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**FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**

**Textile Conservation Centre**

**Investigating Partnership between Local and Institutional Communities for the  
Preventive Conservation of Cultural Heritage in East Africa**

by

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE  
TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE

Doctor of Philosophy

INVESTIGATING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN LOCAL AND INSTITUTIONAL  
COMMUNITIES FOR THE PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL  
HERITAGE IN EAST AFRICA

by Anne-Marie Deisser

This study explores partnership models between local and institutional communities practicing preventive conservation, for movable cultural heritage in East Africa. Institutional and local approaches to preventive conservation are analysed and the principles and practices developed in the fields of movable, immovable and natural heritage are compared. The challenges posed by the intangible attributes of cultural heritage are also considered, as are the characteristics of local values and practices. Particular attention is paid to the vulnerability of local and traditional practices in the face of standardised conservation principles. The data collected in the analysis of local and institutional contexts is discussed in relation to two questions: (i) What are the historical, cultural and social issues that shape the development of partnerships between local and institutional communities? ii) What are the necessary requirements for establishing principles and practices pertinent to the preventive conservation of tangible and intangible heritage and which are relevant to both communities?

The research methodology included a review and analysis of the publications of international heritage organisations, interviews with the staff of selected heritage organisations and local community representatives, the author's observations during fieldwork undertaken in Kenya and in Ethiopia between 2002 and 2005, and the analysis of three case studies of the conservation of movable, immovable and natural heritage (Ankober, Ethiopia; Thimlich Ohinga, Kenya; the Sacred Forests of coastal Kenya). The analysis of these case studies identifies the various stakeholders involved in the conservation of cultural heritage, and explores their motivations, practices and arenas of interaction.

The underlining thesis of this research is that building partnerships between relevant authorities and resource users provides common ground on which to preserve cultural heritage through the practice of preventive conservation. It is also argued that a preventive and partnership approach to conservation can foster respect for cultural diversity and contribute to conflict resolution in a continent increasingly shaped by the effects of cultural globalisation.

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## Abbreviations

AAU	Addis Ababa University
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AHRB	Arts and Humanities Research Board
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Centre
AU	African Union
AFRICOM	International Council of African Museums
AIC	American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
AICCM	Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Material
ARAAFU	Association des Restaurateurs d'Art et d'Archéologie de Formation Universitaire (Association of Art and Archaeology Conservators of University Education)
ARCCH	Ethiopian Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage
CAC	Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property
CAM	Commonwealth Association of Museums
CAPC	Canadian Association of Professional Conservators
CHDA	Centre for Heritage Development in Africa
CFCU	Coastal Forest Conservation Unit
CRATerre-EAG	Centre International d'Architecture de Terre-Ecole d'Architecture de Grenoble (International Centre for Earth Architecture-School for Architecture of Grenoble)
DESS	Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées (Masters)
ECCO	European Network for Conservation-Restoration Education
ECPDM	European Centre for Policy Development Management
EPA	Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (School for African Heritage)

EU/NMK SP	Support Programme for the European Union and the National Museums of Kenya
GCI	Getty Conservation Institute
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICME	International Committee for Museums of Ethnography
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICOM-CC	International Council of Museums Committee for Conservation
ICOM-CIDOC	International Committee for Documentation of the International Committee of Museums
ICOM-ICTOP	International Committee for the Training of Personnel of the International Committee of Museums
ICOM-UK	United Kingdom National Committee of the International Council of Museums
ICOMAC	International Council of Museums of Central Africa
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IES	Institute of Ethiopian Studies
IESMA	Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum of Anthropology
IIC	International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works
IIC-CG	International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works-Canadian Group
IRPA	Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique (Royal Institute for the Study and Conservation of Belgium's Artistic Heritage)
KENRIK	Kenyan Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge
KIT	Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Tropical Institute of the Netherlands)
KWS	Kenyan Wildlife Society
MEPOA	Museum Education Programme of Africa

MGC	Museums and Galleries Commission
MYSC	Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture of Ethiopia
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NME	National Museum of Ethiopia
NMK	National Museums of Kenya
PMDA	Programme for Museum Development in Africa
PNUD	Programme of the United Nations for Development
PREMA	Prevention in African Museums Programme
RMCA	Royal Museum of Central Africa
SADCCAM	South African Development Coordination Conference Association of Museums
SAMP	Swedish African Museums Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
TCC	Textile Conservation Centre
UBCIC	Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UKIC	United Kingdom Institute for Conservation
WAMP	West African Museum Programme
WAAC	Western Association for Art Conservation
WMF	World Monuments Fund
WWF	World Wildlife Fund



## Preface

This research has its origins in a series of personal, professional and academic experiences. In 1994, I arrived in East Africa to join my husband who was working there. I did not know at the time that this would be the beginning of four years of travels through Burundi, the Congo, Kenya, Somaliland and Ethiopia. This social and cultural experience in East Africa, with its people and their history, would lead to a change of my professional life. Based in Nairobi in 1995, I started to study the history of Kenyan cultures through visits at the National Museums of Kenya.

Within a year

I established contacts with heritage professionals of the Museum. In 1996 the National Museum of Nairobi asked me to work with the Museum's exhibition team, in the role of designer (my former professional experience). My work consisted in the submission of a proposal to renovate the gallery presenting Swahili Culture. I was immediately confronted by challenges created by differing conservation and museological approaches. During the course of the project it became apparent to me that conservation and museology were concepts difficult to dissociate in the museum context. As a result I sensed the importance of internationally agreed principles of conservation and the need to acquire a solid academic foundation for my future career as a conservator. This led me to the Textile Conservation Centre at the University of Southampton.

During both years of the MA Textile Conservation programme, I became immersed in the analysis and conservation of so-called 'ethnographic objects'. These studies raised questions relating to the implementation of standards, access and conservation practices in Africa and in Europe. I attempted to establish links between my personal research and preventive conservation issues encountered by professionals at several African museums. Two issues took my interest. The first one related to the challenging ethical questions raised by the implementation of Western practices of interventive conservation in African museums, given their geographical, social, economic and fast changing political contexts. Second, I wanted to understand the mission and the context within which international

organisations were tasked with heritage conservation, and to analyse the outcomes of established Western conservation programmes in Africa. My focal point of interest was to develop preventive conservation approaches for museums and heritage organisations based on equal exchange of skills between Western and African professionals. In this regard, my work was primarily influenced by the stimulating research of Miriam Clavir (1994) and by the PREMA programme of ICCROM whose vision of the theory and the management of preventive conservation provided the basis of my research.

In December 2000, during a visit to Addis Ababa, I was offered a contemporary religious ceremonial umbrella. I was intrigued by the object, which at once appeared to have ceremonial and social roles, and also presented an unusual combination of different materials. The conservation of this object was selected as the case study for my MA dissertation, presenting a system of cultural values often unfamiliar to Western museum professionals and their audiences. I argued that Western principles of conservation should be adapted to the current thinking of African cultural heritage keepers, in order to foster a reflective approach applied to preventive conservation principles and practices. This led to consideration of issues such as professionals' willingness to work abroad and the likelihood of encountering conflicts of value as regards conservation ethics, strategies and work practices.

Over recent years I have pursued my research and built a network of relationships with African museum professionals. Studying in the United Kingdom, as a Belgian national, with my experience in East African countries allowed me to approach this work from a multi-cultural perspective when studying and comparing different approaches and practices on each Continent. Here again, I went in search of the source of differences in conservation approaches focusing on preventive conservation principles and practices. A series of visits to the International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM, Nairobi, Kenya) and the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA, Mombassa, Kenya) helped me to understand the philosophy and activities of these two recently created African organisations, in the field of conservation. In parallel, I worked in collaboration with the Institute of

Ethiopian Studies Museum, the National Museum of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) and the National Museums of Kenya (Nairobi). The projects undertaken with these three museums aimed at implementing a preventive conservation strategy for their galleries and storage and to assess the condition of their ‘ethnographic’ collections. In addition I was involved in a community-conservation project, at the invitation of the religious community of Ankober (Ethiopia). The project involved the collaboration of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, the Addis Ababa University, a private company (Amba Ecotourism) and the local community. I was curious to find out the socio-cultural constraints encountered by heritage professionals in relation to international donors, the private sector and the local communities in the development of the conservation project.

Part of what I learned from my research is that the concept of preventive conservation was transferred and developed into Africa during the 1980s. Although, the benefits of preventive conservation were readily acknowledged by African museum professionals, the practice of preventive conservation in museums could not fully work for two major reasons: a lack of funds and a lack of education. Moreover, many museum professionals argued that before the introduction of this discipline within their respective institutions they had conserved their heritage according to traditional practices and local facilities. It was particularly bewildering to me to realise that although ICCROM had conducted a ten-year programme of preventive conservation for museums in sub-Saharan Africa, conservation was neglected compared to museology and museum management. My surprise came from the fact that from my personal experience in East Africa, preventive conservation was particularly appropriate to the museum context yet the concept of ‘caring’ for heritage was inherent to most individuals and communities I had met.

I gradually began to see how much my views were being shaped by the African museum environment and by African museum professionals. While my first objective was to develop a preventive conservation approach respectful of Western and African values and practices, I realised the huge extent of the subject, not least the simple question of why conservation of cultural heritage had not developed compared to museum management during the last twenty years. This question

raised a series of managerial, legal and conceptual issues, concerning all partners involved in this process: African museums, international cultural heritage organisations and the local communities. I decided to look at Western and African cultural organisations involved in the development of heritage conservation and the effects of their respective actions. That is the reason why although much of what is presented in this document was inspired by experiences in African museums and institutions, its genesis lies in my research at AFRICOM, PMDA and the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). Part of what I learned from my studies was that characteristics and differences between the strategies of Western and African organisations can be attributed to their respective motivations and value-systems. Western or African views about why to conserve, what to conserve and how to conserve cultural heritage, differ according to cultural, social and political contexts and the related priorities in terms of funding, education, access and practices. As such, the capacity to understand, adapt and transfer knowledge represents a challenge for each culture. In addition the inception of conservation development through large cultural heritage projects influenced the philosophy of African and Western organisations. In some respects they share a number of similar professional values but close collaboration calls for constant questioning on current and relatively new concepts in the field of Western preventive conservation: intangibility, sustainability and cross cultural partnership.

This dissertation is one outcome of these and many other cross-cultural encounters. It is also the product of a series of beliefs and perceptions, which ultimately concern the impact of conservation development on African museums and on society at large. The aim of this research is to investigate partnerships in preventive conservation and to foster its practice with other fields of cultural heritage (intangible, immovable and natural). It is also about recognising and respecting diversity in conservation values and practices and ultimately looking at how traditional knowledge and expertise can be incorporated into research and development agendas.

## Note to the Reader

The term 'East Africa' refers to the confluence and links of different cultures created through early trade and immigration between Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda (Heywood 2004). The use of the term 'Western' designates people, organisations and practices originating from Europe and North America.

The term 'heritage professional' is used here to refer to individuals working in museums or cultural heritage organisations concerned with the conservation and interpretation of material culture and the management of cultural heritage. The term 'institutional communities' refers to National Authorities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), museums and African cultural heritage organisations involved in the preservation of African cultural heritage. The term 'local communities' refers to East African communities of local residents involved with the conservation of their cultural heritage.

A wide variety of sources including books, articles from periodicals, along with unpublished studies and reports produced by international cultural heritage organisations were consulted. French and English sources were considered as they are the prevalent languages used in European, North-American and African heritage organisations.

Footnotes record the professional expertise of authors quoted in the text (when appropriate) as well as references to primary sources, dates and conferences. All tables and photographs were produced by the author unless mentioned.

## Note to the Examiners

The Harvard referencing system is used in the text, for the list of references and the bibliography (University of Southampton 2006). The format of this thesis follows the regulations of the University of Southampton: the thesis does not exceed 75,000 words, excluding references and bibliography.

### Word Count

Chapter I	4,348
Chapter II	11,801
Chapter III	10,506
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Chapter V	14,523
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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1. Objective and Argument**

‘Preventive conservation’ is accepted as one of the dominant tenets of modern conservation ideology. Its benefits of minimal intervention with artefacts and sites, and cost-effectiveness and sustainability have been promoted world-wide. It was therefore surprising to discover that preventive conservation has not been widely adopted for the care of cultural heritage in East Africa. This dissertation sought to understand this apparent resistance to preventive conservation and to research ways of fostering locally acceptable and applicable forms of preventive conservation practice.

Recent conservation development in East Africa and international cultural conventions (1986 African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights; 2002 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity; 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage) encourage heritage professionals to develop new approaches for the conservation of cultural heritage in its various forms and contexts. It is argued that in this process heritage professionals should reconsider the value(s) of preventive conservation, investigate African traditional practices and establish partnerships between institutional (national authorities, cultural heritage organisations and museums) and local (resident) communities in ways that have not been developed within East African museums.

The underlining question addressed in this thesis is: ‘What are the roles and practices that local and institutional communities are able to retain and wish to develop in partnership for the preventive conservation of cultural heritage in east Africa?’ This chapter introduces the research which answers this question and outlines the content of the dissertation. A comparison of preventive conservation practices explains the similarities

and diversity of Western conventional and African traditional approaches and key terms such as 'preventive conservation' and 'access' are defined. An overview of international projects undertaken between heritage professionals and local communities is provided in order to put the research in the wider context of conservation development.

## **Methodology**

The study was undertaken in Europe and in East Africa through a review of primary written sources, analysis of case studies, participant observation and interviews with key actors in the development of preventive conservation. Field work research was conducted in Kenya and in Ethiopia between 2001 and 2005. The aim of the literature review was to compare and analyse the rhetoric and actions of African and Western heritage organisations in the preventive conservation field from 1985 to 2005. A further objective of the review was to provide a comprehensive summary of heritage concepts used in the research as well as a clear picture of the context in which African and Western heritage organisations operate.

Conservation partnership between local and institutional communities was explored through interviews with African heritage professionals and through an analysis and comparison of three case studies. The research model that was developed became more specific, and was more evident in practice, as the fieldwork progressed. Initial applications of the developing model of partnerships were revised after analysis of the three case studies and the results of earlier conceptual fieldwork were reinterpreted.

## **Research context**

The research took place in East Africa where international heritage organisations and museums have official mandates that require them to preserve, promote and maintain access to cultural heritage. To care for African cultural heritage diversity in a manner that respects their formal, contextual and non tangible attributes can be a formidable task (Mellor 1992: 15). In this process there is often little partnership between local and



institutional communities. The traditional expertise and custodianship of local residents and understanding of heritage value(s), history and function often go unacknowledged by heritage organisations. However, for heritage professionals the concept of conserving intangible features and living expressions of cultural heritage, rather than just conserving material culture, represents a profound conceptual change (Clavir 1996: 101). In addition, many heritage professionals and local communities explore ways of attracting new stakeholders into the field of conservation, particularly those from the private sector (Bandarin, Serageldin and Stanley-Price 2004). These disparate groups may have common objectives, to conserve cultural heritage, but their approach, motivations and value systems may not be in harmony. Thus, each relevant player can influence the methods by which cultural heritage is conserved.

## **2. Outline Contents**

The research is organised into four sections. The first section which comprises of Chapter Two is theoretical. It examines the primary heritage and conservation concepts associated with the hypothesis developed in Western and East African countries and presents a definition for key concepts such as ‘cultural diversity’, ‘intangible heritage’ and ‘preventive conservation’.

The second section, of two chapters, is more empirical. Chapter Three contextualises the thesis through the description of the East African environment where the practice of conservation develops. The social and cultural characteristics of local and institutional communities are analysed in order to justify the relevance of the subject of conservation partnership from both practical and theoretical perspectives. In Chapter Four, the implications of these characteristics are elaborated upon an analysis of the network and roles of East African heritage organisations established in Kenya since 1999. The study of these organisations is introduced as a means of understanding their contribution to the practice of preventive conservation and addresses the potential for partnership with local communities.

The third section substantiates the thesis through the analysis, assessment and comparison of three case studies on the partnership between heritage professionals and local communities. Chapter Five analyses and evaluates the development and implementation of community-led measures, building on local customs and traditions, for the preservation of religious and ceremonial artefacts. This project undertaken through partnership between the Ethiopian religious community of Ankober, heritage professionals and the private sector, took place from 2003 until 2005 at the Medhane Alem Church site in Ethiopia. Chapter Six investigates two comparative case studies within the conservation of immovable and natural heritage in Kenya (the stones enclosures of Thimlich Ohinga and the Sacred Forests of Coastal Kenya) undertaken between local communities, cultural and natural heritage organisations.

The final section (Chapters Seven and Eight) returns to a wider perspective. Chapter Seven acts as a bridge between the case studies and the theory developed in Chapters Three and Four. It is argued that the value of preventive conservation and its practice from the perspective of local and institutional partnership offer practical and sustainable approaches to the conservation of the diversity of cultural heritage thus making the study of traditional African practices more relevant. Chapter Eight concludes the research and summarises the core of the developed theory. Implications for practice by local and institutional communities are reviewed and models for partnership are provided. It is argued that conservation partnership offers a new way to preserve cultural heritage in East Africa while fostering local and institutional capacity to promote conservation diversity, democracy and sustainability.

### **3. Preventive Conservation: Meanings and Diversity of Practice in the International Context**

The concept of 'preventive conservation' is central to the research question. It conveys different meanings according to the context in which it is used and the approach selected for its practice; conventional Western or traditional African. The concept of preventive

conservation also raises questions about access and use of cultural heritage particularly within the partnership framework. This section aims to clarify what ‘preventive conservation’ is, why it is particularly adaptable to conservation partnerships between local and institutional communities in East Africa and which partnership models have developed in other parts of the world.

## **Preventive Conservation**

Preventive conservation is a relatively new concept that emerged during the second half of the 20th century. It can be defined as a series of means that enables the causes of deterioration of cultural heritage to be identified, evaluated and prevented by looking at its environment; thus preventive conservation respects the integrity of cultural heritage because its practice does not involve direct interaction with it (Roy and Smith 1994; Waller 1994; Berducou 1996; Little 1999; Pye 2001; Putt and Slade 2003; Kreps 2003; Muños Viñas 2005). Overall, the practice of preventive conservation involves the monitoring and the control of the environment of the heritage such as; light, temperature, relative humidity, pests and pollutants, as well as practices relating to handling, storage and transport issues.

The intrinsic characteristics of preventive conservation present a series of positive assets for the conservation of cultural heritage when there are partnerships between local and institutional communities. For example:

- From a historical and geographical perspective it can be argued that some form of preventive conservation has always existed in all societies if preventive conservation implies regular care of cultural heritage through control of its use and environment (Dia 1994; Clavir 1996; Joffroy 2005).
- When the environmental conditions surrounding the heritage are monitored, kept stable and maintained, preventive conservation can be cost-effective (Keene 1994; Krumbein, Brimblecombe, Cosgrove and Staniforth 1994; Cassar 1995; Pye 2001).

- Its practice can find applications in the preservation of historical sites, monuments, natural and intangible heritage (Odegaard 1995 and 2000; Pye 2001; Joffroy 2005; Stovel, Stanley-Price and Killick 2005; Sullivan 2003; Abungu 2005).
- Its long term and non-intrusive approach is consistent with the principles of sustainability (Clavir 1994; Keene 1994 and 1996; Ashley-Smith 2002 and 2003).

This holistic approach to preventive conservation also raises questions about the extent to which the heritage preserved should or can be used. This is an important question in East Africa where traditional methods of preservation are often linked with questions of access (Ndoro 2001 and 2003). The concept of ‘access’ can be defined as the conjoining of means that promotes democratic decisions in the practice of conservation. Thus, access is guaranteed when all peoples have a right to their own culture and when the conservation of cultural heritage is a socio-cultural issue that is the responsibility of all (Konaré 1995; Little 1999; Eastop 2002; Saouma-Forero 2006). For example in conservation partnerships ‘access’ requires all partners to accept and secure physical and intellectual rights to use cultural heritage for its functional, ceremonial and religious purposes (Barclay, Gilberg, McCauley and Stone 1988; Keene 1996; Clavir 2002; Barclay 2004). ‘Access’ also implies the recognition of local distinctiveness in relation to conservation skills, knowledge, resources and values (Cassar, Dardes and Matero 2003: 16). Finally, promoting access to conservation can foster the status and economic support of traditional folklore (intangible heritage) by supporting the work and customary practices of local communities (UNESCO 1989; MGC 1997).

### **Western Conventional and African Traditional Practices**

The attention of Western conservation focused on the heritage to be conserved and its physical properties rather than the cultures and local communities that create and use the heritage (Ardouin and Arinze 1995; Konaré 1995; Clavir 2002; Wharton 2005). The responses of African local communities to preventive conservation often differ to Western ones in the routine care of and access to heritage (Nicklin 1983; Mellor 1992; Ngugi 1999). In East Africa these differences in preventive conservation arose from two

main reasons. For local communities, cultural heritage is an integral part of social and cultural activities and behaviour, and as such is used and maintained within the society (Saouma-Forero 2006). Objects to be preserved within their cultural context require practices adapted to the conservation of cultural diversity including immovable, natural and intangible heritage (Munjeri 1999; Ndoro 2001; Aprile, Doubleday and Gibson 2006). However, if these practices differ from one culture to another the belief that prevention is better than cure is accepted by both Western and African conservation cultures.

For example, Konaré describes preservation practices in Mali, which involve the use of ‘conservation structures’ with specific rooms set aside for storing family relics. The site and the objects it contains are preserved because they are used for ceremonies and regarded as sacred. Thus, the preventive conservation of this heritage is based on socio-cultural aspects of use and access (Konaré 1983: 146-147). Another example is the technique used to preserve skin-covered masks from the environmental risks of high levels of humidity and pests as described by Nicklin. The masks were preserved by applying a traditional oil preparation to their surfaces in order to preserve the skins. Then they were placed in the sun so that the oil could be absorbed before being wrapped in a particular kind of bark cloth that is resistant to termite attack (Nicklin 1983: 127).

In the case study of the Ethiopian Ankober community, elders, knowledgeable in community’s protocols and culture, are consulted on traditional maintenance of the heritage. The preventive conservation of the heritage is undertaken through teamwork and involves practices that control the environment. For example, the most valuable artefacts are stored and locked in wooden cases and chests that are buried in the ground which protects them from potential theft and keeps them in stable environmental conditions. Pest infestations are controlled by using local plants that are dried and burnt at the entrance of the storage area. Sensitive objects, such as manuscripts, are protected with textiles covers made of local, absorbent cotton fabric, which reduces exposure to light and limits the effects of fluctuation in relative humidity. Regular monitoring is the responsibility of the women. Handling and transport of manuscripts is the charge of the

users; the students. The care of ecclesiastical artefacts is the responsibility of the religious representatives. Thus the community approach to preventive conservation responds to the socio-cultural functions of the heritage. Its practice is shared by community members, according to their respective roles and expertise within the group, in a way that is very similar to the management of museum collections.

In other parts of the world (Canada, United States of America, South America and Australia) heritage professionals have not only acknowledged the expertise in, and rights of, resident communities to access, manage and conserve their heritage but they have also engaged in conservation partnership with local communities (Moses 1992; Anyon, Ferguson and Welch 2000; Clavir 2002; Kreps 2003; Peers and Brown 2003; Geoffrey 2004; Munjeri 2004; Sillar and Fforde 2005; Stovel, Stanley-Price and Killick 2005). These developments in the diversity of conservation practices imply that local communities and individuals, who are directly concerned by a conservation process, should be part of the process used to make decisions about care of cultural heritage (Johnson, Heald, Mchugh, Brown and Kaminitz 2005: 206). These recent advances in conservation have been addressed at conferences (Barclay, Gilbert, McCauley, and Stone 1988; Roy and Smith 1994; Little, Gitonga and Abungu 2005) and in a number of publications (Odegaard 2000; Clavir 2002; Joffroy 2005; Kaminitz, Kentta and Bridges 2005; Muños Vinãs 2005).

For instance, museums and cultural centres established by local communities throughout the Pacific have been at the heart of a heritage preservation movement since the 1970s. This movement combines elements of local traditions with Western ideas on the museum to serve the conservation of cultural heritage along with the needs and purposes of local communities (Edwards and Stewart 1980; Hanson and Hanson 1990; Konaré 1995; Arinze 1998; Kreps 2003). At the beginning of the 21st century these museums and cultural centres provide evidence of the ability of local communities to care for their heritage (Kreps 2003: 64). Also, in Australia, Aboriginal communities created cultural centres on the model of the traditional meeting place where aspects of the museums that best suited their particular purposes and needs could be adopted (Simpson 1996: 108).

As such, the traditional keeping place serves a socio-cultural and traditional conservation role and the cultural centre addresses educational and economic needs (Kreps 2003: 67). The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) is another example of conservation partnership. In preparation for the opening of the new Mall Museum (Washington D.C.) in 2004, its conservation department held consultations with representatives of nineteen Native communities. Much of the conservation work was carried out under the direction of Native individuals (artisans, elders, tribal leaders or community curators) informing conservators on traditional community approaches to treatment (Drumheller and Kaminitz 1994; Johnson, Heald, Mchugh, Brown and Kaminitz 2005; Kaminitz, Kentta, and Bridges 2005). In addition, the relationship between the Museum's conservators and the Native communities develops through workshops where Native artisans invited heritage professionals to participate in traditional ceremonies, prayers and meals (Hodson and Cobb 2007; 42).

From an international perspective, conservation partnership also develops in 'ecomuseums' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Galla 2002; Corsane 2006 and 2007). Many tenets of this recent and worldwide phenomenon (the museum as territory, under the community leadership) are used, in diverse ways and with varying success, as a mechanism to 'conserve cultural and heritage resources and to construct and promote local or regional cultural identities' (Davis 2004: 93). Finally, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) organise workshops and conferences to raise awareness of the necessity to establish principles and protection systems adapted to the preservation of cultural heritage diversity. For example, heritage experts have recently discussed what means are necessary to effectively implement the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003 and 2006). In the academic heritage sector, it is increasingly recognised that the conservation of cultural heritage depends upon the involvement and commitment of the local communities that live with this heritage (ICOMOS 2002; Schnuttgen, Vacheron and Martel 2006). Therefore, the need to involve communities, and sometimes, individuals to safeguard and inventory their heritage is at the centre of UNESCO debates.

## **4. An Overview of the Chapters**

The content and the main thrust of the argument in the thesis, and of each chapter, is summarised below.

### **Chapter Two: Heritage and Conservation Concepts**

Cultural heritage and the theories of conservation studies and organisations are strongly intertwined. Meanwhile, definitions of the terms of ‘conservation’ and ‘cultural heritage’ can differ according to their historical and geographical contexts. Therefore, there are inherent difficulties in defining them coherently. One source of cohesion is conservation theory, which is in practice often integrated into the mandate of international cultural heritage organisations. A common feature of conservation organisations and conservation theory is a failure to develop a single coherent and widely acceptable definition that gives adequate recognition to the diversity that exists within cultural heritage (e.g. natural, tangible, intangible) and conservation practices (e.g. care, preservation, interventive conservation, preventive conservation, restoration). However, since the 1990s UNESCO’s conventions and charters have recognised the cultural significance and diversity of cultural heritage through the social values embedded in material culture. This implies that the significance of material culture may be found in its uses, meanings and physical characteristics (Federspiel 1999; Ndoro 2003; Wharton 2005). Similarly, the value and characteristics of preventive conservation have been increasingly researched internationally and its practice developed in sub-Saharan African museums, since the 1980s (Antomarchi and Little 1998; Little 1999).

Chapter Two demonstrates that the understanding and recognition of cultural and conservation diversity by heritage professionals and international conventions is potentially a unifying force for the advancement of preventive conservation development. It requires a clearer description but also implies some prescription to effectively implement conservation practices addressed to natural, tangible and intangible culture. International conventions contain both enabling and constraining dimensions. It is also



appropriate to the investigation of partnership models between local and institutional communities. It is argued that the concept of preventive conservation is of value for two reasons. It provides a means of addressing issues of environmental conditions for culturally diverse heritage and its practice adheres to ‘sustainability’ and ‘democracy’, the two core concepts developed in contemporary conservation theory.

### **Chapter Three: Context of Conservation Development**

Chapter Three presents the East African socio-cultural characteristics, which influence the prospects for preventive conservation partnership. Attention is paid to the influence of the colonial authority on the development of ethnographic museums and the significance this has had, and is having, on post-colonial practices in heritage management. The chapter describes the various participants involved in the preservation of cultural heritage through the analysis of theoretical and historical information. It provides an analysis of their characteristics and identifies three types of communities; the ‘cultural heritage organisation’, the ‘museum’ and the ‘local community’, as key players in conservation partnerships.

Chapter Three demonstrates that the East African context of preventive conservation development justifies the value of conservation partnerships to respond to the limitation of local professional expertise and funds available. It also underlines that the disparity between universal principles and the adaptation to local needs and conditions may be overcome through the combination of Western conventional and traditional African expertise in conservation.

### **Chapter Four: Organisational Structures in East Africa**

Chapter Four develops the basic theory laid out in Chapter Three through the study of two African cultural heritage organisations which emerged at the end of the 1990s: the International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM) and the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA). A chronological study of the development of both

organisations with the support of ICOM and the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) reviews the benefits of such international collaboration. A description and analysis of the ten year programme of preventive conservation conducted by ICCROM between 1990 and 2000, 'Prevention in African Museums' (PREMA), is provided. An analysis of AFRICOM and CHDA's official mandates and their practical actions underlines their strengths and weaknesses in the management of heritage issues linked to conservation partnership with local communities.

The analysis emphasises that both organisations occupy the middle ground between national 'institutional' and local 'traditional' conservation systems. It is argued that the emergence of these two organisations, within similar geographic and socio-economic contexts, combined to the successful ten years PREMA programme of ICCROM, presents a singular opportunity to address the question of partnership in the practice of preventive conservation.

## **Chapter Five: The Ankober Community Case Study**

Chapter Five is a case study of the Ethiopian religious community of Ankober, who worked together with heritage professionals and the private sector in the conservation of its cultural heritage. The case study shares many characteristics with East African communities, who are pulled in different directions between the effects of globalisation and the maintenance of traditional practices. An identification of the extent to which all partners can learn from each other in the practice of conservation and the factors affecting that process is provided. Particular attention is given to socio-cultural practices involving regular meetings of all partners. The case study seeks to identify what are the values that the community attribute to the concept and practices of preventive conservation and how the specific expertise and practices of the diverse partners can merge in an integrated preventive conservation approach.

Two related conclusions are drawn. Firstly, the case study provides an excellent model of the inseparable links between tangible and intangible heritage. It supports the view that models of partnership may be more effective in the long-term care of cultural heritage than the whole-sale importation of Western concepts and practices of preventive conservation. Secondly, there is substantial evidence that a preventive conservation approach is perceived by the community as a concept that is respectful of their cultural and spiritual values. Thus its practice is widely accepted and provides an effective tool in the preservation of their heritage. From a theoretical perspective, the process of partnership and the combination of local and Western practices generate ideas and relevant learning models at individual and organisational levels.

## **Chapter Six: Case Studies in Other Heritage Sectors**

Chapter Six provides an analysis of two case studies undertaken between local communities, the National Museums of Kenya and ICCROM, on immovable and natural heritage. The methodology used by heritage professionals in the conservation of a sacred forest and stone enclosures in Kenya offers examples for comparison. The analysis of both case studies aims to identify the benefits that preventive conservation can gain from dissimilar professional and local approaches being used in the conservation of natural and immovable cultural heritage. They also examine why partnerships between local and institutional communities require the adaptation of guiding principles, particularly when the democratisation of conservation practice is central to its sustainability.

It is argued that the concepts and practices of preventive conservation are pertinent to, and have applications in, the conservation of natural, immovable and intangible heritage. The specific expertise and practices of the diverse partners are combined to achieve an integrated approach recognizable as 'preventive conservation'. In addition, the analysis demonstrates that this combination is critical to the conservation of heritage in its natural and socio-cultural contexts.

## **Chapter Seven: Preventive Conservation Partnership, from Practices to Principles**

Chapter Seven summarises key aspects of the theoretical and factual elements as observed in the three case studies. This is followed by a return to the context of cultural heritage organisations, as an essential constituent that can influence the development of conservation partnership. The diversity of Western and local practices affecting Western preventive conservation principles are revised, including those that may influence the values of local communities and conservation practitioners.

Chapter Seven also demonstrates that partnership is conducive to the preservation of cultural diversity in its natural and socio cultural settings. However, it is observed that gaps occur between the theory and practice of the discipline, particularly in terms of access and legal recognition of traditional custodianship. These disparities call for a comprehensive reassessment of the meaning and functions of preventive conservation to the benefit of heritage professionals in charge of the preservation of cultural heritage diversity.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis is to develop coherent means to identify the roles and practices that the different actors possess and wish to further develop in conservation partnership. This identification aims to generate practical means which can foster preventive conservation learning and development. Chapter Eight demonstrates that this objective has been achieved.

This last chapter supports the thesis that preventive conservation partnership offers a practical and sustainable response to the preservation of cultural heritage in East Africa. However, it establishes that, at present, when East African national authorities and heritage organisations participate in conservation efforts they do not meet the needs of cultural diversity because they continue to work in isolation from their local communities. The conclusion presents three models of partnership which enable local and institutional partners to manage cultural heritage without limiting their capacity to



## **Chapter Two**

### **Heritage and Conservation Concepts**

Chapter Two reviews some of the key concepts used in the conservation of cultural heritage and which are central to this research. There are abundant definitions and views on the terms ‘conservation’ and ‘cultural heritage’ and these offer different meanings according to the professional and cultural frameworks in which they are used. For instance, local and institutional communities may have differing views on what ‘cultural heritage’ is and what it means. Similarly heritage professionals may understand ‘preventive conservation’ from different perspectives which correspond with their areas of specialism, be it scientific, managerial or legal. Therefore, it is important to highlight the ambiguity of some of the terms used by heritage professionals while presenting observations that clarify their meaning and relevance in the context of this research. This chapter provides a series of definitions and views that have been expressed by heritage professionals on the concepts of ‘cultural heritage’, ‘preventive conservation’ and ‘local and institutional communities’. A definition for each term is then selected as the basis for the thesis.

#### **1. Cultural Heritage**

ICOM provides a definition of cultural heritage that is short and inclusive but which does not explicitly address issues of diverse values or cultural identity. ICOM defines cultural heritage as:

‘Any thing or concept considered of aesthetic, historical, scientific or spiritual significance.’ (ICOM 2006: 14).

The definition of ‘culture’ formally adopted by UNESCO in the Declaration on Cultural Policies<sup>1</sup> (1982) states that:

‘The cultural heritage of a people includes the works of its artists, architects, musicians, writers and scientists and also the work of anonymous artists, expressions of the people's spirituality, and the body of values which give meaning to life. It includes both tangible and intangible works through which the creativity of that people finds expression: languages, rites, beliefs, historic places and monuments, literature, works of art, archives and libraries.’ (UNESCO 2006: Article 23).

This definition of ‘culture’ is selected as the basis for this thesis. It encompasses both tangible and intangible features of cultural heritage which have specific implications for the practice of preventive conservation partnerships. This definition is recognised by the African and Western cultural heritage organisations analysed in this study, all of whom are UNESCO partners. Even though ICOM, AFRICOM, ICCROM and CHDA can find common ground in the definition of cultural heritage the views of local communities on this concept may differ. Peoples respond to their physical environment and social culture shapes their values, bodies and beliefs, thus culture defines who they are and how they see themselves (Maathai<sup>2</sup> 2004: 5). As Clavir points out in her book, ‘Preserving what is Valued’ (2002), the concept of ‘culture’ itself is challenged because it is dynamic.

The concept of cultural heritage is used in this study in association with the terms ‘movable and immovable’, ‘intangible’ and ‘natural’. The meanings of these terms are discussed below in relation to issues that are particularly relevant to East African heritage organisations and museums involved in the conservation of cultural heritage in partnership with local communities. In the author’s view there are two key questions that must be asked about these issues. What value or role does cultural heritage have in the

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<sup>1</sup> Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies, World Conference on Cultural Policies Mexico City, 26 July to 6 August 1982 (UNESCO 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Wangari Maathai is a Member of Parliament, Republic of Kenya (2002 to Present) and Assistant Minister, Environment, Natural Resources & Wildlife, Republic of Kenya (2003 to Present). Winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, she was the founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement.

development of conservation? Does the conservation of cultural heritage contribute to conflict resolution?

### **An Anthropological Approach to Cultural Heritage**

In the East African context of colonialisation, which took place at the end of the 19th century and lasted until 1977<sup>3</sup>, cultural heritage has often served the politics of colonisers (Hardin and Arnoldi<sup>4</sup> 1996: 2). In certain cases, the history of colonialisation has been an influential factor and has directly influenced the criteria for identifying cultural heritage values and its institutional recognition (Négre<sup>5</sup> 2005: 6). In the colonial period, the significance, meanings and values of East African ‘heritage’ were largely shaped by Western scientists in European terms. Then, in the early 20th century cultural and social anthropologists largely rejected the notion that all human societies share similar value systems (Lévi-Strauss 1955 and 1958; Leiris 1951 and 1995; Malinowski 1944 and 1945; Evans-Pritchard 1940 and 1951). This anthropological approach to culture and the refocusing on socio-cultural and local values had a significant impact on the definition of ‘non-Western’ cultural heritage. For instance, Clifford explained that in the 20th century an anthropological and plural definition of culture (lower-case ‘c’ with the possibility of a final ‘s’) emerged as ‘a liberal alternative to racist classifications of human diversity’ (Clifford<sup>6</sup> 1988: 234). In the post-colonial context, and in the author’s experience, the concept of cultural heritage in East African museums sometimes still reflects a Western colonial vision. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, resident communities and tourists have access to an increasingly diverse cultural heritage in East Africa. Museums provide access to a large section of the material evidence of the historical heritage of African cultures. African heritage, particularly in its intangible and contemporary forms,

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<sup>3</sup> The colonial period in East Africa lasted until 1976/1977, when Seychelles and Djibouti officially gained their independence from European colonisers (although other East African colonies had gained independence from Europe by the early 1960s).

<sup>4</sup> Mary Jo Arnoldi is the Curator for African Ethnology in the Department of Anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, USA.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent Négre is a researcher and a member of the Research Group on Cultural and Natural Heritage Law at the University of Paris, which directs and participates in research on cultural heritage law. He is an Associate Professor at the Senghor International University in Alexandria, Egypt.

<sup>6</sup> Over the past three decades, James Clifford has been one of the most original and controversial scholars working in anthropology. His work has challenged the conventions of anthropology by offering new ways to understand the interactions that shape cultures. Dr. Clifford is a Professor of the History of Consciousness at the University of California in Santa Cruz (1978-present).



is a significant element of African ‘living’ culture(s), which is accessible to all in the everyday life of urban and rural societies. For heritage professionals, the concept of African cultural heritage has radically shifted within a century from an ethnographical and colonial embodiment of Western categories to a heritage integrating tangible and intangible facets rooted in the history and current life of local communities and closely associated with natural heritage. Thus today, ‘it is the diversity of expressions that creates the definition of heritage rather than the adhesion to a descriptive standard’ (Bouchenaki<sup>7</sup> 2004: 4).

### **Cultural Heritage in the Context of ‘Development’**

In order to use cultural heritage in the process of development, East African museums often serve as the central medium between national authorities, international agencies and the population. African heritage professionals discussed the concept of ‘the museum as a tool for development’ at the 1991 conference<sup>8</sup> entitled ‘What Museum for Africa?’ The conference which gathered participants from Africa, Europe and North America was the first and broadest experience of sharing museological ideas ever attempted in the history of Africa (Konaré<sup>9</sup> 1992a: 5). The museum contribution to development was clearly identified in three areas: economic development, educational development and the reinforcement of national unity (Tchanile<sup>10</sup> 1992: 352). Within these three areas, the participants debated gender, tourism and cultural identity issues experienced by heritage professionals working in partnership with national authorities and local communities (ICOM 1992: 14). International agencies, political and religious leaders and heritage institutions are increasingly recognising the central role cultural heritage can play in ‘development’ (De Merode, Smeets and Westrik 2003; Stovel, Stanley-Price and Killick 2005; Abungu and Abungu<sup>11</sup> 2006). Promoting respect for heritage diversity, cultural

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Bouchenaki was Assistant Director-General for Culture at UNESCO, which he joined in 1981 and now Director General of ICCROM (2006-present).

<sup>8</sup> The Conference was organised by ICOM and held in Benin, Ghana and Togo, November 18-23, 1991.

<sup>9</sup> Alpha Oumar Konaré was former President of the Republic of Mali (1992-2002) and former President of ICOM (1989-1992). Since July 2003 he has been Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU).

<sup>10</sup> Moussa Madjobaba Tchanile is Curator at the National Museum, Lomé, Togo.

<sup>11</sup> Lorna Abungu was Executive Director of AFRICOM (2000-2006). She joined the National Museums of Kenya as a coastal Archaeologist in 1989, where she organised Internet and multimedia work at the Museum through the formation of a working group that oversaw the development of the NMK website and

identity and rights is a role undertaken by AFRICOM since its foundation in 1999. In this regard, the organisation stated in its programme policy that African museums should recognise the power of cultural heritage in shaping lives in contemporary societies and that cultural heritage and its preservation are instruments for the dissemination of culture and development (Abungu and Abungu 2006: 5). When culture is understood by heritage organisations as the basis of development the very notion of cultural policy has to be broadened considerably (UNESCO 1996: 232). A significant contribution by UNESCO in the sphere of cultural policy was the adoption of the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity<sup>12</sup> (Figure 1). The Declaration seeks to ensure respect for all cultural identities and the participation of all citizens. It aims to promote the emergence of the creative abilities inherent in any individual, in order that culture might participate practically in development (UNESCO 2003: 5). The Declaration has the potential to be of major significance in the East African context where, in the author's experience, respect for cultural identity and the subsequent involvement of local communities are likely to be significant to the sustainable development of conservation projects. In Africa, national legal instruments concerning cultural rights and respect for cultural identity and heritage diversity arose from the Pan-African Cultural Manifesto, adopted in Algiers in 1969<sup>13</sup> (Négre 2006: 44). Then in 1981 the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights established critical directives regarding partnership between local and institutional communities in the preservation of cultural heritage. Of particular importance in the establishment of partnerships between local communities and national authorities is Article 17 which stipulates that the promotion and protection of moral and traditional values recognised by the community shall be the duty of the State (Négre 2006: 45).

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other multimedia projects. Dr George Okello Abungu has been responsible for several international conferences in Kenya, and has also helped in raising awareness as well as funds for the protection of Africa's natural and cultural heritage through such programmes as PREMA and Africa 2009. He is heritage consultant and Kenya's representative on the world heritage committee.

<sup>12</sup> Adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO, 31st Session, Paris, France, 2 November 2001.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Pan-African Cultural Manifesto affirmed the role of African culture in the struggle for liberation and African Unity' (Négre 2006: 44).

Conservation Charters & Conventions	Purpose (1) & Specific Relevance to Local Communities (2)
<p><b>UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict</b> (The Hague, Netherlands, 14 May 1954)</p>	<p>(1&amp;2) To protect movable and immovable cultural property in the event of armed conflict.</p>
<p><b>(Venice Charter) International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites</b> (Venice, Italy, May 1964)</p>	<p>(1&amp;2) To conserve and restore monuments no less as works of art than as historical evidence (despite saying nothing on the social value of conservation the Charter's 16 paragraphs defined some of the fundamental principles of conservation).</p> <p>In addition, the responsibility to safeguard cultural heritage for future generations emphasised that each country is responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.</p>
<p><b>UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property</b> (Paris, France, 14 November 1970)</p>	<p>(1&amp;2) To tackle the issue of illicit traffic of cultural property, to take action at the request of a State Party to seize cultural property that has been stolen and to collaborate in preventing major crises in the protection of cultural heritage.</p>
<p><b>UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage</b> (Paris, France, 16 November 1972)</p> <p><u>Ratified by Ethiopia (1977) and Kenya (1991)</u></p>	<p>(1) To identify and protect the sites on the World Heritage List which are considered to be of 'outstanding universal value' and to preserve the sites in the frame of sustainable development that respects the resources of humanity and nature.</p> <p>(2) To adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the <b>community</b> and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes.</p>
<p><b>UNESCO Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural</b> (Paris, France, 28 November 1978)</p>	<p>(1) To protect movable cultural property effectively and ensure the application of the necessary measures of care and conservation.</p> <p>(2) To take the necessary steps to ensure that all the tasks associated with the conservation of movable cultural property are carried out in accordance with the traditional techniques best suited to the particular cultural property (UNESCO 1978: 14).</p> <p>To facilitate the protection of collections belonging to <b>private bodies or individuals</b> by:</p> <p>(a) inviting the <b>owners</b> to make inventories of their collections and to communicate them to the official Authorities;</p> <p>(b) if appropriate, providing the owners with assistance for the conservation of items listed in the inventories or appropriate fiscal measures;</p> <p>(c) studying the possibility of granting fiscal benefits to those who donate or bequeath cultural property to museums or similar institutions (UNESCO 1979: 15).</p>
<p><b>The Burra Charter (The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance)</b> (Burra, South Australia, 19 August 1979)</p>	<p>(1&amp;2) To provide guidance for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance (based on the knowledge and experience of Australia ICOMOS members).</p> <p>To find a way of adapting the Venice Charter to local conditions (which might be very different from European ones).</p> <p>To promote the idea of 'cultural significance' (e.g. the idea of a building is replaced by that of 'place'), through definitions and guidelines dealing with cultural significance and conservation policy (how to establish it and how to deal with its implementation).</p> <p>To foster proper record-keeping of cultural significance along with the heritage to be preserved.</p>

<p><b>UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore</b> (Paris, France, 15 November 1989)</p>	<p>(1) To highlight the specific nature and importance of folklore as an integral part of cultural heritage and living culture and to underline the roles of conservation as being concerned with documentation of folk traditions and with folklore in a tangible form.</p> <p>(2) To provide means for securing the cultural <b>community</b> to have an access to the materials. To ensure that preservation is concerned with protection of folk traditions and those who are the <b>transmitters</b>, having regard to the fact that each people has a right to its own culture. To guarantee the right of access of various cultural <b>communities</b> to their own folklore by supporting their work in the fields of documentation, archiving, research, etc., as well as in the practice of traditions. To provide means to guarantee the status of and economic support for folk traditions both in the <b>communities</b> which produce them and beyond (UNESCO 1989: 240)</p>
<p><b>Nara Document on Authenticity (UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS)</b> (Nara, Japan, 1-6 November 1994)</p>	<p>(1) To respond to concerns and interests in cultural heritage diversity in the spirit of the Charter of Venice. To deal with the question of values and authenticity, paying respect to the idea that different cultures would have different values and maybe different notions of authenticity.</p> <p>(2) To recognise that responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural <b>community</b> that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it. To balance international principles for conservation with those of other cultural <b>communities</b> (provided that achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values). To ensure that attributed values are respected and efforts are made to build a multidisciplinary and <b>community</b> consensus concerning these values.</p>
<p><b>UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity</b> (Paris, France, 2 November 2001)</p>	<p>(1) To build partnerships between the public sector, the private sector and <b>civil society</b> to guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity in the frame of public policies, to provide the opportunity for each country to implement cultural, media, and communications policies that foster cultural diversity.</p> <p>(2) To take appropriate steps to: Respect and protect traditional knowledge, in particular that of <b>indigenous peoples</b>; Recognise the contribution of traditional knowledge, with regard to environmental protection and the management of natural resources; Foster synergies between modern science and <b>local knowledge</b> (UNESCO 2002:65).</p>
<p><b>UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage</b> (Paris, France, 17 October 2003)</p> <p><u>Ratified by Ethiopia (2006)</u></p>	<p>(1) To ensure the safeguarding of intangible heritage and to strengthen co-operation at regional and international levels in this field. The domains covered by the Convention are: oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship.</p> <p>(2) To recognise that <b>communities</b>, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of the intangible cultural. To ensure the widest possible participation of <b>communities</b>, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management.</p>

**Figure 1:** Conventions and charters relevant to the conservation of cultural heritage in partnership with local communities, in date order (bold text emphasises terms which specifically refer to ‘local community’ and ‘local knowledge’).

## **Cultural Heritage and Conflict Resolution**

The contribution of cultural heritage to conflict resolution is an important notion in the context of partnership between institutional and local communities in East Africa. The region has been through a series of conflicts since de-colonialisation until the present. For instance, in Kenya and Ethiopia, the two African countries where fieldwork was undertaken, conflicts arose for political, social and religious reasons. In Kenya, with borders imposed by an outside colonial power and where dozens of languages are spoken by more than 40 distinct ethnic groups, there has been unremitting ethnic conflict for the last decades (1960-2005). While in Ethiopia, in addition to a border dispute with Eritrea since Eritrea's independence in 1993, there have been bitter conflicts amongst the different religious and ethnic groups. In that context the line between respect for, claim to or fights for cultural identity and diversity is sometimes equivocal particularly when intangible and natural heritage is at stake. The main case study selected for this research is concerned with cultural heritage in the custody of a religious community so it is interesting to emphasise that the 'religious' status of heritage does not necessarily convey concepts of peace building and conflict resolution. Stovel<sup>14</sup> et al. highlight this fact in, 'Conservation of Living Religious Heritage' (Stovel, Stanley-Price and Killick 2005). The authors argue that:

'Taken to an extreme, cultural heritage may be used as a weapon in furthering the competing claims of various faiths. Places and objects of perceived heritage value to two different faiths may be demolished by the adherents of one faith in order to give ascendancy to the other.' (Stovel, Stanley-Price and Killick 2005: 1).

A contemporary and notorious example of the destruction of cultural heritage within the context of politico-religious conflicts was the bombing of the colossal Bamiyan statues of Buddha in Afghanistan. In March 2001 the Taliban, the fundamentalist Islamic militia that had governed most of Afghanistan since 1996, ordered their destruction as part of a campaign to rid the land of all pre-Islamic 'idols' considered by them to be an assault on

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<sup>14</sup> Herb Stovel is Assistant Professor in Heritage Conservation at the Carleton University, Canada. He was Director, Heritage Settlements Unit, and World Heritage Convention Co-ordinator for ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) in Rome. He has been at the forefront of efforts both to develop and apply new approaches to conservation problems, and to organise and deliver innovative and effective conservation training to support these approaches.

and an insult to Islam. Following this example and the destruction of heritage as observed recently in the former Yugoslavia and in Iraq, it could even be argued that tangible and intangible heritage might be the basis for these conflicts. Therefore, culture can be the basis for conflict and/or the basis for conflict resolution. For example, Gideon Chowe<sup>15</sup> explains that, in the pre-colonial society of Malawi, ethnic conflicts arose mainly from the competition for decision making positions and cultural identity whilst in the post-colonial period religious systems and ethnic practices which grew out of these same beliefs and values have formed institutions for conflict resolution (Chowe 2005: 104).

Since 1999, AFRICOM states in its programme policy, that cultural heritage and its preservation can foster initiatives for peace and reconciliation; examples of museums as ‘peacemakers’ are numerous in Africa. The post-Apartheid context of South Africa provides vivid examples of the power of cultural heritage in issues of land restitution, reconciliation and ultimately forgiveness. For instance, the Robben Island Museum (Cape Town) operates as a site/museum which aims to develop the island as a national and international heritage and conservation resource. The island, once a place of banishment and imprisonment, has since 1997 become a ‘living’ museum. It runs educational programmes to inform the public about Apartheid and other human rights abuses. Visitors explore what human rights are; examine human rights violations within their own contexts, and the responsibilities that accompany human rights.

The Gitega Museum in Burundi is another example of the involvement of museum and local communities in conflict resolution. Since November 1998, there has been intense activity by armed groups in Burundi, particularly in the Gitega province where the Museum is located. Cultural material was looted or destroyed. To avoid further losses the museum gave cultural artefacts into the care of members of the local community who became custodians of the heritage<sup>16</sup>. Since 2003, the National Museum is using the artefacts for education programmes with the local communities, intending to play its role

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<sup>15</sup> Gideon Chowe is Senior Curator of the Museum of Malawi (also known as the ‘Chichiri Museum’), Blantyre, Malawi (2003-present).

<sup>16</sup> Personal communication from Jacques Mapfarakora, Conservator at the National Museum of Gitega, Nairobi, Kenya, 30 September 2003.

in the reconciliation process of the country (Mapfarakora 2005: 103). These examples demonstrate the applications that the use and conservation of cultural heritage material can offer when developed by partnerships between local communities and museums. The impact of cultural heritage on conflict resolution has yet to be measured in East Africa, but it has nevertheless acquired additional value in strengthening respect for local, social and cultural identities (Abungu and Abungu 2006: 5).

### **1.1. Movable and Immovable Cultural Heritage**

While museum programmes and their collections may be used for conflict resolution and development, immovable heritage is another facet of culture that may achieve similar goals.

‘As seen in cases such as Great Zimbabwe and the rock-hewn churches of Ethiopia, immovable heritage is a medium through which identity, power and society are produced and reproduced. As a result it involves a variety of stakeholders - the individual, the family, the local community, ethnic and religious groups, the nation state and the world at large - hence creating the concept of a world heritage.’

(Munjeri<sup>17</sup> 2005: 3).

Thus the concept of ‘immovable cultural heritage’ is analysed in this research with a particular focus on conservation approaches used by heritage professionals and local communities in the process of its conservation. There is no consistency in the definition of immovable cultural heritage, thus in order to rationalise the concept of ‘immovable heritage’ in this research, a classification of its diverse tangible and intangible forms is proposed as formulated by UNESCO/ICCROM (Figure 2).

Historically, the meaning of cultural heritage has shifted from that of ‘cultural property’ which was a term commonly used during the second half of the 20th century:

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<sup>17</sup> Dawson Munjeri is the permanent Zimbabwean Delegate at UNESCO and a former Vice President of ICOMOS (1999-2002).

‘The term “cultural property” was first used as a legal term in the UNESCO Hague Convention of 1954 and was subsequently used in the Illicit Traffic Convention of 1970. The full title of ICCROM, when founded in 1959, was the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. Whereas the term ‘property’ conveys ideas of ownership and sometimes of commercial value, heritage implies rather a legacy to inherit and to pass on to future generations.’ (Stanley-Price<sup>18</sup> 2003: 2).

Berducou<sup>19</sup> points out that for not having been often defined, the term of ‘cultural property’ is today one of the terms most frequently used to cover, for the better or worse, the diversity of cultural heritage upon which societies confer particular values (Berducou 1996: 248).

<i>Immovable ‘Tangible’ Heritage</i>	<i>Immovable ‘Intangible’ Heritage</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Architectural works</i></li> <li>- <i>Monuments</i></li> <li>- <i>Archaeological sites</i></li> <li>- <i>Historic centres of towns and cities</i></li> <li>- <i>Groups of buildings</i></li> <li>- <i>Cultural landscapes</i></li> <li>- <i>Historical parks and gardens</i></li> <li>- <i>Botanical gardens</i></li> <li>- <i>Industrial archaeology</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Natural or maritime parks of ecological interest</i></li> <li>- <i>Geological and physical formations</i></li> <li>- <i>Landscapes of outstanding natural beauty</i></li> </ul>

**Figure 2:** Classification of immovable heritage as formulated by UNESCO and ICCROM (UNESCO and ICCROM 2003: 8).

In addition, neither of the terms ‘heritage’ and ‘property’ denotes exclusively either movable or immovable items (Jokilehto<sup>20</sup> and Laenen<sup>21</sup> 1999: 2). The distinction between

<sup>18</sup> Dr Nicholas Stanley-Price was Director-General of ICCROM (2000-2006).

<sup>19</sup> Since 1980 Marie Claude Berducou has been in charge of the Conservation Department of the University of Sorbonne, Paris, the first of its kind in France. She also works as a Heritage Consultant with the Collections Unit of ICCROM.

<sup>20</sup> Jukka Jokilehto is an architect and urban planner. During his 32 years at ICCROM he has travelled the world giving lectures and has for many years co-ordinated the architectural conservation course of ICCROM. He is a long-standing member of the ICOMOS International Training Committee and he represents ICCROM on the World Heritage Committee. Jukka Jokilehto has written on heritage conservation, conservation theory, science and technology, international collaboration, and education and training.



