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I.

THE RISE OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION

World Heritage in Historical Perspective

A number of themes recur throughout this dissertation. On different occasions, for instance, I deal with ongoing struggles over management authority, which have come to pit different government institutes against one another but which also complicate private-public partnerships. At times I emphasize the various ways in which Mt. Kenya's World Heritage listing naturalizes and depoliticizes, thus obscuring cultural, political and racist histories and enabling a variety of political projects to appear as if they are technical affairs. And, of course, I deconstruct the Kenyan state party, in an attempt to disentangle the processes and actors that initiated Mt. Kenya's 1997 World Heritage listing as well as the 2013 modifications to Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site.

These themes resonate with different key characteristics of World Heritage. These characteristics include uncertainties over who 'owns' and is responsible for World Heritage; the relationship between World Heritage, the state, and nationalism; World Heritage's categorical separation of natural and cultural heritage sites; World Heritage's technical idiom; and World Heritage's present-day popularity. In this first chapter, I make an effort to historicize these characteristics by tracing World Heritage's genealogy. This will bring me to, among other things, the French Revolution's iconoclasm, to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aristocrat endeavours to cultivate obedient national citizens, to the emergence of a particular American nature conservation ethos from the turn of the twentieth century onwards, and to the campaign to save the Nubian temples in Egypt in the 1950s. By discussing these developments, I draw attention to how the 1972 World Heritage Convention emerged from a wider set

of historical developments. Thus, I mean to underscore that while Mt. Kenya's World Heritage designation is the product of a relatively recent set of developments in Kenya, at the same time it articulates longer traditions of heritage conservation.

World Heritage as collective and state-owned property

Until the late eighteenth century, European countries showed relatively little interest in the preservation of historical sites and objects. In France, for instance, old buildings were generally left to deteriorate, or they were dismantled and their construction material reused (Sax 1990: 1150). The French Revolution, which lasted from 1789 to 1799, brought about major changes in this regard and laid the foundations for contemporary conservation practices.

During the French Revolution, France's common masses challenged the sovereignty of the gentry and clergy. Their protest manifested itself in, among other things, the widespread destruction and expropriation of church and aristocratic valuables. The taking over of the Louvre and the Tuileries illustrates this: in 1791, the French king Louis XVI declared the Louvre's buildings and gardens a national palace, but a year later he was imprisoned and the revolutionary government took possession of both the palace as well as of the scientific and artistic collections that it contained.

Revolutionists plundered at a steady rate – revolting masses looted monasteries and royal graves, and those noblemen who were not executed fled abroad, leaving numerous art collections unattended (Grijzenhout 2007: 7). As a result, the body of confiscated goods expanded rapidly, but the revolutionary government was ambivalent about what to do with all these objects. It meant to sell parts of it, and in 1790 it founded a Monuments Commission that was to distinguish the saleable from the non-saleable items (Sax 1990: 1152). But the broader populace soon protested against the commission: it maintained that the artefacts were too reminiscent of former repression, and they demanded their wholesale destruction. Initially, the revolutionary government paid heed to such calls and in 1792 it even adopted legislation that justified and encouraged demolition (Sax 1990: 1153).

While France struggled to cope with the material relics of the old regime, different commentators began to call for conservation. Among them was the bishop of Blois, Henri Baptist Grégoire, who was a fierce critic of the widespread destruction and even invented a word for it: vandalism (Grijzenhout 2007: 8). Rather than giving prominence to how church and aristocratic treasures had come to represent ecclesiastical and feudal power, Grégoire underscored their artistic value – he was an advocate of the fine arts and the sciences, and he argued that the revolutionary slogan *liberté, égalité et fraternité* was merely an empty catchphrase as long as the country at large failed to respect talent and creativity (Sax 1990: 1155).

Henri Baptist Grégoire's calls resonated with other advocates of conservation such as Alexandre Lenoir. Like Grégoire, Lenoir strongly disapproved of the public's cry for demolition, and it has been

suggested that he especially deplored the looting of the Church of St. Denis as well as the plunder of the Abbey of Cluny (Ter Keurs 2011: 10). Yet, unlike Grégoire, Lenoir was far less successful in streamlining his arguments with the revolution's credos – he always struggled to 'get in line with the appropriate revolutionary rhetoric of the day' (Sax 1990: 1165). Nevertheless, Lenoir made significant contributions to the preservation of the objects that revolutionists targeted. Already in the early 1790s he used his political contacts to press for safekeeping. Surprisingly, he received support from the revolutionary government, which hired him as well as two assistants to collect as much as possible and store it in the Petits-Augustins convent in Paris (Ter Keurs 2011: 10). In 1795, Lenoir opened the Musée des Monuments Français, after which his collection became accessible to the larger public.

The advocacy of men such as Henri Baptist Grégoire and Alexandre Lenoir gave way to a catchall term for the objects under threat of the revolution, for which hitherto no collective name had existed. This term was *patrimoine*, introduced by the politician Armand-Guy Kersaint in 1791 (Grijzenhout 2007: 7). Prior to Kersaint's usage of the word, *patrimoine* had been a strict juridical category that had referred to an individual's possessions obtained through patrilineal inheritance and that were inalienable. Such legal restrictions to what one could do with bequeathed goods were not exclusive to France. In the Netherlands, for example, the notion *erfgoed* imposed similar constraints (Van den Berg 2007: 24): *erfgoed* made a juridical distinction between the possessions one had inherited from ancestors and the possessions one had acquired oneself, called *koopgoed*. Contrary to *koopgoed*, *erfgoed* was subjected to various norms and constraints that sought to prevent family capital from breaking up or from being handed over to in-laws. Similar juridical regulations were in force in Germany (*Ibid.*).⁴

Presumably, the kinship values on which *patrimoine* and *erfgoed* rested began to disintegrate already from the thirteenth century onwards, and possibly even earlier (Van den Berg 2007: 30). Gradually, the legislative distinction between possessions bought and possessions inherited lost its relevance. Particularly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, juridical arrangements in general took progressive account of individual rights, and the protection of private interests gained the upper hand over the custody of family resources (*Ibid.*: 29-31). The French Revolution further reinforced this process and marked the end of the legal separation of bought and inherited goods in France (*Ibid.*: 37). However, and partially due to Armand-Guy Kersaint, the word *patrimoine* did not vanish from French vocabulary.

