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Africa, Archaeology, and World Heritage

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In this paper we discuss the initiative of the ICOMOS International Committee for Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) to contribute to the UNESCO strategy to create a more representative and balanced World Heritage List. This can be done by concentrating on archaeological sites in Africa that potentially have Outstanding Universal Value. In so doing, we address at the same time the (thematic) under-representation of archaeological sites on the list, as well as the (regional) under-representation of African properties that have been inscribed.

KEYWORDS World Heritage, UNESCO, ICAHM, Outstanding Universal Value, World Heritage List, States Parties, tentative lists

Introduction

In 1972, UNESCO adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage that was initially signed by twenty countries before coming into force in 1977. Today, almost forty years after its adoption by the General Conference the treaty — that established the World Heritage List — has no less than 187 signatories or 'States Parties' as they are called, which makes it one of the most successful UNESCO treaties ever.[1]

The most important reason for this apparent success is presumably the relation that exists between heritage and nation states. The concept of 'national' heritage was born in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century and gained momentum with the restructuring of post-Napoleonic Europe, when new nation states needed a shared national past and associated symbols. In 1972, when the treaty established a World Heritage Committee, this committee went to work to create a World Heritage List which inevitably became a collection of national icons and centrepieces. Although some countries did not become party to the treaty for a long time, others were quicker

to join. Having the national cultural and natural heritage valued and recognized by the global community has become an important issue internationally and a source of pride and prestige (see, for example, Askew, 2010).

It need not surprise that, even though it took some Western states more than two decades to actually make any proposals, most submissions, and hence most inscriptions on the list, did come from Western countries. After all, the entire construction of the idea of 'World Heritage' was based on notions born and matured in Europe (Esposito and Gaulis, 2010; Omland, 2006; Willems, 2009). Developing countries and countries in other continents in general are therefore less well represented on the list. An overview of a world map with proportionately sized dots indicating listed sites (Figure 1) suffices to convey a compelling visual impression of the regional imbalances.

A second and equally relevant reason why non-Western countries are underrepresented is the fact that the nomination process has become fairly complex and requires considerable expertise, making it a costly enterprise. In many African countries, organizations which are responsible for the management of cultural heritage sites are poorly funded when compared, for example, with defence, health, agriculture, and education. Nomination of cultural sites on the World Heritage List and their subsequent management is therefore a peripheral issue because many African governments are more concerned with meeting the basic needs of their people. Moreover, nomination needs a firm basis in adequate assessments of heritage properties and of a suitable legal and management frameworks, which are not always present or adequate (Breen, 2007; Mabulla, 1996).

There are other ways in which the World Heritage List can be considered to be imbalanced, with major differences between certain types or themes of properties. The most obvious is the predominance of monumental built heritage compared to,
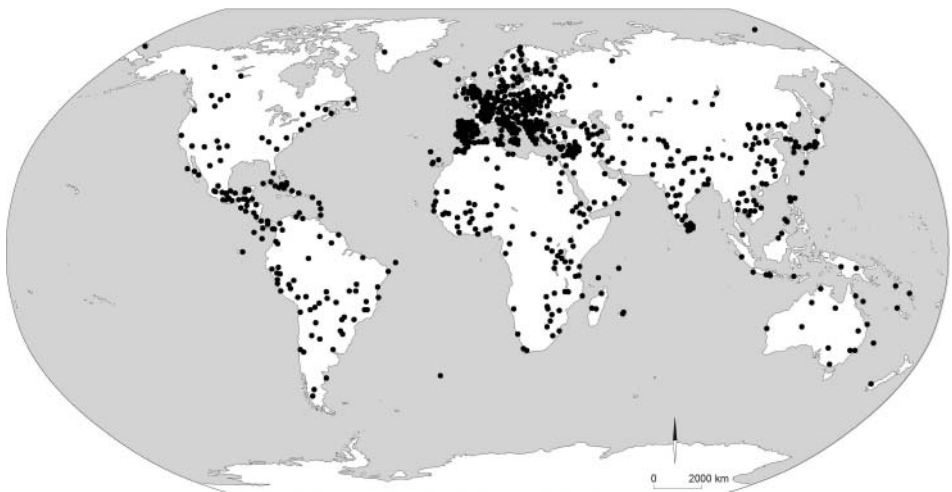

FIGURE 1   The distribution of World Heritage properties as derived from UNESCO publications.
Drawing by the Faculty of Archaeology Leiden

for example, industrial heritage, cultural landscapes, or archaeological heritage. Furthermore, there is the difficult issue of intangible heritage that cannot be listed by itself.

