. McIver Lopes continues, that:

Ise Jingu is made up of parts that were joined together no more than twenty years ago. Although it sits next to the spot where a different building stood, it is not the survivor of that building. The reason is that no building survives the simultaneous replacement of all its parts. Indeed, there was a time when both buildings stood side-by-side, and a material object cannot stand beside itself.

A constitutive feature of buildings in this strand of architectural practice in Japan is that they change – they weather, decay, and soon perish.

Ise Jingu is a multiple-instance work... [and reflects a type of] cultural pluralism... because sound architectural appreciation varies across cultures.<sup>185</sup>

It is precisely this distinction of Ise being a *multiple-instance work*, with regard to culture, perspective, and variability, that the issue of architectural *authenticity* needs to be constantly reexamined, and contextually resituated for a more complete understanding.

With regard to contextual resituation, the subsequent rebuilding and the temporary nature of the *Ise Shrines* has also proved problematic in interpreting

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<sup>184</sup> The Venn diagram, and McIver Lopes' notion of coming "*into existence when the parts are assembled*", are both very evocative of Kenneth Gergen's use of the layered *double wing* multi-being diagram, as depicted in "*An Invitation to Social Construction*", which shows a *selected* intersection of multiple perceptions and relationships. This idea similarly reflects the point that music is a *multiple-instance work*, and can therefore be reflective of how one views architecture, depending on its context.

<sup>185</sup> Dominic McIver Lopes, "Shikinen Sengu and the Ontology of Architecture in Japan", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 65, No. 1, Special Issue: Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics, Winter 2007, 81-83.

*authenticity*, as defined by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) and the World Heritage Convention, for Heritage Site Status. The use of new materials during the *Shikinen Sengu* rebuilding ceremony has been problematic for UNESCO in classifying the *Ise Shrines* as a World Heritage Site. For UNESCO, the problem lies more with each successive rebuilding, implying a break with the *physical continuity* of history.

The rebuilding ceremony also emphasizes the pluralistic cultural and historical narratives of Japan that differ from Western constructs of architectural *authenticity*, heritage, and continuity. The Western dependence on physical attributes, for determining World Heritage status, often negates the *cultural continuity* of traditions and rituals of the East, unfortunately classified as immaterial or non-physical elements. This classification as *material* (physical) versus *immaterial* (non-physical), is now more formally defined by UNESCO as *tangible* versus *intangible* heritage or evidence, due to the issues posed and reframed by the example of the *Ise Shrines*.

Tze M. Loo, in “*Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise*”, offers the following narrative explanation as to the cultural differences encountered in the term *authentic*. It also speaks to the previously mentioned bias of the Western Canon that can prevent attempts to reframe the context of the implied differences. Loo states:

Constructed primarily of wood, Japan’s historical architecture was maintained through a technique known as ‘repair with dismantlement’... in which a building was periodically dismantled entirely and reassembled with new materials replaced where needed. Some observers questioned whether buildings maintained this way could be considered authentic... [and cast the] situation as evidence of a difference between Euro-American West and the non-West... to highlight the inherent Eurocentricism of UNESCO’s World Heritage. They suggested that the inability of the World Heritage Convention to appreciate the authenticity of

Japan's historical architecture was the result of a system based in Euro-American ideas about preservation, which took only stone and brick architectural forms into account. Nevertheless,... Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs attempted to show that 'repair with dismantlement' was in fact precisely about preserving the authenticity of traditional architecture. They explained that this technique introduced new materials only when existing materials were too damaged to be reused. In these instances, skilled artisans trained in traditional building techniques used the same kinds of materials as the original building... according to meticulous and detailed records available from previous repairs of the buildings.

Explaining the Japanese position further, Watanabe Akiyoshi [the Japanese Councilor of Cultural Properties] suggested that there is a 'Japanese idea' of authenticity in circulation,... which captured a spiritual and non-material dimension. In contrast, UNESCO's definition of authenticity... emphasized material aspects, [but] noted that both Japan and UNESCO's approach to preservation aimed to prevent changes to an object's form. However, Japanese preservation practices valued not only an object's physical form, but rather a '*something*'... that revealed itself in an object's materiality. Preventing changes to the object's physical form was thus really to protect this immaterial '*something*'. In Watanabe's opinion, an object's value lay... from both an object's material and immaterial aspects. Measures of authenticity should therefore also pay attention to this immaterial 'something' and preservation should include the careful assessment of the authenticity of an object's non-material aspects.<sup>186 187</sup>

Overall, the separation of layered concepts that go into determining the full range of issues pertaining to *authenticity* is similar to the many shared ideas, narratives, and constructs, put forth in social construction methods, to *negotiate a common reality*.<sup>188</sup> No *one* reality can ever be absolute in determining what is *authentic*; otherwise it would marginalize alternative narratives and perceptions.

In the *Ise Shrines* World Heritage Site application, it was their marginalized position that the Japanese Councilor of Cultural Properties, Watanabe Akiyoshi, was

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<sup>186</sup> Tze M. Loo, "Escaping its past: recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: Vol. 11, No. 3, 2010, 385-386.

<sup>187</sup> The in-depth discussion and background history, of the issues posed, warranted this lengthy inclusion.

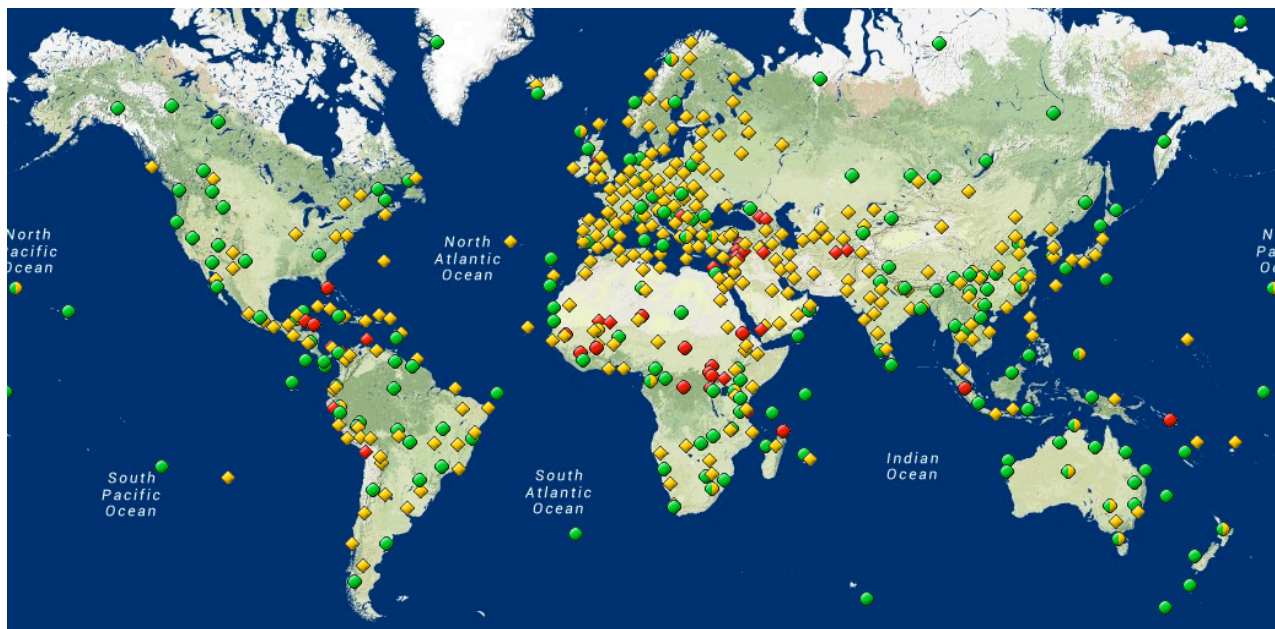
<sup>188</sup> Kenneth J. Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction*, (London, England: Sage Publications, Ltd.), 2009, 113.

trying to draw attention to, with regard to the constructed bias of the Western perspective. Tze M. Loo, in “*Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise*”, describes the various issues discussed with regard to the shrines rejected application:

At the Nara Conference [on *Authenticity*, the] Ise Shrine was conceptualized firstly as an embodiment of authenticity. *Ito Nobuo* used [the] Ise Shrines to name an approach to heritage preservation distinguished from a European one. Compared with a ‘European value system’ rooted in an appreciation of an object’s material aspects, the ‘Ise value system’ placed ‘spirituality’ and ‘gods’ at its center. He pointed out that cultural heritage was grounded in natural and social factors and, therefore, specific to contexts.

Despite historical records, which showed that Ise Shrine’s periodic rebuilding was interrupted several times during its history and that the form of the shrine’s buildings and their layout changed over time, Ise Shrine’s periodic rebuilding was cast as an effective way to maintain a complete continuity between the past and the present.

Ise’s periodic rebuilding should not be understood as only transmitting the buildings, but as a practice that enabled the transmission of both Ise Shrine’s ‘ancient architectural space’ as well as the practices that made that space possible.<sup>189</sup>



UNESCO Map of World Heritage Sites, taken from: [whc.unesco.org/en/list/](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/)  
MAP KEY: yellow: cultural site, green: natural site, red: cultural or natural site in danger

<sup>189</sup> Tze M. Loo, “*Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise*”, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: Vol. 11, No. 3, 2010, 388.



During the conference, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, a member of UNESCO's International Council of Museums, made specific note of the distinctions posed by *tangible heritage* at the *Ise Shrines* as not being static “*things*”, compared to *intangible heritage*, which were seen as dynamic “*things*”, such as the “*living culture of knowledge, skills, and values*”.<sup>190</sup> Due to the reframing of issues, differentiating between *tangible* and *intangible heritage*, there was a great reconsideration among conference participants as to the bias posed by a Western perspective on *authenticity*, in looking at other cultures. This bias is also very apparent when looking at the current World Heritage Site map, and the proliferation of sites that are in Europe, compared to the rest of the world (see image on previous page).

As a result of this reframing, the *Ise Shrines* came to be seen as a test case for alternative cultural points of view with regard to *authenticity* in various historical contexts, and as a conduit for communicating *authentic* historical and cultural contextual relationships that exist as constructs from “*the past to the present*.”<sup>191</sup> In essence, the shrines offered a renewed sense of *authenticity* that had not been previously considered. Unfortunately, despite the reframing and reconsideration of issues pertaining to *authenticity*, the *Ise Shrines* (as of 2014) have still not been recognized or listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.



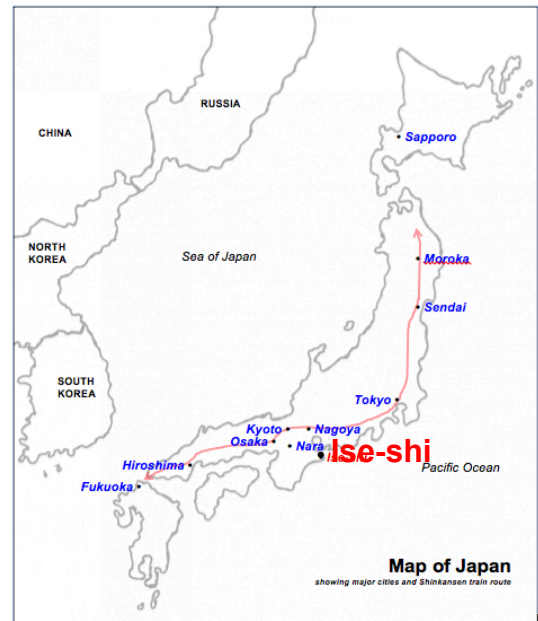
Logos for UNESCO and World Heritage Sites, taken from: [worldheritage.si.edu/en/](http://worldheritage.si.edu/en/)

<sup>190</sup> Tze M. Loo, “Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise”, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: Vol. 11, No. 3, 2010, 388.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

## The *Ise Shrines*, Ise-shi, and Tourism

As with the *Fantoft Stave Church*, many guidebooks also offer varying narrative accounts of the *Ise Shrines*, with descriptions that try to draw tourists and pilgrims to Ise-shi. The journey is not particularly easy from Tokyo, or any closer from cities such as Osaka and Kyoto. Deciding to visit the shrines in Ise-shi takes considerable effort for the common tourist, let alone for natives of Japan (if they are not in the vicinity).