In the course of the French Revolution, *patrimoine* came to signify the objects that the revolutionary government had seized from the gentry and clergy. Armand-Guy Kersaint called these objects *le patrimoine de tous* (Grijzenhout 2007: 7) and, as such, he had identified the French people as the legitimate and ultimate heirs of the revolutionary loot. When Henri Baptist Grégoire, Alexandre Lenoir and likeminded thinkers adopted Kersaint's application of *patrimoine* and made it central to their conservation jargon, its meaning shifted permanently from a juridical arrangement on family inheritances to a conservation philosophy that concerned goods that belonged to society at large (see

also Sax 1990: 1157). This philosophy was vested in a collective commemoration of the past that was already seen elsewhere, for instance during the celebration of Bonfire Night in seventeenth-century England (Harvey 2001). At the same time, there was something truly novel in the French Revolution's notion of *patrimoine*: it made the safekeeping of the historic relics that belonged to all a task of the state.

The historical development of the term *patrimoine* may encourage us to consider heritage as the expression of a property relation. Yet, the kind of property relation that formed during the French Revolution created a *contradiction in terminis*: *patrimoine* suggested that goods could be collective property and state property at the same time, and in doing so it confused different types of ownership rights. MacPherson (1978) defines collective property as a bundle of individual rights that pertain to the same use or the same benefit, and that gives all individual members of a group access to something (*Ibid.*: 4). State property on the other hand, seen from the perspective of the recipients of collective rights, is a right of exclusion reserved to the state (*Ibid.*: 5-6). MacPherson's definitions thus suggest that collective property can never be state property, or vice versa, for the former endows members of society with access rights that the latter denies them. It follows that state ownership over heritage, which is by its very nature the property of a collective (Handler 1985; Strother 2012), is inevitably contradictory – it communicates that heritage is simultaneously of the state, and of all the people who are not the state.

The 1972 World Heritage Convention echoes *patrimoine*'s idea of state supervision over collectively owned heritages. In the preamble it states:

Considering that parts of the cultural and natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole

UNESCO (1972: 1)

And:

Considering that, in view of the magnitude and gravity of the new dangers threatening them, it is incumbent on the international community as a whole to participate in the protection of its cultural and natural heritage of outstanding value, by the granting of collective assistance which, although not taking the place of action by the State concerned, will serve as an efficient complement thereto

UNESCO (1972: 1)

The convention grants state parties the exclusive power to select and manage the world's heritages, it dictates that all decision-making should go through state parties, and it constantly reiterates state authority over World Heritage preservation. On a very practical level, this means that stateless territories cannot host World Heritage Sites – Antarctica, for instance, has an extraordinary landscape but no government to put forward World Heritage nominations (Anthamatten & Hazen 2007: 265),

and the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem was only recently added to the World Heritage List after the United Nations recognized Palestine as a state party in November 2012 (UNESCO document WHC-12/36.COM/19). At the same time, the convention indicates that World Heritage exceeds national interests and serves mankind as a whole. As such, the friction between collective property rights and state property rights became one of World Heritage's core features: on the one hand, World Heritage is identified as a global common tantamount to a global public domain (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 185); on the other hand, World Heritage's protection is entrusted to the state. Among other things, this friction has translated into ongoing discussions over who is ultimately responsible for the preservation of World Heritage Sites. Elizabeth Ouma,⁵ who in 2011 worked for the regional UNESCO office in Nairobi, indicated to me that especially poorer countries tend to demand from UNESCO that it takes responsibility, for instance by offering financial support. She said that these countries 'misunderstand' the organization's role in the World Heritage Programme, and underscored that the convention is very explicit about state parties' obligations.

What seems to further complicate the confusion over who precisely should be in charge of World Heritage preservation is that neither the principle of state ownership, nor the principle of collective ownership identifies where exactly supervision over the property in question should be located: the first assigns control to all and thus to no one in particular, and the latter assigns control to an institution of which the representatives change (MacPherson 1978: 5-6). Thus, even if one had a clear idea about whether World Heritage is more 'of the state' or more 'of the world', it would still not be obvious exactly which individuals or institutions should be entitled to deal with World Heritage. Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site illustrates how this may manifest itself in daily struggles over management authority. What is particularly interesting about the case of Mt. Kenya is that different sets of stakeholders have tried to capitalize on the confusion that the convergence of collective property rights and state property rights create, and have deliberately tried to mobilize a global heritage community in the competition over the power to manage. Indeed, as chapter two shows, in 1997, the idea of World Heritage as a global commons was used in attempts to remove the mandate over Mt. Kenya's forests from one state institution and locate it with another, and, as indicated in chapter five, in the late 2010s, it was employed in an endeavour to bypass Kenya's state apparatus altogether.

World Heritage and the failure to problematize 'the state'

This section continues to focus on the central role of the state in the 1972 World Heritage Convention. It specifically looks at how the notion of the state is dealt with both by the convention itself as well as by the majority of World Heritage studies. Before I discuss this below, I first briefly turn to how the link between heritage and state-making consolidated across Europe in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

In the course of the nineteenth century, nationalist sentiments gained momentum on the European continent: populist movements, which challenged the hegemony of the aristocracy, sprang up roughly from the 1820s onwards (Anderson 1983). Europe's ruling classes typically responded pragmatically to the rise in nationalist ideologies – rather than trying to suppress or challenge emerging nationalist rhetoric, they began to work their way into it (*Ibid.*: 109-111). They had multiple strategies for this that included, among other things, the implementation of state-controlled education, propaganda that meant to naturalize and justify existing power structures (*Ibid.*), and the glorification of heritage (Willems & Comer 2011: 160).

Europe's aristocrats understood the political potential of the symbolic mediation of a shared national past, and different ruling elites began to employ the celebration of official histories for governmental purposes. The institution of the Victorian public museum in Britain for instance is a case in point. Victorian public museums were to introduce 'high culture', which was previously restricted to the aristocracy, to Britain's proletariat. By bringing visitors in direct contact with the aristocratic lifestyle, the Victorian public museum intended to regulate morale – in essence these museums were highly controlled environments that meant to foster specific normative and ethical standards among the broader public (Bennett 1995).

The nineteenth-century celebration of national heritage, which manifested itself in the establishment of museums, but also in the institution of national traditions (Hobsbawm 1983^B), articulated a wider change in government strategies. Roughly until the middle of the eighteenth century, hegemonic rule had been vested in law, regulation, and discipline. But, among other things, the collapse of mercantile theories and practices, as well as rapid population growth, had commanded a reorientation of power relations (Foucault 2003 [1978]: 239). This had given way to a political frame of mind that aimed at the cultivation of self-regulating citizens. This self-regulation depended on an ensemble of institutions, procedures and tactics, all designed to manipulate the population's behaviour (*Ibid.*: 244). Central to this ensemble was a complex of disciplinary technologies, or governmental strategies that meant to promote the internalization of specific knowledge systems, truths and ethics. Foucault called this 'the governmentalization of the state' (*Ibid.*: 245), and the national celebration of heritage came to play a key role in this. In the words of Bennett:

Culture was increasingly thought of as a resource to be used in programmes which aimed at bringing about changes in acceptable norms and forms of behaviour and consolidation those norms as self-acting imperatives by inscribing them within broadly disseminated regimes of self-management.

