

# G.R.H. Wright and the Restoration of Ancient Monuments

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**Abstract:** G.R.H. Wright worked in the Middle East and India on the restoration of ancient monuments during a period when principles for conservation and restoration practice established in Europe following the Second World War began to evolve to accommodate the needs of fast-developing Asia. The paper describes his experience as he learned on the job in the Middle East and tried to forge his way through the cultural complexities in India providing an early illustration of the issues that have come to the fore in recent years regarding authenticity as it relates to reconstruction.

## Introduction

Recent destruction of world heritage listed sites due to natural disasters and armed conflict has brought restoration and reconstruction issues to the forefront of concerns for the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in its capacity as advisor to UNESCO on World Heritage. There is an ongoing debate regarding permissibility and standards, particularly in relation to authenticity, raising the question: when and how can a destroyed world heritage site be reconstructed and still retain its Outstanding Universal Value?

The problem of destruction due to war is not new, and some countries, notably Poland had previously adopted wholesale reconstruction of bombed out historic centres after the Second World War. Previously concerns with ruined ancient monuments had been mostly to do with preserving sites for tourism purposes and a body of conservation and restoration practice had built up in Europe from which a philosophy and guidelines could be formulated. These were essentially based on the desire to preserve or recover the art-historical interest of the monument or site, and were particularly concerned with authenticity so reconstruction (involving the addition of new material) as distinct from preservation and restoration could be problematic.

The introduction of the *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (the *Venice Charter*) which developed out of the *Athens Charter* of 1931 and was adopted by ICOMOS in 1965, limited restoration to *anastylosis*, which means only the reassembly of existing but dismembered parts, and required that it must be based on precise and indisputable documentation (ICOMOS 1964). This charter was the product of the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments at Venice in 1964 and while expressing a purely European philosophy became universally influential.

There were obvious difficulties in applying the *Venice Charter* in places like Australia to historic urban centres

and Aboriginal sites, so in 1979 the Australian chapter of ICOMOS adopted its own *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance* (the *Burra Charter*). It has since been revised several times (Australia ICOMOS 2013).<sup>1</sup> This developed the concept of establishing first what was significant about a place, before deciding how it should be conserved. And the different aspects of conservation were clearly defined as including preservation, restoration and reconstruction.<sup>2</sup> The concept of establishing significance in a clear statement resonated elsewhere and subsequently evolved into the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value required for monuments and sites inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List (ICOMOS 2016: § 49-53, 154 & 155).

The G.R.H. Wright archive held by the Australian Institute of Archaeology (AIA) offers considerable scope for research into some contemporary field experience at the time of these developments. From the 1960s to the 1980s Wright carried out or made proposals for conservation and restoration works at Kalabsha in Egypt, the Mausoleum of Oljaytu in Iran, the Srirangam Temple and Rameswaram Temple in Tamil Nadu; the Amiri Palace, in Doha, Qatar; Meda'in Saleh in Saudi Arabia, and the Ma'rib Dam in Yemen (Davey 2013). In the process he developed his own approach to conservation and restoration on which he published several articles including the entry for the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Near East* (1997).

George Roy Haslam Wright (1924–2014) was not trained in conservation and restoration when he began working on the restoration of monuments. After serving in the RAAF during the Second World War he completed a BA in History at the University of Western Australia in 1947 followed by an LLB in 1949. He then worked as a site surveyor on various archaeological excavations during the 1950s until 1958-9 when he completed the Certificate of Architecture course at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University of London. He subsequently joined the British School of Archaeology's excavations at Petra later in 1959 (Davey 2013: 37-41).

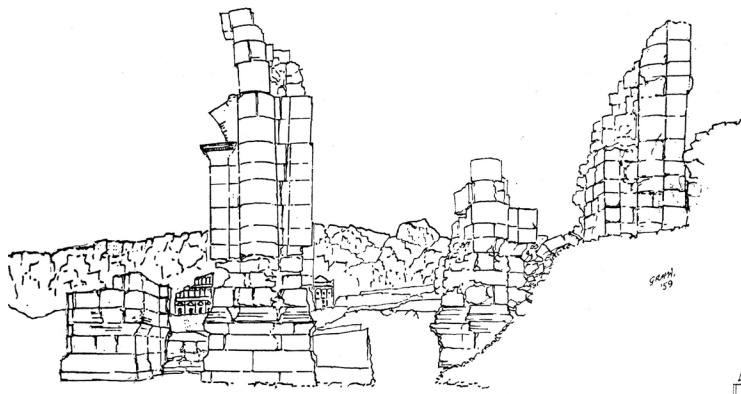


Fig. 1. West Façade at Beginning of Work in 1959.

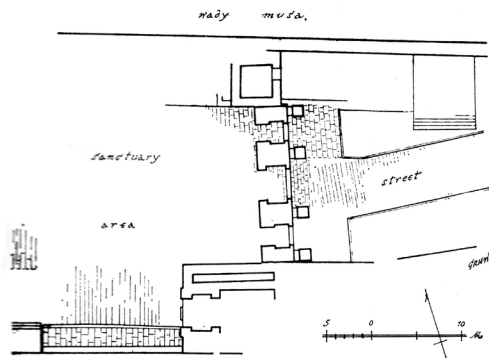


Fig. 2. General Plan of Emplacement.

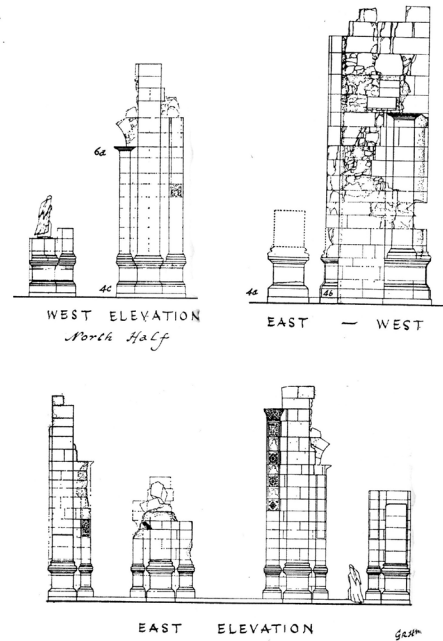


Fig. 3. Elevations with key to details.

Figure 1: Petra Temenos Gate. Image from Wright (1970b).

## Petra

During 1959 and 1960 while working with British archaeologist Peter Parr, Wright made studies of the temple known as Qasr el Bint or Bint Far'un and the arched Temenos Gate leading from the colonnaded street to the temple area. Later in 1960 he was engaged by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities to work with Professor H. Kalayan, 'distinguished engineer of the Lebanese Department of Antiquities' (Wright 1962: 48 n.2)<sup>3</sup> on the reinstatement of a damaged, fallen column at the Khasne. It seems that it was from Professor Kalayan that he learnt about the practical aspects of restoration works organisation and the equipment needed to undertake the work, as well as techniques of consolidation with cement mortar matched to the stone by the use of coloured sand. Wright went on to supervise the building up and consolidation of the base of the Temenos Gate piers and the erection of the remains of columns along the colonnaded street, noting that the columns were erected from drums lying at random in the street. 'These were considerably eroded and it was sought to retain the somewhat picturesque ruinous appearance of the columns which resulted from their re-erection' (Wright 1961: 25-31).<sup>4</sup> In 1970 he published some additional drawings of the Temenos Gate (Figure 1), noting that since the work done in 1961 other clearing and minor works had been carried out by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and it was now possible to see that it accommodated a change in the orientation of the civic plan (Wright 1970: 111-4).