Map of Japan, image created by the author

As Ise-shi is located away from the major north-south Shinkansen train lines, or tourist routes, the trip is out of the way for most tourists and often requires a change of transport, or two, to slower and more local options. Furthermore, to most Westerners, initial travel to Japan after the war was geared towards well-known sights and major sightseeing destinations, with the Shinkansen high-speed train line targeting only major metropolitan areas.

Sharon Bohn Gmelch, in “*Tourists and Tourism: A Reader*”, offers some perspective on the nature of tourism in Japan:

In the 1960s and 1970s, international tourism was basically geared to sightseeing... [where] sightseers wanted to not just experience foreign cultures, but also to compare them with their own.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>192</sup> Sharon Bohn Gmelch, *Tourists and Tourism: A Reader*, (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press), 2004, 112.

With the lack of international tourism to Ise-shi, apart from pilgrims, many guidebooks have tried to entice foreign visitors with varying narrative of the shrines and their natural context. A local tourist brochure offers an enticing description as follows:

**Jingu (Ise Grand Shrine): Naiku (Kotaijingu)**

Naiku or the Kotaijingu is dedicated to Amaterasu-omikami the ancestral Goddess of the Imperial Family and holds the most honored place among all the shrines in Japan. The Main Shrine is located in along the Isuzugawa River, deep in a 13,600 acre-forest full of ancient cedar and cypress trees. A feeling of holiness surrounds the solemn atmosphere as one strolls the pebble stone approach to the Main Shrine. The architectural style of the Main Shrine is known as Yuiitsu Shinmeizukuri or the “Unique Deity” construction.

**Jingu (Ise Grand Shrine): Geku (Toyoyuke Daijingu)**

Geku or the Toyoyuke Daijingu is dedicated to Toyoukeno-omikami, Goddess of Agriculture and Industry. She is also the guardian of Amaterasu-omikami’s food offerings. Located in a deep forest of ancient trees, Geku is said to date from 478 AD.<sup>193</sup>

“*Baedeker’s: Japan*“, from as early as 1983, offers a somewhat similar description, as follows:

To the S of the town are the \*\* **Great Shrines of Ise**, set among magnificent trees.

HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE – The two shrines, the Outer Shrine (Geku) and the Inner Shrine (Naiku), are some 3 miles/5 km from one another. They were originally erected on other sites and later transferred to their present positions. The Geku is believed to have been built at Manai (historical province of Tamba, now Kyoto prefecture) and moved to Ise in 478, during the reign of Emperor Yuryaku (457-479). The Naiku was originally part of the Imperial Palace; in the time of the Emperor Sujin (3<sup>rd</sup> c.), or perhaps later, it was moved to Kasanui (Yamato province) and subsequently transferred to its present site. The same priest serves both shrines; originally a sister of [Emperor] Tenno was priestess here.

The shrines... in Ise still attract great numbers of pilgrims. Foreign visitors should behave with proper reverence and should observe the ban on photography.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, *Ise City*, (Ise-shi, Japan: Ise Tourist Information Center), 2012.

<sup>194</sup> Alec Court, editor, *Baedeker’s: Japan*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall), 1983, 145.

An interesting cultural note, towards the end of the description, is the warning on behavior to foreign tourists with regard to photographic etiquette, out of respect for the pilgrims.

The “*Globetrotter Travel Guide: Japan*“, offers an equally promising description as follows:

Ise is the home of Amaterasu, the sun goddess. The **Naiku** (Inner Shrine), established in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, houses Amaterasu’s mirror (one of the three sacred imperial regalia). The **Geku** (Outer Shrine), 6km (3.7 miles) away, is dedicated to the kami of food.

Though the shrine grounds are atmospheric, the Naiku in particular flirts tantalizingly behind several layers of fencing, showing off only her roof and the odd beam. Mortals are not allowed to get any closer to Amaterasu’s residence, which makes this a pleasant, but not entirely satisfying outing.<sup>195</sup>

The difference with this entry is that behind all the flowery descriptive words, it questions the worth of traveling off the beaten path, as it may not be an “*entirely satisfying outing*.”<sup>196</sup> The last sentence becomes an emotionally conflicting conclusion to an otherwise interesting and worthwhile destination.

Unfortunately, even the most comprehensive of travel guides, published by Dorling Kindersley, only offers a brief entry on the *Ise Shrines*, in “*DK Eyewitness Travel Guide: Japan*“, and only as part of a tour of the Ise peninsula and the surrounding sites.

### **Ise Peninsula Tour**

The city of Ise, its Grand Shrine – the most sacred in Japan – and the Ise-Shima National Park are the main tourist attractions of this peninsula. Its jagged, indented coast, the center of cultured oyster pearl production in Japan, is in striking contrast to the undulating evergreen-clad hills inland, which are the habitat of monkeys, wild boars, and flying squirrels.

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<sup>195</sup> Sue Thompson, *Globetrotter Travel Guide: Japan*, (London, UK: Globe Pequot Press), 2004, 91-92.

<sup>196</sup> Alec Court, editor, *Baedeker’s: Japan*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall), 1983, 145.

## Ise Shrines ①

Reconstructed every 20 years in accordance with Shinto principles of purity and renewal, Ise's shrines are in two main groups: the Geku (outer shrine) and Naiku (inner shrine).<sup>197</sup>

From a social constructionist point-of-view, the *Ise Shrines* represent all of the perspectives described in the guides above, and much more. As was the case with the travel descriptions of the *Fantoft Stave Church*, the diversity of voices is also very apparent from this small sampling. No singular narrative offers a definitive or absolute perspective on visiting the shrines. None have an unconditional hold on what is true or *authentic* at the site; with the listings of each guidebook presenting insights for varied interests and approaches, for multiple perspectives.



*Ise Peninsula Tour, taken from: DK Eyewitness Travel Guide: Japan, 2011.*

A major aspect of tourism related to the *Ise Shrines* is obviously for religious purposes, as the shrines are the most revered in the Shinto tradition. Many visit the shrines following strict reverential Shinto practices. Some visit for daily prayers, weddings, or just quiet contemplation. For many, there is a practice of documenting their shrine visits (and Buddhist temple visits) by means of a *Shu In Cho* (朱印帖) book, literally the red stamp book. It is a blank book that is stamped and officially scribed by shrine monks or priests, with each visit on a separate page, in a ritualistic



*Yukiko Tsuji displaying her Shu In Cho book, 2012, photo by author*

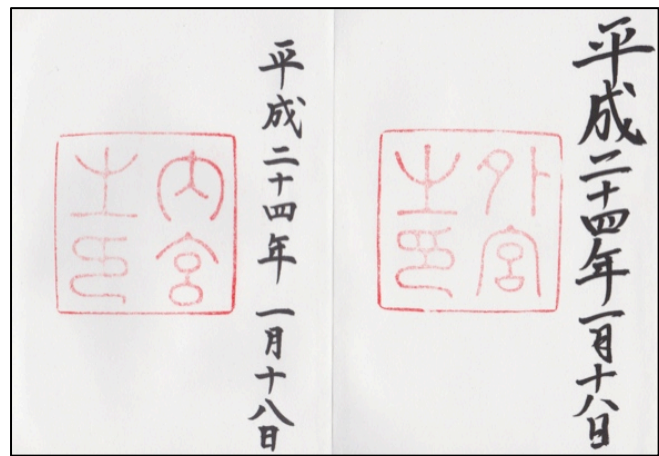
<sup>197</sup> Rosalyn Thiro, editor, *DK Eyewitness Travel Guide: Japan*, (London, UK: Dorling Kindersley), 2011, 198.

exchange that costs about 300 Yen (about \$3.50 USD, in 2102). Each acquired stamp involves visiting the scribe office, and requesting a red imprint of the official shrine seal, along with a calligraphic inscription in brush pen of the temple's signature. Afterwards, the scribe will then place a small piece of paper between each stamp to blot the excess ink. Sometimes these blotter sheets have blessings or information on the shrine.

Another aspect of the *Shu In Cho* practice is from an aesthetic perspective. Each stamp carries with it the personality of both the scribe and the shrine. When compared to other shrine stamps and signatures, the *Ise Shrine's* pages are quite plain and simple, evoking the nature and spirit of the shrines in their minimalism and simplicity of architectural forms.



**A shrine scribe stamping and inscribing a *Shu In Cho* book, 2012, photo by author (note the bold ink characters)**



***Shu In Cho* book of the author and stamps for the Ise Shrines, 2012, photo by author (note the plain and simple ink characters)**

While not required to visit a shrine, many Japanese still carry their *Shu In Cho* books with them, so as to be ready at the next instance of a visit. The practice represents a personal dialogue with scribes and priests, apart from the typical religious reasons for visiting the shrines. It also allows those waiting in line at the scribe office, a chance to meet and talk with other visitors about their experiences in a public forum.



Most, if not all in line, are Japanese, with many foreign visitors unaware of the very intimate ritual exchange.

However, unresolved from a tourism point of view, is the fact that the *Ise Shrines* are still not a destination for the majority of foreign visitors coming to Japan, due in part to multiple transportation modes and its geographic remoteness, away from the Shinkansen train lines.

Further answers can perhaps be drawn out from the site interviews that follow, and in comparison to similarly reconstructed buildings in other countries, as documented in previous discussions.



*Ise Shrines, Geku, secondary shrine structure, Ise-shi, Japan, photo by author*

### ***Ise Shrines: Interviews***

To promote further discussion on issues of *authenticity*, *invented tradition*, and social constructionism relative to architecture, I conducted several interviews (both in person and online), with regard to the *Ise Shrines*. I chose the following interviews, from a larger amount of participants, due to the diversity of intriguing stories, narratives, backgrounds, and interests. The interviews were as follows:

**Chizuru**, Travel Industry, Kobe, Japan

**Yuichi**, Ise-shi, Japan

**Mike**, Scientific Researcher, Mie Prefecture, Japan

**Shoichiro “Susuke” Hattori**, Photographer, Tokyo, Japan

**Kenjiro Tsuji**, International Student Officer, Rikkyo University, Tokyo, Japan

Here is the abridged text, from a selection of interviews, of what was discussed:

### Interview 1, Recording 1:

**Chizuru**, Travel Industry, Kobe, Japan

C: The first time I visited Ise was for the school trip at 6th grade, then I visited there two years ago because my friend from Finland wanted to go.

RA: To you, how are the *Ise Shrines* perceived in Japanese culture and traditions, and in history?

C: People might visit temples for [just the] buildings, but I don't think people visit shrines for [just the] buildings. It is not 100% for religious reasons either, but maybe 50%, and it is also a part of our custom. Now days, people believe in spiritual power at places like shrines. It can be a reason, too. In fact, I feel being purified [when I am] there.

RA: I am interested in the connections buildings and people have; the stories you, your friends, and family members might have about buildings and places. I am also interested in how we decide if something is original or *authentic*. (We discuss the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony and its rebuilding period).

C: One of [my friends'] parents are from Ise and goes to *Ise Shrines* every New Year's Day. People go to shrines because it is where the gods live. They visit shrines to pray, ask for... wishes, or to thank... the gods. And the *Ise Shrines* are the top of all shrines in Japan. I think it doesn't matter if the building is new or old. The gods may... feel better to live in newer house. However, the gods in Japan don't have real religious meaning, more [of a] day-to-day spiritual belief. They say the family of [the] Japanese Emperor [are] descended of the gods. It is more like a mythological story. Anyway, whatever the *Ise Shrines* building is, it doesn't make any difference.

*My reflections on the interview:*

Though it was a short interview, what was interesting about my conversation with Chizuru, was her enthusiasm for having visited the shrines and also in meeting a



foreigner who was also interested in the shrines. She was also able to convey a sense of the societal traditions, associated with the shrines, and how they affected her own life, in terms of “*being purified*”. However, for her, a visit to the shrines is not only for religious reasons, but also for developing an awareness of the spiritual power associated with its setting, and not just the buildings.

With regard to the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony and the gods, her parallel analogy of the gods wanting a new home, much like any one else would, seemed to be a pretty obvious connection for her, and pointed to a distinct cultural common understanding of the temporariness of religious home. Overall, she was having fun with conversing in English, but she was quick to point out the lack of devout religious relevance (especially with the framing of certain Imperial historical narratives as mythology), though the gods were still important, in current society, as a spiritual practice.

## **Interview 2, Recording 3:**

***Yuichi***, Student, Ise-shi, Japan

RA: How many times have you been to the *Ise Shrines*?