‘movable’ and ‘immovable’ represents more than a problem of terminology for conservation professionals because there are clear cases where object and place create an entity that is more valuable in cultural terms than its individual components (Parrott 1991: 47). For instance, many Ethiopian Christian Orthodox churches, made from earth or hewn from rock have walls decorated with representations of Saints and their lives. These images are painted onto canvas and are pasted onto the walls with a mixture of adhesive and cotton threads, and became part of the wall structure. The paintings’ status has altered from movable to immovable though, if required, they could be detached from the wall and thereby return to the movable category. These conceptual categories of ‘movable’ and ‘immovable’ have little currency in the contemporary context of cultural heritage which has expanded from single buildings or objects to broader categories including intangible heritage.

However, there is often a distinction in professional practice between conservators working on objects and conservators working on buildings and sites. These two conservation fields often seem to be surprisingly distinct from one another<sup>22</sup>. Most conservation practitioners are trained in the conservation of movable or immovable heritage. In the author’s experience, heritage professionals seem predisposed to work within the same partition, apparently ignoring the benefits of co-operation and the exchange of expertise that preventive conservation offers to both conservation fields<sup>23</sup>. This situation is often due to a museum organisational system which separates the responsibilities for the conservation of the collections and the buildings and sites in its custody. This system, as observed at the National Museums of Kenya and Ethiopia, is not conducive to professional partnership because it creates a hierarchy in the values of the heritage itself, and consequently on individuals. For instance, archaeologists and historians responsible for the conservation of sites and immovable heritage, which hold

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<sup>21</sup> Marc Laenen was Director General of ICCROM (1992-2000).

<sup>22</sup> ICCROM contributes to the conservation of immovable and movable cultural heritage from two distinct units within its organisational structure: the ‘Architecture and Archaeological Unit’ and the ‘Collections Unit’. Similarly, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) focus on museum collections while its sister organisation the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) directs its attention to immovable heritage.

<sup>23</sup> In order to respond to this issue, ICCROM has worked towards policies and activities that integrate the conservation of movable and immovable cultural heritage (one of ICCROM’s strategic directions for the years 2004-2010).

the more important position according to the institution, rarely cooperate with curators and conservators responsible for movable heritage. However, from an international organisations' perspective, the PREMA programme of ICCROM has succeeded in highlighting the value of a preventive conservation and teamwork approach in the context of African museum and movable heritage. The experience of PREMA was followed by the development of 'Africa 2009', a programme which focuses on the conservation of immovable heritage and which operates in close collaboration with the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA) and local communities. In this regard, the principle of teamwork which was an essential feature of PREMA might be a critical asset in future partnerships between movable and immovable heritage professionals in Africa.

## **1.2. Intangible Cultural Heritage**

Policies for movable and immovable cultural heritage increasingly recognise intangible features that sometimes change the historical or traditional perception that societies have of cultural heritage:

'African habitats and sculpture, European monuments, the lost pyramids of Latin America...are no longer simply perceived as images par excellence of the heritage of humanity, but have acquired a new dimension, through the intermediary of the concept of intangible values.' (Bouchenaki 2004: 4).

The concept of 'intangible cultural heritage' also relates to the cultural and social life of local communities from which it originated or where it is still developing. Thus, it is a form of cultural heritage that is particularly important to the context of this research.

From an historical and legal perspective, the concept of 'intangible heritage' was recognised within the framework of cultural charters and conventions in 2003 when UNESCO drafted a 'Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage'. With this official recognition, the concept of 'intangibility' has been increasingly used by international heritage organisations and individuals. For example, it was the theme selected for the 2004 ICOM General Assembly and International Conference: 'Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage' (Seoul, Korea, 2-8 October 2004). UNESCO's

definition of ‘intangible cultural heritage’ has been chosen for this research. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by UNESCO, in 2003, defines intangible heritage as:

‘The practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills, that communities, groups and, in some cases individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage...The intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, and is constantly recreated by communities and groups, in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their historical conditions of existence. It provides people with a sense of identity and continuity, and its safeguarding promotes, sustains, and develops cultural diversity and human creativity.’ (UNESCO 2003).

This definition not only underlines the role that the conservation of intangible heritage can play for local communities, but it also highlights the contemporary aspects of creativity that this form of heritage conveys. Indeed, intangible heritage is not only about ancient traditions and expressions and it is also about contemporary forms of culture such as those developed by modern artists, architects or artisans in the creation of movable or immovable objects. Heritage professionals and particularly conservators, who incorporate the intentions behind these definitions into their function, may perceive that they have a major role in the preservation of the skills and knowledge embedded in local conservation practices and principles.

While the concept of ‘intangible heritage’ is widely understood, the conservation of this heritage represents a real challenge for heritage professionals. ICCROM has identified intangible and social values of cultural heritage as being actively and officially at the heart of the conservation of tangible heritage (Stanley-Price and Phyrillas 2004: 4). However, the integration of these values and their practical application within its international training programmes are very recent. This approach which is particularly relevant to this thesis is described by Bouchenaki:

‘Intangible heritage is made up of processes and practices and therefore needs another safeguarding approach and methodology than the tangible heritage. It is fragile by its very nature and therefore much more vulnerable than other forms of heritage as it hinges on actors and social and environmental conditions which do not change too rapidly. Safeguarding intangible heritage involves collection, documentation and archiving as well as the protection and support of its bearers.’ (Bouchenaki 2004: 4).

In an African context and from an historical view point, the intangible represents meanings considered to be intrinsic to cultural heritage, yet during the colonial period governing Authorities seldom recognised such meanings. Even after independence international agencies and their sponsors continued to ignore such matters in their development plans. However, as Joseph King<sup>24</sup>, who worked for ICCROM’s Africa 2009 programme, points out that the conservation of the intangible relies significantly on a collaborative approach between cultural heritage professionals and local communities as well as on a mutual respect for the intangible values of cultural heritage. Thus the conservation of intangible cultural heritage provides an opportunity to bring together local communities and museum institutions. King also argued that international agencies have very few technical tools for conserving the intangible because its conservation is largely determined by social factors<sup>25</sup>. Although it can also be argued that objects are attributed intangible characteristics, and therefore the physical conservation of objects may ultimately contribute to the conservation of their intangible attributes.

However, the preservation of intangible heritage creates new challenges for museums in documentation, storage, care and in intervention choices (Dardes<sup>26</sup> and Levin<sup>27</sup> 2000: 13).

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph King is Senior Project Manager of the Heritage Settlements Unit of ICCROM. Personal Communication, Joseph King, ICCROM, Rome, 5 May 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Personal communication, Joseph King, ICCROM, Rome, 5 May 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Kathleen Dardes is Senior Project Specialist and Project Manager at the Getty Conservation Institute. She is Course Instructor for the ‘Museum Emergency Program Education Initiative’ (the aim of this Program is the protection of cultural heritage through the enhanced capacity of museum personnel and other heritage professionals in risk assessment, and emergency response, taking into account community interests, as well as local contexts, traditions and methods).

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Levin is Editor of the Getty Conservation Institute newsletter, Liaison Officer with the Getty Trust's Public Affairs Department.

These challenges often arise because of the variety of value systems<sup>28</sup> ascribed to intangible cultural heritage and its potential interaction with the public. Ahmed Zekaria Abubaker<sup>29</sup>, co-ordinator of a community and museum project in Ethiopia<sup>30</sup>, identifies these challenges through his professional experience with local communities: 'I do not know if the people who made these objects or used them thought in term of aesthetics. The objects were a symbol of something that was valued by the community and it is that aspect that is important to conserve, not so much what they look like'<sup>31</sup>.

### 1.3. Natural and Cultural Heritage

The concept of 'natural heritage' in East Africa is critical as it is part of the social and economic life of rural communities. It is also part of the economic development of many East African countries which generates important revenue through the exploitation of game reserves mainly catering for the international tourist market. This concept is equally important to this research as natural heritage is often an integral part of the socio-cultural pattern of local communities. Natural heritage can also provide resources such as food and local medicines; sometimes it also generates employment and may hold spiritual values and shelter the spirits of ancestors. For the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 'natural heritage' is defined as:

- '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: 2).

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<sup>28</sup> Developments in the conservation field over the past 20 years have produced a growing awareness of the need to undertake an assessment of values, often referred to as a 'cultural significance assessment', as an integral part of conservation projects and as a significant means of advancing the field (e.g. Avrami 2000: 20).

<sup>29</sup> Ahmed Zekaria Abubaker was Curator of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum (1999-2003) and is the AFRICOM Regional Representative for East Africa (2004-2006).

<sup>30</sup> 'Conserving the Ankober Community's Collection of Artefacts' is a collaborative conservation project between the community of Ankober, the Institute of Ethiopian Museum Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and the University of Addis Ababa, 2003-2004.

<sup>31</sup> Personal communication, Ahmed Zekaria Abubaker, Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 25 May 2003.

While UNESCO's 1972 definition considered only the tangible forms of natural heritage, ICOM incorporates the concept of intangibility in its definition. This definition which integrates the concept of intangibility through the recognition of spiritual manifestations is selected as the basis for this research.

‘Natural heritage is any natural thing, phenomenon or concept, considered to be of scientific significance or to be a spiritual manifestation.’ (ICOM 2006: 15).

In the practice of conservation, there have been international regulations dealing with wildlife and forest conservation in certain areas of East Africa since the period of colonisation. In this regard the separation of man from nature and the conservation and development models imposed on East Africa were an important objective of British colonialism.

‘In Kenya and Tanzania, land was set aside for game for the use of the white colonialists, and any indigenous communities that lived within the reserves or claimed use rights of the lands and their resources were evicted and alienated from the conservation process. The institutionalization of these aspects of British colonialism alienated the East African people from their lifestyles, their cultural identities, and their capacity to live sustainably with the environment.’ (Emmons 1996: 125).

Despite this pressure on pre-colonial lifestyles, natural heritage still holds an important position for many local communities. For example, Wangari Maathai explained that among Kenyan local communities trees were used as a peace tool. Sticks were cut from trees and given to elders as a symbol of authority. If they found people quarrelling, they would first try dialogue, putting the stick between them. Once an elder had done this, the protagonists were supposed to separate and reconcile their differences (Maathai 2005: 5). This example demonstrates how cultural and natural heritage contribute to the socio-cultural life of local communities and that the conservation of nature has become another path to peace. Maathai states that:

‘Cultural revival might be the only thing that stands between the conservation or destruction of the environment...A new attitude toward nature provides space for a new attitude toward culture and the role it plays in sustainable development: an attitude based on a new understanding that self-identity, self-respect, morality, and spirituality play a major role in the life of a community and its capacity to take steps that benefit it and ensure its survival.’ (Maathai 2004: 7).

In the 1980s, at the same time that ICCROM’s PREMA programme was operating, experts in environmental conservation acknowledged that the connections between culture and development, between culture and nature and between development and conservation were critical to understand and preserve natural heritage (Cohn<sup>32</sup> 1988: 450). This attitude towards nature conservation provides a model for new approaches and practices towards movable heritage conservation. It gives heritage professionals a model through which they can engage in the examination of what effects partnerships can have on development of preventive conservation as well as on the preservation of the heritage of local communities.

In order to conclude this discussion on the many facets and values of cultural heritage and to clarify its general meaning in the context of this research it could be said that cultural heritage is the essence of a community when it encompasses both tangible and intangible forms. Thus in East Africa, the conservation of movable heritage has a lot to gain from integrating conservation practices used in the fields of immovable, intangible and natural heritage within a museum strategy designed to play an integral part in social reconstruction, economic revitalisation and in community development.

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<sup>32</sup> Jeffrey Cohn is a freelance Science Consultant and writer specialising in the conservation of biodiversity.

## 2. Preventive Conservation

The concept of ‘preventive conservation’ is central to this thesis as it is a concept that is used by both local and institutional communities. Local communities do not however, use the term ‘preventive conservation’ to describe their local and traditional practice in the conservation of artefacts in their custody. However, the conservation practices developed by the local communities studied in this research are very similar to many of the principles of Western preventive conservation. Therefore, in this analysis the term ‘preventive conservation’ has been selected over other terms which reflect a conservation approach such as ‘care’ and ‘preservation’. This section provides a definition for the term ‘preventive conservation’ and describes its characteristics as a professional practice. It also highlights the various practical and philosophical issues that this concept raises in the course of partnership between local communities and heritage professionals. From a broad perspective, the concept of conserving cultural heritage can be defined as:

‘The ensemble of means that, in carrying out an intervention on the object or its environment, seeks to prolong its existence as long as possible.’ (Berducou 1996: 250).

However, the term ‘conservation’ is not the only word that transmits the concept of conserving cultural heritage. Other terms such as ‘restoration’, ‘preservation’, ‘care’, ‘safeguarding’ and ‘maintenance’ also denote an intention to conserve cultural heritage with different degrees of practical intervention and philosophical approaches. Elizabeth Pye states that according to the different systems in which these terms are used, their respective practical and philosophical characteristics create a sort of hierarchy (Pye<sup>33</sup> 2001: 27). This is a critical point in the framework of this thesis because if common ground can be found in the practice of conservation between local and institutional communities it does not imply that both communities will reach an agreement upon its

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<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Pye is a Senior Lecturer in Archaeological Conservation at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London (UCL). Her research interests include principles, ethics, training and professionalism in conservation. She has collaborated with the PMDA Project (Programme for Museum Development in Africa) in conjunction with the University of Nairobi, Kenya and with the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Rome (ICCROM). She is also co-author (with Robert Ferguson) of the ICCROM teaching material *Our Students and Ourselves* (2004).



designation. Examples of divergence on the designation of terms related to conservation are not specific to non-Western cultures or non professionals. For instance, Pye states that conservation implies responsible and cautious use of cultural artefacts whereas preservation implies total protection (Pye 2001: 27). While Kreps<sup>34</sup> states:

‘I use the term “preservation” rather than “conservation” when referring to concepts and approaches to the protection of cultural resources. I do so to avoid confusion with the museological understanding of conservation as measures taken to prevent the deterioration or destruction of cultural materials’. (Kreps 2003: 14).

The term ‘restoration’ also generates debate and disparities in the understanding of its meanings, its significance and its effects on cultural material.

‘According to Brandi<sup>35</sup>, restoration is essential to the reconstitution or preservation of the cultural value of an object with cultural significance...and it is not even acceptable to contrast conservation and restoration as though the first were guided by objective criteria and the second by judgement and taste.’ (Melucco Vaccaro<sup>36</sup> 1996: 326-327).

Whatever meaning ‘restoration’ conveys to Western heritage professionals, in the context of East African local communities, restoration can be perceived as a legitimate and essential part of conservation practice. For example, and in the author’s experience, the most valuable Christian Orthodox manuscripts of Ethiopian religious communities are restored by local artisans who re-fill losses in pictures with new pigments. Thus, as stated by Brandi, it is not always possible to contrast conservation and restoration practice particularly in a different hierarchical system of values. Philippot<sup>37</sup> (1996) shows that

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<sup>34</sup> Christina Kreps is Director of Museum Studies and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Denver.

<sup>35</sup> Cesare Brandi (1906-1988) was an Italian art historian and critic. He is the author of the ‘*Teoria del Restauro*’, published in 1963. Between 1948 and 1967 he undertook international missions and lectures in addition to consultations for UNESCO.

<sup>36</sup> Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (1940-2000) is an Italian archaeologist. She taught architectural and archaeological conservation at the University of Venice and at the Istituto Suor Orsola Benincasa in Naples. Through this work, she was very active in organizations such as UNESCO, the World Heritage Center, and the Council of Europe.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Philippot was a Belgian art historian and archaeologist. From 1971 to 1977 he was Director of ICCROM and has carried out advisory missions for ICCROM throughout the world.

this issue is even more critical in the context of third world countries which present Western conservators with problems not unlike those seen in the West in attempts to reconcile traditional methods by handing over to local artisans the maintenance of popular artefacts. He also shows that these differences in the understanding and practices of conservation were multiplied tenfold by the extremely rapid character of technological change in the 19th century (Philippot 1996: 219). Conservation, however defined, also needs to address the challenges posed by the characteristics of intangible cultural heritage. The respective approaches of Brandi and Clavir to the ‘conservation’ of intangible heritage show that ‘respect for cultural diversity’ is a principle that is also applicable to the concept of conservation. As early as 1963, Cesare Brandi explained in his complete works, ‘Theory on Restoration’, that when a conservator feels the material component of an object, he or she experiences as well its immaterial characteristics (Brandi 2001: 11). In 2002, Miriam Clavir completed Brandi’s view by stating that the tangible evidence that objects provide is important, but their meanings lie even more in the intangible aspects of the culture they represent (Clavir 2002: 119).

While there is divergence in the meanings of conservation and the implications that this has on diverse cultures, practices and philosophies, heritage professionals and local communities may find common ground in a future focused perspective as explained by Lindsay<sup>38</sup>:

‘Conservation and other disciplines that ‘care’ for cultural heritage have an inherently future focused perspective, just as in health care or banking. Their aims are to adopt strategies and invest now in order to generate some kind of benefit in the future. The strategies may be more or less altruistic or, at least, benefit the wider population but their success is only assessable at some point in the future’.

(Lindsay 2006: 60).

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<sup>38</sup> William Lindsay is the Head of the joint Conservation Programme provided by the RCA and the Victoria & Albert Museum. His research focuses on the conservation of fossil material and he is also interested in the wider issues of conservation decision-making.

The connections between the practice of conservation and other concepts and principles, such as intangibility and access, which are two key issues in the framework of this research, are also applicable to the concept of preventive conservation. Thus, the questions arise: what differentiates preventive conservation from interventive conservation and how long preventive conservation has existed and in which societies? These questions are important when considering partnership between local and institutional communities in the practice of preventive conservation. Overall, and in contrast to conservation, it can be argued that preventive conservation uses approaches and techniques that concentrate on the physical environment of the object rather than on the object's physical features. From a historical and geographical perspective it can be said that some form of preventive conservation has always existed in all societies if by preventive conservation one means regular care of cultural heritage through control of its use and environment.

## **2.1. Some Characteristics of Preventive Conservation**

From a Western historical viewpoint, preventive conservation arose mainly from recognising the drawbacks of interventive approaches, considered expensive and unconnected to the wider needs of collections and the resources of museum institutions. In addition, Pye states that:

‘The growing focus on preventive conservation of whole collections was for conservation to engage with a much wider range of museum artefacts including, for example, natural history and social history material.’ (Pye 2001: 15).

The potential of preventive conservation, as a continuance (not a substitute) of interventive conservation, is studied by professionals in the heritage management sector (Wadum<sup>39</sup> 2003: 3). For instance, Clavir states that preventive conservation is the main feature of modern conservation; she characterises modern conservation philosophy as one which plainly distinguishes conservation from restoration (2002: 16). For other professionals, interventive and preventive conservation merge in one global management

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<sup>39</sup> Jorgen Wadum is a former Chair of ICOM-CC and the Head of the Conservation Department of the Statens Museum for Kunst, Denmark.

process called ‘integrated conservation’. This process considers conservation as a holistic practice that ensures access to or use of heritage resources and is part of economic, educational, cultural and environmental planning and development (Berducou<sup>40</sup> 2002: 12).

In practice, preventive conservation presents a set of principles and practices which are sometimes beneficial to the economic situation of museums. Its long term and non-intrusive approach are consistent with the principles of sustainability. Yet, the benefits of preventive conservation practices are sometimes difficult to quantify and appreciate. Preventive measures work over the long-term and may not directly improve the appearance of objects and thus are seldom visually spectacular. However, preventive conservation provides scientific resources for heritage managers in the analysis of the environmental conditions that may affect the conservation of collections and artefacts. These analyses and assessments offer approaches and techniques which help museum staff to prevent significant damage to the collections in their custody and may generate economic benefits for the institution by reducing the rate and number of interventive treatments. Thus the Western practice of preventive conservation should enable risks to collections to be identified, quantified and evaluated and allow determination of the most cost-effective means by which to reduce risks (Waller 1994: 12).

Essentially, the practice of preventive conservation focuses on the physical environment to which objects are subject. The social, philosophical and spiritual features that affect the perception of the value attributed to the objects are not yet consistently considered by preventive conservation practitioners. Clavir argues that, in the context of the heritage of local communities, practitioners should develop philosophical approaches and practices that can include conservation of the conceptual integrity as well as the physical, historic and artistic integrity of their heritage (Clavir 1994: 56). There are parallels with the work of Appadurai and Kopytoff (1986) on the social life of things. Kopytoff states that:

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<sup>40</sup> Marie Berducou is Head of the Conservation Department of the University of Sorbonne, Paris, France and Heritage Consultant for the Collections Unit of ICCROM.

‘While social contexts encode objects with changing meanings, a close examination of objects can also provide insights into the societies which produced and consumed them’. (Kopytoff 1986: 64).

The points made by these authors emphasise that cultural heritage and the practice of preventive conservation can provide insights into the values ascribed to cultural heritage, its physical and intellectual environment and its ‘producer’ or user. That preventive conservation considers the environment of heritage in contrast to ‘interventive’ conservation is an asset when its practice takes place through partnerships between heritage professionals and local communities.

‘Similarly it has now become clear that, in many cases, environmental conservation is contingent on the conservation of local cultural resources, especially the knowledge and experiences of local communities that have applications to conservation based on western scientific paradigms.’ (Kreps 2003: 124).

## **2.2. ‘Principles’ and ‘Practices’ of Preventive Conservation in East Africa**

In East Africa the Western concept of preventive conservation is relatively new. However, in contrast to the West, the historical development of conservation in African museums started with preventive conservation. African museums are often in a precarious position due to lack of funds, expertise and facilities, and so understandably call for a preventive approach. In this context a teamwork strategy effective for the entire collection is crucial in contrast to an interventive approach geared towards the treatment of individual objects. The PREMA programme of ICCROM was a determining factor in the development of preventive conservation in the museums of sub-Saharan Africa. Since 1985, its substantial work on training and providing technical assistance to museums radically increased awareness of the values of preventive conservation in the museum environment. African museum professionals readily acknowledged the contribution of

PREMA in their professional development as well as the benefits that preventive conservation could bring to the management of museum collections<sup>41</sup>.

From the view point of a local community in Kenya, the collection and preservation of precious artefacts has always been practised by traditional societies (Sokhna 1973: 255). In Tanzania, as in other East African traditional societies, collections of objects were instigated by some Kings in the period prior to colonisation (Kiéthéga<sup>42</sup> 1992: 274). However, most of the heritage was conserved in the context of religious or social traditions and was often in the custody of individuals or families<sup>43</sup>. This is illustrated by communities practising the mask cult. A special hut was dedicated to their conservation and only a few masters had access to it and its contents (Kiéthéga 1992: 273). These traditional practices which preserved cultural heritage and sustained local Authorities raise numerous questions for heritage professionals regarding the potential roles and responsibilities of local communities and heritage professionals in the conservation of this heritage. Thus heritage professionals need to develop a broader understanding of their conservation role in society whilst developing preventive conservation in museums. This is a complex task as the principles and practices which are culturally appropriate in one context may not be automatically applicable in another. Indeed, conservation codes of ethics are based on sets of accepted values in a given situation and as noted by Lewis<sup>44</sup>: ‘they contribute much to the development of institutional culture and, among group of practitioners, the culture of a profession’ (2006: 10). In this context, the legitimacy or transfer of Western conservation principles and codes of ethics to an African context is an important issue that should be questioned, particularly when partnerships between local and institutional communities are considered. Clavir argues that:

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<sup>41</sup> Personal communication, Mwadime Wazwa, Programme Co-ordinator CHDA, Mombasa, Kenya, 25 October 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Jean-Baptiste Kiéthéga is Professor of History and former Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Human Sciences and African Archaeology at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication, Ephraim Wahome, 15 July 2005, Nairobi, Kenya. Pr. Wahome is a Lecturer in the Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nairobi.

<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey Lewis was a former Chairperson of the ICOM Ethics Committee (1997-2004) and former President of ICOM (1983-1989).

‘In the literature that examines the relationships between museums and First Nations, conservation practice has not often been critiqued. That a primary mandate of museums is to preserve the objects they house has been considered a truism. Conservation practices that accomplish this mandate through scientifically developed and proven techniques, in conjunction with a code of ethics whose goal is to preserve the original integrity of the object, have been considered undebatable’. (Clavir 2002: xix).

While most Western codes of ethics integrate the concept of preventive conservation and recommend its practice in the museum environment (CMA 1999; SAMA 2001; ECCO 2002; PIMA 2006 and ICOM 2006) they do not provide specific guidelines for the conservation of local communities’ heritage and the related concepts of intangibility and access. However, in the field of immovable cultural heritage, ICOMOS formulated principles for the preventive conservation of wall paintings (2003), which refer to concepts of intangibility and consider practical and philosophical issues relating to access, use and vandalism (ICOMOS 2003). This type of initiative demonstrates that the formulation of conservation principles relevant to local and institutional communities may be considered and that principles in preventive conservation may require further debate and development in order to uncover relevant and flexible solutions for all partners. The re-evaluation of preventive conservation principles may be particularly significant to international heritage organisations which are increasingly involved in the development of cultural policies adapted to the protection of intangible cultural heritage. However, this task may take some time considering the young history of preventive conservation, in Africa and in the West, and the amount of time necessary to reflect upon the validity of these principles. As Pye explains:

‘Principles reflect thinking which may have been developing over some time, thus they may exist in different forms. Some may have reached the stage of being formally accepted and codified, some are beginning to take shape and being tested through discussion and publication, and some are being re-evaluated.’ (Pye 2001: 33).

Policies and standards have often been both very flexible and multifaceted or so rigid that they can put the success of projects in jeopardy. In such cases, conservation guidelines are sometimes perceived as practical suggestions that are not providing ethical or scientific references. Therefore, the term ‘principle’ as adopted for this study, is a guide to how to think and act.

### **2.3. Preventive Conservation in the Context of Development: the Case of Lalibela**

In the context of development what is happening in conservation is not so different to what is happening in other sectors. For instance, the theme of ‘emergency’ is stereotypically inherent in descriptions of the African continent. This theme has mobilised and allied donor agencies, international heritage organisations and local Authorities in the implementation of major conservation projects which focus mainly on the conservation of immovable cultural heritage and sites. Well known examples are: the royal palaces of Abomey in Benin; the rock churches of Ethiopia; the traditional Ashante buildings in Ghana; the Gorée Island in Senegal; and, the ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara in Tanzania (Taboroff<sup>45</sup> and Cook 1993). All have been registered as World Heritage Sites.

Conservation projects are sometimes selected in tandem with Western political agendas with little respect for the objectives and requirements of local Authorities and communities in terms of development and conservation priorities. The Ethiopian Churches of Lalibela,<sup>46</sup> a medieval monastic complex where priests and students still live and worship, are a typical example of this situation where conflicts occur between conservation and development. Several Ethiopian Authorities, the Orthodox Church, the European Union and UNESCO have been involved in conservation projects in Lalibela since 1993. The churches have deteriorated over the centuries, but the development of the region since the 1980s has created a new ‘threat’: tourism. This raises additional

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<sup>45</sup> June Taboroff is an American architectural historian, with an interest in the conservation of historic monuments and sites. She works as a cultural resource specialist and as consultant for the World Bank.

<sup>46</sup> Lalibela has been on UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 1978. Lalibela is a monastic complex of medieval churches hewn from the rock of the Ethiopian highlands (2,700 meters above sea level).



conservation issues concerned with access for tourists and use of the site by the local community. UNESCO and the European Union, both of whom were involved in ‘developing’ Lalibela, have conflicting preservation priorities (Boukhari<sup>47</sup> 1998: 4). In 2004, no agreement was reached between the two agencies and the local community and no decision was taken about the conservation approach to be taken. The European Union earmarked substantial funds for the project, but only a portion was used to construct a high-tech shelter to cover (and preserve) the churches. This conservation approach was perceived to be a compromise by the agencies but it neither satisfied the Lalibela community, nor met the most essential requirement, to preserve the Lalibela site as it had originally been intended. The Ethiopians waited for years for the churches to be repaired, and the people of Lalibela called for the use of traditional building methods; the European Union rejected the use of their aid package in this manner. As this example shows, preventive conservation is affected by environmental, financial and political conditions. The basis for conservation decision-making lies in a value system inherent to individuals or communities as well as by their other cultural values and their social environment. This implies that there is a need to understand how the community consider and value preventive conservation principles and practices in relation to their heritage, local Authorities and museum professionals (Dardes and Levin 2000: 10).

It is helpful to view preventive conservation not as an end in itself but as a means to an end (Milner<sup>48</sup> 1999: 22). Thus, as underlined by De Guichen<sup>49</sup>, the crucial question to answer before designing a preventive conservation strategy, relates to the justification

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<sup>47</sup> Sophie Boukhari is journalist for ‘The Courier UNESCO’ and works at the Public Information, Editorial Section of UNESCO.

<sup>48</sup> Carole Milner played a key role in the creation of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisation (ECCO) in 1991. In 1994 she was appointed Head of Conservation and Collection Care at the then Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC) in London and played a pivotal role in the establishment of the new Institute of Conservation (ICON). She has been awarded the Royal Warrant Holders Association 2005 Plowden Medal in recognition of her exceptional contribution to the development of the conservation profession.

<sup>49</sup> Gaël de Guichen, former ICCROM Programme Director and Assistant to the Director-General, has been a leading thinker in the field of preventive conservation and is well known for his work on the preservation of museum collections in Africa and for encouraging the involvement of media and youth in heritage preservation.

behind decisions to conserve or not: a question that must be addressed, as much by the professionals as by the community concerned<sup>50</sup>.

Considering the East African socio-cultural context where fieldwork took place and considering the issues discussed above, the selected definition for preventive conservation derives from the concept of ‘cultural conservation’. This relatively new term, which like the new museology that has emerged in recent decades, aims to reflect alternative approaches and new ways of thinking about heritage protection (Kreps 2003: 11). Preventive conservation is the sum of principles and practices, relevant to an integrated cultural heritage (tangible, intangible and natural), which aims to conserve cultural heritage with respect to its physical and intellectual integrity and which takes into consideration its physical, social, cultural and spiritual values while promoting public access and the involvement of cultural heritage users in its practice.

#### **2.4. Preventive Conservation and the Concept of ‘Sustainability’**

‘Sustainability’ is a significant concept in both development policies and conservation practices. The New Shorter Oxford dictionary defines the term as:

‘the quality of being sustainable. Sustainable (a) supportable, bearable; (b) able to be upheld or defended; (c) able to be maintained at a certain rate or level’. (Brown 2003: 3,163).

The term ‘sustainable development’ became widespread after its adoption by the World Commission on Environment and Development in its 1987 report<sup>51</sup> entitled ‘Our Common Future’ (Brundtland 1987). The overall aim of the World Commission was to find practical ways to address the environmental and developmental problems of the world. The most widely used definition, taken from the Brundtland Report, is that:

‘Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.  
(Brundtland 1987: 43).

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<sup>50</sup> Personal communication, Gaël de Guichen, ICCROM, Rome, 15 May 2004.

<sup>51</sup> This report is also known as the ‘Brundtland Report’, named after the Chair of the Commission and former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland.

UNESCO approached the issue of sustainability from the viewpoint of cultural diversity. The challenge was to demonstrate that the conservation of cultural heritage is not merely a technical issue and the responsibility of specialists, but a global and socio-cultural issue that is the responsibility of all. The biggest challenge was to make public Authorities, the private sector and civil society as a whole realise that cultural heritage is not only an instrument for peace and reconciliation but also a factor in development.

Meeting UNESCO's objectives requires new approaches, resources and expertise in both conservation principles and practices. May Cassar<sup>52</sup> explains that practising a form of sustainable heritage relies on understanding that a key principle of sustainability is local distinctiveness in relation to conservation, personal skills, local products, values and knowledge (Cassar 2003: 16). Nicholas Stanley-Price (2003: 2) argues that conservation development increasingly concentrates on access and interpretation. Thus, the integration of all aspects of natural, intangible and tangible heritage within a common ethical and practical approach is an essential element for the sustainability of conservation projects. Moreover, while pressures such as natural disasters, conflicts, illicit traffic and a wave of globalisation threaten cultural heritage, this approach of integration opens new paths for fundraising, development and collaboration in cultural heritage conservation. The workshop on African heritage and sustainable development that took place in South Africa<sup>53</sup> in 2002 is one example of this integrated model. The workshop focused on immovable heritage, but also raised issues and questions pertinent to the larger context of cultural heritage in Africa. Among the problems discussed at the workshop was the contribution of cultural heritage to poverty alleviation and conflict resolution. The role played by cultural heritage and museum professionals in the process of sustainable development was also assessed (Ndoro<sup>54</sup> 2003: 14). Overall, the workshop's

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<sup>52</sup> May Cassar is Director of the Centre for Sustainable Heritage, University College London, and is responsible for research and teaching on the sustainable use of historic buildings, collections and sites.

<sup>53</sup> Pretoria 19 to 23 August 2002. The workshop was organised by the World Heritage Centre and the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Ndoro was the Monuments Co-ordinator and Site Conservator at Great Zimbabwe for the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (1990-1995). In 2004 he joined the staff of ICCROM as a project manager for the 'Africa 2009 programme'. Dr. Ndoro has been active in AFRICA 2009 activities since 1999.

participants<sup>55</sup> urged African Governments to take seriously the role that heritage management can play in development. However, to achieve these institutional objectives within a framework of sustainability, the primary goal identified by the Conference participants was the need to appoint African professionals to museums and cultural heritage organisations<sup>56</sup>. In summary, the sustainability of community conservation projects requires national authorities to consider the aspirations of their local communities. It also requires heritage organisations to accept that they may have to reconsider the principles and practices that guide the conservation of cultural heritage in partnership with local communities.

### **3. Local and Institutional Communities**

The term ‘community’ is extensively used in the international network of development and cultural heritage organisations and conventions and it appears in the primary sources analysed in this thesis. The term ‘community’ is used in this research to describe two groups of people, the local community and the institutional community, which have common objectives to conserve cultural heritage but which operate in different social environments. Some analysis of the various connotations of ‘community’ is necessary. It could be argued that local and institutional communities are in no way comparable in terms of intrinsic value. Weil argues that ‘unlike individuals, institutions and that include museums have no inherent worth or dignity’ (Weil<sup>57</sup> 2006: 4). A different view is proposed here. The view supported by this research is that both local and institutional communities operate according to their respective value systems and resources for the preventive conservation of cultural heritage. This view is emphasised in the analysis by Egounlety<sup>58</sup>:

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<sup>55</sup> The sub-Saharan States Parties were represented by individual museum professionals, the School for African Heritage and ICCROM.

<sup>56</sup> Personal communication, Lorna Abungu, Nairobi, Kenya, 29 September 2003.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen E. Weil (1928-2005) was Scholar Emeritus, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., USA.

<sup>58</sup> Micheline Egounlety, a curator of the History Museum of Ouidah, Benin and Director of the Benin Cultural Heritage Authority (2004-2006). She was co-ordinator of the 6th Africa 2009 Course on the Conservation and Management of Immovable Cultural Heritage in sub-Saharan Africa (30 August-19 November 2004).

‘The first order for humanity is to bring people together in communities. Humanity can only express itself in the context of a community. This is why people created societies culture, the ensemble of social structures and artistic, religious and intellectual expressions that define a group.’ (Egounlety 2005: 97).

Before looking at the meanings of these two types of community, it is useful to consider the definition of the term ‘community’ in the New Shorter Oxford Dictionary:

‘Community: a body of individuals. 1. An organised political, municipal, or social body; a body of people living in the same locality; a body of people having religion, profession, etc., in common; a body of nations unified by common interests. 2. A monastic, socialistic, etc., body of people living together and holding goods in common.’ (Brown 2003: 455).

In this research each type of community is understood to be a body of individuals, but what is the meaning of a local community in the context of cultural heritage in East Africa? The dictionary defines the term ‘local’ as:

‘Belonging to or existing in a particular locality, neighbourhood, especially a town, county, etc., as opposed to the country as whole’. (Brown 1993: 1613).

However, from a cultural heritage perspective there are several ways of defining a body of individuals with socio-cultural characteristics. For instance, the term ‘source communities’ is often used in museology and archaeology. It describes the communities from which artefacts or museum collections originate. The term refers both to the groups in the past when artefacts were collected, as well as to their descendants today (Peers<sup>59</sup> and Brown<sup>60</sup> 2003: 2). This term is pertinent to issues of representation and classification and does not convey connotations of discrimination. However, in the author’s experience, it is rarely used in the context of cultural heritage management in East Africa with the exception of some Western academics. Another definition refers to

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<sup>59</sup> Laura Peers is Curator for the Americas Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum, and Lecturer in the School of Anthropology at the University of Oxford.

<sup>60</sup> Alison Brown is Research Manager (Human History) for Glasgow Museums. She worked with First Nations communities in Canada, and published on collecting histories in contemporary museum practice.

'First Nations'. The word 'Nations' implies a concept of sovereignty, and is thus relevant to the research. However, 'First Nations' is a term mostly used in Canada and New Zealand by and for Aboriginal peoples. This definition of a community has a geo-political connotation which is not applicable to the historical and social context of Africa. The term 'indigenous' is also commonly used in cultural heritage studies. It refers to the first occupants, the original inhabitants of a particular region. However, through colonisation and later by immigration, it increasingly conveyed notions of minority and marginality, which are not pertinent to the African context. For instance, the African Commission on Human Rights has insisted that all Africans are indigenous to Africa and that no particular group could claim indigenous status (Sillar<sup>61</sup> 2005: 72)<sup>62</sup>. Lorna Abungu makes a similar argument:

'In Africa, despite colonialism, indigenous Africans remain in the majority and so almost every person walking the street, whether in traditional attire or a suit and tie, is in fact 'indigenous'. A Masai in full regalia in his hut in the Rift Valley is equally as indigenous as a Kikuyu businessman in Nairobi dressed in an imported Armani suit. So, in an African context, it is much more common to talk of local communities.' (Abungu 2005: 152).

From a social perspective, 'local community' implies a group of people living in the same area who have a common profession, religion or other social identity. The root of the word community implies 'something shared by', 'coming from' or 'done by two or more people or groups' (Etzioni<sup>63</sup> 1993: 15). The term 'local community' is used in this sense in this research, as a group of people who share 'common knowledge', resources, beliefs, values and practices which provide basis for collective action.

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<sup>61</sup> Bill Sillar is Lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, with research interests in archaeology and the ethnography of the Andes.

<sup>62</sup> In response to the United Nations focus on Indigenous Peoples, the African Commission on Human Rights set up a report on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples/Communities in Africa which was adopted in November 2003.

<sup>63</sup> Amitai Etzioni is an eminent American Sociologist. He is the Director of the Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies at The George Washington University, and at the Harvard Business School. Etzioni is the author of numerous books on the relationship between the concepts of 'communities' and 'societies'.

The concept of ‘institutional community’ may also have various meanings according to the time period and the professional context in which it is used. However, in the context of this research it presents the same qualities as the concept of ‘local communities’ with the addition of the following characteristics:

‘Of, pertaining to, or originated by institution: organised. Of, or pertaining to a society or organisation for the promotion of a purpose’ (Brown 1993: 1383).

### **3.1. Local and Institutional Communities in Conservation Partnership**

The selected definitions of local and institutional communities, which involve the notion of collective action, require the consideration of the terms of ‘participation’ and ‘partnership’: terms often used in the development sector. The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines participation as follows:

‘Participation: (1) The action or fact of having or forming part of. (2) The fact or condition of sharing in common; association as partners. (3) The action or an act of taking part with others (in an action or matter), specifically the active involvement of members of a community or organisation in decisions which affect them.’

(Brown 1993: 2109).

Overall, the principles of community participation indicate a mechanism through which decisions and practices are shared between communities and organisations. However, the term participation does not reflect this principle of associating two entities governed by particular values and objectives. Similarly, the term ‘participation’ does not encompass the concept of identity and is somehow restrictive in a social and cultural perspective. In the author’s experience in East Africa, the term participation has been so widely used and misused in developmental aid projects, that its original meaning has been altered. Nowadays, the concept of ‘community-participation’ sometimes implies some form of ‘consent’ from the institutional community to share its actions with the local community within the framework of its institutional agenda.

The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines the terms ‘partnership’ and ‘partner’ as:

‘(1) The fact or condition of being a partner; association or participation as a partner. (2) An association of two or more people as partners; a joint business’.

(Brown 1993: 2111).

‘Partner: A person who possesses something jointly with another or others’.

(Brown 1993: 2111).

The term ‘partnership’ in contrast to ‘participation’ denotes the association of partners around a common possession. Also, the term ‘partnership’ conveys a notion of responsible and mutual involvement in actions (partnership takes place ‘between’ partners ‘to’ achieve a purpose in contrast to participation, which implies participation in a purpose only). Thus the term ‘partnership’ is selected in this research with the following definition:

‘Partnership is a clearly defined artistic, financial, or administrative relationship. Partners share responsibility and often share risk. A partnership lasts whatever length of time suits the partners and their undertaking.’ (Canada Council for the Arts 2006).

The concept of community participation (or partnership) has become a major feature in the conservation of natural and immovable heritage in Africa and beyond. While this concept has received widespread support from international agencies in development projects since the 1950s today, there is little research on the concepts and ideas it draws upon from the field of preventive conservation. For instance, few academics investigate and research traditional and local conservation practices in sub-Saharan Africa. This fact may arise from the frequent assumption that local African communities are not concerned with the preservation of their material heritage. Nicklin<sup>64</sup> reached an opposite conclusion in pioneering research entitled ‘Traditional preservation methods: some African practices observed’ (1983). The author’s anthropological approach coupled with a series of case

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<sup>64</sup> Keith Nicklin was Ethnographer for the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments (1970-1978), Curator of the Powell-Cotton Museum of African and Asian Zoology and Ethnography in Birchington, Kent (1979) and Keeper of Ethnography, Horniman Museum, London (1982). He developed a number of important exhibitions, especially memorable at the Horniman was his comprehensive and popular Yoruba show (‘Yoruba: A Celebration of African Art’, 1991-1992) and his contributions to the permanent exhibition, ‘African Worlds’.



studies supports his argument: the advance of scientific research into traditional preservation methods can, in the long term, prove to be the most effective means for the preservation of the heritage of local communities in Africa (Nicklin 1983: 127). As underlined by Kreps, the collection, storage and care of objects is often considered to be a Western pre-occupation but most cultures keep objects of special value and have created elaborate methods to preserve them which, in many respects, are analogous to professional museum practices (Kreps 1998: 5). The studies of Christina Kreps on this topic spotlight the growing recognition of and respect for 'indigenous' curation, or traditional care. Kreps approached this subject from an anthropological angle. This interest from academics in the humanities highlights the need for academic expertise and research in a scientific sphere which increasingly integrates social parameters (Kwayera and Oluoch 2003: 10). Equally, the Institute for Development Policy and Management (University of Manchester) researched principles and comparative practices in community conservation in Africa (Hulme<sup>65</sup> 1996). The research, which focused on natural heritage and immovable heritage, identified some principles applicable to the conservation of movable heritage. The research strongly recommends clarifying the meaning of the term 'community' so that the theory, policy, practice and outcomes of community conservation can be better understood. This academic approach also demonstrates that while the ambiguity of the term 'community conservation' makes analysis difficult, the term may well hold value for heritage professionals who find it an attractive label for conservation initiatives and the changes they wish to promote.

Local communities and heritage professionals working in partnership develop complex relationships with objects that vary according to their respective cultural identity. These disparities in the value and understanding of cultural material generate questions about access and conservation practice. From a museological perspective, Susan Pearce<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> David Hulme is Professor of Development Studies at Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. His international experience and research interests include the sociology of development; the role of community organisations and NGOs; the evaluation of technical assistance; and environmental management.

<sup>66</sup> Susan Pearce is Professor of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. Her research interests concentrate on material culture. She is the author of : *Objects of Knowledge* (1990); *Museums, Objects and Collections* (1992); *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (1992); *Researching Material Culture* (2000).

explains that Western exhibition concepts can only be fully understood by those who have been trained to do so, i.e. by people who understand the conventions of exhibitions and feel at home in their performance (Pearce 1999: 13). This view, shared by many African museum professionals, is also relevant to conservation. For example, some contemporary issues in the conservation of ethnographic artefacts are rooted in the politics of acquisition of colonial museums in the late 19th century. The 'appetite' of museums for the quick and easy acquisition of cultural material resulted in the lack of contextualising documentation. This policy still has a significant impact on the conservation of ethnographic artefacts at the beginning of the 21st century (Losche and Waltson 1982: 35). There is a genuine need to enhance the understanding and sensitivity of heritage professionals towards objects through collaboration with originating communities and their environments.

The development of conservation in partnership with local communities requires the development of effective management strategies and the re-assessment of knowledge about traditional conservation practices. These conservation practices, with their associated requirements and restrictions, often associated with spiritual values and technical practices are a good opportunity for the communities to put their mark on their environment and demonstrate their skills. They constitute references and models that can be used to plan and manage at the site and at national levels. In this context, the practice of preventive conservation and the museum structure both have a role to play. George Abungu declared that community participation is crucial to the overall process of cultural heritage preservation in Africa (Kwayera and Oluoch 2003: 10). Few African museums have the resources to put into operation an interventive conservation strategy and can at best concentrate their efforts on long term preventive conservation programmes. However, merging traditional methods of conservation with museum standards of care requires analysis of the benefits and conservation risks created by a traditional care approach (Flynn 2001). For example the architectural design chosen for the museum has an impact upon the environment, way of life and philosophy of local people and can have a significant impact upon the development of conservation activities. Alpha Oumar Konaré clearly explains this in his cultural and social analysis of the context in which the

National Museum of Mali, in Bamako, was established. This museum which was designed and built in collaboration with the community, and with respect for local traditions, is described by the community as being primarily a conservation structure (Konaré 1983: 146). This does not imply that African museums should become conservation centres or no longer have the other roles of representation, education and advocacy to fulfil. However, one might ask who are the users of African museums and what kind of museums, if any, do African societies really need?

In this contentious debate about the need (or not) to reassess the relevance of African museums dating from the colonial period a speculative link could be made with the need (or not) for democracy. A number of people have argued that some cultures are not seeking democracy. Thus, if the need for democracy is not genuinely recognised by all, its concept and implementation may be rejected. Although, the concept of 'democracy' is understood worldwide, there can be apprehension and controversy about the many and various connotations held within this concept. This relates to the characteristics and historical contexts of cultures and societies, be they pastoral, tribal, religious or national democracies, and the consultation undertaken between these diverse groups and their respective authorities. Thus respect for cultural diversity applies as much in political as cultural debates.

The rationale for sustaining museum institutions and the preservation of cultural heritage results from the same process of consultation. Thus museums can not escape having to deal with its public and its expected partners; local communities.

Ayari's answer to this debate is that the African museum is viewed as a social participant (not neutral) in the society at large, which contributes to the action of conservation and cultural education (2001: 50). Thus while the museum has to respond to specific political and economic issues linked to its institutional mandate, it can have a social status equal to that of the local communities. Within this social structure or partnership, the role of African museums in conservation and the degree of participation and decision-making by communities in museums can be defined. This indicates that institutional theoretical partnerships no longer suffice and that such partnerships require innovative collaboration.

In a two-way relationship, involving the sharing of ideas, knowledge and power, museums can act as a 'contact zone' between heritage professionals and local communities (Peers and Brown 2003).



Chapter Three describes the cultural, social, and economic contexts of preventive conservation development in East Africa (figure 3). It explains approaches implemented to develop heritage management and underlines the disparity between universal principles and the adaptation to local needs and conditions. In addition, it explains the international and local networks involved in preventive conservation development.

## **1. East Africa**

The economic and political context of East African countries at the beginning of the 21st century must be outlined briefly. If Africa is no longer struggling for political independence, the number of civilian victims of the post-independence wars and other types of conflict is considerable. Stephen Smith highlighted the frail integration of the African continent within the international market as a reality depriving many communities of their basic needs and human rights (Smith 2003: 5). ‘Africa is poor, Europe is rich’: these types of sentences, which are thought to be self-evident, are part of a larger and recurring debate in Africa. The recent effects of the expansion of globalisation combined with the social and cultural traditions of African societies, place African individuals and communities in a complex position. Indeed, many people live simultaneously in two different ‘epochs’. To give an extreme example, in some African regions, a person might work with the London stock exchange while sharing tea or take part in a traditional ceremony with village elders.

From an historical and socio-cultural perspective, the colonial methods, among other contemporary political and corporate factors, have created misunderstanding between Western and African societies, which in turn have created misinterpretations of the reciprocal cultures. Embedded in the colonial period and stimulated by the effects of globalisation, the twisted perceptions that Westerners and Africans have on their reciprocal cultures and ways of life still survived, fuelled by a series of ‘exotic’ or ‘glamorous’ clichés.

In addition, artificial political borders, which were often demarcated in an arbitrary fashion by colonial powers, have resulted in discord and clan based conflicts. From a cultural perspective, the task of establishing a cultural identity and managing the conservation of a community's heritage divided by the borders of two or three countries<sup>1</sup> is extremely complex for both the communities and national authorities.

This brief description and viewpoint might seem over assertive. Yet, it reflects social and economic features which affected the development of African nations during the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, it explains why cultural heritage preservation was not considered a priority by African Governments. Waves of democratic and free market reforms in Africa leave little room for the development of 'culture'. This does not mean that African heritage professionals are not keen to learn from the mistakes and successes of others who have already started to adapt universal principles to local needs and conditions.

### **Significance of the Designation 'Ethnographic Museum'**

The term 'ethnography' is often mentioned in the reports of international cultural organisations<sup>2</sup>. In a summary of the 'CIDOC Ethnographic Group Report', Penelope Theologi-Gouti underlined the problem of meaning(s) and confusion of terms 'labelling' museum collections, such as 'ethnographic', 'ethnologic', 'anthropological' or 'art' museum collection (Theologi-Gouti 1998). Questioning the boundaries of 'ethnography' within African museums conveys the acceptance or rejection of natural history, folk and fine art collection within the category. 'Ethnography' has something to say, but to whom and how? Though is it a difficult and wide-ranging exercise, from a theoretical view, the New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines ethnography as being:

'The scientific description of races and peoples with their customs, habits, and mutual difference [from ETHNO- + -GRAPHY. ETHNO from Greek *ethnos*, nation. GRAPHY from Greek *graphia*, writing].' (Brown 1993: 857).

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<sup>1</sup> Among many examples in East Africa, the Issa Somali community is divided between Djibouti, Somalia and Eritrea.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the Ethnographic Group of the International Committee for Documentation of ICOM (CIDOC) collaborated with AFRICOM at the edition of the *Handbook of Standards: Documenting African Collections* (Chedia, Kumetsu and Chieze: 1995).

The concept of ethnography in Africa became prevalent with the emergence of the colonies and the socio-cultural values inherent in the new political powers administrating African countries at that time. It also became popular for Western intellectuals and journalists to present, in a reductive manner, to the public, the complexity of non-Western societies. Indeed, in the Western museums of the colonial period, ethnography was actually a residual or ‘dustbin’ category, including the majority of the known cultures of the world but excluding those of particular interest to Western scholars of the time (Burt<sup>3</sup> 1998: 11).

‘For the past century or so, the objects of cultural “Others” have been appropriated primarily into two of these categories; the artefact or ethnographic specimens and the work of art. They have, that is, been fitted into the scholarly domains defined in the late nineteenth century when anthropology and art history, were formally established as academic disciplines. As a construction, however, this binary pair has almost always been unstable, for both classifications masked what had, by the late eighteenth century, become one of the most important features of objects: their operation as commodities circulating in the discursive space of an emergent capitalist economy.’ (Phillips<sup>4</sup> and Steiner<sup>5</sup> 1999: 3).

Many museums created during the colonial period were, and still are, categorised as ‘ethnographic’. Similarly, a vast majority of African art and history collections are described as ‘ethnographic’. Not only has this label generated philosophical debates amongst academics (Karp and Lavin 1991; Coombes 1994; Joy 1994; Barringer and Flynn 1998; Phillips and Steiner 1999) but it has also created ethical and social issues in museology and conservation fields.

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<sup>3</sup> Ben Burt is Education Officer in the Department of Ethnography, British Museum.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Ruth Phillips was Director of the Museum of Anthropology and Professor of Anthropology and Art History at the University of British Columbia (1997-2003). She is now Research Chair in Modern Culture at the University of Carleton, Canada, (2003 to the present). Her research interests include the study of Native North American communities and culture, visual and material culture as aspects of ‘larger processes of culture contact and colonisation’, and the study of visual culture and communicative practices which incorporate both Western and indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Steiner is Associate Professor and Director of Museum Studies, Department of Art History & Architectural Studies, Connecticut College, USA. Professor Steiner specialises in ‘African art’, ‘Art market and collecting’ and ‘Image of the “Other” in visual culture’. Much of his work examines the relationship between the local and the global, and the construction of value and meaning in non-Western art.



‘Colonial ethnography differentiated ethnic groups, which their members had not themselves always acknowledged, on the basis of language (on a continent where bilingualism was common), and established a directly equitable classification of artistic styles. This allows museum displays still to distinguish, abstracted from historical considerations, and to present a picture of African peoples living in hermetically sealed and solitary isolation from each other, detached from trade, political and familial alliances, religious pilgrimage routes, and the vicissitudes of an inclement history responsible for massive forced resettlements.’ (Shelton<sup>6</sup> 2003: 191).

The term ‘ethnography’ presents a series of meanings that differ according to the historical, geographical and social context. Thus defining this term is complex and may be confusing. The uses and definitions of this term in the literature of sociology and anthropology are numerous and often contradictory. While a number of social science specialists studied and questioned the meaning(s) of ‘ethnography’, those approached by the author could provide neither a clear-cut answer nor a standard definition. Moreover, some of them confessed that this concept represented one of the most awkward parts of their academic experience in teaching. Laura Hammond<sup>7</sup>, a cultural anthropologist lecturer, also emphasised the importance of the correct designation and use of this term. She has argued that the word ‘ethnographic’ has never satisfied anthropologists because of its ambiguity in its numerous applications. In addition, she has suggested that social science experts should use it only in an historical perspective and abandon it as a contemporary concept<sup>8</sup>. However, according to James Clifford modern ethnography appears in several forms traditional and innovative which as an academic practice, can not be separated from anthropology.

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony Shelton is Director of the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, Canada.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Laura Hammond is Assistant Professor of International Development and Anthropology, University of Clark, USA. She is an anthropologist with extensive experience in Ethiopia, Somaliland/Somalia, Eritrea, and Kenya. From her decade working in the Horn of Africa, Hammond has developed a great appreciation for community-based development. She is the author of *This Place Will Become Home* (Hammond 2004), a study of the challenges of reconstruction encountered by local communities in the Ethiopian post-conflict context.

<sup>8</sup> Personal communication, Laura Hammond, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2003.

‘Seen more generally, it is simply diverse ways of thinking and writing about culture from a standpoint of participant observation...A modern ‘ethnography’ of conjunctures, constantly moving between cultures, does not like its Western alter ego ‘anthropology’, aspire to survey the full range of human diversity or development. It is perpetually displaced, both regionally focused and broadly comparative, a form of dwelling and of travel in a world where the two experiences are less and less distinct.’ (Clifford 1988: 9).

However, from the perspective of ‘physical’ cultural material, it is difficult to refer to the concept of ‘modern ethnography’. If the academic practice of ethnography has gradually evolved and to a degree merged with the practice of anthropology, the ‘ethnographic’ label attributed to many African collections and artefacts has not really changed. In the author’s experience, this label of ‘ethnographic’ artefacts still retains an ‘emotional’ or disrespectful character for African heritage professionals who lived during the colonial period. For the young generation of museum professionals the label ‘ethnographic’ is an historical legacy of the colonial past but more generally they consider the concept as a system of classification created by ‘Westerners’ which is purely inappropriate and irrelevant to their socio-cultural context and to their heritage.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett<sup>9</sup> has described this view on ethnographic artefacts as follows:

‘Ethnographic artefacts are objects of ethnography. They are artefacts created by ethnographers. Such objects become ethnographic by virtue of being defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by ethnographers.’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 387).