Bennett (1995: 23)

World Heritage articulates the historical link between states and heritage, and the convention prescribes that all World Heritage designations require state endorsement (UNESCO 1972, article three). In practice, this fuels conflict, for instance between states and marginalized groups that feel that their heritage is excluded from the official history of their country, or between states when different

governments lay claim on heritage sites in border areas. Numerous scholars have called attention to such conflicts and the case studies abound. For instance, citizens of Turkish North Cyprus struggle to have their heritage acknowledged on the World Heritage List because Cyprus's government seeks to establish a Greek identity for the island (Scott 2002); in the 2000s, the governments of Cambodia and Thailand fought over the right to nominate the Temple of Preah Vihear for World Heritage status (Silverman 2011); Tibetans continue to lament that the Mountain Resort and its Outlying Temples became Chinese World Heritage in 1994, for this placed the Buddhist site firmly within the PRC's multi-ethnic propaganda (Hevia 2001); and the government of Laos deliberately downplayed the social and ceremonial functions of the Town of Luang Prabang when it nominated the place for World Heritage status on the basis of its architecture and aesthetics only (Long & Sweet 2006). All these case studies emphasize that the 1972 World Heritage Convention offers state parties a tool with which to disseminate national messages, and with which to buttress nationalist schemes. In doing so, these studies make a valid point and they offer important insights into how World Heritage fosters conflict, opposition and alliances. Yet, at the same time, there is also an important hiatus in these studies – they fail to engage with the notion of the state critically.

Already more than seventy-five years ago, the anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1940) suggested that 'the state' does not exist. He wrote:

In writings on political institutions there is a good deal of discussion about the nature and the origin of the State, which is usually represented as being an entity over and above the human individuals who make up a society, having as one of its attributes something called 'sovereignty', and sometimes spoken of as having a will (law often being defined as the will of the State) or as issuing commands. The State, in this sense, does not exist in the phenomenological world; it's a fiction of the philosophers. What does exist is an organization, i.e. a collection of individual human beings connected by a complex system of relations. Within that organization different individuals have different roles, and some are in possession of special power or authority, as chiefs or elders capable of giving commands which will be obeyed, as legislators or judges, and so on. There is no such thing as the power of The State; there are only, in reality, powers of individuals – kings, prime ministers, magistrates, policemen, party bosses, and voters.

Radcliffe-Brown (1940: xxiii)

Abrams (1988) suggested that since Radcliffe-Brown did not believe in the state he saw no use in examining it – to understand relations of power it sufficed to study governance and politics (*Ibid.*: 75). Abrams himself took a different perspective: he accepted Radcliffe-Brown's comment that the state does not exist as a tangible thing in itself, but simultaneously stressed that there are, nevertheless, powerful ideas of the state that suggest otherwise. These ideas, Abrams suggested, mask political practice as it is and serve to convey ideological power. For Abrams, 'the state' is a governmental technique, or a form of moral regulation (*Ibid.*: 77) that means to legitimize and reinforce the subordination of the larger public.

From the 1990s onwards, and in the wake of Abrams' landmark study, various scholars further worked on how the idea of the state aims to foster national obedience. Attention has been drawn to, among other things, how an image of the state as distinct from the rest of society is socially produced and maintained (Ferguson & Gupta 2002; Li 2005; Mitchell 1991); to how the effectiveness of the state depends on its mystification and fetishization (Taussig 1993); or to how the idea of the state creates effects beyond government and national institutions and surfaces throughout society (Li 2005; Trouillot 2001). This literature underscores the hegemony of the notion of the state and at the same time suggests that, in order to understand how this hegemony works, we must look into the actual institutions, individuals, policies, power structures, and so on, where the idea of the state is productive. Many World Heritage case studies fail to do precisely that – they buy into the idea of the state without scrutinizing or unpacking it, and in doing so they mistake the state's symbolic purpose for empirical reality. This is furthermore sustained by World Heritage's depoliticized and technical rhetoric, which I discuss later, that presents state parties as simple administrative entities that serve a mere bureaucratic purpose.

Those World Heritage case studies that neglect to address the idea of the state critically typically pay little or no attention to the actual individuals and institutions that are responsible for specific World Heritage nominations (but see Scholze 2008). However, the coming chapters reveal that doing so is vital for understanding how World Heritage functions: if we do not deconstruct World Heritage state parties into their actual agents, then we may fail to recognize the social and political processes that propel and complicate World Heritage designations. One consequence of such a failure seems to be that, at times, World Heritage is too easily portrayed as a nationalist tool (see for instance Askew 2010). Sharma & Gupta (2006) have indicated that the terms state, nation, and nation state are often used interchangeably and without much consideration or awareness. This has historical reasons, for the conjunction of 'nation' and 'state' normalized from the nineteenth century onwards (Trouillot 2001: 130) – one implication is that the two are seldom distinguished from one another theoretically:

The concept of the nation-state has so thoroughly conjoined the state with the nation that it is almost impossible to think of one without the other [...]. Theories of the state always have implicit in them theories of nationalism; similarly, theories of nationalism assume some theory of the state in that nationalism is often seen as a state project.

Sharma & Gupta (2006: 7)

In quite a few World Heritage case studies the amalgamation of nation and state has come to translate into the logic that because World Heritage Sites depend on state approval they inevitably carry a nationalist message in them (see for instance Hevia 2001; Long & Sweet 2006; Scott 2002; Silverman 2011). I disagree with this and stress that World Heritage status might be pursued for reasons other than nation-building. Different parts of this dissertation illustrate this. In chapter two, for instance, I show that Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site primarily sprang from struggles between government

institutes over management authority. In chapter five, furthermore, I demonstrate that the 2013 modification to Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site rested on an explicit intention to challenge the Kenyan state administration.

Natural World Heritage is culture

In the second half of the nineteenth century two prominent figures emerged within Britain's conservation scene: John Ruskin and William Morris. Both were at the forefront of the preservation of historic relics and personified a particular British conservation ideology. Roughly a century later this ideology helped to shape the World Heritage Programme.

