

PART TWO

Policy and Principles



The Content and Theoretical Significance of the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China

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Abstract: *In October 2000, at the city of Chengde, Hebei province, the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China (the China Principles), which includes Commentary on the Principles, was approved by China ICOMOS. This paper presents the main content of the China Principles and the theoretical significance the document has for the conservation of China's cultural heritage sites. It provides a synopsis of and defines the scope of the document's thirty-eight articles, which address a range of conservation issues, and reviews the evolution of heritage preservation in China from the 1930s onward, including the roles of significant historical figures such as Liang Sicheng and Qi Yingtao. In addition, this paper discusses the relationship of the China Principles to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics and to international practice and conventions, including the Venice Charter and the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). It concludes that the China Principles, along with their Commentary, present an organized, systematic compilation of Chinese experience and draws on domestic and international success to provide operational guidelines. It is believed that such guidelines are highly significant for the development of an urgently needed theoretical base to guide practice in the conservation of China's immovable heritage.*

The *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (the China Principles) was published at Chengde, Hebei province, in October 2000. In the afterword, Zhang Bai, deputy director-general of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, details the reasons for and the process of drafting the document. This paper summarizes the main contents and the theoretical significance of this document for

Chinese conservation practice. The China Principles consist of thirty-eight articles addressing a range of conservation issues, Commentary on the Articles, and an English-Chinese glossary of conservation terms.¹

Key Articles of the China Principles

Article 1 states: "Heritage sites are the immovable physical remains that were created during the history of humankind and that have significance; they include archaeological sites and ruins, tombs, traditional architecture, cave temples, stone carvings, sculpture, inscriptions, stele, and petroglyphs, as well as modern and contemporary places and commemorative buildings, and those historic precincts (villages or towns), together with their original heritage components, that are officially declared protected sites."

Article 24 states: "Natural and cultural landscapes that form part of a site's setting contribute to its significance and should be integrated with its conservation."

Article 36 states: "These *Principles* may also be drawn upon for conservation of the historic condition and setting of commemorative places where important historic events took place."

In the *Management Regulations for Memorial Sites, Ancient Buildings, and Rock Grottoes*, issued in 1986 by the Ministry of Culture, the objects of protection were expanded from ancient buildings to all immovable heritage. This accorded with the actual situation of China's cultural heritage protection. In recent years, great efforts have been made to preserve, by means of advanced technology, the historic sites, particularly those of large scale: ancient tombs, ancient villages, and historic streets, some of which are key state

projects. The expansion also reflects the developing concept that although the heritage objects are diverse in form and scale, they should be preserved in accordance with common principles once they have been designated as heritage.

Purpose and Objectives of the China Principles

Article 2 states that the purpose of the China Principles is to ensure preservation, through good conservation practice, of the authenticity of sites and their information and values. The objectives are to remedy damage done by natural and human forces and to prevent further damage, by both technical means and managerial measures. This is, significantly, the first time in China that the purpose of cultural heritage protection has been defined from the perspective of preserving and sustaining authenticity and historic information. Realization of this point constitutes the core of protection work and is the very basis of the China Principles.

The Threefold Value of Cultural Heritage Sites

Article 3 states that the value of a heritage site is threefold: historic, artistic, and scientific. Chapter 2 of the Commentary analyzes in detail these values and concludes that cultural heritage must retain its historic authenticity. Based on this concept, article 2 states, “All conservation measures must observe the principle of not altering the historic condition.” This article is in accord with the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics, which decrees that “the restoration, maintenance and relocation of immovable heritage shall be carried out in such a way that the original look of the relics be maintained.”²

Articles 18 through 27 set forth the technical requirements to ensure that the original condition of a site is kept intact.

Heritage Conservation as a Systematic Process

Article 2 states, “Conservation refers to all measures carried out to preserve the physical remains of sites and their historic settings.” This means that conservation not only involves construction work or refurbishing and restoration of ancient buildings in the common sense of the words, but is also guided by principles that are unique in this field. Article 5 further points out, “Conservation needs to be carried out according to a sequential process,” the phases of which are elaborated in articles 9 through 17 and in chapter 5 of the Commentary. The China Principles also relates conservation to daily management. Defining the technical phases of the

protection work as a logical process is one of the unique and important innovations of the document.

Assessment of Significance

Article 5 states that in the entire process of cultural heritage protection, assessment of the values of a site is the top priority. Article 12 states that the result of the values assessment is the basis for determining the level of classification as an officially protected entity, and article 13 states that the assessment result is also the basis for formulating the site’s conservation master plan. Chapter 8 of the Commentary elaborates the main contents of the values assessment.

Stages of Conservation

Articles 13 through 16 elaborate the three stages in developing and implementing a site’s conservation master plan: formulation, execution, and review. Chapter 9 of the Commentary states, “All heritage conservation organizations should draw up a conservation master plan” and explains the types of master plans and the main contents of each type.

Use of Heritage Sites

Article 4 states that cultural sites should be used in a rational manner, that this use is for social benefit, and that no damage to the site’s values shall be inflicted for short-term gain. The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics, as revised in 2002, decrees that “protection is the purpose, remedy of the damage is of top priority, [and] reasonable use and efficient management are fundamental.” This means that the three tasks of heritage preservation—namely, conservation, use, and management—are of similar importance and that none shall be neglected. Of the three, conservation is the basis for deciding use, which is secondary and must be guided by the requirements of conservation. Management involves the whole process and should therefore be promoted. The China Principles also proposes standards for reasonable use of sites. Chapter 4 of the Commentary elaborates the relationship between the social benefit and the financial benefit derived from use of a site.