To misunderstand the impact that the term ‘ethnography’ has on many clans and societies is not an insignificant mistake in Africa, for it embodied social and cultural predicaments about race issues. This label did not only convey a terminology of discrimination, it did not leave enough leeway for the inclusion of 21st century issues. In 2003, the Museum of

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<sup>9</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett is Professor at the Tisch School of Arts, Department of Performance Studies, New York University, USA. She is the author of *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (1998). Her engaging analysis shows how museums compete with tourism in the production of ‘cultural heritage’.

the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) felt the need to change the appellation of their permanent exhibitions from ‘ethnography’ to ‘anthropology’. This change was undertaken in parallel with the re-organisation and ‘re-contextualisation’ of the collections and galleries<sup>10</sup>. The ambition of the museum’s scientific committee was to develop within the visitor a respect and appreciation for Ethiopian cultural diversity, through a better understanding of ‘the other’<sup>11</sup>. The Committee rejected the term ‘ethnography’ as being too ‘exclusive’. They chose ‘anthropology’ as a more inclusive and factual term, covering a larger spectrum of contemporary concepts and representations<sup>12</sup>.

These modifications in the labelling of collections (whose nature remained the same) raised not only social and ethical issues but created problems in documentation practices for curators and conservators. In 1998, the International Committee for Documentation of ICOM (CIDOC) observed that the most important problem encountered by heritage professionals in ethnographic museums was the confusion as to what ethnography, ethnology, or anthropology museums were, and what was the status of each category of museum (Theologi-Gouti<sup>13</sup> 1998). Naturally, this confusion also influenced the documentation and classification systems of objects. It was within this context that John Picton<sup>14</sup> explained his professional experience in Nigerian museums.

‘I have assumed that the word “ethnography” refers to descriptive understanding of social practice, especially those aspects thereof that are deposited in material form. Unfortunately, this process was and continues to be vitiated, as far as African practice is concerned, by fundamentally misconceived categorical contrasts.’  
(2000: 110).

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<sup>10</sup> The Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum (IES) opened its new permanent exhibition, dedicated to the ‘anthropology’ collection on 13 June 2002 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication, Ahmed Zekaria Abubaker, IES Curator, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Personal communication, Ahmed Zekaria Abubaker, IES Curator, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Penelope Theologi-Gouti is an Architect-Ethnologist, Secretary of the International Committee of University Museums and Collections of ICOM (UMAC) and a member of the ICOM Hellenic National Committee. Her publications include texts in ‘*The International Core Data Standards for Ethnology/Ethnography*’ (ICOM Study Series, issue 3, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> John Picton is Emeritus Professor at the Department of Art and Archaeology, SOAS, University of London. He specialises in the History of Art; Anthropology; Archaeology; Museum Studies; Culture Studies and Material Culture Studies.

Lack of records or poor standards of documentation generated uncertainty and questions regarding museum practice. Artefacts which were de-contextualised raised conceptual and ethical issues about exhibition procedures. For instance, many contemporary displays of 'ethnographic' collections opt for a 'fine art' style. This type of representation exalts the aesthetic quality of the artefact to the detriment of its material culture and contextual values. Ultimately this approach to display may influence the monetary value of artefacts, which are still in the custody of local communities, and promote their introduction into the international network of African art. Indeed, the last twenty years have seen the arts of Black Africa triumphantly entering Western museum collections, a cultural heritage often referred to as primitive, rather than historically rich and significant to human history<sup>15</sup>.

In a post-independence context there has been a dramatic transformation in the value systems attributed to ethnographic artefacts, both from a Western and an African perspective. About seventy five years ago, Georges Henri Rivière, then Deputy Director of the Parisian 'Musée d'Ethnographie' (Museum of Ethnography)<sup>16</sup> ironically wrote about the opportunity to exhibit in a museum like the Louvre 'all the beautiful works of primitive art' (Bassani<sup>17</sup> 1991: 12). In 2003, African Art entered the Louvre<sup>18</sup>.

This recent elevation of the status of African material culture places heritage professionals in a challenging position. Questions arise from socio-economic and cultural factors and are reflected in the conservation of a heritage at risk. In that context, the

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<sup>15</sup> In 1987, African artefacts entered the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The National Museum of African Art became part of the Smithsonian Institution and opened its premises in Washington D.C. in 1987. In the United Kingdom, the British Museum opened the Sainsbury Galleries, dedicated to African art, in March 2001. In 2002, the Royal Museum of Central Africa, in Belgium, embarked on a re-structuring of its galleries and a re-assessment of its museological approach in opposition to its historical and 'colonial' museum policy (founded in 1898, the 'Congo Museum' became the 'Royal Museum of Central Africa' in 1960).

<sup>16</sup> In 1937 the 'Musée d'Ethnographie' (Museum of Ethnography) changed its name in the 'Musée de l'Homme' (Mankind Museum). In 2006, the Museum's name changed again in 'Musée du quai Branly-Arts et Civilisations d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Océanie et des Amériques' (Museum of Quai Branly-Arts and Civilisations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and Americas).

<sup>17</sup> Enzo Bassani is a scholar of African art for more than thirty years (Università Internazionale dell'Arte, Firenze, Italy). He is the author of *Arts of Africa: 7000 Years of African Art* (Bassani 2005).

<sup>18</sup> The collection of African artefacts, on view at the Louvre since April 2000, belongs to the Musée du quai Branly, Paris.

distinctive nature of preventive conservation has also to adapt and respond to issues pertaining to documentation, access/ownership and management practices.

### **Preventive Conservation Context**

According to Catherine Antomarchi, the concept of ‘preventive conservation’ really did not exist in sub-Saharan African museums before the 1990s, while today it is been widely disseminated within most museums in the region (Dardes and Levin 2000: 11). Indeed, the introduction of preventive conservation in African museums is the result of a ten year collaboration between ICCROM and African heritage professionals (PREMA 1990-2000). Since the 1990s an increasing number of African curators and directors are conscious of the relevance and diverse benefits that the practice of preventive conservation offers to their institutions, collections and personnel (Luhila 1999: 48). The ‘teamwork’ philosophy inherent in the practice of preventive conservation has been very successful with museums’ personnel. Indeed this approach integrates often ignored museum personnel, such as cleaners, guides, security guards (and conservators) in the conservation of museum collections, thus raising their profile within the institutions. The practice of preventive conservation has also placed them in positions of responsibilities from which they are encouraged to develop and promote their professional discipline in dynamic and collaborative ways with other museum colleagues.

However, the number of operating African museum professionals is insufficient in relation to the conservation needs of museum collections and the professional position of conservators within the hierarchical system of museums:

‘Many conservators are not in senior positions in their organisations and cannot simply insist on their instructions being followed. Instead they must persuade others to comply with their requests.’ (Henderson<sup>19</sup> 2006: 63).

Moreover, principles and standards for conservation have not yet been fully debated by museum professionals in most African countries. This situation requires people, often

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<sup>19</sup> Jane Henderson teaches ‘Conservation and Collection Care’ at the Cardiff University and works as a consultant in collection care.

poorly paid, with poor social status who lack vital resources, to take on considerable responsibilities.

The conservation philosophy of African heritage professionals and local communities often differs from Western ones. The little interest that Africans demonstrate for their heritage in the 'conventional' or 'Western' way partly relates to the difference in the values attributed by Westerners and Africans to the very nature of this discipline. It is also due to the adoption by African museum professionals of Western cultural policies without criticising the very nature of its principles. The president of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré, archaeologist and former President of ICOM, demonstrated how unproductive the transplantation of a Western cultural model into the African context is. He explained that in Africa, traditional cultural material often relates to traditional ceremonies and symbolises a person, a power or an authority (Konaré 1992b: 377). The object is not conserved for its tangible properties but for the ceremony or the person representing the authority. The lifetime of the object is known and limited. In contrast when an object is conserved using a 'Western' approach, it is primarily its physical, tangible nature that is conserved. Similarly the concept of a museum as a place for storing, classifying, documenting, conserving and presenting objects does not conform to traditional African philosophical and cultural belief-systems. Consequently, local communities often perceive museums inherited from the colonial legacy as a conservation 'sanctuary'.

'Most African traditions aim to recreate permanently the vital flow even through its relation with objects and have consequently excluded from its collective memories the Western tendency that aims at conserving the life through the compulsive conservation of objects.' (Passano 1991: 115).

Preventive conservation offers a series of characteristics that are particularly compatible with the 'traditional' practices of local communities, while adapting to the requirements of African museums. However, African museums encounter many challenges in the development of preventive conservation. The lack of funding must be acknowledged as a primary concern. The precarious financial situation of many museums impedes conservation projects. If African museums have ambitious ideas and programmes, they

need to compete with other institutions for resources. At present, the combination of the terms 'Africa' and 'conservation' attracts very few donor agencies or stakeholders. On the other hand, much can be achieved with local resources and an open-minded attitude and adequate knowledge. There is much people can do to improve the conditions of a specific museum at no, or very little cost. For the majority of African museums, this search for alternative resources is unavoidable and already ordinary practice.

In addition, few museums operate with international and standardised systems of documentation<sup>20</sup>. In many cases, artefact records do not exist or are difficult to locate because they have been filed away and even forgotten in museum archives. The consequences of this lack of documentation could be observed in the significant illicit trafficking of cultural heritage in the last fifty years. The retrieval of stolen objects in the international market is insignificant if institutions cannot prove ownership. Thus the implementation of an operational and standardised system of documentation is perhaps the most essential tool to develop in relation with conservation practice, ensuring the dissemination of data and the improvement of conditions for access. Once again, this process requires financial support and professional expertise.

In the context of conservation projects between local communities and museums the issue of documentation has not yet been studied by museums, or by international organisations and national authorities. The lack of existing methodologies and legal instruments to document heritage in the custody of local communities is a considerable problem, both for the heritage professionals and the national authorities.

Finally, the isolation in which African museums are placed means that many existing conservation resources are unavailable and calls for the promotion of an enlarged

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<sup>20</sup> Two main systems of documentation have been proposed since 1995 to African museums. The first one is the result of collaboration between AFRICOM and CIDOC and is entitled 'The Handbook of Standards: Documenting African Collections' (Chedia, Kumetsu and Chieze 1995). The second is the 'Object ID System' developed by the Getty Information Institute and implemented by the Royal Tropical Institute of Netherlands (Thornes 1997). The will and resources to implement standards of professional practices as a basis for all actions in the fields of museology and the documentation of conservation was still insufficient in 2006.

network of cultural heritage related professionals (Tshiluila 2000: 8). African conservators have to refer to their own cultural and historical resources, libraries, photographic documents and oral traditions. This requires expertise, ingenuity, technology and a conservation-care philosophy to satisfy the political authorities, museum professionals and local communities (Stolow<sup>21</sup> 1977: 26).

### **Conservation Education: Who is the Learner and Who is the Teacher?**

Education is crucial for the development of preventive conservation practices in museums. But who is the ‘learner’? The learner may be a university graduate, or have received little education. However in general, the learner in an African museum is the person who entered the institution without elementary training about what a museum is or what its mandate is (Arinze 2000: 4). Whatever type of education museum personnel received; there was a severe shortage of heritage professionals at all hierarchical and specialised levels. Thus, education remains a priority in all directions and approaches that museum development takes. When considering the concept of ‘education’ itself, it is interesting to note that in international literature relating to conservation development there is often reference to the term ‘training’. Little, Antomarchi, De Guichen and Godonou highlight that when the developed world reaches out to help the developing world; training is increasingly synonymous with assistance (1996: 116). The words ‘training’ and ‘assistance’ are part of the vocabulary used in Western development programmes and often relate to other terms such as ‘recipients’ or ‘beneficiaries’. In the author’s experience, many African heritage professionals (recipients or beneficiaries) are sensitive about this vocabulary, which has been over employed in documents defining Western programmes, and which carry paternalistic connotations. The view of Ferguson and Pye on the use of the terms ‘training’ or ‘education’ is particularly relevant to international and conservation contexts. The authors of ‘Our Students and Ourselves’

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<sup>21</sup> Nathan Stolow is the author of books on conservation in the museum environment (see *Conservation Standards for Works of Art in Transit and on Exhibition*, 1979; *Procedures and Conservation Standards for Museum Collections in Transit and on Exhibition*, 1981; *Conservation and Exhibitions: Packing, Transport, Storage, and Environmental Considerations*, 1987).



(2004) explained that conservators need to be educated and trained, education and training informing each other in a reciprocal relationship:

‘For us the conservator operates on three related levels: she is well trained in specific, pre-established skills; she is capable of innovation in the development of practice where skills need to be adapted or modified (what used to be called ‘transfer of training’); and finally, she is able to make decisions based upon a broader understanding of issues or problems.’ (Ferguson and Pye 2004: 3).

In East Africa, unlike professionals in other classical studies, such as medicine or law, cultural heritage professionals who take up teaching have very few pedagogical resources. Though a substantive body of literature regarding conservation has developed in the West, they were not easily accessed by African museums. Likewise, a considerable body of knowledge has yet to evolve for analysing African values and traditional expertise in conservation. This problem is acute and often exacerbated by a lack of teaching or research structures (Antomarchi and Verger 2002: 119). To pursue conservation education/training, three main options can be followed: the University Diploma Course<sup>22</sup> offered by CHDA, participation in a single course with CHDA or within museums and undertaking education in the West. When considering the first option, the PREMA programme must be mentioned. By 2000, the programme offered preventive conservation education to museum professionals and established a network of over four hundred individuals who progressively took on the responsibility of conservation and training activities in Africa (PMDA 2003: 19). In addition, ICCROM and CHDA have recently developed educational tools culturally adapted to the African heritage context. They have been developed for this new generation of African museum professionals who have acquired substantial experience as educators through the PREMA programme (see Ferguson and Pye 2004).

The second option which involves conservation training in a museum or undertaking a single course at CHDA is attractive as it has the advantage of studying in Africa and

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<sup>22</sup> The CHDA Postgraduate Diploma Course in the Care and Management of Heritage and Museum Collections is offered in conjunction with the University of Nairobi, ICCROM and the Institute of Archaeology-University College London. The first course began in October 2002.

sharing experience with colleagues who have encountered similar problems. Many African museum professionals apply for places on these short courses, but the number of places available is insufficient for the number of candidates. Moreover, many museums lack the financial means to fund a place for even one member of staff. While these short courses are a good compromise for many individuals they have their limitations. For instance, when the education product is conceived and implemented as a short-term experience, it might have some immediate positive impact. Sometimes it is only by chance that it will have institutional or sustainable impact in the museum working context<sup>23</sup>. Although many African national museums have been involved or have sent a participant to PREMA, few museums organise in-house courses that maintain and update expertise within their institution.

The last alternative, undertaking an academic education in the West, is not contemplated as an option by the majority of museum professionals. This choice presents a series of social, financial and sometimes political issues. Indeed, such education requires an important financial investment and administrative guarantees. It also requires long separation from their family and culture. Besides, there is often a distortion between the needs met by African museum professionals, the means used to educate them and the transfer of knowledge and expertise acquired on their return to their home institution.

Overall, one of the fundamental challenges for the education of African conservators is the ability to train or educate a professional who will retain an interdisciplinary approach. African museum objective is based on the idea of ‘producing’ a good manager, a scholar, a practical technician, and a curator all combined in one person. How this can be achieved is one of the major issues which any educational programme aimed at African museums should address (Arinze 2000: 1). As with Western conservation, there is a need for practitioners, but there is also a desperate need for tomorrow’s conservation leaders (Cassar, Dardes and Matero 2003: 13).

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<sup>23</sup> Personal communication, Gaël de Guichen, ICCROM, Rome, 10.04.2004.

## 2. Theory

Though it is common to see Africa's conservation practices as largely contemporary, few heritage professionals would doubt that there is an historic legacy. Looking at the period between colonisation and the present, three major factors have influenced the representation and conservation of cultural heritage in African museums. During the colonial period, the politics and approaches followed by Western authorities was a 'foreign' system which was detrimental to the local values, expertise and practices. Religion with its political influence and social rules has also played a crucial role in the preservation and/or destruction of cultural heritage. Civil wars, economic decline and environmental degradation following the independence of many countries have had severe consequences for the management of cultural heritage. This section briefly examines these factors through the views of authors who have questioned the future of African museology and conservation practice.

Among a selection of articles published in the UNESCO periodical 'Museum', Susan Pearce presented a summary of stories about the founding of museums that helped to clarify museum management practices and attitudes within a sequential perspective (Pearce 1999). The article, entitled 'A New Way of Looking at Old Things', approached the history of museums in the West in the framework of 'social identity'. The article does not refer directly to African museums. However, the Western social and ideological analysis by the author is relevant to an African museum context. The article offers an opportunity to reflect upon a 'European' modernist approach to museology and its impact on African museum institutions. Pearce describes 'a modernist approach' as being concerned with the development of broad explanatory narratives, which were believed to have universal significance and relevance (Pearce 1999: 12). This approach allowed for discussion on scientific knowledge and concepts crucial to an understanding of how traditions affecting present practice in museum tradition were established. As the author underlines, people can only understand what is happening to them if they understand where they are coming from (Pearce 1994: 4). This observation is pertinent to museological and conservation concepts.

Museums are not new creations in Africa, the first in tropical Africa were established in Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe more than ninety years ago (Posnansky<sup>24</sup> 1993: 144). Most African national museums were created during the colonial period when their roles and the types of collections they displayed reflected changing colonial policies. A common characteristic was that museums were not established to serve the needs and interests of Africans. Rather they stood out as institutions dedicated to the interests of the colonial powers (Arinze 1998: 31).

‘Africa has not only been confronted with challenges of reconciling inherited institutions in the form of museums and their collections, but also in reconciling the needs and aspirations within the institutions inherited from the colonial past. In dealing with these challenges, the various countries on the continent have had to grapple with the Western notion of a museum as a place for collection, preservation, education and exhibition, often placing more values on the collections they possess rather than the communities they are supposed to serve.’ (Abungu and Abungu 2006: 4).

The laws inherited from the colonial authorities also slowed down the process of appropriation and transformation of colonial museums into national museums:

‘Museums law in Africa is the result of a process of consolidating texts derived from the colonial period and new legislation which struggles to find an institutional structure in direct contact with the cultural, social and economic realities in Africa.’ (Négri 2006: 41).

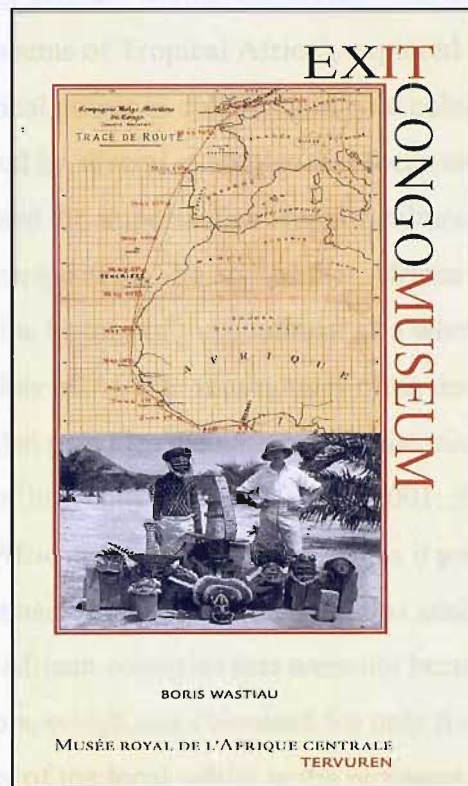
Boris Wastiau<sup>25</sup> edited a fascinating essay on the roles and mission of colonial museums under the title ‘Exit Congo Museum’ (2000) (Figure 4). He focused on the Royal Museum of Central Africa’s collecting practices and the ‘social life’ of African artefacts collected during the colonial period. He also provided an historical insight into the

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<sup>24</sup> Merrick Posnansky is Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Los Angeles, USA (International Institute, African Studies Center, Department of Anthropology and History). He taught and conducted research in Africa for twenty years.

<sup>25</sup> Boris Wastiau is Curator at the Royal Museum of Central Africa, Brussels, Belgium. He is a cultural anthropologist specialising in the anthropology of colonial museology and the history of ethnographic collections.

dissimilar practices of collecting, conserving and valuing African ethnographic artefacts. Overall, the author's analysis is thought provoking and supported by historical references and photographs which disclosed colonial practices in a straightforward manner that is quite unusual in the sensitive field of colonial and cultural studies.



**Figure 4:** Front cover of 'Exit Congo Museum' by B. Wastiau (2000).

Within this historical and political context, another social and ideological component has influenced the development of museums in Africa: religion. Emmanuel Arinze (1998) in an article entitled 'African Museums: the Challenge of Change', stated that Christianity and Islam confront African cultures head on, challenging traditional values, rites and belief systems. On conversion communities discarded objects associated with traditional religions. Missionaries and clergymen either destroyed or collected objects which in most cases were deposited in museums with scant information about their provenance or the context in which they were used (Arinze 1998: 31). In contrast, the Muslim and Christian Orthodox authorities in Ethiopia have managed the preservation of their religious

heritage through social and administrative activities including documentation and local conservation practices.

Following independence the leaders of the new African States used museums to promote African unity, or as in most cases, national unity to serve their own geopolitical plans.

Anne Gaugue<sup>26</sup> (2001) in her article, 'Myths, Censorship and the Representation of pre-Colonial History in the Museums of Tropical Africa', explored how museums have been used as instruments of political power in colonial and post-colonial African States.

Her depiction is substantiated by several examples that focus on archaeological collections. She also discussed the important concept of cultural heritage representation in a historical and cultural perspective. She argued that African museums represent both their national histories and the history of the continent as a whole in a distorted manner (Gaugue 2001: 27). The policy of African museums is often designed to emphasise the value of a prestigious past that provides the nation with historical depth, coupled with the myth of the non-existence of internal violence (Gaugue 2001: 30). This confrontational view, rarely developed by African academics, has merit as it puts into perspective colonial and post-colonial museum policies. However, this analysis is not universally applicable, particularly for African countries that were not been colonised over a long period. For instance, Ethiopia, which was colonised for only five years, has museums that promote the cultural identity of the local public in the representation of their communities' past heritage<sup>27</sup>.

As early as 1965, Robert Gessain, then Director of the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France, presented a series of observations on, and recommendations for, museums in Africa entitled 'The Roles of Museums in Contemporary Africa' (Gessain 1965). This article is a unique reference as it is the first published document that presents a 'portrait' of African museums which refers to conservation issues. It can be observed that the author's recommendations were quite innovative for the time as they integrated scientific

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<sup>26</sup> Anne Gaugue is a Lecturer at the University of Clermont-Ferrand II, France. Her research interests concentrate on how museums in African have been used as instruments of political power in colonial and post colonial times.

<sup>27</sup> The Addis Ababa National Museum and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies include art and ethnographic galleries but also present the history of the wars and conflicts of pre-colonial Kingdoms.

principles and local communities' conservation practices and underlined the importance of preserving traditional practices and oral tradition as a historical resource of inestimable value (Gessain 1965: 119). More recently, Alpha Oumar Konaré regretted that African professionals did not engage in reflections more deliberately distanced from the Western museum model (Konaré 1992a: 6). Konaré's vision was pivotal in the design of African museum development as it fostered the creation of concrete measures and programmes adapted to an African context. Notably, the introduction of challenging concepts to the field of heritage management such 'democratisation', 'decentralisation' and 'integration', promoted the emergence of new economic models for African museums in keeping with the resources of its population (Konaré 1992c: 4). Ultimately Konaré's vision fostered the development of exchanges between heritage professionals with a view to creating greater autonomy and responsibility for African professionals and creating an international organisation that represented museums in Africa. The views of the author reflect the fascinating transformation of the roles and values of African museums since 1965.

Emmanuel Arinze is another African heritage professional who has called into question the very 'raison d'être' of the museum. Arinze has a long-term experience in heritage management. His commitment and reflective approach to the development of African museums focused on the analysis of three main themes: the vision of the African museum in the post-independence context and museum training programmes. His vision for the future of African museums is challenging, particularly in the formulation of their contemporary and future roles in the preservation, security, leadership and training within a general development context. Arinze attributed the shortage of museum experts to political interference in museum affairs and the absence of defined museum policies (Arinze 1998: 35). One of the reasons that had a considerable impact on this situation was that during the colonial period Africans were not encouraged to make a career in museums.

These analyses of the major factors which influenced the representation and conservation of cultural heritage in African museums highlight the diversity of historical, ethical and

practical issues that African heritage professionals encountered during the management and conservation of cultural heritage. Yet, African museums can only develop through partnership. Other than partnerships between museums, collaboration with international organisations also presents many assets. This network collaboration implies in turn the acceptance of a ‘modus operandi’ designed from a relatively Western pattern. Thus, new challenges arose in the management of cultural heritage and the integration of international conservation standards.

### 3. Organisational Network

Isabelle Vinson<sup>28</sup>, in her article, ‘Heritage and Museology: a New Convergence’ (Vinson 2001: 61) provides a relevant introduction to the post-colonial context of development in African cultural institutions. The author noted that since the Second World War (1939-1945), the term heritage has widened considerably through exchanges initiated and carried out by international organisations. This historical account and clear analysis explains the scope and diversity of the challenges met by institutions in charge of heritage management. In Africa, the network of museum institutions, heritage professionals and international organisations grew along a management approach which aimed to develop heritage management practices adapted to the representation and conservation of cultural heritage. From an historical standpoint this network made of institutions and individuals has developed through a Western approach in parallel to many other sectors of development in Africa. This section examines this phenomenon of ‘development’ and the effects it has had on the organisation of conservation partnerships.

‘The term development carries different meanings for different peoples, but in the field of international development it is broadly defined as a means of improving the material and social conditions of a society through planned social change.’ (Kreps 2003: 116).

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<sup>28</sup> Isabelle Vinson is Editor-in-Chief of *Museum International*, UNESCO Division of Cultural Heritage.



Since the end of the Second World War, Western social scientists have begun to look at the processes of change and development. The international development community has operated primarily on the premise of an ‘input-output’ development model. This model was considered to offer fast, efficient transfer of goods and structural entities: a key element in the economic and social development of African countries. The failure of some of these programmes and institutions to achieve sustainability and effectiveness finally brought into serious question the efficacy of this approach (Donnelly-Roark<sup>29</sup> 1998: 1). As the concept of sustainability began to emphasise the importance of participant ownership, donor organisations often assumed that participation processes were to be used with ‘local’ groups of people. However, these practices of participation were often imbued with the dominant ‘Western-type’ cultural system and within its own time-frames. This essentially left the assumptions surrounding the necessity for externally induced change untouched and ‘un-reflected’ upon (Donnelly-Roark 1998: 2). However, the critical difference in defining how to go about change was dependant upon whether one assumed that, economic and social development could be internally initiated, externally induced or whether change would arise from a combination of both types of development.

Many theories have surfaced regarding the nature of cultural change and the impact of these changes on human beings, their environment, and their social values. Over the last twenty years, one of the challenges often put to those who worked in the management of cultural heritage was; why and how to retreat from classical ‘universals’ into an era of greater diversity and local contextual specificity (Bryant<sup>30</sup> 1994: 451)? The answer is two-fold. Management is universally about organisation, analysis, motivation and the implementation of decisions. However, not all aspects of these processes are the same in different cultural contexts. Yet, museum and cultural conservation do not develop in isolation from the dominant cultures within which they are embedded (Bryant 1994: 454). Assessing and studying how to integrate management in different cultural contexts is the subject of fundamental academic research and part of the operational work in the

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<sup>30</sup> Coralie Bryant is Professor and Director of the Economic and Political Development Program at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York, USA.

corporate sector. It is not the purpose of the present research to study this issue. However, it is essential to consider the culture(s) of management an important aspect of the development of conservation partnerships in East Africa.

### **A Culture-based Approach**

From an institutional perspective, it can be observed that the development of museums has been based on four key assumptions. The first assumption is that public administrations were created during the colonial period and that all that was consequently needed was to manage them well. The second is that Western techniques of management were considered to be the only approach for modernisation and progress. Thirdly, that there was a linear concept of development, which assumed that every society must go through the same stages before it can achieve development. The fourth theory is that museums and their public had the same basic values and goals that characterise the 'developed' countries (Dia<sup>31</sup> 1994: 166). The logical conclusions of this system was that Africa's development was to be stimulated through the transfer of culture, institutions, methods, and techniques from the industrialised Western countries. Yet, the claim 'we are better because we are modern' can displace traditional methods of organisation. For instance, the concept of reciprocity that is found within many African cultures and modes of organisation was unexploited in cultural development. However, it is central to building teamwork and partnerships, two widely held precepts in modern conservation management.

In addition, there is a tendency to think that heritage management in general began with European colonisation. International donor agencies are inclined to assume that local communities are not able to manage and preserve their own heritage. However, the fact that much African heritage was found in good condition by Europeans means that this heritage survived because of some form of prior management<sup>32</sup> (Ndoro 2001: 20). Many objects, buildings and sites of religious and cultural significance benefited from

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<sup>31</sup> Mamadou Dia is the Chief of the Capacity Building and Implementation Division of the World Bank (since 1990). He was instrumental in the World Bank's management research that aimed to reconcile indigenous and transplanted institutions.

<sup>32</sup> Ethiopia provides a good example of long-term preservation management. A large part of the country's heritage (tangible and intangible) was and is still, conserved by local and religious communities.

community protection because they were considered to be sacred. Another way of preserving heritage was based on a complementary tendency that aimed to provide access to, and use of, objects for traditional ceremonies. Movable and immovable heritage was looked at regularly in order to preserve it for ceremonies. Thus, artefacts and buildings were at the same time sacred, accessible and used.

Furthermore, the strong link between culture and nature is often very difficult to separate in Africa. In fact the quest for equilibrium with other human beings and with nature is a widespread philosophical principle in Africa (Dia 1994: 176). Typically, higher value is placed upon social and religious activities than on individual achievements. As a consequence, access to objects and sites are crucial in a heritage management perspective. However, African religious practices have often been banned of development projects, leading to defensive relationships between heritage managers and local communities. In this respect, African Governments and museum authorities have a responsibility to promote management practices that integrate local communities who have assumed the role of custodians of their heritage. A culture-based approach to development recognises the cultural identity and values system of the communities. Healy refers to this approach as ‘ethno-development’ (1994: 14). This approach is generally pursued by organisations, which are independent of government driven agencies and integrated within their institutional policies.

‘Non governmental organisations and research institutions have developed ways to restructure market relations, refocus educational programmes, and increase indigenous self management capacities and opportunities. They also draw on cultural recovery and identity revalidation for socio economic development.’  
(Healy quoted in Kreps 2003: 117).

However, two of the biggest impediments to cultural and conservation development in Africa are the poor performance of the public sector and the enduring weaknesses in local institutions. Most countries and Governments have, for many sound and decent reasons, not integrated heritage preservation into their priorities. In other words, many African

Governments do not consider the preservation of their cultural heritage as an element of the overall process of their development. Alexandre Marc underlined this:

‘In Africa weak institutional capacities, lack of appropriate resources, and isolation of many culturally essential sites are compounded by a general lack of awareness of the value of cultural heritage conservation.’ (Marc<sup>33</sup> 1992: 259).

The relationships between African museums and international partners call for a better integration of current African political and social issues within conservation projects. For instance, the introduction of preventive conservation in Africa requires political stability, but not necessarily along the lines of a strictly Western vision. Organising national and international resources to implement preventive conservation strategies collides with many overriding priorities, security, basic commodities and public health. Moreover, one of the main characteristics of African conservation projects is their dependency on foreign financial assistance. Yet the challenge seems to be the difficulty of combining the introduction of a conservation approach mainly designed in the West while at the same time promoting the ownership of the African beneficiary. Often the countries with the most pressing preventive conservation needs are those where political instability and armed conflict disrupt everyday life, increasing the potential for unethical art trading and which jeopardise co-operative programmes with international partners.

It can be observed that although Africa presents a bleak picture in terms of scientific knowledge and political infrastructure, the expected problems in conservation projects, might be more of a cultural and technical nature. For instance, in 1997 the Japanese Embassy in Nairobi presented the National Museums of Kenya with expensive and sophisticated conservation equipment for analytical analysis (X-ray diffraction). No one at the Museum knew how to use this piece of equipment which was sent directly from Japan with no explanation, with the exception of a Japanese manual. At the same time, the Museum conservation laboratory was lacking basic facilities such as work tables or

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<sup>33</sup> Alexandre Marc joined the World Bank in 1988 where he worked on local and social development in Africa, the Middle East and Europe and Central Asia. His publications focus on institutions supporting community development and participation and on the non-economic dimension of poverty. The social development team, which he has managed since 1999, focuses on the analysis of civil society and local level institutions, culture, social inclusion and minority issues.

running water. In 2005, the laboratory still needed basic resources. It was the lack of dialogue and proper understanding between ‘donor’ and ‘beneficiary’ that resulted in this situation. This is not, however, an isolated example. Unless museums and funders are involved in a process of multifaceted collaboration, they will not fully participate in a sustainable process of conservation development.

## **Networks**

In East Africa, responsibility for cultural heritage rests with a variety of institutional partners. Among the national governmental agencies, the institution in charge of the protection of cultural heritage is often the weakest and may be responsible for culture, education, sports, tourism and youth. Co-ordination with other agencies is often poor to nonexistent. Typically, the ministry in charge of cultural heritage is not involved in discussions or decisions on development or environmental planning. Moreover, the capital cities, region, or dominant ethnic group tends to monopolise the activities of the agency responsible for cultural heritage protection with the consequence that the cultural patrimony of other regions or minority groups is neglected.

AFRICOM and CHDA are the two regional Non Governmental Organisations (NGO’s) that support cultural preservation in East Africa. AFRICOM assists museums with legal, financial and advocacy matters. CHDA focuses on education, management and practical matters. Both institutions extend their support to museums through close co-operation with international organisations, foundations and research institutes. Universities and research institutes also play an important role in a number of countries through their scientific participation in conservation projects<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, they participate in the dissemination of knowledge and the research for educational material through museum and conservation studies<sup>35</sup>. Some universities have a research department that undertakes research projects across national boundaries and which publish monographs, regional syntheses and journals.

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<sup>34</sup> The University of Addis Ababa (UOA) collaborated with the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) for the implementation of the Anthropology exhibitions of the IES Museum. Both Institutions also collaborate through the participation of University students in archaeological conservation projects.

<sup>35</sup> The University of Nairobi (UON) collaborated with CHDA and the University College London (UCL) in the creation of a Diploma Course in the Care and Management of Heritage and Museum Collections.

International organisations played a key role in the preservation of cultural heritage. UNESCO, ICOM and ICCROM initiated and supported heritage management through educational programmes and practical projects aimed at museum professionals. Likewise, the Ford Foundation and the Getty Grant Programme actively contributed to conservation and research projects in museums and heritage organisations. Yet, a clear analysis of the individual institutions and appropriate restructuring is required if African cultural heritage conservation is to be effective (Taboroff 1994: 324).

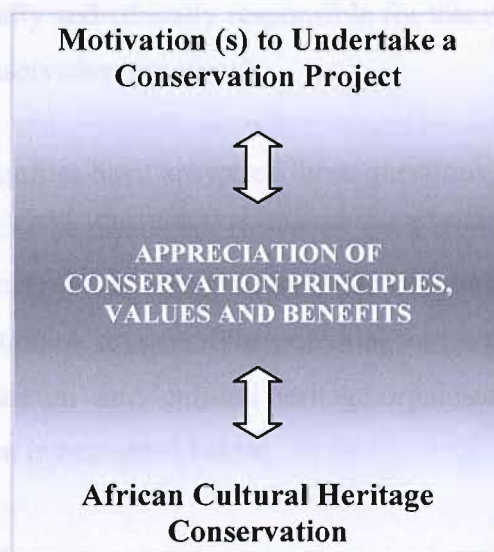
#### **4. Cultural Heritage Communities**

A major problem with most efforts to preserve cultural heritage seemed to emanate from a failure to understand its cultural significance or to appreciate the conservation values of the different communities involved in this process. If cultural heritage organisations recognised the necessity to take into account the cultural dimension within the overall development framework, it was often more theoretical than practical. For conservation projects, the problem often arose from the desire by organisations to instigate projects as they wanted to dictate where they took place and how they developed. Then, divergences in the appreciation of conservation principles and values between heritage professionals and local community materialised. These divergences were sometimes ignored or misunderstood because they required an important investment of time and research of all cultural, social and political backgrounds. However, the promotion of original actions and innovations in conservation management and practices are essential to satisfy all partners involved. Individuals and members of social groups may hold similar or different values which are the result of their particular experiences. There are in addition many ‘sub-cultures’, and communities of which they are part. For instance, cultural heritage professionals are part of a ‘museum community’, a ‘lifestyle culture’, an ‘education culture’, and so on. Therefore, rather than considering conceptual and practical issues in a sequential perspective, this section analyses the different partners involved in this process as distinct ‘cultural heritage communities’ of peoples:

- The Museum Community (museum professionals)
- The Local Community (local residents)
- The Heritage Community (cultural heritage organisations)

This approach neither concentrates on Western characteristics, nor on African ones.

It examines the cultural and social relationships between the three communities in the conservation of cultural heritage. The design of conservation strategies can be managed by one, two or more communities through a process of consultation. This course of action depends on the motivations for undertaking conservation and for each participant to appreciate its benefits (Figure 5). Thus, understanding the motivations for undertaking conservation is fundamental as it represents the foundation of the project and the spirit to develop it. Each community involved in conservation partnership considers, favours or discards concepts associated with the development of conservation in legal, managerial, conceptual and practical aspects.



**Figure 5:** Key concepts associated with the development of conservation in African museums.

This process raises crucial questions for the different communities such as:

- Do we want to conserve cultural heritage?
- Why do we want to conserve cultural heritage?
- How do we want to conserve cultural heritage?

Within this process of evaluation, it is essential to appreciate that Africa is composed of many different countries, cultures and traditions in just as many various cultural, social and political contexts. There is no real rule for partners other than that they are capable of flexibility while maintaining recognised conservation standards when implementing projects. This raises questions about coming to terms with the different values communities attribute to cultural heritage:

- Why do we value this object, building and site?
- In which context is 'it' valued?
- For 'whom' do we want to preserve 'it'?
- Do we want to keep access to 'it'?

Once people value a tangible or intangible element of their heritage, they develop an interest in respecting its 'existence'. In other words the rationale behind the will of the communities ultimately leads to a series of enquiries that influence a course of action:

- Which conservation approach do we use?
- Who is legally, financially and ethically responsible for this conservation process?
- Who is involved in conservation practices?

Once the different communities have answered these questions, then the objective and modalities of the project can be discussed. However, each community presents a set of social and structural characteristics, engaging their participation and responsibilities in diverse tasks of conservation. A review of the potential for participation by the different communities, 'local', 'museum' and 'cultural heritage organisation', in the development of preventive conservation is examined below.

### **The 'Local' Community**

Each community and individual makes his or her management decisions within the context of a local knowledge system<sup>36</sup>. Conservation knowledge is embedded in this local knowledge, which itself is linked in some ways to other parts of the global knowledge system. In order to begin undertake partnerships it is important that each participant

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<sup>36</sup> Local knowledge arising from tradition and embedded in culture is often referred to as 'indigenous knowledge' by international agencies.



understands the nature of his/her partners' knowledge and the dynamics associated with these knowledge systems. However, if no single knowledge system can legitimately claim to be the right one, the approaches and values of formalised scientific knowledge may contradict those of local knowledge systems. For institutional partners, community knowledge is a difficult resource to utilise to its full potential. Yet, it is the basis for natural resource management involving local communities. Equally, local community knowledge and its relationship with the natural environment is often an important element of the cultural identity of local residents. Traditional conservation practices, in common with traditional medical and agricultural practices in Africa, are generally subject to rules and rituals that assume a relationship between nature, humankind, and the 'spiritual' world (Ngugi 1999: 16). However, the introduction of 'spiritual' community values to scientific conventions created a doubt among many professionals regarding the efficiency of local traditional expertise. In parallel, communities' traditional practices have not always been effective in conserving cultural heritage, and in preventing trafficking. Nor have they systematically mitigated against threats to cultural heritage from conflicts and social instability.

'Western' conservation, in contrast to community 'recipes', seems to present carefully calibrated and annotated standards without any 'metaphysical' features. Its scientific nature is therefore acceptable to the vast majority of cultural heritage professionals and organisations. For professionals and academics to understand community ethics on preservation, they must recognise and be willing to work with atypical models. Likewise, if communities believe that the conservation of their cultural heritage can serve its collective identity and creativity, then they should also advocate for this. It is only possible to preserve tangible and intangible heritage and perpetuate traditions when people are convinced that such a traditional approach is a valid alternative to 'modern' methods. Besides, communities living in regions of conflict, famine or disease, do not always have this choice, due to the imperative of survival. In addition, challenging political, social, and economical conditions restrict the potential for a community to participate in traditional conservation practices.

Nonetheless, it is important to identify and accommodate local community values and knowledge as a component of intangible heritage. When appropriate, national organisations could integrate these values when formulating conservation policies and programmes. Such a considerate approach when associated with academic and scientific expertise could, in the long term, prove to be the most effective means of ensuring the survival of heritage in the museum and in the communities where they still exist (Nicklin 1983: 127). However, success in community heritage management will largely rely on the conformity of the conservation objectives with the needs and wishes of the community and its heritage.

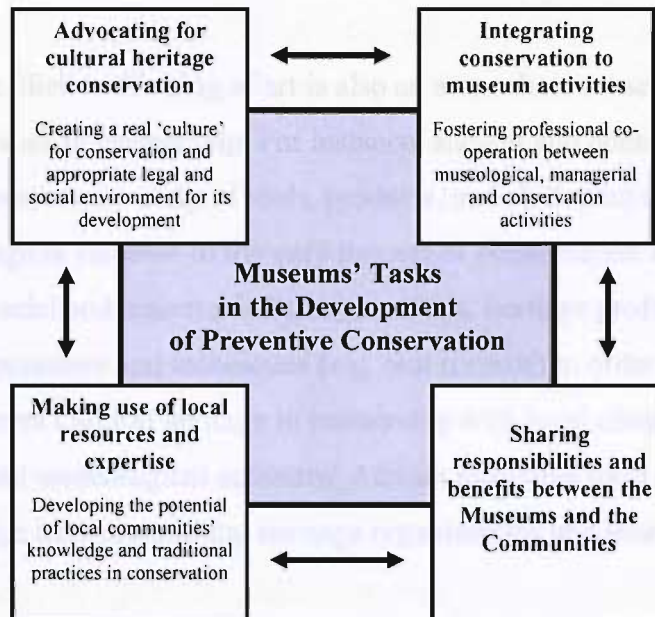
### **The ‘Museum’ Community**

In Africa, the main deficit in the responsibilities of museums is the absence of an institutional vision and mission statement. Without a determined and explicit vision, museum projects lack cultural substance. This problem calls first for legal and institutional resolutions with the support of AFRICOM. However, it was observed at the 2003 AFRICOM First General Assembly that most museum professionals wish to see their institution as an interpretive medium and a refuge for the local communities. The potential support of local communities in this matter should not be underestimated. Local communities could share their heritage and associated knowledge with museum professionals, while museums could integrate communities into its conservation projects. Thus, with the support of a professional team, properly equipped and well-informed authorities, the museums would sensitise the community to its heritage so that the integration process would be more effective (Figure 6). The conservation of cultural heritage is also important for museums, on an economic level. For instance, the cultural and tourist sectors are closely related, and in constant development<sup>37</sup>. Some countries take advantage of their natural heritage and folklore to promote tourism, and increasingly introduce tourists to conservation issues (Galla 2002; Ababio 2006; Corsane 2006 and 2007). Thus, access to and conservation of intangible cultural heritage may be an additional asset to social, cultural and economical values for local communities and museums. If many individuals are theoretically aware of this new phenomenon and the

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<sup>37</sup> Personal communication, Emmanuel Arinze, Nairobi, Kenya, 1 October 2003.

potential it has for the development of conservation, African authorities have not yet fully realised this potential.



**Figure 6:** Roles and responsibilities of African museums in the development of preventive conservation with local communities.

The practice of conservation is developing in a museum environment that has considerably improved since the 1980s. The main reason for this progress is associated with the ten-year PREMA programme of ICCROM, and the foundation of AFRICOM and CHDA. Yet, a lot still remains to be achieved to rationally integrate the practice of conservation with other museum practices. The main challenge for museum managers is to identify the components of their culture that can create greater institutional synergies, as a result of working with, rather than against, widely held cultural norms (Ndoro 2001: 20). An inclusive and intellectual partnership between conservators and museum directors, curators and scientists would raise conservation on museum agendas. At present, there is rarely a museum vision which aims to develop the conservation practice and there are few criteria for the selection and assignment of conservation

priorities; a fundamental task which requires a great deal of human expertise. Thus the collaboration of museum professionals with academics and local communities has several benefits. This partnership could prove to be the best way of generating a two-way process of co-operation where all partners learn from each other while working towards the same goal.

The fight against the illicit trafficking of art is also an area where museums and communities could work in partnership. For instance, ancient and contemporary traditions in Africa possess a variety of tools, products, and skills that this illegal trade threatens. This heritage is valuable to the very process of conservation as it brings together historical, social and material information. Thus, heritage professionals should develop practical approaches and techniques (e.g. oral records) in order to create an inventory and document cultural heritage in partnership with local communities. As for other conservation and museological activities, African museums form an informative and educational bridge between cultural heritage organisations and local communities.

### **The ‘Cultural Heritage Organisation’ Community**

Since the end of the Cold War the degradation of state systems has resulted in increased political instability in most Eastern African countries. This has affected the willingness of wealthy donors, and the capacity for African States, to absorb and manage foreign assistance. Consequently, fewer budgets were allocated to the preservation of cultural heritage. In parallel, the establishment of AFRICOM and CHDA, combined with the emergence of the concepts of intangibility and sustainability, provided cultural heritage professionals with increased opportunities to integrate conservation within the international realm of development.

There is also a geographical dimension to the preservation of cultural heritage. For instance, should the preservation of African cultural heritage be considered in terms of international, regional or local heritage perspectives? Indeed, it is difficult to delineate legitimate boundaries of cultural heritage and to determine what should be the criteria for selection and who should have the authority to select them. This issue has financial and

conceptual implications. For instance, it can be argued from the author's observations in East Africa that international donor agencies were more interested in and involved with large regional programmes than with local communities and museum projects.

The rationale for international donor agencies to initiate conservation projects often related to in-house financial strategies while locally the inclination of politicians was to support large cultural projects, attracting public attention, and which established their contribution to the conservation of cultural heritage. These political and financial motivations and the subsequent selection of a geographical strategy for development are influential in shaping the conservation of cultural heritage between local and institutional communities. This approach of development, directed to large projects, African countries of the same region or to local communities, implies (or rejects) the recognition and respect of local cultural identities.

Attracting necessary support for museums and local communities depends most of all upon having an effective and eye-catching programme. It is also dependent upon building partnerships with agencies, discussing expectations and analysing current opportunities. It is crucial that heritage professionals inform donors about a project's development and to present good examples and best practice. While all partners look for shared interests and agree to execute joint missions, it is crucial that support from international organisations does not solely take the form of financial assistance or change the nature of local goals. An increasing number of museum managers search for alternative financial formulas and should not expect complete sponsorship from stakeholders. While museum managers consider local and international NGOs as alternative financial partners, there is a reluctance to work with international NGOs. Somehow, their long-term implementation in emergency and development programmes is sometimes felt to be part of a 're-colonisation process'. Overall, museums professionals fear that their institutions will become an arena for experimentation by donors who are not used to the realities of local museums and are not prepared to cope with challenging local issues. AFRICOM recommends that museums provide donors with data that substantiate the use of granted budgets, and demonstrates the real benefits and actual impacts of their proposal for assistance. While this preliminary study might slow down the fundraising process, many

managers think that it is essential to break this vicious circle that both discourages and discredits museums and their partners.

Cultural heritage organisations should also express their motivations and views in contrast to those of the communities they want to support, as much identifying common ground as issues of confrontation. National museums and local communities have their respective difficulties that, if not detected and addressed in the very early stages, always become those of everyone involved. Thus the sharing of responsibilities can provide the basis for the decision to conserve. The continental collaboration between AFRICOM and CHDA with the 'local' and the 'museum' communities is currently the most pertinent and applicable prospect for such collaborations.

Another concern for the success of partnerships resides in the understanding of conservation principles and practices consisting of many 'universal' conventions in terms of universal applicability. International heritage organisations have increasingly portrayed 'conservation' to developing countries as a Western import. The discipline of conservation needs to be placed in its cultural and geographical contexts if it wants to develop further inside Africa, within the framework of international programmes (Cassar, Dardes and Matero<sup>38</sup> 2003: 16). Organisations such as ICCROM and the Swedish African Museums Programme (SAMP) have adopted in 2006 an approach that integrates community management within the diverse formats of conservation training programmes (Andrade and Rakotoariosa 2000; SAMP 2006). Yet, for this integrated approach to function, international experts need to address conventional and often paternalistic views on the understanding of specific values of African heritage. While education for 'cultural heritage communities' can prove to be an effective means of conservation development, it is not a stand-alone 'shortcut' solution. For instance, many training programmes reflect the particular concerns about the environmental conditions of buildings and collections, but relevant new thinking and research from beyond the local cultural and social contexts

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should also be incorporated. Considering scientific, interventive and preventive conservation practices as idealistic concepts without trying to integrate them in a legal framework would remove any chance for the sustainable development of conservation in African museums.

## **Discussion**

Together with museums local efforts, PREMA's involvement demonstrated that preventive conservation and teamwork is not only preferable from a social and cultural perspective, but that it is also necessary for the conservation of cultural heritage. Yet, the key to understanding how far the world of conservation has embraced new issues in its development is to define how much has changed by clarifying what the problems are.

Many international agencies believed that considering the views of local people, their involvement and ownership were part of the goal of development, rather than the means by which to achieve development. Despite this problem, many African museum professionals considered that positive new development can happen, but only if the people themselves stay in charge of their resources, economies and culture. However, the determination of organisations and museums to resist development projects that distinguish them as 'beneficiaries', not as 'participants', is only a negative strength, if they do not explore their own potential.

Affirming the significance of the cultural heritage of Africa is essential for the present and the future of African communities and museum professionals, on social and practical levels. For instance, the changing nature of African cultural heritage should be acknowledged when planning and evaluating conservation projects. African museum professionals have only recently researched the variety of traditional, ancient and contemporary material cultures. However, their appreciation of the cultural and social significance of this heritage is crucial to the understanding and conservation of material that will become the cultural heritage of future generations.

The interface between intangible and tangible cultural heritage conservation practice is another conservation subject that has not been fully addressed in the programmes of international organisations. Yet, recent advances in international preservation policies have placed the conservation of the ‘intangible’ on the agenda, thus creating further opportunities for collaborative conservation programmes with museum professionals. The knowledge of African local practices of conservation is incomplete although its documentation and use would probably help museum conservators lacking expertise or resources. In addition, it might disclose conservation resources, unfamiliar to heritage professionals, which may have applications for conservation practices on a larger international level.

For partnership between museums and local communities, motivations for conservation of cultural heritage represent social, cultural and historical characteristics that have not yet been identified. Recognition of these features would measure the rationale for and competence of communities to take part in conservation activities. Ultimately, this could lead to feasible and sustainable conservation partnerships within which local communities, museums and heritage organisations could work toward a common goal respectful of their respective objectives (Figure 7).

This emerging consensus on what is the nature and extent of the problems in the process of conservation development does not necessarily indicate an agreement on how to meet the challenges between local communities, African museums, and international organisations. In order to summarise the attempt at structuring these factors and the dynamics associated with them, the next chapter presents a case study which gathers the concepts of ‘integrated conservation’ and ‘community participation’ within a scheme where local communities are ‘actors’ and not ‘beneficiaries’.



THEORETICAL INDICATORS FOR PARTNERSHIP	INTENTION	ORGANISATIONS
<b>Integrated Approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To combine scientific principles, local values, expertise, resources and education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNESCO (Gessain 1965)</li> <li>- ICCROM/PREMA (1990/2000)</li> </ul>
<b>Long Term Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To ensure transfer of knowledge.</li> <li>To ensure long term preservation of cultural heritage.</li> <li>To foster the creation of cultural heritage departments responsible for conservation policies at national level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNESCO (Coremans 1965)</li> <li>- ICCROM/PREMA (1990/2000)</li> </ul>
<b>Legitimacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To recognise the community as a starting point to any development project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ICOM/SAMP (Andrade and Rakotoarisoa 2000)</li> </ul>
<b>Democratisation &amp; Decentralisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To work on preconceived notions and prejudices and towards mutual respect between heritage professionals and communities</li> <li>To foster understanding concerning possibilities of development on both sides.</li> <li>To involve actively local communities in decisions which affect them.</li> <li>To favour tolerance of local communities' views.</li> <li>To share responsibilities among local museums and communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ICOM/SAMP</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ICOM (Konaré 1992)</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To conceive a new economy for African museums in keeping with the resources of its local communities.</li> <li>To promote an ecologically sustainable way of managing cultural heritage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ICOM/SAMP (Andrade and Rakotoarisoa 2000)</li> </ul>

**Figure 7:** Identification of theoretical indicators conducive to partnerships between heritage professionals and local communities in the preventive conservation of cultural heritage.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Organisational Structures in East Africa**

Chapter Four provides the theoretical and historical background of the preventive conservation development in East Africa between 1980 and 2005: a period that is characterised by the shift from a Western to African heritage management approach. The chapter follows the development of projects involving conservation activities and presents a chronological account of their achievements and/or failures. The structure of international organisations is explained and their practices compared with a particular focus on two institutional partnerships: ‘ICOM and AFRICOM’, ‘ICCROM and CHDA’. The orientations and ideology of these organisations in the dissemination of knowledge for both conservation and developmental purposes are analysed. The chapter presents an analysis of their activities and their potential contribution to the development of preventive conservation practice. Following this analysis indicators which could foster conservation partnerships with local communities are identified within the respective mandates of AFRICOM and CHDA.

#### **1. Museum Orientations**

This section explains the origins of AFRICOM and provides a description of the organisation’s mission statement and activities in the development of African museums. This information highlights the significance that AFRICOM has on the development of African museology and the potential that the organisation has to foster the integration of conservation practice in museums mission statement.

AFRICOM emerged with the support of the International Committee of Museums (ICOM). However, the organisation is not a regional organisation of ICOM, such as ICOM-Europe or ICOM-Central Africa (ICOMAC). AFRICOM is a unique museum

organisation system that has no counterpart on other continents. In 2000 AFRICOM gained legal status as a Non-Governmental Organisation in the Republic of Kenya, where its headquarters are based. The organisation offers services to its members that are similar to those offered by ICOM. For instance, AFRICOM organises general assemblies, conferences and post-prints of these meetings. The organisation is actively involved in the fight against the trafficking of art and collaborates with partners such as UNESCO and ICCROM on heritage management issues.

The origins of AFRICOM date back to November 1991 when at the initiative of Alpha Oumar Konaré, then President of the International Council of Museums, ICOM organised a conference which was held in Benin, Ghana and Togo. The conference aimed to address the role and the relevance of the museum on the African continent. A scientific committee composed of African museum professionals developed the intellectual guidelines for the conference workshops<sup>1</sup> (Figure 8).



**Figure 8:** AFRICOM Founding Members, Ghana, Togo, 1991 (AFRICOM 1999).

<sup>1</sup> The themes selected for discussion within three distinct workshops were ‘Museum Management and Financing’; ‘Personnel and Training’; ‘Conservation, Repose and Exchanges of the Heritage’; ‘Heritage and Contemporary Culture’; ‘Museums and Research’ and ‘Museum as a Tool for Development’ (ICOM 1992: 5).

At the meetings, a final report was drawn up addressing four general themes<sup>2</sup> on the future development of African museums. A clear consensus emerged for the need for greater museum autonomy and the development of regional and international professional networks (Chieze<sup>3</sup> 1992: 15). The participants asked ICOM, in its capacity as a professional association, to set up a project designed to help African museums in this direction; the African Programme of ICOM was born.