Y: I have been several times. I went to *Ise Shrines* two weeks ago. There were many people around there, because this year [2013] is a special year in *Ise Shrines*. I know about *Ise Shrines* a little bit, but I think it is difficult to explain in English.

RA: That’s OK. Would you be able to speak more about your visit, and your experiences there? I would be very interested in your visit.

Y: OK. I went to *Ise Shrines* by car, and parked near the parking lot. I got out of the car and walked to *Ise Shrines*. It took about 15 minutes from main entrance to main building. *Ise Shrines* are called spiritual places, and everyone who goes... there can get many powers and good things. Maybe you know about *Ise Shrines*, this year is a special year.

RA: Yes, but please tell me more in your own words.

Y: OK. Every twenty years, the two main buildings inside the *Ise Shrines* are rebuilt. Because building technique is complex and traditional architecture. So we have to succeed to this technique for the future. Any rebuilding is rebuilt according to the original design blueprints from over a thousand years ago. So I could see new *Ise Shrines*, but there is old *Ise Shrines* next to new one. But we can't enter the old one. I heard there are two main buildings until this year the old one will be demolished beginning of the next year.

RA: Are there any spiritual practices you do or like to do when you visit?

Y: Yes. I arrived the main building, and I throw a five Yen into an offertory box. After that I did two bows, two claps, one bow. This is a Japanese traditional rule.

RA: What did you do afterwards?

Y: After seeing *Ise Shrines*, I walked around *Okage Yokocho* [the recreated village outside the main entrance]. There are a lot of souvenirs; the most famous shop is Akafuku [the candy confectionary company]. We ate Akafuku Zenzai. Zenzai is sweet, thick bean soup with rice cakes or dumplings in it.

RA: That sounds very good.

*My reflections on the interview:*

Yuichi was very interested to contact me, being eager to practice English and especially wanted to talk about the *Ise Shrines*, because he is from Ise-shi. I also read a type of pride in his conversation in being able to talk about something geographically familiar.

His attention to detail was very important to me, as it helped reconnect me to memories and experiences I had when I visited in 2012. I personally remember the main ritual of bowing and clapping, after throwing a five Yen coin into the offering box. I also remember trying the Zenzai at *Okage Yokocho*, made by the Akafuku Confectionary Company, as well as the hand made mini-donuts from some of the shops. Much of this conversation triggered many olfactory memories for me, but at the same time it also allowed me to slip into memories of the architectural environment, from the feel of the dark wood at a table to the tiled roofs that shaded the shops.

### Interview 3, Recording 8:

**Mike**, Scientific Researcher, Mie Prefecture, Japan

RA: I am writing about architecture, personal experiences, and issues of *authenticity*. My... work is focused on issues of social construction, how we create dialogue and meaning in conversations related to architecture. I am comparing two buildings... the *Fantoft Stave Church* in Bergen, Norway, and the *Ise Shrines* in Ise-shi [Mie Prefecture]. The stave church was destroyed by arson in 1992, and rebuilt using the same materials, techniques, and craft. The same is true of the *Ise Shrines*, but the Norwegians don't treat the church as original and *authentic*, which I suspect is not the case with the *Ise Shrines*. So my question has more to do with how the *Ise Shrines* are perceived in Japanese culture and traditions, and in history. My inquiry is more sociological, as to perceptions and how we construct narratives around architecture and place, and what we perceive as original and *authentic*. How do you see the buildings at Ise? How do you perceive them, and do you have your own associations and memories attached to them?

M: Thank you for your interesting explanation. The comparison between Japan and Norway with specific examples made things clearer for me. There [are] several things that came to my mind but one main explanation about why [we] perceive [them as] *authentic* or not might be: In *Ise Shrines*, they periodically rebuild the shrines (every 20 years) with new materials. So, the shrines are perceived as *authentic* as long as the structures are retained even if the original materials are gone. The site does not change and the shrines forest remains as original, so it is not just shrine structure and buildings that give the Shinto shrines *authenticity*, but also the site itself, it seems [to contribute to that authenticity].

I guess the image of *Ise Shrines* is associated with other images and concepts of Japan, in [the] Japanese mind. Such as Japanese natural environment (perceiving long lasting old trees as sacred entity etc.), and the shrine is [also] associated with purity or purging impurity. I guess, Shinto shrines are associated with national identity, image, [and] tradition to some extent, but I am not sure how significant or important to people [it is] these days. Many, [or rather] some, still at least go to [the] *Ise Shrines* on the first day of the year for wishing and praying for a good year etc., I guess.

An interesting comparative [or counter] example might be [Buddhist] temples in Japan, as they seem to retain original building materials much longer than the Shinto shrines. They renovate parts of them but probably try to maintain as much old original materials as possible.

By the way, about the *Fantoft Stave Church* in Bergen, Norway destroyed in 1992. I guess this old church has been standing there for a while, right? Perhaps it will become *authentic* in people's mind if it keeps standing there for a sufficiently long time.

*My reflections on the interview:*

Our online conversations (via conference calls) took place over the course of a few days. I found his conversation very rich and helpful.

I found his interpretation of the issue of *authenticity* to be interestingly reframed.

Mike states:

one main explanation about why [we] perceive [them as] *authentic* or not might be: In *Ise Shrines*, they periodically rebuild the shrines (every 20 years) with new materials. So, the shrines are perceived as *authentic* as long as the structures are retained even if the original materials are gone. The site does not change and the shrines forest remains as original, so it is not just shrine structure and buildings that give the Shinto shrines *authenticity*, but also the site itself, it seems [to contribute to that authenticity].<sup>198</sup>

The contextual component of the forest is very helpful in reminding me that the site environment is also the domain of the shrines. It is a symbiotic environment in that the *genius locus*, or *spirit of place*, is equally important in defining the full experience of the shrines.

I was also interested in his analogy of the weathering aspect of the materials used in the shrines compared to the context of everyday architecture. All buildings weather over time, with the materials being either repaired or replaced. As the *Ise Shrines* are commonly associated with the notions of rebirth and renewal (or as Mike puts it as “*purity*”), the Shinto tradition of the *Shikinen Sengu* ceremony fulfills the spiritual need to “*purge impurity*” in the rebuilding process, and gives new meaning to the common practice of repair and replacement in everyday architecture.

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<sup>198</sup> The quote references Mike’s online interviews (via conference calls).

#### Interview 4, Recording 12:

**Shoichiro “Susuke” Hattori**, Photographer, Tokyo, Japan

RA: I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me about the shrines. Have you been to the *Ise Shrines* before?

S: Yes, I have been to visit the *onsens* (Japanese hot springs). Did you see the new shrine?

RA: Yes, it is wrapped in white plastic, so it is covered. I took pictures of both the old and the new buildings, at all of the main shrines. That was very interesting to see. I saw a couple of smaller shrines, some of which had the adjacent empty land on one side, and the shrine on the other plot. So they have not done anything with those empty plots yet, as to rebuilding. I guess it takes a couple of years to work on the rebuilding.

S: Mmmm. Yes. The ceremony was held in October [2013]. Perhaps you could watch some videos of it?

RA: Yes, I hope to. May I ask, in terms of the shrines... it's a part of Japanese culture and tradition, and very important in the Shinto tradition... but, do you see them any differently, because of their rebuilding? Do you see them as not original, because of the new materials? What I mean to say is, that they are original, in terms of the tradition and the culture, but they are new buildings. Does that change how you think of them?

S: Mmmm. That's no problem [as] the important thing is where the god is. The *sengu* [rebuilding ceremony] is like building a new home for human beings. When we build a new home, family members don't change. A family continues in the new environment. The same is at Ise.

RA: Interesting. I had met a Japanese architect years ago, named Fumihiko Maki, and there was discussion about the fact that one of his older buildings [the Spiral Building] might be torn down at some point, due to the increasing density and land value of that Tokyo neighborhood. I was told that the lifespan of contemporary buildings in Tokyo lasts about 20 years, and that there is constant change in Tokyo. To an American, or perhaps even a European, that seems different because we build buildings to last a long time. It's very interesting that you have a tradition of having a short lifespan for buildings, and it is interesting that that is parallel, historically, to the short life-span of the buildings at Ise, and more specifically in the number of years, 20. Is there any insight, or thoughts, about that short lifespan?

S: As I know before, [it is] to teach the contractor... or carpenters, techniques to build shrines. Which is more important than the building, even today. They rebuild *Ise Shrines* not because they are old.

RA: Do you feel the need to visit Ise on your own?

S: No. I was just there on business.

RA: So, were the shrines important in your visits?

S: No, not the shrines, but the nature and the city. I also like the *onsen*.

RA: Do you know of any family or personal stories, remembrances, or experiences they might have had at the shrines?

S: Yes. When I was young, I went to the shrine with my parents. Ah yes... hmmm... the shrines are important to them.

RA: Do you remember any stories from your mother or father about their visit to the *Ise Shrines*?

S: No.

RA: What do the *Ise Shrines* mean to you? Artistic, social, historical... or something else?

S: Ahhh... something else. Japanese people have Shinto in their mind, in some way. It is a part of them all the time.

RA: Do you think that if Shintoism is with them all the time, do they think about the *Ise Shrines* in the same way too?

S: No, not at all.

RA: Did you learn about the *Ise Shrines* in school?

S: Yes.

RA: What do you learn about them?

S: There are some religions in the world, and Shinto is one of them. That's it.

RA: Did you learn anything about them, in terms of the art, architecture, or building of them?

S: Not much. They are based on old warehouse buildings.

RA: At what time in your education did you learn about this?

S: At an early age. Yes. And most of Japanese students go to Kyoto or Nara... ahhh... how do you say that... for school trip.

RA: So there are many kids that go to Ise for field trips?

S: Kyoto and Nara are more popular.

RA: Do you think older Japanese go to the shrines than younger Japanese?

S: Yes, older. I mean retired people go there more, I think. It has that association.

RA: Is that common, that people associate older and retired people with the *Ise Shrines*?

S: Yes I think so.

RA: Is that a stereotype?

S: Yes. Mmmm. Yes. Young Japanese like Western culture. Shrines are not as popular to young Japanese.

RA: Besides Western cultures, why do you think the *Ise Shrines* are not as popular or as important enough to young people.

S: Young. I do not say that Japanese culture is not important, but visiting shrines or temples is not active... just to look at, to read, or listen to someone's story. It's not active enough for them.

RA: Do the young think of the shrines as a museum?

S: As museum? Yes.

RA: So it does not have an importance in current active life?

S: No. Young people... I think young people tend to be active, to go abroad, enjoy sports, or summer recreations, having dates, having sex... (laughs). Generally, there is no interest in older buildings. Some people are interested in them, of course.

RA: Did you find the *Ise Shrines* interesting?

S: Interesting... hmm... now I am interested in Japanese history and religion and Imperial families. But when I was young I was not interested in it at all.

RA: The Imperial family has a strong connection to the *Ise Shrines*. Is that important in Japanese history to you and to other people?

S: Yes.

RA: Why?

S: Imperial family has been... playing an important role for Japanese traditional history.

RA: The Emperor can trace his history back to Amaterasu-omikami [the goddess associated with Ise]... sorry that I cannot pronounce that well. Do you believe the Emperor is directly descended from the gods?

S: No.. ahhh... no... no.

RA: But in history...

S: Yes. In history... it is mythology... no one believes it's true.

RA: Do you think people used to believe it was true?

S: I don't think so.

RA: Do you know of any other history stories, cultural references, or popular references to the *Ise Shrines*?

S: Do you know the "*Tale of Ise*" and the "*Tale of Genji*"?

RA: Yes, I have read those. I like the references to Ise in them. Do you know of any other references to music, opera, theater, or anything else?

S: Modern songs?

RA: Modern or old. Both. I was just wondering if it had any popular references, other than religious.

S: Yes, in folk songs.

RA: That's interesting. I appreciate the experiences you've mentioned. I only see these things from a Western perspective, and I am very appreciative to see and hear them through your own experiences, eyes, and memory. Because there may be things missing in my understanding and cultural reference that I may not be seeing or hearing about. (Discussion follows about the shrines and the connection to the Imperial family and WW II).

RA: Do you see the *Ise Shrines*, much like the role of the Emperor? Has its position changed over time, in terms of relevance or importance?

S: It changed. Do you mean in the past, in a hundred years?

RA: Yes.

S: After the war... it changed. But I think, from now on, the shrines... its importance will be higher, more important, I think.