Conservation Interventions

Articles 28 through 35 state that conservation includes all technical measures taken to repair a cultural site and improve the surrounding environment. They define the concepts and technical measures for conservation work according to six types: daily maintenance, prevention and stabilization, improvement of present condition, focused remedy of seri-

ously damaged condition, restoration of the whole site, and environmental management. Chapters 11 through 16 of the Commentary recommend technical measures to be taken and problems that may occur in the work.

Theoretical Significance of the China Principles

As analyzed above, the China Principles constitute a document rich in content and logically coherent among its Articles and Commentary chapters, and they provide both principles and practical procedures concerning conservation techniques and management. It is a document formulated by an independent collaboration of scholars working in the conservation field, framed within China's relevant laws and regulations. The China Principles are both a summary of seventy years of experience accumulated by Chinese conservation practitioners and a reflection of the achievements resulting from increasing exchanges, in both theory and practical work, with international conservation counterparts. In short, the China Principles are of vital significance in establishing a theoretical framework for China's cultural heritage protection.

The vast body of experience and research results acquired by architects, archaeologists, historians, art historians, management, and others whose activities have related to the preservation of China's cultural heritage is highlighted below.

Clarification of the Objectives and Specific Tasks of Conservation

At the beginning stages of cultural heritage protection in China, attention was paid only to the maintenance of ancient buildings, to their history and original appearance, and, if possible, to extending their life. An example of this approach is found in the 1932 Plan for the Reconstruction of the Floor, Beams, and Girders of Wenyuan Ke, which states that "artistically, the top priority is to maintain the original look" (Tsai Fangyin, Liu Tuntseng, and Liang Sicheng 1932). Later, in the 1934 Plans for the Restoration of the Wanchun Pavilion, the approach was expanded to include architectural elements and amended such that "all newly applied painting should look as much like the original as possible" (Liu Tuntseng and Liang Sicheng 1934).

In the 1950s the Mogao Grottoes were included in the range of cultural heritage needing protection, and the values of the cultural relics were defined as revolutionary, historic, and artistic. As stated by Chen Mingda ([1953] 1998: 16), "Any

historical construction that exists today, once its historic and artistic values are confirmed, is to be protected with the greatest possible effort."

Since the 1960s the values of cultural property have been legally recognized as "historic, artistic, and scientific." The purpose of preserving ancient buildings was defined as "making the past serve the present"; that is, ancient relics are to be used as a means to educate people about the history of China and to cultivate their aesthetic awareness. Specifically, there were four purposes for preserving ancient buildings: (1) to motivate the Chinese people's patriotism and national confidence; (2) as material evidence for historical studies; (3) as inspiration for architectural and artistic innovations; and (4) as recreational and tourist facilities. The second of these was viewed as the most significant, and it is commonly known as preserving "historic values" (Qi Yingtao [1985] 1992: 171). Since the 1990s the range of types of cultural heritage to be protected has been greatly expanded.

Development of Concepts of Heritage Conservation

Two conservation principles followed in China in the 1930s were to maintain the present condition of ancient buildings and to restore them to their original appearance (Liang Sicheng 1935: 1). In the 1950s the principle was shifted to preservation of the original appearance, which applied to both the exterior and the interior of buildings: "The restoration of ancient buildings shall preserve their historic form, structure, and all decorative patterns. This is what the Ministry of Culture decreed: preservation of the original form. The preservation of the original form applies not only to the visible exterior but also to the invisible interior" (Chen Mingda [1953] 1998: 17–18).

These concepts, since they were intimately related to practical preservation work, were challenged by the problems incurred as the work deepened and expanded. As a result, experts had numerous discussions concerning the conservation approaches, and the consensus reached covered the following issues:

1. *Preservation of the existing condition, restoration of the original form, and maintenance of the original appearance.* The Provisional Statute for Cultural Heritage Protection of the State Council (1961) decreed that the restoration and maintenance of ancient buildings and grottoes, including any later additions, should be guided by the principle that the original form should be restored or the present

condition preserved and that the institutions that make use of the heritage sites for tourism or educational purposes should make no alterations to the original form.

The Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of Cultural Relics, originally enacted by the Chinese People's Congress in 1982, decreed that the restoration, maintenance, or relocation of revolutionary sites, memorial buildings, ancient tombs, ancient grottoes, and ancient engravings and their attachments are to be guided by the principle that no alterations should be made to their original form and that the institutions making use of heritage property for other purposes should conform to the same principle and ensure that no damage, removal, replacement, or addition be done.

These two clauses provide evidence that a consensus was taking the form of conservation principles. Controversies over such questions as the present condition of cultural heritage and what should be preserved were essentially settled in the early 1980s: "The preservation of the present condition means the preservation of the healthy look of ancient buildings as they are at present. It would be wrong to think that preservation of the present condition means the preservation of a shabby mess" (Qi Yingtao [1981] 1992: 125).

Another controversy lies in the concept "original form" and how it might be restored. With regard to a building, the definition at present is the form it had at the time of its identification as a place of historic value, not necessarily the form it might have had at its earliest historic period. The criteria for determining original form result from the time of authentication of the existing remains. Accordingly, restoration to the original form is also determined by authentication of the original form.

The actual time of a building's construction and the corresponding characteristics are to be used as the basis for restoration (Qi Yingtao [1985] 1992: 171). Restoration of the original form should be based on the fact that the major parts of the building, that is, the wooden framework consisting, for example, of beams, and brackets, exist with only minor parts lost or damaged (Qi Yingtao [1987] 1992: 346). It should also be based on the premise that "the people who are responsible for the restoration must have adequate proof and evidence for the original form of the building" (Liang Sicheng 1932) and that "full investigation has to be conducted to determine the original form, and adequate expertise, technology, and financial support should be mobilized

before the work begins" (Qi Yingtao [1985] 1992: 170). In the choice between preserving the present condition of a building and restoring the original form, the consensus is that the first consideration should be preserving the present condition, since restoration of the original form is too complicated a task to accomplish with assurance. In fact, in many cases, preservation of the present condition is the only alternative.