In 1999, all responsibility for the project was transferred to the African co-ordination Committee, thus creating the conditions for the transformation of the African Programme of ICOM into a pan-African NGO. The statutes of the organisation, its bodies and its areas of intervention were adopted and on the 2 November 2000 AFRICOM was officially registered as an international NGO (Figure 9). AFRICOM operates in the entire African continent according to the African Union (AU) definition of Africa<sup>4</sup>. AFRICOM Regional Representatives are nominated for the following regions: North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Indian Ocean Islands, Central Africa and Southern Africa. The official languages of the organisation are French and English.

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<sup>2</sup> The four themes are 'Autonomy of African Museums', 'Regional Collaboration between Museums through Joint Activities', 'Specialised Training for Museum Curators, Technicians and Educators', 'Implications for the Future' (ICOM 1992: 369).

<sup>3</sup> Valérie Chieze was ICOM Programme Activities Officer (1996-1999). She participated in the AFRICOM project for the Standardisation of Inventories of African Collections (Chédia, Kumetsu and Chieze 1995).

<sup>4</sup> The Organisation of the African Union (OAU), established in 1963, officially became the African Union (AU) in March 2001. The fifty three State members decided to change the name of the organisation to transform the Union in a more ambitious organisation. Among objectives defined in the constituent agreements are the reinforcement of African institutions and the culture of democracy (Goucha and Cilliers 2001).

<p><b>1989</b>  <b>ICOM 16th General Assembly</b>          (the Hague, Netherlands,          5 September 1989)</p>	<p>African museum professionals informed the international community of the difficulties they encountered in the daily management of their institutions. They called for the organisation of meetings on the theme 'What Museums for Africa? Heritage in the Future'.</p>
<p><b>1991</b>  <b>Meetings 'What Museums for Africa? Heritage in the Future'</b>          (Benin, Ghana, Togo,          18-22 November 1991)</p>	<p>On the instigation of Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of ICOM, the Meetings are organised in Benin, Ghana and Togo, with the aim to address the roles and relevance of the museum for the African continent.</p>
<p><b>1992</b>  <b>Adoption of the 'African Programme' by the 17th General Assembly of ICOM</b>          (Quebec, Canada,          26 September 1992)</p>	<p>The General Assembly of ICOM, within its triennial Programme of Activities for 1993/1995, adopted the 'African Programme' of ICOM. The programme aimed to develop greater autonomy for African museums as well as regional and international professional networks.</p>
<p><b>1993-1999</b>  <b>The 'African Programme of ICOM'</b></p>	<p>An African co-ordinating Committee and the ICOM Secretariat were responsible for the implementation of the programme. It consisted mainly of preliminary field studies and the compilation of legal documents conducive to the transfer of responsibility to the African co-ordinating Committee and to the creation of AFRICOM by 1999.</p>
<p><b>1999-2000</b>  <b>Establishment of AFRICOM as a pan-African and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)</b>          (Nairobi, Kenya,          2 November 1999)</p>	<p>The Constituent Assembly of AFRICOM convened in Lusaka, Zambia, in order to establish AFRICOM as an NGO and to adopt the organisational Statutes, Body of Governance, Programme of Activities and Budget (3 to 9 October 1999). AFRICOM obtained legal status as a Non-Governmental Organisation, by the Republic of Kenya on the 2 November 1999.</p>
<p><b>2003</b>  <b>AFRICOM First General Assembly and Conference</b>          (Nairobi, Kenya,          29 September -1 October 2003)</p>	<p>The First AFRICOM General Assembly and Conference was organised in Nairobi, Kenya with the aim of strengthening the organisation's institutional structure, renewing its leadership and presenting its activities since its establishment in 2000.</p>

**Figure 9:** From the African Programme of ICOM to the International Council of African Museums.

AFRICOM is characterised by a mind set known as the ‘Spirit of Lomé’. This appellation comes after the ‘Lomé Convention<sup>5</sup>’, the most extensive development co-operation agreement between Northern and Southern hemisphere countries. The convention states that the co-operation of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) is to be based on partnership, equality, solidarity and mutual interest<sup>6</sup>. The convention also recognises the sovereignty and the right of each ACP State to define its own development strategies and policies (Parfitt<sup>7</sup> 1981: 86). AFRICOM elaborated its own development strategy and objectives according to the Lomé Convention. AFRICOM considers museum policies at a continental level while promoting regional political, social and cultural integrity (ICOM 1999). In order to adhere to this approach AFRICOM seeks to respond to the social, economic and political issues affecting the development of African museums (Tshiluila<sup>8</sup> 2000: 8). All the projects carried by AFRICOM attempt to enhance the expertise of African institutions by sharing professional practice amongst African museums.

The AFRICOM’s objectives are:

- ‘To promote the development of museums and museum-related institutions in Africa in the context of global development;
- To promote the development of professions on which museum activities are built;
- To strengthen collaboration and co-operation amongst museums and museum professionals in Africa and develop exchanges with museum professionals abroad;
- To promote the participation of all components of society in the protection and enhancement of cultural and natural heritage;
- To fight against the illicit traffic of African cultural heritage;

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<sup>5</sup> The first ‘Lomé Convention’ was endorsed in 1975 in Lomé, Togo. The Convention is an international aid and trade agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries group (ACP) and the European Union (EU). The Convention aimed to support the ‘ACP States’ efforts to achieve comprehensive, self-reliant and self-sustained development.

<sup>6</sup> The creation of the ACP group originates from the United Kingdom's accession to the EU in 1973. With the United Kingdom's accession, twenty Commonwealth States in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, all former colonies of EU Member States, were invited to enter into a relationship with the EU. Initially, the Lomé Convention considered covering the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. However, it became evident that the colonial argument was the eligibility criterion for the ACP countries to receive preferential treatment (ECDPM 1996). This explains why the Lomé Convention has often been described as a ‘post colonial agreement’.

<sup>7</sup> Trevor Parfitt is an economist who specialises in African development and he is a contributing editor to the Review of African Political Economy.

<sup>8</sup> Shaje'a Tshiluila was the first President of the AFRICOM Board of Directors (1999-2003). She is a Curator at the Institute of the National Museums of Zaire and a visiting Professor at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium.

- To establish and maintain an effective autonomous institution to achieve these objectives.’ (AFRICOM 1999: 3).

In an interview with ICOM in 2000, Shaje’a Tshiluila, the newly elected President of AFRICOM, outlined three main components of the future programme as the training of museum professionals, the ability to work with communities and the standardisation of collection inventories (Tshiluila 2000: 8)<sup>9</sup>. Three years later, her plans had proved to be too ambitious for such a new organisation in a continent where most Governments are confronted with more urgent and basic issues. In addition, the preservation of cultural heritage is not a priority for international donor agencies struggling with national African authorities who often assume that their development should be taken in hand by the West and not by themselves (Smith<sup>10</sup> 2003: 27). Equally, for the AFRICOM programme, respecting the diversity of African civilisations, social groups and the politics of cultural affairs may be seen as a protracted process in comparison with the occidental approach of development projects.

### **From ICOM to AFRICOM**

The primary sources which were reviewed on the development of AFRICOM are largely unpublished documents. Descriptions of the organisation’s activities can be found in the ICOM periodical ‘ICOM News’. Yet, these short articles do not provide a comprehensive analytical or historical review of the organisation. However, AFRICOM offers two sources of information for the public; its Website<sup>11</sup> and its Newsletter. ‘AFRICOM News’ is an annual periodical, published in English and French. The newsletter provides information on the development and activities of the organisation. One section deals with African regional news, covering museological and preservation projects within individual museums. The section below reviews three key areas of research addressed by the activities of AFRICOM in its first three years: ‘Documentation’, ‘Autonomy’ and ‘Communication’.

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<sup>9</sup> The total proposed budget for establishment and planned activities in the AFRICOM Triennial Programme of Activities was 2,066,302 US Dollars (AFRICOM 2003: 3).

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Smith is a Politic Analyst who specialises in Africa and is Africa Editor and Deputy Editor of the Foreign Desk at the French newspaper ‘Le Monde’.

<sup>11</sup> AFRICOM website is at: <http://www.africom.museum>



## **Documentation and Illicit Traffic of Art**

ICOM and AFRICOM worked in collaboration with ICOM on the publication of books focusing on the issues of illicit trade in art and of documentation. First they participated to the publication of the 'Directory of Museum Professionals in Africa' which facilitated contacts among professionals within African cultural institutions (Bour 1993 and Abungu 2003). Then they work together with ICOM at the publication of 'Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property in Africa' (ICOM 1995), and 'One Hundred Missing Objects: Looting in Africa' (ICOM 1997). These publications targeted institutions and individuals involved in buying and selling antiques. They also enabled Interpol to make links with museums and law-enforcement officers in Africa (Musonda<sup>12</sup> 1999: 258).

The absence of written and visual documentation also affected the management and preservation of museum collections as observed as early as 1991 by ICOM<sup>13</sup>. Many museums had no inventory of their collections. When some of them catalogued their collections, records in varying formats generated a number of classifications that could not be related (Radimilahy<sup>14</sup> 1999: 153). Therefore, the adoption of a single standardised system of stocktaking appeared necessary (Roberts 1996: 7). ICOM and AFRICOM considered, as a priority, the establishment of computerised inventories of collections and the creation of a handbook on standards for documentation. This particular project demanded the consistent co-ordination between AFRICOM, the ICOM Secretariat, and CIDOC (Chieze 1994: 30). After four years of work (1993-1996), a bilingual English-French handbook, covering all types of collections, was published in 1996. The handbook was widely distributed to museums and following its dissemination AFRICOM promoted the adoption of these standards by all African institutions<sup>15</sup>. However, according to

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<sup>12</sup> Dr Francis Musonda is Executive Secretary of the National Museums Board of Zambia and a Private Heritage Consultant in Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>13</sup> At the Encounters 'What Museums for Africa? Heritage in the Future', Benin, Ghana and Togo.

<sup>14</sup> Chantal Radimilahy is Senior Lecturer in archaeology at the University of Madagascar. She is responsible for the archaeological collection of the University Museum and conducts archaeological research in the island.

<sup>15</sup> This policy was based on using pilot museums as resource centres to take care of training in their respective countries and regions. During regional meetings, AFRICOM organised training sessions on how to use the standards (Roberts 1996: 8). In addition, a regional workshop for North African countries in Morocco resulted in the translation of the handbook into Arabic, and its publication in October 1997.



interviews<sup>16</sup> with African museum professionals, conducted by the author between 2001 and 2003, the full potential of the handbook has not been realised. The format of the handbook and how to use it confused African museum professionals as they were not familiar to the proposed system nor were they sufficiently trained to use it effectively. CHDA, supported by individual heritage professionals called for a review and a re-assessment of the handbook's format<sup>17</sup>. International assistance has added confusion to this complex situation by introducing, to a series of African museums, two different systems and standards of documentation without a coherent vision of implementation<sup>18</sup>. The two systems mostly used in East Africa between 2000 and 2005 were the 'Handbook of Standards' proposed by CIDOC in collaboration with AFRICOM, and the 'Object ID Standard'<sup>19</sup>, developed by the Getty Information Institute, and implemented by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT). AFRICOM also wished to reinforce the museums' capacity to preserve and document intangible heritage resources. For instance, in 1999, the General Assembly recommended that research be undertaken on traditional techniques of conservation and craftsmanship with the objective of producing an encyclopaedia on this subject (ICOM 1999: 16). The suggestion was genuine from preservation and conservation perspectives but it was not retained in the triennial programme of activities. A second recommendation proposed the development of an African 'Living Heritage Management Programme' (AFRICOM 2003: 21). Initially, AFRICOM launched a programme addressing the preservation and accessibility of existing archives of oral traditions.

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<sup>16</sup> Interviews undertaken at: The National Museums of Kenya, August 1999; CHDA Programme Review and Development Workshop, CHDA, Mombasa, Kenya, June 2002; National Museum and Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, March 2003; and, AFRICOM First General Assembly and Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, September 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Personal communication, Lorna Abungu, AFRICOM First General Assembly and Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 29 September 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Two systems of documentation were presented to the AFRICOM 2003 Conference participants, the *Virgile* and the *Museum Depot System* (MD-System). The *MD-System* offered its object and collection registration system to all participants however; the prerequisite for training adapted to the system was ignored.

<sup>19</sup> The *Object ID Standard* was developed by Robin Thornes for the Getty Information Institute and was adopted by UNESCO, Interpol, Scotland Yard, insurance companies and museums all over the world. It is a standardised description of objects within ten different fields. The Royal Tropical Institute and the Leiden Ethnography Museum in the Netherlands developed the software application together with Jeanne Hoogenboom, which was implemented in 1998 at the National Museum of Mali and the Cham Museum of Danang, Vietnam.

## **Autonomy**

Autonomy has also been an important subject of debate and research for ICOM and AFRICOM. Investigations of the potential for African museums to acquire legal autonomy were undertaken as early as 1991. In 1995, the research culminated in the publication of 'Autonomy in Africa' (Négre 1995). This book is a study of the financial and legal autonomy of museums and is the sole reference on this particular subject. It analyses the nature of African legislation in light of the laws of the former colonial States within a theoretical framework divided in two legal systems: the Roman and the Anglo-Saxon. The author clarified the influences that both policies, 'indirect administration' for the British law and 'policy of assimilation' for the Roman one had on the development of African museums (1995: 9). The analytical part of the work is supported by an historical account that explains the origin of current African legal systems.

This study presents relevant information for those supporting the development of conservation within an official framework. It presents several national official documents that demonstrate that the principle of preserving cultural heritage is often incorporated into national legislation (sometimes a legacy of the colonial period). For instance, an article of the Ethiopian Constitution encourages the active participation of the population in the conservation of national heritage<sup>20</sup> by declaring:

'Ethiopians shall have a duty to participate in the State and the society's efforts to safeguard, collect and use those objects that have a historical interest as well as safeguarding the national heritage and to take care of these objects.' (Négre 1995: 15).

Négre argued that museum institutions could only take their place in the organisation of society and influence it if the law recognises them and assigns them an acknowledged legal framework (Négre 1995: 14). His theory is also relevant and applicable to the museums' duty in conservation, thus the principle of preserving cultural heritage should

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<sup>20</sup> Ethiopian national law, article 55.1 of the 1987 Constitution of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Ethiopia (Négre 1995: 15).

be endorsed within museum policy and mission statement. In East Africa, the collaborative project undertaken by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) and the European Commission (EC) in the restructuring of the NMK demonstrate that Négri's theory is justified. Indeed, the European Commission identified the National Museum of Kenya as a model for the 'Museum Restructuring Project' for the African continent. The objective of the project is to modernise the museum and turn it into a self-sustaining organisation (2002-2007). However, this large-scale and inclusive project did not consider integrating conservation principles and practices within its strategic plan until 2005<sup>21</sup>. This is because the principle of conserving cultural heritage was not clearly ascribed in the museum's mission statement and, the conservation 'category' and its function(s) within the museum institution were not officially acknowledged within the project's official agenda. Although these provisions define the principles according to which cultural heritage is to be preserved Négri, with the exception of documentation, did not provide guidelines for the means by which these principles could be implemented (1995: 71).

Considering that African museum collections are threatened by illegal trade in cultural property, the need for a law enshrining museum participation in the regulation of the movement of cultural property cannot be over emphasised (Négri 1995: 73). In addition, he also considered the museums' educational role and he underlined that the 'educational nature' of heritage protection is not central to the legal texts (1995: 79). Then, Négri discussed the integration of an educational mandate into law. However, knowing that the educational objectives need to be translated into law for them to be effective can be questioned.

In conclusion, this study provides African museums professionals with a unique insight into legal autonomy. However, and according to the principles singled out by Alpha Oumar Konaré (1995), the position of Négri, looking at and proposing imported institutional practices, has its limits in the African context.

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<sup>21</sup> When the author was invited to undertake the condition assessment of the Museum ethnographic collection and the transfer of the collection in new storage (Deisser 2005).

‘The greatest issue at stake in the development of African museums is whether African States can develop and integrate models which can function in an autonomous manner.’ (Konaré 1995: 7).

### **Communication: AFRICOM First General Assembly and Conference**

The First General Assembly and Conference of AFRICOM was the most important event prepared by the organisation for communicating with its member states (Nairobi, Kenya, 29 September to 1 October 2003). The aim of the General Assembly was to strengthen the institutional structure of AFRICOM, to renew its leadership and motivate its membership. It was also an occasion to present AFRICOM’s activities since its creation in 2000. Participants were one hundred and forty eight participants from forty-eight countries, including museum professionals, ICOM international committee members, representatives from the Kenyan Government and African Union and representatives of conservation institutions (EPA, CHDA and SAMP). The conference theme was ‘Museums in Africa: Challenges for the 21st Century’. The conference workshops examined the following issues:

- Museums and the Public(s);
- New Information and Communication Technologies;
- Administration, Management and Financing of Museums;
- Museums and the Prevention of Conflicts in Africa.

The role that museums can play in conflict resolution has to be acknowledged in the present analysis. First, it was the theme of one of the workshops. Second, the development of African museums takes place in an African context severely affected by wars and conflicts. The Vice-President of the International Court of Justice (Den Haag), Mr. Raymond Ranjeva<sup>22</sup> underlined that the prevention of conflicts is a fundamental part of diplomacy and thus when conflicts occur, these failures may also be diplomatic. He suggested that AFRICOM takes policies inspiration from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with its strict neutrality and impartiality. As conflicts relate to

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<sup>22</sup> Raymond Ranjeva is a Judge at the International Court of Justice (Den Haag). He has been a Member of the Court since 1991. Prior to his election to the Court, he was a Professor of Law at the University of Madagascar, Antananarivo (1981-1991).

political and economic issues, cultural heritage may not be cause of conflict. Yet citizens feel powerless in face of the destruction of cultural heritage and have often expressed their desire to act to prevent such destruction of their heritage. Thus, AFRICOM can not deny its responsibilities and should establish and maintain dialogues between museum professionals and local leaders in areas of conflict.

A series of ‘unofficial’ recommendations were made at the conference workshops. This information is the result of a field trip undertaken by the author who was invited to participate in the General Assembly and Conference<sup>23</sup>. Some ideas and concerns were discussed in an informal manner outside the official timetable. While these discussions are not part of the official records of the conference, they form an agenda that could influence the future development of AFRICOM. During these conversations, participants raised two significant concerns.

The question ‘what museums for Africa?’ remained a challenging and philosophical query that has not yet been fully addressed. According to many participants, the key question which relates to the role of African museums could be articulated as follows: will African museums remain consumers of values or will African museums become producers of values? In addition, African museum professionals considered that an important role of museums is to provide access to the community and promote education and knowledge exchange; a role that must be enunciated and promoted more effectively by AFRICOM. African museums also need a theoretical and legal framework within which to develop effective and coherent strategies within their institutions so they can be relevant to their public. Thus, AFRICOM could help design procedures to provide greater access and participation with local communities.

The second issue debated by African professionals related to colonial history and its effects on African societies. The weight of these colonial cultural policies caused a large number of museum professionals to question their ownership of cultural heritage.

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<sup>23</sup> Field trip organised in September and October 2003 to study and research the latest developments of the National Museums of Kenya/European Union ‘Restructuring Project’ and to participate in the AFRICOM First General Assembly and Conference.

The question ‘who owns African cultural heritage and who benefits from it?’ was constantly put forward in conference debates. This question and the feelings that generated it were rooted in issues of identity and representation. In Africa, the ‘other’, as the object of anthropological study, has been a subject of much debate during the last twenty years and has raised the problem of its deconstruction in anthropological discourse. Heritage professionals consider that it is time to deconstruct the exotic character of museum collections that have been neither devised nor displayed with respect for the local populations who created these objects (Manzambi<sup>24</sup> 1999: 46).

A large communication gap now exists between the communities concerned and African museum professionals, who are both, legitimately, worried about this situation. To respond promptly to this cultural and social issue, museum professionals suggest the creation and implementation of an institutional strategy that focuses on the recognition of, and support for, small community and private museums. In addition, they propose working on micro-projects that explore traditional community knowledge. Then, in collaboration with local communities, alternative ways of thinking in museum activities and responsibilities such as access and conservation could be formulated. Meanwhile, AFRICOM as an international organisation could integrate this local and traditional expertise into its networked database, thus contributing to the dissemination of traditional African knowledge to cultural heritage organisations.

### **1.1. Integrating Preventive Conservation into Museums’ Practice**

One of the major objectives of the AFRICOM First General Assembly and Conference was to strengthen the collaboration and co-operation between museums and museum professionals and to develop an exchange and sharing of information. The organisation’s mandate is clearly not conservation orientated. However, it presents some aspects that could be conducive to the development of preventive conservation practices and partnership with local communities. Among the participants to the Conference, less than ten people were conservators. However, their expertise was highly sought after by colleagues, curators and museum directors, searching for conservation advice.

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<sup>24</sup> Fernando Vuvu Manzambi is Curator at the Angola National Museum of Anthropology.

The demand for an adequate response to cultural differences and the effects of a reinterpretation of traditional and community values on heritage itself initiated discussions about the conservation discipline among museum professionals. It was perceived that the lack of funding and expertise significantly slowed down conservation activities (Figure 10). Many professionals were concerned by museums' failure to research, record and integrate traditional knowledge and technical skills into their conservation activities. Some participants suggested that AFRICOM promote the inclusion of an 'integrated' conservation approach that considered tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the mandates of African museums.



**Figure 10:** Development of conservation in African museums: key issues.

The foundation of an international professional network was also considered to be essential to the organisation in terms of legal, museological and conservation expertise. ICOM and AFRICOM worked on the development of legal instruments that foster the advance of autonomy and encourage the fight against the trafficking of art. However, AFRICOM did not yet take the advantage of a closer collaboration and use of the museological and conservation expertise of its two partner organisations in Africa, EPA and CHDA. These organisations could provide AFRICOM with a pool of expertise and a database on the current needs of African museums. Yet, the benefits that AFRICOM, CHDA and EPA could acquire in sharing their expertise have not yet been articulated

officially. Some African professionals felt that the organisation had a responsibility and a role to play in integrating the conservation discipline into the overall development of heritage and management. Although AFRICOM is not directly involved in conservation activities it aims to create a sense of ownership and pride in cultural heritage which ultimately is conducive to the endorsement of conservation. In this regard, AFRICOM was in an ideal position to encourage professional co-operation between managerial, museological and conservation activities. Hitherto, no initiative has been undertaken on this by the organisation.

### **Preventive Conservation and the Issue of Autonomy**

Conference delegates suggested that AFRICOM organises a seminar on the subject of autonomy with the aim of fostering an Africa-centred museological ‘identity’ and a conservation ‘philosophy’ not yet prevalent in African museums. AFRICOM could foster research on the design of legal instruments that are adapted to the African continent and act as a forum where cultural heritage and community representatives can discuss the future of African museums. The AFRICOM Secretariat was requested to study this suggestion and encouraged to review and enlarge its roles in partnership with local communities and museums.

The success of a development approach that links cultural heritage to social and economic development and to environmental and ecological policies is also inherent in the provision of effective legal instruments. AFRICOM and African museums are also responsible for the promotion of legal instruments that protect cultural heritage and museum professionals. The lack of clear legislation on cultural heritage conservation can be observed in Africa at national, regional levels and in museums. Nonetheless, if the principle to conserve is not inherent in a museum’s mission statement, conservation has little chance of being allocated resources and therefore not given the opportunity to develop. AFRICOM is the only mandated authority to represent the interests of its members to national governments while at the same time acting as an advisor to museums in need of fundamental support.



Finally, the participants suggested that AFRICOM constitutes a working group to develop capacity building in risk preparedness. Many conference participants felt that AFRICOM should be represented at the African Union (AU) Headquarters based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The creation of a 'micro-museum' at the AU Headquarters was recommended in order to display exhibitions that promote peace, tolerance and dialogue and present the tangible and intangible heritage of local communities. Thus, AFRICOM would represent its members at the largest pan-African organisation while advocating conflict resolution through the development of cultural projects.

## **2. Heritage Management Orientations: the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA)**

This section explains how the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa developed from a partnership between ICCROM and sub-Saharan African museums. The decision to found the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) was taken at the 9th UNESCO General Conference in New Delhi in 1956. This intergovernmental organisation was established in Rome in 1959. Currently it comprises over one hundred member States, as well as associate members from among the world's leading conservation institutions, of which twenty-nine are African<sup>25</sup>. ICCROM occupies a unique position in being the only institution with a worldwide mandate to promote the conservation of both movable and immovable heritage in all its forms, tangible and intangible. ICCROM has contributed considerably to the development of preventive conservation through international training programmes. In Africa, ICCROM has been the major contributor into the development of preventive conservation. In 1990, the organisation launched a programme of training and technical assistance called 'Prevention in Museums in Africa' (PREMA 1990-2000).

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<sup>25</sup> In 2006, ICCROM had twenty five sub-Saharan African Member States (Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe).

In 2000, ICCROM concluded that the PREMA programme had had a number of successes. Within ten years, the programme led to the foundation of two African organisations dedicated to the preservation of African cultural heritage, the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA)<sup>26</sup> and the School for African Heritage (EPA)<sup>27</sup>. CHDA has been based in Mombasa, Kenya since 2000. Since its foundation, CHDA has been involved in a variety of training activities, the organisation of workshops and the management of a University Course in Heritage management.

In order to build on this foundation ICCROM launched a two year programme that aimed to build a second generation of African teachers, capable of conceiving learning and teaching materials on the conservation topics and the use of collections. The programme was named 'Generation 2'. In 1998 ICCROM launched another programme to preserve immovable cultural heritage; 'Africa 2009'. Similarly to the PREMA programme, 'Africa 2009' aimed at increasing national capacity in sub-Saharan Africa for the conservation of cultural heritage.

### **From ICCROM to CHDA**

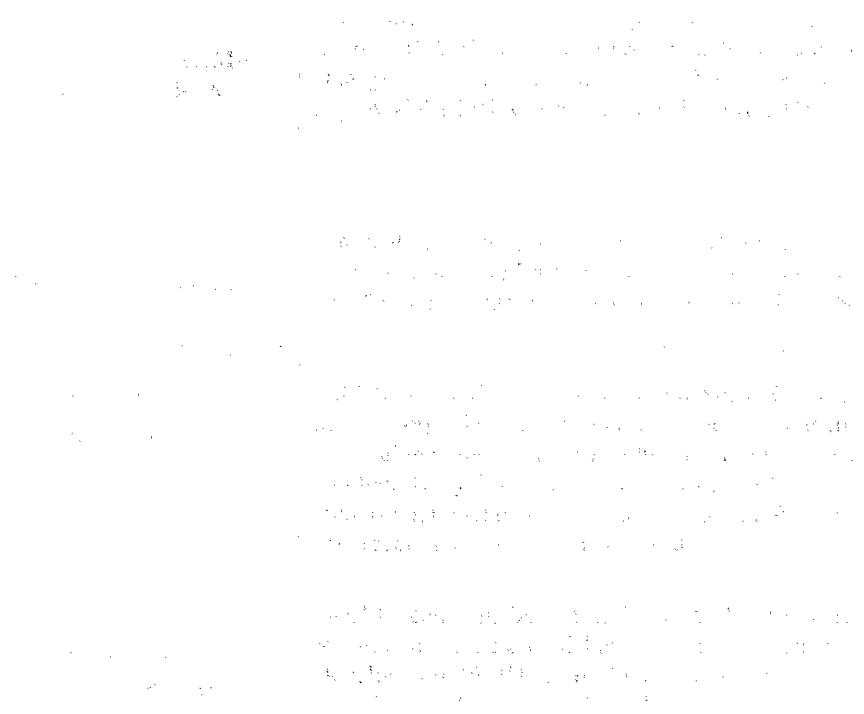
ICCROM organised its first courses on the conservation of historic towns and buildings in collaboration with the University of Rome in the early 1960s. Other regular, annual, courses followed on the conservation of mural paintings (organised jointly with the Istituto Centrale del Restauro in Rome, starting in 1968), on the scientific principles of the conservation of objects and materials (1974) and on the preventive conservation of museum collections (1975) (Little, Mikael and Rockwell 2000). Since the early 1960s over one hundred groups have participated in these programmes, all of them sharing similar characteristics in that participants were both male and female, of different nationalities, different religions and cultures, with different educational backgrounds and

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<sup>26</sup> Over time the roles of the Programme for Museum Development in Africa have grown from a museum-focused mandate to include capacity building on all types of heritage, such as: archives, cultural landscapes, historic cities, monuments and sites. Considering the need to ensure that its name reflects its current mandate PMDA has officially changed its name and is known, since 2005, as the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA, formerly PMDA).

<sup>27</sup> This research does not provide information on the history and development of the School for African Heritage (EPA) because the organisation is concerned with the French speaking countries of Western Africa.

of varied professional experience (Antomarchi<sup>28</sup> and Little 1993: 711). By the early 1990s, the fact that preventive conservation should involve all museum staff in conservation programmes and practices was already considered a ‘cliché’ in the professional arena of ICCROM. In addition to its international leadership in conservation education, ICCROM launched a comprehensive, long term and strategic project that would act in response to the specific needs of African museums: Prevention in Museums in Africa (PREMA) (Figure 11).



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<sup>28</sup> Catherine Antomarchi is Collections Unit Director at ICCROM.

<p><b>1983</b>  <b>14th ICOM General Assembly and Conference</b>  (London, United Kingdom, 1-2 August)</p>	<p>ICOM General Assembly underlined the importance of the presence of African museum professionals within ICOM and recognised the urgent need to undertake an evaluation of the needs of African museums in conservation and museology.</p>
<p><b>1984-1986</b>  <b>ICCROM Mission of Evaluation</b></p>	<p>In 1984, ICCROM started a mission of evaluation in collaboration with the West African Museum Programme (WAMP) to evaluate the needs in conservation formation for African museums.</p>
<p><b>1986-1988</b>  <b>PREMA Pilot Project</b></p>	<p>ICCROM launched the ‘Prevention in African Museums (PREMA) Pilot Project’ with the University of Paris I (Sorbonne), the University of London (UCL) and the Ethnographic Museum L. Pigorini, Rome. The pilot project focused on the education of African museum professionals in preventive conservation.</p>
<p><b>May 1988</b>  <b>Adoption of the PREMA Programme (1990-2000)</b>  (15th ICCROM General Assembly)</p>	<p>ICCROM prepared a feasibility study, for submission to UNESCO and the ICCROM General Assembly, which would enable a long-term and enlarged PREMA Programme. The XV ICCROM General Assembly approved the PREMA programme in May 1988.</p>
<p><b>1990-2000</b>  <b>PREMA Programme</b></p>	<p>‘International University Course’; ‘National and sub-Regional Course’; ‘Regional Seminar for Museum Directors’; ‘Formation of Co-ordinators and Teachers’; ‘Development of the Professional Network’.</p>
<p><b>1998-2009</b>  <b>Africa 2009</b></p>	<p>‘AFRICA 2009’ is a joint programme of ICCROM and African cultural heritage organisations. The programme was launched in 1998, at the regional meeting of African cultural heritage professionals held in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The main objective of ‘AFRICA 2009’ is to increase national capacity in sub-Saharan Africa for the management and conservation of immovable cultural heritage.</p>
<p><b>April 2000</b>  <b>From PMDA to CHDA</b></p>	<p>PREMA ended in December 1999. An ICCROM Review Meeting recommended the establishment of the Programme for Museum Development (PMDA), in Mombassa, Kenya, to cater for English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa. PMDA, an international NGO, began operations in April 2000 and changed its name to the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA), in 2005.</p>
<p><b>2001</b>  <b>‘Generation 2’ Programme</b></p>	<p>‘Generation 2’ is a joint project of ICCROM, the School for African Heritage (EPA) and CHDA. ‘Generation 2’ aimed to establish a second ‘generation’ of African teachers equipped to teach and to design teaching materials on the fundamentals of conservation and the use of collections, focusing on sub-Saharan Africa.</p>

**Figure 11:** From ICCROM to CHDA.

## **PREMA: Prevention in Museums in Africa (1990-2000)**

In 1983, the 14th ICOM General Assembly stressed the need to undertake an evaluation of the professional development of museum personnel in African museums. A mission of evaluation undertaken by ICCROM 1984 drew attention to the need to design and offer a conservation 'education' to African museum professionals. It also recommended developing conservation through a holistic and preventive approach rather than an interventive one. Catherine Antomarchi and Gaël de Guichen, then in charge of the mission of evaluation, encouraged ICCROM to focus on sub-Saharan Africa and advocated a long-term strategy to ensure successful and sustainable development in African museums<sup>29</sup>. Their recommendations ran counter to the general approach of ICCROM, which hitherto had only gained experience through inter-continental programmes. However, two reasons justified the decision to design a programme dedicated solely to the African continent. Firstly, in 1984 ICCROM had only six member States from sub-Saharan Africa<sup>30</sup>. Secondly, Africa was the only continent that had no national school system preparing anyone for a museum career.

Between 1986 and 1988, ICCROM launched the 'PREMA Pilot Project' with the scientific and technical collaboration of the University of Paris I (Sorbonne), the University of London (UCL) and the Ethnographic Museum L. Pigorini of Rome<sup>31</sup>. The pilot project consisted of the education of African museum professionals in preventive conservation. Within three years (1986-1988), ten French speaking and nine English speaking museum professionals had successfully obtained their University Diplomas, 'Technician in Conservation of African Cultural Heritage' (Figure 12).

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<sup>29</sup> Personal communication, Gaël de Guichen, ICCROM, Rome, 8 April 2004.

<sup>30</sup> In 1989, the six sub-Saharan African member States of ICCROM were: Ghana (1959), Sudan (1960), Gabon and Nigeria (1961), Madagascar (1963) and Ethiopia (1975).

<sup>31</sup> In its pilot phase, the course lasted eleven months and was held in Rome, Italy. The class consisted of twelve African museum professionals, with a working experience of at least five years. The Diploma, 'Technician in Conservation of African Cultural Heritage' was delivered under the seal of the University of Paris I. The courses were constituted forty percent theory and sixty percent practice. A field study of two weeks, which offered the opportunity for the students to visit European Ethnographic Museums, was organised at the end of the course (Antomarchi and de Guichen 1989: 94).



**Figure 12:** PREMA participants of the first University Course, Rome, Italy, 1986 (Little 1999: 20).

For ICCROM, the pilot project helped to enhance teaching methods and increase financial support for the project. The pilot phase also enabled a better understanding of the circumstances and relationship between ICCROM and African museums. For instance, few African countries knew what ICCROM was, while ICCROM was not familiar with the development context of African museums. ICCROM professionals realised that conservation had not really been integrated into the activities of most African museums. At a national level legislation defining museum mandates and roles were rare. Besides, conservation was generally understood to be a purely technical and scientific action, leading to the idea that ‘no laboratory means no conservation’ (Antomarchi and De Guichen 1989: 22).

In February 1988, following two years of pilot projects, Gaël de Guichen and Catherine Antomarchi, the heads of the programme, undertook an evaluation of needs in the formation of conservators in African museums. Despite the short duration of the study (two months), much useful information was gathered. The study underlined that museums for English speaking countries were more organised and employed more personnel than museums in French speaking countries. English and French speaking

countries had different historical backgrounds that required distinct approaches (Antomarchi and De Guichen 1989: 30). In addition, the evaluation exposed an alarming state of affairs in the conditions of African museums and these were:

‘Lack of storage organisation; inadequate techniques of display; infestation of organic collections; lack of conservation facilities and lack of environmental control.’ (Antomarchi and De Guichen 1989: 30).

The XV ICCROM General Assembly approved the PREMA programme in May 1988 (ICCROM 1990) with the following objectives<sup>32</sup>:

‘To establish a network of African museum professionals able to take charge, by 2000, the conservation of their collections and the formation of their colleagues; To ensure the conservation of the collections of African museums.’  
(De Guichen 1994: 122).

By the end of 1999, more than three hundred professionals from forty-three countries had attended conservation training through PREMA<sup>33</sup>. The organisation of courses and seminars in the diverse regions and museums of Africa allowed the host institutions to participate in conservation activities. The participants upgraded the conditions of their own museum, through the re-organisation of storage or the construction of storage spaces, the improvement of the collection documentation and the creation of a

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<sup>32</sup> The activities of the programme were divided in five complementary fields as follows: International University Course, National and sub-Regional Course, Regional Seminar for Museum Directors, formation of Co-ordinators and teachers, development of the professional network (De Guichen 1994: 122). The average cost of PREMA per year amounted 600,000 US dollars: University Course (320,000 \$), National and sub-Regional Course (140,000 \$), Regional Seminar for Museum Directors (30,000 \$), Professional Development Activities (60,000 \$), Technical Assistance (50,000 \$) (Little 1999: 39). Three types of organisation supported PREMA: international organisations, national governments through their co-operation agencies and foundations. The variety of founders was a key element in order ensuring autonomy, continuity and neutrality of the programme (Personal communication, Gaël de Guichen, ICCROM, Rome, 8 April 2004).

<sup>33</sup> The total budget for the 10 year PREMA Programme was seven millions US Dollars. This resulted in the training of four hundred heritage professionals in forty six countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and the preservation of the collections of twenty five museums (personal communication, Gael de Guichen, Rome, Italy, 8 April 2004).

conservation department within their museum. Ultimately, the programme motivated African participants to encourage their countries to become members of ICCROM<sup>34</sup>. Many people looked at ICCROM's PREMA programme as a model from which others can draw lessons on organising successful training in a culturally appropriate way (Stanley-Price 2001: 3). The strategy of the programme was to better define and refine preventive conservation approaches and to understand its importance for 'developed' museums as well<sup>35</sup>. In fact, PREMA radically changed ICCROM's educational methodology. Rosalia Varoli Piazza<sup>36</sup>, ICCROM Senior Programme Co-ordinator explained that this new approach supported ICCROM Members' States in improving their professional and operational capacities. ICCROM produced a series of working documents that have recorded PREMA's history, vision and activities. Many of these were not published. However in 1999, ICCROM produced a bilingual publication 'Prevention in Museums in Africa'. It presents a clear portrait of the programme, its methods and achievements since its inception (Little<sup>37</sup> 1999). The publication is an attractive and inclusive document that offers conceptual, practical, and financial information (Figure 13). The programme has also been presented in heritage journals and conferences by former participants and co-ordinators. Four articles presents below a clear picture of the programme benefits and weaknesses.

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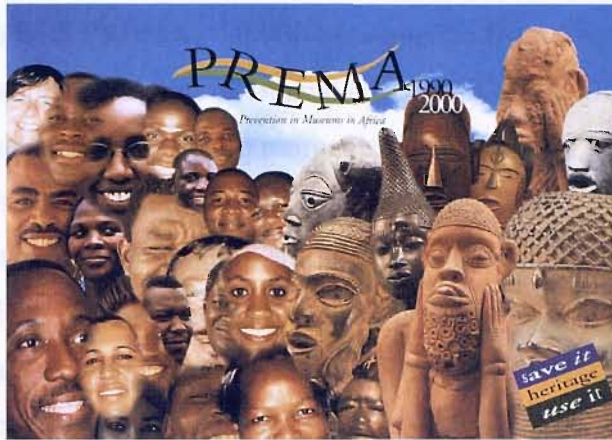
<sup>34</sup> Between 1985 and 1999, eleven countries in sub-Saharan Africa became member States of ICCROM (Ivory Coast, 1985; Benin, 1986; Burkina Faso, 1988; Angola, 1992; Zimbabwe, 1993; Cameroon, 1995; Kenya and Namibia, 1998; Congo and Gambia, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> In 1994, ICCROM launched the programme PREMO (Prevention for Museums in Oceania, 1994-1998) addressed to the museums of the Pacific Islands, which had a number of characteristics similar to African museums, such as isolation, condition of collections, lack of local resources and training.

<sup>36</sup> Dr. Varoli-Piazza has been on the staff of the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro in Rome between 1976 and 2002, Director, Co-ordinator of Art History and responsible for the textile conservation section. She is Senior Programme Co-ordinator at ICCROM since 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Terry Little works as a Heritage Consultant for ICCROM, CHDA and EPA. He was involved with PREMA between 1990 and 2000.





**Figure 13:** Front cover of 'Prevention in Museums in Africa', by T. Little (1999).

The philosophy of the PREMA programme was clearly summarised by Catherine Antomarchi and Terry Little in an article entitled 'Multicultural Training: a Rich Mosaic or an Impossible Puzzle?' (1993). The article is of particular interest for it places PREMA in the historical and multicultural context of conservation training undertaken by ICCROM since 1964. The authors raised a series of questions regarding conservation terminology and concepts in relation to different languages. The authors' investigation is rationalised by descriptions of the advantages and limitations of the different systems of interpretation inherent in bilingual courses. Finally, the authors discussed ways to integrate differences into the very design of training thus ensuring the transfer of knowledge. Their analysis was an opportunity to reflect upon the advance of PREMA philosophy in conservation training within ICCROM's conceptual and contextualised approach.

Mubiana Luhila<sup>1</sup>, Lydia Koranteng and Alain Godonou<sup>2</sup>, former PREMA participants, presented case studies that illustrate the experience gained through the programme in solving practical museum problems about conservation and collection storage (1995).

<sup>1</sup> Mubiana Luhila was Programme Co-ordinator for the National Museums of Zambia and is the Programme Co-ordinator for the Programme for the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa since 2000. He is a member of the ICOM-CC Directory Board since 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Alain Godonou was the Curator of the Royal Palace of Porto Novo in Benin and Co-ordinator of ICCROM within the framework of the 1990-2000 PREMA Programme. Since 1997, he is the Principal of the School of African Heritage, of which he is a Co-Founder.

Lydia Koranteng described the inventory project carried out by the National Museum of Ghana in collaboration with PREMA: '30.000 Movements: from Confusion to Preventive Conservation at the National Museum of Ghana' (1995: 32). Alain Godonou described the case of an ambitious project aiming to reorganise the storage of four national museums in Benin in his essay 'Remove and Refit: the Case of Benin' (1995: 32). The author described in detail the upgrading of storage buildings and shelving systems. Then, he presented information on the financial cost of the project. Mubiana Luhila in an account entitled 'From a Certain Mess to a Possible Order: a Success Story in Zambia' (1995) illustrated the case of the Livingstone Museum in Zambia. The author presented a chronological description of the Livingstone Museum's project to upgrade storage and collection documentation. The methodology of the project is also provided with emphasis on the creation of a conservation department (1995: 28). The determination and resourcefulness of the working team that completed these projects provide indication of the success of PREMA in the transfer of knowledge of preventive conservation practice.

The views of PREMA co-ordinators are discussed in the article 'PREMA: a Training Strategy for a Change or Let's Stop Building Castles in the Sand' (Little, Antomarchi, de Guichen, and Godonou 1996). It is an analysis of the philosophy and strategy of the programme. The authors underlined the potential benefits of PREMA's experience to the conservation profession as a whole. The objectives and activities of the programme are clearly identified, thus providing a framework for the analysis of concepts inherent to international and long-term conservation programmes. The assertive and critical self-assessment of the authors' involvement in the programme raised a series of conceptual issues on conservation training approaches and models that can be used in developing countries. The approach and design of this comprehensive and long-term programme are described as 'a series of military operations' in order to achieve a particular objective (1996: 116). It is also an approach largely fed by human and social considerations and is considerate of local resources and expertise. This approach is substantiated by the analysis of concepts such as expectancy, efficiency and sustainability.

Finally, Antomarchi and Little proposed a method for evaluating the programme in the article '2007: Exploring the Impact of the PREMA Training Programme on the Conservation of Cultural Heritage' (1998). The paper aims to develop an impact study and define indicators of change in order to better understand and appreciate the links between conservation education and cultural heritage. The authors examined the process, practices and results in conservation training. The date 2007 was chosen at 'random', but was far enough in the future to measure the long-term impact of the PREMA programme. A clear table summarises the various evaluation processes with reference to planning, implementation, completion and follow-up indicators. Finally, the principle of involving the training beneficiaries is examined through the authors' experience in the specific context of PREMA. Overall, the authors advocated an approach through which the trainee, trainers and designers share responsibility for the education process (Antomarchi and Little 1998: 16).

### **The Centre for Heritage Development in Africa**

Following the positive achievements of PREMA, ICCROM took a contributor's role rather than a leading one. As PREMA was ending in December 1999, a PREMA Review Meeting<sup>40</sup> noted the need for continued training and development support. The participants recommended the establishment of the Centre for Heritage Development (CHDA), in Mombassa, Kenya, to cater for English speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa<sup>41</sup>. CHDA began operations in April 2000 as an international NGO. An international team was put in place to set up and run the organisation and to identify opportunities and future orientations<sup>42</sup>. The National Museums of Kenya volunteered to house CHDA's headquarters (Figure 14). ICCROM and NMK formalised their

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<sup>40</sup> The PREMA Review Meeting was held in Porto Novo, Benin, 16 to 19 September 1998.

<sup>41</sup> The African countries affiliated to CHDA are: Angola, Botswana, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>42</sup> The CHDA team is responsible to the Executive Board for: the identification of future orientations and the planning of future activities, the implementation of the Programme of activities, fundraising and the creation of partnerships necessary for the sustainability of CHDA and its activities and budget administration.

co-operation, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and based the new institution in the old Law Court of Mombasa<sup>1</sup>.



**Figure 14:** CHDA headquarters, Mombasa Old Law Court Building, Mombasa, Kenya (CHDA 2000).

CHDA aims to provide a common ground where African heritage professionals can learn and share knowledge and develop new expertise. The Centre carries out five types of activities relating to training, education, information dissemination, cultural projects and support for museums. Besides the training and planning activities, CHDA has hosted or sub-contracted projects to other organisations, including ‘Africa 2009’ courses on ‘Conservation and Management of Immovable Heritage’. The support for museum development starts with education and training but other forms of support are available. A regular support service includes provision of advice, information, small equipment or grants. Information dissemination is achieved through a variety of media including a newsletter and a website<sup>2</sup>. Other products that respond to specific needs, such as a journal, directory and activities reports are also available at archives and at the library

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<sup>1</sup> The National Museums of Kenya has made its existing library available, its exhibition gallery and its conservation laboratory and collection storage area (in the adjacent Fort Jesus Museum). The research resources include the establishment, maintenance and facilities of a specialised library and a database in the old Law Court complex. Accommodation is organised for the students and the participants who have been following CHDA courses and seminars.

<sup>2</sup> The website of CHDA is at: <http://www.heritageinafrica.org>.



located in CHDA's headquarters. The centre also encourages cultural projects aimed to promote regional collaboration and initiatives and to support national capacity building initiatives. The objective is to make more effective use of museums as educational tools and to encourage museum professionals to give public lectures and publish their research.

From an educational perspective, the Centre's core activity is the running of a Postgraduate Diploma Course in the Care and Management of Heritage and Museum Collections. This postgraduate programme is the first in sub-Saharan Africa. Launched in 2002, it resulted from a joint venture between the University of Nairobi (Institute of African Studies), the University College of London (Institute of Archaeology), ICCROM and CHDA. The course was designed for museum professionals who wished to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to manage cultural heritage and to ensure its conservation. The course content, initially developed by Mubiana Luhila, former PREMA University student, has evolved from a rather technical preventive conservation approach to a conceptual and managerial one that explores principles and methods for the management of conservation and the use of collections. The course explains the history of conservation and definitions of the core concepts, principles and processes related to heritage, museums and collections. It continues with an analysis of heritage collections, their context and their conservation, through practical exercises (Figures 15 and 16). The course includes individual research projects, which analyse and develop one or more aspects of the programme.



**Figure 15:** CHDA University Course, collection survey practical, Fort Jesus Museum, Mombasa, Kenya, 2003 (CHDA 2003).



**Figure 16:** CHDA University Course, laboratory practical, Fort Jesus Museum conservation laboratory, Mombasa, Kenya, 2003 (CHDA 2003).

In addition to its membership services and University Course, CHDA worked at its network development in Africa and abroad. Since 2000, the centre has developed professional links with the United Kingdom National Committee of ICOM (ICOM-UK). The relationship took shape when ICOM-UK commissioned a consultant to report on its

potential to assist museums in developing countries (Mason<sup>45</sup> 2002). Following the recommendations of the report, ICOM-UK selected CHDA as a heritage organisation partner in Africa. As a first stage of partnership, ICOM-UK contributed to the enhancement of CHDA library and organised an internship. The multi-faceted nature of the internship enabled ICOM-UK to work closely with the CHDA team, providing administrative and course assistance when needed (Trappes-Lomax 2004: 8). In 2004, both organisations formulated recommendations identifying areas in which ICOM-UK could assist CHDA. The first objective was to organise reciprocal study visits in order to develop a better understanding of the mutual benefits the organisations could gain from each other. The need for assistance in particular aspects of training was identified as a key element of the collaboration process. It was agreed that ICOM-UK would assist CHDA to strengthen its postgraduate course through the participation of ICOM-UK members who have experience teaching in conservation. The need for the development of a conceptual educational approach has been identified in order to further the development of community links<sup>46</sup>. Finally, in 2005, CHDA organised a conference which focused on development, management and partnership between African museums and cultural institutions<sup>47</sup>. The conference, jointly organised with the British Council and the British Museum, was directed towards senior museum professionals. The participants discussed orientations and strategies to improve the management of African museums and heritage, and to strengthen professional partnerships with museums in United Kingdom.

### **‘Generation 2’ Programme**

The next challenges, arising from ICCROM’s work on PREMA and the establishment of CHDA, was to develop ways in which it would be possible, for those engaged in teaching, to design and produce relevant materials and course structures (Ferguson and Pye 2004: 1). ICCROM addressed this problem through a joint educational project with EPA, CHDA and ICCROM’s Unit Collections, called ‘Generation 2 Programme’

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<sup>45</sup> Timothy Mason is an Arts and Heritage Consultant, the former Director of the Museums and Galleries Commission (1995-2000), Director of the Scottish Arts Council and Director of the Western Australian Arts Council.

<sup>46</sup> Personal communication, Mubiana Luhila, 25 July 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Conference on African Museums and Cultural Institutions in the 21st Century: Development, Management and Partnerships, Mombasa, Kenya, 5 to 10 December 2005.

(2001-2003). 'Generation 2' aimed to establish a second 'generation' of African 'facilitators' equipped to teach and to design teaching materials on fundamental conservation topics and on the use of collections, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa. A second objective of the programme was to document the most successful course design developed during the PREMA programme<sup>48</sup>. The didactic material produced by 'Generation 2' for teachers derived from the experience and professional networks developed with PREMA 1990-2000. Isabelle Verger<sup>49</sup>, Heritage Consultant, collaborated with PREMA and co-ordinated the 'Generation 2' programme for ICCROM. She presented a clear description of this two year programme in an article 'Generation 2: Rethinking Education Materials' (Verger 2003: 8). Her experience with African and Western museum professionals combined with her involvement in the design of the 'Generation 2' programme are described in a short and informative article, which illuminates the background to the programme, sums up its progress, and advertises its outcomes in the production of educational conservation material. The authoritative document on this programme is the course design itself; entitled 'Our Students and Ourselves, Approaching Course Design', the course was developed by Elisabeth Pye and Robert Ferguson (2004). Both authors possess an extensive and complementary expertise in education, preventive conservation and cultural heritage in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. This educational tool is unique in its approach as it fosters a reflective approach from all communities concerned with heritage conservation and explores conservation approaches that respect cultural, social and economic diversity.

'The courses we produce are directly related to the kinds of professionals we wish to see evolve. This is not some abstract exercise. It involves living, breathing people who have to interact productively with their environments, their peers and the general public.' (Ferguson and Pye 2004: 1).

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<sup>48</sup> Personal communication, Isabelle Verger, 10 April 2004, ICCROM, Rome, Italy.

<sup>49</sup> Isabelle Verger is Secretary of ICOM-CC and Project Assistant at ICCROM, Rome, Italy.



## **The ‘Africa 2009’ Programme**

After the PREMA Programme, a second challenge for ICCROM was to ensure the preservation of African immovable heritage. As a response to an urgent need in this field, ICCROM created the programme ‘Africa 2009’ (1998-2009). The programme was launched in 1998, at the regional meeting of African cultural heritage professionals held in Abidjan, on the Ivory Coast. The programme is based on the results of a survey carried out by ICCROM in 1996, to which thirty two African countries responded (Joffroy<sup>50</sup> 2001: 7) The principal objective of ‘AFRICA 2009’ is to increase national capacity in sub-Saharan Africa for the management and conservation of immovable cultural heritage.

There are differences and similarities between the PREMA and ‘Africa 2009’ programmes. While PREMA focused on movable heritage, ‘Africa 2009’ focused on immovable heritage. Thus the programmes are complementary. Each programme followed a long term strategy that aimed to train museum professionals in conservation. The ‘Africa 2009’ programme gained from the experience of PREMA, allowing its different projects to get the best of PREMA’s practices and knowledge while adjusting their approach to immovable heritage. The objectives and approach of ‘Africa 2009’ reflect an African perspective of management rather than a Western one. For instance, the management of the ‘Africa 2009’ programme has within its ranks African professionals based at ICCROM’s headquarters. Until then no African Nationals were involved at organisational or project decision-making levels. ‘Africa 2009’ works in close collaboration with CHDA and EPA. Thus, the project fosters exchanges of professional expertise between African cultural heritage organisations through meetings, courses and conservation joint projects. The ultimate objective of the programme is to transfer responsibilities and activities to other African cultural agencies such as AFRICOM, CHDA and EPA. However, at the conclusion of the programme, it might also share its responsibilities with individual African museums, universities or other research institutions.

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<sup>50</sup> Thierry Joffroy is an architect and a Lecturer and Researcher at CRA Terre-EAG Ecole d’Architecture de Grenoble, France, and a Course co-ordinator for the ‘Africa 2009’ courses.

The programme was a significant advance in the study of traditional preservation in Africa. Two publications present the results of the research projects and the case studies that offer evidence on the variety and degrees of involvement by local communities in traditional conservation practices (Joffroy 2001 and 2005). These practices are described with their associated and specific requirements and restrictions, associated with spiritual values and technical practices. They demonstrate that conservation activities are a good opportunity for the communities to put their mark on their environment and express their skills (Joffroy 2001: 9). They also demonstrate that ‘Africa 2009’ is a programme that favours reflection and the progressive development of integrated conservation practices.

## **2.1. Developing the Practice of Preventive Conservation**

Based on the analysis of cultural heritage organisations and programmes undertaken in preventive conservation, it can be observed that AFRICOM, CHDA and the ‘Africa 2009’ programme of ICCROM have the capacity to foster the development of preventive conservation in East African museums.

### **Centre for Heritage Development in Africa**

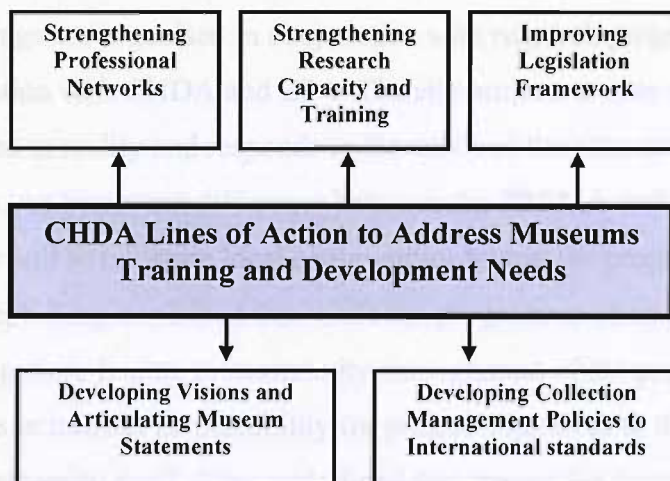
For CHDA to be responsive to the real needs of African museums, a comprehensive assessment of museum conditions and resources was essential. In November 2001, CHDA undertook a survey from which collective museum needs were identified and analysed. By April 2002, the assessment drew a clear picture of current museum training and developmental needs. The assessment provided an analysis of the key issues identified by African museum professionals. Besides involving partner institutions in the design and development of CHDA activities, the assessment formulated action plans to address these issues collectively (Figure 17). In August 2002 (11-17), CHDA held a programme review and planning meeting at its Headquarters in order to design its 2004-2008 programme based on the results gathered at these meeting. Participants representing museums and heritage institutions in Africa, technical partners<sup>51</sup> and the

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<sup>51</sup> Technical partners from the ‘Africa 2009’ Programme were: the British Council, ICCROM, ICOM-UK and KIT.