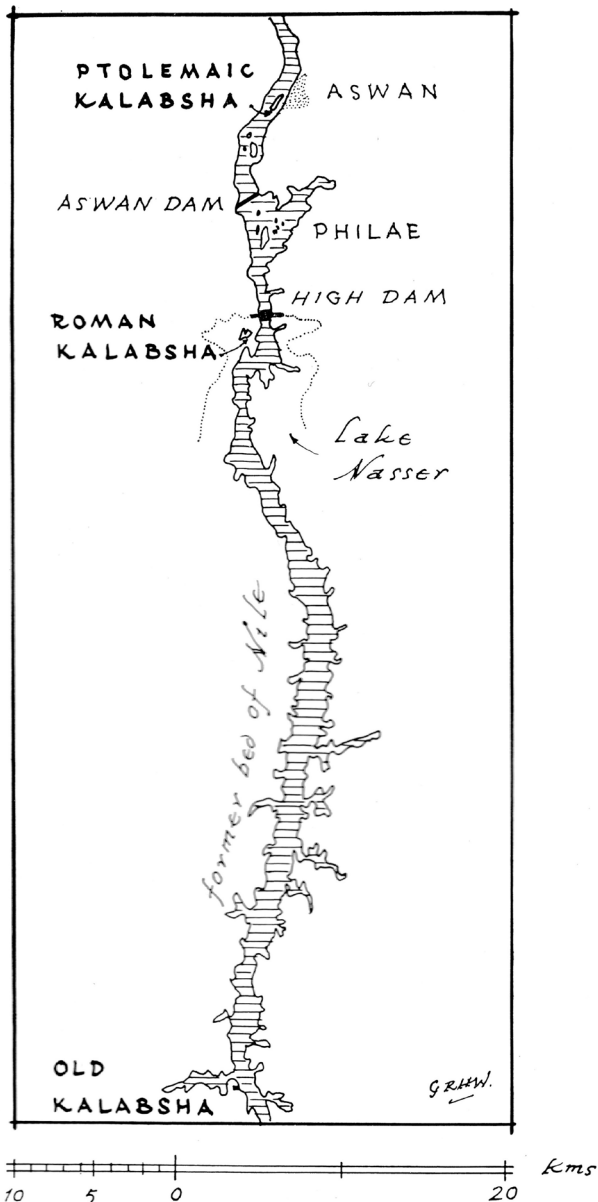
Iain Browning noted in his 1973 volume on Petra that the soft, pink ashlar of the Qasr el Bint had been considerably restored and was a credit to the Department of Antiquities and to 'Mr G.R.H. Wright who directed the work'. He considered that they had achieved a happy medium between blending in new stonework so that it was not obtrusive while 'not faking it up so that it attempts to deceive' (Browning 1973: 147; Figure 2). Wright published further articles on the Qasr in 1973 and 1974 revising the date first proposed for the temple and in 1985 published an article proposing a higher roof over the pronaos in line with other temples he had been studying in Palestine.



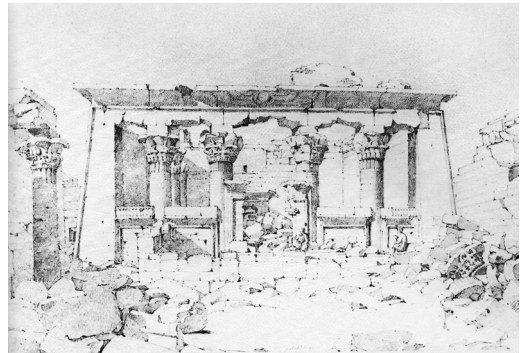
Figure 2: Petra Temenos Gate. Image: 1975 CJ Davey.

He acknowledged the 1982 preliminary report of Dr Fawzi Zayadine following excavation of the interior of the temple in 1979-81 under architect François Larché. However, Zayadine and Larché conducted further work in 1983 and 1984 from which they concluded that Wright's proposition regarding the roof did not hold. The temple was subsequently further consolidated with ten courses of one wall being dismantled and rebuilt by the Department of Antiquities under local architect Abdel-Majid Mjelli (Zayadine 1985: 246).

The whole site of Petra was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985. It was noted in the statement of authenticity that 'Stabilization of freestanding monuments including the Qasr al Bint temple and the vaulted structure supporting the Byzantine forecourt to the Urn Tomb Church was carried out prior to inscription' (UNESCO 1985).



**Figure 3: Kalabsha Map.**  
Image from Wright (1976: 230).

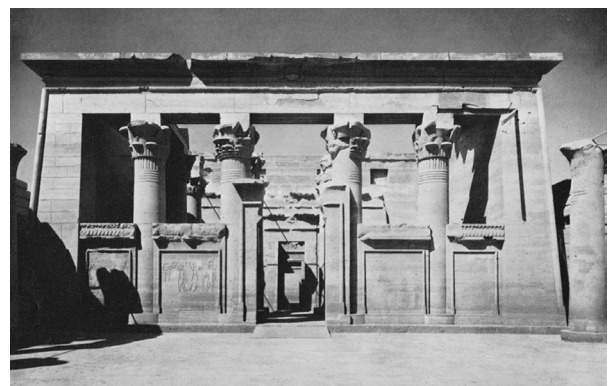


**Figure 4: Kalabsha, Temple of Mandulis by Charles Barry 1818.** Image from Clayton (1982: fig.71).

### Kalabsha

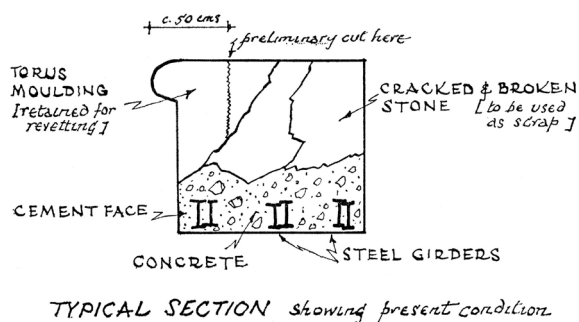
At Kalabsha in Egypt Wright was engaged as deputy archaeological supervisor (Wright 1972: 23) by the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo for the West German Government's contribution to UNESCO's campaign to save the Nubian monuments from flooding by the Aswan High Dam. This involved dismantling the Roman period Temple of Mandulis at Kalabsha (ancient Talmis) and its re-erection at a new site south of the west abutment of the High Dam in 1962-3 (Figure 3). Wright was part of a team which included Dr H. Steckeweh<sup>5</sup> as archaeological supervisor, Herr Andorf who directed the dismantling and recording operation, and W. Ianders as surveyor (Wright 1972: 24-5). The project was carried out by the large German civil engineering firm Hochtief of Essen who were at the time constructing a power house for the Egyptian government at Aswan.

The temple had been previously 'consolidated' during 1907-9 under the direction of conservator-restorer Alexandre Barsanti when it became apparent that it would be seasonally flooded due to the building of the Aswan Dam at the beginning of that century. The new High Dam would cause permanent submergence 60 meters beneath Lake Nasser. Barsanti had used steel girders embedded in concrete to support the collapsed lintels and roof beams of the hypostyle hall, and the lintels of the portal entranceway. As Wright noted the temple had then withstood 50 years of almost total inundation (Figures 4 & 5).

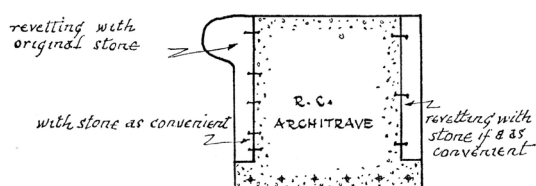


**Figure 5: Kalabsha, entrance to hypostyle hall 50 years after Basanti's work.** Image from Wright (1972: pl.7).

## HYPOSTYLE HALL ARCHITRAVES



TYPICAL SECTION showing present condition



TYPICAL SECTION showing proposed construction

NOTE: STRUCTURAL DETAILS  
TO BE ESTABLISHED  
IN DUE COURSE BY THE  
CONTRACTORS & APPROVED  
BY ARCH. SUPERVISION

Kalabsha 6-6-62

SEM.

