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The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/23598 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

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Title: Nubia and Nubians : the 'museumization' of a culture
Issue Date: 2014-02-12

CHAPTER 3

The Emancipation of Museums: An Overview of Ideas

Before moving from the history and historiographical literature of Nubia to its 'museumization', it is necessary to understand how the museum has evolved over time and how it operates in different sociopolitical realities. Museums document and record the passage of time, but this process unavoidably affects them. Therefore this chapter explores the impact time has made on museums themselves.

Museums, born to satisfy the taste and values of the educated western elite of the nineteenth century, are changing their identity. Rather than functioning as an immutable, static and for some, arid place, it is progressively becoming an interactive tool for communicating with the world outside its doors, the living presence of what is displayed inside.

The language and terminology used in this chapter as well as the profile of those who are dealing with museum 'emancipation' are different from those of the 'old museology' and clearly show that the subject can no longer be characterized by *staticity* but, instead, by *dynamicity*.

Changing the Traditional Role of Museums

If the 20th century was characterized by conflicts of ideology, the 21st century is all about conflicts of identity. Following this new political trend, museums, scattered around the five continents, are breaking new ground in an effort to prove that the museum is not necessarily an obsolete, elitist institution, and that it has an essential part to play in the world of today and tomorrow. The consciousness of cultural identities, represented by cultural heritage, has led to the awareness that political emancipation is of little significance unless it entails cultural emancipation.[167]

The traditional role of both science and humanities museums is unquestionably changing. Rather than focusing on preserving, studying and presenting their collections, museums can now be required to perform a variety of social functions, among them social inclusion, lifelong learning and awareness of group identities. This aspiration to effectuate a social evolution of museums is especially applicable in those museums where the function of objects is to tell the history of those who have produced them.

The complex system on which the museum is based will certainly create difficulties in addressing these new roles. The museum is basically formed by two components that are interdependent: first the collection that is indispensably supported by its technical, scientific and institutional apparatus. The relationship between the museum and the reality that it represents is, as Bloom *et al.*[168] have remarked, rhetorical rather than methodological or scientific. The dynamics of how the objects arrive in the museums are primarily linked to issues of power, politics, finance and other marginal factors, and have little to do with systematic research. This approach very often

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[167] Bouchenaki, 1999 (Mounir Bouchenaki has worked with UNESCO for a long time, as Director of the Division for Cultural Heritage and earlier as Acting-Director of the World Heritage Centre and then as Assistant Director-General for Culture. In the last years he has also been Director-General of ICCROM- International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property).
[168] Bloom, 1994:11.

leads to the creation, as Cliffords says, of 'contingent fictions' of other ways of life.[169]

The social roles and responsibilities of museums are therefore many and varied; they can differ radically from context to context and organization to organization. They are influenced by many factors, including the needs and concerns of communities, the museum's history and that of its collections, the way in which it is funded, the political priorities of its stakeholders and the financial and human resources it has available.[170]In 1992 Eilean Hooper-Greenhill wrote in the introduction chapter to the book *Museum and the Shaping of Knowledge*:

> This fixed view of the identity of museums has sometimes been firmly held and, until recently, little has disturbed it. But it is a mistake to assume that there is only one form of reality of museums, only one fixed mode of operating. Looking back in to the history of museums, the realities of museums are changed many times. Museums have always had to modify how they worked, and what they did, according to the context, the plays of power, and the social, economic, and political imperatives that surrounded them. Museums in common with all the other social institutions, serve many masters, and must play many tunes accordingly. Perhaps success can be defined by the ability to balance all the tunes that must be played and still make the sound worth listening to. At the present time, in many areas where decisions are now being made about the funding and maintenance of museums, hard questions are now being asked about the justification of museums, about their role in the community, and their functions and potentials.[171]

J.D. Harrison states that museums have taken on these challenges in different ways. Some have generated confrontation in their approach, while others have encouraged an increased acceptance of diversity. In each case, the museum has had to address the questions of whose history is being constructed and whose memories are being negotiated by the museum, and ultimately whose voices will be heard and whose will be silenced. By looking at the processes of construction and negotiation, and their outcomes, and by recognizing the connections, the museum profession will be in a better position to be able to reconcile these differences.[172]