By "no alterations to the original form" is meant "both of the two alternatives" (Qi Yingtao [1985] 1992). Therefore, for ancient wooden buildings, conservation is the highest objective to strive for, and preservation of current condition is the basic requirement (Du Xianzhou 1986).

2. *Preservation, to the greatest extent possible, of the remains of the ancient buildings.* One of the contributions that architects of the 1930s made to the preservation of China's cultural heritage was the introduction of architectural, structural, and engineering knowledge into the area that had once been the domain of craftsmen only. The architects were, however, ignorant of the significance of preserving the conventional techniques and materials from which the ancient buildings had been constructed. Rather, they believed in reinforced concrete as an ideal substitute for wood in both reparation and restoration work (Liang Sicheng 1935a: 1).

In the 1960s experts started to consider the feasibility of using traditional techniques and wood to replace damaged or decayed wooden parts, and this idea was successful in the restoration of Yongle Gong (Palace of Everlasting Happiness). In the 1970s synthetic materials as reinforcing agents were tried so as to minimize replacement of original parts, and it was at this time that the maximal preservation of the original form of ancient buildings started to draw professional attention. Qi Yingtao summarized this approach in 1985: "For individual buildings, the original form that we try to preserve includes the following four aspects: shape, structure, texture, and craftsmanship. For compound buildings, one more aspect should be added to the list, that is, the interior and the exterior environment that the buildings had at the time of construction" (172). Luo Zhewen ([1990] 1998: 258–60) summed up the concept of original form of ancient buildings at the UNESCO Asian and Pacific Cultural Heritage Protection Conference in 1990 as follows: shape, structure, material, and technique.

3. *Restoration of the old as old.* This concept was first suggested, possibly in 1952, by Liang Sicheng. According to Luo Zhewen's memoirs, Liang said, "Restored ancient buildings should have the ancient flavor. In other words, the old should be restored as old" (Luo Zhewen 1998: 301). Chen Mingda ([1953] 1998: 19) stated similarly, "To renovate ancient buildings without careful study, to lose the detailed craftsmanship and tone of the artist and thus lose the original look, is not restoration at all; it is destruction." In 1964 Liang Sicheng elaborated this idea: "I still believe it to be an absolute diminishment of artistic and historic values to turn ancient buildings into something brilliantly new, like polishing vessels of the Zhou dynasty and mirrors of the Han dynasty to re-create their shining surfaces. . . . I think we need to conform to the principle of restoring the old as old in the preservation of ancient buildings that carry historic and artistic values" ([1964] 2001: 440–42). Qi Yingtao has stated on many occasions that "to restore the old as old" is not only aimed at the external effect of the restoration work but is also a technical methodology. For example: "In the course of ancient building restoration, whether to restore the original form or to preserve the present condition, the ultimate effect, in addition to stabilization, should be the obvious signs of its age, the markings of time, so that the viewer may get an immediate glimpse of the longevity of the building. To achieve this effect, we should analyze the color, the luster, as well as the structural features of the building. . . . And it can be accomplished by combining various factors which we call 'to restore the old as old'" (Qi Yingtao [1978] 1992: 125).
4. *Reconstruction of destroyed buildings.* Mainstream opinion is generally against this concept. Chen Mingda ([1953] 1998: 16) has written, "Some important buildings that were destroyed in the past but found their way into historical documents may provide no clue at all about their original shape, and there is, of course, no way of maintaining their historic and artistic value. For such cases, there is no need to consider reconstruction."
5. *Other concepts.* With increasing international exchange in the field of cultural heritage protection

in the 1970s and 1980s, some experts, Qi Yingtao among them, suggested other principles that we need to conform to. The reversibility principle states that "strengthening measures should be reversible to some extent"; the minimum interference principle states that "if minor repair is adequate, do not make major repairs; if partial removal is satisfactory, do not completely remove; original parts should be preserved to the greatest possible degree; the extent of repair should be limited to the smallest possible area; and replacement should be applied to as few parts as possible" (Qi Yingtao [1985] 1992: 182–83). The legibility principle states that "repair work that is aimed at preserving the present condition should guarantee that the signs and markings of previous repair work be preserved so that these successive traces may serve as evidence in diachronic studies of the architectural characteristics of other dynasties. In other words, the markings may carry a considerable degree of legibility" (Qi Yingtao [1988] 1992: 354). All these concepts have been generally accepted and adopted in practical restoration work.

Establishment of Cultural Heritage Conservation and Restoration Procedures

In 1935 Liang Sicheng formulated the Plan for the Restoration of the Buildings in the Confucius Temple at Qufu. In the preface, Liang wrote, in reference to the differences between modern designers and the ancient architects: "We need to be responsible for the conservation or restoration of the ancient buildings from various dynasties. We need to acquaint ourselves, before designing, with the date of construction, the architectural style of the time and the cause of the damage, if any, to the buildings and its remedy" (1935b). Liang's practice in the restoration of the Confucius Temple established a procedure that has been refined and that is still in use today.