Painter, architect and critic John Ruskin was one of the few early advocates of a 'conserve as found' conservation ethos (Smith 2006: 19). At the time, Victorian renovators restored ancient buildings such as medieval churches and cathedrals based on an idea of what such buildings had looked like in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – they aimed to recover a building's original appearance and often made major architectural interventions (*Ibid.*). Ruskin, however, criticized such practices and argued that buildings acquire a soul over time, which was to be protected against Victorian renovators' brutal methods:

Neither by the public, nor by those who have the care of public monuments, is the true meaning of the word *restoration* understood. It means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered; a destruction accompanied with false descriptions of the things destroyed. Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is *impossible*, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture. [...] that spirit which is given only by the hand and eye of the workman, never can be recalled. Another spirit may be given by another time, and it is then a new building; but the spirit of the dead workman cannot be summoned up, and commanded to direct other hands, and other thoughts. And as for direct and simple copying, it is palpably impossible. What copying can there be of surfaces that have been worn half an inch down? The whole finish of the work was in the half inch that is gone [...] There was yet in the old *some* life, some mysterious suggestion of what it had been, and of what it had lost; some sweetness in the gentle lines which rain and sun had wrought. There can be none in the brute hardness of the new carving.

Ruskin (1899 [1849]: 161-162 original emphases)

Ruskin called for conservation methods that merely prevented further decay. His critical writings on Victorian restoration techniques, and in particular his popular essay *Seven Lamps of Architecture* published in 1849 from which the above is an excerpt, inspired William Morris (Burman in Smith 2006: 20).

William Morris was a textile designer, poet and novelist born some fifteen years after John Ruskin in 1834. In 1887, he founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in Bloomsbury, a British conservation initiative that is still active today. The SPAB's ideology was firmly grounded in Ruskin's ideas on proper conservation and it advocated a kind of 'conservation repair' that intervened with the fabric of buildings as little as possible (Smith 2006: 20). The SPAB's approach eventually proved decisive for the development of a typically British heritage philosophy, not in the least because in the course of the twentieth century the organization came to direct official legislation and policy setting (*Ibid.*) – to this day, British heritage regulations echo Ruskin's outlook on acceptable conservation practices and the country's current legal instruments continue to lean on the architect's ideals (*Ibid.*). The explicit concern with conservation techniques distinguished British heritage customs from heritage practices elsewhere in Europe, for instance in France. But there was also another important difference: the notion of patrimoine confined to the preservation of cultural objects, yet Ruskin and Morris also pressed for the conservation of ornamental landscapes and sceneries (Grijzenhout 2007: 10).

Both John Ruskin and William Morris were admirers of the British countryside. They had a taste for the picturesque and the pastoral (Smith 2006: 20), which they considered threatened by the country's advanced state of industrialization and urbanization. Above all, Ruskin and Morris advocated conserving medieval rural homes and churches and they pressed for the safekeeping of the aesthetic landscapes in which these homes and churches were found – for both men, the preservation of buildings and sceneries was inevitably entwined (see for instance Lowenthal 2005: 84). In the course of the twentieth century, Britain's national imagination increasingly formed around such rural panoramas (Soper 1995: 196, see also Williams 1973), and eventually country houses became central to Britain's body of national heritage.⁶

John Ruskin's and William Morris's calls for the conservation of rural landscapes resonated with developments taking place elsewhere, namely American patriots' efforts to cultivate a sense of national belonging. In European countries, literary and artistic achievements had been central to the formation of a unique national identity, but in the United States, which lacked such achievements, nationalist rhetoric came to revolve around the splendour of nature (Nash 1967). The continent's wilderness turned into a collective source of pride – as such, the United States became one of the few places where nature played an explicit role in summoning national solidarity (Haila 1997: 133).

The American pride for nature gave way to concerns for nature conservation, which were formulated for the first time in George Perkins Marsh's book *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* published in 1864 (Lowenthal 2005: 83). In this publication, Marsh indicated that, unless the United States would learn to manage its natural resources better, the continent's wilderness would eventually succumb to the pressure of urbanization and industrialization. Marsh's work prompted the naturalist and travel writer John Muir to take action and, in 1892, the latter cofounded the Sierra Club, an environmental movement that included nature lovers, scientists,

and activists. Muir's travel writings were widely read and he managed to mobilize broad national support (Tsing 2005: 95-97). These writings echoed Muir's compassion for the United States' wilderness, and presented American nature as God-like and worthy of worship in its own right. It drew heavily on spiritual rhetoric – to Muir, nature had an intrinsic value and deserved religious devotion (*Ibid.*: 96).

The advocacy of John Muir, in turn, paved the way for the emergence of the American National Parks model. This model found its origin in the foundation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 (see for instance Neumann 1998). It rested on the presumption that nature was best maintained in closed-off sanctuaries where wilderness was protected against human destruction and exploitation. The national parks model departed from an understanding of nature as pristine, Eden-like, and ideally unspoilt, which, for instance, also informed the landscape portraits of American painters such as Thomas Cole, Asher Brown Durand, Frederic Edwin Church, Albert Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran (Nash 1967), or the writings of American authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson or Henry David Thoreau (Wolmer 2007: 13).

Such understandings of nature found their roots in Romanticism, which experienced its heyday in the first half of the nineteenth century and which, for instance, also came to inspire John Ruskin (Smith 2006: 20). Romanticism was partially a response to Europe's industrial developments and it articulated a nostalgic longing for nature not yet affected by the polluting and destructive effects of industrial demands. The separation of man and nature that is implicit in the Romanticist nostalgia for virgin nature has its own and much longer genealogy – it has been suggested that in medieval times the orthodox concept of nature still included man (Williams 1980: 74), but that during the Renaissance period that followed nature came to stand out as a 'realm apart from the everyday present' (Lowenthal 2005: 82). With the onset of technological developments in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nature was increasingly perceived in mechanistic terms and a view of nature as animistic made way for a view of nature as employable to satisfy human needs (Soper 1995: 43).

Under the influence of Romanticism, the conceptual distinction between human-shaped environments and a nature existing in isolation from human intervention became increasingly authoritative. It gave way to the modern ideology of naturalism (Escobar 1999)⁷ that conceived of nature as a place devoid of history and culture (see also Schama 1995). Through the popularity of the National Parks model, which soon spread beyond the United States, the separation of man-made and natural environments became key to environmentalist rhetoric worldwide. This had important consequences, especially on African territory where pristine understandings of nature came to inform colonial policy and administration. In the next chapter, I deal with this in more detail and discuss its effects on Kenya more specifically.