Of course, none of these issues are new, and there is a long history of growing awareness of the need to replace the rationale of Western knowledge, upon which recognition for heritage was founded, with a more inclusive approach that takes into account other heritage concepts and priorities. This dates back to the 1990s, when UNESCO introduced the 'Global strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List'. Around that time new States Parties from Asia, in particular Japan, contributed to a radical redefinition of the concept of authenticity as well as to the introduction of cultural landscapes as a new heritage category and of intangible heritage as a priority to be dealt with (see Esposito and Gaulis, 2010; Jokilehto et al., 2005; Labadi, 2005; Rao, 2010; or UNESCO, 2008: section IIB). The latter has been addressed by a separate treaty, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that came into force in 2006. Although anthropologists sometimes have a different opinion, and it remains a subject of ongoing debate (compare, for example, Baillie and Chippindale, 2007, and Nas, 2002), intangible heritage remains one of the ten criteria that can be used to establish what is called Outstanding Universal Value, although it should be used in conjunction with other criteria.[2]

There is no need to discuss all this in great detail in the present context. Suffice it to say that all aspects of the convention, from its core concepts to all sorts of structural and qualitative aspects, are constantly being reconsidered, reformulated, expanded, or otherwise evaluated. At the moment, the growing complexity and diversity of the Convention, and the fact that the World Heritage List is almost forty years old and contains nearly 1000 inscribed properties, provides the impetus for a process of reflection on the 'Future of the World Heritage Convention' that was initiated by the World Heritage Committee (Rao, 2010). Nevertheless, despite all these past and future efforts, there remain a considerable number of 'imbalances' of various kinds in the World Heritage List.

In our view, such imbalances are unavoidable. Firstly, this is inherent in the subject. As formulated by Jokilehto et al. (2005: 14): 'There will probably always remain a certain "imbalance" between various regions and countries of the world, considering the incredible diversity of cultural heritage, the way it is distributed and how it is now represented around the world'. A second reason why they cannot be completely avoided is because what is perceived as an imbalance directly corresponds to the perspective from which the World Heritage List is analysed. Dealing with heritage is always political — and anyone who has ever attended a session of the World Heritage Committee will certainly agree that dealing with World Heritage is political in the extreme![3] Hence there will always be discussion about differences and perceived inequalities, about what constitutes Outstanding Universal Value and other core concepts, or about other qualitative and quantitative aspects.

The Africa initiative

This does not imply that there are no serious deficiencies that should be addressed in some way, and this paper is about two of those. Both are mentioned in the title and

have in fact been signalled often in speeches, pamphlets, reports, and academic papers referred to elsewhere in this article. It is clear that sub-Saharan Africa has relatively few properties on the List; whilst in 2010 fifty-one African countries had signed the World Heritage Convention, twelve of them had no sites on the World Heritage List and nine African countries had sites which appear on the List of World Heritage in Danger. A simple table (Table 1) shows how uneven the distribution of cultural sites on the List is.

The same can be said of archaeological properties. As 'archaeological' we consider all sites and other properties that are studied primarily by archaeological means, including any form of archaeological site, earthworks, burial mounds, cave dwellings, defensive works, cemeteries, rock art sites, fossil hominid sites, as well as some routes and fossil cultural landscapes. This includes buried settlements (towns, villages, farms, villas) but it excludes individual built monuments, temples, and other public buildings, etc., that are still standing even though they are no longer in use or occupied. In that sense, our definition differs from the typological framework proposed in the 2005 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) study (Jokilehto et al., 2005: 33).