As Bloom *et al.* say, certainly in the future, four forces are likely to direct museums: a proliferation of voices, cultural pluralism, the impact of the information age and challenges in education. Seven aspects of museums that need 'to be approached with fresh insight' in order to respond to these forces are: collection management, education potential, internal organization structures, the value of the museum to human experience, and representation of cultural diversity through all aspects of the museum.[173]

Heritage and Identity

Since one of the main arguments of this study is the impact of heritage on identity issues, it is necessary to make some brief comments on these two topics, since their intrinsic meaning is not as simple as it might appear. The most tangible manifestation of heritage is the material. That is to

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[169] These 'contingent fictions' created not only by museums displays but also by other culture practices as anthropology, travel writing and collecting by Western society, have been actively contested in post-colonial contexts (Cliffords, 1988: 22-229).
[170] Sandell, 2002: Introduction.
[171] Hooper- Greenhill, 1992: Introduction.
[172] Harrison, 2002: 29.
[173] Bloom, *et al.:*1994: 11.

say, a society that built monuments and produced material culture hereby attests to its power, intelligence and creativity; these products are concrete, they can be touched. However, there is also the world of ideas and practices covered by the heading of 'intangible heritage' or 'immaterial' heritage. Today, the expression of mankind's creativity in both its tangible and intangible forms is being approached more and more as an indivisible whole. One, in fact, is the material manifestation of the other.

International organizations like UNESCO are paying special attention to intangible heritage with the creation of several key projects and actions such as the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Thirty-Second session of the UNESCO General Conference on October 17, 2003. The definition of 'Intangible Heritage' used in the Convention states that:

> The Intangible Cultural Heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, and knowledge skills as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment their interaction with nature and their history and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purpose of this convention, consideration will be solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.[174]

The value of intangible cultural heritage has already been acknowledged by a number of countries that have a culturally diverse population and indigenous people. To date 140 countries from all over the world have ratified the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage.[175] The Convention clearly states that cultural heritage should be preserved in its holistic vision in order to link past and present for a better future. As Sharon MacDonald and Gordon Fyfe contend:

> What distinguishes humans from animals is our awareness of time. The concept of time is inherent to the concept of humanity. And in this awareness of time, we feel, above all, the weight of the past. Humans try to justify their actions in the present by invoking their past, the past of the community. In many prayers, and in agrarian and other rites, you will hear, 'I am doing this as my ancestors did before me', a justification of the present with reference to the past, but also to ensure development in the future. Everything is linked, from the past to the future. But heritage also helps to define the meanings of culture and power and is a political resource; and consequently, it is often accompanied by an array of different identifications and potential conflicts, not least when places and objects of heritage are involved in issues of legitimization of power structures.[176]

David Lowenthal states that the past validates the present by conveying an idea of timeless values and unbroken lineages through restoring of subverted values. The sense of belonging to a place is fundamental to identity, people cut off from their past by migration or even by its destruction - deliberate or accidental - in war, often recreate what could or should have been there but never

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[174] UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage, 2003.
[175] http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00024
[176] MacDonald and Fyfe, 2004: 58.

actually was. Inevitably, therefore, the past as rendered through heritage, also exacerbates the burdens of history. The atrocities, errors and crimes of the past, that are appealed to, legitimize the atrocities of the present.[177] Some think that museums need to explore and confront all aspects of the past, even if they are a sphere of contestation. Museums must become a site of truth and commemoration, as the Holocaust Museum in Washington is. In this spirit as well, Kanan Makiya, an Iraqi dissident, has proposed the construction of a Museum of Baathist Crimes.

The idea of some others is that in contexts of reconciliation and reconstruction of countries, the building of deeply damaged relations between nations, peoples or faiths can begin only when peace and stability have been achieved. Once the right conditions are in place, a nation can begin to debate its past.[178]

Heritage is also an economic resource exploited everywhere as a primary component of strategies to promote tourism, economic development and rural and urban regeneration. This factor greatly influences the way in which heritage is processed, preserved and presented.