Clarification of the Relationship between Conservation and Use of Cultural Heritage

From the beginning China was faced with the problem of how to make use of its cultural heritage. In the 1950s it was urgent to find new functions for ancient buildings, and the idea of assigning new functions to ancient buildings based on categorization according to their importance was

proposed. In 1952 Luo Zhewen classified immovable heritage generally into two categories: unsuitable and suitable for practical uses. The former included stone engravings and sculptures, statues, and other relics of archaeological value but no practical utility, and the latter included, according to Luo, “(1) Those important ancient buildings that can serve as museums, exhibition venues, parks and tourist resorts, etc., the use of which must be guided by the noninterference principle; and (2) those ancient buildings of minor importance that can serve as offices, schools, meeting rooms, etc., the use of which is again guided by the principle that no damage is done to the buildings themselves and the major components such as the main halls of temple complexes, stele, sculptures and engravings, etc.” ([1952] 1998: 161–64). Chen Mingda, in 1955, pointed out that “in some places, protection is mistaken for no function; that is, the buildings are completely locked up. The lack of restoration and financial support thus isolates them, and gradually they fall into decay” ([1955] 1998: 71). In the 1980s Qi Yingtao said that “ancient buildings and other cultural relics inside a protected site should first be classified into several categories and then put to different uses according to their values.” Newly constructed service facilities should “not interfere with the view,” and newly constructed tourist attractions should “go with the original buildings in style and nature,” and there must be “a border between the relics and the new constructions” ([1984] 1992: 166–67).

Categorization of Heritage Conservation Projects

Cultural heritage preservation is the main task of conservation work. Because of the immovable nature and the materials, mainly wood, of buildings, such projects are complex and diverse. To protect the heritage from further decay, it is vital to categorize the project and to clarify each category. In 1953 Chen Mingda classified projects into four categories—maintenance, rescue, reinforcement, and restoration—and clarified the objectives, targets, methodology, procedure, and problems of each. Conservation practice over the past fifty years has for the most part conformed to his categorization.

International Cooperation as Reflected in the China Principles

Compared to Europe’s, China’s cultural heritage protection had a late start. Its growth, however, has always been facilitated by assistance from other countries. The earliest law concerning heritage protection is the Law for the Preservation of

Ancient Relics and its Implementation Specifications published by the government of the Republic of China in the 1930s. Lu Zhou (2001) wrote, “The whole law and most of its regulations are borrowed from foreign countries,” adding that pioneer specialists, such as Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen, favored introducing, studying, and adopting the practices of Europe and Japan.

In the 1950s the Chinese authorities decreed that practices in the Soviet Union should be adopted (Wang Yequi [1957] 1997). Soviet laws and academic works were quickly translated into Chinese for reference. In summary, the Soviet system contained the following points: (1) all cultural and artistic heritage of a country belongs to the people and should be under the direct control of the state, and the preservation of the heritage is of great significance to the whole nation; (2) the state formulates all laws to regulate protective actions, and the work should be carried out by specialized government agencies; (3) a special institution is established in the government (the People’s Committee) to take charge of protection work, and similar institutions are set up in the governments of all federal republics; and (4) the documentation, registration, maintenance, and repair of memorial buildings (i.e., heritage properties) should be standardized (Luo Zhewen [1953] 1998, [1955] 1998). Soviet practices played a fundamental role in the formulation of China’s legal and administrative systems.

With the implementation of its open policy, China moved faster to catch up with the rest of the world in protecting cultural heritage. China’s ratification of the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1985 indicated that its heritage protection had become part of the global effort. All related agreements and charters of UNESCO were translated into Chinese, professional exchanges between China and other countries became increasingly frequent, and joint efforts were made in the protection of historic relics. Chinese scholars published books and papers introducing Western practices and theories, which in general influenced the entire nation in cultural heritage protection. The China Principles reflect the country’s continuing efforts at international cooperation and exchange.

The Value of Heritage Protection

The value of historic heritage lies in the fact that relics carry information of the past, a unique civilization, a meaningful development, or a historical event. Ancient buildings and

gardens also reflect the aesthetics of the ancient people and thus have artistic value. Historic sites include not only individual buildings but also whole cities or villages that carry the same values.

Cultural Heritage Values

The British expert Sir Bernard Feilden (1982: 6) summed up the values of cultural heritage as *emotional value*, which includes curiosity, identity, continuity, spirituality, and symbolism; *cultural value*, which includes documentation, history, archaeology, aesthetics, architecture, ecology, and science; and *use value*, which includes functional purposes, such as economic benefit, and sociological and political purposes. Wang Ruizhu's (1993: 6–8) interpretation expands on Feilden's: "Historic buildings and relics carry information handed down from past times, and are truthful vehicles of historical records. They are therefore very important in both historical studies and archaeology. They also afford substantial evidence that contributes to national identity. Important heritage can sometimes serve as the symbol of a nation and thus has spiritual function. The everlasting memory that ancient relics carry may provoke nostalgia for the glorious past of a nation and thus inspire feelings. Craftsmanship and artistry can provide aesthetic experience and inspiration and therefore have great artistic values." These statements on cultural heritage encompass the inherent historic, artistic, and scientific values, as well as the functions they have in educating contemporary society. They therefore serve as guidelines in the practical work of heritage conservation.

Emphasis on Scientific Methodology

Scientific methodology starts with thorough and multidisciplinary research work prior to the conservation project itself. The restoration process is a highly specialized one, aimed at the preservation and exhibition of the aesthetic and historic values of the cultural heritage and based on the original remains and substantial documents. The Florence Charter states, "No restoration or reconstruction should be allowed before thorough research is conducted in the original documentation of the ancient buildings and gardens and in the feasibility of the restoration is conducted. The preparation work shall be fully conducted and a thorough plan for restoration shall be submitted to a joint panel of experts and the authorities for approval before the restoration work gets under way" (ICOMOS-IFLA [1982] 1986). And the Washington Charter states, "Multidisciplinary research shall be conducted, which includes archaeology, history,

architecture, technology, sociology and economics, before a decision is made to restore a historical town or street" (ICOMOS 1986b).

Scientific methodology also influences the clear demarcation and precise definition of the managerial and technical means to conservation, for example, what can and what cannot be done to preserve a site. This is clearly stated in the 1964 International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter), its addendum the Florence Charter of 1982, the Washington Charter on the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (1987), and others (ICOMOS 1986a).

