

## Preface

Laura Graham (2006) recently wrote that anthropologists are obligated to promote human rights and social justice. Her call to action, especially among vulnerable communities, is one felt in many disciplines. We take particular pleasure in the range of fields represented in this volume on cultural heritage and human rights: anthropology and archeology (Hugo Benavides, Jan French, Charles Orser, Anne Pyburn, Helaine Silverman, Laurajane Smith, Larry Zimmerman), architectural and landscape history (D. Fairchild Ruggles), landscape architecture and geography (James L. Wescoat, Jr.), cultural heritage conservation and urban geography (William Logan), urban planning (Chris Silver), and history, cultural studies, human rights, and international and public affairs (Elazar Barkan). The richness of perspectives herein reflects both the disciplines and the dialogues among the authors.

The volume is divided into two parts. Part I begins with an introduction, written by the editors, that provides an overview of the themes that emerged in the workshop that gave rise to this volume. It concludes with the text of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Part II begins with William Logan's paper, which acts as a second introduction. There is a strong link between Logan's discussion of conflict and the specific South Asian case study presented in James L. Wescoat, Jr.'s essay. Like Wescoat, Chris Silver is concerned with conflicting claims to heritage sites in the context of tense local politics, local cultural antagonisms and tourism; his case study is Bali. The papers by Charles Orser, Jan French, Hugo Benavides, and Larry Zimmerman are united by their treatment of historically denigrated and disenfranchised populations. Orser deals with the Irish who, although a majority in their own country, faced centuries-long oppression from British colonialists that collided in the middle of the nineteenth century with the potato famine, thereby generating a mass migration and diaspora. The Africa-descended population of Brazil, discussed by French, is likewise a diaspora and one that faced terrible challenges due to the experience and legacy of slavery. Upon abolition this population still remained at the bottom of the social scale. Just as Irish-Americans have looked to their homeland in the construction of their cultural heritage, so, too, Afro-Brazilians are empowering their own trans-oceanic identity. The other great underprivileged group in Latin America is its own native peoples. Benavides is

interested in the cognitive dissonances between an appropriated pre-Hispanic past in Ecuador and its Indian present as played-out at the country's largest archeological site. Attention to native people leads us to Zimmerman's paper on how Indians have participated in, or been excluded from, writing the narratives of national commemorative sites. Laurajane Smith also deals with native people in her discussion of one Australian Aboriginal group's struggle to manage its own cultural heritage. At the same time, Smith incisively explores the political aspects of heritage practice and heritage assertion. Those political perspectives resonate with Anne Pyburn's forthright goal of getting archeologists to aid grass roots political action by providing useful information to various groups of stakeholders who then can think about the past in ways that lead to actions other than violence and divisive politics. The volume concludes with Elazar Barkan's philosophical consideration of the problematic entanglements of human rights and cultural heritage understood as cultural property (in both tangible and intangible form), and the question of voice.

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in scholarly attention to the topic of cultural heritage. Heritage is important because it provides symbolic and economic sustenance, meaning, and dignity to human lives. It legitimizes territorial and intellectual ownership, and it is a critical factor in the formation of social identity. Although heritage as a management practice has been the focus of numerous international conferences sponsored by UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM, and other cultural organizations, the specific relationship between the free expression of cultural heritage and human rights has not been sufficiently explored. The relationship between cultural heritage and human rights is complex and cannot be adequately considered in a single volume such as this; however, it opens the door to further discussion. Cultural rights are a critical dimension of human rights and should be at the forefront of heritage studies. We hope the present volume draws attention to the vital intersections that must be engaged by scholars, practitioners, communities, and politicians in this area.

Our thanks go to the authors who have contributed such stimulating papers, and to our editor at Springer, Teresa Krauss, for providing us all with this important publication opportunity. The participants in this volume met in a workshop at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) in 2006. That meeting, organized by the Collaborative for Cultural Heritage and Museum Practices (CHAMP), was made possible by generous support at UIUC from the Vice-Chancellor for Research, the Dean of Fine and Applied Arts, the Department of Landscape Architecture, the Department of Anthropology, Human Dimensions of Environmental Systems, and the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities.

## References

- Graham, Laura R., 2006, Anthropologists Are Obligated to Promote Human Rights and Social Justice. *Anthropology News*, October: 4–5.



<http://www.springer.com/978-0-387-76579-2>

Cultural Heritage and Human Rights

Silverman, H.; Ruggles, D.F. (Eds.)

2007, X, 206 p., Softcover

ISBN: 978-0-387-76579-2