Turning to the idea of identity, the concept has become the subject of academic discussions and studies. As McLean states, at a macro level the contemporary transformation of identity has taken place against the backdrop of decolonization, imperial atrophy, globalization and the decline of the nation-state. At a national level, the challenge becomes one of reconciliation and of promoting national integration within the plurality and diversity of identity.[179]

According to Newman and McLean, there are two interpretations of identity: the first is a 'fixed view' of it as unchanging over time and space. The other view sees identity as something fluid and contingent that, in a multicultural era such as today, changes over time and might be privileged over other identities and in particular contexts. This second and non-essentialist perception considers identity as a social concept, as it

> gives us a location in the world and presents the link between us and the society in which we live. Identity can then be grouped into factors such as ethnicity, race, nationality, social class, and so on […][180]

The concept of community is also very complex. A person can belong to one or more communities and identify them in a different manner. He or she can belong to a community defined by geographical locality, or by an ethnic community or a community focused on a particular industry. It is easy to understand, therefore, that for a museum the process of exhibiting an identity is a challenge. As Corsane says:

> When heritage, museums and galleries, become sites and spaces where a multiplicity of voices can be heard and different representations found, they open up as places where dialogue can take place. They can challenge, inspire and act as resources for life-long learning. Thus is all positive. However, they can also become arenas of contestation that at times stimulate controversy.[181]

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[177] Lowenthal, 1985.
[178] Lumly in Sandell, 2002: 31.
[179] McLean, 2005: 1- 4.
[180] Newman and McLean, 2002:56-68.
[181] Corsane, 2002: 1-22.

While multiculturalism is leading to the creation of specialized museums, far more difficult is the role of such museums if they are expected to make a contribution towards the construction of national identity.[182] The concept of national identity or nationalism is not a simple one. Generally, nationalism is part of the human tendency to belong to a group. As Hugh Seton-Watson says: 'All I found to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one'.[183]

Michael Ignatieff explains that there are two forms of nationalism: a civic one based on patriotic sentiments and a shared set of political practices and values. The other form of nationalism is based on inherited ethnic characteristics. In both cases it is a mistake to think that a nation is something which pre-exists the present form of nation-state, or is a 'natural' or 'innate' entity.[184] As Benedict Anderson indicated in his well-known study *Imagined Communities*,[185] nationalism is somehow 'invented' and, more precisely, invented on the basis of a number of selected features. A particular group living within a nation-state can be regarded differently from the rest of the population and as such it can claim political independence but not necessarily a separate state, for example, the Aborigines in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Minorities tend to consider themselves as 'nations' but rarely as 'states'.[186] However, in the case of Native Americans, they are able to maintain a certain legal status that recognizes the legitimacy of their own internal nationhood within specifically designated geographical areas. Hence, the 'Cherokee' or 'Navajo' Nations design recognized communities that are confined to land allotted to them by the US government in the late nineteenth century. In this way, they are able to exercise legal rights concerning burial grounds and what those grounds contain.[187]

Different nations can be contained within the boundaries of a single state, as many states can be part of one nation. In these circumstances, often, for political reasons, a sort of trans-national identity is promoted. This is the case of the Pan-Arab and Pan-African movements that consider themselves different from the Western world. Therefore, the creation of a national identity is subjective and also very relative. Consequently, representing any specific national identity becomes a complex and delicate task. The museum usually tends to simplify the diverse elements that make up the concepts of its displays and exhibitions. As a result, these displays often give a homogeneous, and therefore more readable picture of what they are trying to represent,

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[182]An example can be found in Sweden, that can be considered a new multicultural society with a relatively small number of established and recognized national minorities (the Sami, the Swedish Finns, the Tornedaler Finns, the Roma and the Jews) and larger groups of new immigrants who have come in different waves of immigration since the 1950s. This has led to the challenging decision of including ethnic minorities in Swedish Museums. Four museums have been created and federated under the general name of National Museums of World Culture and their collections are from 'other parts of the world', namely, mainly non-European collections (three already existed while one, The Museum of World Culture, was opened in 2004). According to the Swedish Government (1998) the mission of these museums is to play a specific role in dealing with the challenges of multicultural Sweden, through their international collections and networks. However, the politics of inclusion have tended to generate tension and conflict along two dimensions: (i) the relationship between museum employees and external stakeholders, especially concerning the decision-making process that determines what is to be exhibited and (ii) the symbolic and textual dimensions of display (Lagerkvist, 2006). For what concerns multiculturalism and museums cf. also Pieterse, 1997: 123-146; Hakiwai, 2002, 179-201.

[183] Seton-Watson, 1997: 5.

[184] Ignatieff, 1993:6.

