Charters and the Ethics of Conservation
A Cross-Cultural Perspective

Barry Rowney

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Adelaide
School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design
Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture (CAMEA)

© Barry Rowney
March 2004
ABSTRACT

The growing realisation of national identity in the face of the threatening envelopment of globalisation has been one major inducement for the increasing practice of conservation of the world’s built heritage. This study examines contemporary practices of heritage conservation, analyses their assumptions and theories, and critiques their guiding instruments, the Charters. It adopts a cross-cultural perspective to assess the merits, validity and agency of the most recognised Charters, to discuss their various adaptations, particularly in the Syrian context, and to reveal their Eurocentric focus and indifference to cultural concerns. The study also identifies the inadequacies of the Charters with regard to ethics and morality and proposes a code of ethics for urban conservation.

The study focuses on the notion of authenticity that has been an issue of debate since the Nara Conference on Authenticity in 1994. Although arising from, and specifically aimed at, World Heritage Listing, authenticity is recognised as a complex issue dependent on cultural understandings. The study adopts the view that authenticity judgements are linked to a great variety of sources of information, such as form, design, materials, function, traditions, techniques, use, location and spirit that are context-related. It articulates a wide scope for conservation practices at the architectural, urban and archaeological levels, negotiating the breadth and depth of authenticity issues beyond mere fabric and function. The study promotes a dynamic view of authenticity, one that acknowledges socio-cultural change with its inevitable impact on the conditions and conservation of historic environment. The ethical code this study presents places the responsibility on the conservator to ensure the continued conservation and stewardship by the resident society.

The study argues that both the Venice and Burra Charters, being the most recognised conservation instruments, are pitched at individual monuments. It critiques the widely held assumption that maintains applicability of these Charters to area and urban conservation. It draws attention to the paradox that while these Charters address the ethics of conservation their scope are limited to individual buildings, whereas the Charters concerned with urban and area conservation, like the Washington Charter, are inadequate with regards to ethical and cultural issues. By articulating a code of ethics for urban conservation, the study attempts to bridge a significant gap.

The study draws on, and contextualises its arguments in, the rich and varied archaeological and urban heritage of Syria, a country that is still coming to terms with the practices, implications and problems of heritage conservation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of contents</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations and Glossary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Background to the Study</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Aims and Method</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charters</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Structure of the Thesis</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 1: THE SYRIAN EXPERIENCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduction</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Legislation Regarding Antiquities</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Archaeology and Conservation Practices</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebla</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mari</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ain Dara</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dura Europos</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosra</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Present Day Cultures and Urban Conservation</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus old city</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The old city of Aleppo</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maalula</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Summary</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 2: THE CHARTERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Building Conservation Charters</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Venice Charter</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Burra Charter</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Urban Conservation Charters</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO Recommendation</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Washington Charter</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian ICOMOS Urban Conservation Charter</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other charters</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Social and Cultural Factors</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Summary</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART 3: AUTHENTICITY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART 6: TOWARDS A CODE OF ETHICS FOR URBAN CONSERVATION

6.1 Introduction 291
6.2 Draft Code of Ethics for Urban Conservation 293

CONCLUSION 308

BIBLIOGRAPHY 312

APPENDICES (separate volume)
1 Régime Des Antiquités En Syrie DECRET – Loi No 222
2 Bosra: World Heritage Listing Citation
3 Damascus: World Heritage Listing Citation
4 Damascus: Parliamentary Act 826
5 Aleppo: World Heritage Listing Citation
6 3 Tiered Charter System
7 Venice Charter
8 Burra Charter
9 Draft of the New Burra Charter, July 1997
10 UNESCO: Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Rôle of Historic Areas
11 Washington Charter
13 Draft of the Australian ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Urban Areas
14 Nara Document on Authenticity
15 The Declaration of San Antonio
16 Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the Old City of Aleppo
   Chapter 3 Principles
       3.1.1 Building categories
       3.1.2 Permitted scope of construction
       3.1.3 Implementation
       3.2 General Principles
   Chapter 4 Floorplans
   Chapter 5 Building Elements
       5.1.1 Outside walls
       5.1.4 Kishks
   Chapter 6 Streets and Public Space
       6.1 Pavement
       6.2 Drainage
       6.3 Electrical installations
17 ICOMOS Resolutions – Conservation of Smaller Historic Towns
18 Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage
19 Cultural Diversity Code: Code of Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places
20 Ethical Commitment Statement for ICOMOS Members
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations by the author are shown (Author: date). All redrawn maps are by the author, with alterations illustrating features referred in the text.