It is quite clear to anyone familiar with African archaeology that precisely the category of properties we consider as archaeological is poorly represented on the World Heritage List in general, but also has the greatest potential for Africa where such sites occur in abundance. For this reason, the ICOMOS International Committee for Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) has launched in 2010 an initiative aiming at increasing the number of archaeological sites on the World Heritage List and, at the same time, at increasing the number of African sites on the List. The ICAHM Africa Initiative was launched at the joint Pan African Archaeological Association for Prehistory and Related Studies (Panaf) / Society of Africanist Archaeologists (SAfA) Conference in November 2010 at the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal. At this conference, ICAHM presented a symposium entitled 'The Potential Role of the World Heritage Convention, ICOMOS, and ICAHM in African

TABLE 1

THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST IN JUNE 2010 BY CONTINENT AND ACCORDING TO TYPES OF HERITAGE. FOR TRANS-BOUNDARY PROPERTIES, SITES HAVE BEEN COUNTED AS MANY TIMES AS THE NUMBER OF COUNTRIES INVOLVED (21 PROPERTIES OVER 2 COUNTRIES AND 1 PROPERTY OVER 10 COUNTRIES)

Region	Total sites	Cultural sites	Natural sites	Mixed sites
America	161	101	57	3
Asia and Pacific	197	135	52	10
Arab Countries	69	63	5	1
Europe	432	380	42	10
Sub-Saharan Africa	82	43	35	4
Total	941	722	191	28

Archaeological Site Preservation and Economic Development', organized by the authors and sponsored by African World Heritage Fund.[4]

The role of ICAHM in the World Heritage process is primarily as an expert advisory body.[5] ICOMOS advises the World Heritage Committee in regard to nominations of cultural sites to the World Heritage List and it monitors these sites once listed. In turn, ICAHM advises ICOMOS on archaeological sites, though there are separate committees for rock art and for underwater cultural heritage. Its expert members are consulted to provide assessments of the claims to Outstanding Universal Value made by States Parties in their nomination dossiers. In addition, its most experienced heritage managers are sent out by ICOMOS to evaluate nominated archaeological sites and to provide reports that have an important role in the advice that ICOMOS then gives to the World Heritage Committee at its annual meeting in June each year. These same members are also involved in occasional missions (by ICOMOS, or jointly with UNESCO) after disasters affecting archaeological heritage, such as the recent collapse of a house in Pompeii, or for other monitoring purposes. Sometimes, ICAHM expert members are also asked by States Parties to advise on potential nominations and sites that may be included on the (national level) Tentative Lists as a first step towards possible nomination.

States Parties are, of course, the only ones that can actually nominate an archaeological site. The way in which the ICAHM initiative in Africa is intended to work is that information on potential World Heritage Sites is provided by professionals working in African countries, such as the members of Panaf and SAfA that met in Dakar. These ideas will then be evaluated by ICAHM members with relevant expertise to see if one or more of the criteria mentioned in the *Operational Guidelines* (UNESCO, 2008) applies and if the property has sufficient authenticity and integrity. These can then be presented to the organization at the national level of States Parties that is charged with World Heritage affairs, usually a state service or a *quango* (quasi autonomous non-governmental organization). Following this, it is left to the State Party — possibly with the help of the African World Heritage Fund — to take the matter further. Although its members can always be consulted in that process, ICAHM will not participate in the actual work of preparing a nomination, as that could cause a potential conflict when called upon to evaluate a nomination. In principle, it is also intended to organize thematic sessions at regional conferences in Africa and at international conferences at the global level to explore the potential within certain chronological or chorological coordinates in more detail, and to collect expert opinions for comparative analysis.

Apart from the perspective of the World Heritage List and what it aims to be, and the issues of national pride and international recognition, there are of course also potentially very important economic benefits associated with obtaining World Heritage status.[6] Indeed, there are quite a few World Heritage Sites in Africa and elsewhere that have become leading destinations for many tourists. This creates opportunities for local and sometimes even national development, alleviation of poverty, and other development aims. At the same time, it should be clear that increased tourism potential is by no means guaranteed, and in many cases will be nearly impossible to achieve in a cost-effective way. Another important issue is when there is at least some degree of economic benefit which also creates a chance to turn tourism into a conservation

tool for World Heritage Sites. This does not mean local people should not benefit from the presence of heritage that has the potential to generate income, but the property in question, and its continued survival, should not be forgotten. Tourism exploitation and economic benefits do of course have a dark side that should not be forgotten; for example, affluent tourism is known to increase the sale of antiquities and thereby to increase intentional looting of archaeological sites (see various papers in Kankpeyeng and DeCorse, 2004 and Schmidt and McIntosh, 1996).