Figure 6: Kalabsha, detail drawing by Wright of proposed architrave construction. Image from Wright (1972: fig.18).

Wright documented in thorough detail the whole process of the relocation and reconstruction of the temple on its new site in his 1972 publication *Kalabsha II, the preserving of the temple*. He took over the archaeological supervisor's role when Steckeweh was called away at the end of 1961. It appears that the role was renegotiated at this stage and Wright was made responsible only for the appearance and disposition of the monument (Wright 1972: 29). The structural stability was the responsibility of the contractors. They were to work in cooperation with Wright on the planning and execution, and would be advised by the German Nubian Committee of the German Archaeological Institute. Ultimate responsibility lay with the German ancient monuments authority (GAWI) as the agent of the German Foreign Ministry (Wright 1972: 23).

Wright recorded that in the re-erection process steel was used as reinforcement in columns, but set in mortar or cement grout to obviate later difficulties from expansion of the steel (Wright 1972: 30). The impact of steel corrosion when embedded in stone would have been clear to the team from Barsanti's work – cracking of his consolidated architraves can be detected in the photographs taken prior to dismantling. However, it is unlikely that setting the steel in mortar or cement grout would mitigate dam-

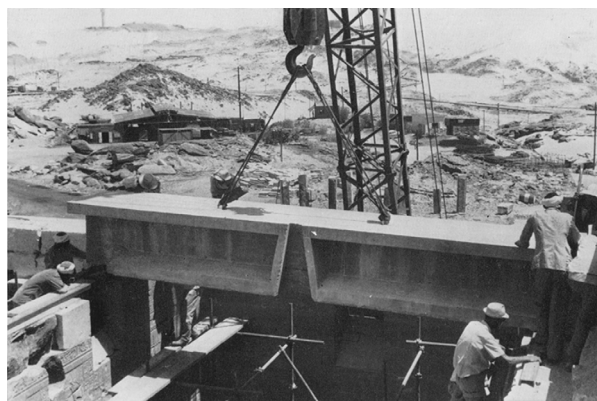


Figure 7: Kalabsha, placing reinforced concrete roof beams. Image from Wright (1972: pl. 79a).

age. Documents in the Wright archive (box 28) include blueprints of structural details by Hochtief showing the pre-stressed steel rods used vertically through the stone columns of the hypostyle hall and steel cramps along the stone courses of the pylons.

Barsanti's treatment of the architraves, lintels and roof beams meant that they could not be reused (Wright 1972: 58). However, Wright detailed the reconstruction of the architraves and lintels in reinforced concrete with the original stone profile attached as facing (Figure 6). He attempted to do something similar to conceal the roof beams over the three chambers of the sanctuary but was over-ruled by the new advisor to the German Nubian Committee Dr K.G. Siegler who advocated the use of pre-fabricated concrete beams (Wright 1972: 40; Figure 7). The appearance of these was subsequently ameliorated by finishing and patinating, and wiring was included for electric lighting of the decorated friezes to the direction of a scholar appointed by GAWI, Dr W. Clasen. Wright continually attempted to prevent excessive reconstruction (1972: 60-4) but lost over reconstruction of the missing cavetto cornice of the north tower. Having stated that he could find no definitive evidence for its original profile, but could come up with appropriate dimensions, he was ordered to implement it in prefabricated concrete as for the sanctuary roof beams (1972: 63-7).



Figure 8: Kalabsha, transporting stones up the Nile by felucca 1974. Image from Wright Archive Box 38.



**Figure 9:** Kalabsha, reconstituting the Ptolemaic sanctuary 1975. Image from Wright Archive Box 38.

The dismantling operation gave him the opportunity to study the construction of the temple and the way in which it had been originally put together. He noted that the Egyptian system of large block masonry, as distinct from the Greek system of smaller block orthogonal stone masonry, allowed the stones to be held by their dead weight without mortar, and proposed that the blocks were placed undressed except on the bedding face, with dressing being completed in situ as a separate exercise (Wright 1996: 143-54).

Eleven years later Wright supervised the restoration of the Ptolemaic remains of a sanctuary which had been discovered during the dismantling of the Roman temple to have been used as part of the later construction. In 1963 these Ptolemaic stones decorated in relief had been recorded by dimensional sketches and photographs and transferred from the original Kalabsha Temple site to the new site under the direction of Professor H. Stock, then Director of the German Archaeological Institute in Cairo, assisted by Dr. D. Arnold but without Wright's involvement. Some that had been part of a gate were given by the Egyptian government to Germany in 1972 as thanks for that government's contribution. Others including the sanctuary stones were subsequently transferred to Elephantine Island further south of the new Roman period temple site under the direction of Ahmad Loutfi of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities (Wright 1987: 19, n.3). There in 1974-5 they were erected under Wright's supervision based on a reconstruction drawing made by Dr. D. Arnold (Wright 1976: 229). Wright recorded that some new stone was used and left roughly dressed to distinguish it from the old, while the base structure needed to hold the recovered decorated stones was constructed in sandstock brickwork of similar colour and texture but clearly different from the recovered stones (Wright 1977: 156-8; Figure 9).

This was a far smaller project than the previous Kalabsha work but not without its difficulties (Wright 1987: 42). Its execution shows Wright's awareness of the current European principles of restoration. By this stage he had

been well indoctrinated in these, having followed his earlier work at Kalabsha with research in Rome prior to undertaking a joint mission to Iran with other UNESCO experts. He had noted in his response to the invitation from UNESCO that he was interested in 'working and associating from time to time with European authorities in Europe' (Wright 1967a: 1) as he was conscious of having been 'de-Europeanised' after 17 years in the Middle East and it was important when working in the Middle East to be able to communicate European standards. These comments suggest that he thought the previous work at Petra and Kalabsha left something to be desired in terms of these standards, possibly in relation to the degree of reconstruction carried out, particularly at Kalabsha - although there the standard-setters were in fact Germans. However, a slight note of sarcasm can be detected in Wright's account of being required to place a stone stele near the reconstructed Ptolemaic sanctuary on Elephantine Island recording the nature and limits of the reconstruction<sup>6</sup> (Wright 1976: 229-231).

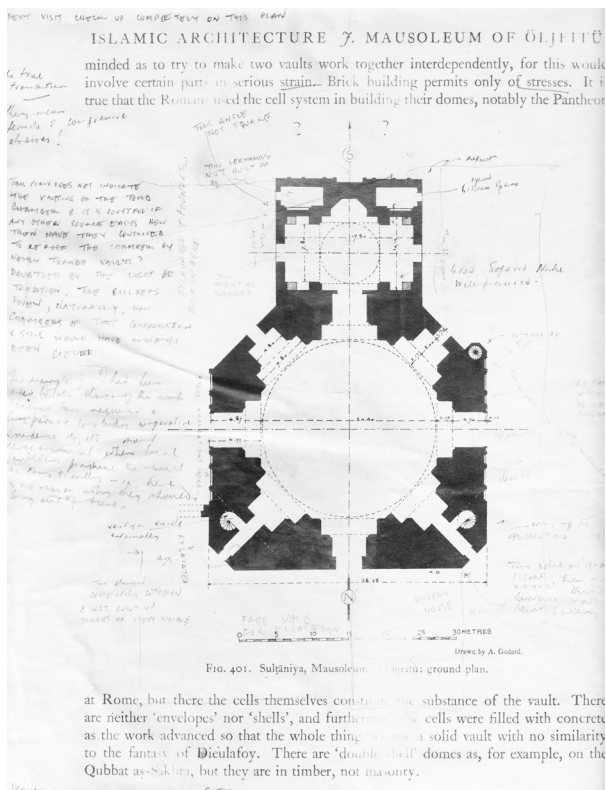
The ICOMOS evaluation of the Nubian monuments from Abu Simbel to Philae at the time of their inscription on the World Heritage List in 1979 recognised them as 'masterpieces of the creative spirit of man' (UNESCO 1979: 2). Since this assessment included the temples on their new sites, their re-siting and reconstruction was clearly accepted as not detracting from their recognised Outstanding Universal Value.