The American celebration of nature as it materialized from the late nineteenth century onwards had repercussions for the development of World Heritage. When the convention was drafted at the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, the United States pressed for the inclusion of natural sites (UNESCO

2008^B: 7; see also Adams & Hutton 2007: 150) – a handful of international heritage treaties and agreements already existed, as the next section points out, but all these treaties and conventions focused exclusively on cultural historic relics. The motivation for the United States’ lobby was evident: without the inclusion of natural heritage, the continent could not partake in the exhibition of masterpieces that the convention aimed to promote. Besides, to American patriots the United States’ wilderness was equivalent to European monuments (Tsing 2005: 96) and deserved equal recognition.

The World Heritage Convention indeed came to include natural sites, and treated these as fundamentally different from cultural heritage. The first two articles of the convention immediately describe their differences and emphasize their mutual exclusiveness. Article one reads:

For the purpose of this Convention, the following shall be considered as “cultural heritage”:

monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

(UNESCO 1972, article one)

Article two reads:

For the purpose of this Convention, the following shall be considered as “natural heritage”:

natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;

geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

UNESCO (1972, article two)

Although these two articles do not explicitly mention it, they allude to the Romantic separation between human-shaped and natural environments. This division is also visible in the World Heritage

guidelines, which subject natural heritage and cultural heritage to different standards and principles. Criteria for the designation of cultural sites, for instance, focus on human creative genius, town planning, architecture, and artistic and literary achievements, while the criteria for the designation of natural sites focus on ecological processes, geological formations, and ecosystems (UNESCO 2013: article 77). In addition, cultural heritage sites and natural heritage sites must stand different tests of credibility: cultural sites are assessed on authenticity vested in an idea of historical truthfulness, while natural sites are assessed on biological integrity. Here, it is not historical depth and accuracy that matters but ecological intactness (*Ibid.*: articles 79-95). In practice, this means that nature does not have to be 'old' to become World Heritage – chapter five illustrates this and shows how a property that only recently converted to nature conservation managed to obtain World Heritage status. Finally, World Heritage's separation of natural and cultural heritage also finds expression in their institutional subdivision: the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is responsible for the evaluation of natural heritage sites, while the Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) are responsible for the evaluation of cultural heritage sites. In sum, the World Heritage Convention rests on a categorical separation of nature and culture – it allows for valuing both a property's cultural and natural features, for instance through the designation of cultural landscapes⁸ or 'mixed heritage sites', but it nevertheless treats the two as intrinsically different.

It seems that the separation of natural heritage and cultural heritage also echoes in academia: natural and cultural heritage studies have come to occupy two distinct fields of academic interest that rarely overlap or engage with one another (but see Byrne & Ween 2015). Cultural heritage scholars have typically taken on the task of identifying problems associated with heritage's identification, its commodification, its recent popularity, and so on. Among other things, they have demonstrated that heritage claims are contemporary social, cultural and political constructions (see for instance Handler 2003; Harrison 2004; Probst 2011; Weiss 2007); they have drawn attention to struggles over heritage's definition, meaning and ownership (see for instance Berliner 2012; Creighton 2007; Herzfeld 1991; Rowlands & Butler 2007); and they have pointed out the principles on which current dominant understandings of heritage rest (see for instance Byrne 1991; Smith 2006).⁹ Scholars dealing with the preservation of nature, on the other hand, largely deal with the social implications of conservation programmes and primarily focus on issues of access, resource use, resettlement, and the like (see for instance Adams & Hutton 2007; Brockington 2004; Duffy 2000; Igoe 2004; Neumann 1998; Nishizaki 2004). Such studies are essentially different from studies on cultural heritage because they do not explicitly address nature conservation as a form of heritage celebration. This split between cultural and natural heritage, both in practice as well as in academia, can be partially explained historically – the conservation of cultural relics and nature emerged under different historical circumstances and commented upon different political contexts, as this and preceding sections pointed out. Nevertheless,

I suggest that natural and cultural heritages are far more alike than is currently acknowledged – the reason for this is that our understandings of nature are culturally informed.

That ideas about nature are essentially cultural ideas is a theme that has received significant scholarly attention over the decades. Anthropologists, for instance, underscored the Western-centric character of nature/culture dichotomies while pointing out its inapplicability to other cultures (Barth 1975; Strathern 1980), and different suggestions have been made to replace dualistic models with alternative conceptual frameworks that account for the culturally diverse ways in which people interact with their physical environments (cf Descola 1996; Haila 2000; Latour 1993). Likewise, it has been argued that the nature/culture dichotomy is always incapable of capturing man's relation to his surroundings, regardless of one's whereabouts or one's cultural background, because this relation is perpetually in-the-making, shaped and reshaped, and thus unavoidably temporal (Bender 2002; Ingold 1993; Ronayne 2001).

These works, as well as specific historical developments such as Europe's industrialization, the rise of Romanticism, or the emergence of the American National Parks model, suggest that when the term 'nature' is used one should consider which cultural model for nature is taken for granted in the act (Beck 1996: 2). I do not mean to reduce nature to a mere discursive construct, and there are natural powers and processes that operate independently of how we talk about them. In the words of Kate Soper: 'it is not the discourse of 'global warming' or 'industrial pollution' that has created the conditions of which it speaks' (1995: 249). But the point here is that the ecological rhetoric that World Heritage and the environmental movement at large employ, which relies on a purely scientific presentation of nature and which presents itself as neutral through the recital of 'hard scientific facts' such as biodiversity records, is a political discourse – it conceals that nature is not only ecological processes, but also cultural practice, and it conflates the reality of nature with its ideological representation (*Ibid.*: 251).

Approaching nature in this way, cultural heritage and natural heritage no longer appear radically different. In fact, they look quite similar: both are the tangible evidence of specific cultural ideas about how to deal with our material surroundings. Mt. Kenya's 1997 natural World Heritage designation was not an inevitable outcome of the mountain's natural extraordinariness. Rather, it marked the victory of one particular cultural idea over a range of others. This entire work rests on that assumption, but in chapter three I engage with it directly and discuss how Mt. Kenya's naturalization marginalized cultural and political pasts.

World Heritage's depoliticizing technical idiom

By the late nineteenth century, the loss of national heritage, especially during times of warfare, had become a shared concern between European nations. This concern led to the establishment of

international treaties in which signatories promised to respect each other's historical sites and objects (Grijzenhout 2007: 11-12). One of the first such treaties was the Declaration Concerning Laws and Customs of War drafted in 1874 (Elliot & Schmutz 2012: 262-263), which was followed by the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions. The latter specifically stated that sacred edifices, historic monuments, buildings used for artistic purposes and a number of other places were to be spared in bombardments – it even encouraged countries to identify such places with clearly visible rectangular panels that could be seen from the air (*Ibid.*).