2 Ebla: aerial view. The date given is 2250 BC. Postcard from Aleppo.
4 Ebla: mud brick ruins. (Author: 1999)
5 Ebla: protective roof over the original plastered wall. (Author: 1998)
6 Ebla: new protective plaster spalling to reveal original mud brickwork. (Author: 1998)
7 Mari: protective plastic roofing over the remaining mud brick walls. (Author: 1998)
9 Mari: excavations, aerial view. The protective plastic roofing can be seen, and covers the only remaining portion of the ruins. The direction of the view is shown in Fig. 8. Postcard from Aleppo – no information given.
10 Ain Dara: Plinth of lions and sphinxes. (Author: 1998)
11 Ain Dara: the proximity of the new concrete columns to the ruins. (Author: 1998)
12 Dura Europos: view of the stoa area. (Author: 1997)
15 Bosra: the Scaenae Frons of the theatre. (Author: 1996)
16 Bosra: houses built among the ruins. 1996.
18 Damascus: the square adjacent to the Umayyad Mosque. (Author: 2001)
19 Damascus: the Umayyad Mosque and square, with the fountain in the foreground. (Author: 2001)
20 Damascus: the Suk al-Hamidiye restorations. The photo was taken on a Friday and hence few people are present. (Author: 2000)


24. Aleppo: one of the entrances of the Banshoya scheme into the old city, as shown in Fig. 23. (Author: 2001)


27. Maalula: traditional houses. (Author: 1966)

28. Maalula: sketch section through a house. (Author: 1999)

29. Idlib: the typical beehive houses of this region; cf. the Maalula and Idlib constructions with the drawing of the house construction in the Hauran region, Fig. 37. (Author: 1999)


31. Maalula: the village in 1999 with the new hotel. (Author: 1999)

32. Queensland, Australia: timber “Gothic” church. (Author: 2000)

33. Aleppo: a French colonial building from the early twentieth century with “oriental additions”. The central arched openings are an “oriental” feature contemporary with the classical façade, while the kishk is a more recent curious mix of an Arabic form in modern materials. (Author: 1995)

34. Dahkleh Oasis: example of “Nubian Skew Arch” construction at Ismant el Kharab, a 3-4th century CE Roman Site. (Author: 2000)


36. Dahkleh Oasis: village of Qasr. Only the minaret of the Mosque and the small conical dome of the adjacent tomb contrast with the flat roofs of the other buildings. (Author: 2000)

37. Hauran Region, Syria: corbelled structural system. I am indebted to Abdal Al Nassan for drawing the structural system and making the written description easier to understand. (Author: 2002)


39. Dar’a province near Bosra: a sketch of the construction system based on a description by the architect. Compare this “traditional” construction with that of Fig. 37. (Author: 1998)

40. Jerusalem: Dome of the Rock (Internet).

41. Aleppo: a courtyard house showing the elaborate interior. (Author: 2000)

42. Qalaat Ja’ber: situated near the Assad Dam, the fortress still dominates the newly formed Lake Assad as it did the River Euphrates. (Author: 2000)
Qalaat Ja’ber: the only information board for the interpretation of the site. (Author: 2000)

Qalaat Ja’ber: portion of the ruins showing a variety of brickwork. (Author: 2000)

Aleppo: two Kishks showing the juxtaposition of two steel “I” beams in the same configuration as the adjacent traditional timber beam on a stone corbel. Note the curving of the end of the steel beams to simulate the traditional beams, and that the structure above the beams is traditional. (Author: 2001)

Aleppo: traditional mode of transport in the suq. (Author: 2001)

Dahkleh Oasis: village of Qasr. Once a thriving village, the deterioration of the fabric can be easily seen. (Author: 2002)

Aleppo: new development in the old city. Even though situated on the main inroad of the Banshoya scheme, and in proximity to some high-rise buildings following that scheme, the present buildings maintain the general scale of the old city. (Author: 2001)

Damascus: new development outside the old city walls. The photograph shows one flyover taken from another. Although situated within half a kilometer from the old city, and built on an area developed in the early twentieth century that had retained a close-knit and medium scale built environment, it now stands in stark contrast to the old city in all respects. (Author: 1996)

Damascus: Martyr’s Square, 1918. An enlargement of the square shown in Fig. 17.

Damascus: Martyr’s Square, 1922. The photograph equates with the plan. The notable Martyr’s Monument is to the right. The Post and Telegraph Office is in the centre of the picture. The trams indicate the tramline configuration of the plan. Historical postcard, Damascus.

Damascus: Martyr’s Square, c1960. Looking NW, a garden setting now surrounds the monument. The building adjacent to the Post and Telegraph Office remains, but the surrounding area is becoming compact. The tramline has been relocated nearer to the Council “Rathaus.” Historical postcard, Damascus.

Damascus: Martyr’s Square, c1960. Looking NE. Historical postcard, Damascus.

Damascus: Martyr’s Square, 2002. Compare with Figs. 51 and 53. The once predominating monument is now becoming dwarfed by the surrounding development. (Author: 2002)

Damascus: a street in the Old City. The Ottoman building on the right sits comfortably with later buildings in the rest of the street. (Author: 2002)

Aleppo: the suqs of Aleppo have several finishes to their interior. This section is rendered. (Author: 2001)

Aleppo: one of the older stone vaulted suqs. (Author: 2001)

Aleppo: suq vaulting recently “restored,” contrasting sharply with adjacent vaulting shown in Fig. 57. (Author: 2001)

Serjjila: a tree growing inside a Byzantine ruin. (Author: 2000)

Apamea: portion of a Roman stone arch in danger of collapse. (Author: 2000)
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Barry G Rowney
ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

AAA: Australian Archaeological Association.