## Iran

During the negotiations over Wright's participation in the Iran mission, he noted in his letter to Conrad Wise (Wright 1967b: 1)<sup>7</sup> that he would be attending a colloquium in Rome where 'the question of the weathering of brickwork is being discussed'. He also attended an ICOMOS meeting on 'The problems of humidity in historic monuments' held at the Villa Farnesina, Rome 11-14 October 1967 as indicated in the archive file 'Restoration of Monuments' (Box 38), which contains a programme brochure annotated in his hand with inserted sketches and notes. There are also several practice notes from the U.K. Building Research Station including one on 'Cracking in Buildings' (1966).

The Iran mission included four other experts as well as Wright albeit on separate (parallel) missions. It was led by Mr. R. Curiel as Administrative Advisor and included Mr. R. Lafrancesca on road access problems in relation to monuments and Mr. G. Shankland on the town planning programme for Isfahan with a view to preservation of the historic city.

Wright's mission was to review and report on restoration work being undertaken at several monuments with a view to their preservation for the purpose of cultural tourism. These included the congregational mosques at Veramin and Isfahan, the Mausoleum of Oljaytu at Soltanieh (Figure 10), the Sassanian palaces at Sarvistan and Firuzabad and the Sassanian Castle at Qala'-I-Dukhtar.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 10:** Iran, Mausoleum of Oljaytu, plan annotated by Wright. Image from Wright Archive Box 31.

As a guide to what was required, he was given a copy of a 1966 UNESCO report on the theatre of Sidé in Turkey and as background for UNESCO’s concern in the field of preservation of monuments associated with cultural tourism, a copy of the 1966 Secretariat’s report on the Iranian government’s plan for the restoration or *mise-en-valeur* of historic monuments in four priority areas of the country. Due to extreme weather in the latter half of the period of the mission, Wright was only able to complete his tasks at four of the monuments allocated to him, and in fact the combined report of the mission includes only three – Veramin, Soltanieh and Sarvistan (Curiel et al 1968: II-1).

‘Soltaniyeh’ was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005. Under ‘Conservation’ in the ICOMOS evaluation report, it is noted that the ‘Mausoleum of Oljaytu was subject to a restoration campaign from 1969 to 1979 jointly with an Italian team, directed by Prof. Sanpaolesi. At this time, major attention was given to structural stabilisation’ (UNESCO 2005: 69). Wright had been provided with an earlier report by Sanpaolesi and had been informed that Prof. Sanpaolesi would be undertaking the work there. He was advised that the purpose of his own report was to review the then state of conservation and outline what works he considered were needed. So, it seems that UNESCO had wanted a ‘second opinion’ on this major architectural monument.

Wright’s reports demonstrate his awareness of current European approaches in terms of *Venice Charter* principles,

but he doesn’t refer to it<sup>9</sup>. He strongly recommended that full documentation of the current state of each monument was required both as a basis for understanding the different periods of construction and as a basis for future work. At Soltaniyeh he commented favourably on the structural repairs that had been done using traditional materials and techniques and noted that it was unlikely that any ‘foreign structural devices’ would be needed to ensure the structural stability of the monument. At Veramin a considerable part of the monument had already been rebuilt. There he was concerned with how this could be distinguished from the original structure by means of its ‘finish’, and stressed that in the case of new plaster, it should be separated clearly from the old while still creating an acceptable visual effect.

### Tamil Nadu

Following the Iran mission Wright undertook further research before taking on the Indian work for UNESCO in 1968. The file ‘Restoration Training’ (Wright archive: box 38) includes information on the Conservation of Historical Monuments course at the University of London’s Institute of Archaeology as well as details of the six-month course run by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property in Rome (ICCROM). There is also a full set of lecture notes for the course run by the U.K. Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 7-12 October 1968. This comprised lectures and site visits covering ‘History and Principles of the S.P.A.B.’; ‘Repair and Conservation Methods – the Need for a Survey’; ‘The Repair and Preservation of Stonework’; ‘The Aesthetics of Stone Repair’; ‘Structural Repair’; ‘Repair of Timber Structures’; ‘Timber in Health and Decay- Remedial Treatments and Conservation’, and ‘Historic Buildings Legislation’. It is not clear whether Wright undertook the course before going out to India to report for UNESCO on the Srirangam Temple but the existence of the course timetable and lecture notes in the file suggests that he did. A cutting from *The Indian Express* Madurai of Oct 28 1968 reports that ‘two UNESCO experts Mr George Wright and Madame Jeannine Auboyer have just completed a survey of the Sri Ranganathaswami temple at Srirangam with a view to suggesting steps for its renovation and conservation’, which indicates that if he did do the course he must have left for Madras immediately afterwards.

While following Western approaches to conservation and restoration, Wright was intensely aware that the intangible aspects of Hindu monuments would impact on how they could be treated. In his report for the Srirangam Temple (Wright 1969), he was at pains to point out that there were several conflicting issues in relation to the restoration. He recognised then the conflict what would later give birth to the *Nara Document on Authenticity* in 1994 (ICOMOS 1994) – that the significance of a living monument which according to Western notions would reside in its fabric – its design and construction, could be heavily impacted by the religious procedures and rituals



**Figure 11:** Tamilnadu, Rameswaram Temple. Image from Wright (1973: pl. 1).

associated with its ongoing use. While he understood that it was the architectural/art qualities that made it significant to westerners (including himself as he made clear in his report), he also recognised that it was the associated social and religious life that was of significance to the local community (Wright 1969: 3-5, 22-3). In this he anticipated the ongoing conflict between East and West over what constitutes the heritage values of a place.

Nevertheless, he condemned the impact of the practice of ongoing renewal of elements and finishes where they detracted from the integrity of the monument through obscuring its form and were of lesser quality than those they replaced. He was particularly scathing about the practice of introducing pointing to stone walls that previously had none, together with the application of cement or lime washes or paint to the stone surfaces. These were frequently applied over layers of dirt to the extent that the form of mouldings and decorative details was eventually smothered (Wright 1969: 24-6). However, these practices were part of a religious tradition of temple renewal and enhancement whereby local donors within the community showed their veneration of the deity and they continued in spite of *The General Principles for the care of Ancient Monuments* published by the Government of India following promulgation of the *Ancient Monuments Act* in 1904. The *Principles* proscribed such actions as the use of whitewash or paint, especially on sculptures.

Wright was the third of three experts engaged by UNESCO to report on the Srirangam Temple in 1968. As recorded in the Indian Express article mentioned above, Patrick Faulkner visited the Temple in 1966 and prepared a comprehensive report on how he thought the

numerous structures could be preserved. Subsequently an expert from the UNESCO mission to Delhi also inspected the site. As indicated by Wright's own report, he had access to Faulkner's earlier report and as in Iran, had again been asked to review the programme. Wright's summary of recommendations explained that the initial programme of conservation should be restricted to a section of the complex only, with a view to determining whether Western programmes of conservation and restoration were applicable to Srirangam Temple. He referred to the administrative difficulties in relation to the work – the settlement within the temple which had occupied the outer three *prakara* or corridor rings since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (and which he described as comprising poor, modern housing and squatting, encroaching on the ancient masonry) being under municipal control, whereas the religious centre (not accessible to non-Hindus) was administered by the religious authorities (Wright 1969: 42-3). Wright was engaged again by UNESCO in 1970 to provide a similar report on the Rameswaram Temple, discussed below under Theory (Figure 11).