During the First World War, several countries made additional efforts to protect heritage against warfare demolition, and in the aftermath of the war the preservation of heritage was further institutionalized within the League of Nations (Elliot & Schmutz 2012). Among other things, this resulted in the adoption of the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments in 1931, and in the adoption of the Roerich Pact in 1935 (*Ibid.*: 264). The Second World War had a similar effect, and after 1945 renewed attempts were made to offer still better protection for monuments and important cultural sites. This led to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict in 1954, but it also gave way to different lobbies that called for the preservation of specific sites. Amongst these was the lobby to save the Abu Simbel Temples in Egypt.

Shortly after the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, the Republic of Egypt announced its plan to erect a dam at a place called Aswan. The revolution had brought an end to the British occupation of Egypt as well as to the dynasty of Muhammad Ali, and the post-revolution government sought a prestige project to demonstrate its newly obtained power and its capacity for modernization. It aimed for a massive dam that meant to regulate the floodwaters of the Nile – Egypt struggled to meet demands for water and energy, and dams in general summoned a sense of progress and prosperity:

Dams were unique in the scope and manner in which they altered the distribution of resources across space and time, among entire communities and ecosystems. They offered more than just a promise of agricultural development or technical progress. For many postcolonial governments, this ability to rearrange the natural and social environment became a means to demonstrate the strength of the modern state as a techno-economic power.

Mitchell (2002: 21)

The project communicated to Egyptians and the international community alike that the government was in full control, and the Aswan dam was to be the centrepiece of post-independent state building (Mitchell 2002: 43).

The Egyptian government intended to expand an earlier dam that had been built by the British in 1902. That dam had already been extended in 1912 and again in 1933 (Hassan 2007: 75), but still failed to control the Nile effectively. In the 1950s, different experts expressed their worries and indicated that further expansion would bring about salinization, a decline in soil fertility, the spread of disease, coastal erosion and loss of water due to evaporation and seepage (Mitchell 2002: 45). Despite

such worries, the Egyptian government pursued its plans, even though it lacked the financial resources. Initially, Western countries supported the project and offered funding: in 1955 the World Bank agreed to lend \$200 million and both the United States and Britain made further financial contributions (Boyle 2005: 104). These developments took place against the background of the Cold War and it has been suggested that Western countries primarily subsidized the Aswan dam to prevent Egypt from turning to the Soviet Union. When the country nevertheless reinforced its relations with the USSR and recognized the communist government of China, Western donors took their hands off the project and withdrew funding (*Ibid.*: 104-105). In response, Egypt's leader Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal as well as the British-French Suez Canal Company. This further increased tensions and resulted in the 1956 Suez crisis, during which Israel, France and Britain attempted to remove Nasser from power.

In the meantime, international protests against the Aswan project began to emerge. These protests were not rooted in the dam's possible ecological effects, but rather were concentrated on the cultural harm it would cause. The Aswan dam was planned in a region called Nubia, which included a number of valleys that harboured old temples such as the Abu Simbel Temples. These valleys would be flooded and, as a result, the last remnants of ancient Egypt civilizations would disappear under water (Hassan 2007). The lobby against the loss of such cultural heritage became mixed up with Cold War politicking (Basu & Modest 2015: 18), which once again underscores my earlier point that it is vital to unpack state parties in order to understand heritage politics, but in 1959 the Egyptian and the Sudanese governments themselves requested support in saving Nubia's treasures. This prompted UNESCO to organize a relocation campaign and the organization began to collect money for dismantling and rebuilding the temples. The operation that followed was unprecedented in scale: it was extremely laborious to document everything item for item, and archaeologists as well as other specialists from around the world contributed to the task. Afterwards, some of the twenty-three temples that were saved were shipped to other parts of the world, and today Nubian temples decorate the exhibition halls of museums in, among other places, New York, Madrid, Turin, Berlin, and Leiden (Hassan 2007: 80). The entire undertaking eventually cost \$80 million and was funded by roughly fifty countries (Elliot & Schmutz 2012: 265) – the United States made the largest contribution and paid \$12 million for the rescue of the Abu Simbel Temples alone (Berg 1972: 34).

UNESCO's salvage operation concluded in 1968. The project was considered an overall conservation triumph: not only had important temples been saved, the scheme had also shown 'the importance of solidarity and nations' shared responsibility in conserving outstanding cultural sites' (UNESCO 2008^B: 7). Abu Simbel became a token for the urgency of international cooperation in heritage conservation (Stoczkowski 2009: 9) and triggered a range of other international conservation campaigns, among others in Italy, Pakistan and Indonesia. It also created momentum for a renewed interest in heritage conventions and existing treaties were again revised – this brought about the 1964

Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites and, finally, it paved the way for the World Heritage Convention.

The World Heritage Convention, and to a lesser degree also the Venice Charter, differed from earlier treaties in at least one regard. Older arrangements had stemmed from national concerns for heritage safeguarding, and they had meant to foster mutual respect for heritage assets between countries. But the World Heritage Convention did not draw on such rhetoric. Rather than underscoring heritage's national merits, it introduced heritage sites as universal treasures that enrich humanity at large (UNESCO 1972: preamble), and in doing so it aimed to cultivate a sense of global communality that would feed into an ethic of shared custody (see for instance Elliot & Schmutz 2012). Thus, World Heritage came to incorporate two ill-matching principles, as I already indicated at the start of this chapter: it granted state parties the exclusive right to identify and nominate World Heritage Sites, but at the same time it introduced World Heritage as a global good belonging to the world at large (Hitchcock 2004; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004).

Six years after the adoption of the convention the World Heritage List was founded. The list meant to offer an overview of all the sites that the convention acknowledged and intended to record all the world's most outstanding sites. Yet, the text of the World Heritage Convention primarily focused on World Heritage's definition and only gave limited clues as to how such sites were to be identified. For this reason, UNESCO drafted guidelines that were to aid state parties through the World Heritage application procedure. Over the years, these guidelines have been adapted and republished many times. The basic outline of the application procedure remained the same, although the requirements have become stricter – in the past, for instance, hand-drafted World Heritage Site maps were accepted, but today GIS maps are the norm.