University of Nairobi attended the meeting. They resolved, amongst other decisions, that the 2004-2008 programme of CHDA would pursue the following activities<sup>1</sup>:

- Maintain and develop the Post-Graduate Diploma Course in the Care and Management of Heritage and Museum Collections in collaboration with the University of Nairobi.
- Amplify the institution’s mandate beyond museums to encompass immovable and intangible heritage.
- Collaborate with other organisations working for heritage management and preservation in Africa<sup>2</sup>.
- Develop and implement a five-year action plan based on the four priorities identified during the meeting: conservation and heritage management<sup>3</sup>, exhibitions, institutional management, co-operation between local communities and museums.



**Figure 17:** CHDA activities in African museums training and development needs.

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication, Mubiana Luhila, 20 August 2002, Mombasa, Kenya.

<sup>2</sup> The collaborating organisations are: Ecole du Patrimoine Africain (EPA), the International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM), the West African Museum Programme (WAMP), the South African Development Coordination Conference Association of Museums (SADCCAM), the Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM) and the Swedish African Museum Programme (SAMP).

<sup>3</sup> Among CHDA’s 2004-2008 programme, the ‘Heritage Conservation, Management and Use’ programme aims to develop capacities and a network of professionals in sub-Saharan Africa, who will ensure the competent conservation, management and use of heritage resources.

From the lines of action identified in the CHDA assessment it can be observed that the needs encountered by museum professionals in issues of training and development are all relevant to the development of preventive conservation in museums. In contrast the concept and prospect of partnership with local communities is not emphasised.

### **The 'AFRICA 2009' Programme**

The activities of 'Africa 2009', in comparison to those of the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa, focus on conservation and heritage management through training and field projects. For instance, the project offers neither short courses nor university courses. Therefore, half of the Programme components took place at the 'heart' of the heritage and in 'contact' with local communities. 'Africa 2009' consists of a continuous loop of feedback and response between workshops and sites projects<sup>55</sup>. The rationale behind the organisation of workshops is to promote reflection, exchange of knowledge and the development of a common framework that can be adapted to local needs. These professional meetings are organised in conjunction with research projects often organised at and in collaboration with CHDA and EPA. The site projects ensure that the programme is effectively rooted in reality and responds to the needs of the sites and the wishes of local communities. An important difference between the PREMA and the 'Africa 2009' programmes is the will to integrate local communities within the programme's objectives and activities. Joseph King explained that while the programme often refers to community participation, it aims to community management of the projects<sup>56</sup>. Thus, 'Africa 2009' aims to transfer responsibility for project objectives to those directly concerned: the community itself. King underlined that among the factors affecting a community-participation approach, the first obstacle came from the heritage professionals who had trouble handing over control to the community<sup>57</sup>. However, the 'Africa 2009' programme demonstrated its real potential for interaction with communities through its research project on traditional conservation practices. This project aimed to create an awareness of existing traditional conservation practices in African contexts and highlights

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<sup>55</sup> Personal communication, Joseph King, ICCROM, Rome, 5 May 2004. Joseph King is Director of the Sites Unit of ICCROM, Rome, Italy.

<sup>56</sup> Personal communication, Joseph King, ICCROM, Rome, 5 May 2004.

<sup>57</sup> Personal communication, Joseph King, ICCROM, Rome, 5 May 2004.

the need for professionals to integrate them into the development of conservation strategies. In addition, 'Africa 2009' identified issues to be considered by heritage professionals in the development of preventive conservation practice. The issues which are particularly relevant to conservation partnerships with local communities are:

- 'The lack of integration of conservation policies into the national authorities' framework of sustainable development;
- The lack of awareness among politicians, decision makers, and local communities of the role that conservation can play within rapidly changing economic, social and environmental situations;
- The ineffectiveness of legislation aimed at protecting immovable cultural heritage;
- The lack of national inventories of immovable cultural heritage;
- The lack of community participation in conservation planning and management;
- The inability for African professionals to share information, specialised knowledge, and best practices in the region.' (Assomo<sup>58</sup> and King 2003: 17).

### **3. Indicators for Preventive Conservation Partnership with AFRICOM and CHDA**

The review and analysis of programmes undertaken by African and Western cultural heritage organisations in preventive conservation offers an opportunity to understand how much conservation has developed in African museums. The identification of obstacles encountered by museum professionals willing to develop conservation practice highlighted the concrete results these international programmes have achieved. They also underlined what the problems were and which approaches and potential partners had not yet been addressed. In fact the process of partnership between local and institutional communities was a linear process. AFRICOM and CHDA demonstrated that the principle of partnership emerged within their mandate and in their objectives (Figure 18).

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<sup>58</sup> Lazare Eloundou Assomo is a Programme Specialist with the Africa Unit of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

However, this colloquial principle has not yet been put into practice. The rationale for this might be the lack of effective institutional interactions. It is also because local communities were not considered as potential partners but rather as an audience.



**Figure 18:** Interactive partnership process.

But how can AFRICOM and CHDA, as organisations and development practitioners, support partnership between museums and local communities in the preventive conservation of cultural heritage and make better management decisions? The following section presents a set of theoretical and practical ideas which respond to this question.

First, the experience gained by CHDA and AFRICOM through their collaboration with their sister organisations, ICCROM and ICOM, must be acknowledged. ICCROM’s PREMA programme has promoted the preventive conservation practice in museums. It also helped the understanding of the development context in African museums. PREMA helped to enhance teaching methods and provided heritage professionals with educational tools that have a real potential for the development of partnerships with local communities<sup>1</sup>. Second, the expertise developed by ‘Africa 2009’ proved to be an

<sup>1</sup> See Ferguson, R. and Pye, E. (2004), ‘Our Students and Ourselves, Approaching Course Design’, in ICCROM (ed.), (Rome: ICCROM).

international agencies, non-governmental organisations and local communities concerned with the design and implementation of the programme. The combination of participants, with various agendas, expertise and financial capacity disclosed the varying degrees of mutual respect and conflict encountered within the organisation of conservation activities<sup>60</sup>. The programme generated a wide range of results in integrating conservation with the socio-cultural characteristics of the site to be conserved and the customs of the sites' residents. Finally, the collaboration between ICOM and AFRICOM helped to broaden financial support for museum projects and allowed a better understanding of the situation and issues encountered by African museums. In addition, within five years, the organisation promoted the status of African culture and museums world wide through publications, conferences and its website<sup>61</sup>.

### **The International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM)**

How can AFRICOM promote the practice of preventive conservation in museums and the establishment of partnerships between local communities and museums? In a museum orientated organisation such as AFRICOM, a substantial method to integrate and link the various actors in contact with the museum environment is needed. For instance, the concept of 'community participation', in cultural and museums projects, is a fundamental feature of museum educational projects. Yet if this approach is considered for museological issue of representation it is not undertaken in the conservation practice of museum professional. However, this approach including awareness of traditions and cultural diversity should be considered while keeping in mind the historical background and affiliations that the local audience maintains with the institution. A large part of the natural, tangible and intangible heritage of Africans is as much an intrinsic part of the communities as it is of the museums. Thus, in conservation development, AFRICOM could play a crucial role in the promotion of an integrated conservation approach that assimilates cross-cultural practices and knowledge into their work. Likewise, AFRICOM could work towards the study and publication of guidelines and handbooks on museology

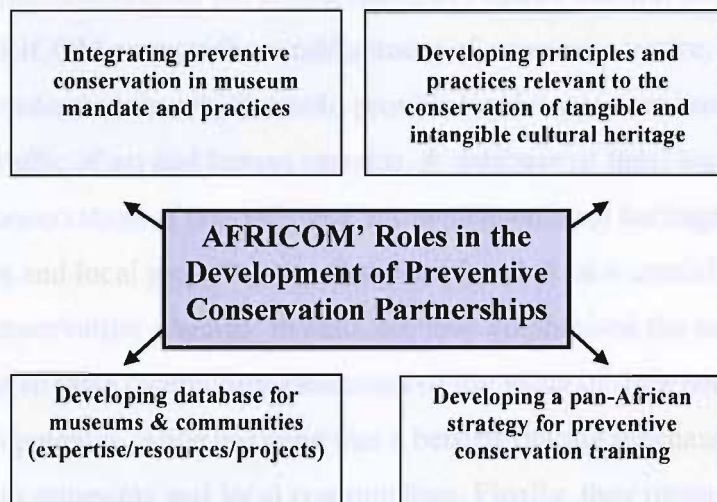
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<sup>60</sup> Personal communication, Joseph King, ICCROM, Rome, 24 May 2004.

<sup>61</sup> AFRICOM's website was honoured as 'Best Museum Professional's Site' at the 10th Annual Conference 'Museums and the Web' (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 22-25 March 2006). It is the first African Website ever to be honoured at this annual event which is the only one to explore the on-line presentation of cultural and heritage content across institutions and around the world.



could work towards the study and publication of guidelines and handbooks on museology and conservation management. These would be valuable tools for the effective integration of intangible heritage into museological and conservation practices. In addition, AFRICOM could contribute to the formulation of international standards conducive to the documentation of intangible heritage. A positive approach could consist of a close partnership between CHDA and EPA in the implementation of concrete activities with local communities. This would provide a unique opportunity for AFRICOM to promote the participation of museums in sustainable development and involve all components of society in the protection of cultural heritage (AFRICOM 1999: 2) (Figure 19).



**Figure 19:** Potential roles of AFRICOM in the development of preventive conservation in museums and in partnership with local communities.

Critical questions remain, ‘What type and form of education is expected by museum professionals?’ and ‘How many museum professionals need training?’. By 2006 AFRICOM had not yet produced, nor envisaged studies to assess the current needs of its members, in terms of conservation and museological training. However, the formulation and development of a strategic plan for the education of museum professionals requires



In conclusion, communication and knowledge exchange is invaluable in an African museum context permeated with oral tradition and lacking up-to-date professional technologies. Museum professionals could benefit from the intangible resources and traditional skills of communities, when they participate in museum projects. A tripartite collaboration between AFRICOM, museums professionals and the communities, in the dissemination of information, ultimately would benefit cultural strategies adapted to the museums needs and create a 'sense of ownership' within the museum going public. To complete the set of indicators developed above, the recommendations discussed unofficially by the AFRICOM Conference participants must be acknowledged and can be articulated as follows. The Conference participants stressed the need for operational co-operation between museums, national governments, UNESCO and NGO's which would then act as the catalysts for the conservation of African cultural heritage. They also suggested that AFRICOM support the establishment of a resource centre, accessible to African museum professionals, which would provide legal support on issues of autonomy, illicit traffic of art and human remains. A database of local expertise and resources in the conservation of movable and immovable cultural heritage (inventory of practice, principles and local projects) was also considered to be a crucial tool for the development of conservation practice. In addition, they emphasised the need to support projects which aim to raise community awareness of the value of their heritage and encourage them to patent it, while ensuring that a benefit sharing mechanism is established between museums and local communities. Finally, they recommended that frameworks for the management of intangible heritage, including principles and standards for the practice of its conservation are created.

### **The Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA)**

CHDA was established to serve the needs of museum professionals in the management of their institutions and the conservation of their heritage. But apart from the University Post Graduate Diploma, the objectives and activities of the Centre did not focus on conservation but rather on managerial and museological issues. However, the Centre offers a series of characteristics conducive to the development of partnerships with local communities. The CHDA team gained considerable experience through its professional

relations with ICCROM and its numerous activities that promoted heritage education. The Centre also developed an important network of partnerships in Africa and abroad. The fact that the Centre changed its name also denotes a socio-cultural determination by its managers to broaden their field responsibilities and activities in heritage management. Indeed, the term 'Centre' which replaced the term 'Programme' conveys the idea of longevity as opposed to a programme which has a planned schedule with timing limitations. Similarly the change of the term 'Museum' in 'Heritage' offers the possibility of considerably enlarging the scope of its activities and partners. The Centre can also involve a larger variety of contributors and expertise to the design and running of its activities. For instance, CHDA could formulate guidelines on preventive conservation best practice with local conservators. The educational material designed for the 'Generation 2' Programme is a resource that the centre should use and further develop with a focus on community based conservation. The core element of the method consists in a manual for future initiators of courses in conservation and collection management. This manual was designed to be used in various ways according to the experience of the facilitator, as well as in teaching contexts (Verger 2003: 8). Thus the method proposed for the 'Generation 2' programme is a way to study and develop in order to integrate new approaches in preventive conservation. Ultimately through this research, CHDA could be in a position to promote the participation of local communities, as partners within the process of preventive conservation development.

In conclusion, the identification of indicators conducive to partnerships between AFRICOM, CHDA and local communities can be categorised in two distinct parts. The first category which is administrative and linked to legal and financial issues could in the long term have some impact on the development of partnerships. However, it essentially relates to the executive policy of each organisation. The second category of indicators presents aspects that integrate managerial and socio-cultural features (Figure 20). Within the review of organisational structures, it is this combination of approaches that provide an indication for the success of partnerships with local communities in the preventive conservation of cultural heritage in the custody of museums and/or the resident communities.

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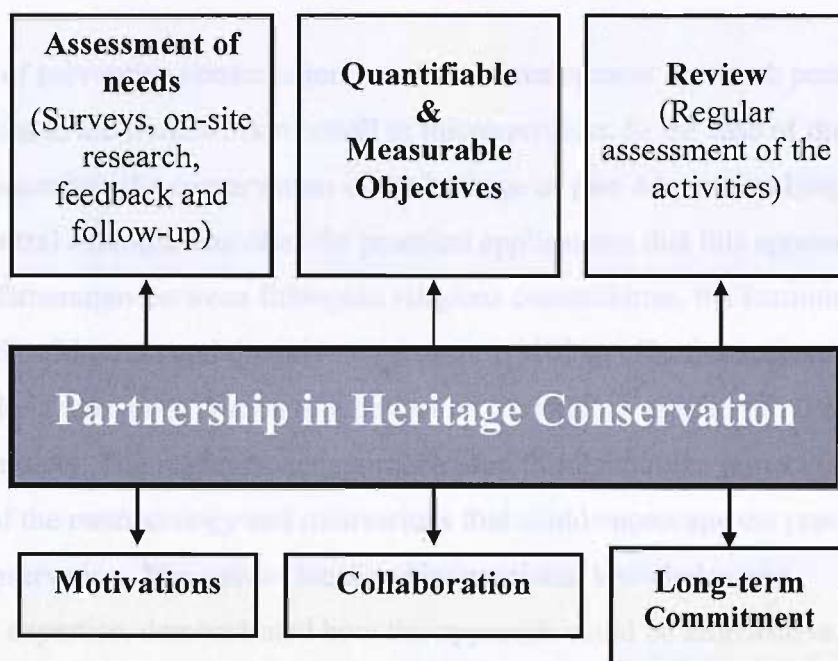


Figure 20: Managerial and socio-cultural indicators for partnership.

## 1. Background of Ethiopia

Unique among African countries the ancient Ethiopian monarchy remained free of colonial rule, with the exception of the 1936-1941 Italian occupation during World War II. It is a multicultural nation, a federation of different states and regions<sup>1</sup> (Euston 1979; Abebe 1998; Zewde 1998; Woodward 2003) (Figures 21 and 22).

<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, promulgated in 1994.

## **Chapter Five**

### **The Ankober Community Case Study**

In the context of preventive conservation, a cultural development approach presents valuable features in the framework of small or micro-projects. In the case of the ‘Ankober community’, the conservation of the heritage of past Abyssinian Emperors and churches in central Ethiopia describes the practical applications that this approach can foster. The collaboration between Ethiopian religious communities, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum and the private sector provided an effective response that promoted the long term preservation of a collection of religious artefacts in the custody of the local community. The management approach used throughout the project opted for a combination of the methodology and motivations that could encourage the practice of preventive conservation. The sum of local and international knowledge and organisational expertise, demonstrated how this approach could be an effective way of responding to the needs and wishes of all the partners involved. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the historical, cultural and social contexts of the Ankober community and its heritage: the Medhane Alem Church and its collection of artefacts. The factors that motivated the community to conserve its heritage are identified and local methods of preventive conservation practice and their principles are also analysed.

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<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was ratified in 1994.

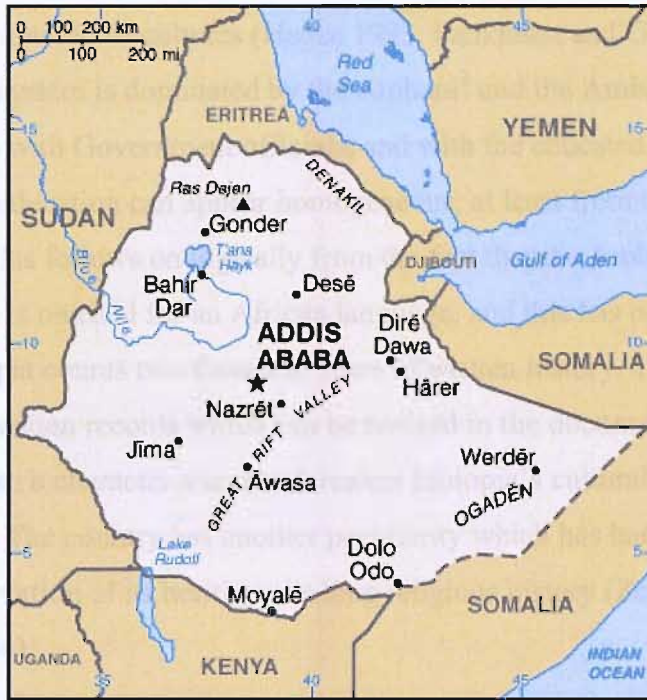


Figure 21: Map of Ethiopia (The University of Texas at Austin 2004).

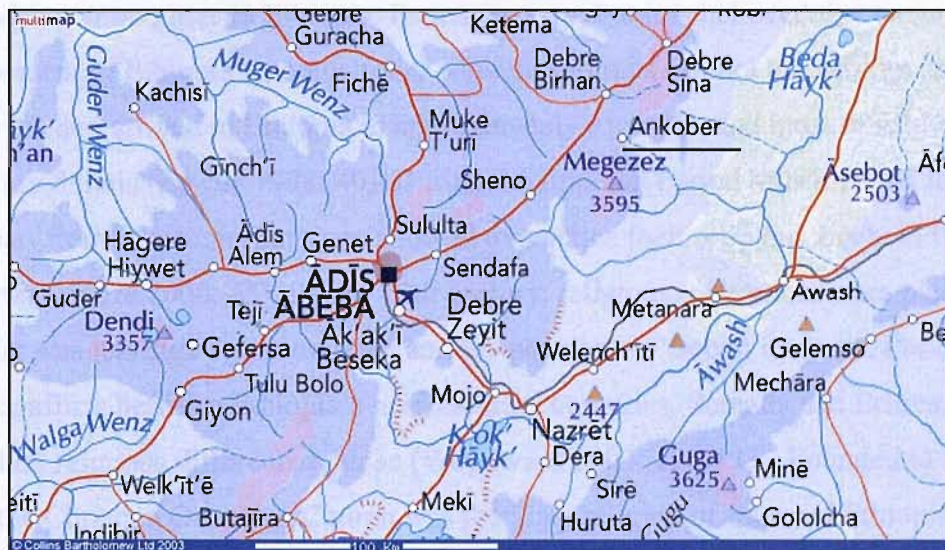


Figure 22: Location of Ankober (Collins Bartholomew 2003).

There appears to be no unity of ‘culture’ in Ethiopia; one can not refer to an exclusive Ethiopian culture, like so many African countries, Ethiopia is a land made up of varied ethnic and linguistic threads (Pankhurst 1990: ix). While successive governments appear to have taken pride in national ‘culture’, most of the different ethnic groups or

nationalities within the country have been given little opportunity to develop a sense of the worth about their own local cultures (Henze 1993, Pankhurst and Gérard 1996). The Ethiopian education system is dominated by the Amhara<sup>2</sup> and the Amharic language. Starting from the top with Government officials, and with the educated classes, the Ethiopian culture of education can appear homogeneous, at least from the outside (Henze 2000: 77). In a way this follows on logically from the fact that the Amharic language has its own script, which is unusual for an African language, and this has been a source of national pride. Ethiopia counts two thousand years of written history. This Ethiopian ancient tradition of written records which can be noticed in the documentation of the nation's history is also a characteristic which makes Ethiopia's cultural identity so distinctive in Africa. The country has another peculiarity which has had an important impact on the conservation of its heritage; its long religious history (Zewde 1998: 34-38 and Fissera 1996: 194).

The majority of Ethiopian believers are Christian or Muslim. Also, there are still a few small Jewish communities in Ethiopia. Estimates vary, but it is believed that twenty five to forty percent of Ethiopia's population is Muslim and thus can not be considered as a 'minority'. Islam arrived in Ethiopia in approximately 615 A.D. and most of Ethiopia's Muslims are Sunnis (Zewde 1998: 40). During the Imperial period Muslims and Jews had to live apart from Christians but were allowed to practice their religions freely in their own quarter (Henze 2000: 55). By the 19th century, religious differences were placed on a level that was less significant to peace and the populations' social interests. For instance political conflicts between Ethiopia's neighbouring countries, Somalia and Eritrea were not based on religious differences per se (Woodward 2003: 126-133). Founded in the 4th century, the Christian Orthodox Church was the State religion of Imperial Ethiopia (Crummey 1971). In 1955 the Ethiopian constitution stated that the Christian Orthodox Church was the established church of the Empire and had the support of the State<sup>3</sup>. As

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<sup>2</sup> The 'Amhara' are the politically and culturally dominant ethnic group of Ethiopia. They are located primarily on the central highland plateau of Ethiopia. Numerically the Amhara population is in minority. Amharic is the official language of Ethiopia (Balletto 1995: 50).

<sup>3</sup> Personal communication, Bertrand Hirsh, 22 December 2004, Paris France. Bertrand Hirsh is former Director of the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, 2000-2003, and Professor of African History, University of Paris (Sorbonne-Panthéon), 2004 to present.

such the church became a vital element in the ethnic identity of the dominant Amhara. In contrast, Islam spread among ethnically diverse and geographically dispersed groups at different times and therefore failed to provide the same degree of political unity.

Ethiopia's tangible and intangible cultural heritage is represented by three main sectors: archaeological sites, immovable and movable heritage (Balletto 1995: 278). Ethiopia is well known for the discovery in 1974 of a human skeleton named 'Lucy', which was a landmark discovery in the history of uncovering the origins of mankind, representing the most complete humanlike fossil ever found (Zewde 1998: 11-13). Ethiopia is renowned for its architectural heritage and particularly for its churches in Gondar<sup>4</sup>, Lalibela<sup>5</sup> and Harar<sup>6</sup> and for the Axum<sup>7</sup> stelae (Gerster 1970; Henze 1993 and Grierson 1993). The country also has a long tradition in the manufacture of Icons, painted scrolls used for religious and medicinal purposes and ceremonial silver crosses (Dubois 1996: 343). This ancient cultural heritage garnered the attention of international experts and fostered the development of diverse archaeological research, all over Ethiopia (Negash 1997; Munro-Hay 1991; Finneran and Tribe 2004; Keys 2004; Weedman 2005). The preservation and management of Ethiopian cultural heritage is the responsibility of diverse groups and authorities. Immovable heritage and sites are the responsibility of the national authorities who are supported by international organisations. Movable cultural heritage comes under the remit of the Ministry of Culture, the Orthodox authority and local communities. The establishment of the Ministry of Culture in 2001<sup>8</sup> has helped to gather and connect all those involved in the management of heritage preservation. It also encouraged cultural rather than restrained diversity. For instance, the National Museum and the Institute of

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<sup>4</sup> The most famous buildings in the city of Gondar are the 17th century Royal Enclosure including the castle of Fasilides, the Iyasu's, a library and three churches (Zewde 1998: 101-110; Pakenham 1998).

<sup>5</sup> The rural Town of Lalibela is well-known for its monolithic churches (11), which were built in the 13th century (Zewde 1998: 57-62).

<sup>6</sup> Harar was founded between the 7th and the 11th centuries and emerged as the centre of Islamic culture and religion in the Horn of Africa. The old town is home to 91 mosques (Burton 1966 and Zekaria 1996).

<sup>7</sup> The major monuments in the city of Axum are stelae which are up to 33 metre-high. A stele looted by the Italian army was returned to Ethiopia in 2005 and is due for reinstallation (Zewde 1998 and Henze 2000).

<sup>8</sup> The Ministry embraces Youth, Sports and Culture affairs as well as organisations such as the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage and the National Archives and Library of Ethiopia.



Ethiopian Studies Museum (IES<sup>9</sup>), which show the histories of Imperial classes, have adopted a less elitist approach towards material culture. Similarly, the protection of cultural heritage has been extended to everyday religion and culture<sup>10</sup>. Ethiopian cultural heritage also consists of artefacts manufactured, collected and conserved by churches, sometimes over many centuries. The central authority of the Orthodox Church supports conservation and museological projects through the funding of individual churches endowed with artefacts of historical significance. The museums of some churches are managed by religious personnel. These ‘museums’ do not have official mandates; however, two purposes guide their operations: education and access. A large proportion of heritage is in the care of small religious communities, who are isolated from the central authority and capital city and thus are deprived of financial and managerial support.

### **Background of Ankober**

Ankober is located 170 kilometres north-east of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa<sup>11</sup>, at an altitude of 2,870 meters. It is on the edge of the Rift Valley escarpment, on the road that connects the lowlands of the Afar<sup>12</sup> with the central plateau of Ethiopia (Balletto 1995: 120). The topography of the area is steep mountains dissected by ravines and gorges through which rivers tumble into the eastern escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. To reach Medhane Alem Church, one must drive from Ankober to the foot of the mountain on top of which the ruins of the Emperor’s Palace are situated (Figure 23). It is impossible to drive the whole way to the Palace and the Church because of the terrain. Visitors must leave their cars at the mountain’s northern base and then climb up on foot.

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<sup>9</sup> The Institute of Ethiopian studies was established in 1963 with three major components: a research and publication unit, a library and a museum. The museum is in the old Palace of the late Emperor Haile Selassie. It has ethnographic artefacts from more than eighty ethnic groups, and an ethnographic section and a gallery which concentrates on the history of sacred arts (Zekaria and Pankhurst 1989).

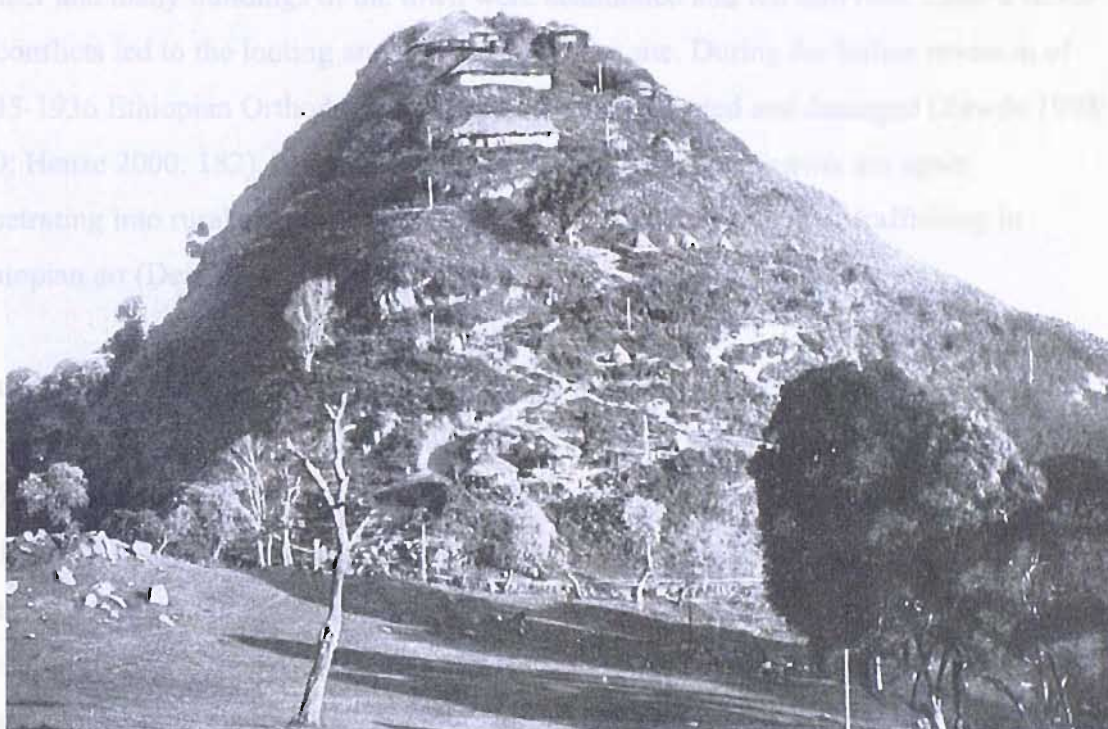
<sup>10</sup> National and religious museums present their collections in Addis Ababa and in rural areas. The most important ones are: The National Museum, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, the Entoto Mariam Church Museum, the Saint George Church Museum and the Harar Museum.

<sup>11</sup> Addis Ababa (‘new flower’ in Amharic) is the capital city of Ethiopia. The site was chosen by Empress Taytu Betul, and the city was founded in 1886 by her husband, Emperor Menelik II (Zewde 1998: 172-173).

<sup>12</sup> The Afar region, located in the north-east of Ethiopia is one of the nine ethnic divisions of the country. The Afar depression, locally known as the Danakil depression, is the three-way junction formed by the Red sea and the Gulf of Aden emerging on land and meeting the East African Rift.



Between 1739 and 1855, Ethiopia was divided into a number of small kingdoms ruled by regional princes and feudal lords (Henze 2000: 120). Strategically well placed, because it stood on a high commanding position, Ankober was made the capital of the Shewan dynasty in the first half of 18th century. The kings of Shoa extended Ankober, creating an important capital, and according to custom they constructed a palace and several churches endowing them with land, manuscripts and precious ecclesiastical artefacts (Balletto 1995: 120; Zewde 1998: 120; Henze 2000: 116).



**Figure 23:** The Ankober Palace hill, capital of Shewa, early 19th century (Pankhurst and Gérard 1996: 90).

The town, in the early 19th century, was one of the principal residences of King Sahle Selassie<sup>1</sup>, founder of the Shewan State, and had a population estimated at between ten and fifteen thousand. The settlement was visited by all the European travellers who made their way to his court (Zewde 1998: 121; Pankhurst 1996 and Pankhurst and Gérard

<sup>1</sup> Sahle Selassie (1795-1847), was a member of the Amhara royal family. He ruled the feudal, semi-independent Kingdom of Shewa between 1813 and 1847. He was the grandfather of Emperor Menelik II (Henze 2000: 128-129).

1996). As a capital and the residence of a succession of Kings, Ankober was unusual in having no less than five churches. During its occupation by Emperor Tewodros<sup>14</sup> in the 1850s Ankober was partially destroyed but subsequently rebuilt by Sahle Selassie's grandson King Menelik<sup>15</sup>. The latter made it his capital until he and his court abandoned it in 1878 to move south to Entoto and later to Addis Ababa. This move led to the decline of Ankober, its population shrank rapidly, although it remained, until the end of the century, a fairly significant settlement on the trade route to the coast. When trade goods began to be transported by the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway Ankober lost its significance as an economic centre (Henze 2000: 206). The population then declined further and many buildings of the town were abandoned and fell into ruin. Later a series of conflicts led to the looting and destruction of the site. During the Italian invasion of 1935-1936 Ethiopian Orthodox churches were further looted and damaged (Zewde 1998: 140; Henze 2000: 182). In the last fifty years, merchants and tourists are again penetrating into rural areas and the region has seen the emergence of trafficking in Ethiopian art (Deisser and Abubaker 2005).

Though much of old Ankober disappeared, the local community maintained the ruins of the Emperor's Palace and the two Churches of Maryam and Medhane Alem, built in 1864. These represent some of the finest examples of early 19th century Ethiopian architecture which are still used for worship (Pankhurst 1990: 232; Balletto 1995: 121). The site has strong historic significance for Ethiopians as the Shoa kings, including King Menelik, had their residences on this site since the 17th century. Despite the troubled history of the city, the religious communities of the Ankober district have managed to retain possession of hundreds of precious manuscripts and other significant historical artefacts.

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<sup>14</sup> In 1855, Tewodros declared himself 'King of Kings' and was crowned under the name of Emperor Tewodros II. He began to re-unify Ethiopia by subjugating regional Princes to his rule (Zewde 1998: 134; Henze 2000: 133).

<sup>15</sup> In 1889, King Menelik of Shoa was proclaimed Emperor Menelik II, King of Ethiopia. He reigned until 1913 and fending off the advance of European powers (Henze 2000: 144-145).

## 2. The Ankober Community and its Cultural Heritage

The relationships between the Ankober community and its cultural heritage have religious, historical and social characteristics. Having been as a capital city for more than a century, Ankober possesses important and diverse cultural heritage (Pankhurst 1990: 217). Throughout Ethiopia the city is known as a sacred place of worship and as an historic symbol of sovereignty. Four thousand years of Christianity have also shaped a religious heritage, well-recognised overseas, which has associated traditions, in music, dress, crafts and architectural styles (Zanetti 1996) (Figure 24). The interaction between the community and its heritage has seen cultural continuity and also many changes. The Ankober site provides the local community with spiritual and cultural guidance and in return the community helps maintain the site and enhance the religious community.



**Figure 24:** The annual procession of clergy carrying traditional Ethiopian crosses, at the Church of St Michael, Ankober; by Johann Martin Bernatz (1802-1878), an official artist of an embassy to Sahle Selassie, King of Shewa in 1842 (by Permission of the British Library OIOC WD 2209/5).



### The Ankober Site

Located at the top of the hill the Palace ruins are a symbol of past glories when Ankober was the capital of the Shewan Kingdom. In the Ethiopian consciousness it also symbolically embodies the regalia and prosperity of the Kings and Emperors who lived there. The construction of this residence encouraged the development of architecture and crafts at Ankober (Balletto 1995: 121; Mack 2000: 38). The physical remains of the building and parts of the perimeter wall are fragile and incomplete. The countryside surrounding the Palace hill retains many of its original features and roles. Since the 4th century church and State have been interlinked and, due churches were constructed around the Kings' residences (Figure 25). Of the five churches built at Ankober, only four still exist, the fifth burnt down.



**Figure 25:** The Medhane Alem Church in its surroundings, October 2003.

The Church of Afer Bayiene Tekle Harmanot on the north-eastern side of the hill is known for its rich heritage. On the northern side is the Ankober Michael Cathedral and on the eastern escarpment is the Church of Saint Mary. The skeleton of Negus Sahle Selassie, which was exhumed by an enemy who was looking for gold, is kept in a chest in a building in the Church compound. In the south are Saint George's Church and the ruins

of the largest Church, Medhane Alem. Emperor Menelik and Taitu Betul celebrated their wedding ceremonies in this Church. The Church burnt down in 1930. According to local tradition the fire was started by the cigarette of a visiting foreigner.

In the areas around the Palace there are many archaeological and historic sites. The graves of Menelik's horse, which served at the famous battle of Adwa<sup>16</sup>, Menelik himself and Antiononi, an Italian agent, are buried to the north and south of the Palace. Another archaeological site in the vicinity is Letmarefia. This site, which was given by Menelik to the Italian Geographic Association (1876), houses the military store of Negus Sahle Selassie and is historically significant for the Ethiopian community at large. Other important sites overlooked by the Palace ruins are the monasteries of the Beta-Israel<sup>17</sup> run by Ethiopian Jews and the Catholic mission established by the French at a place named 'Muk Meder'.

Another significant historic site which has social and economic potential is the market of Alyu Amba, located about fifteen kilometres from Ankober. During the 18th and 19th centuries Ethiopian slave traders used this market which was on the trade route which passed through Harar and on to the historic ports of Zeila and Berbera (Zewde 1998: 158). A market still operates there and is regularly used by the Ankober community. It is also an informal 'open air museum' where ethnically diverse communities such as the Afars, the Argobas, and local Amharas came every week to sell their products (Pankhurst 1990: 217).

### **Religious, Social and Cultural Connections**

Many younger people in the region believe that the development of the capital city, Addis Ababa, could offer them access to a wealthier lifestyle. Some leave the region, others

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<sup>16</sup> At the Battle of Adwa in 1896, Ethiopian forces under Emperor Menelik II united to defeat an invading force of Italian troops. It was a significant turning point in the history of modern Africa. It occurred when the colonial authority was well advanced on the African continent, and it indicated that Africa was not just there 'for the taking' by European powers. Moreover, it marked the entry of Ethiopia into the modern community of nations. Menelik's victory over the Italians forced European States to recognise Ethiopia as a sovereign and independent State (Mack 2000: 67).

<sup>17</sup> The term 'Beta Israel' means 'House of Israel'. Jews of Ethiopian origin are also called Falasha, which means 'exile' or 'stranger' (Henze 2000: 53).

who do not have the resources to do so continue the traditional way of life of their parents. The older generation who preserved the heritage of Ankober are dying out and they realise that alternatives for the preservation and management of their heritage must be found. Cultural heritage itself is the main tool for knowledge transfer, thus its preservation is crucial to the community. The religious community is an important pool of stimulus in the promotion of the preservation of cultural heritage through education (Pankhurst 1962: 245) (Figure 26). The Ankober site includes three schools; the School of Poetry, the School of Manuscripts and the School of Song. Both sexes have access to education, but for social and economic reasons fewer girls attend classes. However, the intellectual status of the women is acknowledged by the community as equal to that of men (Pankhurst 1992). A class in Geez<sup>18</sup> (learning how to write and speak Geez) that the Deacon<sup>19</sup> of Ankober used as an example of the type of education provided, was taught by a woman. The schools encourage the local community to attend poetry and song demonstrations. The School of Song is for the young people and orphans of the surrounding villages, who are welcomed and taken into the care of the community. The schools of poetry and manuscripts are for mature students, who wish to join the religious community. They complete the equivalent of a Masters degree, which takes a minimum of five years to complete. Courses are given in Amarynia and in Geez. Their collection of manuscripts is an essential educational resource for these students. The arts of poetry and manuscript are anchored within Ethiopian culture (Pankhurst 1990: 188; Henze 1998: 76). In the tradition in these arts speakers and writers are trained to narrate, with eloquence, historic tales in original ways, where emphasis is placed in the second meaning of the words (Figure 27). This tradition and skills were also preformed in the reign of Sahle Selassie, at the High Court in Poetry of Ankober, under a tree in the Palace ruins.

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<sup>18</sup> 'Geez' is the classical Semitic language of Ethiopia. It was the language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, as well as the origin of Amharic, Ethiopia's modern official language and of Tigrinya, the language spoken in the north of the country (Henze 2000: 37).

<sup>19</sup> The term 'Deacon' is a Christian Orthodox title. In the context of Ankober it means an appointed Minister of Charity.





**Figure 26:** Students reading manuscripts at Ankober, 1913-1915, (Pankhurst and Gérard 1996: 59).



**Figure 27:** Student contest in poetry at the site of the High Court of Poetry at Ankober, 2005.

The social, educational, and religious characteristics of the community are also linked with the natural heritage. Whereas Westerners have long considered art and medicine to be separate disciplines, the community considers them to be intimately connected. They also believe artworks to be active forces that ensure health. The ability of Ethiopian artworks to cure believers demonstrates art and religious faith and their effect on physical and mental health (Mercier 1979; Pankhurst 1990: 188 and 309). Part of this 'art-medicine' in Ankober includes images with sacrificial status and images of fascinating spirits who dwell in men's body. These images, produced on old parchment scrolls, are often derived from Greek and Christian iconography. Access to them is highly restricted and only in extreme cases. Minor diseases are treated with medicinal infusions produced by the community from local plants, flowers and herbs. These medicines are intended to provide strength and health for all members of the family. Their composition is recorded by the priests and kept within the collection of manuscripts and part of the community's heritage.

The cultural, social and economic values attributed to the Ankober heritage by its community in its everyday life, ensured the perpetuation of local and traditional practices in conservation. The character of this heritage, which combines tangible and intangible features in the natural environment, secured access for everyone. Each individual is, by some philosophical or practical means, a constituent of this heritage; be it a priest, a student, a peasant or a manual worker. The relationship between the community and its cultural heritage has a political facet which reinforces regional and national pride. It also helps in sparing citizens from identity crisis as a collective concern of survival and identity recognition.

### **3. Principles of Partnership**

In 2003, the religious community of Ankober wanted to create a museum that would gather and preserve their cultural heritage in storage and exhibition areas. The artefacts would be registered, documented and conserved and kept in stable and safe



environmental conditions. The project was with the Curator of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, ‘Amba Ecotourism’, a company established to develop ecotourism in the Highland of Ethiopia, and the author. This collaborative project focused on the need to mitigate the threat posed by theft and to ensure the long term preservation and conservation of a collection of Ethiopian religious artefacts. The museum was established by the community in May 2005.

The Ankober project built upon local customs and traditions for the protection of religious and ceremonial artefacts from war and looting. It was innovative, cost-effective and undertaken by the community itself. This project showed that preventive conservation is an appropriate tool in Ethiopia, in a context of great political challenges and human imperatives, presenting opportunities to introduce fundamental principles of conservation and to impede trafficking.

### **Foundation of the Project**

In March 2003, Mr. Haille Gabriel Dagne, a representative from the Ankober community came to the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum to present the community project and to seek collaboration with heritage professionals. This was the starting point for a project that gathered together three types of ‘communities’; the Ankober community, the heritage professionals and a private company.

The project was initiated by the Ankober community in collaboration with Mr. Dagne in 2002, at that time he launched an ecotourism project in collaboration with the community. This project raised a series of conservation issues regarding the natural and cultural heritage of the community. Faced with the desire of the community to preserve the Medhane Alem Church and the movable heritage attached to it, enlarging the partnership using the expertise of heritage professionals was suggested. While the IES Museum had existed since 1963, the Ankober community had never before approached the institution. On the other hand Mr. Dagne had an established relationship with the Museum and the University going back more than thirty years. He invited the community to visit these institutions and seek potential partners. The Museum’s personnel did not

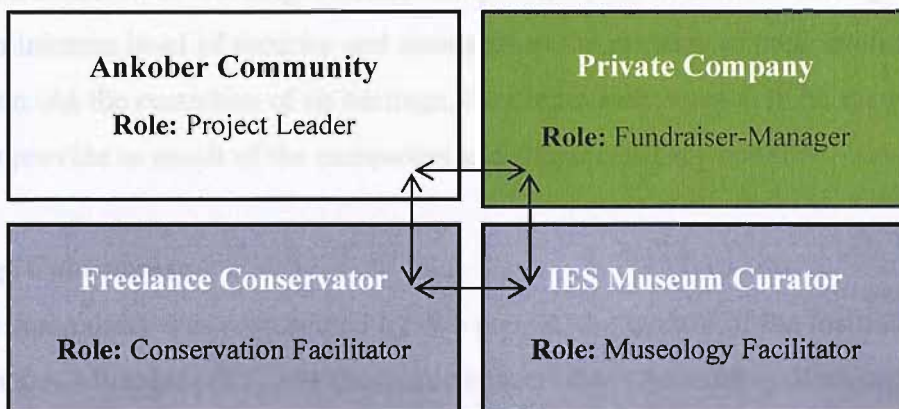
include a conservator. However, at this time the author was working with the Institution and the Faculty of History at Addis Ababa University. Her work involved the implementation of a preventive conservation plan for the Museum's galleries and providing introductory lectures on preventive conservation for the students of archaeology. A meeting was organised between Mr. Dagne, Mr. Ahmed Zekaria Abubaker, Curator of the Anthropology Galleries and the author. The curator and conservator had worked together on a series of projects<sup>20</sup> and had established a sound professional relationship. It was readily agreed that a combination of conservation and museological expertise would be essential to fulfil the objectives of the Ankober community. As both heritage professionals were very interested in participating in this project, an appointment was organised at Ankober with Mr. Liq Kahnat Qale Kristos, who as Archpriest and Head of Ankober Churches, represented the religious and resident community of Ankober. Thus he had the trust of its community and the authority to accept or decline the offer of partnership made by the heritage professionals. The interview, conducted in Amharic and translated by Mr. Dagne, took place at the Ankober Equabet (church storage) where samples of the movable heritage were displayed for the visitors. Along with the artefacts, placed in the centre of the space, ten Elders were present, seated on two wooden benches contiguous to the artefacts. The discussion was imbued with ceremony and the intangible local and traditional culture. For instance, access to Equabet is only permitted when barefoot. In this culture each person is acknowledged by the shaking of hands, whatever their function, age or gender. Everyone, whether adult or child, has the right to express his/her view and have it listened to by the group. Then, traditional food and drinks, prepared by the religious, must be shared on a large common plate and consumed using only hands. Finally, artefacts should not be touched by anyone without getting prior permission to do so from the community's keepers. An appreciation of and adaptation to this heritage and code of conduct, by the heritage professionals was tested by the community's participants. No instruction or recommendations was made by the spokesperson during this process as it was felt by them that this would not be respectful of the different religions and origins of the curator

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<sup>20</sup> Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum: preventive conservation for the Anthropology Galleries and preventive conservation for the Manuscript collection (2002). National Museum of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa): preventive conservation for the collections in storage (2002-2003).

and conservator. Having responded suitably to the community's questions, code of conduct and value system an accord was established between all partners. While the community had a long history of record keeping, the community did not conceive any need for this agreement to be recorded. Such partnerships are based on trust so great importance is placed upon a social code of conduct which acknowledges and is considerate of the values and backgrounds of all partners.

In the collaborative context of the project, it was essential that the backgrounds and motivations of all the partners involved were understood, so that mutual trust would develop. This approach was a prerequisite of the Ankober community prior to starting the project. Thus each community was represented by individuals who liaised with each other to ensure that respective interests and contributions were agreed upon and put into practice (Figure 28).



**Figure 28:** Interests and roles of the three communities participating in the Ankober project.

The representatives from each community were:

- Community of Ankober: Mr. Liq Kahnat Qale Kristos, Archpriest and Head of Ankober Churches.
- Community of heritage professionals: Mr. Ahmed Zekaria Abubaker, Curator, Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum and Ms. Anne-Marie Deisser, textile conservator and PhD student.

- Ecotourism community: Mr. Haille Gabriel Dagne, heritage manager representative of the Ankober community and manager of the ecotourism lodges.

### **The Ankober Community**

The term ‘Ankober community’ as it is used within the project relates to the group of people living on the Medhane Alem Church site. The community is composed of Christian Orthodox religious devoted to worship and spiritual functions of education and religious ceremonies. The community also comprised of the residents of the Church and Palace site. Most of them are peasants, manual workers and students of the local schools. The community sought conservation advice from heritage professionals and for administrative and financial support from Amba Ecotourism, already involved in nature rehabilitation of the site. At the same time, the community wished to retain its autonomy in all ethical and religious matters related with conservation. Thus they favoured partnership with foreign professionals, be they from Africa or further a field. They believed that a conservator working internationally in the field of cultural heritage would guarantee a minimum level of security and standards in the practice of conservation and documentation. As the custodian of its heritage, the community wanted to be the project leader and to provide as much of the manpower and finance as they could.

### **The Heritage Community**

The heritage community was represented by two people, the curator of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum (IES) and the textile conservator (the author). Both worked voluntarily. The IES curator, M. Zekaria Abubaker, knew the heritage and history of Ankober theoretically but he had never had access to the site. He participated in the project without the official support of his museum. However, his personal research focused on the potential benefits of such collaborations for his institution. He was particularly interested in engaging the IES Museum in capacity-building activities that could provide conservation and museological training for local communities. During the project he provided support to the community in the design and implementation of an exhibition and storage units at the Medhane Alem Church. Mr. Zekaria Abubaker is an Ethiopian National and a Muslim. The fact that he was not a Christian Orthodox and had

extensive experience in Ethiopia as an official heritage professional meant that the Ankober community conferred him with impartiality and credit. Mr. Zekaria Abubaker acted not only as a museologist on the project, but also as facilitator and translator (Amharic and English). The conservator (the author) participated in the project as part of her PhD research. Her aim was to collect information on the ongoing conservation process from the Ankober community's point of view. While she advised on environmental and preventive conservation issues, the Ankober community agreed that her role was mainly that of a facilitator between all partners. Why did they trust her? The answer resides in several factors. First, the very nature of conservation, in contrast to curatorship and business characteristics, did not represent a potential threat to the community. One of the fears of the community was that their heritage would be taken by a museum. Also the conservator, representing the academic Western world, ensured the community that a minimum of professional competency and an intention to cooperate with each other would be guaranteed. In addition the process of research undertaken by the conservator assured the community that all ethical, cultural and social aspects would be discussed and documented. For instance, a copy of the research was requested for the community library. However, the rationale behind this relationship of trust did not reside only in professional aspects. It was a combination of rational and intuitive features: the quality of the conservator as a 'professional' and the conservator as a 'human'. Thus, the personal behaviour of the conservator as an individual was a key element in this project based upon trust and transparency. This combination was a mixture of original competences, professional experiences, motivations and behaviours. For instance, the conservator's research was undertaken with the aim of sharing experiences and knowledge: a willingness and an ability to learn from the community as much as transmitting. Finally, the fact that the conservator was not Ethiopian and Christian Orthodox conferred her with further neutrality in the eyes of its management.

### **The Private Company Community**

In order to raise the funds necessary for the project implementation, the community co-operated with the private sector through an ecotourism company, 'Amba Ecotourism'. The company was established in 2002 to develop ecotourism in the highlands of

Ethiopia<sup>21</sup>. At the same time the company undertook developmental and social activities such as reforestation and the establishment of lodges on the Ankober Palace hill. The community was apprehensive that the development of the area with Amba Ecotourism could threaten their heritage, these fears were allayed by the experience and background of the company representative: Haille Gabriel Dagne. He was well known to the community where he had lived and undertook research for many years as an historian and Deacon of the Addis Ababa University. His academic qualifications and his connections with Ankober placed him in the position of guarantor: 'a conservation assurance'. Amba Ecotourism supported the community in the formulation of its project which could be shown to potential sponsors. In addition, the company dealt with the logistics and transportation for all project partners. No direct financial agreement linked the local community and Amba Ecotourism. However it was agreed that the running of the lodges would be undertaken by residents of the Ankober community. It was also agreed that the profits generated by the lodges would go to the private company which financed their construction. Then it was decided that a visit to the museum site would be organised for visitors of the lodges in order to raise extra fund for the museum.

### **Project Objectives**

In rural areas the youth of many communities have migrated to the capital city and responsibility for the care of church property has fallen to an ageing population. Religious leaders and custodians recognised that their traditional practices could no longer guarantee the safety of their collections. In order to safeguard its heritage the community was conscious that it needed to bring it into the public eye to help safeguard it. This was a difficult decision for a community that previously was secretive about the preservation of its heritage. However, the community decided to create a 'museum' that would gather and preserve its heritage. The project aimed to promote a safe storage and

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<sup>21</sup> Amba ecotourism is a founding member of the Ecotourism Association of Ethiopia (EAE), which was founded in 2003. The Association's mission is to facilitate the creation of eco-cultural destinations with the highest tourism standards which in parallel will alleviate poverty, upgrade human resources, promote Ethiopia's cultural heritage, and rehabilitate environmental resources. The primary activities of EAE include: developing awareness of the need to be environmentally and community-friendly in all tourism activities in Ethiopia; setting standards of environmental conservation, social development, ethical business practice, and quality for ecotourism development.

an exhibition area located on the premises of the Medhane Alem Church. The community representative decided that the objectives of the project had to be defined by the representatives of the three communities. The curator and the conservator found themselves in a cross cultural professional context similar to that described by Trudy Nicks:

‘Indigenous peoples around the world are creating their own museums, sometimes enlisting the services of professional consultants from the West to help design buildings and exhibitions and to train staff. This process of change across and between interconnected cultures is the transculturative experience that Clifford references in his discussion of museums as contact zones (Clifford 1997: 201-202; Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 28). Arguably, both sides have come to share a concept of culture as heritage and project.’ (Nicks 2003: 25).

### **The Museum as a Community ‘Safe House’**

The wishes of the community to establish a ‘museum’, whose main purpose was to be a place where cultural heritage is preserved, raised questions about the meaning of the term ‘museum’. In the context of Ankober and more generally in East Africa, the ‘museum’ is not a cultural product but a product inherited from the colonial past. The development and transformation of the meanings, roles and practices of museums in the post colonial period have been increasingly discussed and analysed by international academics and heritage professionals for the last two decades (see Ames 1992; Clifford 1988; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; ICOM 1992; Karp and Lavine 1991; Peers and Brown 2003; Vergo 1989; Walsh 1992). The ICOM definition of a museum is:

‘A non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment.’ (ICOM 2006: 14).

While the Ankober ‘museum’ is very small and situated in a remote rural area of Ethiopia, it fulfils many roles of a museum institution as defined by ICOM. However, the

‘socio-cultural conservation’ approach of the community and its determination to favour preservation and access over other services usually provided by Western museums do not match the ICOM definition. The Ankober community is not an isolated case, other African heritage professionals are looking for alternative definitions and roles for an institution commonly named ‘museum’. This search for new forms of museums was already underlined by Alpha Oumar Konaré in 1983, as highlighted by Christina Kreps in her studies ‘Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation and Heritage Preservation’:

‘Konaré challenges museologists to explore and create new forms of museums that take local conservation structures and practices into account. He suggests that these new types of museums should be more like family or community museums, based on the community’s own cultural traditions, institutions, collective resources, and needs.’ (Kreps 2003: 43).

For local communities, there is a crucial need to redefine and diversify the Western museum model in order to address their specific social, cultural and spiritual needs. There is also a desire by heritage professionals to adapt the forms and roles of museums to the needs of local communities in Africa. This issue was discussed at the First General Assembly and Conference of AFRICOM held in Nairobi (29 September-1 October 2003). In this regards, Yani Herreman<sup>22</sup> stated:

‘The present needs, services, offers and opportunities of museums must be analysed in order to implement them in developing countries. New specialities must be taught under the more socialised approach, sought by developing countries’.  
(Herreman 2005: 130).

While the vision of Konaré and recommendations of Herreman respond to the actual wishes and needs of the local community of Ankober, the problem is how to name this type of museum. Somehow, it can be associated to the museum definition of ICOM.

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<sup>22</sup> Yani Herreman is Former Vice-President of ICOM (2001-2004), Executive Council, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico.



It also has similarities with the concept of ‘ecomuseum’ because of its holistic approach to community development and cultural heritage preservation. In addition, the Ankober community’s choice to be autonomous from heritage organisations and national authorities could categorise its museum as a private museum. Diagne<sup>23</sup> explains:

‘The concept of a private museum is the result of an individual’s perception. It is an attitude that tends to distinguish public authority from civil authority. From a theoretical point of view, it is a simple matter, but very difficult from technical and scientific points of view, regarding museums.’ (Diagne 2005: 115).

In the context of the Ankober project the designation selected to define the local community museum is as a ‘Safe House’<sup>24</sup>. The rationale for the selection of this contextualised definition is in the perception that the Ankober community has of its museum’s roles and functions: ‘Our museum is a place where tangible and intangible cultural heritage is conserved, displayed and accessible to all members of the community for educational purposes and uses in religious and ceremonial purposes’<sup>25</sup>. The differences between the heritage professionals’ and local community’s understanding of the concept of a museum is essentially about the emphasis on access and the conservation role of the museum. The term ‘access’, in the context of Ankober, relates to conceptual, intellectual, spiritual and practical issues of use and the conservation of the cultural heritage by the local community. Thus the combination of the terms ‘safe’ and ‘house’ denote in this context a local and public place adapted to the conservation of the cultural heritage in the custody of the resident community. In order to supervise and manage the project, the community formed a local Committee which they named the ‘Friends of Heritage’. By the end of the project the Committee aimed to have achieved the following objectives:

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<sup>23</sup> Hamar Fall Diagne is Director of the Mauritanian Museum of Traditional Medicine.