[185] The process that, according to Anderson, creates 'the imagined communities' is: the territorialization of religious faiths, the decline of antique kinship, the interaction between capitalism and print, the development of secular languages-of-state and changing conceptions of time and space (Anderson, 1991).

[186] Ignatieff, 1993:5.

[187] For the Navajo Tribal Museum cf. Hartman, 1983: 30-35.

ignoring the depth and dynamics of the concepts and human civilization in all its variety. As Ashworth says:

> In order to be useful in museums and be easily understood by the widest group of people, a 'rich and complex past' has to be reduced to a set of easily recognizable characteristics. Similarly, national identity is usually reduced to a few stereotyped qualities, representative personalities, and supporting mythologies.[188]

The other major problem of the museum in the representation of national identity is the restrictions posed by its link with the power in society. For those who represent the power, the subjective elements that define a nation, created by the power itself, are real. Many of the conflicts that today affect the world are related to the collapse of the nation-state and, in most cases, are attributable to conflicts between civic nationalism and ethnic nationalism. Often museums are in the middle of these conflicts.

The explanations I have pursued in this chapter show, by the analysis made by those who are working on the process of 'emancipation' of the museum, the intrinsic significance of this institution, its strengths and its weaknesses. How it is materialized in the different realities in which the museum operates is the next area of exploration.

Impact of Museums on Societies

If the purpose of creating museums in European countries was to provide an educational tool for the elite and support development and national growth, in other parts of the world, such as what is known as the 'Global South', the museum mandate purpose was initially different.

Nnakenyi Arinzi was one of the best known and effective leaders of the African museum and heritage community and was instrumental in training and in raising the profile of African museum professionals in the international community. He describes the situation of African museums before and after independence and their needs for the future as follows:

> In the beginning, Africans were not given solid professional training that would empower them, nor were they encouraged to make the museum profession their career. What generally emerged was a situation where Africans served as attendants and cleaners who had to accompany expatriates during fieldwork to help collect materials and clean excavated archeological objects. A few were taught how to operate a camera and move objects within the museum and in the field, but were denied the hard-core professional training essential for the profession. This scenario, by and large, created a dilemma for the museum ensuring that they could not develop a vision or a mission consistent with national goals and objectives. The scenario also entrenched the Western model stereotype on the museum, thus creating a contradiction that has continued to plague African museums over the years. How this dilemma is to be resolved has today become an issue in practically all museums in Africa [...] A striking phenomenon emerged in African Museums in the immediate post-independence years: they became active and effective vehicles for nationalism and for fostering national consciousness and political unity. They became tools for reaching out to the population and forging greater national understanding and a feeling

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[188] Ashworth, 1994:13-30.

of belonging and togetherness. In a sense, they became the symbol of 'uhuru' (freedom) and change.[189]

From Arinzi's text emerges a clear indication that independence has changed the mission of the African museum in terms of content. According to this view, the central mission of African museums today should be first of all to represent the local culture, in the past discriminated by the white elite who created the first museums on the continent. Another sphere of action and responsibility for African museums today is a type of corporate social responsibility that interacts with the communities they serve, taking into consideration local needs and problems related to health, urbanization and so on.

In Zimbabwe, for example, prior to independence, the government decreed that museums should not represent the Black Rhodesian culture. This decision was clearly devised to marginalize the local people and their culture. During the conflict that led to the end of the domination by a white minority, museums represented the conflict as a 'campaign against terrorism'.[190] Following independence, the Zimbabwean museums, managed by locals, represented the indigenous culture that is at the heart of the process of reconciliation in the country.

Besides recognizing minorities, governments might also be required to stress unity and to avoid emphasis on different ethnic groups within the country. For an example of this dilemma, we can look at Namibia, a country with a large number of ethnic groups. With independence, the government sought to reinforce the unity of the country using museums as a tool. Any policy that could raise ethnic feeling, and therefore undermine national unity, was avoided.[191]

Another case are the Kom in Cameroon. In 1970 they fought to get back the Afo-A-Kom, a ceremonial statue particularly important to their identity.[192] The government gave this operation no support, but nevertheless it was pursued.[193] Such efforts to retrieve artifacts important to ethnic identities have become a powerful trend around the world. In countries such as Egypt, there have been a number of successes in retrieving objects from foreign countries. In the United States, efforts by Native Americans to retrieve the bones of their ancestors for ceremonial reburial and to block further excavation and destruction of ceremonial burial grounds, have also met with some success. (On the other hand, excavations are very relevant to the history of the peoples concerned, and hence to their own identities).The role of the museum is both one of being a social agent celebrating identities and legacies, as well as the stage upon which governments and special interest groups play out their conflicts.