RA: So, the United Nations has the organizations of UNESCO and the World Heritage Convention, which determines which buildings are important, culturally. So when the *Ise Shrines* applied to be a World Heritage Site, UNESCO denied their application, because they said that the *Ise Shrines* were not original, and that the wood was new and not old. However, the monks at the shrine who applied have argued that the recognized status of the shrines would not be for the original materials of the building but for the traditions, craft, and the people. That it is historically more important for its traditions, than the physical buildings.

S: I did not know that. Because of its materials?

RA: Yes, so UNESCO has had to redefine its understanding of original and *authentic*, because the *Ise Shrines* are about the people and its traditions, and not about the physical and temporal qualities of the materials, which seem to define what a World Heritage Site should be under UNESCO. There seems to be a Western bias involved in the decision as to what is original and *authentic*.

S: Yes... yes. People and traditions are more important than buildings.

RA: I agree too. I think UNESCO needs to re-look at their definitions. For example... buildings in Europe are often rebuilt. In the *Old Town* of Warsaw, in Poland, it was completely destroyed during WW II, and then rebuilt by the locals. Is it then old or new? It's really new. So UNESCO has listed Warsaw's *Old Town* as a World Heritage Site. I am not sure how that condition is different than the *Ise Shrines*. So, in this situation, if UNESCO says yes to Poland, then they must also say yes to Japan. I find that an interesting parallel, in a similar situation. What do you think?

S: World Heritage... I think.... a building that is completely rebuilt does not need to be registered or listed. Being registered is OK, but I think it doesn't need to be registered. If I was the manager of the *Ise Shrines* I would not ask UNESCO to register it. I don't care about the status or registration.

RA: But the *Ise Shrines* have been rebuilt for over a thousand years. Shouldn't UNESCO honor that ritual and practice?

S: It must not be UNESCO. I don't understand why UNESCO is so important.

RA: That's an interesting point of view that I have never thought about. Why do I put so much weight and power into how UNESCO defines original or *authentic* buildings? From your point of view, is there a registration practice in Japan, by the Japanese government, to protect historic buildings?

S: Ahhh... yes, yes, I think so. It is the national *Juyo-Bunkazai* [the Japanese government office for the protection of cultural property. Etymologically the word is from: 文 *bun*, "culture" and 化 *ka*, "change for the better"].



RA: Do you think the *Juyo-Bunkazai* is important?

S: I think some properties are important... very important.

RA: That's on a local or national level, where UNESCO is on an international level. Perhaps it is more important to have the national registration than international registration?

S: Yes. Local people should be responsible... more responsible, because it's their property.

RA: They should decide, and not an outside organization.

S: Yes... yes.

RA: I think that's very interesting for me to re-think that local recognition of buildings is perhaps more important than international recognition.

*My reflections on the interview:*

Shoichiro's conversation about the perceived temporariness of place was interesting. It came about in our discussion on transference and the home. It could be inferred that the continuity of a family to a new home was parallel to the goddess Amaterasu-omikami's transference embedded in the traditional ceremony between the old shrine and the new shrine; it became a representation of continuity of place.

A sense of place, or *genius loci*, as previously mentioned, even if it is temporary, speaks to a larger condition of humanity's place in the world. It is a reminder that nothing is permanent and very much in keeping with the *cycle of life* itself; it is also a key aspect of Shintoism. From a social constructionist point of view, the most interesting part of my conversation with Shoichiro was about how he reframed, for me, the relevance of UNESCO's World Heritage Site list in determining the significance of a building or site.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Just for clarification, this interview is not meant to be either an admonishment or an encouragement of the relevance of UNESCO's World Heritage Site listing, for it does provide many benefits, such as being a draw for tourists, notoriety, and international funding, all things that were considered by the shrines' administration.

While the administration and monks at the *Ise Shrines* saw fit to apply as a World Heritage Site, Shoichiro suggested that it wasn't important enough to pursue this status, and that it must be recognized internally and not externally. Local organizations, such as the *Juyo-Bunkazai* (the Japanese government office for the protection of cultural property) should take responsibility, as well as the local government in Ise-shi, where the shrines are located. The sense I was getting was that historic significance should be determined locally, and from within. This is similar to the personal state of *being* or *to be*, as described in many Zen practices of *being one* outside of oneself.

The local versus global dynamic reference also brings to mind the phrase "*think global, act local*"<sup>200</sup>, often attributed to the Scottish sociologist, town planner, and social activist, Patrick Geddes. Geddes, in his seminal work "*Cities in Evolution*", discusses the notion of *genius loci* as gestalt theory, in that environments must be:

in active sympathy with the essential and characteristic life of the place concerned.<sup>201</sup>

UNESCO's importance, to me, was again from a Western bias, much like the earlier discussion on the perceived supremacy of the Western Canon. This was not something I had realized was occurring in my research, or in the interviews, and something to make note of in future interviews. I felt that the self-reflective notion of this interview had a very important outcome, as I felt more personally connected and participatory in the co-creation of the dialogue in the interviews.

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<sup>200</sup> David Barash, *Peace and Conflict*, (New York City, NY: Sage Publications), 2002, 547.

<sup>201</sup> Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution*, (London, UK: Williams and Norgate), 1915, 397.

## Interview 5, Recording 73:

**Kenjiro Tsuji**, International Student Officer, Rikkyo University, Tokyo, Japan

RA: Do the Shrine's mean anything to you in terms of history, spirituality, or from a general perspective?

KT: Hmm... let me think, that's a big question that you started with. As a customary, as you know, many Japanese people visit certain Shinto shrines, on certain occasions, like the New Year, and people sometimes have their weddings there. They are also used for festivals, which are very rooted in the history and tradition of the community, like the big festival I have been participating in for the past few years, in Asakusa [a temple in the 6<sup>th</sup> District of Tokyo]. So, I kind of start with the meaning of the word spirituality, because we pay certain respects to Shinto shrines. I guess it may mean something to me. I don't think I really have a *faith* the same way people in the West do with Christianity, but yes, I think it has certain meaning. I think so because the Shinto shrines are associated with certain times of my life. I sort of acknowledge the existence of it, and I pay certain respects to it, so if you ask me if it means anything, it does mean something at a certain level of spirituality.

RA: When you pay respect, what does that mean personally to you? Do you see faith and respect on the same level? Because I remember going to the Hikawa Shrine, in Kawagoe, with your sister Yukiko, and I remember the ritual of bowing and clapping, which was very interesting to me, and I enjoyed partaking of it with both of you, but there has to be some personal connection to it for you. What is that respect or honoring for you personally, and not as a culture? Is it family history, connection, or connections?

KT: It is a customary thing to do. But for me personally... even though I don't call myself a religious person, I do acknowledge that the Shinto shrine is a sacred space, and I am paying respect to the sanctity of the space, even though I don't necessarily believe in Shinto. I do acknowledge that there is something sacred there, and I have to pay respect to it.

RA: Out of tradition and culture?

KT: Probably. I think part of it is that it is ingrained in my cultural background.

RA: In that respect, perhaps the parallel is my celebrating Christmas, but I don't have any religious beliefs around Christmas. It is more out of honor and respect for my family and our traditions. I am not particularly religious myself, but I remember having a discussion with you and your sister about my own religious beliefs, and that I don't have any particular religious beliefs, so maybe that's the parallel tradition.

KT: I really want to believe that society needs to have some form of sacred space, but it also may have something to do with nature itself, because Shinto is like *animism* [a belief that nature and natural phenomena possesses a spiritual essence], because part of the Shinto belief is always related to that. For example, if you go to a Shinto

shrine, and you see a tree, it is almost treated like a god. We see something sacred in everything. I think that has some part of it.

RA: So the *Ise Shrines* are rebuilt every twenty years, and this year [2013] is the year of the *Shikinen Sengu*. While it's not the original building, it is this ritual of rebirth and renewal for the gods. Does that perception change anything as to its *authenticity*, with regard to the logic of the new versus old and tradition?

KT: With the *Ise Shrines* there is a long tradition of dismantling and rebuilding the shrines, for centuries. Even though the building is dismantled and rebuilt each time, but it's part of the tradition, of customs, for centuries. So in that case, even though the building is new, I guess we respect the continuation of events throughout history.

RA: In that case, the cultural traditions are more important than the physical traditions.

KT: I think so. One does not distinguish between the physical and the traditions of a building. Building the new building is a tradition itself.

RA: So, UNESCO, under the United Nations, has a status or registration process for World Heritage Site designation. The monks at the *Ise Shrines* applied for protective international status in the 1990's, and UNESCO declined granting that status, as they felt there was nothing original with the buildings. So it comes down to this very interesting Western bias, in that the West puts a lot more weight on the physical qualities, whereas in Japan and perhaps in the rest of Asia, there is this transcendent position.

KT: If UNESCO is deciding the designation of World Heritage status, based on preservation of materials, then the *Ise Shrines* do not qualify, and I can understand that. But, if UNESCO can see the whole tradition itself as a cultural heritage, I think they need a separate category for that.

RA: UNESCO now allows that new category.

KT: OK, then probably places like the *Ise Shrines* or other shrines should apply for that category for the building status?

RA: They have not reapplied yet, but there is *Juyo-Bunkazai*...

KT: The Council on Cultural Articles?

RA: Yes. I thought it was very interesting that the monks at the *Ise Shrines* have now decided to not apply again to UNESCO, because it is covered under *Juyo-Bunkazai*. Is there a reason to apply to UNESCO again?

KT: Well, perhaps, because of the criteria for designation as cultural heritage. For example, I have just been to Salamanca, Spain, and they have a lot of original buildings and artwork. It's clear that those buildings have to be designated as a cultural heritage under the same rules, in order to protect them. So in that case, the *Ise Shrines* are new and rebuilt every 20 years, with nothing physical to protect.

RA: Yes, but there are many old churches and buildings in Europe that are rebuilt. For example, in Warsaw, Poland, the *Old Town* was completely destroyed during WW

It, and it was rebuilt, and UNESCO has designated it a World Heritage Site, but there's nothing original about it. There seems to be this double standard in its application in the West and the East.

KT: OK, I see, for example in Tokyo, the temple in Asakusa, was rebuilt too, and that was quite an old temple, destroyed during WW II, and rebuilt. So you are saying it should not be qualified. Ahhh, now I see what you are talking about.

RA: So in comparison, technically, most buildings over time are rebuilt. Little bits and pieces of an historic building are restored with new materials. So, over a thousand years, how much of a building is really original, versus a building that is rebuilt after a fire or tragedy. If the material is rebuilt little by little, or all at once, what is the difference?

KT: Oh, OK, so you are challenging the notion of what is considered Cultural Heritage and what it means to be *authentic*.

RA: Yes, but from a Western perspective. My goal is to challenge people's perceptions about recognition, about Western biases, about Western cultural designations, and to rethink and reframe our understanding of history. Not all history has to be physical. There's a way to look at things from a cultural and sociological perspective, that culture and people are recognized, not because of the physical nature of the buildings.

KT: It reminds me of a lot of sociologists who talk about what is collective culture. Is it considered a transcendence of collective memory or something like that? But on the other hand, UNESCO recognizes the buildings as something old. OK, UNESCO's distinction is now very confusing to me. I see the dilemma.

### *My reflections on the interview:*

I found Kenjiro Tsuji's conversation very illuminating and different from the other interviews, perhaps because he is a close personal friend (as well as my host and guide while I was in Japan) but also because I could speak more openly with him about the subject and ask more personal questions about his beliefs.



*Kenjiro Tsuji, in Nikko, Japan, 2012, photo by author*

Kenjiro's distinction between faith and the honoring and respect of traditions, was important to the discussion. It brought up the necessity of sacred architectural spaces, in society, regardless of one's religious or spiritual belief. To him, the *Ise Shrines*, as with similar types of Shinto spaces and buildings were reminders of traditions, in that architecture can act as a repository of collective memories, both personal and communal. It also brought to light the dilemma posed by UNESCO's classification system for determining World Heritage status.

The notion of cultural tangibility or intangibility, either through physical material presence or cultural traditions, was also of interest to Kenjiro. While noting a respect for historical continuity in UNESCO's classification system based on physical materials, he also realized the need for a new category that honored cultural traditions.