Emphasis on Daily Maintenance

Emphasis on daily maintenance is an essential and important task in the protection of cultural heritage.

Society and Heritage Protection

As a global task, conservation is aimed at "guaranteeing a fit living environment for the balanced and healthy development of all human beings where they can retain a relationship to nature and the traces of civilization that their forebears have handed down" (UNESCO 1986). Cultural property is the achievement and witness of different traditions and spirits of nations, the constituent of the national identity, and the foundation on which the nation's future is built. The ultimate purpose of preserving and exhibiting cultural and natural heritage is the future development of the whole of humanity: "The natural and cultural heritage should be made to play a positive role in contemporary social life, and so modern achievements, ancient values and the natural beauty of a historic site should be considered as a whole" (from International Heritage Conservation Law). Article 5 of the Venice Charter states that the use of heritage for the purpose of common interest is always beneficial to the relics themselves (ICOMOS 1986a). Accordingly, the protection of heritage, historic cities or towns, and the archaeological sites of a region should be taken into consideration when policy is being made regarding the general economic and social development of the district where the heritage is located.

A New Perspective on Conservation

Concepts discussed in the preceding sections have inspired Chinese scholars to consider conservation work from a fresh perspective. The conventions and agreements of international organizations and the charters and academic papers from

important conferences or well-known individuals have general applications. Implementation of these documents is considered most effective when national characteristics are taken into account in the practical work.

The Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1986a) states in its preface that it is absolutely necessary to establish internationally acknowledged principles in the effort to protect and to restore cultural heritage worldwide and that every country has the obligation to apply these principles in accordance with its own culture and tradition. The eighteenth conference of the World Heritage Committee also emphasized the need to consider the diversity of and differences among world cultures in the assessment of heritage values (Wang Qiheng, pers. com.). Therefore, as a charter-like document, the China Principles meet the need of the nation to preserve its cultural heritage while answering the call of international bodies and individuals for joint efforts.

Conservation Theory and Practice in China

Cultural heritage protection is in part a science. But is it an independent discipline? It is well known that the criteria for a scientific field to develop into an independent discipline are many: there must be absolutely clear objectives, independent basic theories, well-defined research subjects, and mature methodologies. As far as management is concerned, it must be absorbed into an established administrative system, a standardized division of subdisciplines, assessment standards, classical literature, and generally acknowledged achievements.

In this respect, China's cultural heritage protection is far from mature. It has not been considered an independent discipline. Academically, we have yet to develop complete and comprehensive fundamental theories. Luo Zhewen (2001) suggested at an international meeting that "a theoretical system and a practical system of cultural heritage protection with Eastern characteristics be established." We are presently well equipped for establishing the theoretical system: we have considerable experience and information; the objectives of the protection effort are adequately defined; the subjects of the research work have been confirmed by means of laws; and in methodology we have approached consensus as to the restoration of wood constructions and rock grottoes. The difficulty lies in establishing a fundamental theory and refining the methodology. Since conservation is an interdisciplinary field, techniques and methods must be borrowed from other subject areas. For instance, architec-

ture requires historical knowledge, and archaeology requires architectural, historical, environmental, artistic, legal, and economic knowledge.

Through the process of combining Chinese experience with the achievements in cultural heritage conservation from other countries, the China Principles, along with Commentary, synthesize concepts into a systematic approach that can be followed by practitioners. Thus the China Principles have significance in theoretical constructs for conservation in China.

Protection of China's immovable heritage cries out for a comprehensive conservation theory. A wide range of culturally important sites are found all over China, but different places seem to work on them according to their own understanding of conservation. In other words, no nationwide conservation standard yet exists in China. Policy makers and the people who implement the policies are not always conservation professionals, and the professional experts lack systematic guidance. All these circumstances pose great threats to the country's cultural heritage. Staff members of conservation institutions are not well trained, and they know little about the theories of cultural heritage protection. Those few universities with heritage conservation faculties do not have theoretical studies. These deficiencies demonstrate a lack of support for the conservation field from the public, and this hampers the establishment of a stable core of paraprofessionals and the sustainable development of a national effort to protect the country's cultural heritage. It is therefore urgent that China develop its own theoretical construct and approach to conservation.

Notes

- 1 Certain words in the China Principles, as commonly translated from the Chinese, are given below with their more usually accepted translations in parentheses:
 - Cultural relics (cultural heritage/property). For purposes of this paper, unless otherwise stated, the terms refer to immovable heritage, that is, sites.
 - Protection (conservation, preservation)
 - Restoration (repair)
- 2 This law was first adopted in 1982 at the 25th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress and last revised in 2002 at the 30th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress.

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The Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China—A Critique

Jean-Louis Luxen

Abstract: *Publication by China ICOMOS of the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China is an important event in the writing of heritage charters and guidelines. The document is innovative in that it comprises two complementary parts: the text setting forth the general principles and a detailed commentary explaining the principles. It is a comprehensive document overall, though evidently constrained somewhat in terms of its scope by China's legislative framework for heritage. The China Principles are in line with the principal international conventions and, in fact, are a response to the 1964 Charter of Venice. In terms of critique, the general principles skirt the issue of social value but cover them in the commentary, cultural routes are not covered, and historic urban and rural centers are not dealt with in sufficient depth. The China Principles have relevance for the entire country, with appropriate application to specific regional aspects of heritage sites, and are timely given the speed of change in China and the threats to cultural heritage. For a full understanding and expertise in applying the methodology, study and systematic training will be required if the China Principles are to realize their full potential.*

For some time now, voices have been raised to warn against the proliferation of charters, conventions, and other doctrinal texts addressing the conservation of cultural heritage. Admittedly, they all agree that discussions among conservation professionals have made it possible to draw up the major principles for the conservation of cultural heritage. However, the large number and unequal character of these charters undermine their credibility. In particular, they are criticized for having too broad a scope, thus giving rise to various, even divergent, interpretations.