The World Heritage guidelines describe the nomination procedure as follows. First, countries must endorse the convention. At present, nearly all countries have, but in the past this provision limited the number of state parties that could put forward World Heritage nominations.¹⁰ Second, countries must compile a tentative list of potential World Heritage Sites. Only when a property has been on this list for a number of years is it eligible for World Heritage nomination. Third, state parties must draft a nomination file, which, among other things, should refer to a set of pre-defined selection criteria and make a statement on a site's outstanding universal value. This file must then be submitted to the World Heritage Centre in Paris, which checks if the document contains all the stipulated information. If this is the case, it forwards it to an advisory body, which is IUCN for natural heritage nominations and ICOMOS and/or ICCROM for cultural heritage nominations. These advisory bodies evaluate the nomination file on its content and send an expert for a field visit. After the field visit, the advisory body delivers its recommendation on whether or not the site in question merits World Heritage status. This recommendation is passed on to the World Heritage Committee, which consists of twenty-one state representatives who meet annually. Finally, the Committee votes on the nomination – if it receives a majority outcome it is added to the World Heritage List.

The World Heritage guidelines present the identification and designation of World Heritage Sites as a technical problem that is solvable through the intervention of the right kind of expertise. This idea is further reinforced by how the notions of authenticity and integrity serve to assess the legitimacy of respectively cultural and natural heritage sites – authenticity reduces history to something that can be revealed through the recollection of historical facts (see also Rowlands & de Jong 2007) while integrity reduces nature to something that can be revealed through the recollection of scientific facts (see also Latour 2004). This ‘rendering technical’ (Li 2007: 7-10) of World Heritage has at least two effects. First, it takes heritage away from the laymen (Smith 2006: 30) and puts it under the authority of archaeologists, historians, biologists and ecologists. In doing so, it constitutes boundaries between those who are positioned as trustees and those subjected to expert direction (Li 2007: 7). In the process, it reproduces hierarchies of knowledge and it should therefore be understood as a display of power (Mitchell 2002). Joyce’s (2005) study on the Maya staircases in Copán, Honduras, illustrates this. It shows how plans to replace the staircases with a replica brought about struggles between archaeologists, historians and conservationists who fought over decision-making power. Within these struggles there was no place for the ‘non-professional’ inhabitants of the area, and they were never invited into the debate.

Secondly, in presenting the designation of World Heritage Sites as a technical undertaking, World Heritage depoliticize in a way that recalls James Ferguson’s (1990) work on an aid project in Lesotho. Ferguson described how the project reduced the notion of poverty to a statistically measurable condition and argued that this was a highly political undertaking: it pre-empted discussion on the root causes of poverty, including the perpetuation of inequality grounded in discriminatory land distribution or access to jobs, while at the same time it enabled the Lesotho state to expand its power into formerly inaccessible regions where it then continued maintaining such inequalities. Ferguson claimed:

By uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of “development” is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicized in the world today. At the same time, by making the intentional blueprints for “development” so highly visible, a “development” project can end up performing extremely sensitive political operations involving the entrenchment and expansion of institutional state power almost invisibly, under cover of a neutral, technical mission to which no one can object.

Ferguson (1990: 256)

Such dynamics also apply to World Heritage. In the coming chapters, I draw attention to the various ways in which technical definitions of ‘state party’ and ‘nature’ depoliticized Mt. Kenya’s World Heritage designation and catered for a number of political operations. In chapter two, for instance, I address how these definitions came to obscure that Mt. Kenya’s 1997 World Heritage listing was

partially the result of struggles between two government institutes, which harked back to colonial policies; in chapter three, I illustrate that they concealed Kenya's mid-1990s political conditions, which sustained Mt. Kenya's naturalization; and in chapters four and five I reveal that they covered up racial struggles over landownership.

World Heritage's depoliticization thus resonates with Mt. Kenya's particular conditions, but it also has wider implications that touch upon all World Heritage designations – World Heritage's technical idiom obscures the politicking that takes place within the World Heritage Committee and it masks how state representatives form coalitions. It has been suggested that these coalitions resemble alliances between UN member states more generally and attention has been raised to the BRICS bloc that consists of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Meskell & Brumann 2015: 33-34). Recently, the representative of China, for instance, supported a South African World Heritage application, presumably in exchange for South Africa's support for the expansion of Chinese trade and industry ventures (Meskell 2012^B: 150). Due to alliances like these, the members of the World Heritage Committee have become increasingly indifferent to the recommendations that IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM put forward. This development can be traced to 2010, when the World Heritage Committee changed in composition and came to include several countries that have experienced difficulty in adding their national heritage to the World Heritage List for reasons that I discuss in the next section. Since their appointment, these countries have employed their decision-making power to catch up, and many of them have come to perceive IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM as 'spoil sports' (Brumann 2014^B: 2185). In the past, World Heritage state representatives typically had a background in heritage conservation, but today many of them are trained career diplomats (Brumann 2014^B: 2186) – this hints at the type of skills considered most useful, and at present voting sessions are preceded by aggressive lobbying (Meskell 2013).

Finally, World Heritage's technical idiom is vested in an extensive bureaucratic framework. This framework is central to how the convention tries to foster heritage management and conservation, for it lacks official sanction and fully relies on governments' goodwill. One IUCN specialist,¹¹ for instance, described World Heritage to me as a voluntary club in which the members do what they want. A Kenyan cultural heritage expert,¹² moreover, stressed that the World Heritage Committee can do nothing to impose the convention's rules and regulations – in theory, it could de-list a site, but this is considered highly insulting and it has only happened twice throughout World Heritage's entire history.¹³ Maswood's (2000) study on how the World Heritage Committee failed to prevent uranium mining in Kakadu National Park, Australia, further underscores World Heritage's lack of sanction, as does Burns's (2009) study on how the United States' refusal to address climate change undermines the committee's credibility.

In light of the World Heritage convention's lack of power to enforce, governing through cultivating desired behaviour has become all the more important – I suggest that Foucault's work on the governmentalization of the state, which I discussed earlier, applies to World Heritage as well. The

circulation of authoritative texts, a practice that has been considered to be at the heart of statecraft (Gupta 2012; Hull 2012), is key in this regard. In cooperation with IUCN, ICOMOS and ICROM, UNESCO frequently publishes conservation manuals and best practice directives. Also, it constantly produces site evaluation reports, decision documents, statistics, maps, and so on. Moreover, the World Heritage guidelines demand a similar effort from state parties, and every World Heritage designation leans on heaps of paperwork. Together, all this documentation forms the kernel of World Heritage governance and is intended to convey World Heritage's legitimacy. At different moments in this dissertation I deal with this issue explicitly: in chapter two, for instance, I examine how the file on Mt. Kenya's 1997 World Heritage designation constructed subjects and social realities so as to foster administrative control, and in chapter five I do the same for the file on the 2013 extension.