To counter the intangible issues posed by rebuilding the *Ise Shrines*, with new materials, he offered examples of art and architecture he had come across in Salamanca, Spain as more tangible to UNESCO due to their endangered and fragile state, and a stronger need for preservation. This proved to be an interesting distinction, for considering UNESCO World Heritage status for any building.

In comparison to the *Ise Shrines*, when Kenjiro considered the parallel example of *Old Town* in Warsaw, Poland, and its subsequent rebuilding after WW II, he acknowledged the continuing dilemma of where to establish the parameters and criteria for preservation classification. The confusion for Kenjiro, and for aspects of this written work, lay more in the seemingly arbitrariness of some UNESCO decisions in determining the World Heritage status of similar or related architectural sites.

## Conclusion

On the surface, the constant destruction and reconstruction of the *Ise Shrines* is a result of the need for material replacement and physical renewal of the buildings, in that they weather with time. The shrines also represent more of a moment of focused presence, of being in the moment, as evidenced by the experiences of the various visitors and pilgrims. This was clearly a place of contemplation, spiritual release, and cleansing, on so many levels, and as noted from the interviews as well.

The Shinto ritual of honoring the life cycle of rebirth and renewal in everyday practices is also extremely evident throughout Japan's history. The shrines are honored regardless of flaws and blemishes; they communicate a reflective way of life that addresses the condition of human frailty, shortcomings, and the need for self-acceptance.

The Japanese are not ignoring, nor are they distancing themselves from the complexities of the shrines' history, as is perhaps the case with some at the *Fantoff Stave Church*. Quite the opposite is happening with the *Ise Shrines*, in that the various constructed identities are working towards a self-accepted broader worldview and perspective with regard to the relativism of truth, originality, and what it means to be *authentic*.

Again, Tze M. Loo, in "*Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise*", addresses this alignment of the past and the present, with regard to a dynamic versus static construct of *authenticity*:

For many, Ise's buildings today are not merely copies of the original, but are, in a sense, the original buildings themselves, making them living embodiments of a deep past.<sup>202</sup>

Transcending the painful and complex historical narratives, the *Ise Shrines*, from an Eastern perspective, appear to be working towards reconciling a variety of these deeper wounds and joys into an experience layered with new memories of hope or optimism. In this respect, *authenticity* is experienced and conveyed at the shrines by an acknowledgement of the full context of its history, *both* good and bad, especially in the *Shikinen Sengu* rebuilding ceremony, and not as isolated and unrelated events.

George Verghese, in "*The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design*", discusses this transcendence of opposite positions, to a condition of inclusiveness, as follows:

The binary opposition... is... briefly described [as] the foundations of western metaphysics being based on the search for immutable laws that govern the universe that has led to western thought splitting the world into binary oppositions such as being versus nothingness... [and] by contrast [Asian] cultures, in particular the Japanese, have been uninterested in this dichotomy, as the search for universal laws was largely deemed as being of little importance. Japanese culture has evolved to be simultaneously heterogeneous and homogenous; and its seemingly contradictory, or more appropriately paradoxical, and complex approach to design stems from a number of well established factors, 'The Japanese have become a culture of 'both/and', wherein old and new, native and foreign, traditional and modern are complementary aspects of the same thing'.<sup>203</sup>

With regard to Japanese cultural ideas on honoring *both* the old and the new, Verghese compares the lack of permanence at the *Ise Shrines* (in the ceremonial tearing down of the old to be replaced by the new) with a similar condition apparent in the architecture of Tokyo, in that:

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<sup>202</sup> Tze M. Loo, "Escaping its Past: Recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: Vol. 11, No. 3, 2010, 376.

<sup>203</sup> George Verghese, "*The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design*", *IDEA Journal*: (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association Journal), 2003, 163.



High land prices in Tokyo make the ratio of building cost to land value among the lowest in the world, so that 30 percent of central Tokyo's urban fabric is replaced annually. In Japan, craftsmanship is valued more than uniqueness and antiquity in an object. The *sengu* is also a factor: "Japanese architecture and urbanism, in the tradition of 'ritual' building and rebuilding, constitutes a culture of making-and-remaking, rather than that of making-and-holding"... [in that the] cycles of rebuilding reconcile impermanence with continuity: "ephemerality... can paradoxically yield lasting or enduring achievements."<sup>204</sup>

This transcendent distinction is, perhaps, key in reframing the notion of *authenticity*, as an *authenticity* of renewal that has often been biased by a Western predilection towards physical form over the phenomenological connectedness of experiences. The weight given toward honoring alternative narrative perspectives thus allows for a greater understanding and appreciation of the broader experiences discussed.

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<sup>204</sup> George Vergheze, "The Way of the Detail in Japanese Design", *IDEA Journal*: (Interior Design/Interior Architecture Educators Association Journal), 2003, 80-81.



## Concluding Discussion

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[T]here really is no such thing as authenticity, not in the way it needs to exist.... Authenticity is a way of talking about things in the world, a way of making judgments, staking claims, and expressing preferences about our relationships to one another, to the world and to things.<sup>205</sup>

- Andrew Potter

In the study of architecture, or perhaps any other field, *authenticity* is impossible to specifically determine and define, due to the diverse range of issues and perspectives that are explored in relation to its context. Many conversations and relationships, in dialogue with people, the landscape, cultures, traditions, and a whole host of other contexts, offer varying degrees of co-created interactions, in crafting the experiences of what we perceive to be *authentic* architecture.

In this research, differing interpretations of architectural *authenticity* were addressed by examples that demonstrated a variety of interpretations and

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<sup>205</sup> Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax*, (New York City, NY: Harper Collins), 2010, 13.

considerations, both tangible and intangible. Highlights, of those architectural examples, demonstrated *authenticity* through the use of grand narratives (such as the Western Canon and Vitruvian origin myths), appropriation versus plagiarism (as discovered in the work of Antonin Nechodoma, the forged artwork of van Meegeren, and the copy-cat cities of China), nostalgia (as discussed in the national romantic eras creation of open-air architecture museums in Scandinavia and revival styles in Norway), phenomenology (as addressed by Christian Norberg-Schulz), “truthiness” and reality (as humorously considered by Stephen Colbert), and invented traditions (as interpreted by Eric Hobsbawm, the *Paul Revere House*, *Colonial Williamsburg*, *Old Town Warsaw*, and *Okage Yokochō*), to name just a few of the explorations.

In a more targeted survey of individual visitors, *authenticity* was also explored in the multiple narrative perspectives investigated and experienced at the *Fantoft Stave Church*, in Bergen, Norway, and at the *Ise Shrines*, in Ise-shi, Japan. The interviews conducted only offered hints as to the full breadth of issues associated with *authenticity*, and provided only a sampling of individual voices in a collective chorus of observations.

From a social constructionist perspective, *authentic* architectural spaces (as determined by a variety of influences and considerations) are therefore co-created by its context relative to other conditions and issues. Tandy D. Chalmers, in “*Advertising Authenticity: Resonating Replications of Real Life*”, confirms just this notion, in that:

experiences of authenticity are co-created through the interaction of the authentic object and the person experiencing that object<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Tandy D. Chalmers, “Advertising Authenticity: Resonating Replications of Real Life”, *European Advances in Consumer Research*, Volume 8, 2008, 442.

Relativism, subjectivity, context, experience, and perspective are all elements that come to challenge and change our relationship with *authentic* architectural experiences. Therefore, it is important to avoid any definitive definition of architectural *authenticity*, even though many have attempted to define it in such a precise manner. For example, Andrew Potter, in “*The Authenticity Hoax*”, carefully dances around any such specific pronouncement:

there really is no such thing as authenticity, not in the way it needs to exist.... Authenticity is a way of talking about things in the world, a way of making judgments, staking claims, and expressing preferences about our relationships to one another, to the world and to things.<sup>207</sup>

*Authenticity* is comprised of all of these notions, and more. It would be almost impossible to catalogue the number of multiple narratives that contribute to the creation and definition of *authentic* architectural spaces.

Chalmers, again, elaborates on any attempt at defining *authenticity*:

While a concise and broadly accepted definition of authenticity is not readily accessible, authenticity is conceptualized in fairly consistent ways: authenticity is usually based on being historically grounded and/or rooted in traditional modes of production, being separate from the commercial, or being true to the self. [Various sources] build upon this base of authenticity and conceptualize two types of authenticity: indexical authenticity and iconic authenticity. Indexical authenticity refers to something that is believed to be the ‘the original’ or ‘the real thing.’ Iconic authenticity refers to something “whose physical manifestation resembles something that is indexically authentic”, thereby capturing the essence of something that is indexically authentic.<sup>208</sup>

The distinction between indexical (original or real) *authenticity* and iconic (resembled essence) *authenticity*, are just two of the main categorizations. In a simple analogy, the

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<sup>207</sup> Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax*, (New York City, NY: Harper Collins), 2010, 13.

<sup>208</sup> Tandy D. Chalmers, “Advertising Authenticity: Resonating Replications of Real Life”, *European Advances in Consumer Research*, Volume 8, 2008, 442.

story of “*The Velveteen Rabbit*”, by Margery Williams, offers a glimpse into the transcendent alternative view between both types of *authenticity*.

'Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.'

'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit.

'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.'

'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?'

'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen... because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.'<sup>209</sup>

It is with *understanding*, that we overcome the various perceptive biases attached to aesthetic judgments.

As both Chalmers and Potter concur, we could spend an infinite amount of time searching for the full range and scope of characteristics that go into this definition, and may still never come to a complete understanding. Andrew Potter, again, addresses this paradoxical situation:

When it comes to the modern search for authenticity, the irony is that the only way to find what we're really after might be to stop looking.<sup>210</sup>

It is precisely this self-reflective observation to “*stop looking*”, and to “*become*” as mentioned in “*The Velveteen Rabbit*”, that exposes one of the many conclusions drawn from the *Ise Shrines* and the eastern perspective of “*being*”. With the *Ise Shrines*, the Japanese place their own values upon the determination of what is “*real*” and *authentic*. In fact, it could be construed that the Japanese don't place as much importance on

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<sup>209</sup> Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit (or How Toys Become Real)*, (New York City, NY: Project Gutenberg eBook), 2004 (first published in 1922), 3.

<sup>210</sup> Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax*, (New York City, NY: Harper Collins), 2010, 271.

whether it is classified as either *authentic* or *inauthentic*. Gunila Jivén and Peter J. Larkham, in “*Sense of Place, Authenticity and Character: A Commentary*”, reaffirm this point precisely, in that:

it is society that places value on authenticity: to be authentic does not give a value per se; rather it should be understood as the condition of an object or a monument in relation to its specific qualities.<sup>211</sup>

Therefore, in a corollary comparison, the relativism of what is *authentic* or *inauthentic* cannot be forced upon the *Fantoft Stave Church* either, as each visitor brings to it their own experiences and impressions, thus allowing it to be defined on its own, in becoming *authentic*. The reframing of history, perception, and context is very important in determining this distinction. Andrea Borghini, in “*Philosophy of Authenticity*”, offers the following observation:

Authenticity is a virtue (in the Aristotelian sense) that is developed over time, through the cultivation of other traits... To be authentic means to discern how oneself has changed and to channel such a change into a direction that is in keeping with one's own history, values, passions, emotions, desires, and needs. There is no perfect choice here. Rather, as existentialists teach, to choose what's best to ourselves in any given moment is a *creative act*.<sup>212</sup>

While my initial goal was to understand how visitors might have felt about the qualities of *authenticity*, explored by the examples of both the *Fantoft Stave Church* and the *Ise Shrines*, the interviews also reframed my own perspective on the topic. People came to both sites with their own understandings and impressions of how the buildings might represent *authenticity*, but in dialogue their perceptions and narratives also came to change my own interpretations, in a newly co-created understanding. In fact, at the

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<sup>211</sup> Gunila Jivén and Peter J. Larkham, “*Sense of Place, Authenticity and Character: A Commentary*”, *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2003, 75.

<sup>212</sup> Andrea Borghini, “*How to be True to Yourself?*”, *Philosophy of Authenticity*, [philosophy.about.com/od/Philosophical-Theories-Ideas/a/Philosophy-Of-Authenticity.htm](http://philosophy.about.com/od/Philosophical-Theories-Ideas/a/Philosophy-Of-Authenticity.htm), (accessed on November 1, 2013).

*Fantoft Stave Church*, many visitors came around to seeing some (indexical) semblance of why it was more *authentic* than was initially thought, whereas at the *Ise Shrines* the visitors hadn't questioned its sense of *authenticity* in the first place. Neither building was classified as *authentic* or *inauthentic*. They just reflected the state of "*being*" as determined by their own contextually situated truths.