The initiative to publish the *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (Agnew and Demas 2004),

known simply as the China Principles, should nonetheless be acknowledged as a major event and as a demonstration of the interest generated by such doctrinal texts when they are well conceived. The China Principles are, in fact, a response to a recommendation of the 1964 Venice Charter, the founding act of modern conservation practices: “People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. . . . Therefore, it is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and conservation of ancient buildings should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being responsible for applying them within the framework of its own culture and traditions” (ICOMOS and Second International Congress 1964).

A Two-Part Document: Principles and Commentary

From a formal standpoint, the China Principles are innovative in that they consist of two distinct and complementary parts:

1. *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China.* This text of global scope deals with concepts and general guidelines. It sets forth the general principles and presents the conservation process and the conservation guidelines, distinguishing between the different types of conservation interventions.
2. *Commentary on Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China.* This part is a detailed commentary that explains the China Principles explicitly and lists all the situations confronting professionals in their practice. It is an original

initiative that is extremely enlightening and useful. In methodical language, definitions are proposed, situations in the field are analyzed, and the various forms of intervention are described in a concrete manner.

Thus the China Principles constitute a comprehensive document. They serve as a basic reference and a kind of tool box that all conservation professionals should have within reach for regular consultation. However, given the document's length, it requires attentive study, and even systematic training, in order to acquire a full understanding of the directions it contains.

A Comprehensive and Carefully Elaborated Content

In terms of basic content, the China Principles provide a remarkable overview of current major practices in the conservation of cultural heritage at the international level, with a specific contribution that derives from the wealth and diversity of Chinese heritage and its long traditions of preservation and restoration. Fundamentally, the Principles are perfectly in line with the major guidelines of the Charter of Venice and the principal international conventions. China has played a leading role in their implementation, especially in the application of the World Heritage Convention of 1972 (UNESCO 1972): minimal and reversible interventions, an interdisciplinary approach, integrated conservation, the importance of regular maintenance, respect for authenticity, preservation of the setting, respect for the contributions of all periods to the monument, and a ban on additions or reconstruction based on conjecture. It should be pointed out that in many cases Chinese professionals and artisans responsible for managing palaces, temples, and tombs applied these norms before they were codified, thanks to the country's long tradition of preserving its heritage.

In terms of concepts, the China Principles incorporate the major preoccupations of the past few years:

- definition of authenticity in the spirit of the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (Lemaire and Stovel 1994);
- importance of the intangible dimension and the values of a cultural property;
- respect for decorative elements;
- opening up of cultural landscapes;
- special emphasis on the setting;
- recognition of commemorative sites; and
- taking into consideration tombs and cemeteries.

In terms of methods, the document also integrates the latest recommendations widely accepted by the international community:

- the decision-making process, as outlined in the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 2000);
- participation of the inhabitants;
- recognition of heritage by ethnic groups and religions;
- importance of a master plan and a management plan, in compliance with the requirements laid down in the *Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*;
- presentation and interpretation of heritage sites;
- risk preparedness;
- taking the economic factor into account, that is, heritage considered as a resource; and
- control of the number of tourist visits.

Analysis of the China Principles

Like all forwarding-looking documents of such complexity, the China Principles have areas that remain to be addressed.

Content

- The *social dimension of heritage* is not affirmed as such but only through its historic dimension, whereas the social factor could be accepted as a value in its own right, as in the case of many countries; an anthropological approach deserves to be advocated more strongly.
- The concept of *cultural routes* is neither defined nor analyzed despite the fact that China has some remarkable examples, starting with the different itineraries of the Silk Road.
- *Urban and rural ensembles* are mentioned, but not enough attention is drawn to this problem, even though China has experienced spectacular economic development that affects them directly and seriously. More efforts need to be made to recommend a linkage with UNESCO's 1976 *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas* (UNESCO 1976). At the present time, historic urban centers

are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Construction, in ignorance of the China Principles.

- Although cultural landscapes are duly treated, it is surprising to note that *natural heritage* as such is not given specific attention in the China Principles, even though in many regions of the world, particularly in China, the fertile relationship between culture and nature deserves to be highlighted.

Approach and Implementation

- *Appropriation of the China Principles by the local players.* The approach to drawing up the China Principles seems to have been top-down: the process was initiated and conducted by the authorities responsible for heritage conservation, in consultation with international experts. This is reflected in its exhaustive and rational character. But the time has come for Chinese conservation professionals and local players to appropriate these principles, apply them to the concrete situations confronting them, and play a role as advocates vis-à-vis public and private decision makers. In this regard, it appears that the document was planned to collect illustrations of good practices to visualize the recommended measures. Such an exercise can be recommended wholeheartedly.
- *Diversity of Chinese heritage.* The China Principles are of general relevance for the entire country. From the point of view of implementation, in view of the size of the country and the diversity of its heritage (the outcome of the wide variety of climates, economic conditions, and cultural particularities), it will probably be necessary to accept certain adaptations of the Principles to specific regional features. Since plans have been made for participation by local populations, this adaptation will probably be set in motion automatically.
- *Firm support from public authorities.* Given the speed of the economic and social changes occurring in contemporary China, serious dangers threaten cultural heritage, especially the old centers and districts of towns and the traditional villages. To avoid the kind of damage that has been observed in so many countries, firm measures should be taken to protect the setting around cultural properties. More generally, an integrated conservation approach by the authorities responsible for town and regional planning is necessary to ensure the

protection and rehabilitation of urban and rural ensembles and to respect the identities and lifestyles of their inhabitants.