The peculiarities of listing archaeological sites

An aspect that is of particular concern here is the role of archaeological sites on the List. It is intuitively obvious that completely or largely invisible remains are less likely to be considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value than built heritage properties. The most important archaeological site of a country from a research perspective may well be completely invisible,[7] or underneath something of later date that is still standing. It may be argued that archaeological sites in a given country benefit most from that country's participation in the World Heritage Convention not so much because some of the sites make it to the list, but because the vast majority of such sites, that will never make it to the list, may also receive some measure of protection under the obligations imposed by the treaty,[8] at least in principle. It remains of course true that any measures, whether obligatory under an international treaty or the result of national legislation, need to be enforced to be effective, and in Africa that is not always the case as has recently been demonstrated for Ghana (Kankpeyeng and DeCorse, 2004).

   In any case, it is possible that engaging in this process will not only identify properties that will eventually be added to Tentative Lists drawn up by States Parties, but will also develop a list of sites of outstanding scientific and historic merit of use to preservationists and researchers. If all goes well, it will thus increase general awareness, bringing the issue of archaeological research and management to the fore, and leading to provision for its needs.

Archaeological sites appear on the World Heritage List in three forms as:

- archaeological sites that are of Outstanding Universal Value by themselves;
- as components of a site of Outstanding Universal Value; or
- as a series of sites that together constitute a site of 'outstanding universal value'.

Based on the concepts put forward in the *Operational guidelines* (UNESCO, 2008) and on archaeological professional principles, four factors can be identified that to a large extent determine the Outstanding Universal Value of archaeological sites. These are not always of equal importance depending on which of the three situations mentioned above, applies:

- The first factor is physical integrity, because the wholeness and intactness of the World Heritage Site is essential to maintain integrity. Integrity is of special importance for archaeological sites, because all excavation — for research or other purposes — diminishes integrity: excavation = increase in knowledge = decrease of intactness hence loss of integrity!

- A second important aspect is knowledge (scientific value) because with archaeological sites, sources of information are a key criterion for authenticity. These include records and access for further research. With archaeological sites authenticity is only very rarely an issue.
- Consciousness (social and cultural value) is a third aspect because awareness of the Outstanding Universal Value is key in maintaining the site's value, its authenticity, and its integrity.
- Finally, there is also visibility (aesthetic and symbolic value) because this is a key factor in determining value and raising awareness, *in situ* preservation and presentation. This is often an issue that has a negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of an archaeological site.

Obviously, when a single site is considered for inclusion on the List, all criteria have to apply. But, in cases where the archaeological substance is only a component of a site of Outstanding Universal Value, visibility for instance is not a necessary condition. This situation applies, for example, in the numerous historic town centres that have been included on the List. These sites all have important archaeological remains that constitute the cities beneath the city and that are — or at least should be — an integral part of the built heritage. It needs to be said that this part of the World Heritage Sites in question — the majority of which are in Europe — is often not treated in the way it should be. In fact, their subsoil in many cases rightfully belongs on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

More relevant for Africa and other continents may be the option of serial nominations of archaeological sites. For example, an investigated but still largely unexcavated settlement may have very high integrity and good conservation, but lack visibility and thus not have sufficient outstanding universal value by itself. However, as part of a serial nomination that includes several different sites that together represent a prehistoric population or cultural tradition, it may be very valuable. Recent examples are the fifteen Jomon archaeological sites — including the famous Sannai Maruyama site — on the tentative list of Japan that will eventually together constitute one nomination (Cultural Properties Protection Division, 2009), the selection of Chinchorro Culture sites on the tentative list of Chile that is part of the World Heritage Thematic Programme on Prehistory of the World Heritage Centre (World Heritage Centre, 2010b: 11–15), and the nomination in 2010 of the prehistoric pile dwellings around the Alps consisting of an unrealistically large 'sample' of 156 sites.[9]