Overall, the exploration of the various issues surrounding *authenticity*, in architecture, from a social constructionist point of view has proven to be an extremely effective exercise in diversifying the contributing voices, overlapping layers, and outcomes, in resituating the contextual truths of architectural spaces. It is my hope that the various perceptions and perspectives that this work has drawn upon, with regard to architectural space and issues of *authenticity*, will offer architects and historic preservationists the opportunity to continually challenge their assumptions and taken-for-granted beliefs and to begin to address alternative positions and perceptions beyond the conclusions offered by first impressions or as predetermined.

I wish to end with a quote taken from a paper given by David Lowenthal, at the 1994 *Nara Conference on Authenticity*, titled "*Changing Criteria of Authenticity*", which offers the following reflection:

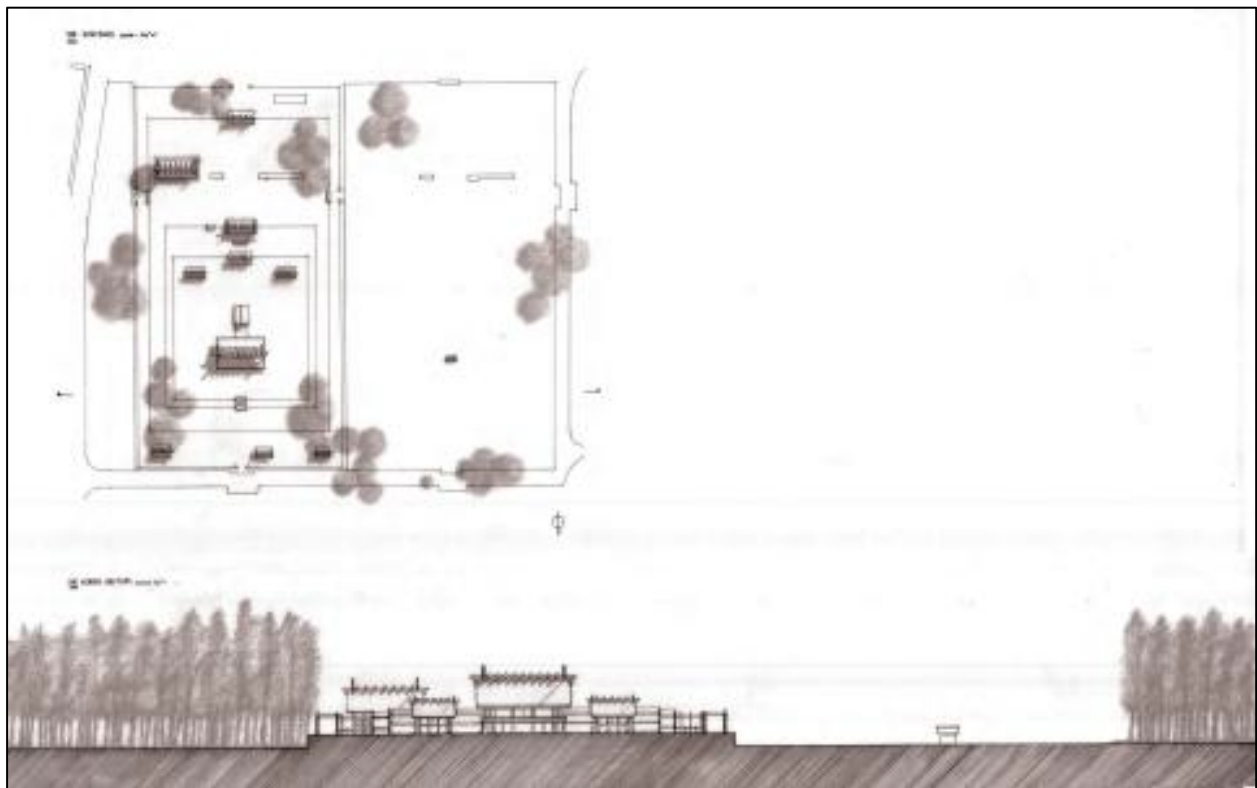
Authenticity is in practice, never absolute, always relative.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> David Lowenthal, "Changing Criteria of Authenticity", in *Nara Conference on Authenticity*, (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and ICOMOS), 2008, 123.







*Ise Shrines: Plan and Elevation*, taken from: Wabi-Sabi, [www.studioish.net/category/school-ish](http://www.studioish.net/category/school-ish), (accessed on April 5, 2012)

# Appendix I

## *The Venice Charter*

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### **INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS AND SITES (THE VENICE CHARTER 1964)**

***11nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice, 1964.***

***Adopted by ICOMOS in 1965.***

**Imbued with a message from the past**, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.

It is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.

By defining these basic principles for the first time, the Athens Charter of 1931 contributed towards the development of an extensive international movement which has

assumed concrete form in national documents, in the work of ICOM and UNESCO and in the establishment by the latter of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property. Increasing awareness and critical study have been brought to bear on problems which have continually become more complex and varied; now the time has come to examine the Charter afresh in order to make a thorough study of the principles involved and to enlarge its scope in a new document.

Accordingly, the II<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, which met in Venice from May 25<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> 1964, approved the following text:

## DEFINITIONS

### **Article 1.**

The concept of a historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or a historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time.

### **Article 2.**

The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.

### **Article 3.**

The intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence.

## CONSERVATION

### **Article 4.**

It is essential to the conservation of monuments that they be maintained on a permanent basis.

### **Article 5.**

The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable but it must not change the layout or decoration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted.

### **Article 6.**

The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale.

Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and colour must be allowed.

**Article 7.**

A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interest of paramount importance.

**Article 8.**

Items of sculpture, painting or decoration which form an integral part of a monument may only be removed from it if this is the sole means of ensuring their preservation.

RESTORATION

**Article 9.**

The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.

**Article 10.**

Where traditional techniques prove inadequate, the consolidation of a monument can be achieved by the use of any modern technique for conservation and construction, the efficacy of which has been shown by scientific data and proved by experience.

**Article 11.**

The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration. When a building includes the superimposed work of different periods, the revealing of the underlying state can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and when what is removed is of little interest and the material which is brought to light is of great historical, archaeological or aesthetic value, and its state of preservation good enough to justify the action. Evaluation of the importance of the elements involved and the decision as to what may be destroyed cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.

**Article 12.**

Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.

**Article 13.**

Additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting

parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings.

## HISTORIC SITES

### **Article 14.**

The sites of monuments must be the object of special care in order to safeguard their integrity and ensure that they are cleared and presented in a seemly manner. The work of conservation and restoration carried out in such places should be inspired by the principles set forth in the foregoing articles.

## EXCAVATIONS

### **Article 15.**

Excavations should be carried out in accordance with scientific standards and the recommendation defining international principles to be applied in the case of archaeological excavation adopted by UNESCO in 1956.

Ruins must be maintained and measures necessary for the permanent conservation and protection of architectural features and of objects discovered must be taken.

Furthermore, every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning.

All reconstruction work should however be ruled out "*a priori*". Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form.

## PUBLICATION

### **Article 16.**

In all works of preservation, restoration or excavation, there should always be precise documentation in the form of analytical and critical reports, illustrated with drawings and photographs. Every stage of the work of clearing, consolidation, rearrangement and integration, as well as technical and formal features identified during the course of the work, should be included. This record should be placed in the archives of a public institution and made available to research workers. It is recommended that the report should be published.

*The following persons took part in the work of the Committee for drafting the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments:*

Piero Gazzola (Italy)  
Chairman Raymond Lemaire (Belgium)  
Reporter José Bassegoda-Nonell (Spain)  
Luis Benavente (Portugal)  
Djurdje Boskovic (Yugoslavia)  
Hiroshi Daifuku (UNESCO)  
P.L. de Vrieze (Netherlands)  
Harald Langberg (Denmark)  
Mario Matteucci (Italy)  
Jean Merlet (France)  
Carlos Flores Marini (Mexico)  
Roberto Pane (Italy)  
S.C.J. Pavel (Czechoslovakia)  
Paul Philippot (ICCROM)  
Victor Pimentel (Peru)  
Harold Plenderleith (ICCROM)  
Deoclecio Redig de Campos (Vatican)  
Jean Sonnier (France)  
Francois Sorlin (France)  
Eustathios Stikas (Greece)  
Gertrud Tripp (Austria)  
Jan Zachwatowicz (Poland)  
Mustafa S. Zbiss (Tunisia)



*Frauenkirche of Dresden, Germany, before, during, and after, taken from: Das Bundesarchiv, [www.bild.bundesarchi.de](http://www.bild.bundesarchi.de), (accessed on April 5, 2012)*



# Appendix II

## ***The Nara Document on Authenticity***

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### **THE NARA DOCUMENT ON AUTHENTICITY (1994)**

#### **PREAMBLE**

1. We, the experts assembled in Nara (Japan), wish to acknowledge the generous spirit and intellectual courage of the Japanese authorities in providing a timely forum in which we could challenge conventional thinking in the conservation field, and debate ways and means of broadening our horizons to bring greater respect for cultural and heritage diversity to conservation practice.
2. We also wish to acknowledge the value of the framework for discussion provided by the World Heritage Committee's desire to apply the test of authenticity in ways which accord full respect to the social and cultural values of all societies, in examining the outstanding universal value of cultural properties proposed for the World Heritage List.
3. The Nara Document on Authenticity is conceived in the spirit of the Charter of Venice, 1964, and builds on it and extends it in response to the expanding scope of cultural heritage concerns and interests in our contemporary world.
4. In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND HERITAGE DIVERSITY

- 5.** The diversity of cultures and heritage in our world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all humankind. The protection and enhancement of cultural and heritage diversity in our world should be actively promoted as an essential aspect of human development.
- 6.** Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space, and 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 acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties.
- 7.** 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.
- 8.** It is important to underline a fundamental principle of UNESCO, to the effect that the cultural heritage of each is the cultural heritage of all. Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it. However, in addition to these responsibilities, adherence to the international charters and conventions developed for conservation of cultural heritage also obliges consideration of the principles and responsibilities flowing from them. Balancing their own requirements with those of other cultural communities is, for each community, highly desirable, provided achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values.

## VALUES AND AUTHENTICITY

- 9.** Conservation of cultural heritage in all its forms and historical periods is rooted in the values attributed to the heritage. Our ability to understand these values depends, in part, on the degree to which information sources about these values may be understood as credible or truthful. Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning, is a requisite basis for assessing all aspects of authenticity.
- 10.** Authenticity, considered in this way and affirmed in the Charter of Venice, appears as the essential qualifying factor concerning values. The understanding of authenticity plays a fundamental role in all scientific studies of the cultural heritage, in conservation and restoration planning, as well as within the inscription procedures used for the World Heritage Convention and other cultural heritage inventories.
- 11.** All judgments about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgments of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage

properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.

**12.** Therefore, it is of the highest importance and urgency that, within each culture, recognition be accorded to the specific nature of its heritage values and the credibility and truthfulness of related information sources.

**13.** Depending on the nature of the cultural heritage, its cultural context, and its evolution through time, authenticity judgments may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information. Aspects of the sources may include 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. The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined.

## APPENDIX 1

Suggestions for follow-up (proposed by H. Stovel)

**1.** Respect for cultural and heritage diversity requires conscious efforts to avoid imposing mechanistic formulae or standardized procedures in attempting to define or determine authenticity of particular monuments and sites.

**2.** Efforts to determine authenticity in a manner respectful of cultures and heritage diversity requires approaches which encourage cultures to develop analytical processes and tools specific to their nature and needs. Such approaches may have several aspects in common:

- efforts to ensure assessment of authenticity involve multidisciplinary collaboration and the appropriate utilization of all available expertise and knowledge;
- efforts to ensure attributed values are truly representative of a culture and the diversity of its interests, in particular monuments and sites;
- efforts to document clearly the particular nature of authenticity for monuments and sites as a practical guide to future treatment and monitoring;
- efforts to update authenticity assessments in light of changing values and circumstances.

**3.** Particularly important are efforts to ensure that attributed values are respected, and that their determination includes efforts to build, as far as possible, a multidisciplinary and community consensus concerning these values.