Conclusion

The China Principles clearly demonstrate the interest in adapting the imperatives of conserving cultural heritage to a country and its traditions. Not only do they provide an excellent overview of commonly acknowledged practices, but they enrich them with the long experience and approaches typical of China. In this respect, the China Principles contribute, in turn, to joint reflection. They are a fine illustration of the fertility of exchanges between different cultures and an invaluable contribution to mutual understanding.

A last observation: the China Principles are not restricted to Chinese heritage sites but cover “the heritage sites in China.” This is a good example of the sense of common responsibility to the heritage of different cultures.

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The Role of Hebei Province in Developing and Implementing the China Principles

Zhang Lizhu

Abstract: *This paper discusses the involvement of China's Hebei province in the development of the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China, or China Principles (Agnew and Demas 2004), and their impact on the conservation of cultural heritage in the province. Experts from both the Hebei provincial and Chengde municipal cultural heritage bureaus participated in the working group that drafted the Principles. The bureaus are collaborating with the Getty Conservation Institute to establish a conservation and management master plan for the Chengde Summer Resort and its outlying temples as a component of the implementation strategy for the Principles.*

Hebei province has rich cultural heritage resources, and each type of cultural site has a particular significance. Conservation work started much earlier in this province than in other parts of China; therefore, the province has well-trained conservation personnel and well-organized conservation teams with extensive experience in conservation and management.

The provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau is putting the China Principles into practice by requiring that assessments and planning be conducted for every conservation project to improve quality. Supervision, guidance, and evaluation systems are integral to this approach and are put in place for the duration of projects. The bureau also has promoted the importance of conservation to the local government authorities and organizations and has attracted the involvement of local communities in conservation projects.

Hebei province, home to Beijing and Tianjin, is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization. Paleolithic people lived at the Nihewan site near the city of Yangyuan more than two

million years ago; the Nanzhuangtou site near Xushui and the Cishan site near Wuqan were home to ancient Chinese peoples from 7,000 to 10,000 years ago; ruins from the Shang dynasty (sixteenth–eleventh century B.C.E.) and the Zhou dynasty (eleventh century–221 B.C.E.) abound throughout the whole province; the Great Wall extends east-west across the province; and the royal gardens and tombs of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911 C.E.) are among the highlights of the cultural heritage sites in this region.

So far 12,215 sites of immovable cultural heritage have been discovered in Hebei, including 88 national-level protected sites, 670 provincial-level protected sites, and 3,476 county-level protected sites. More than 900,000 archaeological objects have been unearthed from these sites. Five towns have been designated historical and cultural heritage at the national level, three at the provincial level. The Great Wall, the Chengde Summer Resort and its outlying temples, and the Eastern and Western Qing dynasty tombs are on the World Heritage List.

As the above description demonstrates, Hebei province is rich in historical sites and artifacts that represent the continuous development of Chinese culture. Our heritage conservation work in the province started very early and enjoys the best expertise the country has to offer. Hebei personnel account for 10 percent of the heritage conservation staff in China. Over decades of conservation work, we have accumulated ample experience in the technology and management of heritage conservation. Because of this, Hebei province has played a key role in drafting and testing the *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (Agnew and

Demas 2004), known simply as the China Principles. These standards for conservation play an even greater role in Hebei province than in other parts of China.

Drafting the China Principles

In 1997 China's State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) and the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI), along with the Australian Heritage Commission, initiated the drafting of the China Principles. The Hebei provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau and the Cultural Heritage Bureau of Chengde City assisted in the process.

In 1998 and again in 2000, this author, together with staff members of the Chengde Bureau, undertook research on cultural heritage conservation in Australia and the United States. In Australia, we investigated the application of the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS and studied its relevance to the drafting of the China Principles; in the United States, a wide range of heritage sites, from historic cities to archaeological sites, were visited as part of the study tour.

In June 2001 the China Principles were finalized in Chengde; thus this document could also be known as the "Chengde Charter." The document was formally issued by China ICOMOS with the authorization of SACH. It is the product of the experience of Chinese heritage experts and the knowledge of Western scholars in the field and the continuation and development of the Burra Charter. With its Chinese perspective, the China Principles have universal value in the guidance of China's cultural heritage conservation work.

Implementing the China Principles in Hebei Province

The China Principles were first applied to conserve and manage parts of two World Heritage Sites in Hebei province: the Shuxiang Temple at the Chengde Summer Resort and cave 85 at the Mogao Grottoes. The project at Chengde (planning and architectural conservation) was conducted jointly by the Hebei provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau, the Cultural Heritage Bureau of Chengde City, and the GCI.

Significance of the China Principles

The China Principles clarify the scope and content of a conservation project. The document is highly practical, and it standardizes format and approach. It provides guidelines and solutions to many of the long-unsettled controversies

concerning conservation approaches. Consequently, conservation projects will be implemented more scientifically and systematically, fully guaranteeing the authenticity of the historic nature of the heritage. The standards embodied in the China Principles and which guide the conservation of cultural heritage in China can be summarized as follows:

1. *Cultural heritage conservation and the management process are of vital importance and are expressly formulated in the China Principles.* Since historic cultural relics vary with regard to place and age, it is impossible, even impractical and unscientific, to attempt a treatment methodology that applies to them all. On the other hand, since the historic sites and artifacts are fragile and cannot be re-created, the conservation work cannot afford the risks of arbitrary interference or treatment.
2. *All interventions applied to heritage sites, as well as their management, should be guided by the following procedure: investigation, assessment, planning, and implementation.* If this procedure is followed with accuracy, minor methodological defects of any kind will not lead the work astray. Any unreasonable simplification or abridgement of the procedure will, however, damage the relics and the message they carry.
3. *Clarification of the responsibilities and rights of the conservation managers is key to the effective accomplishment of the conservation project.* The China Principles make it clear that those institutions with direct operational responsibility at the lowest administrative level are the day-to-day managers of cultural sites and the executors of the basic tasks; they serve as supervisors for the entire process of heritage conservation work. The China Principles also clarify which category of work is to be undertaken by the site authority and which by public organizations or other agencies. The site authority should be the decision maker, organizer, supervisor of conservation and research, and work monitor, and it should also receive credit when the site is well managed and successful projects are undertaken.
4. *Dissemination of the China Principles promotes and improves the expertise of the work staff and the quality of their achievements.* This issue is discussed in detail in the next section.