<sup>24</sup> This definition arose from a series of discussions (May 2005) with Rachel Hand, Ethnographer at the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin who used this term in her research paper (*Whose Story is it Anyway? The Exhibition and Display of Northwest Ethnography in British Museums*, Hand 1999). The definition was selected after discussion (telephone communication and email correspondence) with Ahmed Abubaker Zekaria, 22 May 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Mr. Liq Kahnat Qale Kristos, Archpriest and Head of Ankober Churches, translated by Haille Dagne Gabriel, Amba Ecotourism Manager for the Ankober lodges project, email communication, 5 May 2006.

- To preserve the Medhane Alem Church site and its cultural heritage.
- To establish a 'Safe-House' with a permanent exhibition and open storage.

In the long term the project aimed to:

- Educate children and keep traditions alive through interactive activities organised between schools and the museum (for natural and cultural heritage).
- Provide training for local people so that they can preserve their heritage and run the museum themselves.
- Attract visitors and researchers (locals and tourists).
- Develop partnerships with heritage professionals.

The project was conducted and supported by the Friends of Heritage Committee which was established at a public meeting of approximately sixty people. The Committee, of ten to twelve people, represented each constituent of the Ankober community; the Elders, the young, the women, local academics (historians and linguists) and the regional Orthodox authorities (Figure 29). The meeting enabled the steering group, which received widespread support from throughout the community, to develop a network of contacts within neighbouring villages.

Funds were raised by the Committee and Amba Ecotourism whose participation concentrated on equipping the Museum (the manufacture of showcases, provision of security equipment) with total fund of 3,426 Euro. The community provided the funds and labour for the renovation of the building. In addition, each Committee member personally contributed to an annual fund for the employment of an armed guard for the site (in charge of the security of the people, the natural environment of the village and the artefacts). Each of the Ankober priests (twenty) contributed personally to the salary of the heritage keepers. After completion of the project, the community expected to cover their costs from funds collected by the Committee once a year and funds generated by the local community and the museum (postcards, souvenirs, local craft, and ceremonial activities).



**Figure 29:** Meeting of the 'Friends of the Heritage' Committee, held at the Church *Equabet*, April 2003.

On the long term, the Safe House should generate a small income which would allow the Ankober church and community to fulfil their new responsibilities. Given its reputation, once the collection could be made more accessible it should attract visitors. Later, through experience and by nurturing collaboration with professionals and scholars, Ankober may gain recognition and higher status at home and abroad. Once the community has established a prototype at Medhane Alem Church, they wish to use their experience for further collaboration with neighbouring churches.

### **Foundation of the Project**

At the invitation of the Ankober community, the heritage and private company partners visited the Medhane Alem Church at Ankober on 11 May 2003. After reviewing the traditional storerooms of the church and looking at its collection, there was intense discussion with the Church and village Elders about conservation practices at Ankober and elsewhere. The discussions that took place considered the following points:

1. The social and professional contribution of heritage professionals and Amba Ecotourism.
2. Information relating to the Ankober community: social and cultural values, oral tradition.
3. Information relating to the site and the values assigned to the collection by the community.
4. A conservation action plan that would be universally supported.
5. A management plan that would include preventive conservation practice, access to the site and collection, and encompass the principles of capacity-building, community participation and sustainability.

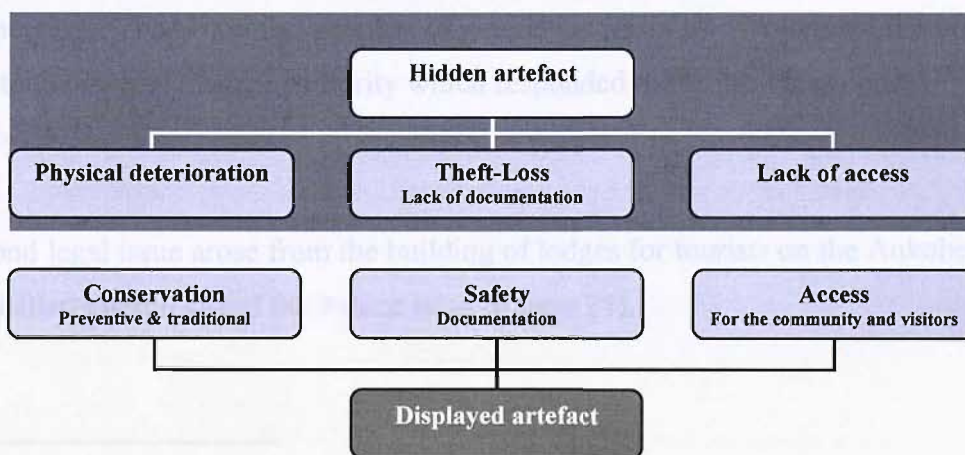
Elders and custodians of the heritage explained the history of traditional Ethiopian conservation, how collections were passed down and why they felt they could no longer cope with modern threats to their collection. The main issue identified as major threat to the collection was the absence of a comprehensive system of documentation. Also the building chosen for the museum was not suitable if the collection was to be safeguarded. These concerns were compounded by the endemic theft of religious artefacts. In 2001, in the Northern Showa region alone, thirteen manuscripts and a gold cross were stolen<sup>26</sup>. To find ethical and technical strategies for the documentation, conservation and access to artefacts in the custody of the community was a real challenge. The future educational and functional roles of the artefacts within the community were considered to be the priority. The heritage professionals introduced the Committee to the Western conservation principles and practices, which involved treatments or respond to conservation issues by taking a pre-emptive approach. A short presentation on recent developments in preventive conservation in African museums highlighted the potential benefits of the discipline for Ankober. The role of the conservator and the type of relationship they would establish with the community was agreed upon.

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<sup>26</sup> Personal communication Liq Kahnat Qale Kristos, Archpriest Medhane Alem Church, 14 March 2003, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,

After all participants had deliberated, preventive conservation was acknowledged as a cost effective and non intrusive approach, relevant to the project’s objectives. However, the Committee did not perceive preventive conservation as an original practice or conservation philosophy, but rather that it complemented their local preservation methods. Preventive conservation principles and practice were gained acceptance because they had the potential to encourage teamwork and adapt to the sensitivities and values of the community. While no major differences of opinion arose during the discussion between all partners and there was no opposition to the conservation plan, the Committee was aware that not every member of the community was wholly supportive.

In the Committee’s view the crucial and tangible benefits of preventive conservation for their heritage and for themselves was; improved access to the collection, the prevention of theft and the establishment of relationships with heritage professionals. Thus the apparent paradox of documenting and exposing the collection to the public when there was a very real threat of theft would result in greater safety for the objects than when they were hidden (Figure 30). More importantly, the Committee did not see conservation and museology as different disciplines but rather as an inclusive approach towards cultural heritage preservation. Their main objective was to conserve their heritage, therefore they wished to associate the additional benefits that both preventive conservation and museology could bring to their local expertise.



**Figure 30:** The benefits of bringing the hidden artefacts to public view.



## **Legal and Administrative Points**

The cultural heritage of the Medhane Alem Church comprised of a number of important religious artefacts. All Ethiopian Orthodox churches which have religious and ceremonial artefacts have to declare them to the religious central authority which is the legal owner of this material. Churches also own material that has been presented by private donors and/or by the Emperors and local dignitaries. This material is the property and sole responsibility of each individual church. Prior to the implementation of the project, the Ankober community had to explain its plan to the central authority of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church based in Addis Ababa. In March 2003, the Archpriest of the Ankober district was invited by the community to meet with the project partners. However, it was only a formal presentation of the project rather than a request for collaboration. When the community asked the central authority to support them in the establishment of a 'small museum', a series of administrative issues emerged. From the community viewpoint, the administration of the central authority had always been a hindrance rather than a help to the community churches and was too bureaucratic to efficiently help in the development of such a small project<sup>27</sup>. Indeed, collaboration with the central authority actually implied its approval of the project, thus slowing down its development. The central authority had never been involved in such community projects and would have to create a special policy that would need to be discussed by committees in Addis Ababa. This approach was not familiar to the community which would have felt geographically and intellectually excluded from the process for it would not be represented at the Addis Ababa meetings. Therefore, the question of gaining authorisation to conduct the project was left to the district Church authority which responded to the project proposal positively<sup>28</sup>.

The second legal issue arose from the building of lodges for tourists on the Ankober hill and particularly at the site of the Palace ruins (Figure 31).

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<sup>27</sup> Personal communication, Liq Kahnat Qale Kristos and Haile Dagne Gabriel, 14 April 2003, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

<sup>28</sup> Personal communication, Haile Dagne Gabriel, 15 March 2003, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



**Figure 31:** The Ankober Palace site, the ruins of the Palace walls and the Amba Ecotourism lodge, April 2004.

This work was conducted by Amba Ecotourism with the consent of the local community and the regional authority but brought about discord and misunderstanding in Ethiopian academia. The private company and local community considered the building of guesthouses as a rehabilitation of the site which would boost the social and economic life of the city. Accessibility to the Ankober heritage, by providing accommodation and facilities, were among the criteria to what would make heritage tours attractive. Academics believed that these activities would violate the proclamations of the ‘Authority of Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage’ (ARCCH) which states that the use of cultural heritage for economic and other purposes may only be allowed if such use is not detrimental to its preservation and does not impair its historical, scientific and artistic values<sup>1</sup>. They also felt that the rehabilitation of the site would endanger not only the ruins of the Palace but also other associate heritage such as the old trees and the stairs leading up to the Palace. While academics did not criticise developmental

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<sup>1</sup> Ethiopian National Culture Policy: Article 4.4, ‘an appropriate precondition shall be arranged to protect sites of heritage from damages caused by construction works and other development activities’; Article 4.5, ‘the heritage’s of the country shall be conserved and preserved in the manner that they retain their original state and artistic quality (MYSC 2004).

programmes under the pretext of heritage preservation, they felt that such a project should have been established some distance from the historical site. However, while they disagreed with the standpoint of the Ankober community they also recognised that among the Ethiopian civil society, Ethiopian Orthodox churches and their communities were particularly active in preserving cultural heritage and sustaining traditional conservation practices. Conflict between academics, heritage professionals and the Ankober community about the lodges built by Amba Ecotourism had not yet been resolved by the national authority in December 2006.

For the Ankober community, the question was who would take responsibility and actively participate in the preservation of their heritage? Government and central church authorities had little money or energy to spare for rural churches or for artefact conservation in the custody of local communities. While national conservation policies were under development, museum conservation policies were still absent in most institutions. Similarly, there was not a policy which addresses the issues relating to the preservation of heritage in the custody of autonomous, religious and local communities. For instance, the visit of the IES Museum Director in May 2004 demonstrated disparities typical in professional practice and approaches towards local communities.

The Institution offered its official support to the project with the condition that the community hand over to them a collection of precious manuscripts. This offer was rejected by the community which had, up to December 2006, refused any further contact with the IES Museum. In this context, with the additional threat of conflict leading to economic upheaval, the degradation and occasional looting of cultural heritage, the community considered the local church to be the owner and keeper of their common heritage. Thus they claimed autonomy over the preservation of their heritage and aimed to become a model for the practice of community and religious preservation in Ethiopia.



#### **4. Preventive Conservation for a ‘Safe-House’ at Ankober**

For generations the community strove to preserve its heritage. They never gave their artefacts to the Orthodox central authority or to museums. Yet since the end of the Cold War, traditional methods of preservation have been challenged by several factors. These include civil wars, huge population growth and the temptations of monetary gain made possible by serving an ever expanding international market in Ethiopian art. However, the preservation system of the community that was based on trust and social hierarchy proved to be effective in the religious, economic and social contexts of the past. For centuries, Ankober residents used traditional methods that effectively protected their cultural heritage.

##### **Local Approaches in Preventive Conservation**

Over time, the Ankober community developed local conservation practices. In the past custom provided rules, which the community followed and which ensured the preservation of their heritage. These rules and practices encompassed tangible and intangible characteristics.

The tangible practices referred essentially to techniques and substances that aimed to control pest infestation. The community used leaves from local plants to fight against moths and micro-organisms. The juice of local lemons was mixed with the powders of three types of dried leaves and this solution was sprinkled onto artefacts. The Amharic designations for the leaves are: ‘*Siol*’, ‘*Yazo Ketel*’, and ‘Crocodile leaves’. The community did not have cats to control rodents, unlike other Ethiopian churches. The same leaves were dried and burnt at the entrances of storage areas to repel mice and rats. The religious community recorded the names and characteristics of the natural products used for preservation purposes and the preparation techniques. However, access to this knowledge was restricted because the records were written in Geez. Further research on

the chemical properties of these plants was undertaken in May 2006 at the Pharmacology Faculty of Addis Ababa University in collaboration with Amba Ecotourism<sup>30</sup>.

The intangible aspects of local conservation related to the social and hierarchical system developed by the community. Every year, the religious community organised a meeting to which all residents were invited, at which they designated who would be responsible for heritage preservation. The criteria for selection included availability, experience and religious faith of the candidates. After deliberation, two 'Keepers of the Treasure'<sup>31</sup> were nominated for the year. One was in charge of practical conservation, mainly concerned with good house-keeping and access. The second, who was in charge of ensuring the security (thieves, bandits) of the heritage and the community living on the site, was an armed guard. Both received substantial pay and housing was provided for them by the Medhane Alem Church, while the farmers provided them with food and clothing. The 'Keepers of the Treasure' in collaboration with the Archpriest or the Deacon organised the storage of the artefacts in various locations and were responsible for their transport, security and for regular inspections. This work was carried out voluntarily by all Ankober residents. Their choice of a location for depositing an artefact and therefore choosing a person provisionally responsible for one or more artefacts was trust based. Most families wished to be once selected to take on this responsibility as it was considered to be an honour. With the exception of large pieces, most artefacts were stored in heavy locked wooden cases and chests (some made of eucalyptus and acacia wood) which were kept hidden by the temporary keeper (Figure 32).

The location of each cache changed regularly. In times of conflict, the most valuable artefacts were buried in a place known by the armed guard who then became responsible for them. Since the artefacts moved regularly from one location to another, their movements were recorded in written inventories. Access to artefacts was also an effective

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<sup>30</sup> Professor Ermias Dagne of Addis Ababa University (AAU) who is the authority on this area visited the Ankober site in May 2006. At present no results have been communicated to the author.

<sup>31</sup> Clavir refers to the term 'Keepers of the Treasure' in her book *Preserving What is Valued* (2002: 71). The definition provided for this term in the context of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians cultural heritage is: 'The Keepers protect and conserve places that are historic and sacred to indigenous people'.

way of conserving them, particularly costumes and textiles worn for specific religious ceremonies. Women were in charge of their inspection and conservation/restoration. Students from the three schools of the area were in charge of the conservation of the manuscript collection. Finally, as in many East African communities, oral tradition was an invaluable method of communicating and transferring knowledge of conservation issues.



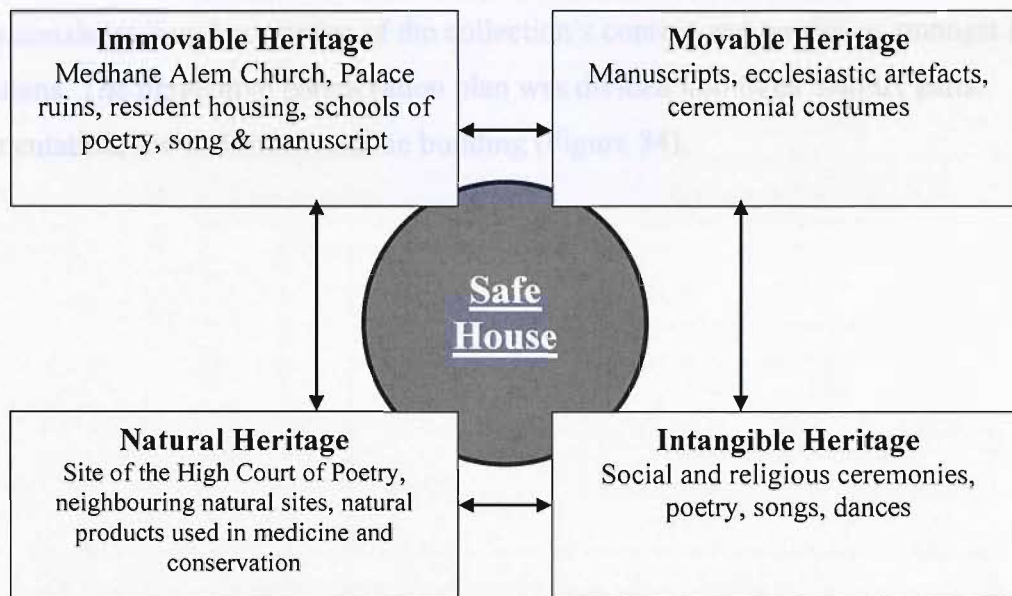
**Figure 32:** Storage of artefacts in locked wooden cases and chests, March 2003.

### **Preventive Conservation and Museology: an Analysis**

All partners discussed preventive conservation and museology issues as a holistic approach. This was possible because of the traditional philosophy of conservation developed by the community as well as their wishes to integrate relevant preventive conservation practice and museology with their traditional practices. The development of a preventive conservation plan was directly linked with the creation of an exhibition space and storage units for the artefacts. An exhibition concept had to be devised. The community's idea was to create a public place dedicated to the transfer of tangible and intangible traditional knowledge in relation to the community's history, living culture and natural environment. For instance, the religious and Imperial traditions and legends were

associated with the natural site (the site and trees of the High Court of Poetry).

Immovable heritage (the Palace ruins and the Medhane Alem Church) was linked with local activities and ceremonies (intangible heritage), and finally was related with the cultural material associated with them (tangible heritage) (Figure 33).

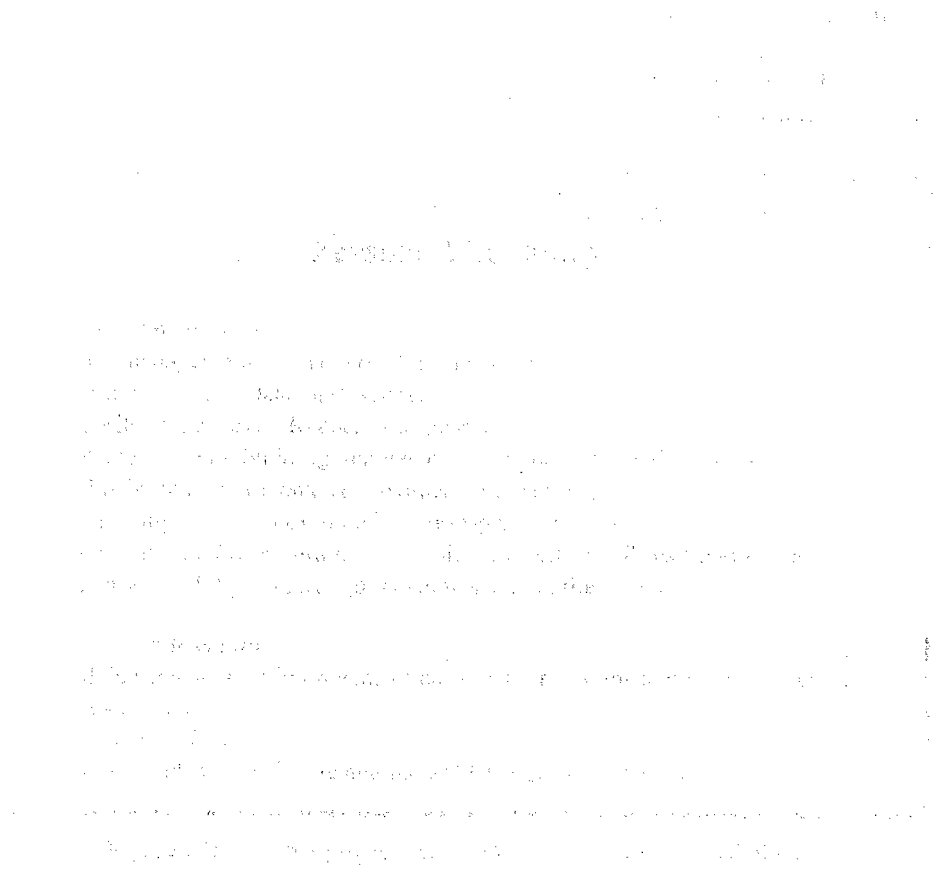


**Figure 33:** The Safe House and the cultural heritage elements used for the transfer of local knowledge.

### Implementation of a Preventive Conservation Plan

The issues which arose from the process of development of the conservation plan relate to three factors. First, the community wanted to be sure that they would be able to cover the greater part of the expenses themselves. Second, they required that the various responsibilities related with preventive conservation practices were assigned to the people traditionally in charge. Additional work and responsibilities would be assigned to individuals according to the community's religious and social systems. Third, the museological approach chosen had to provide access for everyone in the community. Thus anyone from the community could use artefacts for educational and religious purposes (under the supervision of the 'Keeper of the Treasure').

Once conceptual and ethical issues had been discussed and agreed upon with the people responsible for its preservation a comprehensive examination of the collection *in situ* and of the building that housed it was undertaken. The aim of all partners was to develop a preventive conservation plan that would identify the conservation issues and interactions between men, objects and the environment. The preventive conservation approach aimed to reinforce security measures on site by using a combination of documentation and good house-keeping. This examination which was undertaken with the community and heritage professionals built up knowledge of the collection's content and condition amongst its custodians. The preventive conservation plan was divided into three distinct parts: documentation, the collection and the building (Figure 34).





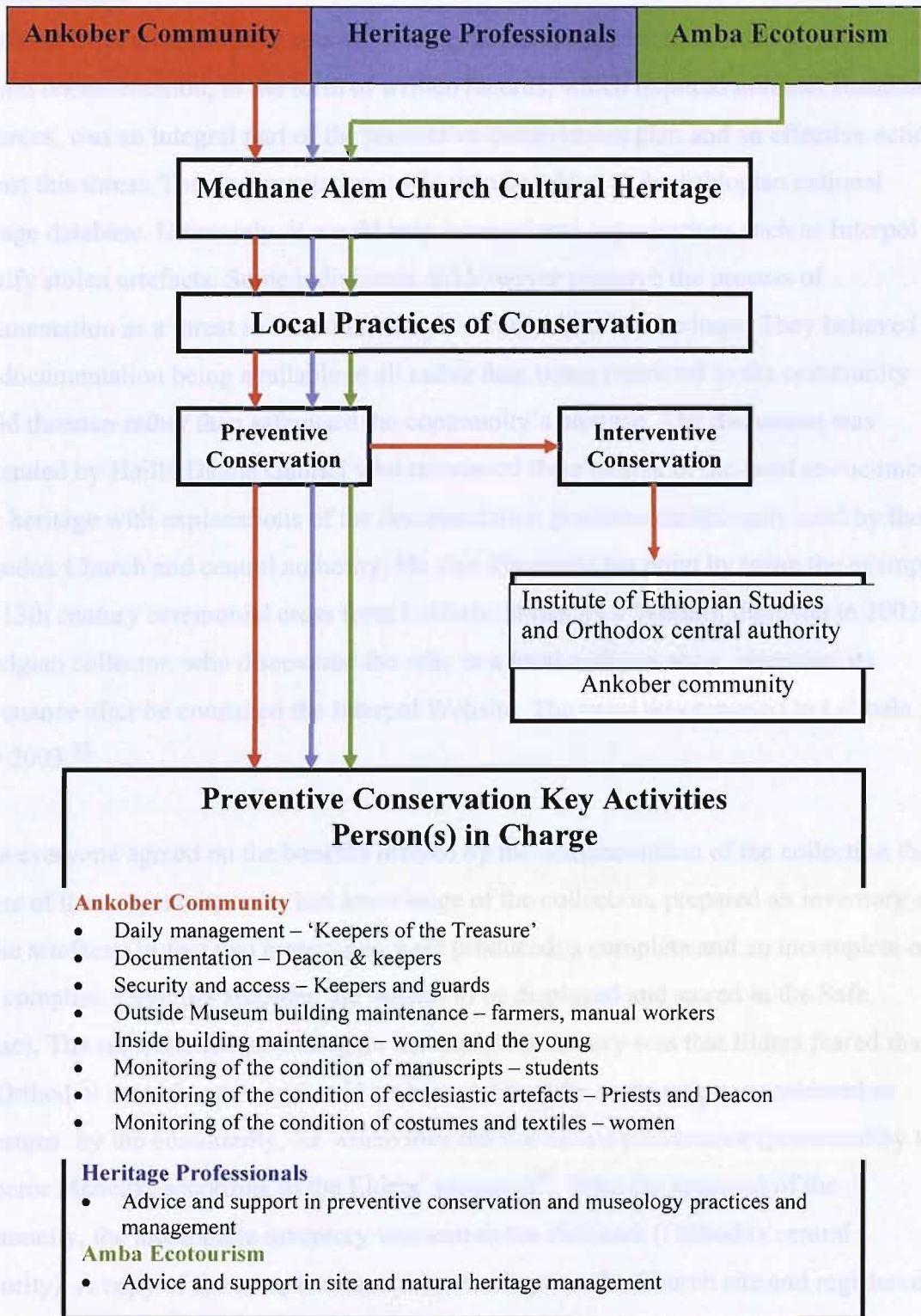


Figure 34: Ankober project action plan and field of responsibilities.

## Documentation

The threat from art trafficking was felt to be considerable by the community. In their opinion documentation, in the form of written records, which required minimal financial resources, was an integral part of the preventive conservation plan and an effective action against this threat. The documentation could then be added to the Ethiopian national heritage database. Ultimately, it would help international organisations such as Interpol to identify stolen artefacts. Some individuals did however perceive the process of documentation as a threat to the community's ownership of the heritage. They believed that documentation being available to all rather than being restricted to the community would threaten rather than safeguard the community's heritage. The discussion was moderated by Haille Dagne Gabriel who convinced these people of the need to document their heritage with explanations of the documentation practices traditionally used by the Orthodox Church and central authority. He also illustrated his point by using the example of a 13th century ceremonial cross from Lalibela, stolen by a Western diplomat in 2002. A Belgian collector, who discovered the relic in a local antiques shop, identified its provenance after he consulted the Interpol Website. The cross was returned to Lalibela in May 2003.<sup>32</sup>

Once everyone agreed on the benefits offered by the documentation of the collection the Elders of the community, who had knowledge of the collection, prepared an inventory of all the artefacts. In fact two inventories were produced; a complete and an incomplete one (the complete inventory recorded the objects to be displayed and stored in the Safe House). The rationale for producing an incomplete inventory was that Elders feared that the Orthodox central authority would reclaim some of the manuscripts, considered as 'treasures' by the community, for which they did not have a provenance (presented by the Emperor Menelik, according to the Elders' memory)<sup>33</sup>. With the approval of the community, the incomplete inventory was sent to the Patriarch (Orthodox central authority). A copy of the complete inventory was kept on the Church site and registered

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<sup>32</sup> Ethiopia's Ministry of Culture agreed to buy back the cross (which cost the Belgian collector twenty five thousands US dollars). The theft of the so-called Lalibela cross led to considerable national outcry and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church leaders demanded greater vigilance by clerics in the region (UNDP 1999 and Yessirach 1999).

<sup>33</sup> Personal communication, Liq Kahnat Qale Kristos, 14 April 2003, Ankober, Ethiopia.

with the local authority, which transferred a copy to the archives of the Ethiopian Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH).

In 2006, the ecotourism company and the Ankober Museum attempted to initiate a photographic documentation and registration system with the National Museum of Ethiopia. The community considered that creating an inventory, with photographs, would take time but prove a worthwhile investment for the Church, the Ankober community and for future generations.

### **The Collection**

In order to undertake a brief condition assessment of the collection, all artefacts were collected from their various locations and deposited in the Church storage. This space named '*Eqabet*' served several purposes. It was often a single large room adjacent to the church building where artefacts used for religious ceremonies were gathered and prepared. It is also in this place that the religious community organised meetings when social issues had to be discussed between Elders, the young, women, or farmers. In this particular case the High Archpriest of Ankober, Elders and heritage keepers got together to examine the condition of the artefacts and to show how effective the community was in the preservation of their heritage.

The total number of artefacts was estimated at two hundred and ten. The collection included ecclesiastic artefacts and objects which belonged to and were used by the successive Kings and Emperors who had lived on the site. Some of the ecclesiastic artefacts were used for religious ceremonies and thus access to them was considered a priority. These included historical and contemporary ceremonial costumes, Orthodox crosses and wooden sticks. Similarly, access to the manuscripts was crucial for the community which intended using them as a reference collection (library) for the church schools of poetry, song and manuscripts. The Committee suggested that the artefacts which symbolised the lives of these Kings and Emperors and considered to be historically significant, would be presented for display for educational purposes. They would however be 'physically' accessible only for research. These artefacts included ceremonial



costumes worn by the royal families, high dignitaries and priests when carrying the Tabot<sup>34</sup>, the wedding dress of Empress Taitu<sup>35</sup>, ceremonial umbrellas and parasols and war loot brought by dignitaries during the battle of Adwa.

The collection assembled organic and inorganic artefacts which were in good condition<sup>36</sup> with the exception of a series of woollen textiles, partially eaten by insects and rodents. The good condition of the artefacts could be attributed to three factors. Firstly, the climate of the highlands and the Ankober hill does not generate high levels of humidity or temperature; two environmental factors which have often lead to the deterioration of artefacts. Secondly, the artefacts had been wrapped in cotton cloth and stored in wooden or metal trunks. They were therefore rarely exposed to UV radiation, they were protected from rodents and were kept in stable environmental conditions (buried underground or stored in traditional houses). Finally, the artefacts were checked at least twice a year for ceremonial purposes. Some of them were used, others exhibited or simply taken out of storage. Artefacts used for ceremonies were repaired and cleaned when necessary before going back into storage. The rest of the collection was mainly checked for pest infestation and corrosion.

The traditions and organisation of the community in preserving its heritage was so effective that both heritage professionals had to underline the potential risks created by a transfer of the collection to a new environment. It was agreed that the responsibility for preservation would remain in the hands of the 'Keepers of the Treasure', although they would conform to new standards adapted to the museum environment. As the community did not have the expertise and resources necessary to undertake conservation treatments on manuscripts and icons, it was agreed that assistance would be sought from the Institute of Ethiopian Studies<sup>37</sup> or with the Orthodox central authority workshop, which both have

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<sup>34</sup> 'Tabot' is a Geez and Amharic term which refers to a replica of the Tablets of Law, onto which the biblical Ten Commandments were inscribed and used in the practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Tabot can be made from alabaster, marble or wood.

<sup>35</sup> Emperor Menelik and Empress Taitu Betul celebrated their wedding at the Medhane Alem Church of Ankober in the Spring of 1883 (Henze 2000: 151).

<sup>36</sup> Good condition means: 'object in the context of its collection is in good conservation condition, or is stable'. The condition assessment is based on the categories for conservation condition as developed by Susan Keene in her book *Managing Conservation in Museums* (1996: 146).

<sup>37</sup> The Ankober community agreed to present some of their precious manuscripts to cultural institutions so that they can be preserved on the condition that they received replicas or copies of the donated artefacts.

expertise in the conservation of these artefacts. The community also wished to remain in charge of interventive treatments for all other artefacts, using local expertise and natural resources respective of their cultural values and social traditions.

### **The Building**

The museum was located within the premises of the Medhane Alem Church (Figures 35 and 36). Built in the 1960's the building was initially used to house the community's guards and food stocks. It needed to be refurbished in order to store and display the artefacts of the Church as well as some artefacts from three nearby churches that have common leadership. The building had two rooms each about thirty square meters. The walls and floors were made of dried mud. The roof was made of corrugated iron that had nearly worn out. The bottom of the walls, doors, windows and roof presented many openings opportunities for ingress by pests. The presence of food in the room also encouraged pest infestation. Floors were not thoroughly cleaned and some objects were in direct contact with the floor. The doors and windows had no locks.



**Figure 35:** The Safe House building before transformation, April 2003.



**Figure 36:** Mr. Zekaria Abubaker, Curator at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum, at the Safe House building during renovation, April 2004.

Initially, the idea was to use one room for exhibition and the other for storage. However, this plan changed very quickly. Since security, access and transfer of traditional knowledge were the three key objectives of the conservation project, the community decided that all objects should be displayed (or stored in cabinets made of metal and glass) in both rooms. Thus, both rooms became ‘open storage and display’ in order to provide better access and to prevent objects from disappearing. The aim of the heritage professionals was to propose effective low cost preservation and display methods that the community, with minimal external support, could undertake and sustain. The general idea was to use stones and mud for the renovation of the building as they were the traditional materials used for local housing; an environment in which artefacts have been preserved until then. Traditional Ethiopian textiles made of cotton<sup>1</sup> were used to cushion and

<sup>1</sup> These Ethiopian traditional textiles are named ‘gabis’. They are made of hand spun and woven cotton. Their heat retaining properties are well known by the population living in the highlands that use the gabis as blankets or as outer garments. Nowadays the gabis are very popular in Ethiopia. The high demand for this type of textile has had an impact of its production which is increasingly mechanised and on its heat retaining properties which come from the manual techniques used in its production (Pankhurst 1990: 225 and Balletto 1995: 283).



support artefacts, while acting as a buffer against potential changes in humidity levels. Advice from professionals at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum was sought for the manufacturing of showcases and shelves. The lack of funds and technical expertise in the community constrained everyone to adapt to the specific environment and find appropriate solutions that looked at preservation issues holistically while conforming to the specific needs of the community. The implementation of preventive conservation practices encouraged everyone in the community to be responsible for a specific activity. All these activities were inter-connected. The system ensured a continuity of responsibility and created a security control mechanism without using extra manpower or high-tech equipment.

The practical work was equally shared between the community, the heritage professionals and Amba Ecotourism. The company provided assistance for the transport of people and material between the capital city and Ankober. The conservator and curator worked in tandem with individuals from the community in all aspects of the conservation plan. They recorded temperature, light and humidity levels in the building areas where objects were to be stored and exhibited. They drew up guidelines for good house-keeping which were translated into Amharic. Finally and due to the limited space available in both rooms, they made a selection of the objects to be exhibited or stored (in the cabinets) considering both their function within the community and their physical condition. The community took other concrete measures by itself. For instance, they organised work parties to collect building materials. The Archpriest mobilised fifty students, sixty clergymen and fifty other inhabitants to gather stones and carry them up the hill in preparation for the rebuilding of the museum walls and the construction of new floors (Figure 37). The transfer of artefacts to the museum required the participation of a large part of the community, the aim of the Ankober Committee to involve any person wishing to play a part in this collective process proved successful. Overall, everyone worked within their traditional area of responsibility. The armed guard secured the area. The 'Keepers of Treasures' opened trunks and wooden cases, made sure that all artefacts were present and supervised everyone (Figure 38). Women placed textiles and costumes outside and surfaced cleaned them (Figure 39). Students transferred the manuscripts to their new

location and the religious representatives took care of ceremonial artefacts (Figure 40). The organisation of the displays was undertaken by each group with the assistance of two young professionals<sup>1</sup> of the IES Museum whom worked voluntarily (Figure 41). Both were from the Shewan region and highly motivated by the project. Their contribution was welcomed by the community who saw in their enthusiasm and expertise the potential for future teamwork for the maintenance of the Safe House (Figures 42 and 43).

The team project started in March 2003 and the active collaboration between the community, the curator and the conservator ended in April 2005 (Figure 45). Overall, the Ankober community and Amba Ecotourism worked together intermittently over a two year period. The implementation of the project was restrained by the lack of funds and the family and social duties of the community participants. Amba Ecotourism supported the project through fund raising and the construction of lodges. The heritage professionals' practical contribution to this project amounted in all to a period of approximately three weeks.



**Figure 37:** Transport of stones by the students of Ankober for the renovation of the Safe House building, June 2003.

<sup>1</sup> Ms. Abebaw, Textile Conservator and M. Kristos, Assistant Curator at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum.





**Figure 38:** Unpacking the hidden artefacts, March 2005.



**Figure 39:** Sorting out textiles for the Safe House and for ceremonies before surface cleaning, March 2005.



**Figure 40:** Students transfer the manuscripts from the *Equabet* to the Safe House under the supervision of the Elders, March 2005.



**Figure 41:** Students exhibiting manuscripts in the Safe House library in collaboration with a volunteer of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies March 2005.





**Figure 42:** Providing access through the display of ‘gabis’ and wooden ceremonial sticks, March 2005.



**Figure 43:** Providing access to the library and ceremonial umbrellas, March 2005.



Month/Year	Ankober Community	Heritage Professionals	Amba Ecotourism
March 2003	First meeting of the representatives from the three communities		
April 2003	First visit to the Ankober community and site		
	- Presentation of cultural heritage	- Condition assessment - Recommendations	- Starting construction of lodges
May 2003	- Preventive conservation action plan and recommendations - Preparation for renovation of museum building		- Lodges construction in progress
June 2003	- Community mobilisation to carry stone and facilitate construction of new floors		
July 2003 - October 2003	- Ground filled with stones and walls plastered with mud	- Presentation of the Ankober Community Project at the First AFRICOM General Assembly and Conference (1 October 2003, Nairobi, Kenya)	
Nov. 2003 Febr. 2004	- Plastering of walls and cementing floors completed - Fundraising - Request for second visit of heritage professionals to Ankober site		
March 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Second visit</b> by the curator and conservator to the Ankober site and meeting with the Ankober Committee</li> <li>- Visit to the schools of poetry, songs and manuscripts, visit to lodges and Palace ruins</li> <li>- Visit to the Safe House building and presentation of renovation work</li> <li>- Examination of environmental issues in exhibition and storage areas</li> <li>- Measurements for showcases</li> </ul>		
April 2004 Febr. 2005	- Painting of the Safe House walls - Installation of locks and windows bars, lighting and showcases	- Conservator and curator design showcases - Visit of IES Museum Director and manuscript expert	- Completion of lodges - Manufacture of showcases and transport from Addis Ababa to Ankober
March 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Third visit</b> by the curator and conservator to Ankober and meeting with the community</li> <li>- Visit of the Alyu Amba market</li> <li>- Preparation of artefacts for exhibition</li> <li>- Exhibition of artefacts</li> <li>- Evaluation of the project</li> </ul>		- Housing of the team in lodges

**Figure 44:** Ankober conservation project, schedule and activities from March 2003 to March 2005.

## 5. Evaluation

First it must be acknowledged that the heritage of Ankober was in relatively good condition before the instigation of the project. This can be attributed to the maintenance of local conservation traditions and practices performed by the community for generations. It also relates to a larger economic and politic context. For instance, if Bruges is one of the most well conserved cities of the Renaissance in the Netherlands, this is partly due to the fact that its harbour sank into sand which led to economic decline, which did not enable urban development since the Second World War. The condition of the heritage at Ankober dating from the time of Menelik can also be associated to its remote geographical situation and its economic stagnation.

This small project executed in collaboration with the owners of collections, private entrepreneurs and heritage professionals presented a wide-ranging regional initiative. Analysis shows that it is a combination of both the motivation and methodology that underpins the success of the conservation project. The cultural heritage to be conserved and the concerned partners in this task were well identified, their respective motivations and skills established and competences of all partners were used. In addition, the collective motivation of the various partners came to fruition because the project responded to the primary needs and wishes of the community for the conservation of its heritage and because it took into account the socio-economic contexts of these people.

### **Factors for Success**

The criteria by which the success of the project was judged were determined by all partners in relation to the objectives determined by the Friends of Heritage Committee prior to the commencement of the project, these were to:

- Preserve the Medhane Church site and its collection.
- Establish a ‘museum-structure’ with a permanent exhibition and open storage.

The representatives of the three communities involved in the project defined criteria for success of the project as being:

- The transfer of all hidden artefacts to the museum building.
- The transformation of the Safe House building into a space where all artefacts could be exhibited or stored securely and in stable environmental conditions.
- The integration of traditional conservation practices with the practice of preventive conservation.
- The participation of all community members wishing to participate in the implementation of the Safe House and who had expertise in traditional conservation practices.
- The preservation of the religious and social hierarchy systems in the heritage management process.
- The provision of access for community members to cultural heritage for educational and ceremonial purposes.
- The identification of artefacts requiring interventive conservation treatments.
- Financial autonomy and self-governance, which was separated from the national and Orthodox central authority.

What were the key factors that made the project successful? First, clarity about the identification and evaluation of the roles of individual partners, representative of the three communities involved, was at the heart of the project. Once the process of identifying roles was achieved, the project stopped being a disembodied concept and became a reality. Thus, an effective collaboration between groups of various participants, often strangers to each other, took place. For instance, the rationale for collaboration with the curator and conservator derived from local and social value systems. The key principles for selection applied to the members of the community wishing to become keepers of the heritage were also applied to both heritage professionals, with respect for their particular culture, religion, age and gender. The three criteria of availability, experience and religious faith, established by the religious community of Ankober, had to be fulfilled by anyone involved in the conservation process. While the criteria of availability and experience were easy to establish, the criterion of religious faith required some adjustment by both heritage professionals. Neither of them were Christian Orthodox. Thus religious faith, which was supposed to guarantee respect for, and the security of,

religious artefacts, was understood to be substituted and achieved by the very principle of preventive conservation, as being non intrusive and respectful of the physical characteristics of sacred and ceremonial artefacts.

The second factor for success was the philosophical and practical facets of preventive conservation. The approach to and practice of the discipline corresponded with the way the community used and valued its heritage tangibly and intangibly. Thus the community identified the significance of preventive conservation as a new but comprehensible value that could be readily integrated within their local and social systems of heritage management. In return, this integration facilitated access to the heritage and respect for traditional conservation approaches while performing conservation practices. Preventive conservation actually provided a convincing and effective response to two main issues: the drain on cultural heritage, through trafficking and the lack of collaboration with heritage professionals. Preventive conservation was a tool for security that existed since its development, but had been remained under used or ignored altogether. This seems odd as both tend to guarantee the safety of heritage.

The collaboration between the community and heritage professionals developed on a practical basis. However, this partnership presented two challenges for which the curator and conservator were not prepared: the adjustment of preventive conservation practices adapted to a heritage integrating intangible, natural and movable features and the development of an anthropological approach to preventive conservation management. While collaboration between conservators and local communities has taken place in many places around the world (Clavir 2002; Joffroy 2005; Wharton 2005 and Whiting 2005) and in a series of archaeological projects<sup>40</sup>, it seems that this has been largely overlooked in sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, preventive conservation was not often linked to social values and assets related to natural heritage resources. This deficit highlights the lack of familiarity with and integration of, local approaches to

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<sup>40</sup> See the Community Archaeology Project at Quseir, Egypt. The project started in 1999 with the specific aim of involving the local community in all aspects of the archaeological activities (Moser, Glazier, Phillips, Nasr El Nemr, Mousa, Nasr Aiesh, Richardson, Conner and Seymour 2003: 208-226).

conservation, from within the professional arena, while failing to utilise effective resources and skills developed and tested by the community.

The third key to success was inherent in the community's organisational effectiveness. It means that even in the modern world, with its socio-economic pressures, there is a tradition of people having to organise themselves to survive. Thus, organisation and respect for the time allocated to a collective purpose are intangible features of the community's culture.

Finally, the autonomy and leadership of the community in making all decisions offered the opportunity for the project to develop without the pressures of the agendas of museums and heritage organisations. While cultural heritage organisations and legislation appear to protect scientific and historic aspects of heritage, they often ignore customary and local values developed by local communities. In East Africa, customary rights and traditional management systems play an important role in most relationships (Ndoro 2003 and Joffroy 2005). However, traditions are not static, they adapt to changing circumstances. This was observed in the desire of the Ankober community to adapt its local heritage management system into preventive conservation practice and to economic development of the site through the implementation of the tourist lodges.

### **Limitations**

The community did not identify weaknesses in the development of the project. However, heritage professionals detected three areas: museology, length of the project and legal issues. From the perspective of the Committee of the Friends of Heritage these three areas did not represent failures but rather unexpected features which emerged within the project development. For instance in the area of museology, the community was not particularly interested by issues of representation. The labelling of objects and the translation of labelling into a language understandable to all visitors was not considered a priority by the community. In December 2006, labels were not yet put in place. From a curatorial perspective, this demonstrates that there is still an educational role for museum professionals. This also highlights that the community sees and uses its Safe House as a

‘preservation structure’ and a ‘reference structure’ where artefacts can be conserved while retaining their original functions.

Management issues materialised in the project’s completion which came to light over the two years. It required substantial commitment and availability by all the partners involved. For Amba Ecotourism, the time allocated to the project was not a problem because the company was involved in the construction of the lodges and shared a common calendar and workplace with the community. However, the independent unpaid heritage professionals had to be flexible and have a dedicated personal interest in the community and its heritage for a two year period.

Finally, the identification of the project’s legal and managerial limitations presented an opportunity to reflect upon its potential for replication in the region. The wishes of the community to extend its conservation project through the region, which contains one hundred and ninety-one churches with many resources and artefacts, created several problems; a lack of funds, legal status and capacity building. On the other hand, unless the community wished to share ownership of its heritage and its management with one of the Ethiopian heritage institutions, it could not give the Safe House legal status, thus restricting opportunities for scientific and technical support. The deficiency in co-operation between the Ankober community and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Museum was equally detrimental to the project and the Institute for which this collaborative project represented valuable professional advertising. The Institute would have benefited from such collaboration by gaining exposure of its activities and demonstrating its role in the preservation of the national cultural heritage to local communities and local Authorities. How can such collaboration be undertaken practically? The Institute can not work on the Ankober site unless it receives an official and written request of assistance from the community. The creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Institute and the local authority of Ankober could resolve this issue. However, the two groups had not reached a consensus in December 2006.

Likewise, the community did not have the same agendas and visions as the Addis Ababa University about the implementation of lodges on the Ankober site. This disagreement prevented collaboration on other aspects of the project. The conservation community must be seen by private companies investing in the conservation of heritage to be people who bring new ideas and proposals, not just objections (Bandarin, Serageldin and Stanley-Price 2004: 13). Also, without any opportunities to actively promote public access, the community was denied possibility of the economic benefits that might otherwise have accrued. Economic gain was not the primary goal of the community but was nonetheless a worthy secondary aim. The prospect of creating an NGO that would support conservation activities through allocation of grants and assistance was the option favoured by the community in May 2006 and yet no progress has been made.

### **Sustainability**

Is the Safe House project sustainable? While sustainability can only be judged over time, the predictions of sustainable development of the museum are linked to geographical and linguistic issues. The museum site is located a long way from both the regional and capital city schools, thus restricting access to a significant number of visitors. Most literature on the site, its history and development is only in Amharic thus restricting information available to foreign visitors. In May 2006 it was not yet possible to highlight potential management deficits and the success of the museum. However, one can distinguish the sustainability of the project from the sustainability of the conservation of the heritage. The objective of the community was to conserve its heritage not to sustain the project. As such conservation is the core objective and the Safe House project is a means by which to achieve this. In this context, legal and financial concerns are of little value to the community. Whether recognised or not by the national or Orthodox authorities, the Ankober community has established and integrated into its everyday life the Safe House as a means to preserve its heritage. Thus, it is the preservation of local conservation practice through its adaptation to the practice of preventive conservation that provides a minimal guarantee of sustainability. The preservation of the intangible heritage of the community's traditional practices is what provides common ground for the preventive conservation of its tangible heritage through the convergence and use of local

motivations and competencies. The long term conservation of the heritage of Ankober will essentially depend upon the values the community ascribe to it at any given time in the future. Therefore, its management should be based on broad consultation and the accommodation of the diverse customs and traditions of the community itself.

### **Lessons Learned**

The Ankober project, from its conception to its completion, was of financial, professional and social benefit to all partners. It allowed Amba Ecotourism to develop a business strategy through a singular collaboration process. This partnership delivered significant benefits for the business of this company. Not only has it allowed the construction of lodges on an historical Ethiopian site, but it also brought economic and cultural assets in the implementation of a 'museum' nearby. The project also gave Amba Ecotourism the opportunity to reflect upon legal and ethical facets of conservation. In particular it placed the company at the centre of an ethical conflict with the Addis Ababa University over the construction of lodges on an historical site. In addition, Haille Dagne Gabriel identified the positive role the company could play in promoting the conservation of cultural heritage and the natural environment through visits by tourists to the Ankober Safe House and site. The local plant resources used by the community generated interest in the scientific research of the properties and applications of the plants. This benefited the company as it aims to foster a relationship between the University of Addis Ababa and the local community.

For heritage professionals, the project offered an opportunity to question preventive conservation practice and to measure their efficiency in intangible and natural heritage contexts. Most of their work and experience arose from an academic education that fears for the loss of the material world, thinking that by losing the materiality of heritage, it will lose its most important attribute. The emphasis on the physical material of heritage has sometimes led heritage professionals to neglect the spiritual facets of heritage, which were of great emotional value to the community. The Ankober experience showed them how and why local customs often make no distinction between the physical and the spiritual world. Therefore they had to adjust their professional beliefs and values to those



of the 'client' who were themselves custodians of the heritage in question. They observed that the community customs of preservation are, in many respects, comparable with preventive conservation practices. Yet, acknowledging the value of local conservation practices did not dilute the role of professional conservators. Rather recognition opened up opportunities for dialogue and the exchange of knowledge and expertise. The point was to give credence to bodies of knowledge and practices that have historically been overlooked, or worse, devalued. It is worth noting here that the heritage professionals did not have the time within the project to systematically analyse and document traditional conservation 'recipes'. However, they recommended further research in this particular matter. The relevance of local conservation practices, in the Ankober context, taught heritage professionals that while museums are as diverse as the communities they represent, so too are the ways in which people care for and preserve their cultural heritage (Kreps 2003: 4).

## **Conclusion**

The work undertaken at Ankober was a modest yet innovative contribution to the wider use of preventive conservation principles. It demonstrated that education about and application of preventive conservation practices inspired the community and created a basis for confidence in an activity that demands transparency. It placed the actual community and its heritage, not the institutions and Western principles of conservation, at the centre of the conservation process. The practice of preventive conservation was connected to people's life and the heritage became a resource to be taken care of day by day, thus the local and customary systems placed responsibility for conservation on the community. The project confirmed that the most effective conservation and safety programmes are not necessarily large, well-financed and endorsed by international or central authorities. In addition, small projects can feed larger ones. Large programmes are sometimes trapped in conventional and political circles that often hide alternative initiatives. Small projects are not a substitute but can be a complementary approach to large programmes and an 'enlightener' which can provide a rapid response, explore new ideas and develop local networks of expertise.

## **Indicators of Preventive Conservation Principles**

The evaluation of the Ankober community project highlighted strengths and weaknesses encountered within its development. It also underlined the opportunities and limitations encountered by the three communities in the course of its implementation (Figures 45 and 46). More importantly, it identified some indicators relevant to the development of preventive conservation principles adapted to promote teamwork between local communities and heritage professionals.

In this context indicators relevant to partnership in preventive conservation are:

- Mutual trust and respect between all partners and for cultural heritage diversity (the practice of preventive conservation can be a foundation for this).
- The personal interest of all partners.
- The integration of local and ‘foreign’ values (cultural, social, philosophical and spiritual) into the management and practice of preventive conservation.

In this context indicators for the practice of preventive conservation are:

- To place the community at the centre of the conservation process.
- To integrate the motivations of all partners into the methodology of heritage management.
- To acknowledge the values of the physical and spiritual characteristics of the heritage and to integrate these values into preventive conservation practices.
- To allocate time for a reflective approach.
- To introduce flexibility into the philosophical and managerial aspects of preventive conservation practice.
- To reconsider the relevance of particular skills and resources.
- Transparency.

	Collective Management	Socio-Cultural Principles and Values	Preventive Conservation & Local Practices
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leadership</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Skills</li> <li>• Condition of heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community at the centre of the reflection</li> <li>• Identification and exposure to different value systems</li> <li>• Respect for cultural diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of both approaches</li> <li>• Ensure security</li> <li>• Cost effective</li> <li>• Non intrusive</li> <li>• Educational</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of legal status</li> <li>• Rate of project development</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Use of different languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissimilar definitions of value attributed to the Palace site and disagreement about objectives for the site with officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of expertise of each partner in 'others' approach</li> <li>• Lack of conservation policy</li> </ul>

**Figure 45:** Strengths and weaknesses of the practice of preventive conservation at Ankober.

	Ankober Community	Amba Ecotourism	Cultural Heritage Professionals
<b>Opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of preventive conservation practices</li> <li>• Partnership with cultural heritage professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research into ecological and sustainable conservation practices</li> <li>• Partnership with cultural heritage professionals and the Faculty of Pharmacology, University of Addis Ababa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of partnerships with museums</li> <li>• Anthropological and scientific research into local practices and resources</li> <li>• Research in preventive conservation efficiency and sustainability in a context associated with intangible and natural heritage values</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alteration of local practices</li> <li>• Expansion of trafficking</li> <li>• Capacity building</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over exploitation of the site through the construction of additional lodges bringing in too many visitors</li> <li>• Alteration of the community' social structure and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deficiency in museums policies</li> <li>• Divergence in conservation values</li> <li>• Interventive conservation</li> <li>• Disparity between local and professional terminology</li> </ul>

**Figure 46:** Opportunities and limitations to the sustainability of the Ankober project.

## Chapter Six

### Case studies in other Heritage Sectors

Chapter Six analyses what can be learned by the practitioners of preventive conservation about methodology and practices used in the conservation of natural and immovable cultural heritage in East Africa. It compares the Ankober project with two case studies which look at conservation undertaken between local and institutional communities in Kenya. The aim of this chapter is to identify theories, concepts and practices of partnership which are effective and applicable to the preventive conservation of movable heritage.

Both case studies took place in Kenya between 1995 and 2005 with the participation of National Museums of Kenya (NMK)<sup>1</sup> and the ICCROM Programme ‘Africa 2009’ (1998-2009). They have been selected because they took place in the similar geographical and social contexts than the Ankober case study and because they promoted partnership with local communities in the conservation of their immovable and natural heritage.

The ‘Africa 2009’ Programme aimed to conserve immovable cultural heritage and was the only conservation programme which integrated and studied traditional African conservation practices. The philosophy behind the programme was that culture and nature were intertwined, in much the same way that tangible and intangible heritage are inter-related (Saouma-Forero 2006). The approach taken by ‘Africa 2009’ supported the idea that traditional practices expressed the views of local communities on heritage conservation associated with specific beliefs and rituals, social organisation and sense of

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<sup>1</sup> The National Museums of Kenya is a corporate body under the Ministry of National heritage. The Museum drew its mandate from two Acts of Parliament: the National Museums of Kenya Act (1983) and the Antiques and Monuments Act (1983). These Acts were under review (2005-2006) and have been merged into what is known as the ‘National Museums Heritage Bill’ which has not yet been passed’ (Farah 2006: 20).

community ownership (Bandarin<sup>2</sup> 2005: 7). While ‘Africa 2009’ benefited from the support and broad experience of ICCROM, the National Museums of Kenya had also acquired valuable expertise in the conservation of natural heritage through the implementation of numerous community projects all over the country<sup>3</sup>. The Museum has been in partnership with ‘Africa 2009’ since the inception of the programme in 1998. The Museum has departments which assist natural heritage conservation projects such as the Kenyan Wildlife Society (KWS), the Forest Conservation Unit (FCU), the Architectural Research Unit (ARU) and the Kenya Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (KENRIK).

## **1. Conservation of Natural and Immovable Cultural Heritage**

### **Diversity in Disciplines**

Natural and cultural heritage professionals represent a wide spectrum of academically qualified disciplines. Sullivan<sup>4</sup> has argued that heritage studies are developing along with professional expertise and experience and that they are becoming increasingly sophisticated, self-reflective and complex (Sullivan 2003: 50). While this growing professionalism is desirable, it may have unintended consequences in the practice of conservation. For instance, there is a growing use of conservation jargon which has developed between practitioners similar to that in the medical and legal professions. Whereas intellectual rigour is required in conservation, the language used by professionals to express new or difficult theories is not necessarily appropriate to the context or the ‘client’.

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<sup>2</sup> Francesco Bandarin is Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Center and Secretary of the World Heritage Committee (2000-to present).