**4.** Approaches should also build on and facilitate international co-operation among all those with an interest in conservation of cultural heritage, in order to improve global respect and understanding for the diverse expressions and values of each culture.

**5.** Continuation and extension of this dialogue to the various regions and cultures of the world is a prerequisite to increasing the practical value of consideration of authenticity in the conservation of the common heritage of humankind.

6. Increasing awareness within the public of this fundamental dimension of heritage is an absolute necessity in order to arrive at concrete measures for safeguarding the vestiges of the past. This means developing greater understanding of the values represented by the cultural properties themselves, as well as respecting the role such monuments and sites play in contemporary society.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Definitions**

**Conservation:** all efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement. (Cultural heritage is understood to include monuments, groups of buildings and sites of cultural value as defined in article one of the World Heritage Convention).

**Information sources:** all material, written, oral and figurative sources which make it possible to know the nature, specifications, meaning and history of the cultural heritage.

*The Nara Document on Authenticity was drafted by the 45 participants at the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, held at Nara, Japan, from 1-6 November 1994, at the invitation of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Government of Japan) and the Nara Prefecture. The Agency organized the Nara Conference in cooperation with UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS.*

*This final version of the Nara Document has been edited by the general rapporteurs of the Nara Conference, Mr. Raymond Lemaire and Mr. Herb Stovel.*

# Appendix III

## ***Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage***

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### ***Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)***

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization hereinafter referred to as UNESCO, meeting in Paris, from 29 September to 17 October 2003, at its 32nd session,

**Referring** to existing international human rights instruments, in particular to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,

**Considering** the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development, as underscored in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore of 1989, in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001, and in the Istanbul Declaration of 2002 adopted by the Third Round Table of Ministers of Culture,

**Considering** the deep-seated interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage,

**Recognizing** that the processes of globalization and social transformation, alongside the conditions they create for renewed dialogue among communities, also give rise, as does the phenomenon of intolerance, to grave threats of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular owing to a lack of resources for safeguarding such heritage,

**Being aware** of the universal will and the common concern to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of humanity,

**Recognizing** that communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of the intangible cultural heritage, thus helping to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity,

**Noting** the far-reaching impact of the activities of UNESCO in establishing normative instruments for the protection of the cultural heritage, in particular the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972,

**Noting further** that no binding multilateral instrument as yet exists for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage,

**Considering** that existing international agreements, recommendations and resolutions concerning the cultural and natural heritage need to be effectively enriched and supplemented by means of new provisions relating to the intangible cultural heritage,

**Considering** the need to build greater awareness, especially among the younger generations, of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage and of its safeguarding,

**Considering** that the international community should contribute, together with the States Parties to this Convention, to the safeguarding of such heritage in a spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance,

**Recalling** UNESCO's programmes relating to the intangible cultural heritage, in particular the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,

**Considering** the invaluable role of the intangible cultural heritage as a factor in bringing human beings closer together and ensuring exchange and understanding among them,

**Adopts** this Convention on this seventeenth day of October 2003.

## **I. General provisions**

### **Article 1 – Purposes of the Convention**

The purposes of this Convention are:

- (a) to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned;
- (c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof;
- (d) to provide for international cooperation and assistance.

### **Article 2 – Definitions**

For the purposes of this Convention,

1. The “intangible cultural heritage” means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.
2. The “intangible cultural heritage”, as defined in paragraph 1 above, is manifested inter alia in the following domains:
  - (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
  - (b) performing arts;
  - (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
  - (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
  - (e) traditional craftsmanship.
3. “Safeguarding” means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.
4. “States Parties” means States which are bound by this Convention and among which this Convention is in force.
5. This Convention applies mutatis mutandis to the territories referred to in Article 33, which become Parties to this Convention in accordance with the conditions set out in that Article. To that extent the expression “States Parties” also refers to such territories.

### **Article 3 – Relationship to other international instruments**

Nothing in this Convention may be interpreted as:

- (a) altering the status or diminishing the level of protection under the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of World Heritage properties with which an item of the intangible cultural heritage is directly associated; or
- (b) affecting the rights and obligations of States Parties deriving from any international instrument relating to intellectual property rights or to the use of biological and ecological resources to which they are parties.

## **II. Organs of the Convention**

#### **Article 4 – General Assembly of States Parties**

1. A General Assembly of the States Parties is hereby established, hereinafter referred to as “the General Assembly”. The General Assembly is the sovereign body of this Convention.
2. The General Assembly shall meet in ordinary session every two years. It may meet in extraordinary session if it so decides or at the request either of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage or of at least one-third of the States Parties.
3. The General Assembly shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure.

#### **Article 5 – Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**

1. An Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”, is hereby established within UNESCO. It shall be composed of representatives of 18 States Parties, elected by the States Parties meeting in General Assembly, once this Convention enters into force in accordance with Article 34.
2. The number of States Members of the Committee shall be increased to 24 once the number of the States Parties to the Convention reaches 50.

#### **Article 6 – Election and terms of office of States Members of the Committee**

1. The election of States Members of the Committee shall obey the principles of equitable geographical representation and rotation.
2. States Members of the Committee shall be elected for a term of four years by States Parties to the Convention meeting in General Assembly.
3. However, the term of office of half of the States Members of the Committee elected at the first election is limited to two years. These States shall be chosen by lot at the first election.
4. Every two years, the General Assembly shall renew half of the States Members of the Committee.
5. It shall also elect as many States Members of the Committee as required to fill vacancies.
6. A State Member of the Committee may not be elected for two consecutive terms.
7. States Members of the Committee shall choose as their representatives persons who are qualified in the various fields of the intangible cultural heritage.

#### **Article 7 – Functions of the Committee**

Without prejudice to other prerogatives granted to it by this Convention, the functions of the Committee shall be to:



- (a) promote the objectives of the Convention, and to encourage and monitor the implementation thereof;
- (b) provide guidance on best practices and make recommendations on measures for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage;
- (c) prepare and submit to the General Assembly for approval a draft plan for the use of the resources of the Fund, in accordance with Article 25;
- (d) seek means of increasing its resources, and to take the necessary measures to this end, in accordance with Article 25;
- (e) prepare and submit to the General Assembly for approval operational directives for the implementation of this Convention;
- (f) examine, in accordance with Article 29, the reports submitted by States Parties, and to summarize them for the General Assembly;
- (g) examine requests submitted by States Parties, and to decide thereon, in accordance with objective selection criteria to be established by the Committee and approved by the General Assembly for:
  - (i) inscription on the lists and proposals mentioned under Articles 16, 17 and 18;
  - (ii) the granting of international assistance in accordance with Article 22.

#### **Article 8 – Working methods of the Committee**

1. The Committee shall be answerable to the General Assembly. It shall report to it on all its activities and decisions.
2. The Committee shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure by a two-thirds majority of its Members.
3. The Committee may establish, on a temporary basis, whatever ad hoc consultative bodies it deems necessary to carry out its task.
4. The Committee may invite to its meetings any public or private bodies, as well as private persons, with recognized competence in the various fields of the intangible cultural heritage, in order to consult them on specific matters.

#### **Article 9 – Accreditation of advisory organizations**

1. The Committee shall propose to the General Assembly the accreditation of non-governmental organizations with recognized competence in the field of the intangible cultural heritage to act in an advisory capacity to the Committee.
2. The Committee shall also propose to the General Assembly the criteria for and modalities of such accreditation.

#### **Article 10 – The Secretariat**

1. The Committee shall be assisted by the UNESCO Secretariat.

2. The Secretariat shall prepare the documentation of the General Assembly and of the Committee, as well as the draft agenda of their meetings, and shall ensure the implementation of their decisions.

### **III. Safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage at the national level**

#### **Article 11 – Role of States Parties**

Each State Party shall:

- (a) take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory;
- (b) among the safeguarding measures referred to in Article 2, paragraph 3, identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations.

#### **Article 12 – Inventories**

- 1. To ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory. These inventories shall be regularly updated.
- 2. When each State Party periodically submits its report to the Committee, in accordance with Article 29, it shall provide relevant information on such inventories.

#### **Article 13 – Other measures for safeguarding**

To ensure the safeguarding, development and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, each State Party shall endeavour to:

- (a) adopt a general policy aimed at promoting the function of the intangible cultural heritage in society, and at integrating the safeguarding of such heritage into planning programmes;
- (b) designate or establish one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory;
- (c) foster scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, with a view to effective safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular the intangible cultural heritage in danger;
- (d) adopt appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures aimed at:
  - (i) fostering the creation or strengthening of institutions for training in the management of the intangible cultural heritage and the transmission of such heritage through forums and spaces intended for the performance or expression thereof;
  - (ii) ensuring access to the intangible cultural heritage while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage;

(iii) establishing documentation institutions for the intangible cultural heritage and facilitating access to them.

#### **Article 14 – Education, awareness-raising and capacity-building**

Each State Party shall endeavour, by all appropriate means, to:

- (a) ensure recognition of, respect for, and enhancement of the intangible cultural heritage in society, in particular through:
  - (i) educational, awareness-raising and information programmes, aimed at the general public, in particular young people;
  - (ii) specific educational and training programmes within the communities and groups concerned;
  - (iii) capacity-building activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular management and scientific research; and
  - (iv) non-formal means of transmitting knowledge;
- (b) keep the public informed of the dangers threatening such heritage, and of the activities carried out in pursuance of this Convention;
- (c) promote education for the protection of natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for expressing the intangible cultural heritage.

#### **Article 15 – Participation of communities, groups and individuals**

Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management.

### **IV. Safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage at the international level**

#### **Article 16 – Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

1. In order to ensure better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance, and to encourage dialogue which respects cultural diversity, the Committee, upon the proposal of the States Parties concerned, shall establish, keep up to date and publish a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
2. The Committee shall draw up and submit to the General Assembly for approval the criteria for the establishment, updating and publication of this Representative List.

#### **Article 17 – List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding**

1. With a view to taking appropriate safeguarding measures, the Committee shall establish, keep up to date and publish a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of

Urgent Safeguarding, and shall inscribe such heritage on the List at the request of the State Party concerned.

2. The Committee shall draw up and submit to the General Assembly for approval the criteria for the establishment, updating and publication of this List.

3. In cases of extreme urgency – the objective criteria of which shall be approved by the General Assembly upon the proposal of the Committee – the Committee may inscribe an item of the heritage concerned on the List mentioned in paragraph 1, in consultation with the State Party concerned.

### **Article 18 – Programmes, projects and activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage**

1. On the basis of proposals submitted by States Parties, and in accordance with criteria to be defined by the Committee and approved by the General Assembly, the Committee shall periodically select and promote national, subregional and regional programmes, projects and activities for the safeguarding of the heritage which it considers best reflect the principles and objectives of this Convention, taking into account the special needs of developing countries.

2. To this end, it shall receive, examine and approve requests for international assistance from States Parties for the preparation of such proposals.

3. The Committee shall accompany the implementation of such projects, programmes and activities by disseminating best practices using means to be determined by it.

## **V. International cooperation and assistance**

### **Article 19 – Cooperation**

1. For the purposes of this Convention, international cooperation includes, inter alia, the exchange of information and experience, joint initiatives, and the establishment of a mechanism of assistance to States Parties in their efforts to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage.

2. Without prejudice to the provisions of their national legislation and customary law and practices, the States Parties recognize that the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is of general interest to humanity, and to that end undertake to cooperate at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels.

### **Article 20 – Purposes of international assistance**

International assistance may be granted for the following purposes:

(a) the safeguarding of the heritage inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding;

(b) the preparation of inventories in the sense of Articles 11 and 12;

(c) support for programmes, projects and activities carried out at the national,

subregional and regional levels aimed at the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage;

(d) any other purpose the Committee may deem necessary.

#### **Article 21 – Forms of international assistance**

The assistance granted by the Committee to a State Party shall be governed by the operational directives foreseen in Article 7 and by the agreement referred to in Article 24, and may take the following forms:

- (a) studies concerning various aspects of safeguarding;
- (b) the provision of experts and practitioners;
- (c) the training of all necessary staff;
- (d) the elaboration of standard-setting and other measures;
- (e) the creation and operation of infrastructures;
- (f) the supply of equipment and know-how;
- (g) other forms of financial and technical assistance, including, where appropriate, the granting of low-interest loans and donations.