## Doha

During 1973-4 Wright was engaged by the Beirut architectural firm 'D C G' to work on the restoration of The Old Amiri Palace in Doha for the ruler of Qatar. He was commissioned to 'study the buildings from the historical point of view so as to guarantee the authenticity of the restoration' and also to provide a Guide Book to the restored complex when it was put into commission as the National Museum premises (Wright c.1975:1). The Guide Book appears to have been his main interest, necessitating research into South Arabian domestic architecture. It was



*Figure 12: Meda'in Saleh, tomb.  
Image from Wright Archive Box 26.*

published in 1975. It was through this project that he met Michael Rice, a British museum consultant working on the museum programme in Saudi Arabia who several years later was instrumental in getting him work as a site supervisor at Meda'in Saleh.

### **Meda'in Saleh**

In 1984 Wright was contracted to the Edinburgh firm of Robert Hurd Overseas Limited on the recommenda-

tion of Michael Rice, to work with the Saudi Arabian Department of Antiquities at Meda'in Saleh as project manager for the restoration of the rail buildings and Islamic castle and the cleaning out of rock-cut tombs; and to advise on cleaning and protection of the facades of tombs and develop landscaping and viewing points (Mansouri 1985: 1; Figures 12, 13 & 14). He was required to provide a curriculum vitae and details of his educational qualifications before being signed up for this contract. He was contracted at US\$5000 per month plus expenses for twelve months from 1 May 1984 but exchanges of correspondence (Wright archive: box 26) indicate that the project was problematic and payments were not forthcoming. He resigned from the project in January 1985, and was then required to sign an agreement not to publish or lecture on the antiquities of Meda'in Saleh without the permission of the Saudi Arabian Department of Antiquities and Museums or Robert Hurd Overseas Limited. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2008 as 'Al-Hijr Archaeological Site (Meda'in Saleh)'. The ICOMOS evaluation noted that 'in the 1980s, excavation campaigns led to cleaning operations inside the tombs and the removal of burial vestiges. Today it is very difficult to find any such vestiges in their original state at Al-Hijr' (UNESCO 2008: 12). The evaluation also noted that 'since 2001, a cooperation agreement has been in force between France (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Centre national de la recherche scientifique-CNRS) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Antiquities and Museums, King Saud University Riyadh) for the study of the Al-Hijr site'.

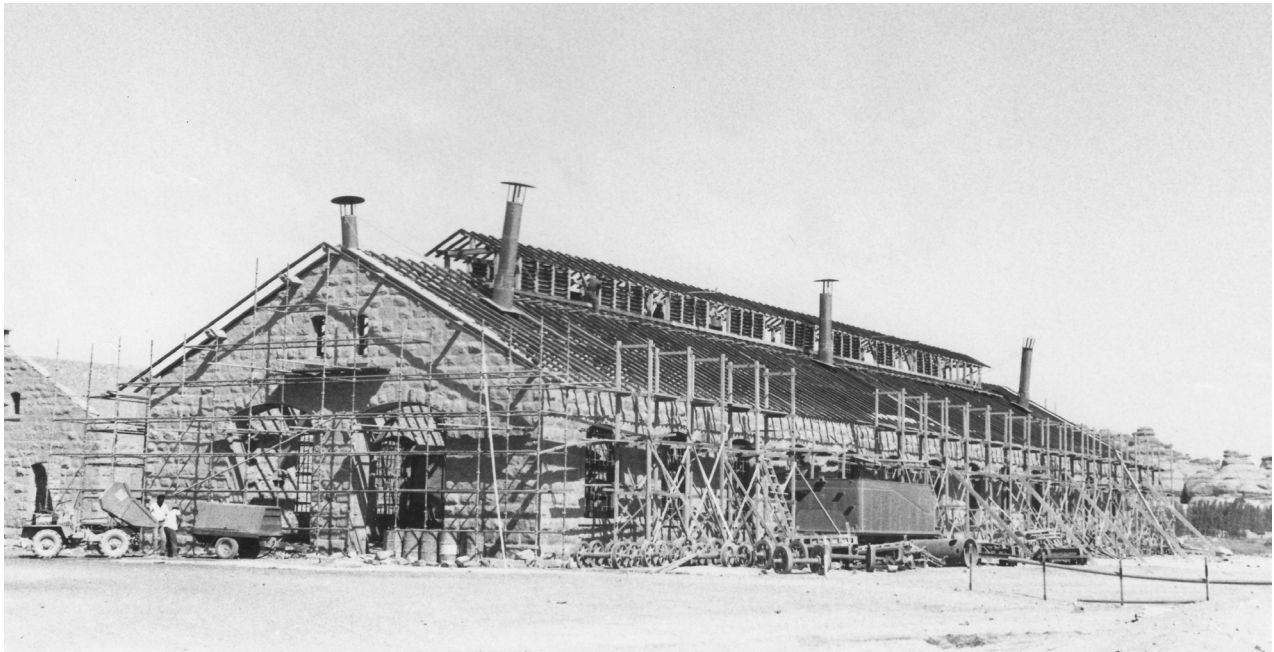
### **Yemen**

In August and September 1986 Wright was engaged through the German Archaeological Institute by the Department of Antiquities in Sana'a for advice on possible restoration work to remaining sections of the ancient Ma'rib Dam and structures associated with the irrigation system. His report set out his views on which structures could be advantageously restored for tourism presentation purposes and gave details on how a works contract could



*Figure 13: Meda'in Saleh, Wright photographing the Islamic castle. Image from Wright Archive Box 26.*





**Figure 14:** Meda'in Saleh, restoration of Hejaz railway building. Image from Wright Archive Box 26.

be set up using a Turkish company which was already on site for work to the new dam. Six months later he was asked for advice on the possibility of moving the remains of another associated structure lying in the bed of Wadi Dhana upstream of the new Ma'rib dam which would be flooded on completion of the new dam. In fact, this site was flooded before any removal work could be undertaken. At this time he had a professorial appointment at Munich University and was granted two periods of absence to undertake the work in Yemen (Wright archive: box 42). The 'Archaeological Site of Marib' was submitted to Yemen's World Heritage Tentative List in 2002 (UNESCO 2002: 1).

## Theory

During these years, Wright was clearly developing his own philosophy of conservation and restoration which culminated in his contribution to the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Near East* (Wright 1997). In his Srirangam report he suggested that in the case of monuments different approaches would apply, depending on whether the place was a ruin or 'living' – that is, still in use. In a lecture given at Kancheepuram in 1970 he proposed that a monument by its nature calls to mind history and art, often in the service of religion, and that anyone involved in caring for an ancient monument needed to be proficient in these three areas. He expanded his concept to cover four categories: Archaeological Ruins, Ruined Monuments, Living Monuments and Modern Monuments (Wright 1970: 1-2).

In the same lecture, he proposed that a monument has two attributes; the structure and the aspect and that 'if the monument is structurally sound and there is nothing unsatisfactory about its appearance, no intervention is required' (Wright 1970: 2). He noted that these were

Western ideas developed during the last few generations of which the first principle was not to harm the monument.<sup>10</sup> He considered that the evolution of Indian culture might find expression in its own way of caring for its monuments but that this should follow the same principle. He had referred to the fact that Indian culture already had its own way of caring for its Hindu monuments - as set out in several Sanskrit treatises (Moschini 2008: 393-400) - in his two UNESCO reports (1969 and 1971), but he did not discuss this in the lecture. In his report for UNESCO on the Srirangam Temple he referred to the fact that in certain circumstances it was considered unbecoming for the Deity to be manifested in spoiled and broken images and that they should be removed and replaced with new ones. In the Rameswaram Temple report he noted that there existed in India 'sacred writing' (Wright 1971: 11) which prescribed that 'worn-out' elements may be replaced in the same material or in a material of a higher virtue on exactly the same plan, as an exact replica of the original.