<sup>3</sup> Kenya has numerous game parks and reserves which are managed by the national authorities and local communities. In turn, NMK is involved in the conservation of natural heritage when the sites present archaeological or cultural assets, such as: the site of Olorgesailie (donated to the Kenyan Government by the Maasai community), the site of Jumba La Mtwana (13th century Swahili settlement), the ruins of Takwa (Manda Island), the Mnarani ruins (South bank of the Kilifi Creek on Kenyan’s Northern Coast), the Koobi (prehistoric site, Eastern shore of Lake Turkana, gazetted as the Sibililo National Park) (see [www.museums.or.ke](http://www.museums.or.ke)).

<sup>4</sup> Sharon Sullivan is First Assistant Secretary of the Australian and World Heritage Group Environment.

‘The problem with the language of conservation disciplines is that, apart from being increasingly inaccessible to most people, it tends to represent them as passive recipients of heritage practice and as people to be educated to appreciate and conserve heritage rather than being seen as its prime creators and owners.’

(Sullivan 2003: 51).

This problem of language can lead to issues of ownership regarding the management of conservation projects. It underlines the importance of consultation and shared decisions between the conservators and their ‘client’ or partners; a participatory approach commonly known as ‘community participation’ and a management principle commonly cited and used by United Nations Agencies. However, the concept of sustainability recently emerged as another fundamental principle of management and development that has to be addressed. This concept underscored the failure of international programmes to really apply the principle of community participation. Since the 1980s there was a great deal of discussion about the community and the public but rather more about them than with them<sup>5</sup>. Organisations and individuals working towards the conservation of natural and cultural heritage often replicated or conformed to the methodology of international agencies. Similarly, the principle of community participation often resulted in a ‘tick box’ list filled only by professionals. In return, many African communities complained that they felt that they were studied, stereotyped and ignored during the management of these projects<sup>6</sup>.

Similarly, a Western dominance of conservation practice tends to exclude the opinions and needs of local communities with whom heritage practitioners are dealing. This deficiency in professional practice can also lead to a sort of elitism in heritage practice. Within such a relationship, the community tends to distrust the conservator or sees him/her as an expert who holds knowledge and power to which they have no access. Ultimately, this can mean that local communities lose ownership and responsibility for

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<sup>5</sup> Personal communication, Peter Nizette, 08-07-05, Nairobi, Kenya. Peter Nizette was a Cultural Heritage Consultant for the European Commission and National Museums of Kenya Restructuring Project (2005).

<sup>6</sup> Personnel communication, Lorna Abungu, AFRICOM First General Assembly and Conference, 1 October 2003, Nairobi, Kenya.

their heritage or come to resent the ‘expert’ whom they see as interfering in their everyday life. This was the case for many African places associated with religious practices which received more attention from natural and cultural heritage specialists than those that had been abandoned by the local communities<sup>7</sup> (Ndoro 2003: 81). Such places were effectively protected by traditional customs through of rituals and restrictions. However, once the areas were designated as a national park and the sites declared national monuments traditional activities were prohibited<sup>8</sup>.

## **2. The Sacred Forests of Coastal Kenya**

Forests are important to Africans people for many reasons. Forests are valued because they provide: water, energy, fertile soil, good air quality and forest products such as medicinal plants, fruits and flowers. Traditionally Africans conserve forests so that they may be used as a refuge in time of drought. The rationale for conserving forests is also for other direct benefits; biodiversity and ecosystems that provide food, building materials and medicines. Forests are also places of recreation. Tourists come to see the wildlife, to hike, to camp, or to bike in forests.

Forests are the ancient traditional homes of several communities in Kenya for whom the forests are sacred places and the sites of religious and/or cultural ceremonies. Forests are important sites for education and research and provide employment for the local communities which live in their vicinity. In Kenya, forests were under threat from conflicts between local communities and the Government over land issues (Younge 2002: 45). Local communities and forest residents faced practical issues about rights to land and

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<sup>7</sup> In many African countries, World Heritage sites are associated with religious and ritual activities (e.g. the Sukur cultural landscape in Nigeria, the Khami Ruins and Great Zimbabwe National monuments in Zimbabwe, the Khahlamba-Drakensberg Park in South Africa and the Lamu Old Town in Kenya). In Ethiopia the World Heritage Sites associated with religious activities are: the rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela, the fortress-city of Fasil Ghebbi (Gondar region), Axum (the legendary birth place of the Queen of Sheba, which allegedly houses the Ark of Convent) and the site of Tiya (carved stelae of ancient Ethiopian culture).

<sup>8</sup> Personnel Communication, Ephraim Wahome, Lecturer Faculty of history and Archaeology, University of Nairobi, Kenya, 15 July 2005.

water and socio-economic opportunities. As a minority, the forest residents were usually not recognised by mainstream groups or by their own Government. This is shown by the lack of support given to local communities by the national authorities in the last few decades. Thus it could be argued that the Government has partial responsibility for the deterioration or destruction of sacred forests in Coastal Kenya. The current condition of the forests also results from a decline in knowledge and respect for traditional values combined with an increasing demand for land, for agriculture and development (Soutter, Smith and Rana 2003: 146).

Since the 1990s, a number of international meetings have been held to discuss these issues. The Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>9</sup> and the UNESCO Symposium on Sacred sites, Cultural Diversity and Biological Diversity<sup>10</sup> acknowledged the need to protect and encourage customary use of biological resources. They also reflect a growing appreciation of the importance of sacred sites as a component of natural heritage conservation. They promote the preservation of traditional and cultural practices that are compatible with conservation and sustainable requirements (United Nations 1993).

A commonly asked question, among African heritage professionals, is whether environmental conservation can be effective when based on cultural values and traditional belief systems. In Kenya it is possible to make some general observations about the conservation of natural resources at sacred sites using the experiences of organisations such as the National Museums. Its Coastal Forest Conservation Unit was involved in the conservation of Kenya's Mijikenda Kaya forests (Nyamweru 1996: 5).

### **The Conservation of the Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests**

The example of the conservation of sacred forests in Kenya explores the concept of sacred sites and their potential contribution to the conservation and management of natural heritage. It is difficult to give an inclusive definition of a sacred forest as the

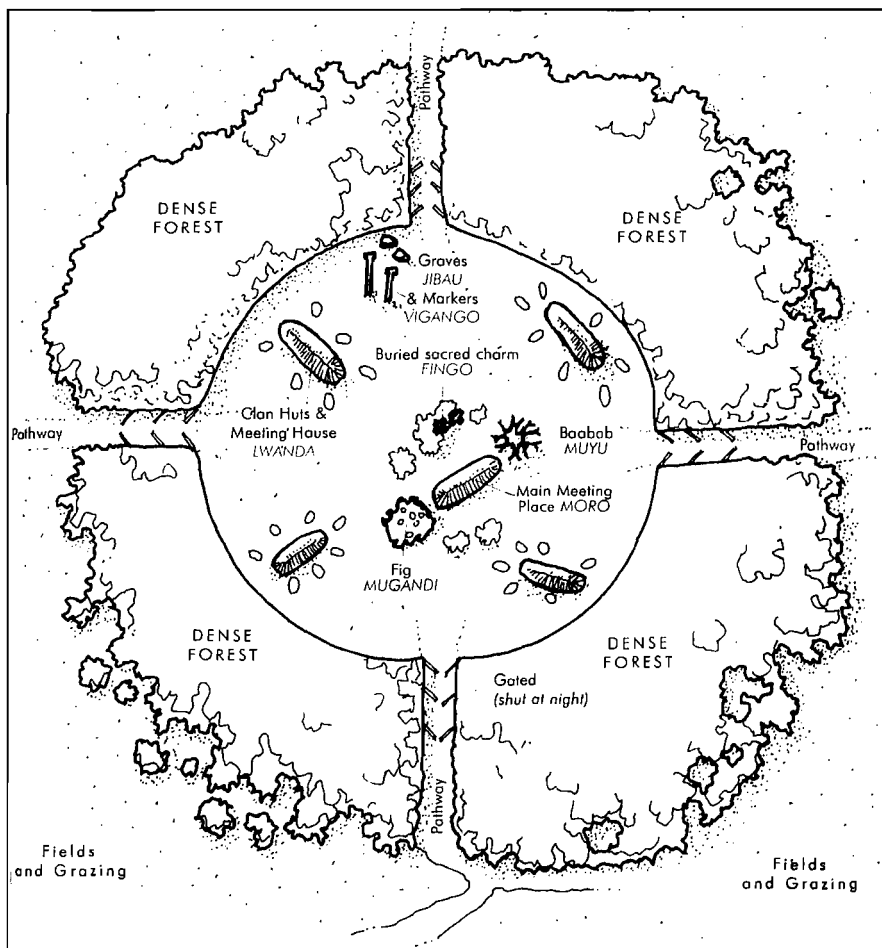
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<sup>9</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit, 3-14 June 1992, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO Symposium: 'Natural' Sacred sites, Cultural Diversity and Biological Diversity, 22-23 September 1998, Paris, France.



understanding of the concept varies between different beliefs systems and communities. However, in the case of the Kaya, the term ‘sacred forest’ referred to areas regarded by the local communities as having specific spiritual, cultural and historical significance (World Heritage Committee-UNESCO 2000: 17). The sacred Mijikenda Kaya forests are situated on the coastal plains and hills of Kenya. The Kaya forests are important for cultural and biodiversity reasons as determined by various studies, particularly two undertaken by the National Museums of Kenya and funded by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (Robertson 1986; Robertson and Luke 1993). Kayas are regarded as sacred by the Mijikenda people and owe their existence directly to their beliefs, culture and history. Initially, these forests protected small fortified villages, called Kayas, which were established to protect local cultural heritage (Younge 2002: 45) (Figure 47).



**Figure 47:** ‘Diagram of a traditional Kaya, a fortified village within a forest.’ (Joffroy 2005: 61).

The word 'Kaya' means homestead in many Bantu languages which are closely related to those spoken by the local communities of coastal Kenya (Tengeza 2003: 29). The Kaya was governed by a council of Elders whose authority was based on supernatural powers derived from certain oaths that they had inherited (Nyamweru<sup>11</sup> 1998: 25). The Elders regulated the use of the Kaya as a source of selected forest products, burial sites and for ceremonial activities (Younge 2002: 13). It is assumed that as conditions became more secure, particularly since the late 19th century, the groups left the forest refuges and began to clear and cultivate the surrounding areas. However, the small forested sites of the original Kayas were preserved as sacred places and burial grounds by the communities under the leadership of the Elders (World Heritage Committee-UNESCO 2000: 17).

However, customs and traditions changed. The rapid socio-economic and cultural changes that have occurred within Kenyan society since the 1960s have resulted in the decline of traditional values and practices (Tengeza 2003: 29). Interference by the Government in land tenure fostered the expansion of agricultural activities and development of tourist resorts development. These economic and ecological changes halted or slowed down the preservation of many Kaya forests. Increasing contact with foreign cultures also influenced the younger generation who lost their spiritual attachment to the Kaya forests. Then growing human needs to exploit the forests has led to the illegal appropriation and destruction of many forests (Soutter, Baidu and Rana 2003: 146).

Since the 1980s Kaya Elders and politicians have voiced their concerns and attempted to raise the awareness of the national authorities to the degradation of the Kayas (Githitho<sup>12</sup> 2005: 63). By the early 1990s the process to gazette the Kayas as National Heritage Sites

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<sup>11</sup> Dr. Celia Nyamweru is a former Academic Dean at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya. She has an international reputation for her work on physical geography. She offers a range of courses which deal with women in East Africa and the Third World, development issues and indigenous perceptions of the environment. She is Associate Professor in Environmental Studies at the St. Lawrence University of Canton, New York, USA.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Githitho is Heritage Manager at the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit, National Museums of Kenya.

and Monuments<sup>13</sup> under the care of the National Museums of Kenya has started (Younge 2002: 45). The first group of forests was gazetted in 1992 and the process continued until 2006. With the financial support of WWF, NMK established a Coastal Forest Conservation Unit (CFCU), which was charged with the task of continuing investigation into biological and cultural values and promoting the conservation of the Kayas in consultation with local communities (Soutter, Smith and Rana 2003: 146). The Museum organised educational and conservation activities that took place between heritage professionals, local communities and the wider public (Bassi 2003: 12). The Museum was also involved in administrative and legal issues aimed at facilitating conservation practices for all partners involved in the project (Githitho 2001: 7).

The ICCROM Programme ‘Africa 2009’ worked in partnership with the conservation unit of NMK (WHEN?). ICCROM professionals aimed to develop guidance for the improvement of legal frameworks which involved local communities in the management and preservation of their heritage resources (Saouma-Forero 2006: 90). They also researched traditional practices used by local communities for the conservation of immovable heritage and landscapes. ICCROM participated to the project for several reasons. First ‘Africa 2009’ had two important African partners in East Africa, AFRICOM and CHDA. Second, one objective of ‘Africa 2009’ was to contribute to capacity building within national institutions in the implementation of and respect for international conservation norms and standards (Joffroy 2005: 4). However, within the Kaya forests project, ‘Africa 2009’ focused on activities which integrated and prioritised the use of local knowledge systems, human resources’ skills and materials. The participation of NMK and ‘Africa 2009’ in the conservation of the Kaya forests highlighted indicators for effective partnerships between local and institutional communities. These indicators, reviewed in the section below, can be identified by the following aspects of the project:

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<sup>13</sup> The Antiques and Monuments Act (1983) which repealed the Preservation of Objects of Archaeological and Palaeontological Interest Act (1962) (Négri 2005: 5).

- Traditional practices used by Kaya communities.
- Partnerships between local communities, conservation agencies, **National Museums** and authorities.
- The legal aspects of protection.
- Institutional development issues.

### **Traditional Practices**

In East Africa, many local communities were well adapted to difficult living conditions because they gathered a vast knowledge about local and natural resources, including its strengths, applications and its management<sup>14</sup>. This was the case for the Mijikenda community of coastal Kenya. The Kaya forests provided the community with natural resources; it was also a spiritual asset to the community. To a certain extent, it is through the significance that the community assigned to these natural and spiritual resources that they built up their cultural identity. It is also a testimony to the strength of local culture and beliefs among the Mijikenda that most Kaya forests still exist (Githitho 2005: 63).

The main objective of the traditional management used by the Mijikenda living in the Kayas was to maintain their sanctity by controlling access to them. This was mainly achieved through the use of power based upon spiritual beliefs and social rules (Mulenkei<sup>15</sup> 2000: 3). Commonly, taboos and other religious codes were used to regulate access to the site. These codes reinforced self-discipline among individuals who were sanctioned by the spiritual leaders if they did not conform to the rules. Traditionally, the most important part of the Kaya forests was the Kaya itself: the clearing set at the centre of the forest. Historically, Kaya meant ‘the home of the community’. One of the community rules was that the Kaya should be approached from only a few defined paths. Use of any other trail but these paths and gates signified bad faith and hostility and was met with resentment by the community (Nyamweru 1996: 5). An important symbol of power used by the community was a protective talisman. This symbolic artefact passed

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<sup>14</sup> Personnel Communication, Ephraim Wahome, Lecturer Faculty of history and Archaeology, University of Nairobi, Kenya, 15 July 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Lucy Mulenkei is the Executive Director of the Indigenous Information Network, Nairobi, Kenya.

on by descendants of the original tribe was buried in a secret place in the Kaya (Soutter, Smith and Rana 2003: 145). Burial sites were also associated with the forest where generations of people are buried, in burial grounds designated for members of the community. No coffins or other receptacles were used to bury the dead, only a white shroud was tolerated (Githitho 2005: 65). The graves of great leaders were kept apart and were also treated as shrines because the Mijikenda believed that their spirits resided there. Some old trees and caves also had ritual significance. The cutting of trees or vegetations was forbidden (Githitho 2005: 65). In general any activity that had the potential to cause damage to sacred places and natural elements of the forest was strictly forbidden by the Elders. This included keeping to the traditional paths and avoiding stepping on vegetation and disturbing secret sites (Nyamweru 1996: 5). Any structures built for ritual purposes used materials from the Kaya forests. In addition to these restrictions on physical interactions with the site, some communities placed restrictions on the type of attire that could be worn on a visit to the clearing. At the most sacred sites, only traditional clothes such as seamless sarongs and shawls of distinctive colours could be worn <sup>1</sup> (Githitho 2005: 65) (Figure 48).



**Figure 48:** ‘Kaya Funo Elders dressed for a ceremony.’ (Joffroy 2005: 64).

<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this requirement are obscure but it may be that unusual cloth in the past may have helped to identify a ‘stranger’ and a possible threat (Githitho 2005: 65).

These ‘spiritual’ rules regarding acceptable respectful and disrespectful behaviour within the Kaya sanctuaries proved to be relevant in conservation terms, as they preserved the forest vegetation (Muller 2006: 8). Another way to sustain conservation was governed by a strong belief in a spiritual world which consented (or refused) to care for the local heritage in accordance with the ‘conduct’ of the Kaya inhabitants (Tengeza 2003: 30). However, this system of preservation relied heavily on the presence of a homogenous community sharing similar values and experiences.

### **Partnership**

Partnerships between local communities and heritage professionals compensated for any deficits in traditional practices. Collaboration allowed for the provision of local guards at sacred sites where the traditional and cultural systems no longer exist (Younge 2002: 46). Such a system required a modest injection of money, which those involved in the partnership were able to raise. Partnerships with the State through the support of ‘Africa 2009’ were also important as they helped to protect sites from destruction by private companies involved in deforestation for commercial purposes (Githitho 2003: 31). These companies were well funded and politically powerful for local communities to resist. A strong conservation partnership with ‘Africa 2009’ and the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit provided a significant advantage for the sustainability of the conservation project (Tengeza 2003: 30).

As the protection of the Kayas depends heavily on the status and cohesion of social and cultural values, the heritage professionals involved in the project conducted educational activities within local communities (King 1999: 16). While this did not completely restore cultural traditions, it served to restore interest in Kaya communities. For these activities to be effective, it was important to broaden the circle of Kaya local communities beyond just Mijikenda. The Kayas were mostly small areas of forest scattered over an extensive area. While links existed between some of them, the various groups tended to work in isolation despite having similar beliefs and interests. In the past this was understandable because for centuries communities were self sufficient, but the

conservation project and the management of its associated activities showed that in the 21st century greater collaboration to promote Kaya conservation was needed.

### **Legal Recognition**

It was essential to study the legal aspects in order to provide the sites with an official status. Kenya's official designation of the Kayas as national monuments and forest reserves provided an element of State protection which reinforced local and organisational preservation systems. A condition for such a nomination was that there would be clear demarcation of the forests by the national authority in consultation with local communities. However, conferring official status was not sufficient on its own. The conservation component of the relevant act was weak. It was also evident that without the inclusion of local communities in the formulation of Government policies, other problems would arise. For instance, there was a disparity between the rules and languages used by local communities and national authorities. Local communities had their own way of managing resources but 'others' had come and brought rules articulated in a language they did not understand. The national authorities and their official status were not sufficient and nor adapted to the conservation approach of the local communities to effectively manage the conservation of the Kayas. Kaya community groups and conservation organisations were key players in the conservation of the forest, particularly monitoring sites and preventing destruction. NMK also intended to assist committees of Elders by promoting their recognition as legal entities and by developing their capacity to initiate projects on their own. However, this approach if successful could extend to the ownership of land. Yet the transfer of land to any entity would require the full support of local councils, which for political reasons was difficult to attain (Githitho 2003: 32).

The Kaya sites have been listed onto the '2003 World Heritage List' (Fowler 2003: 115). This resulted from meetings organised between Kaya Elders and representatives of the World Heritage Centre (WHC). The Elders authorised representatives of the advisory bodies (IUCN, ICOMOS) and of UNESCO to visit some of the most sacred areas of the Mijikenda Kaya forest. Representatives of the World Heritage Centre explained to Kaya

Elders what the roles of heritage bodies and local communities concerned in the process of nominations were. It became evident that the Kaya community should understand the important role it played in the nomination procedure (World Heritage Committee- UNESCO 2000: 17). Therefore priority was given to information and education directed at Kaya representatives who participated in all stages of the preparation of the nomination.

### **Institutional Development**

Initially, the development of an institutional framework was not considered for the project. However, it became clear that without considering institutional issues in partnerships between the communities and heritage bodies, there would be little hope of sustaining conservation activities over the long term (Joffroy 2005: 1). There was much reflection, within the project, on this subject including analysis of institutional, socio-economic, geographic and other factors relevant to the formation of enabling structures for Kaya conservation (Githitho 1998). The requirements for institutional development and capacity building from the national to the local levels included the exploration of many issues linked to the value systems of the community but also to the resources that could be deployed by all partners involved in the project. First, agreement was reached on the importance of local perceptions and values attributed to Kaya heritage. The need to safeguard them was equally fundamental to heritage organisations and the people of the Kayas. Local communities have protected Kayas because of their traditional and cultural values and they still value them in this way. Conservation policy had to be discussed and agreed upon. For example, local Kaya Elders traditionally instituted rules and regulations to protect Kayas from disturbance. These rules relied heavily on social sanctions rather than active policy. However, for heritage professionals it was difficult to integrate ‘social sanctions’ into a conservation policy. After changes in society the local communities were no longer as cohesive and the influence of traditional institutions weakened considerably. Over time and with gazettelement the Kayas have been brought under the protection of national laws, which was meant taking a ‘State protection’ approach. Local communities felt that these laws were too weak and that they would not successfully



protect Kaya heritage (Soutter, Smith and Rana 2003: 146). From the Museum's standpoint, historical sites were protected by law and under their official responsibility. Finding resources for management was another crucial issue for the conservation project. Most of the population of the Kaya areas lived in deprived conditions and the committee of the Kaya Elders lacked the means to support the project financially. Any institutional developments need to recognise this socio-economic reality and in some way contribute towards the welfare of the community. However, if NMK and other national bodies were provided with State funds, these tended to be insufficient due to competing national demands. Although NMK was also able to attract funding from international agencies, for instance through the 'Africa 2009' programme, most donor project funding by its definition has time related limits (Barillet, Joffroy and Longuet 2006: 35). Thus the best and more sustainable resource offered by NMK was its considerable resource of scientific and technical expertise.

The Research Department of the National Museum and the Elders themselves have been the main initiators of Kaya conservation activities in the region since the early 1990s. (Githitho 2005: 63). The Museum was also the main catalyst for institutional changes initiated by the need to conserve the Kayas. However, establishing an institutional framework for the conservation of the Kayas was fairly complex because it was required to be effective at local and regional levels (Younge 2002: 46). Although the Museum itself was a stakeholder with particular interest in the national character and had links with the Government, possible difficulties may arise in the future if conservation activities tend, for various reasons, to involve elements of non-governmental advocacy. Assessments were produced by the various partners to identify the key needs to sustain the conservation project. A review process of the relevant laws about preservation started in 2005, facilitated by the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit. The most pressing and complex issue was the organisation of local institutions that could co-ordinate conservation activities under the supervision of the Kaya committees (Tengeza 2003: 29). Questions arose about whether in the final account all parties would agree to continue when assisted by *Parastatal* departments such as the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit or go down the non-governmental route.

## **Natural Heritage and Preventive Conservation**

The Kaya forests are listed as landscapes, when the UNESCO definition is used in their 'distinct character and components' (Githitho 2005: 66). However, their preservation required more than support from heritage professionals on legal issues such as supporting traditional regulations with national laws (Bassi 2003: 13). While NMK and conservators focused on institutional issues arising from the complexity of managing all the partners involved, the Kaya communities were the sole 'active' guardians of their heritage (Younge 2002: 46). From an institutional perspective, the Kaya conservation project succeeded in raising awareness to the various threats to the forests and sacred sites, and to the likelihood that local conservation practices were vanishing (Tengeza 2003: 30). However, the project lacked partnership in the identification and/or development of conservation principles adapted to a heritage integrating natural and movable features (Bassi 2003: 13). This deficiency was probably due to the emergence of a new and integrated conservation approach by 'Western' heritage professionals; an approach that aims to integrate tangible, intangible and natural features within a single professional methodology. Such partnerships necessitated the integration of the preservation of the local communities' rituals and culture within those of the heritage professionals. The ten year commitment by NMK, and to some extent 'Africa 2009', should allow valuable experience and information on conservation partnership to be gathered and studied. Notably, it could help point out the potential effects preventive conservation can have on the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and act as indicators that encourage innovative approaches with social and anthropological features. From the standpoint of a conservator, areas for partnerships can be identified as social, legal and intellectual (Figure 49).

## LOCAL VALUES IN PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT

### Social Aspects

Reality	Requirements
<i>Communities</i>	Acknowledge participants (Elders and the young)
<i>Heritage</i>	Acknowledge resources (animal, plants, seasons) Acknowledge applications (medicine, conservation material)
<i>Spiritual &amp; Social Rules</i>	Acknowledge practices (conservation, access, security, education)

### Legal Aspects

Reality	Requirements
<i>Communities &amp; Authorities</i>	Partnership (national/regional authorities, museums and local communities)

### Intellectual Aspects

Reality	Requirements
<i>Local Knowledge</i>	Identify local knowledge Acknowledge intellectual rights

**Figure 49:** Social, legal and intellectual requirements for the integration of local values with preventive conservation practice for cultural and natural heritage.

The potential that the combination of these three areas of partnership (social, legal, intellectual) has on the conservation of diverse natural and cultural heritage is mainly through collective practices, research and advocacy. Respect for cultural diversity, based on the recognition of local values in conservation management, and the identification of the social values of the community in relation to the site were key elements of the condition assessment process. It allowed external partners to comprehend the communities' conservation objectives in conservation and to understand the rationale for the rules and practices from which they originate. For example, Elders of local communities possessed considerable knowledge about their environment, the seasons, animals and plants and their behaviour and applications for preservation techniques or recipes.

Traditional healers and herbalists treated a variety of diseases with plants that could be developed by pharmaceutical companies to make new medicines<sup>2</sup>. Much of this knowledge was well known and used by many people and is part of the community's culture. Similarly, the communities developed social rules that operated as preventive conservation techniques to control vandalism, degradation of the sites and access to the heritage. These social rules also aimed to respect the Kaya heritage by using only natural products of the forests in their everyday life and by wearing clothes made exclusively of natural fibres when in contact with the heritage. All of these codes of conduct partially related to those developed in the field of 'Western' preventive conservation and ecological approaches. However, can these rules still be used? This is an important question from the perspective of heritage professionals and conservation practitioners. Heritage professionals have not answered this question. The local practices of Mijikenda have been transmitted orally to members of the local communities and records and documentation of this still need to be undertaken. However, comprehensive research of traditional conservation practices in East Africa requires more than the involvement of a conservation programme. Partnerships need to be extended to include other stakeholders notably local museums, which have closer social and cultural connections with their communities than national authorities and international organisations. However, the key participant in the preservation of local knowledge is the local community itself. Locals are in contact with Elders who have the knowledge and expertise. The community shares a common language which is a 'conventional' way to transfer knowledge. The community lives and preserves its heritage through teamwork: a key principle of preventive conservation management. This collective method of preservation can take place through farming activities; for example growing traditional and threatened food crops. It can also occur through the preparation of traditional medicine from natural resources. Thus, the community needs to find ways to preserve traditional knowledge while respecting changing local and social values. The community also needs assurance that traditional keepers and Elders are respected and retain ownership of this information.

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<sup>2</sup> Kenya has ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. This international agreement stresses that communities should share the benefits generated by the use of their indigenous knowledge and that Each Contracting Party shall manage biological resources with a view to ensuring their conservation and sustainable use' (CBD 2005).



This aspect of ownership of local knowledge is an issue of intellectual rights (if not property). This issue arose with the increasing exposure of local communities to a variety of heritage professionals and researchers interested in 'indigenous' knowledge. When providing information to external researchers, the community has the right to discuss their project with them and to be compensated for sharing their knowledge. Public recognition of local expertise is a small step towards considerate and sustainable collaboration with local communities.

### 3. The Stone Enclosures of Thimlich Ohinga in Kenya

Thimlich Ohinga is a unique architectural complex built in the Nyanza<sup>1</sup> province. It consists of six circular stone wall enclosures located among the trees and vegetation of a sloping hill. The name of the site has its origin in the local language spoken in Nyanza Province. 'Thimlich' means from a distance and 'Ohinga' refers to the presence of the stone enclosures (NMK 2005). The structures have dry stone walls which are between one and four meters high and are about one meter thick (Figure 50).



**Figure 50:** 'The enclosures at Thimlich Ohinga', Kenya (Joffroy 2005: 101).

<sup>1</sup> The Nyanza Province is situated in western Kenya. 'Nyanza' is the Swahili word for lake. This province is so named because this is where the largest fresh water lake in Africa, Lake Victoria, is located.

They were built of loose stones and blocks without any dressing or mortar. This construction technique is designated by African heritage professionals as ‘dry stone architecture’. Archaeological records of materials found within the site go back five hundred years (Wandibba 1986). The construction of the site date back to between 1590 and 1680 and there has been successive occupations (Ayot 1979). The first communities to settle there, mainly of Bantu<sup>4</sup> origin, introduced this stone building tradition to meet their security requirements and to exploit the environmental resources effectively. Early Bantu and later Nilotic<sup>5</sup> settlers in the region constructed about five hundred enclosures in more than a hundred locations in the Lake Victoria region (NMK 2005). Subsequently the communities that moved into this region between the 15th and 19th centuries repaired and modified the structures<sup>6</sup>. However, these repairs did not interfere with the architecture or preservation of the walls. During the first quarter of the 20th century, communities abandoned the Ohingas. On the establishment of colonial rules, traditional systems collapsed and no more stone structures were erected; this lead to the decline of these monuments (NMK 2005). Thimlich Ohinga is one of the few surviving stone structures and thus has historical significance in Kenya (Nunoo 1985: 2). In 1981, the site was declared a ‘National Monument’ by the National Government of Kenya and in 2000 was named in the ‘List of 100 Most Endangered Sites’ by the World Monuments Watch<sup>7</sup> (Farah 2006: 23). The following section looks at three specific aspects of the conservation of Thimlich Ohingas:

- Local and traditional conservation practices.
- Project development approach.
- Partnerships.

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<sup>4</sup> The term ‘Bantu’ refers to over four hundred different ethnic groups in Africa from Cameroon to South Africa. They are united by a common language family, the Bantu (and in many cases common customs). In a South African context, the term ‘Bantu’ in reference to people is considered offensive due to its tie with apartheid, and its linguistic connotation prevails. However, outside South Africa however it is widely used as a term for the Bantu-speaking peoples (Vansina 1985).

<sup>5</sup> The term ‘Nilotic’ refers to a number of native East African peoples who originated in the region of the Nile. Nilotic groups comprise the Dinka, Luo, Masai, Nuer, Turkana and Tutsi peoples. Nilotic peoples live primarily in Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea (Vansina 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Personal communication, 15 July 2005, James Kariuki, architect, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>7</sup> The UNESCO ‘World Heritage List’ and the ‘Watch list of 100 Most Endangered Sites’ share a common goal to raise awareness about preservation of sites. The UNESCO World Heritage List is a catalyst for raising awareness while the Watch program is one of its ‘tools’. UNESCO inscription is permanent while sites selected for inclusion on the Watch list change every two-year.

## **Traditional Practices**

As with the conservation of the Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests, traditional practices developed by local communities came from their social and philosophical values. However, as monuments the Ohingas had uses which differed from those of the natural heritage. Originally, the Ohingas were built as part of a complex where social, commercial and religious activities took place. They were villages where administrative, economic and spiritual activities took place such as trade, control of agricultural activities and meetings between leaders from different villages. In 2005, elements of these activities were still visible at the site (Onjala<sup>8</sup> and Kamaru<sup>9</sup> 2005: 98). Magic, an important element of power, was strongly associated with the site. The Ohingas also carried symbols which related to issues of gender. For instance, local communities considered that as the walls were protective they must be masculine and contain ancestral spirits. The village settled inside the enclosure conveyed concepts of motherhood and so was perceived as feminine (Onjala and Kamaru 2005: 98).

The village was under the authority of a single leader who was responsible for the preservation of Ohinga (Onjala and Kamaru 2005: 101). As with Kaya communities, prohibitive and taboos systems guaranteed preservation of the site. More significantly from a 'Western' conservation perspective, the communities living in the Ohingas had developed a conservation strategy based on teamwork which used approaches similar to those used by preventive conservation. When it came to conservation issues the communities behaved as 'heterarchical' societies. This system implied that each individual could potentially be ranked in a number of different ways, thus limiting intrusive behaviour in information management and conservation procedures (Crumley 1979: 145). The site was preserved through the participation of all members of the community under the leadership and authority of Elders. The role of Elders was to organise teamwork and to link the working group with the spirit world. Conservation work was an everyday task for the members of the community responsible for the regular inspection and monitoring of the site. Once a problem was identified, it was assessed in

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<sup>8</sup> Isaya Onjala is an Architect at the National Museum of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>9</sup> Ephraim Kamaru is a Research Scientist at the National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya.

collaboration with Elders and local experts who recommended appropriate solutions using traditional techniques and local materials. Local techniques favoured minimal intervention; however, when new stones were necessary and restoration work required, Elders mobilised everyone in the community to assist the local experts. (Onjala and Kamaru 2005: 100)

### **Project Development**

NMK records showed that the first condition assessment of the site was done in the 1960s by Neville Chittick, former Director of the British Institute of History and Archaeology in East Africa. The site was then left until 1980 when NMK researchers began work there (NMK 2005). The site was in poor condition, several portions of the walls had fallen while other sections were disintegrating, and other parts of the complex were overgrown. The entire site was an open and unfenced making it difficult to control entry and movement around the site (Onjala and Kamaru 2005: 99). The walls survived because of their unique construction and their use by local communities as a spiritual site. But the use of the site was changing rapidly despite its importance as an historical and spiritual link between the neighbouring communities. The local community was informed by NMK, about the significance attributed to the site by the national authority and their willingness to preserve it. However, with only a handful of researchers, the absence of a perimeter fence, and national policies and legislations that was both bureaucratic and unclear, the site continued to deteriorate<sup>10</sup>.

### **Partnership**

While the communities wished to preserve their heritage, potential partnership with the national authority created tensions over ownership. The Government of Kenya was the legal owner of the land and site. NMK took over the management of the site in 1983, acting for the Kenyan Government (Nunoo 1985: 3). Due to the high cost of conserving immovable heritage, most African Governments gave it less priority than direct economic necessities. Though, as tourism became one of the fastest growing industries in Kenya,

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<sup>10</sup> Personal communication, 15 July 2005, James Kariuki, architect, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya.



funding to heritage conservation, has been linked to the economic returns from tourism. This provided an official and legal foundation on which NMK could develop research and conduct conservation work. 'Africa 2009' and UNESCO ensured the dissemination and advocacy of conservation projects through research, publications and additional funding (Joffroy 2005). In 1999 the project received funds from the World Monuments Watch Program to carry out conservation work on most of the degraded and vulnerable portions of the wall enclosures<sup>1</sup> (Schuster 2003: 5). Local conservation practices were documented, including oral records created by past researchers and narratives from Elders who knew or saw the practices of those who had lived on the site (Onjala 1990). Also of value were ethnographic studies undertaken in East Africa which were analogous with the Ohingas. The experience of 'Africa 2009', in numerous conservation projects, served as a basis for the research methodology. A strategy for the conservation of Thimlich Ohinga was then put in place following recommendations issued at the 'Africa 2009' training session, organised at CHDA headquarters in 1999 (Onjala and Kamaru 2005: 100). From 2000 to 2004, work on the site involved monitoring of the condition of the walls and restoration work (Figure 51).



**Figure 51:** Thimlich Ohinga walls after restoration (Joffroy 2005: 102).

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<sup>1</sup> The World Monuments Watch Program contributed towards a sum of 8,000 US Dollars (Schuster 2003: 7).

Fencing of the site was organised to halt grazing and other human activities such as uncontrolled walking and collecting firewood or stones from the site. Overall, the preservation approach related to restoration techniques was ‘museum’ orientated. It aimed to bring back the original form of the complex, highlights its architectural characteristics and make it more attractive to visitors. An interpretation centre provided information to both local and foreign visitors about the site and the reasons for its conservation (Onjala and Kamaru 2005: 98). A traditional Luo<sup>12</sup> homestead constructed in the 1980s served as an exhibition space. The work was commissioned through NMK, and under the supervision of Museum architects who worked in close partnership with ‘Africa 2009’ advisers<sup>13</sup>. The supervision and management of the conservation project was under the responsibility of NMK. However, the actual ‘conservators’ were all traditional masons who had knowledge and skills of local construction techniques.

### **Immovable Heritage and Preventive Conservation**

The approach taken towards the conservation of the Ohingas, as immovable cultural heritage was similar to those used in the conservation of natural heritage in the coastal region of Kenya. These approaches, reviewed previously in the analysis of the Kaya forests, also relate to the respect of cultural diversity and the development of conservation research. In the present case study, the concept of respect for cultural diversity resides essentially in the use of local people and their expertise in preserving architectural heritage. This participation and recognition of local expertise encompassed social, intellectual and legal aspects.

The conservation project took place over a period of four years<sup>14</sup>. A range of specialists were involved from local, national and international backgrounds. They encouraged dissemination of knowledge and advocated community based conservation. The roles, objectives and benefits of all partners were clearly identified and found to be quite

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<sup>12</sup> The origins of the Luo people date back to 1500 in Sudan. Between 1550 and 1800, some groups moved to Uganda, others crossed into Kenya. They still live in the province of Nyanza (Vansina 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication, 15 July 2005, James Kariuki, architect, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>14</sup> The conservation work took four years, however the involvement of NMK began in 1980 and in 2006, the Museum is still responsible for preservation of the site.

dissimilar. NMK acted as an intermediary between the local communities and the Kenyan authorities. The importance of the Museum's role was its official status and its mandate within the conservation project. Not only did the Museum's official position further the network of collaboration with conservation professionals but it also facilitated funding from international agencies accustomed to collaborating with national institutions rather than with local communities (see Barillet, Joffroy and Longuet 2006). The site and the communities also benefited from the experience of 'Africa 2009' in the design of a conservation plan which respected local social values and which considered local conservation philosophy and practice (Saouma-Forero 2006: 90 and Africa 2009 2005: 32). The participation of local people in the conservation work answered the legitimate requirements of the project which aimed to develop conservation partnerships (Nunoo 1985: 3) (Figure 52). It fostered institutional recognition of the expertise of local communities and provided employment. Thus the museum created sustainable resources for the local area, while reviving and developing threatened practices.

**Administration** (National Museums of Kenya)

- Acts as an official medium between all partners.
- Provides institutional support (research, funding and advocacy).
- Provides technical support.
- Disseminates information on conservation projects, regionally and internationally and promotes the role(s) and value(s) of conservation.
- Promotes the integration of local and international values in conservation practice.

**Education and Research** ('Africa 2009' Programme)

- Provides training (respectful of the local socio-cultural and local conservation philosophy and practices).
- Disseminates knowledge through education, publications and conferences.
- Advocates for the development of preventive conservation.
- Researches effective documentation techniques for tangible and intangible heritage.

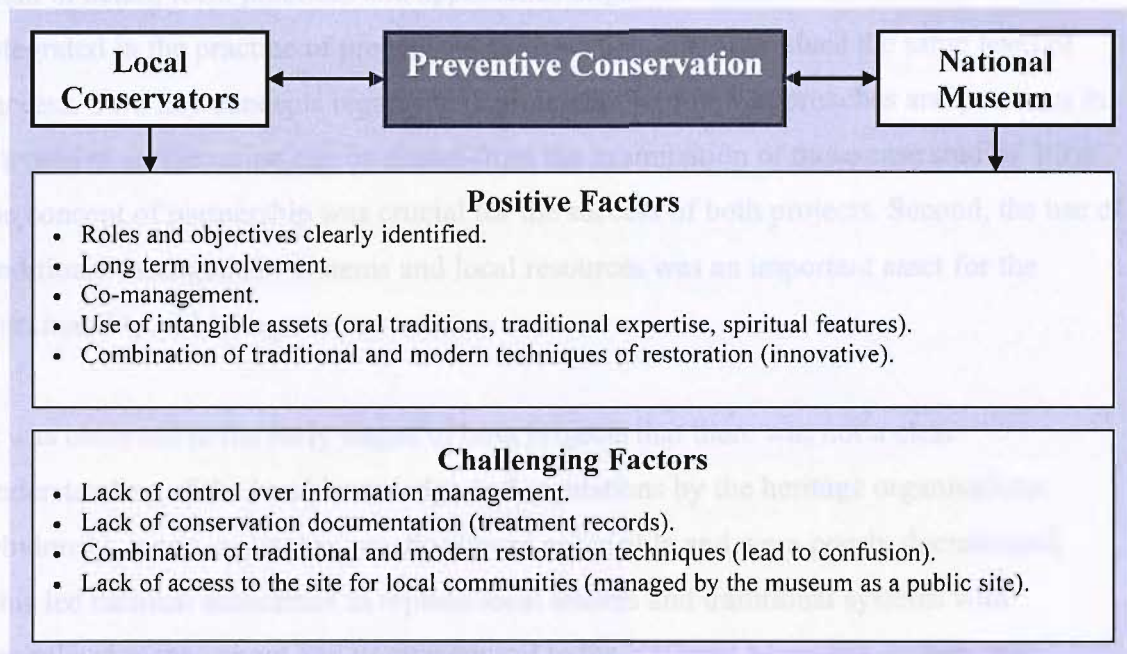
**Conservation** (Local Community)

- Acts as an intermediary between the museum, the heritage and the residents.
- Provides conservation skills for practical work.
- Shares traditional knowledge and practices with cultural heritage professionals.
- Works in collaboration with the museum in the documentation of tangible and intangible heritage.
- Promotes sustainable resources for the residents in the management of the heritage.

**Figure 52:** Comparison of the project structure with a museum structure; the roles of each partner in the practice of preventive conservation.



The technical contribution of the Museum's architects and researchers led to the gathering of important findings on conservation practice and management. This information stimulated further dynamics between the communities, the Museum and 'Africa 2009' through the publication of the Ohinga case study in the book: 'Traditional Conservation Practices in Africa' (Joffroy 2005). While the conservation project could be perceived as successful it also highlighted weaknesses (Figure 53). Surprisingly this arose through the management of information. The practical restoration work, undertaken and shared by all the experts (community, museum and 'Africa 2009'), highlighted the lack of standards in the recording of traditional practices. Within the restoration process, the practices of local masons and the 'Africa 2009' experts have been 'customised' by their students, who themselves became experts, with the result that most experts worked in their own way (Onjala and Kamaru 2005: 104). While the combination of ancient and contemporary techniques was perceived by all partners as positive and innovative, the procedure led to confusion. Thus, the experience highlighted that developing methodical techniques for monitoring, recording, and subsequently applying traditional practices with the backing of local restorers who possess the practical skills was required.



**Figure 53:** Strengths and weaknesses of conservation partnership between local and museum experts.

Through partnerships with local communities and international partners, NMK regionalised and even globalized its actions, enhancing the role of culture in development (Nunoo 1985: 3). Co-management has proved to be successful for the project by reviving traditional management techniques in the Thimlich Ohinga. Furthermore, a rediscovery and redefinition of peoples' traditions seemed to have taken place. Thus, with efforts and commitment, traditional ways of caring for immovable heritage could be revived. This offers local communities a chance to actively participate in site management and instils in them a sense of belonging. Once they become interested stakeholders and are allowed to work on the sites, they could safely ensure the safety of heritage sites on behalf of the organisation.

#### **4. Empathy and Integration of Practices**

Although much of the discussion is based on experience in Kenya, countries in East African and beyond are probably facing similar issues over the conservation of their cultural heritage. While recognising that two cases do not make a 'theory' by examining them in detail, local practices and approaches might be identified and isolated which, if integrated in the practice of preventive conservation, might produce the same level of success. Two key concepts regarding the integration of new approaches and practices in preventive conservation can be drawn from the examination of those case studies. First the concept of partnership was crucial for the success of both projects. Second, the use of traditional management systems and local resources was an important asset for the sustainability of heritage conservation.

It was observed in the early stages of both projects that there was not a clear understanding of the local knowledge and regulations by the heritage organisations. Obviously, many customary practices were not visible and were poorly documented. This led national authorities to replace local leaders and traditional systems with centralised management and to give control to the National Museums. In turn, the

museums mainly ‘controlled’ heritage preservation through the gazettelement of sites, sometimes at the expense of the communities’ benefit. This national and official approach was also observed in wildlife conservation projects in Kenya in the 1950s. Regional authorities established game reserves and policies without consultation with the communities living in the areas chosen by the Kenyan Government. This approach resulted in conflicts between national authorities and the representatives of the local communities. As a result wildlife numbers continue to decline on most private and communal lands (Barrow, Gichohi and Infield 2000: 2). If this approach persists, it might have similar effects on the conservation of cultural and natural heritage in the custody of local communities.

An alternative approach to those used by national authorities would be to take advantage of the local community’s diversity in conservation practice. Divergence between traditional and ‘modern’ approaches in conservation practice could be balanced by emphasising similarities and opportunities for all the partners involved in community-based conservation. In his study on the links between traditional and legal systems, Mumma<sup>15</sup> referred to ‘state-based’ as opposed to ‘community-based’ systems and highlighted the characteristics of each (2005: 22-23). He suggested using the terms ‘local community’ and ‘heritage sphere’, as more applicable to small projects acting under local customary rules. The table below presents a combination of the characteristics underlined by Mumma with those identified in the two case studies (Figure 54).

The Kaya and Ohinga communities wanted to conserve their heritage not for their sole material characteristics, but for mankind in relation to man, society and nature: what is not used is not conserved. In this regard, local communities have an opposite vision to that of local museums which conserve objects that can not be used and have therefore lost their function. Thus key criteria for local communities to preserve the part of the heritage which is not ‘used’ in their social life, and to retain access to their own heritage, would be to document it and to educate and promote a sense of ownership for the young.

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<sup>15</sup> Albert Mumma, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

An examination of the three conservation case studies underlined the complexity of managing conservation projects in partnership. Whether they were funded by national authorities, international NGOs or by the private sector, conservation projects depended initially upon external funding. There was a serious danger that such funding could run out and not be renewed. In such cases it would be difficult for the communities to keep the balance between their autonomy and the need for assistance.

<b>‘Local Community’ Traditional System of Heritage Management</b>	<b>‘Cultural Heritage’ Legal System of Heritage Management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral tradition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written in formal texts.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquires legitimacy from historical rights of use and ownership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquires legitimacy from constituent assembly votes or nation-state resolution.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dates back to the origins of each specific community (transmitted by community Elders).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent in origin (date back to 1931; Athens Charter)<sup>1</sup>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on traditional rules drawn from local and socio-cultural value systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on international and national standards.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded on oral history, spiritual beliefs and the use of heritage resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Founded on theoretical and scientific theories.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merges nature and culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separates nature from culture.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation priorities very community orientated; favours local heritage over national heritage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decides on ‘uniqueness’ of heritage to be conserved according to Western value systems.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrates heritage conservation with socio-cultural and ecological features and with private sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrates heritage conservation with economic and institutional sectors.</li> </ul>

**Figure 54:** Comparison of ‘traditional’ and ‘legal’ systems of heritage management.

<sup>1</sup> The Athens Charter has contributed to the development of a vast international conservation movement. This has culminated in the formulation of national conservation related policies which has influenced the activities of ICOM and UNESCO, and which has led to the creation of ICCROM.

It can also be observed that most of the tensions and problems associated with the attempt to involve local communities in conservation practice are similar in the fields of movable, immovable cultural and natural heritage. One of the main conceptual issues shared by all disciplines is well illustrated in the ‘Operational Guidelines for World Heritage listing and management’<sup>17</sup>. The guidelines encompasses the concepts of ‘living site’ and ‘traditional management practice’, but still make it very clear that emphasis is placed on the establishment of criteria of universal value and on the management of the conservation of these values. This runs contrary to heritage management best practice, which insists that all the cultural values of a place should be acknowledged and cared for and that management planning should include the conservation of all these values (Sullivan 2003: 51). The example of the great Khmer city of Angkor in Cambodia plainly illustrates this conceptual attitude. The site is described in World Heritage terms as ‘a unique artistic realisation of the human mind’ (Sullivan 2003: 49). For two hundred years the whole management focus has been on the restoration and physical conservation of these monuments. But the ongoing traditional and religious connections between the spiritual and cultural values of local communities do not form part of the reasons for the World Heritage listing.

‘These connections have been all but ignored. The local and resident communities have been excluded from management decisions, have worked under the direction of international ‘experts’ and their rights to access and use of the site increasingly restricted in the interests of the conservation of these World Heritage values.’ (Sullivan 2003: 50).

In East Africa where there is little political support for heritage conservation, the conservation of natural and immovable heritage often raised more interest from international agencies than the conservation of movable heritage. Essentially this is

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<sup>17</sup> The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention aim to facilitate the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (referred to as ‘the World Heritage Convention’). The Guidelines set the procedures for: (a) the inclusion of properties on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger; (b) the protection and conservation of World Heritage properties; (c) the granting of International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund; (d) the mobilisation of national and international support for the Convention. The Operational Guidelines are periodically revised to reflect the decisions of the World Heritage Committee (IUCN 2006).



associated to economic factors related to the development of tourism. It also derived from the historical development of conservation in Western countries where there is often a separation between natural heritage and cultural heritage (Sullivan 2003: 49). Western conservation developed and focused primarily on the conservation of monuments and sites, as expressed in the 1964 Venice Charter. This approach has influenced and sometimes formatted the priorities of international agencies with the exception of ICCROM. In turn, professionals working in the conservation fields of natural and immovable cultural heritage were accountable to international agencies; the donors. Thus they developed means by which they could try, objectively and accurately, to measure returns and benefits to international agencies. Management was one of the many skills necessary to improve their ability to achieve heritage conservation objectives and to hone their arguments for the maintenance of conservation activity. Thus, monitoring conservation projects and testing the effectiveness of actions, were key elements of natural and immovable heritage development in East Africa since the 1990s.

### **Indicators of Preventive Conservation Principles**

The evaluation of both case studies uncovered a set of indicators conducive to the formulation of collective preventive conservation principles within the framework of partnerships between local communities and heritage professionals. It can be observed that the indicators identified in the Ankober case study are also relevant to the conservation of natural and immovable cultural heritage. However, additional indicators for partnerships were identified as follows:

- To share similar values and requirements (that the community be homogenous).
- To overcome the disparities between the rules and languages used by local communities, heritage professionals and local authorities.
- To provide a minimum guarantee for sustainability (the combination of all expertise).
- To recognise that traditional cultural practices are compatible with the concepts of conservation and sustainability.



## **Chapter Seven**

### **Preventive Conservation Partnership: From Practices to Principles**

Chapter Seven summarises key aspects of the theoretical and factual data collected in the analysis of organisational structures and the three case studies, which have the potential to develop principles for the practice of preventive conservation between local and institutional communities in East Africa. Chapter Seven examines the rationale for developing preventive conservation principles in the context of partnership and provides an assessment of the values that the practice of preventive conservation presents to local and institutional communities. The interpretation of these results shows which practices local and institutional communities can share in the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Finally, the factors that indicate that the circumstances are conducive for the formulation of preventive conservation principles, which can be used by local and institutional communities, are suggested.

An understanding of how new skills, professions and areas of specialisation in preventive conservation and heritage management have expanded and developed from those of the past is crucial. In East Africa, the transfer of knowledge about, and the implementation of, preventive conservation in museums respond to the economic conditions faced in the management engage in the conservation of museum collections. Also, it appears that the long term involvement of PREMA in preventive conservation training has fostered the involvement of a much larger number of African professional in the preservation and management of museum collections than were previously involved. However, the development and sustainability of the practice of preventive conservation in African museums and heritage organisations has not yet been assured. African heritage professionals wish to regain their autonomy and superimpose their cultural identity over the residual museum ‘legacy’ of the colonial period. CHDA and AFRICOM favoured the development of museology and museum management at the expense of preventive conservation. While heritage organisations and museums refer to community

participation when developing heritage conservation strategies, partnerships with local communities have often been neglected. However, the roles and views of the residents are critical when international and national parties discuss the value of partnership.

In this context of partnership between local and institutional communities, the practice of preventive conservation presents scientific and theoretical approaches that sometimes are not feasible for local communities or applicable to the heritage. This may be due to a lack of resources or to divergence in ethical and spiritual values. Thus the characteristics and functions of preventive conservation are not always adapted to the needs of local communities and the demands of cultural heritage preservation. In the context of local communities the discipline is not merely concerned with scientific measures, it needs to be re-contextualised by developing relevant socio-cultural approaches.

Specialisation in scientific conservation, archaeology or documentation has contributed additional expertise from ecology, anthropology and social sciences. Along with these developments, conservators have acquired new roles within which they have to consider cultural heritage in its larger context.

‘Both cultural and environmental conservation are now seen not only as feasible but also as necessary for human survival, and an integral part of the development process. When culture is integrated into development, it can enable the bearers of traditional culture to adapt their ideas and actions to a changing environment within the context of their own cultures and on their own terms.’ (Hunt and Seitel 1985: 38).

In East Africa, conservators and heritage managers should be willing to adapt their professional behaviour so that in their practice movable, immovable and natural heritage are inextricably linked. In order to achieve this they may need to integrate the principles relating to these disciplines with their own areas of expertise.

A preventive conservation approach that integrates communities and promotes access is likely to have a beneficial impact on the conservation of cultural heritage and can

promote the sustainability of conservation efforts by engaging communities in the care and preservation of their heritage.

‘The greater the relevance and sustainability of conservation efforts and the more they serve to foster community building and civic dialogue, the more cultural heritage conservation is embraced by society as a ‘public good.’ (Avrami 2000: 19).

However, to attain such an objective a conservation philosophy and strategy is required to develop preventive conservation principles which ‘satisfy’ the different partners and which respond to the needs of cultural heritage.

Several factors have led to the decline of traditional and local conservation practices. However, they could be revived and integrated into conservation partnerships so that traditional and contemporary practices are combined. Under what conditions do preventive conservation partnerships assist in the creation of cultural and social values that strengthen the preservation of cultural heritage? And what should the roles of heritage professionals be in the promotion of organisational capacity in support of community conservation? Between the views and priorities of African museums and international heritage organisations divergence can be observed. Museum professionals aim to integrate preventive conservation into their institutional practice because the discipline provides a relevant response to their lack of resources and stimulates teamwork that is conducive to significant achievement. Cultural heritage organisations are trapped in discussions and planning on managerial and fundraising issues and often contribute to a theoretical debate rather than with concrete actions (Abungu 2005: 29).

The collaboration of international heritage organisations with local communities calls for a steady and orchestrated questioning of the values of preventive conservation practice which includes concepts of intangibility, sustainability and community involvement. In this respect local and institutional communities share a number of similar values when it comes to the conservation of cultural heritage.