#### **Article 22 – Conditions governing international assistance**

1. The Committee shall establish the procedure for examining requests for international assistance, and shall specify what information shall be included in the requests, such as the measures envisaged and the interventions required, together with an assessment of their cost.
2. In emergencies, requests for assistance shall be examined by the Committee as a matter of priority.
3. In order to reach a decision, the Committee shall undertake such studies and consultations as it deems necessary.

#### **Article 23 – Requests for international assistance**

1. Each State Party may submit to the Committee a request for international assistance for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory.
2. Such a request may also be jointly submitted by two or more States Parties.
3. The request shall include the information stipulated in Article 22, paragraph 1, together with the necessary documentation.

#### **Article 24 – Role of beneficiary States Parties**

1. In conformity with the provisions of this Convention, the international assistance granted shall be regulated by means of an agreement between the beneficiary State Party and the Committee.

2. As a general rule, the beneficiary State Party shall, within the limits of its resources, share the cost of the safeguarding measures for which international assistance is provided.

3. The beneficiary State Party shall submit to the Committee a report on the use made of the assistance provided for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.

## **VI. Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund**

### **Article 25 – Nature and resources of the Fund**

1. A “Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage”, hereinafter referred to as “the Fund”, is hereby established.

2. The Fund shall consist of funds-in-trust established in accordance with the Financial Regulations of UNESCO.

3. The resources of the Fund shall consist of:

(a) contributions made by States Parties;

(b) funds appropriated for this purpose by the General Conference of UNESCO;

(c) contributions, gifts or bequests which may be made by:

(i) other States;

(ii) organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Development Programme, as well as other international organizations;

(iii) public or private bodies or individuals;

(d) any interest due on the resources of the Fund;

(e) funds raised through collections, and receipts from events organized for the benefit of the Fund;

(f) any other resources authorized by the Fund’s regulations, to be drawn up by the Committee.

4. The use of resources by the Committee shall be decided on the basis of guidelines laid down by the General Assembly.

5. The Committee may accept contributions and other forms of assistance for general and specific purposes relating to specific projects, provided that those projects have been approved by the Committee.

6. No political, economic or other conditions which are incompatible with the objectives of this Convention may be attached to contributions made to the Fund.

### **Article 26 – Contributions of States Parties to the Fund**

1. Without prejudice to any supplementary voluntary contribution, the States Parties to this Convention undertake to pay into the Fund, at least every two years, a contribution, the amount of which, in the form of a uniform percentage applicable to all States, shall be determined by the General Assembly. This decision of the General Assembly shall be taken by a majority of the States Parties present and voting which have not made the

declaration referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article. In no case shall the contribution of the State Party exceed 1% of its contribution to the regular budget of UNESCO.

2. However, each State referred to in Article 32 or in Article 33 of this Convention may declare, at the time of the deposit of its instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, that it shall not be bound by the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article.

3. A State Party to this Convention, which has made the declaration referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article, shall endeavour to withdraw the said declaration by notifying the Director-General of UNESCO. However, the withdrawal of the declaration shall not take effect in regard to the contribution due by the State until the date on which the subsequent session of the General Assembly opens.

4. In order to enable the Committee to plan its operations effectively, the contributions of States Parties to this Convention which have made the declaration referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article shall be paid on a regular basis, at least every two years, and should be as close as possible to the contributions they would have owed if they had been bound by the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article.

5. Any State Party to this Convention which is in arrears with the payment of its compulsory or voluntary contribution for the current year and the calendar year immediately preceding it shall not be eligible as a Member of the Committee; this provision shall not apply to the first election. The term of office of any such State, which is already a Member of the Committee, shall come to an end at the time of the elections provided for in Article 6 of this Convention.

### **Article 27 – Voluntary supplementary contributions to the Fund**

States Parties wishing to provide voluntary contributions in addition to those foreseen under Article 26 shall inform the Committee, as soon as possible, so as to enable it to plan its operations accordingly.

### **Article 28 – International fund-raising campaigns**

The States Parties shall, insofar as is possible, lend their support to international fund-raising campaigns organized for the benefit of the Fund under the auspices of UNESCO.

## **VII. Reports**

### **Article 29 – Reports by the States Parties**

The States Parties shall submit to the Committee, observing the forms and periodicity to be defined by the Committee, reports on the legislative, regulatory and other measures taken for the implementation of this Convention.

### **Article 30 – Reports by the Committee**

1. On the basis of its activities and the reports by States Parties referred to in Article 29, the Committee shall submit a report to the General Assembly at each of its sessions.
2. The report shall be brought to the attention of the General Conference of UNESCO.

### **VIII. Transitional clause**

#### **Article 31 – Relationship to the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity**

1. The Committee shall incorporate in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity the items proclaimed “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” before the entry into force of this Convention.
2. The incorporation of these items in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity shall in no way prejudice the criteria for future inscriptions decided upon in accordance with Article 16, paragraph 2.
3. No further Proclamation will be made after the entry into force of this Convention.

### **IX. Final clauses**

#### **Article 32 – Ratification, acceptance or approval**

1. This Convention shall be subject to ratification, acceptance or approval by States Members of UNESCO in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures.
2. The instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval shall be deposited with the Director-General of UNESCO.

#### **Article 33 – Accession**

1. This Convention shall be open to accession by all States not Members of UNESCO that are invited by the General Conference of UNESCO to accede to it.
2. This Convention shall also be open to accession by territories which enjoy full internal self-government recognized as such by the United Nations, but have not attained full independence in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), and which have competence over the matters governed by this Convention, including the competence to enter into treaties in respect of such matters.
3. The instrument of accession shall be deposited with the Director-General of UNESCO.

#### **Article 34 – Entry into force**

This Convention shall enter into force three months after the date of the deposit of the thirtieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, but only with respect to those States that have deposited their respective instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval, or accession on or before that date. It shall enter into force with respect to any other State Party three months after the deposit of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.



### **Article 35 – Federal or non-unitary constitutional systems**

The following provisions shall apply to States Parties which have a federal or non-unitary constitutional system:

(a) with regard to the provisions of this Convention, the implementation of which comes under the legal jurisdiction of the federal or central legislative power, the obligations of the federal or central government shall be the same as for those States Parties which are not federal States;

(b) with regard to the provisions of this Convention, the implementation of which comes under the jurisdiction of individual constituent States, countries, provinces or cantons which are not obliged by the constitutional system of the federation to take legislative measures, the federal government shall inform the competent authorities of such States, countries, provinces or cantons of the said provisions, with its recommendation for their adoption.

### **Article 36 – Denunciation**

1. Each State Party may denounce this Convention.
2. The denunciation shall be notified by an instrument in writing, deposited with the Director-General of UNESCO.
3. The denunciation shall take effect twelve months after the receipt of the instrument of denunciation. It shall in no way affect the financial obligations of the denouncing State Party until the date on which the withdrawal takes effect.

### **Article 37 – Depositary functions**

The Director-General of UNESCO, as the Depositary of this Convention, shall inform the States Members of the Organization, the States not Members of the Organization referred to in Article 33, as well as the United Nations, of the deposit of all the instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession provided for in Articles 32 and 33, and of the denunciations provided for in Article 36.

### **Article 38 – Amendments**

1. A State Party may, by written communication addressed to the Director-General, propose amendments to this Convention. The Director-General shall circulate such communication to all States Parties. If, within six months from the date of the circulation of the communication, not less than one half of the States Parties reply favourably to the request, the Director-General shall present such proposal to the next session of the General Assembly for discussion and possible adoption.
2. Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of States Parties present and voting.

3. Once adopted, amendments to this Convention shall be submitted for ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to the States Parties.
4. Amendments shall enter into force, but solely with respect to the States Parties that have ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to them, three months after the deposit of the instruments referred to in paragraph 3 of this Article by two-thirds of the States Parties. Thereafter, for each State Party that ratifies, accepts, approves or accedes to an amendment, the said amendment shall enter into force three months after the date of deposit by that State Party of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.
5. The procedure set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 shall not apply to amendments to Article 5 concerning the number of States Members of the Committee. These amendments shall enter into force at the time they are adopted.
6. A State which becomes a Party to this Convention after the entry into force of amendments in conformity with paragraph 4 of this Article shall, failing an expression of different intention, be considered:
  - (a) as a Party to this Convention as so amended; and
  - (b) as a Party to the unamended Convention in relation to any State Party not bound by the amendments.

#### **Article 39 – Authoritative texts**

This Convention has been drawn up in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, the six texts being equally authoritative.

#### **Article 40 – Registration**

In conformity with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, this Convention shall be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO.

DONE at Paris, this third day of November 2003, in two authentic copies bearing the signature of the President of the 32nd session of the General Conference and of the Director-General of UNESCO. These two copies shall be deposited in the archives of UNESCO. Certified true copies shall be delivered to all the States referred to in Articles 32 and 33, as well as to the United Nations.

# Bibliography

## ***Works Cited***

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Keep your heart clear and transparent, And you will never be bound.  
A single disturbed thought, though, Creates ten thousand distractions,  
Let myriad things captivate you, And you'll go further and further astray.<sup>214</sup>

- Ryokan Taigu

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<sup>214</sup> Larry Chang, editor, *Wisdom For the Soul: Five Millennia of Prescriptions for Spiritual Healing*, (Washington, DC: Gnosophia Publishers), 2006, 244.

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*Most importantly, a lengthy thank you to: Jim Vogel, whose patience, love, and support during this seemingly never ending period, and his understanding of my adventurous spirit, is always appreciated.*

*Much love to: Felix, Freia, and Lucky, my purring lumbar supports.*

*Dedication:* I dedicate this work to my grandmother, Borghild Anderson, who passed away on February 11, 2002. She instilled in me a sense of the past, the future, and an interest in my Norwegian heritage. She was my mother, teacher, confidante, and best friend. She is still missed, but always at my side in this process.



**Rob Anderson, feeding the deer in Nara, Japan.**





# Authenticity of Several Paintings Sold as Vermeers Is Questioned

AMSTERDAM, July 20 (AP)—The authenticity of several paintings introduced to the public as newly discovered works of Jan Vermeer, seventeenth century Dutch master, is in question and the case has become a national sensation in England.

Originally many of these paintings were introduced to the public by Hans Van Meegeren, modern Dutch painter. Soon after the liberation of the Netherlands Van Meegeren was arrested for collaboration with the Germans and is now in prison awaiting trial.

The press agency Anepaneta, which operates as a government mouthpiece, asserted a few days ago that Van Meegeren had made a statement that he himself painted the supposed Vermeers.

Anepaneta quoted Van Meegeren as saying he made 8,000,000 guilders (\$3,024,000 at present exchange rates) forging the pictures and bamboozling the art experts.

Netherlands newspapers today demanded an investigation.

Art experts say they are not convinced that the statements attributed to Van Meegeren are true.

The director of the Rotterdam Museum said the prisoner was a fantasist who had a grudge against museums and similar institutions. A painting restorer in The Hague said that if one of the disputed works which he transferred to new canvas recently, "Pilgrims to Emmaus," was indeed a forgery, then the painter must be considered a genius in that particular line.

"Pilgrims to Emmaus" was returned to the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam only Tuesday, along with other masterpieces from war-time storage in tunnels at Maastricht.

The Catholic daily newspaper

Volkskrant said that there were suspected Vermeers also in Germany, England and the United States.

The Amsterdamsch Dagblad said its editors "have at hand facts in detail" concerning the case which it would print as soon as a release was authorized by military intelligence.

Vermeer (1632-1675) rarely dated his pictures. Lemon yellow and blue mark all his works. He used the brush with strength and power in his early productions. Colors were bold. In his later years he adopted a second manner. His painting was smoother, thinner, softer. His works in public and private collections were listed at thirty-seven in 1939.

Volkskrant reproduced two paintings side by side today under the caption: "Painted by the Same Brush." One was the head of "Mother" by Van Meegeren. The other was the head of Christ in "Pilgrims to Emmaus."

Het Parool said it was in the national interest that the affair be "investigated to the depths and cleared up completely."

"If the rumors prove to be true," the newspaper said, "then the best experts and completely reputable persons have been the dupes of a deception which was fashioned with unparalleled skill and in which, besides the forger himself, many middlemen must have taken part."

The picture case is without precedent in Netherland law. What the penalty might be was not announced.

Van Meegeren and other major figures in the Netherlands charged with collaboration have yet to be brought to trial. He was among the first arrested by Dutch interior forces after the liberation.

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