Application in practice

As for Africa, the start of the ICAHM initiative has already yielded some very promising new ideas for properties that could be added to tentative lists.[10] These include properties in Benin, Ghana, South Africa, Togo, and Zimbabwe. All of these countries already have sites on the World Heritage List; only five States Parties in sub-Saharan Africa, namely Liberia, Djibouti, Rwanda, São Tomé, and Príncipe, and also the Seychelles are still without any World Heritage Sites.[11]

Benin

For Benin, a very important example is the sites in the south of the country that according to Randsborg and Merkyte reflect a large scale pre-Dahomean (twelfth to early sixteenth century AD) iron production, presumably for export to the Moslem north. The production was so extensive that it is deemed partly responsible, as a result of charcoal for melting of the ores, for the gap in the rainforest between Ghana and Nigeria. Thousands of slag mounds are dotting the landscape, the largest mounds being up to 100 × 100 × 12 m or more, representing each a total production of more than two million kilogrammes of raw iron. These are scales of production at a level that is comparable to the classical world of Rome. Currently, the slag-mounds are being destroyed in large numbers for use as gravel on roads (Randsborg and Merkyte, 2009, 1: chs 14–15). An important and well-defined site for protection and preservation is located at Segba to the east of Dogbo. It includes huge iron mines, smelting furnaces, and other remains of the production. A somewhat earlier and also well-defined property can be found at Sofonhuinta near Bohicon.

This is not only an African and an archaeological property, but also an industrial site that testifies to the achievements of the local population long before direct Western contact. It is conceivable that not just the most common criterion (iii) from the

FIGURE 2   Huge refuse mounds of slag at Segba, east of Dogbo, in Benin testify to the large pre-Dahomenan iron production dating to between the twelfth to early sixteenth century AD. *Photo by I. Merkyte, Copenhagen, 2009: reproduced with permission*

Operational Guidelines is applicable here (Okello Abungu Heritage Consultants, 2009: 15–17), but actually a whole range of criteria from ii–v and possibly vi may apply for this property.[12]

Also in Benin, the existing World Heritage Site of the Royal Palaces of Abomey that was recently severely damaged,[13] could be extended with the addition of some two dozen palaces (mostly outside Abomey), part of the huge ditch around Abomey, and in particular, a selection of the many thousands beautiful 'souterrains' or 'caves' in the open landscape. The caves represent bunkers constructed in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries AD on the fertile and densely populated Dahomean home-lands; the caves found secondary use for water collecting during the dry seasons. The latter include the specimens on the territory of the newly established archaeological park and museum at Agonguinto near Bohicon east of Abomey and the nearby very fine, and easily accessible, caves at Kana Hagadon.

Finally, a third option in southern Benin is a huge settlement of at least 250 ha, located at Sodohome to the east of Bohicon, established in the seventh century BC and continuing into the time of the Dahomean kingdom that existed from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. This hitherto unknown African capital city is currently being threatened by the rapidly expanding town of Bohicon. Magnetometer and other surveys have been undertaken, but so far only on an all too limited scale (Randsborg and Merkyte, 2009, 1: ch. 10; 2: pls 64–67).

These cultural remains are very rich indeed, for example, providing insight into hitherto unknown cultures responsible for the huge iron productions mentioned above. Furthermore, in a region and a country starved of pre-Dahomean archaeology, Sodohome has provided a cultural sequence, complete with very high quality ceram-ics and sculpture which compare favourably with the more famous traditions of Nigeria. An Early Stone Age site has also been discovered in the area.

Ghana

In Ghana, an important property that nevertheless has not been submitted to the Tentative List is the hill top city of Krobo to the north-east of Accra. In 1892, the population of Krobo was forced by the British to abandon their town and settle on the plain below. The kings of Krobo laid a ban on visiting the site of Krobo and removing objects from it, resulting in complete preservation of this 'African Pompei', complete with houses, ceramics, and other artefacts still *in situ* (Huber, 1963). Today, however, tourists and plunderers are beginning to threaten the integrity of the site.