Although one of the most important roles of African museums is the preservation and conservation of those objects and artifacts most closely tied to that of their people's identity in Africa, exhibitions and displays in some museums have been strongly influenced by audience

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[189] Nnakenyi Arinze, 1988. The integral version of this text has been included in Annex II.
[190] Munjeri, 1990: 444- 456.
[191] Schildkrout, 1995: 65-77.
[192] The *Afo-A-Kom* is not among the greatest pieces of art but for its community of 30,000 people its meaning is inexpressible. This wooden statue was stolen from a storage hut in the Kom Kingdom in the northwestern part of the Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1966, and finished up in the hands of an American art-trader. It seems that Law Aw, the King (also called the Fon) of Kom, was so affected by this theft that he was believed to have been 'psychologically killed,' as he died soon after this traumatic event. The attempt to replace the statue with another did not bring peace to the community. Thaddeus Nkuo, first secretary of Cameroon in Washington and himself a Kom, demanded its return, explaining: 'It is beyond money, beyond value. It is the heart of the Kom, what unifies the tribe, the spirit of the nation, what holds us together. It is not an object of art for sale, and could not be'.(The lost totem: Time Magazine, Monday Nov. 5 1973).
[193] Vincent, 1995:80 - 85.

expectations. In Namibia, for example, there are two national museums, a historical one and the other for natural history and ethnography. In the Museum of History, visited almost exclusively by foreign tourists, local history is infused by a kind of nostalgia for the former German and Afrikaans dominant cultures, and presents the national identity through stories framed in and informed by European culture. The Museum of Natural History and Ethnography, visited mainly by local authorities, has a different dimension of the history of the country, a local dimension.[194] The use of museums for political purposes and consequently the display of the most convenient items for such scopes is defined by Enid Schildkrout as 'selective amnesia'.[195] Although there is always a selection excluding other displays, 'selective amnesia' refers to the political choice to include and avoid certain topics and objects without informing the public of the reasons for these choices.

In the Middle East, the official role of museums tends to reflect the policies of national governments which are intent on building a national identity based on their epic and glorious pasts. These glorious legacies tend to erase other chapters of more recent history, less glorious, and often characterized by tensions and conflicts. The representation of these epic pasts, often embellished, exaggerated and dramatized, is targeted in particular at the foreign audience that, through tourism and other activities related to the promotion of this illustrious heritage, represents one of this area's main economic resources.[196] In Lebanon, a land that for years has lived through chapters of civil war, state museums transmit a national identity still linked to the heritage of Phoenicians and Romans.[197] Along the same lines, Egypt, whose situation will be presented in more details in the next chapter, Turkey and other countries in the Arab region have pursued similar policies in the context of museums.

The use of museums in the Far East for state-ideology varies and changes. In China, for example, since the early 1990s museums have been shifting the focus of their exhibitions from socialism to patriotism. Museums in contemporary China are officially designated bases for patriotic education, but the content of the 'patriotism' that they are meant to promote remains in many respects vague or problematic. One of the key tensions here is that between a deep-rooted assumption of equivalence between the Chinese and Han cultures and history, and the multicultural reality of the contemporary People's Republic - including as it does a range of non-Han groups such as Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongols, and many other cultural groups. The progressive abandonment of socialism has in some ways exposed these contradictions more starkly in recent years. Meanwhile, the homogenous official vision of Chinese identity in general, and Han identity in particular, is contested either at the popular or the official level (or both) in the largely Han communities of Hong Kong and Taiwan, the Republic of China. In a rapidly commercializing and modernizing Communist China, the promotion of a state-centered patriotism has become a key instrument for the regime in its efforts to preserve its legitimacy, and museums represent a key element in this strategy. The imperial collection now displayed in Taipei, the capital of the Republic of China and the other part in Beijing, the capital of Communist China, is the glue that holds together the collective cultural heritage of the two countries.[198]

In countries where theocratic power has a leading role, the memory of ancient civilization, considered to be pagan, represents a danger to religious identity. One pertinent case is

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[194] Schildkrout, 1995:70.
[195] Schildkrout, 1995:65.
[196] Said, 1991: 80-91.
[197] Mackey, 1989.
[198] Vickers, 2007:365-382; Hamlisch, 1995: 20-30.