World Heritage as a contemporary fascination for the past

In 1978, the first twelve World Heritage Sites were identified. The year after, another forty-five followed and by the mid-1980s the list already counted more than two hundred designations. In short, there was an instant enthusiasm for World Heritage. This enthusiasm echoed the increasing popularity of heritage more generally (Lowenthal 1998; Probst 2012), which itself mirrored important cultural and political changes: immediately after the Second World War the emphasis had been on progress and technological development, but by the 1980s the focus on the future had made way for a focus on the past. The celebration of memory became a key concern in Western societies (Huyssen 2000: 21), and over the past decades certain heritage expressions have become 'imbued with a sacrality' (Meyer & De Witte 2013: 276-277), to the extent that heritage could be considered a contemporary religion.

World Heritage marked the beginning of a large, international heritage movement (Smith 2006). From its inception, the World Heritage List aspired to be balanced and representative (Labadi 2005). But as the number of sites grew exponentially throughout the 1980s a pattern nevertheless revealed itself. By the late 1980s, World Heritage was concentrated in European countries and largely comprised historic towns and religious buildings, particularly Christian ones (*Ibid.*: 90). It advantaged elitist architecture over vernacular buildings (UNESCO 1994^A), and especially the number of African World Heritage Sites lagged behind (Breen 2007). The World Heritage convention claimed to watch over the world's most extraordinary places, but slowly it was becoming apparent that its particular understanding of extraordinariness only applied to certain parts of the world (Anthamatten & Hazen 2007; Byrne 1991; Labadi 2007).

As the uneven distribution of heritage sites became more pronounced, critics began to reject World Heritage for its Western-centric disposition (see for instance Elliot & Schmutz 2012; Eriksen 2001; Rowlands & De Jong 2007; Smith 2006) and its 'West knows best' (Kersel & Luke 2015: 71) attitude. In response to such criticism, UNESCO took a number of measures. For instance, it carried

out a study between 1987 and 1993 that meant to identify gaps in the World Heritage List and that aimed to encourage the nomination of sites in underrepresented categories (Labadi 2005: 90). In 1994, it also organized a meeting that brought together a handful of heritage professionals from Canada, Brazil, France, Australia and Germany (see UNESCO 1994^A) to explicitly address the disparities and to develop a new overall vision to tackle the issue. This meeting resulted in a document called Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List that continues to guide World Heritage applications to this day. But UNESCO not only actively motivated the designation of marginalized heritages – one of World Heritage's key concepts, authenticity, also came under review following controversy over one particular nomination.

In 1993, the government of Japan applied for World Heritage status for a temple complex called Hôryûji, in Ikaruga, Nara Prefecture. Records traced Hôryûji's origins to the seventh or eighth centuries, but the temple consisted of wooden buildings that had been rebuilt numerous times since. Taking this into consideration, World Heritage experts maintained that the temple was no longer in its 'original' condition and rejected the nomination. Japanese stakeholders fiercely protested against the decision: they objected to World Heritage's restricted understanding of authenticity, and claimed that the survival of the skills needed to rebuild the temple time and again was of greater value than its actual physical shape (Brumann 2014^B). Eventually, the experts gave in, and in 1994 UNESCO published a paper that reconsidered the notion of authenticity (see UNESCO 1994^B). This paper adopted a cultural relativist definition of the concept and stated: 'the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong' (UNESCO 1994^B: article 11).

While UNESCO undertook a number of measures to reduce regional and thematic imbalances in the World List, a range of other concerns began to emerge. Under UNESCO's encouragement, the list had continued to grow rapidly, and each year dozens of sites had been added to it – by 2000, the total number of World Heritage Sites counted nearly seven hundred. In consideration of this, heritage experts began to argue that the World Heritage List was defeating its purpose: they claimed that UNESCO had been so concerned with a fair distribution that it had accepted countless sites that failed to meet World Heritage criteria, and they argued that the list had ceased to be a collection of the most extraordinary places only (see for instance Anthamatten & Hazen 2007; Askew 2010). Such critiques prompted widespread discussion among heritage experts about what it meant to be of 'outstanding universal value' as well as about how such values were to be measured.¹⁴ One of the effects of these debates was that the World Heritage application procedure became stricter, more time consuming, and far more expensive (see also Willems & Comer 2011: 161). Poorer countries, which typically were also the underrepresented countries, once again found themselves in a marginalized position, although in recent years different funds have been established to support them. Among these initiatives is, for instance, the African World Heritage Fund that was founded in 2006, which seeks to offer assistance

in the application for World Heritage status and which aims to train local heritage experts and site managers.

More than forty years after its inception, it has been suggested that, today, the World Heritage Convention might be considered dead (Meskell 2012^B: 147). In addition to the increased politicking that I discussed earlier, and in addition to what has been considered an inflation of World Heritage status due to the large number of designations,¹⁵ World Heritage is currently suffering serious budget cuts that appear to have brought the entire programme to an impasse (Meskell 2013). World Heritage's financial troubles were a direct result of the United Nation's decision to accept Palestine as a non-member observer state in November 2012, after which the United States, previously World Heritage's largest sponsor, withdrew its funding – this again articulates just how much World Heritage is entangled in global politics, and it is reminiscent of how the Cold War complicated the rescue of the Nubian temples in Egypt in the 1960s.

Throughout this chapter I have dealt with different historical episodes, all of which have had a bearing on what World Heritage looks like today. The argument implicit in this is that World Heritage is the most recent phase in a chain of events that goes back more than two centuries. Interestingly, however, the current phase is one that largely ignores its own genealogy, for it conceives of heritage as static and unchanging. Scholars have repeatedly argued that heritage is not a quality located in an object or a place, but a mode of cultural production (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; see also Smith 2006) that has recourse to the past, but which is also inherently different from that past:

We use objects to refer to, or think about, the past. But those cultural links to the past can exist only in the present and only within present-day semiotic activities. To save or conserve the past, tradition, or heritage is to do something new, today.

Handler (2003: 355)

Heritage is a temporal social construction, which reveals more about those who make heritage claims than about the sites or objects that are claimed. The World Heritage Convention fails to accommodate this and instead departs from a static definition of heritage that presumes that objects and places have a constant and permanent meaning. Chapter five illustrates this and describes how a 2010 request to expand Mt. Kenya World Heritage Site was unsuccessful because it did not match the description used for the 1997 designation. World Heritage defines heritage in a way that does not allow for change – cultural, political or otherwise. As such, it fixates meaning, and fails to fully understand the ramifications of its own historical roots.