Another option for Ghana might be in the Ghana-Burkina Faso borderlands that have a cultural landscape across national parks and very thinly populated areas filled not only with Early Stone Age sites including even from the Oldowan culture, but also extremely well preserved farmsteads of the third century AD (pers comm., L. Randsborg and I. Merkyte, 2010). It also has localities related to slave-hunting in more recent centuries, beautiful natural fortresses/hiding places for the hunted and fortified settlements for the Moslem hunters and their clients delivering slaves to the Ashantis even as late as the late nineteenth century. The first traces of early industrial iron production (for export) from pre-Islamic centuries are also beginning to emerge here.

South Africa

A possible addition for South Africa may be Bokoni, which is the historical name for an area of the escarpment in Mpumalanga Province. This area, about 150 km from north to south, contains evidence of dense settlement in the form of stone-walled homesteads, agricultural terraces, and roads which date within the past five hundred years but were already abandoned by the time of colonial rule. Research by a team from the Universities of the Witwatersrand (archaeology and history), Cape Town (archaeology), and Stockholm (human geography) has shown that this was essentially, if not entirely, the work of the Koni, a farming community whose political power was destroyed in the early nineteenth century. The large areas of terracing are the only archaeological evidence for intensification of an agricultural system in pre-colonial South Africa, but they are comparable with other 'islands of agricultural intensification' such as Nyanga in Zimbabwe and examples in eastern Africa such as Engaruka (Soper, 2006; Widgren, and Sutton, 2004).

Togo

On the border between Benin and Togo is the ancient walled city of Tado that also saw early iron production of some scale, and as in Benin slag heaps, are being destroyed for use as materials in construction. Further west is the walled city of Notse, on the north–south-going main road of the country. Both localities are threatened, perhaps Tado the most (Gayibor, 1997: 54–58).

Zimbabwe

Although the country has several World Heritage Sites, it currently has only one property on its tentative list. An important addition might be the Nyanga cultural landscape and its lately rediscovered and still highly controversial evidence for gold mining (Kritzinger, 2008). The traditional interpretation as the Nyanga agricultural terraces is challenged by recent laboratory research that has suggested that hundreds of stone-lined tanks in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe were purpose-built for processing gold. All samples from tunnels and drains of 27 tanks across 65 km exhibit residual values between 0.04 and 1.78 g/t Au. Waste from vein quartz sampled at associated ore-dressing sites ranges 0.07–1.34 g/t Au and a growing awareness of pre-colonial strip-mining of the hill slopes challenges an academically postulated pastoral/agricultural hypothesis (see Kritzinger, 2010 vs. Soper, 2006). Neither terrace agriculture nor gold mining feature in oral tradition.

   Agriculture is not practised in the largely uninhabited terraced landscape, but today's undercover gold panners are living testimony to a field presence of gold which supports the test results from the hydraulically engineered tanks. It introduces from Africa a past practice of gravity concentration of international importance in the history of precious metal recovery presently dominated by Europe and the Near East. With mining archaeology not being a university subject in Zimbabwe and the country's mining engineers, mining geologists, and metallurgists fully engaged in reactivating the industry, it may take some considerable time before conclusive research results will be available. This research will be needed to underpin an eventual bid to inscribe the Nyanga cultural landscape as a World Heritage Site as its Outstanding Universal Value should of course be unambiguous — though, as the recent political decisions of the World Heritage Committee show,[14] such research is not always required.

Conclusion

With the Africa initiative, ICAHM intends to contribute to a classic 'win-win' situation, with benefits for UNESCO and the World Heritage programme, for African countries, and for the archaeological heritage: not just the high end that could become a World Heritage Site, but for the management of the archaeological heritage in general. Until now, various initiatives have run more or less independently, and there is an urgent need for more coordinated efforts. The activities and planning of the World Heritage Centre (e.g. 2010b) concerning archaeology needs broader support.