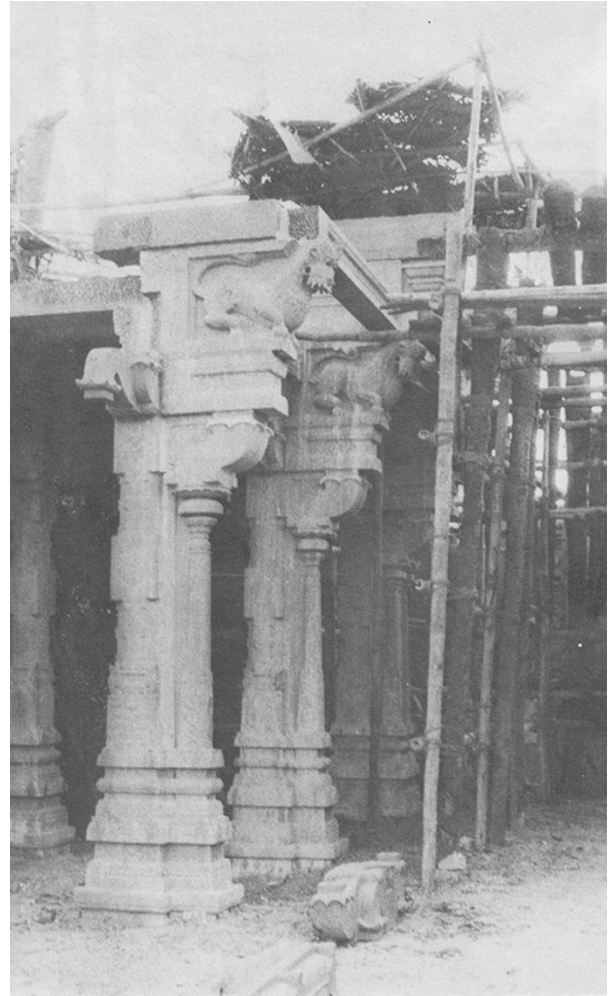
However as he pointed out in that report, comparison with the remaining parts of the original second corridor at the eastern end with new work at the western end showed that such a replica was not achieved in that instance (his plates I[a] and I[b], see Figures 15 & 16). He suggested that respect for the earlier work by those who came to replace it or 'renew' it in the name of religious imperatives could be encouraged by 'a most stringent and forceful programme of instruction to make it public that such activity is a displeasing affront to the deity, that it is *tamasic*' (Wright 1971: 20). His frustration was expressed in his rhetorical suggestion that since various monuments in other parts of the world were being moved from their original locations including to other countries for display (referring to the Egyptian and Nubian monuments), perhaps it would be appropriate for nations who liked



**Figure 15:** Tamilnadu Rameswaram Temple original second corridor east end. Image from Wright (1971: pl.1a).

antiquities to pay to obtain discarded Indian sculptures – thereby funding conservation in India. On the other hand he recognised that there were still local practitioners with traditional roofing skills able to repair or replace terrace roofs, achieving a satisfactory long-term result so long as ongoing maintenance and removal of debris build-up was carried out (Wright 1971: 17).

Wright appears to have found a sympathetic hearing for his views from the Director of Archaeology in Madras, Mr. Thiru R. Nagaswamy. An exchange of letters between the two between February and May 1969 discussed the possibility of setting up a training course in conservation and restoration at the Institute of Religious Art at Mahabalipuram (Wright archive: box 38). Wright suggested in his UNESCO report that instruction in the principles and practice of conservation and restoration could be introduced to the final year of the course already taught there, which covered building and decorating Hindu temples in the traditional manner (Wright 1969: 54-5). In a further letter from Wright on 8th July 1969 he offered to provide a monograph on the nature and purpose of the conservation and restoration of monuments and its practi-



**Figure 16:** Tamilnadu Rameswaram Temple new work second corridor west end. Image from Wright (1971:pl.1b).

cal application as relevant to stone temples in southern India, based on Part II of his Srirangam Temple report to UNESCO. This was accepted and published by the Madras State Department of Archaeology that same year as: *A background to restoration of monuments in Southern India*. In this publication, he argued for the removal of infills to colonnades, partition walls, barriers, enclosures and accretions including ‘village-style’ decoration on the basis that in Hindu culture there is justification for revealing the essence or true nature of the monument (Wright 1969a: 182-3).

Wright was of the view that those put in charge of conservation and restoration work should be made aware of current (‘modern’) principles and practice and that they should be provided with literature to guide them in their work (Wright 1971: 6). He backed this view in both UNESCO reports by reference to the Indian government’s own guidance documents, which dated back to the early twentieth century and were developed during Lord Curzon’s time as Viceroy. That these might be disregarded as colonialist interference did not apparently occur to him. He did his best to promulgate European principles within

the region. His article on 'The Development of the care of Ancient Monuments in Tamilnadu' was published by the Journal of the Department of Archaeology (Wright 1970a: 105-110) and a similar one on the 'Restoration of Hindu Temples in South India and its Conceptual Background' was published in the 80th Birthday Felicitation Volume for Professor K.A. Nikilanta Shastri (Wright 1971a: 315-21). The latter article was published again thirty years later in *East and West* (Wright 2001).

It is notable that in none of his reports or articles to this point was there any reference to the *Venice Charter*. His eventual 1997 exposition on conservation and restoration in the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Near East* lists a UNESCO publication of 1950 in its Bibliography, but there is still no direct reference to the *Venice Charter*, which was the definitive set of principles used by ICOMOS as advisor to UNESCO. He referred to principles developed by 'men of great practical experience and/or acute analytical disposition' during the middle years of the century – presumably meaning the *Venice Charter* – and went on to outline his understanding of them (Wright 1997) before leading into the categorisation of archaeological ruins, ruined monuments, living monuments and modern monuments that he had developed previously in his Indian articles. Under 'Restoration practices in the Middle East' he pointed out that the Ottoman and then European colonial administrations set the initial framework for excavation and restoration work, followed by an influx of international experts on aid-funded projects in the 1960s. He could also have mentioned that Western influence came too with local professionals who returned home to work after studying in the West.

The archive holds some evidence of research used for the first part of his *Encyclopaedia* entry. In the archive box 38 the file labelled 'The basis of restoration of Monuments in Western Philosophy' includes two extracts from *The Dictionary of Art*, WJ Turner London 1996 Vol. 32. One is on Architectural conservation and restoration, §2: c. 1800-c.1900 p.319 and the other is on Viollet-le-Duc, Eugene-Emmanuel, pp.596–7 by Françoise Bercé. On the latter, in the margin of the section Aesthetics and style, Wright's handwritten note refers to a section of text which says: 'restoration: both the word and the activity are modern. To restore a building is not to repair or rebuild it, but to re-establish its original state which must at a certain moment in time, have existed'. Wright noted: 'This says nothing positive and avoids many actualities – eg the question of different (and conflicting) periods in the fabric of ancient monuments – also the part played by time in the existing monumentality'. The file also contains notes about the anti-scrape approach of William Morris and John Ruskin.