Afghanistan. Here the conflict between the Soviet forces and *Mujaheddin*, led to the destruction of numerous monuments and museums. One of the hopes of the post-conflict era was the reconstruction of the Kabul Museum. When the Taliban toppled the government, they did everything possible to destroy all that was reminiscent of the ancient civilizations which had flourished in this part of the world. The most striking blow was the assault on the colossal Buddha figures carved into the cliffs of the Bamiyan Valley.[199] The destruction of many of the treasures held in the museum of Kabul although less striking was equally serious.

Areas composed of several different countries are thought to be defined as belonging to a unique entity as in the case of the Mediterranean Basin. At the Barcelona Conference in 1995, the then fifteen members of the European Union and the twelve countries of the Mediterranean Basin - from Turkey to Morocco (excluding Libya which was at that time under embargo) decided to create the so-called Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The aim of the Partnership was to support a process of accelerated convergence in social, economic and political terms, creating an area of security, stability and shared prosperity. Indubitably the Barcelona Declaration has certainly stressed the concept of a unified Mediterranean identity,[200] but the Mediterranean is notoriously marked by a north-south split, a colonial legacy, as well as an east-west dichotomy. The symbol of the latter is the Orientalism that characterizes the western construction of the Middle East. This dichotomy makes the creation of a Mediterranean identity difficult, and consequently it cannot be manifested in museum exhibitions. Today, some museums display specific products common to the Mediterranean basin but there is, as yet, no museum for Mediterranean civilization in its holistic vision.

A contextual concept in which museums are playing an important role has revolved around what has been termed the 'Aboriginal identity'. Groups whose members have reason to claim indigenous status within established states have found themselves challenged by the muting of their voices in political arenas. Chaliand writes:

> Paradoxically, human beings as groups turn out to have fewer rights than individuals – unless they form a state. It is from this absence of their own states that the minorities of the world are suffering today, in that sovereign states [...] are denying them even cultural rights.[201]

Today aborigines or indigenous peoples around the globe are struggling for official recognition of their identities in the states in which they live. This does not mean that they claim a separate state, although governments often fear that cultural identity struggles will give rise to neo-nationalist movements. In museums, the demand to recognize the identities and cultural legacies of these groups is becoming a reality. The southwest Pacific is a prime example of this trend. In the museums of the area a number of approaches are being considered: indigenous curation; indigenous motivation; indigenous audiences; and indigenous concepts relating to methods and character of collecting and display.

Several cultural centers have also been created: they are considered to be particularly appropriate institutions for displaying art and ceremonial objects and appropriate to the insertion of new cultural and political dimensions into the venues. Two examples of exhibitions of non-indigenous history in national museums have appeared in Australia: the Aboriginal exhibition at

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[199] Bailey, 1997: 1-2.
[200] Barcelona Declaration on Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, 27 November, 1996.
[201] Chaliand, 1980.

the National Museum of Australia (2001) and the Maori exhibit in the Auckland Museum (1998) in New Zealand. Both museums try to explore the non-indigenous national identity through the idea that these identities are based on three premises: a relationship with the land; the two nations highlighted are considered immigrant societies; and the construction of a national identity. The basic concept explored by both museums has been the inter-relationship between the environment and indigenous and non-indigenous histories. The exploration was to inform the displays in the galleries and create an environment in which the interaction between the viewer and the dramatic space of the displays could foster better understanding of the unique roles that the Aborigines of Australia and the Maori of New Zealand (Aotearoa) have played in the growth and development of the continent and the Australian and New Zealand states. However, much of the criticism that these exhibitions have met with has concerned a perceived imbalance between the representation of indigenous and non-indigenous cultures, complicated by problems of copyright-ownership.[202] Curators throughout the Pacific have to negotiate these issues in the displays they mount. But, it is argued, the results can sustain new forms of association and cultural exchange. Such an approach is not just 'open' to the minorities, but seems to respond indirectly to the Australian and New Zealand 'national' interest and unity: it justifies the existence of the main/dominant European immigrant component and legitimacy in Australia and New Zealand. In a few words, this approach implies that both Aborigines, the Maoris and the Europeans are migrants linked to the 'land', they are 'all' legitimately Australians and New Zealanders.[203]