We are aware that what ICAHM is doing essentially represents a top-down approach. On the one hand we feel that this is justified because, for archaeological heritage more than for built heritage, scientific research is a critically important issue when looking at the Outstanding Universal Value. That requires expert involvement and thus by implication is to some degree a top-down process. Nevertheless we subscribe to the position that such outside involvement should not be isolated but must also contribute to — indeed be part of — the development of archaeological infrastructure in African countries, and the local archaeologists, heritage managers and politicians that are part of it (cf. Breen, 2007; MacEachern, 2010 and various contributions in Naffé et al., 2008, as well as Schmidt, 2010). That is an essential precondition of our African initiative and why it was launched in Dakar, but of course it still remains a top-down approach as far as local communities are concerned. Given the nature of the nomination process this seems unavoidable, but in fact it is not, because that process also explicitly provides for involvement of different stakeholders. As specified in the *Operational Guidelines*, 'Participation of local people in the nomination process is essential to enable them to have a shared responsibility with the State Party in the maintenance of the property' (UNESCO, 2008, paragraphs 122 and 64; also in paragraphs 12, 40, 111). This is a crucial point that ICAHM will need to push forward consistently, because we know that, even in Western countries, it is also all too often overlooked.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

[1] States to the Convention as of 10 June 2010 according to <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/> [accessed 22 December 2010]. There are 192 Member States of the United Nations.

[2] See especially note 12 below for more details.

[3] In fact, the 34th and 35th sessions of the World Heritage Committee in 2010 in Brasília, Brazil and in 2011 in Paris, France have shown an extreme disregard of expert advice and have taken such radically political decisions that the credibility of the list is likely to become seriously compromised. It is hoped that initiatives such as described in this paper may help to counterbalance the apparent need that politicians feel to inscribe properties without proper regard for the demands made by the convention and its operational guidelines.

[4] Apart from the authors, discussants were W. Ndoro, N. Schlanger, M. Welling, M. Doortmont, and S. Makuvaza.

[5] ICAHM's other major role is as a global organization for archaeological heritage management. This is also a concern of associations such as the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) and the International Union of Pre- and Protohistoric Sciences

(IUPPS), but at the global level ICAHM is the only body in archaeology that is specifically devoted to heritage. It is unique in its focus on the development and propagation of effective and efficient international cultural resource management standards and practices. In 1990, ICOMOS adopted ICAHM's Charter for the protection and management of the archaeological heritage, also known as the Charter of Lausanne that has received wide international recognition and has seen its principles integrated in later international agreements such as the European Valletta Convention. For information about ICAHM, see further at <http://www.icomos.org/icahm/>.

6 On archaeological heritage and tourism, see for example McKercher and Du Cros, 2002; Rowan and Baram, 2004; Starr, 2010; and Winter, 2010.

7 Of course, visibility is a criterion to measure importance in the process of valuation, but the research value of a site is independent of that.

8 See especially article 5 that is quite explicit. It reads: 'To ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory, each State Party to this Convention shall endeavor, in so far as possible, and as appropriate for each country:

   – to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes;
   – to set up within its territories, where such services do not exist, one or more services for the protection, conservation presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage; and
   – to develop scientific and technical studies and research and to work out such operating methods as will make the State capable of counteracting the dangers that threaten its cultural or natural heritage;
   – to develop scientific and technical studies and research and to work out such operating methods as will make the State capable of counteracting the dangers that threaten its cultural or natural heritage;
   – to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, to foster the establishment or development of national or regional centres for training in the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage and to encourage scientific research in this field'.

9 Nomination dossier, available at <http://www.palafittes.ch/de/service/nominationsdossier/index.html> [accessed on 22 December 2010]. The World Heritage Committee has approved a revised nomination, consisting of a still huge number of 111 sites, at its 35th session in Paris in June 2011.

10 Okello Abungu Heritage Consultants, 2009; World Heritage Centre, 2010c. We are grateful to A. Kritzinger, T. Maggs, I Merkyte, and K. Randsborg for providing the information that follows.

11 The selection below is not in any way the result of prioritization or valuation: it simply reflects the information that reached us in November and December 2010.

12 The World Heritage Convention defines ten criteria that can be used to define the Outstanding Universal Value of a property, of which the first six can be applied to cultural properties. As defined in UNESCO 2008, paragraph 77: 'Nominated properties shall therefore: (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; (iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; (iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; (v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria)'.

13 The property was ravaged by a catastrophic fire in January 2009. The fire has occurred after the Dahomean Palaces were removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2007, following extensive restoration works. See further Randsborg and Merkyte, 2009, 1: chs 4–5 (Abomey and palaces) and 7 (caves); 2: app. 6 (archaeological park and museum at Agonguinto), pl. 29 (map Kana Hagadon).

14 See note 3 above.

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