The file labelled 'Restoration of Monuments' contains a copy of the publication of papers given at a conference in Cyprus in 1984: *Conservation on Archaeological Excavations* (ed. N.P. Stanley Price 1984, ICCROM Rome); *The*

*Treatment of Stone: Proceedings of the Meeting of the Joint Committee for the Conservation of Stone Bologna October 1-3, 1971* (ICOM, ICOMOS, International Centre for Conservation – Working group on the treatment of stone) Centro per la Conservazione Delle Sculture All'Aperto Bologna 1972; a US/ICOMOS newsletter of 1992 by their Committee on Earthen Architecture and various technical pamphlets on chemical treatments. However, in his conclusion to the *Encyclopaedia* entry he recommended against the use of any such chemical treatments.

## The Issue of Significance

The issue of significance was not discussed in the *Encyclopaedia* entry.<sup>11</sup> However Wright had shown an early appreciation of this issue, which later became the guiding principle of work on heritage places generally – that is to establish what is the significance of the place. In his lecture at Kancheepuram he acknowledged that what was important in the West – 'the historical and artistic significance of the monument' – was not necessarily what was important in India. But he did not make the jump to appreciating that what was important in India might come to have equal relevance to what was important to the West.

With Australia ICOMOS' *Burra Charter* first adopted in 1979 (latest edition 2013), *The Nara Document on Authenticity* of 1994 and UNESCO's *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003 the concept of significance broadened. This is clearly evident in India's World Heritage Tentative statement for the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Srirangam – the subject of Wright's first Indian report for UNESCO. The statement considers the temple as testimony to the living *Vaishnava* cultural tradition and an exemplar of a Temple-town, representative of Tamil culture over the centuries, as attributes of its proposed Outstanding Universal Value, as well as its 'astounding architecture and ornamentation' (UNESCO 2014).

It had taken years to get to that point however. The issue was eventually given a more-or-less official airing by ICCROM – one of the three advisors to UNESCO nominated in the World Heritage Convention - which held a forum in Rome in 2003 on 'Living Religious Heritage: conserving the sacred'. Participants who gave papers came from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Denmark, Greece, the Vatican, Japan, Israel, Italy and New Zealand. It was suggested by Nobuko Inaba and Gamina Wijesuriya that attention to the 'living' aspects of religious heritage should go beyond the 'material-oriented conservation practice of monumental heritage' and consider 'human-related/non-material aspects of heritage value' linking with the surrounding societies and environments (Stovel 2005: 1).

Three years later the International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism (INTBAU) held a conference in Venice in 2006 with the aim of situating the text of the *Venice Charter* in the context of its times

(Hardy 2008: xv). Five papers by practitioners in India were included in the conference publication<sup>12</sup> but the general gist was as presented by A.G. Krishna Menon, an Architect, Urban Planner and Conservation Consultant who had been practising and teaching in Delhi since 1972 and within the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), authored *The Charter for Unprotected Architectural Heritage and sites in India*, 2004 (Hardy 2008: 748). He believed that in spite of the subsequent charters the *Venice Charter* still had too much influence in India. He claimed that while it is accepted that the Japanese may rebuild the Ise shrine periodically in Japan, in accordance with traditional religious principles, it was not acceptable to rebuild a ruined monument in India. And while indigenous tribes may follow their pre-historic traditions in tribal lands, it was not accepted that master-builders in urban India should follow their traditions in reconstructing historic buildings built by their forefathers. He put this down to the impact of colonialism and the fact that from the 1970s Indian practitioners were encouraged to take courses in the West where they imbibed ‘universal’ conservation principles which they now insisted must be applied (Menon 2008: 18-23). This is of course exactly what Wright and others who were dismayed at what they saw in the 1960s and ‘70s as the destruction of India’s heritage, had hoped for (Mennim 1997: 170-1).

### Management of Outstanding Universal Value

The above illustrates the fact that in this ongoing debate relating primarily to World Heritage properties, insufficient attention has been given to the real purpose of conservation as applied under the World Heritage Convention, which is to manage the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the inscribed property (ICOMOS 2016: § 49-53, 154 & 155). The fact that more social groups and communities now participate in identifying and establishing OUV and its management is already reflected in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.<sup>13</sup>

Study of how OUV has been managed in World Heritage properties that have undergone restoration and/or reconstruction can illuminate and clarify directions for the future of properties such as the Indian ‘living monuments’ that Wright encountered, as well as for properties that have suffered damage and destruction due to armed conflict. For example, while the Ise shrine mentioned by Menon above is not inscribed on the World Heritage List, other Shinto shrines in Japan with a similar religious imperative for periodic reconstruction are inscribed, such as the Kasuga-Taisha Shinto shrine included in the Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara. The statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) for the Kasuga-Taisha shrine records that ‘The Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines of Nara demonstrate the continuing spiritual power and influence of these religions in an exceptional manner’ (UNESCO 1998).

The statement of authenticity for this property records that:

*The Kasuga-Taisha Shinto shrine has maintained its tradition of routine reconstruction. The level of authenticity of the various buildings on the property is high from the view of form and design, materials and substance, traditions and techniques, and location and setting. Japanese conservation principles have ensured that replacement of damaged or degraded architectural elements has respected the materials and techniques used by the original builders (UNESCO 1998).*

Similarly for the Itsukushima Shinto Shrine, the SOUV records that:

*Even though the buildings of Itsukushima-jinja have been reconstructed twice, this was done in a scrupulously accurate manner preserving the styles that prevailed from the late 12th century to the early 13th century (UNESCO 1996).*

Valetta (Malta) was inscribed in 1980 (UNESCO 1980) despite considerable postwar reconstruction, because this was not considered to impact on the attributes of its OUV, which were its late Renaissance urban plan, fortified and bastioned walls modelled around the natural site, the voluntary implantation of great monuments and its association with the Knights of St John of Jerusalem.

In fact, issues relating to postwar reconstruction have also received a thorough airing – again courtesy of ICCROM, which held a forum in Rome in 2005 on ‘Armed conflict and conservation: promoting cultural heritage in postwar recovery’. Participants from different backgrounds presented their experience related to the topic in places such as East Germany, Palestine, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Laos, West Africa, Belfast, Jerusalem, Mostar and Nicosia.

Sultan Barakat described the first instinct of outsiders as being to restore the built environment, including significant monuments but advised that rushing this in an environment of insecurity is not a good idea, particularly before properly understanding the society (Barakat 2008: 36). Neal Ascherson noted that where the citizenry were not much consulted (as in Frankfurt and West Berlin) modern cutting edge replacement opera houses were proposed whereas in Munich they were consulted and the result was an opera house rebuilt to its last detail (Ascherson 2008: 24).

The involvement of the community of Kandy, Sri Lanka in the restoration of the Singhalese Buddhist Temple of the Tooth Relic complex after it had been bomb-damaged in 1998 reflected the issues that bothered Wright in India. The community’s first goal was to revive the function of the Temple. This was of prime importance to the community in maintaining continuity in their lives. The conservation specialists wanted to remove certain buildings which were later additions in foreign styles but the

community of religious leaders, politicians, administrative authorities and local representatives refused, and the decision-making power rested with the religious authority (Wijesuriya 2008: 90-3). Wijesuriya concluded that the conventional (for which read ICOMOS) conservation approach had to be modified in order to achieve a result that would satisfy the community. He explained this as because the 'function value' deserved primary consideration, while conceding that secondary values could also be encompassed as evidenced by the fact that the Temple had been inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1988. However, in fact the ICOMOS evaluation of the Temple prior to inscription makes no reference to any art-historical values or what he might consider to be 'secondary values', but rests almost entirely on its 'function value':

*Built to house the relic of the tooth of Buddha, which had come from Kalinga, India, to Sri Lanka during the reign of Sri Meghavanna (310-328), when it was transferred a final time, the Temple of Kandy bears witness to an ever flourishing cult (UNESCO 1988a).*

So, there should have been no conservation imperative to remove the later additions.