If the voice of ethnic minorities has begun to be heard and respected in the context of national museums, the birth of eco-museums is the most clear expression of an institution aimed at preserving not only the cultural but also the natural heritage of minorities. Born in France in 1971, the concept of eco-museum has become a new trend for preserving ethnic cultures in Europe and both Americas. Their main target is the protection of unique ethnic cultures and folklore, and the promotion of local society and economy. Since in their remit the protection of the natural environment, living environment and original residence of ethnic people is basic to their birth and is particularly linked to situations of tension, border areas and areas at risk of destruction, they are considered a real rescue mechanism. Many of these museums have been built in the Basque country, in China and in Latin America.[204]

The holistic approach of eco-museums emphasizes the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts that provides a meaningful and significant context for a more complete vision, one which is multi-layered in terms of existing and impeding cultural damage.[205]

In the Basque region located on Franco-Spanish border and formed by a community of around 3 million people unified by an ancient language, the Euskera, sixty eco-museums of which forty-four were constructed in the post-Franco era, are playing a fundamental role in the preservation of the traditions of this people.[206] In Asia, where a large number of ethnic groups such as the Miao, Dong, Buyi, Mongolia and Yao people reside, seven eco-museums are distributed in southwest, north and south China.[207]

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[202] MacCarthy, 2007; Gore, 2007.
[203] The Aborigines have been in Australia for at least 40,000 years, if not 60,000. The Maoris were a back migration from Eastern Polynesia in 14th century. In their turn they almost wiped out the Moriori who still survive in small groups mainly in the Chatham islands.
[204] Davis, 1991:8-11; Corsane & Halleman, 1993: 111-125.
[205] Diaz Balerdi, 2004. Two of these eco-Museums are the St Jean de Luz Eco-Museum located 15km to the south of Biarritz on the French Basque coast, and the Eco Museum of Basque Building in Artea (Bilbao).
[206] The first museum, the Suoga Miao Eco-Museum, was built in 1998.
[207] This nationalist policy has led to a 'population exchange' forced migration and de-naturalization of 1.5 million

Eco-museums are also being envisaged by Sarah Elliott from Newcastle University (UK) for the southeast of Turkey, a region that has suffered and still suffers considerable damage to its physical, societal and cultural landscape.[208] In Turkey, the repudiation of the Turkish multilayered culture was begun in 1920 by Ataturk, whose plan was to build a state with a monolithic Turkish identity. This would be achieved by a progressive policy of the assimilation and subsequent eventual disappearance of the Kurds and other indigenous cultural elements. Only at the household level and in the countryside was it possible for the Kurds to preserve their language, music, religion and beliefs which form the cultural identity of the Kurdish people. More recently, this national policy has added an enormous water infrastructure program damming the great watercourses of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Important archeological sites such as Samos and Seugma on the Euphrates have been lost (only a few of the others had ever been investigated). On the Tigris, Hasankeyf is threatened by the Illisu Dam.[209] These archeological sites are of great significance to the local population, which, as in Nubia and other locations, were forced to relocate. With the proposal of the entry of Turkey into the European Community, elements of flexibility are beginning to appear and possible mechanisms of recovery as the proposal for the creation of eco-museums substantiates.[210]

The few examples discussed in this chapter give an idea of how museums operate in different areas of the world in different realities and different contexts. The next part of the research shows whether and how museums have taken up the complex idea of 'Nubia'. Has this 'museumization' considered the current geographical and political reality of which Nubia is part and if and how it includes the recognition of ancient traditions.

Greeks from Turkey and 500,000 Turks from Greece.

[208] Elliot, 2005.

[209] It is one of the 22 dams of the Southeastern Anatolia Project, which purpose is to produce hydroelectric power, flood control and water storage. When complete, the dam will support a 1,200 MW power station and will form a 10.4 billion m^3 reservoir. Construction of the dam began in 2006 and it is expected to be completed by 2015. The dam has aroused international controversy, because it will flood portions of ancient Hasenkeyf and necessitate the relocation of people living in the region. This is the reason that international funding for the dam was withdrawn in 2008.

[210] Elliot, 2005.