AIATSIS: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Conservator: Includes all practitioners that carry out conservation action, including architects, engineers, material conservators, art conservators, landscape conservators, conservation planners and surveyors.

Conservationist: A person, not necessarily a practitioner who has an interest in the conservation of heritage places.

EAA: European Association of Archaeology.

ECS: Ethical Commitment Statement.

ICOMOS: International Council of Monuments and Sites. An international non-governmental organisation bringing together people and institutions actively concerned with the conservation of buildings, groups of buildings and larger units of architectural, archaeological and historical interest. It enjoys consultative and associate status with UNESCO, from which it also receives funding. Australia is a member state of ICOMOS, and its members make up Australia ICOMOS.

Monument: As used by ICOMOS, means the physical evidence of history, and includes Place, as defined below, archaeological sites, and ruins.

Practitioner: means a person, usually a professional conservator and member of a conservation organisation, engaged in conservation work.

UIA: International Union of Architects.

Urban and Area: Urban usually denotes a built up city or town. Area has a broader meaning, including smaller villages, landscapes, townscapes, groups of buildings, and gardens. Both words are used in this thesis and may be interchangeable.

WAC: World Archaeological Congress.

The following terms are taken from the Burra Charter:

Place: means site, area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, and may include components, contents, spaces and views.

Fabric: means all the physical material of the place including components, fixtures, contents and objects.

Conservation: means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to a number of people for assistance in the preparation of this thesis. My thanks go first to Dr. Samer Akkach, as my supervisor through the whole course of the thesis. He assisted in the translation of Arabic legislation, and his help was invaluable for the final organisation of the document. His knowledge and understanding helped clear many aspects of Arabic writings and culture.

My thanks also go to my two other supervisors: Dr. Judith Brine in the first part of the study for her comments and encouragement, and Dr. David Jones in the latter part for his comments.

During the course of the research in Syria, I met with and interviewed a number of conservation architects and historians both in Damascus and Aleppo. But first special thanks should be given to Dr. Sultan Muhesen, the Director General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria, with whom I had several interviews. In addition, thanks go to Dr. Mohammad Ali, Director of the Aleppo Museum, and responsible for the archaeological sites in northern Syria, for his comments on some of the sites included in the thesis.

In Damascus, interviews with the architects Abdul Rahman Al Nassan and his assistant Basel Abdulaal, not only provided interesting discussion but also began a lasting friendship. They are conservation architects, and one of their major projects has been the conservation of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

Although I criticise some of the conservation work of Nazih Kawakibi, I must give him thanks for his generous time, information and contacts during some of my stay in Damascus. He is an architect and lecturer at the Department of Architecture in the University of Damascus, and a member of the Friends of the Old City of Damascus, a watchdog group on conservation work in the Old City. He is also responsible for some conservation projects in the Salhiyye Quarter. His colleague, also a member of the Friends, is Koutaiba Shihabi, a historian, and author of a book of Minaret design in Damascus. Also Dr. Nadia Khost, a historian and author, gave freely of her time, and showed me a number of historical sites, both ancient and more recent, in the modern areas of Damascus surrounding the Old City. Dr. Talal Akili, Professor of Architecture at the University of Damascus, also gave an interview regarding conservation in the Old City. He is the Chairman of the Committee for the Preservation of Old Damascus, and as such has differing opinions to the members of the Friends of Old City of
Damascus. My thanks go to them all for their opinions, attitudes and expertise that they brought to some most interesting interviews. Special thanks are due to Salwa Akkach, for her time in assisting me to travel around Damascus for these interviews.

Dr. Raif Muhanna is an architect in Damascus with whom I had a most interesting interview. We did not agree on most points, and I have criticised one of his projects that won an Aga Khan Award in 1990. Nevertheless, his opinions were invaluable regarding his approach to conservation.

The goodwill shown by those in Damascus was continued in Aleppo. First my thanks go to Khair El Deen Al Rifai, a noted conservation architect, and member of the Board of Administration of the Aleppo Archaeological Society. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Abdulkarim Barazi, a lecturer in architecture in the University of Beirut, and a translator for Mr. Al Rifai. Mr. Barazi is also a conservation architect, employed with the Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo. Special thanks go for his on the spot translation of my talk to the Aleppo Archaeological Society, again another experience in attitudes towards conservation in archaeological sites. Dr. Muhammud Ali, the Director of the Aleppo Museum was helpful in passing the latest situation regarding the archaeological sites on to me.

Mr. Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj, is a senior member of the Aleppo rehabilitation project, and was most helpful regarding the organization of the project. He also provided a CD Rom of the Guidelines for the Restoration and Renovation of the Old City of Aleppo. Both he and his assistant, Mr. Mahmoud Ramadan, were most helpful in their comments.

Back home, I am indebted to Hannah Bleby for her translation from the German of the report of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Damaskus. I am also indebted to Lyn Stocks for her translation from the French of the Syrian legislation: Regulations Regarding Antiquities in Syria.

Finally, most thanks go to my wife Alison for her patience and support during the whole long life of this thesis. Without her constant support it could never have come to fruition.