In the case of Aleppo, the desire to rebuild its architectural heritage to its pre-crisis situation as outlined by Dr Anas Soufan in his paper to the meeting convened by the Arab States Unit of UNESCO 'Post-Conflict Reconstruction in the Middle East Context and in the Old City of Aleppo in Particular' (UNESCO 2015) would appear to be primarily for reasons of civic pride given the complex issues of identity. He suggested that any reconstruction would require oversight by a multidisciplinary committee, with a plan of intervention instituted by experts and Syrian administrators involving residents and users of the old city.

Aleppo was inscribed in 1986 under criteria (iii) and (iv) (UNESCO 1986). The attributes of its OUV include the architectural fabric of the city comprising evidence of many periods of history. The Great Mosque and the Madrasa Halawiye which incorporated remains of Aleppo's Christian cathedral are specifically mentioned under criterion (iii), as part of 'the diverse mixture of buildings' including 'other mosques and madrasas, suqs and khans which represents an exceptional reflection of the social, cultural and economic aspects of what was once one of the richest cities of all humanity'. The walls, glacis and gateway of the Citadel are specifically mentioned under criterion (iv) as is the Madrasa al Firdows. According to the 2009 statement of authenticity, the layout of the old city in relation to the dominant Citadel had remained basically unchanged, and conservation efforts within the old city had largely preserved the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value, while the historic and traditional handicraft and commercial activities had continued as a vital component of the city sustaining its traditional urban life. Today some key attributes described in the SOUV have been destroyed, particularly the 'evidence of many

periods of history', and the Great Mosque. Nevertheless, reconstruction of the Great Mosque has apparently begun (Mottram 2017).

In the background document for the UNESCO meeting cited above, Nada al Hassan noted that by comparison with the passionate discussions on the Bamiyan Buddhas' possible reconstruction, the full reconstruction at Timbuktu following the 2012 conflict did not raise any controversy, and 'seems to have full consensus among specialists or stakeholders so far'. This is not surprising since the SOUV described the buildings as 'exceptional examples of earthen architecture and of traditional maintenance techniques, which continue to the present time' (UNESCO 1988). The 'traditional characteristic construction techniques' are mentioned in the justification for criterion (v). It is clear from the investigation of the State of Conservation (UNESCO 2016) preceding Decision 40COM 7A.6 that the reconstruction was carried out using traditional practices developed through ancestral knowledge passed on through the generations by the Corporation of Masons of Timbuktu and was preceded by compilation of archival material and detailed documentation of the destruction, thereby conserving the OUV set out in the justification of the criteria for which the property was inscribed. So, there was no conservation imperative to take any other approach.

By comparison the SOUV for the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (UNESCO 2003) does not include the Buddhas because they were destroyed before the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The attributes do include the empty niches – so any proposals for future works to the niches such as reconstruction of the Buddhas must be considered in the light of the impact on the OUV of the property overall (ICOMOS 2016: §72-75), remembering that the attributes of OUV do not include the Buddhas. Hence the situation is considerably more complicated than at Timbuktu.

## Conclusion

Provided the significance of a place is clearly justified and understood, reconstruction may not be an issue for authenticity. It will depend under which criteria and how the place has been justified, since authenticity relates to the attributes of OUV.<sup>14</sup>

It can be seen from the above discussion that this concept has taken years to be properly understood even by professionals. But it does enable all monuments - even 'living' ones to be treated on their merits.

It appears that it was only in India that Wright had to deal with the conservation and restoration of 'living monuments'. In relation to 'archaeological ruins' and 'ruined monuments' he learned on the job in the Middle East, before studying conservation procedures and attending seminars and courses in Europe as he became aware of the European standards adopted by UNESCO. He subse-

quently commended the procedures that had been carried to the Middle East with the colonial administrations and were based on the practice of the Ancient Monuments Service of Britain on which he commented favourably in his bibliographical reference to M. W. Thompson's *Ruins: Their Preservation and Display* (Wright 1997). His publication on 'The Care of Monuments in Cyprus' (1994) summarised this very succinctly (Wright 1994: 1-3).

In India Wright's approach was essentially to try to apply those same procedures. While he realised the importance of the religious practices to the local community, he didn't conceive of these as part of the significance of the temples. It remains to be seen whether renewal and reconstruction will become accepted ICOMOS practice in India as it has in Japan where appropriate to a place's significance. But Wright's recommendations for cleaning and removal of cement coatings at Srirangam were certainly taken up and indeed reported on in detail by a local newspaper. Whether his suggestion that would-be donors of renewal works at Hindu temples could be persuaded to instead contribute to the removal of accretions for the purpose of revealing the pure essence of the monument, is not evident. However, the newspaper article noted that it was hoped that given so much interest had been taken in the renovation of the shrine, 'devotees of Sriranganatha living all over the country will contribute their mite for the renovation' *The Hindu* (6 September 1970).

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## Endnotes

- 1 Since then other national committees of ICOMOS have adopted their own charters including China, Indonesia, Canada, New Zealand and Brazil.
- 2 Preservation means maintaining a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration; Restoration means returning a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing elements without the introduction of new material; Reconstruction means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material (Australia ICOMOS 2013).
- 3 It is notable that in his earlier (1961) account of the Petra restoration he did not acknowledge Prof. Kalayan's involvement – it appeared from that article that it was all his own work. However, in this note to his 1962 article he acknowledged Kalayan's cooperation throughout the project, stating that he acted as consultant in all matters and 'in the final critical lifts assumed full responsibility'. While Kalayan's engineering ability was not in doubt, the degree of reconstruction he thought appropriate was considered excessive post-*Venice Charter*.
- 4 There is no mention in this article of the process of recording and numbering fallen or dismantled stones prior to reinstatement. In fact, prior to the ratification of the *Venice Charter* in 1964, detailed documentation and analysis of the architectural elements was not always undertaken.
- 5 Wright notes that Dr Steckeweh was previously in the service of the Oriental Institute of Chicago and was a member of the German Archaeological Institute.
- 6 'The reconstruction thus effected at Elephantine Island was the truth, and virtually nothing but the truth, however it cannot be asserted that it was the whole truth concerning the Sanctuary building at Kalabsha. Inevitably, since one thing which is certainly known concerning the Ptolemaic Sanctuary at Kalabsha is that the whole truth is not known. Therefore lest it should be charged that "suppressio veri" amounted to "suggestio falsi", a stone stele was set up....'
- 7 Wise became Wright's chief contact in the Section for the Development of the Cultural Heritage at UNESCO.
- 8 Correspondence records that the list changed a few times before he arrived in Iran.
- 9 The combined UNESCO report is in French but the reports on individual monuments are available in English in the Wright archive, box 30.
- 10 Here he is reflecting the principles of S.P.A.B.
- 11 Wright was not alone in that. *The Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites* published by ICCROM in 1998 made a similar omission.
- 12 None of whom cited any of Wright's publications.
- 13 Signatory States who nominate places for inscription agree a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and are encouraged to take into account the views of all stakeholders (ICOMOS 2016: §12). This does not generally include stakeholders within the wider 'world' community although sometimes comments from 'world experts' are included in the nomination dossier. The process of evaluation by ICOMOS addresses this lack through inviting 'desk reviews' of the nominations from acknowledged international experts (ICOMOS 2016: Annexe 6 A2). Integrity and Authenticity are related to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property.
- 14 Processes exist within the Operational Guidelines to address the fact that OUV may change over time (ICOMOS 2016: §155), and also for the removal of properties whose OUV is irreversibly compromised (ICOMOS 2016: §192).