Dissemination and Application of the China Principles in Hebei Province

The China Principles have been disseminated to management personnel at heritage conservation institutions in Hebei province, and they serve as the basis for establishing policies concerning conservation projects. The China Principles have also influenced the drafting of other significant guidelines that regulate conservation work in Hebei province, such as *Regulations for Cultural Heritage Conservation Management in Hebei Province* and *Regulations for the Security and Safety of Cultural Heritage during Conservation Intervention Projects in Hebei Province*. They also played a vital role in establishing state certification in planning, estimation, and construction personnel for the leading reconnaissance design and construction team. The state certificate clarifies the legal responsibilities of the project managers, stresses operational procedures, and tightens the contractual management of projects and the legal authorizations required prior to commencement of work.

The Hebei provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau is actively promoting the China Principles to all levels of local government, as well as to the public, to mobilize their support. Although cultural heritage conservation is mainly the duty of the government, public participation contributes to the best results. Only if both the government and the public understand and accept the importance of conservation work can the desired outcomes be accomplished.

The China Principles in Action

Among the first entities to adopt the China Principles was the Ancient Architecture Conservation Institute of Hebei province. The institute began applying the Principles to its work, even when they were still being drafted, by refining working procedures and evaluation criteria. In subsequent planning and design tasks, both inside and outside the province, the institute made an effort to conform its work to the specifications formulated in the China Principles, which won a high evaluation from the sponsoring institutions and the national cultural heritage authority.

The institute's adherence to the China Principles is evident in its work at the Daxiong Hall, which dates to the Liao dynasty (916–1125 C.E.). It is located in the Kaishan Monastery at Xincheng City, Hebei province. The institute undertook a large amount of research as part of the restoration process for Daxiong Hall. Each physical intervention

was preceded by substantial investigation and debate, every stage of the procedure was documented in detail, and all historical information that the building carries was preserved as accurately and as completely as possible.

The China Principles have also been disseminated to all World Heritage Sites in China and to all heritage conservation institutions in Hebei province, requiring them to undertake assessment and planning before a conservation measure is carried out. For example, projects for the ancient fortress at the Shanhaiguan Pass, built in 1381, started with a full-scale assessment, and then a detailed plan was drawn up. The planning addressed both the cultural relics inside the fortress and the fortress itself. A tourist development program was also drawn up to balance protection and use. Likewise, the conservation of Dingzhou City, a provincial-level historic site, and Jimingyi in Huailai, the best-preserved ancient post station in China, was conducted in the same manner.

The Hebei provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau is now conducting a series of assessments of the value, significance, and state of preservation of all historic sites at the provincial and national levels. The result of these assessments will be used to draft general project plans for cultural heritage conservation for the entire province. The major heritage protection institutions in Hebei province have been asked to draft their own plans for conservation and management so as to standardize their work procedures. So far, master plans for the Eastern and Western Qing dynasty tombs and the Chengde Summer Resort have been completed and approved by the People's Congress of Hebei Province. They will be disseminated and enforced as legal regulations.

The Importance of Experts

In the course of implementing the China Principles, the Hebei provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau became aware of the importance of the role of experts in supervising and guiding conservation work. A standing committee of experts in heritage conservation was established that includes specialists in ancient building restoration, archaeologists, and architects. The experts were consulted at the beginning of the Shanhaiguan Pass ancient fortress project for project assessment, fieldwork guidance, quality control, and other policy-related activities. With their valuable assistance, the conservation and development of the ancient fortress of Shanhaiguan Pass were accomplished successfully.

The Public's Role in Conservation

The China Principles call for wide-ranging input on conservation projects, from professionals and from the general public. This input has helped to clarify many issues that have puzzled us for decades, for example, how the value of heritage sites should be assessed, how to balance preservation of their current condition with restoration of their original form, and how to balance cultural values with the commercial benefits that derive from use of sites.

At the Hebei provincial Cultural Heritage Bureau, the entire bureau staff, from director to employee, have studied the Principles and understand the spirit of the document, and they have reached out to people throughout Chinese society to promote understanding and awareness of cultural heritage. For example, the iron lion in Cangzhou, cast in 963 C.E. and measuring 5.4 meters high by 6.3 meters long, was in lamentable condition because of an earlier treatment failure. To save this treasure, the provincial government advertised in the mass media seeking proposals for remedial measures from the public. This met with an enthusiastic response. Experts were invited to explain the value of the iron lion to all interested people and institutions, to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the submitted proposals, and to offer specific suggestions. Through this process, all participants came to a

full understanding of the significance of protecting the iron lion and the bureau learned from the public.

Conclusion

We are honored that the *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*—the China Principles—were created in Hebei province and that we are among the first to have implemented the guidelines. As a province rich in cultural heritage, Hebei has benefited greatly from international cooperation in the field of cultural heritage conservation. We have formed theories about conservation that are universally practical and meet the specific needs of China. We will refine and develop these theories through our practice. The application of the China Principles will elevate heritage conservation work in China to higher and higher levels.

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