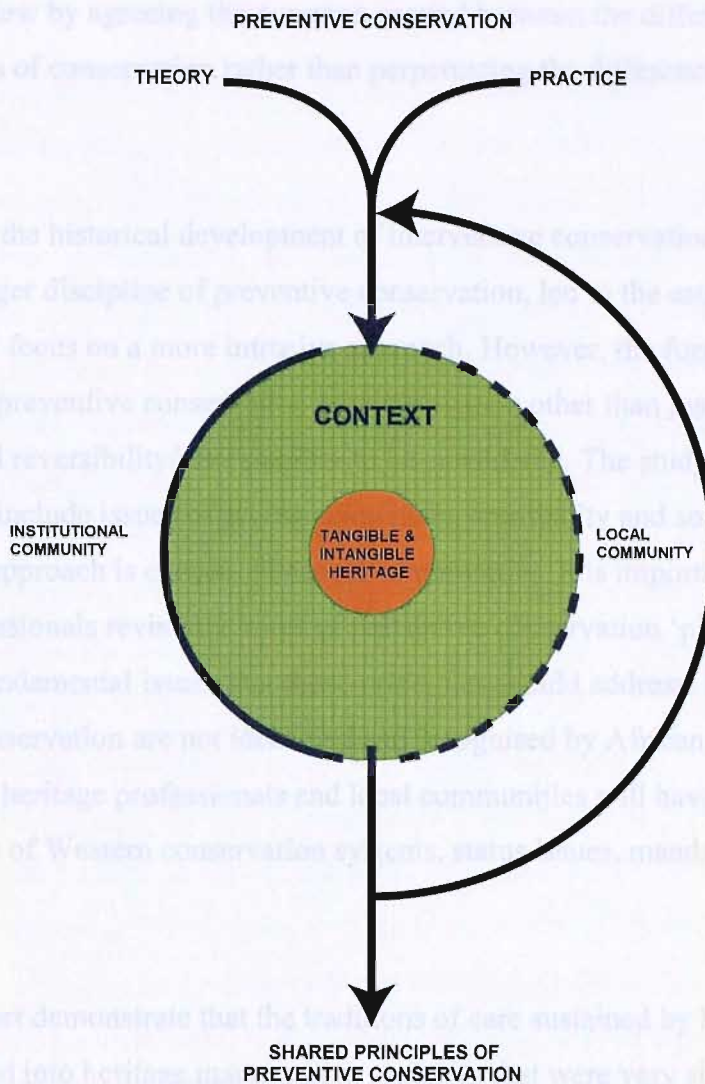
## 1. Rationale for Preventive Conservation Principles

Principles for the preventive conservation of cultural heritage when local and institutional communities are in partnership have not yet been developed at an international level. Similarly preventive conservation principles which consider tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as a heritage which sometimes interacts with natural and spiritual environments, has not been yet developed by international organisations.

When working with the Ankober community the author had to refer to guidelines and standards used in conservation code of ethics and development studies (CMA 1999; SAMA 2001; ECCO 2002; PIMA 2006 and ICOM 2006). In a partnership context, the rationale for developing preventive conservation principles relate to the social life of groups of individuals, with different value systems and historical backgrounds, who have to find common ground around the preservation of cultural heritage (Figure 55).

‘Rules are needed in every relationship, whether it is with a state, an institution or a person. Without mutually understood rules, every event has to be treated as a unique situation, something that consumes unnecessary time and energy. The rules may be codified, written or implicit, but without rules there is often too much unpredictability which itself breeds distrust. The rules may include codes of behaviour, values and standards, critical areas for professional bodies where the public are asked to take expertise and competence on trust. Partnership only works if there is at least an implicit agreement on what is right and what is wrong in the way the work is done.’ (Handy 2004: 99).

In the course of this research, and in the development of the Ankober project, it can be observed that preventive conservation principles, particularly with regard to practice, access and ownership, would facilitate the development of partnerships by providing a forum in which heritage management could be discussed.



**Figure 55:** Local and institutional partnership in the preventive conservation of cultural heritage: from the theory and practice to principles.

The actual functions and applications of preventive conservation principles are different for local and institutional communities. For heritage professionals, the use of principles provide consistency in practices, scientific research, code of conduct and ethical issues which in turn promote expertise and knowledge to be shared and developed internationally.

‘Discussion of theory and principles is important if conservation is to make an effective impact within the heritage field. Conservation needs to develop a coherent view by agreeing the common ground between the different fields and specialisms of conservation rather than perpetuating the differences.’ (Pye 2001: 35).

It is clear that the historical development of interventive conservation when compared with the younger discipline of preventive conservation, led to the establishment of principles that focus on a more intrusive approach. However, the formulation of principles for preventive conservation requires aspects other than just scientific treatments and reversibility/retreatability to be considered. The study of concepts and practice must include issues of access, ownership, spirituality and sovereignty when a conservation approach is chosen. For local communities, it is important that African heritage professionals revisit the roots of preventive conservation ‘philosophy’ and identify the fundamental issues that those principles should address. If the values of preventive conservation are not identified and recognised by African heritage organisations, heritage professionals and local communities will have to work within the constraints of Western conservation systems, status issues, mandates and codes of ethics.

The case studies demonstrate that the traditions of care sustained by local communities were developed into heritage management practices that were very similar to those of preventive conservation. The research has shown that combining this international expertise has a positive effect for the conservation of intangible heritage, in contrast to more interventive approaches. Therefore, it is important that the value and relevance of preventive conservation practices in tangible and intangible cultural environments are identified and compared with the roles that heritage professionals and local communities can play in this process.



## **2. The Values of Preventive Conservation: Local Communities as Conservators of their Heritage**

The value of preventive conservation practice is clearly identified by heritage professionals by its various economic, ethical and sustainable approaches that are particularly well adapted to the preservation of large collections within museum contexts. For local communities, the characteristics of preventive conservation are beneficial to the preservation of the heritage in their custody. However, issues of access, ownership and practice need to be specifically and more closely linked to the practice of preventive conservation. A preventive conservation strategy developed by conservators, organisations or local communities requires an assessment of the value placed on this heritage by those concerned with its preservation. This process is commonly used and is relevant in all heritage sectors; the importance placed upon tangible, intangible and natural heritage differs between the participants involved and the socio-cultural environment in which it takes place. Specific context generate scientific, unempirical, individual or collective approaches for the assessment of the value of cultural heritage. Thus, the assessment of heritage values, preceding the development of a preventive conservation strategy, should not be left to specialists such as conservators, archaeologists, architects or historians. These last three groups are often more involved in the discovery and recording/documentation of, rather than the sustaining of, heritage and therefore should consider the views of the local communities (Saouma-Forero<sup>1</sup> 2006: 88). Analysis of the case studies showed that in the context of partnerships between local and institutional communities, this process and its outcomes often differed significantly.

The values attributed by the different communities to heritage are as diverse as are those used for its assessment. In heritage conservation this divergence is not an obstructing factor but rather a predictable characteristic of cultural diversity. It can not

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be expected that common ground for conservation partnerships which assign similar values to cultural heritage will always be found. Kreps points out another crucial factor that has to be taken into account in the process of assessing the values local communities assign to cultural heritage: the contemporary development of cultural material and preservation practices.

‘We can also question if cultural resources can be adequately identified by outsiders and then used to ‘measure’ degrees of ‘cultural loss’ or ‘cultural integrity’. This approach is especially problematic if too much attention is focused on so-called ‘traditional’ cultural resources. In searching for evidence of ‘traditional culture’, one can overlook new cultural expressions or how earlier forms have evolved in response to changing social conditions.’ (Kreps 2003: 136).

Of equal importance to the development of a value system adapted for the assessment of heritage managed and preserved in partnership, are issues of access and related practice. Berducou says that the most effective way to preserve objects is not to hide them away but to make them more accessible so that people have access to them and care about them (1999: 18). For many local African communities, access means the ability of local community to use artefacts for religious and social ceremonial purposes. Requests by communities for intellectual or physical access can generate issues for conservation practice, storage and use (Moses 1992: 4). The three case studies demonstrate that access is often closely linked with the socio-cultural life of the community and that access generates the development of particular practices which respond to intellectual, religious or spiritual characteristics of the community. If preventive conservation is to be practiced by heritage professionals and local communities, these issues must be addressed. Understanding the value that access has for all partners can foster the development of shared preventive conservation guiding principles.

When considering the assessment of cultural heritage values, physical and intellectual access and the diversity in preservation practice, it is vital that the importance of

national and local legislation, that allows partnerships to develop within a legal framework, is acknowledged. In Négri's view legislation adapted to partnership in the practice of conservation is:

‘Legislation should be for the people and by the people, reflecting the values of all the different segments of society. These values should be documented and well defined within the heritage legislation. To achieve this, the law must provide for community values, customary rights, and traditional practices including those that relate to ownerships and the right to use heritage. Legislation should cover the interrelationship of tangible/intangible, and movable/immovable heritage. Legislation needs to provide for a variety of diverse methods of conservation in keeping with different situations and types of heritage.’ (Négri 2005: 73).

Although dissimilar in their social organisation and objectives, local and institutional communities can find common ground in the practice of preventive conservation. The underlining thesis is that it is the integration of preventive conservation values into practice that provides a common basis for partnership. It is not the assessment of heritage values but rather the assessment of preventive conservation values that should inform the development of principles relevant to partnerships between these communities.

The Ankober community identified key preventive conservation attributes that were pertinent to their circumstances prior to starting their project as those that were: relevant to their social system (teamwork and access); relevant to local practices (physical and spiritual); relevant to their cultural context (integrating tangible, intangible and natural heritage). Representatives from all communities were included in the formulation and dissemination of preventive conservation values and it is this that led to success of the partnership and in the achievement of the conservation objectives. The section below reviews what aspects of the preventive conservation ethos can be used a starting point when principles are formulated.

This analysis looks at preventive conservation values within what is often referred to as the 'socio-cultural system' and it is within this system that practice takes place.

This concept of a 'socio-cultural system' derives from the work of David Clarke, who examined culture as a system with five sub-systems which interact with each other within their natural environments (social, religious, psychological, economic and material) (Clarke 1994: 45). While this value system mainly addresses museological studies, it is applicable to this research which also considers preventive conservation in its socio-cultural and natural environments.

### **The 'Social' Sub-system**

The social sub-system indicates values which relate to hierarchical networks of local and institutional relationships. The value of preventive conservation practice in this sub-system can be attributed to several factors, its main asset is its encouragement of a team based approach. Through teamwork local and institutional communities are able to work on preconceived notions and prejudices and develop mutual respect.

Teamwork allows an understanding to develop the possibilities of preventive conservation for both sides through the active involvement of all partners in decisions on matters which will affect them. Respectively, it is also valid for the social systems of local and institutional communities. Although communities interact with each other they also remain homogenous in their individual hierarchical systems, thus they can respond to their respective preservation approach and local/professional requirements.

### **The 'Religious' Sub-system**

The religious sub-system refers to religions, beliefs and spirituality which are associated with the formulation of doctrines and rituals. The preventive conservation practice can accommodate the principle of legitimacy of local religions and beliefs over heritage. Preventive conservation can be 'non-intrusive' in its approach and through preventative measures directed towards the cultural heritage environment its practice can reduce the deterioration of artefacts. Thus, preventive conservation accommodates the needs of local communities who require restricted access to heritage in the course of its conservation. Preventive conservation in contrast to interventive conservation can

influence the environment in which artefact are used for ceremonial purposes. Preventive conservation can contribute to the preservation of intangible heritage, an important feature of religious cultural heritage. Through the incorporation of different religious beliefs and associated traditional customs in the preventive conservation practice of tangible heritage, intangible features are used and perpetuated in the conservation process and thus are preserved.

### **The ‘Psychological’ Sub-system**

The psychological sub-system is:

‘An integrated system of supra-personal, subconscious beliefs induced upon the individuals in a society by their culture, their environment and their language: essentially the subconscious system of comparative values.’ (Clarke 1994: 45).

The value of preventive conservation can be seen through the teamwork engendered by its practice and its non-intrusive approach towards integrating the motivations of all partners in heritage management methodology. Thus its practice allows flexibility in its philosophical, intellectual and managerial matters to relate to the conservation of cultural heritage. It encompasses a concept of democratisation which favours a more tolerant approach to individual-institutional and local-foreign views. Democracy within heritage management means that the responsibility for conservation is distributed among all the partners and other individuals wishing to participate in the preservation process. A shared practice of preventive conservation through the combination of local and foreign approaches promotes dialogue and the transfer of knowledge. Ultimately, a preventive conservation practice that is acknowledged and shared by all partners fosters the development of a ‘professional’ language understandable by all (as opposed to professional jargon).

### **The ‘Economic’ Sub-system**

The economic sub-system is the combination of methods and resources which equip different communities. Preventive conservation is cost effective and its long term approach promotes the sustainability of preservation programmes. Preventive

conservation practice does not require sophisticated equipment or resources. This means that heritage professionals and local communities can reconsider the relevance of their own skills and investigate local resources which would enable sustainable preventive conservation practice. Heritage professionals can undertake studies on the potential applications of local skills and resources in the larger international context of conservation. Local communities can develop social and physical systems to control access to their heritage and can use natural resources and local material recognised for its physical and spiritual properties. The combination of local and international expertise and practice provides a guarantee of sustainability. The economic value of partnerships in preventive conservation resides in the integration of all the components of the society in a process of conservation which recognises that traditional cultural practices are compatible with Western concepts of conservation and sustainability.

### **The ‘Material’ Sub-system**

The material sub-system is the diversity of cultural heritage which in turn outlines and rationalises the diversity in practice. Within a partnership context conservation practice, on cultural heritage in the custodianship of local communities, has to take place in a ‘living’ cultural environment. Within such an environment, the local communities may be the instigators of the partnership process and in heritage management terms are at the centre of the decision-making. In contrast to more interventive approaches, where control would be assumed by the institutional community, preventive conservation can develop under the guidance of local communities. The diversity of cultural heritage also requires preventive conservation practice to broaden its approach to include concepts of intangibility and natural environment. Preventive conservation holistic approach in its practice can integrate local and ‘foreign’ values (cultural, social, philosophical and spiritual) and combine scientific principles with local expertise and resources. Preventive conservation may also develop a more philosophical approach to conservation by heritage professionals and promote an ecologically sustainable methodology for the management of cultural heritage, that is publicly (locally and internationally) recognised for its particular knowledge and expertise.

### **3. Preventive Conservation from the Perspective of Local and Institutional Partnership**

The recommendation of principles directed towards international organisations is complex because in an executive environment they are often reinterpreted by individuals, in specific systems of hierarchy, responding to various institutional motivations and agendas. Recommendations made at a grass roots level can only guide policy makers who will translate these into institutional formats and systems. For museums and private conservators principles do not provide answers to all questions and uncertainties encountered during conservation partnerships. However the practice of preventive conservation raises ethical issues that require an appropriate professional response. The formulation and adoption of principles commonly defined by local and institutional communities would provide a solid foundation for preventive conservation partnerships. Established principles would also guarantee a degree of respect for codes of ethics and the values of the communities involved in the co-management of cultural heritage.

#### **Recommendations**

The technical expertise and resources needed for the development of preventive conservation practices relevant to tangible and intangible heritage will vary according to the characteristics of the heritage to be conserved and to the social, geographical and political contexts of the community. However, the minimum requirements for the establishment of conservation partnership between local and institutional communities requires an appreciation by the community to value its heritage as well as the rationale for institutional participation and the means for the conservation of the heritage.

The following suggest what should be the minimum requirements for the practice of preventive conservation with local communities:

1. Assessment of cultural heritage values.
2. Collective principles of preventive conservation management.
3. Financial autonomy.
4. Documentation.

5. Dissemination of knowledge through access, use and education.
6. Meeting place where local and institutional communities can meet and discuss legal, ethical and practical issues.
7. Minimum resources and equipment for packing, surface cleaning support of artefacts and disinfestations issues, using readily available local and/or ecological material.

In view of and from the experiences examined in this thesis, partnerships between local and institutional communities in preventive conservation include some or all of the following tangible and intangible components.

### **Local Community**

The local community should be at the centre of any reflections on the decision-making process. It would be a useful exercise for the community to create a committee that could discuss and co-ordinate this conservation process and ensure that there is co-operation between all partners and an understanding and integration of ‘foreign’ values and practices into the project. Local communities should develop systems to control access to the heritage in the community’s care and contribute to all aspects of preventive conservation management and practice. The community should also be involved in fund raising, and be given responsibility for the available resources committed to conservation activities and in the promotion of public recognition of local knowledge and expertise.

### **Institutional Community**

As with the local community, the institutional community and with heritage professionals there must be real personal or institutional interest and willing to participate in conservation partnerships. Equally, they must respect and integrate local values and practices into their own practice. Heritage professionals should acknowledge the spiritual attributes of heritage as being as significant as the physical ones and reconsider the relevance of Western and scientific skills and resources in this context. Thus, it is the combining and balancing of local and institutional motivations



and methodologies that promotes exchange knowledge and transparency in this process. Flexibility and a generous timescale must be allotted to such projects in all philosophical and ethical aspects if this process is to succeed. Where there are partnerships between institutions and the private sector, it is important that appropriate legislation, which has been approved by local and national authorities, is in place. Links with law enforcement agencies should be strengthened so that they become more actively involved in the ways cases of destruction and illicit trafficking of heritage are handled. It is critical to ensure that there is recognition of the value of local heritage at a national level and within nationwide legislation in order to support and reinforce local conservation practice. It is important that heritage professionals are appropriately trained to have empathy with the socio-cultural sensitive issues relating to the ethics of conservation and cultural diversity. It is also important to adequately support local committees or leadership with scientific or managerial training. When it is necessary, institutions and heritage professionals should provide technical support for local heritage management systems; technical services, research facilities and advocacy. Finally, it is important that institutional communities consider methods by which sources of the long term funding for heritage organisations involved in local conservation projects can be secured.

## **Discussion**

The validity of this approach to preventive conservation principles can be tested against models that are already operating successfully which can then be used as analytical models to establish the extent to which this collaborative model, and the dynamics associated with it, can play a role in the ways heritage resources are preserved and used in partnership. Further research should consider the development of an analytical system to detect and assess the motivation behind preventive conservation activities so that the full potential of community conservation management systems is realised and any ethical and scientific deficits are addressed. The key for preserving intangible heritage is inherent into the socio-cultural environment of local cultures and communities and the only sustainable future for heritage conservation which integrates tangible and intangible features is preventive conservation. If the discipline is to

advance problems posed by the conservation of intangible heritage the integration of concepts of sustainability and ecology must be solved. These new trends and issues in cultural heritage have many applications for partnerships and the development of preventive conservation practice. Heritage professionals must regularly evaluate the practice of the discipline and the value reassigned through this process. They must also reconsider the philosophical foundations of the discipline so that they can successfully engage with the new challenges faced by the conservation of a heritage field that is increasingly diverse. As the case studies demonstrate, it is not in the assessment of the values of cultural diversity that local and institutional communities will find a common ground for partnership but in the practice for its conservation. It is the preservation of the heritage that is the common objective of both communities. Their motivations may vary however; consensus can be reached through an approach integrating the respective values of local and preventive conservation practices as demonstrated in the case of Ankober. It is indeed the identification and integration of conservation values into practices that provides a common ground for partnership.

*Heritage professionals must regularly evaluate the practice of the discipline and the value reassigned through this process. They must also reconsider the philosophical foundations of the discipline so that they can successfully engage with the new challenges faced by the conservation of a heritage field that is increasingly diverse.*

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## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion is a critical assessment of the results gathered by the author in the analysis of the three case studies and East African cultural heritage organisations. These results justify arguments that advocate partnerships that engage heritage professionals and local communities and answer the question: which partnership models can foster preventive conservation practice of cultural heritage between local and institutional communities in East Africa?

The effects that the respective roles and actions of AFRICOM and CHDA may have on the development of partnerships and on preventive conservation practice in East African museums are analysed. Core historical, cultural and social issues that influence ways in which partnerships develop are identified. An interpretation of these results provides a context for the requirements necessary for the establishment of partnership models that respect the different stakeholders, the value systems and needs of cultural heritage, when based on shared practices. Finally, issues encountered during the practice of preventive conservation and approaches to its development and management are discussed in relation to the creation of partnerships between local communities, museums, heritage organisations and national authorities.

#### **AFRICOM, CHDA and the Development of Partnership**

In East Africa, heritage managers are concerned that their cultural diversity will be subsumed by globalisation and they are now looking at the preservation of their heritage as a means by which to counter the social impact of globalisation. African heritage managers are expected to maintain a delicate balance by thinking globally, while at the same time stimulating the development of national and local agendas in cultural policies. Unfortunately, in many African countries the national authorities responsible for heritage preservation have given cultural issues a low priority.

As a result, globalisation not only undermines national interests and efforts to promote cultural heritage, but also has a negative impact on financial investment in local conservation efforts.

This trend has put AFRICOM and CHDA on the spot; how can they promote and develop practical conservation while dealing with sustainable development issues. In a five year period (2000-2005), CHDA and AFRICOM have successfully faced this challenge, by reinforcing the commitment of national authorities' policy makers, by raising awareness among heritage professionals and by upgrading the expertise and resources available to heritage conservation. However, to sustain heritage management and preventive conservation practice, they will have to maintain a delicate balance between new approaches to international co-operation and the support of social structures, traditional knowledge and local practices. Globalisation is not necessarily detrimental to the development of preventive conservation practice. It can be a valuable communication tool for heritage professionals. It has already strengthened the professional relationships that AFRICOM and CHDA have with international heritage organisations and funders. This has also influenced the management and educational programmes of both organisations. Internet access provides conservation resources and knowledge and promotes professional exchanges between individual and international practitioners. It is also a useful tool in the trafficking of cultural material. However, globalisation has not yet proved to be an asset for the conservation of the cultural heritage of local communities or for the preservation of their traditional resources and expertise. Yet, African organisations involved in the conservation of natural heritage in Kenya (National Museums Coastal Forest Conservation Unit; Kenyan Wildlife Society) have managed to raise public and political awareness in a way that has not yet been achieved for cultural heritage conservation.

Achieving a balance between conservation and access, as the basis for heritage sustainability must become a realistic objective if conservation practice is to involve communities in conservation decisions. If this objective is to be achieved preventive conservation practice must be officially recognised as an integral part of the museums'

mission statement so that necessary resources can be allocated to ensure its development. However, AFRICOM and CHDA have not yet been able to advocate such an official amendment.

Collaborative management and community based conservation is a relatively new phenomenon in East Africa. Only recently have heritage professionals considered this method, involving local people in the conservation of their heritage, thus making the whole conservation process more sustainable. In recent years tough initiatives have been put in place by ICCROM's 'Africa 2009' programme. However, a large proportion of East African cultural heritage is still in the care of local communities. A parallel can be made between this situation and religious heritage which in many parts of the world is preserved by religious communities. Heritage professionals developed and adapted conservation practices to this specific heritage and its context (Stovel, Stanley-Price and Killick 2005). However, cases of local communities without a specific religious or socio-cultural status, and how they should be dealt with, have not yet been addressed by heritage professionals. Similarly, AFRICOM and CHDA have not yet designed an approach in which the values of people, cultural diversity and preventive conservation practice can be merged in a partnership process.

Therefore, how can heritage professionals, as development practitioners, support local communities in the preservation of their heritage while making good management decisions? AFRICOM and CHDA are in a difficult position. Many individuals with these organisations have been frustrated by the limitations placed upon them by development frameworks and methodologies that aim to promote and sustain community conservation projects. Indeed, the rigidity, deficiency, or lack of conservation policies in museums does not accommodate a conservation partnership process easily. Collaborative conservation projects are often constrained by a museum's lack of focus and by the physical isolation of local communities.

However, the empowerment of, and restoration of pride in, local communities are contentious issues and if these aims are to be achieved, local communities need to be

involved in the management of their heritage. AFRICOM and CHDA will have to find ways of integrating some of their practice into their institutional systems of development. As local community practices and policies continue to evolve both organisations will have to familiarise themselves with these changes if they want to initiate new approaches that are relevant to the development of conservation partnerships in Africa. It takes time to change the attitudes of heritage managers, conservators and local communities. The research shows that the few examples of conservation partnerships in East Africa are poorly documented in the cultural heritage sector, thus results are neither quickly visible nor quantifiable.

### **The Context of East African Museums in the Development of Partnership**

The uses that colonial authorities made of museums and its effects on generations of people can still be perceived in social and cultural issues relating to representation. The result of this is that a large proportion of the public can not see the museum without remembering these past associations and views the museum as an ‘alien’ concept. In contrast, it was observed in Kenya that some of the public became nostalgic when the transformation of their National Museum occurred in 2006, changing it from a colonial construction to a modern building with modern facilities. In fact, they integrated the colonial history of their museum into their collective national and cultural identity.

The post colonial generation of African museums face numerous issues when managing cultural heritage. They have to combine institutional functions with a representative role which increasingly have connections with international partners. They have limited expertise in museum management, small conservation budgets and little time for social inclusion (Abungu 2007: 2). Museums are the only national organisations which aim through the management of cultural heritage to preserve it and to transmit it to future generations. Not only are museums safeguarding cultural heritage they are also an effective arena in which diverse elements of the society can meet. Thus museums provide a crucial link between local communities and the academic, scientific and politic arenas. They act as a facilitator for international

heritage organisations and individuals aiming to develop partnerships through programmes and research. Most importantly African museums have reservoirs of professionals often highly motivated in institutions where the hierarchy is still often pyramidal. The integration of preventive conservation within this type of structure is a critical asset for the social and professional inclusion of the museum personnel. The practice of preventive conservation does not de-structure the hierarchy system but permit the deployment of it as observed after the PREMA experience. Indeed preventive conservation allows for the effective use of a larger range of individual expertise. Thus the discipline fosters both individual and collective motivation. The principle of democracy espoused by PREMA is particularly relevant in a museum context where there is need of expertise and resources (Little 1999: 6). This approach involves all museum personnel in conservation activities giving each equal status over specific responsibilities, be it the museum director, curator, guide or cleaner. It allows social equality which is not possible with interventive conservation. The author applied this principle to a preventive conservation strategy designed for the galleries and storage facilities of two Ethiopians museums (Deisser 2002 and 2003; Deisser and Abubaker 2003). While the Museums' Directors agreed to reconsider their position within a teamwork project, the cleaners and security guards were reluctant to take part in a practice which was not part of their social or professional culture. Ultimately, the experience demonstrated the efficiency of this logic and the work of the conservator as a facilitator was crucial in a process that engaged everyone. However, it is clear that to support heritage professionals in the conservation of cultural heritage it requires at least minimum support from national authorities. It is essential that training is provided and efforts are made to raise awareness of the heritage values among public authorities and local communities. The establishment of trust funds or endowments managed by local communities may also lead to greater sustainability of local efforts (Nkwi 1993: 108).

In 2006, many museums lack vision and policies in conservation. In today's Africa where the word 'liberalisation' is central, many so called 'private museums' have developed without definite strategies, but are 'get rich quick' ventures (Abungu 2005). Although museums are still collecting, there is not sufficient provision of storage

space, appropriate environmental conditions or conservation. If not checked, this will become an even bigger threat to the African heritage than the plunder that took place during colonial times and continues with the trafficking of cultural property (Abungu 2004: 3).

### **Historical, Cultural and Social Issues and the Development of Partnership**

In East Africa, traditional systems for community management have been weakened by population movements and high levels of political, social and economic uncertainty. Many communities were geographically separated and so were unable to collaborate. The combination of the colonial experience and the recent post colonial authorities have culminated in the development of state based systems for the preservation of cultural heritage. These have marginalised local communities-based structures (Mumma 2005: 23). In addition, there were some concerns that from the authorities' point of view, the support of local communities' systems (relatively traditional) by international donors would be perceived as an idea imposed from the West, which attract international funding. Thus, the tendency among bureaucrats is to adopt low risk strategies which avoid innovation. Therefore cultural heritage and local community projects are largely donor funded. While donors have a vital role in community based conservation, donors funded projects often over zealously focus on project output rather than the long term needs of the community. Therefore, national conservation programmes have mainly focused on tangible heritage and overlooked its intangible values. In these circumstances, many conservation management systems have almost totally ignored the significance of traditional systems and practices. This has often resulted in the implementation of conservation practices which have denied people access to their own heritage. An analysis of the economic value of contributions made to communities by conserved heritage areas would almost certainly be revealed to be insignificant in economic terms. However, this split in opinion over developmental partnership issues is not justified in the context of local museums who can find a series of practical and financial benefits from partnerships with local communities.



Globalisation and cultural diversity are issues that directly influence the development of preventive conservation partnerships in a post independence context. Also questions must be asked about the use and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage when traditional conservation practices are threatened by the injection of new technology into Africa. A clear understanding of the role of each participant and the tasks assigned to them in the preventive conservation of cultural heritage is required to overcome these problems. From analysis of the case studies it can be observed that the concept of 'local community' (ancient and contemporary) relates to social, historical and geographical issues. In the changing socio-political contexts at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, recently independent African nations wish to regain control of the interpretation and conservation of their cultural heritage, as a way of expressing their particular and distinct cultural and geographical identities. Local communities have often been denied access to heritage sites and artefacts when in the care of national and local museums. Initially, this was due to past colonial practice but this phenomenon still persists in new heritage management systems which tend to ignore local traditions and customs. Sometimes, traditional functions and cultural heritage values have been misinterpreted to suit the preconceived theories of external scholars and museum professionals. Consequently, heritage professionals are challenged by the need to respond effectively to the conservation needs of this living and evolving cultural environment. No community or heritage professional involved in the preservation of local knowledge and practice can avoid these issues.

Over the last twenty years, cultural heritage has become recognised very diverse, the concept has widened from an historical perspective which only consider objects and monuments to the consideration of the cultural environment as a whole. There have also been parallels in timescales. In fact the heritage with which heritage professionals are now concerned is no longer just in the past but is increasingly contemporary (Lilius 2003: 14). For many African communities the recent trends in international conservation reflect cultural features that have been integrated into their socio-cultural life for generations. Integrating these new concepts into the development of preventive conservation in Africa has significant consequences for the articulation of principles

recognised by local and institutional communities. The emerging international cultural conventions aiming to relate cultural heritage to social and economic development and to link this to environmental and ecological policies is an indication of these trends. This approach is particularly relevant and applicable to conservation partnerships with local communities. However, to relate the preservation of cultural heritage to social and economic trends challenges the ethics of conservation, especially, when the integration of local communities into social and economic developments is at stake. It could be asserted that the principle of supporting conservation development is immoral in the face of imperative socio-political issues, unless it directly contributes to human welfare. It could also be argued that conservation will not develop in museums unless it is responding to the needs of local communities. Taking the three thematic areas of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental) it can be argued that similar influences and pressures affect society, the natural environment and cultural heritage (Cassar, Dardes and Matero 2003).

In East Africa, there is a complex relationship between development and conservation. It would be irrational to suggest that social and economic development should be curtailed to support the preservation of African cultural heritage. Neither can matters continue as they are. Collaboration or community participation in development must not be confused with assistance and the interests of all partners should be identified and recognised to develop trust and to ensure the success of development projects. For instance, in natural heritage conservation, contributions by local communities to conservation practice were recognised as a necessity not a luxury (Barrow, Gichohi and Infield 2000: 10). However, despite the good intentions of institutions concerned with community conservation, it is unclear whether there has been any real handing over of ownership and responsibility to local communities. While the concept of 'community participation' was widely used in the context of natural conservation in East Africa, it has only been applied to the conservation of immovable cultural heritage by ICCROM's 'Africa 2009' programme. Both the concept and practice of community participation be it a matter of just ticking the boxes or translated into action is found in most disciplines of international programmes of development but not in the field of

preventive conservation. This illustrates that both the status of preventive conservation and local communities has not yet been recognised and integrated into the mandates of heritage organisations and museums.

No development of conservation partnerships between museums and local communities has yet taken place. Some local and national museums can not maintain the heritage in their care and this becomes even more problematic if they have to participate in the preservation of local community heritage. Thus if non-participatory policies, strategies and programmes have had their day, community conservation needs to be set within an appropriate and acceptable policy environment. As such, the Ankober conservation projects provided a good example of the ‘fusion’ of Western and local practice in the management of conservation. The approach taken by local heritage managers at Ankober required them to become curators and conservators; this was a significant break with tradition and Western conventional approaches to conservation. They demonstrated that while they would ‘do as much as necessary but as little as possible’ to conserve their heritage as it was, they actually integrated a Western model into their own as they strove to achieve, through rigorous methodology, the highest possible standards. This meant their modern and traditional conservation and curation methods were considered and controlled and very similar to preventive conservation principles and practice.

Conservation practice used by heritage professionals with natural and immovable cultural heritage is a positive development that has not yet been comprehensively used in the preventive conservation of movable cultural heritage. The two Kenyan case studies demonstrated that these practices have significance and are relevant to preventive conservation practice. In both cases, local communities and heritage practitioners developed a common approach, notably for the management of their projects which responded to access issues and local expertise. That these heritage professionals were embedded in the heart of the community’s social life is clearly a positive asset that facilitated trust to develop, value systems to be understood and that enabled the dissemination of knowledge. However, these three case studies are unique

and not all community conservation projects could follow their example, thus alternative partnership models involving institutional communities are required.

### **Requirements for Establishing Partnership**

Sharing conservation practices between museum conservators, heritage organisations and local communities is not always possible however; fundamental improvements are needed in the relationships they share. The requirements for establishing partnerships should not be limited to the areas of rights and laws but guided by ethical principles. Working in partnership with local communities on the preventive conservation of cultural heritage presents conceptual challenges to conservators and heritage organisations in terms of ethics and practices. The main challenge is the potential conflicts that may arise between local community values and the values inherent in conventional Western practice of conservation. Facilitating the preservation of local communities' cultural heritage by supporting their living expression (intangible heritage) rather than solely through preserving their material culture (tangible heritage), also presents challenges. To achieve such an objective institutional communities when in consultation with local communities should respond with a set of partnership requirements and develop principles respectful of cultural and conservation diversity.

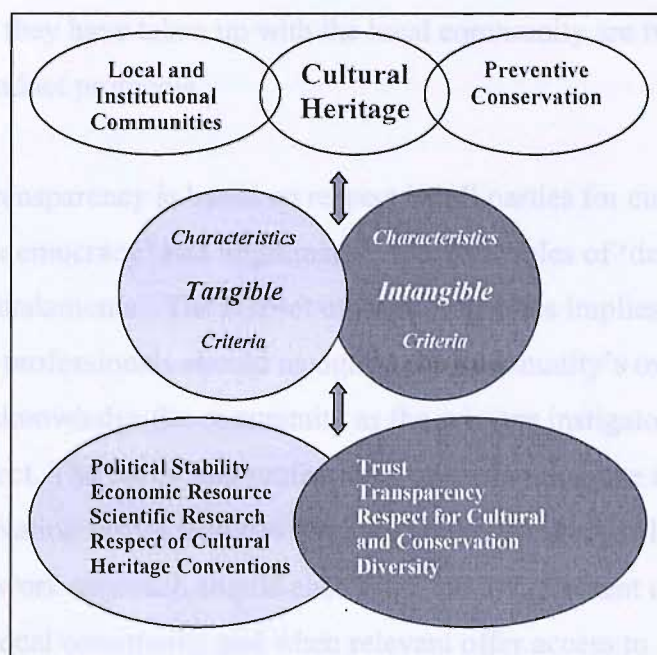
Josef Ackermann argued that the concept of 'partnership', only happens when people participate in shaping the changes that are occurring and when they are in the position to enable others to do the same (Ackermann 2004: 11). This analysis is particularly relevant to the Ankober case study, which demonstrated that in shaping their approach to conservation, the community enabled heritage professionals to do the same.

However, creating partnerships requires more than just the genuine involvement of all partners. As observed at Ankober it also requires the establishment of commonly agreed principles that guide the development of the partnership. This is even more crucial if partnerships involve local communities and institutional partners, with dissimilar cultural and historical backgrounds and different resources, to preserve cultural heritage.

The analysis of the institutional framework in which African heritage organisations and museum operate, demonstrates that principles for partnership with local communities in preventive conservation have not yet been identified and/or defined. When some principles are used and recognised as relevant by the participants, they have not been articulated in the literature, in conservation codes of ethics or in the mission statement of museums and heritage organisations. Therefore, how can conditions conducive to the development of partnerships between institutional and local communities be created? The basic criteria for establishing partnerships suggested below are those gathered and tested by the author at Ankober. The analysis of the case studies pertaining to natural and immovable heritage proved that these principles were also relevant to other conservation fields when local and institutional communities were involved.

In the light of the analysis of these three case studies, the diverse cultural heritage to be conserved, the different partners involved in the partnership and the various preventive conservation approaches present tangible and intangible features that are shaped by cultural, philosophical/spiritual, social and economic factors. Similarly, the fundamental requirements for the establishment of partnerships between local and institutional communities present tangible and intangible characteristics (Figure 56).

The tangible requirements for establishing conservation partnership are found in three main categories: political, economical and scientific. Notably these affect issues relating to fundraising, respect of national laws and international conventions ratified by the concerned country and scientific research in conservation. These categories have not been researched in this study as they relate to fields of expertise which were not within the remit of the current study. They are though of importance and should be further researched. In spite of the relevance of these tangible requirements, the research demonstrates that the principles of trust, transparency, respect of cultural diversity and the concepts of ‘democracy’ and ‘legitimacy’ are intangible criteria important for the development and sustainability of conservation partnerships.



**Figure 56:** Tangible and intangible criteria for establishing partnership between local and institutional communities.

In cultural heritage conservation, expertise and trustworthiness are consistently perceived as elements of credibility (Henderson 2006: 64). The criteria of competence, specific expertise, resources and codes of behaviour are also key elements in the establishment of partnerships. In the course of its development, each partner tries to influence the others so that their own objectives are understood and accepted; this involves negotiations and agreement on goals and outcomes for each partner (Handy 2004: 103). This approach implies two key criteria: trust and transparency. From the beginning of the partnership, these are essential criteria. It is on the basis of trust and transparency that the selection of the participants, who will establish shared conservation principles and manage its practice, will take place.

The criterion of trust in the practice of conservation relies on the expertise of each partner and the resources they can offer to each other. Importantly in East Africa, the trustworthiness of local communities will develop in reflection to the behaviour of heritage professionals. Their ability to adapt to the local context and their respect for

the commitments they have taken up with the local community are two important aspects of any conduct protocols.

The criterion of transparency is based on respect by all parties for cultural diversity and the principles of ‘democracy’ and ‘legitimacy’. The principles of ‘democracy’ and ‘legitimacy’ are fundamental. The respect of these principles implies that, when relevant, heritage professionals should recognise the community’s ownership of the heritage and/or acknowledge the community as the primary instigator of the conservation project. The parity and professional consistency in the allocation of preventive conservation responsibilities must also be considered. A local and institutional teamwork approach should encourage the involvement of volunteers from all sectors of the local community and when relevant offer access to conservation expertise/practice.

The respect for cultural and conservation diversity also implies respect for the social, legal and intellectual characteristics of each partner. The recognition of this principle and its application in practice will foster the development of professional relationships based upon shared responsibilities and the exchange of knowledge. To respond practically to such a principle local and institutional communities should try to remain unbiased and not be influenced by preconceived notions and prejudices that may alter their relationships in the practice of conservation. Heritage professionals should recognise the value of traditional/cultural practice as a new resource which may find applications in scientific and interventive conservation. Similarly, local communities should recognise the expertise of heritage professionals and assess the value of their practices in the conservation of their cultural heritage. The results of these assessments should be shared with CHDA and AFRICOM in order to develop an understanding and appreciation of the local East African approaches to a conservation system and the likelihood of merging them with institutional practices.

The integration of local and institutional conservation approaches which combine local and scientific expertise provides some guarantee of partnership and sustainability of

practice. Partners should integrate their approaches towards the cultural heritage environment, considering its tangible, intangible and natural characteristics. Partners should use local and scientific approaches and resources as that are most appropriate to sustain cultural heritage conservation and that foster an ecological management of resources and cultural heritage. They should use local resources and material when necessary and they should understand the physical and spiritual properties that these materials have for the heritage that is to be conserved. All these criteria enable partners to formulate collaborative objectives in the conservation of cultural heritage and to agree upon shared approaches and conservation practices.

While these criteria help sustain conservation practice other factors should also be considered. It can be argued that social and economic stability in the country or region where the partnership is taking place is necessary if the preservation of cultural heritage is to be achieved and its practice made sustainable. It is also important for the sustainability of partnerships between local, institutional and international communities. The PREMA programme of ICCROM clearly demonstrated that investment in a conflict context provided a poor environment in which to cultivate the successful transfer of knowledge or sustain conservation practice<sup>1</sup>. ICCROM also demonstrated, through PREMA and its 'Africa 2009' programmes that long-term involvement is very important if conservation is to take place and have the potential to develop.

The extent to which communities accept and manage the roles that conservation programmes and donor projects would have them play is another concern. In some areas, community institutions are strong enough to take responsibility for the management of these issues, in other areas they are not. Thus a central factor for the sustainability of community conservation lies in the adaptability of community leadership and authority systems relevant to the community's resources and which are accepted by the younger generation. This is particularly important if local communities want to preserve the local values and heritage in their custody.

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication, Gaël de Guichen, ICCROM, Rome, 15 May 2004.



## **Partnership Models**

The section below presents three partnership models. The first model engages local communities with CHDA and/or AFRICOM. The second model presents partnership with national and/or local museums. The final model presents partnership between local communities, heritage organisations and museums through the establishment of a 'Safe House' managed by the local community.

For the feasibility of these three models, it is essential that the relationship that institutional and local partners would have to retain with the national and religious authorities and with donor agencies is considered. In many cases, the heritage to be conserved does not legally belong to local communities, which care for it, but to the Church or the Government and ministry that has been set up to manage cultural resources. Recent heritage management systems constitute part of the legislation of the modern African States and are therefore viewed as supreme and inclusive by regional authorities. The accession of sites and monuments to national gazettelement brought in funds in the form of assistance provided by the authority officially responsible for the conservation of cultural heritage, which assumed rights of governance. In these circumstances, there is a need to reinstate community Authority structures at local and regional levels which are nationally recognised. A radical shift in the relationships between the State and local communities is needed. This would also require regional authorities to take all necessary steps (the creation of advisory committees, decision-making, grants to community projects, etc.), and help to institute genuine partnerships with local communities to conserve their cultural heritage. There is also a need to recognise the expertise of craftsman and their place in society. Regional authorities and heritage organisations through research can ensure that information about crafts is recorded and may even be able to encourage a revival in interest in promoting and practicing these crafts.

Funding issues are also crucial. Heritage professionals are finding new ways to mobilise additional resources from unlikely partners and this in the private sector has a role to play (Bandarin, Serageldin and Stanley-Price 2004: 11). The private sector has

become the primary investor in almost all sectors of society and it is essential that mechanisms are found that enable the private and cultural heritage sectors to work together. AFRICOM and CHDA have a central role in the establishment of frameworks and mechanisms adapted to each relevant partner (the private sector, heritage professionals and local communities) that are beneficial to such partnerships. Also decisions have to be made about what proportion of any budget is assigned to local community conservation projects. The Ankober case study demonstrated that as it was a small conservation project it required minimal financial investment. At Ankober the key ingredients for success were: minimum financial investment, the prospect of self sustainability, and the direct social and educational benefits of the project for the community. Alternatively, costly and lengthy conservation programmes can be criticised if they do not provide immediate and tangible benefits for the community.

### **Partnership with CHDA and AFRICOM**

The analysis of the three case studies and written source material demonstrates that CHDA and AFRICOM have the expertise, scientific knowledge and local resources to undertake partnership with local communities in the conservation of cultural heritage. Both organisations have a major role to play in supporting preventive conservation projects through educational or community based museum programmes. However, their respective mandates determine the official framework within which their potential activity can take place and the nature of their participation. Thus, AFRICOM can only focus its activities on advocacy and by facilitating communication.

CHDA and AFRICOM can engage in partnerships with local communities at four key levels:

1. Advocacy for the integration of preventive conservation practices within museum mission statements;
2. Formulation of conservation and museum policy that integrate local communities within the decision making framework of heritage management and in the conservation practice;

3. Educational programmes aimed at heritage professionals and local community representatives;
4. Collaboration with international programmes on community based conservation projects.

For both organisations to engage in partnerships with local communities they must acknowledge that the sustainability of the conservation practice relies on long term commitment and on regular condition assessments of the local heritage and environment that is to be preserved. Without carefully designed programmes to monitor the condition of cultural heritage in the custody of local communities, it will remain difficult to measure the impact of community conservation practices. Thus it is necessary to study the scientific relevance and potential applications of local practices and resources, while integrating intangible (socio-cultural and spiritual) elements into the analysis. If concrete quantifiable values are ‘easy’ to measure and manage, living heritage and conservation practices are ‘organic’ in the way that they evolve and are difficult to classify and evaluate using scientific norms. The adoption of an African (or international) knowledge based system, gathering data on scientific and local expertise and resources must be considered.

For AFRICOM and CHDA the idea of partnership with local communities is also linked with decentralisation issues, on which there is a lot of emphasis in African museums and heritage organisations. For museums, partnership with local communities involves less direct costs than the establishment of conservation laboratories, with their associated equipment and expertise. It also responds better to the concerns of local communities who wish to retain access to their heritage. If heritage remains in its original context, it is clearly one of the best places where it can be documented and studied by heritage professionals.

### **CHDA**

CHDA has a significant educational role to play in local communities partnerships. Education on the practice and principles of community-based conservation should be

promoted at academic level (CHDA Diploma Course) and professional level (Workshops). Heritage professionals should be acquainted with and have training on the cultural knowledge of local communities and on approaches conducive to the advance of the conservation discipline as a whole. The methodology developed by Ferguson and Pye for ICCROM's 'Generation 2 Programme' is relevant to the training and education that should be further developed by CHDA to prepare heritage professionals to work in partnership with local communities. The authors emphasise that a sense of identity and community is vital (Ferguson and Pye 2004: 21). From the very start of the course, the principle of 'respect for cultural identity and diversity' is acknowledged and integrated into the learning process. The educational approach promotes sensitivity towards the different contexts encountered when working with local communities. The course also allows students, teachers, heritage organisations and local communities to have equal say on heritage management approaches. This parity implies that each group and/or individual must develop a sense of responsibility in questioning their respective approach, a critical asset in the development of partnership. The course aims to integrate local communities into the assessment process of cultural heritage significance (Ferguson and Pye 2004: 54). Other course characteristics are the ability to develop lateral thinking, using local material in the conservation of cultural heritage, and the ability to work outside standardised procedures. With such a methodology, CHDA would clearly be in the best position to foster an educational tool which aims to foster partnerships with local communities in the preventive conservation of tangible and intangible heritage.

The long term and current involvement of ICCROM in East Africa is another positive asset. The existing network of professionals developed through the PREMA and Africa 2009 programmes will provide a solid foundation on which partnership can take place in the shape of 'community-based conservation projects'. These projects by aiming to research traditional conservation practices would ensure international collaboration in the research of practices relevant to the conservation of intangible heritage and the use of ecological/non-toxic conservation treatments. These are two areas of research increasingly regarded as central to the international development of by UNESCO,

agencies and preventive conservation scientists (2006 AFRICOM's 2nd General Assembly and Conference<sup>2</sup> 'African Museums & Living Cultures'; 2007 ICOM General Conference<sup>3</sup> 'Museums and Universal Heritage'; 2008 ICOM-CC Triennial Meeting<sup>4</sup> 'Diversity in Heritage Conservation: Tradition, Innovation and Participation').

Finally, CHDA should act as the regional organisation responsible for conservation cultural policy and engage (with its countries' members) in the identification and promotion of the values of local conservation practices (cultural, social, and economic). Further partnerships with AFRICOM and national authorities should be sought in order to fund the administration of a joint committee (representatives of local and institutional communities) that would report conservation research and monitor development over a five year period.

## **AFRICOM**

For AFRICOM, their efforts could be directed towards the behaviour of people stealing or buying the heritage of local communities. For instance, the organisation should draw-up a code of good conduct and make it available in all African museums, airports and foreign institutions. AFRICOM's work to standardise documentation, acquisitions, exchanges and loans policies is also of interest to local communities and museums. Providing a conservation documentation system accessible to all partners interested in community conservation projects would be of value to heritage professionals and in the practice of conservation at large. Similarly participating in the elaboration of standards for the documentation of intangible heritage would be invaluable to international heritage community. Devising tools in collaboration with national and religious authorities, so that conservation partnerships develop within a legal framework would facilitate the preservation of cultural heritage. Subsequently, museum professionals could exploit available and local resources which complement Western conservation

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<sup>2</sup> AFRICOM, 4-7 October 2006, Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> ICOM, 19-24 August 2007, Vienna, Austria.

<sup>4</sup> ICOM-CC, 22-26 September, New-Delhi, India.

practices and resources. They could also develop the potential of traditional and cultural expertise that exist within families as well as in local community practices of guardianship and preservation. Finally, AFRICOM should promote exchange programmes and training between African heritage professionals and local community representatives. This could be achieved through partnership between international organisations and museums in the search for scientific and respectful approaches to the conservation of African material culture (Mason 2002).

### **Partnership with Museums**

As expressed at the First General Assembly and Conference of AFRICOM, an objective of the African museums of the 20th century has been to promote and preserve African local cultural diversity. Through the consideration of this objective, partnerships between museums and local communities should take place. But on what basis could this collaboration develop? The same AFRICOM Conference highlighted that museums are not responding to the expectations of its local public; a public which is looking for more social interaction between the institution, its staff and its collections (Abungu 2005: 30). Museums should accept that the philosophy of conservation co-management is appropriate for the cultural material of local communities held by the museums. Cultural conservation requests regarding these objects could include: interventive and preventive conservation, handling, storage and display of sacred/sensitive material which is respectful of the cultural sensitivity of local communities. It is also important that museum managers and conservators learn the legal requirements regarding the repatriation of claimed material by local communities.

Museums should also recognise the right of access local communities have to religious or sensitive material as well as to the documentation pertaining to these objects. Similarly, local communities should recognise the professional ethics and related concerns of conservators about respect for the care and preservation of the cultural material for which they are responsible. Museum conservators should develop procedures which respond to the physical risks posed to material culture when on loan

for ceremonial purposes which are based on the mutual considerations and perspectives of local communities and museum mission statements. The concept of 'access' should not be limited to physical access to collections for ceremonial use, but also to conservation policy development, training and employment in conservation activities.

In order to understand the context and values of objects and to interpret alterations and treatments carried out on objects museum conservators should work in partnership with curators and anthropologists. Conservation and curatorial documentation of ethnographic material should be made accessible to both curators and conservators. Museum conservators should be offered the opportunity to consult craftsmen, artists or other local community representatives, in order to appreciate their culture, views on conservation protocols and to discuss conservation issues.

As national museums are often located in capital cities and are inaccessible to many local communities, the first step could take place through collaboration between local communities and regional museums. At this level, the use of local dialects along with the national language will ensure thorough understanding and collaboration between local communities and museum professionals. This is a way to preserve intangible features of the communities and enrich the technical and scientific conservation vocabulary. AFRICOM should also encourage the establishment of a network of co-operation between local communities and local museums. These museums occupy a central position in the provision of resources to local communities and offer a scientific backup to heritage organisations for the documentation of local practices.

### **Partnership with CHDA, AFRICOM and Museums: the Community 'Safe House'**

The third partnership model offers a framework within which CHDA, AFRICOM and museums can interact with local communities, in the way suggested in the two previous partnership models, in a context where communities provide the leadership. This model of integrated partnership takes the form of a local community 'conservation centre'. The rationale is that in the recent post colonial context, the concept of a 'conservation centre' may be more widely acceptable and relevant to certain

communities than the concept of 'museum'. As observed in the analysis of museum development in East Africa, many local communities encountered relational problems with museums on practical and ethical issues pertaining to the representation and conservation of their heritage. A conservation centre, in the large meaning of the word could be called a 'Safe House' as it was described by the Ankober community. This concept of 'Safe House' may respond more appropriately to the current needs of local communities who wish to retain their heritage on site, in its cultural context, and who wish to receive technical support from heritage managers and conservators. From an international perspective, this model would also respond directly to the recent development of charters concerning the conservation of tangible and intangible values (UNESCO 2003) and traditional crafts and folklore (UNESCO 1989). A local 'Safe House' could also act as a local institutional 'bridge' between communities, regional and national museums and ultimately to CHDA and AFRICOM, thus providing a pool of knowledge and resources for the conservation community at large.

Local communities, wishing to conserve their heritage with substantial support, could gain their conservation 'autonomy' through the creation of a conservation committee endowed with a social structure which required them to attribute functions and responsibilities to individuals within their community. The implementation of this partnership model would require the setting up of a 'Safe House' for a network of communities within a same region, similarly to the one at the Ankober community which aims in the long term to preserve the heritage of the churches in neighbouring areas. The 'Safe House' would gather local knowledge and the expertise of individuals in the local community which could then be shared with neighbouring communities. The 'Safe House', conceived as a built space, could house artefacts of the communities in need of conservation and develop activities associated with practical training and the transmission of knowledge to the younger generation. The centre would then be required to offer the technical expertise and resources necessary for minimal conservation interventions. This could lead to research in methods of storage, local pharmacopoeia, traditional architecture and the use of natural resources.



This model has the advantage of providing a relay between local museums and local communities, while still being under the management of the residents and being preserved in its living cultural environment. Somehow it could act as a documentation centre, recording the characteristics of local sites and collections. Co-operation between local communities would ensure the preservation of local conservation practices, while creating a dynamic conducive to the practice of conservation when in partnership with the heritage sector.

The development of such a meeting place could only foster greater awareness of the need to conserve cultural heritage and promote receptiveness towards other cultures, near or far away. Similarly, it would enhance the social standing of traditional keepers, whose artisan status tends to be looked down upon in the face of Western technological development. At a regional level, the establishment of a 'Safe House' would also facilitate effective planning for craft production using local products. Thus, the centre would have an indirect economic influence through a more rational exploitation of local resources and less dependence on national authorities and international donors.

The 'Safe House' managed by the communities could also act as a 'cultural conservation centre' where tangible and intangible facets of their culture could be represented, made accessible, used and conserved. In this sense the 'Safe House' would become a place where the traditional and ceremonial activities of the communities could take place alongside conservation activities. This could involve the practice of crafts and artistic works.

However, the proper operation of a 'Safe House' of whatever size presupposes the resolution of management problems at several levels. Administrative and financial issues are complex and demand the involvement of the wider community. To achieve consensus on ethical issues is challenging particularly over sensitive conservation issues relating to the principles and practices of access, dissemination of knowledge, documentation and conservation techniques. For these multiple reasons, it is crucial that the creation of the 'Safe House' be carried out through the initiative of qualified

and respected representatives of the various communities. Regarding the development of preventive conservation practice, it is only through advocacy of its value for the preservation of cultural heritage and to the members of the local communities that a real culture and an appropriate social environment for its development will be created. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge and integrate preventive conservation into the broader remit of the 'Safe House' activities such as traditional ceremonies, craftsmanship, education and management of cultural and natural resources.

The challenge encountered by heritage professionals working in close relation with the 'Safe House' will be to give priority to projects that place adequate emphasis on preventive conservation, but which also have a clear and measurable impact on the conservation of cultural heritage and the interests of local communities. The second challenge will be to find a balance between the need to establish extensive partnerships and the need to ensure appropriate leadership. The case studies have shown the importance of demonstrating to communities that there is willingness amongst conservation professionals to change their ways of perceiving and interacting with them. Heritage professionals have another important role which is to enable people to develop, use, and preserve their local expertise. They have an advisory role in facilitating local communities to take rational decisions in the preservation of their heritage, based on wider environmental issues, economic realities, and conservation standards.

Subsequently, where there is sufficient grounds for partnership with heritage organisations, the 'Safe House' could be associated with CHDA and AFRICOM for educational projects, and in the elaboration of guiding principles and practices relevant to community based conservation. This would allow the management of future community conservation-based projects to be designed in stages and to be flexible enough to adapt itself to specific political, economical and social backgrounds. It would also offer an opportunity to integrate legal aspects inherent to a sound and sustainable development of the discipline under the leadership of local communities.

What will be crucial but extremely complex to achieve in the development of this partnership model is the convergence of institutional and local efforts in conservation practices relevant to African heritage professionals, while promoting community awareness and autonomy at all levels. This implies the interaction by numerous people from different background. This also implies that there is a need to break down numerous 'barriers' created by national/religious authorities and heritage organisations in the interests of managerial efficiency. Another problem will be to restore an appreciation of the value of traditional expertise in conservation management and practices within institutional and international management systems. These efforts at local, national and international levels are all essential and meaningless if not backed up by informed and actively involved local communities. These efforts are also meaningless if they come up against the inability of heritage professionals to translate into scientific and methodological terms the community aspirations towards high standards of integrated conservation.

## **Conclusion**

The determination and the efforts made by local communities to preserve their cultural heritage as the dynamics associated with the solidarity of East African societies in the transfer of traditional knowledge are impressive assets. These local strengths, expertise and resources demonstrate that in local East African communities the conservation of cultural heritage is not only about 'objects' but foremost about people.

To build on the many achievements of African and international heritage organisations, museums and individuals who contributed to the conservation of cultural heritage for the last thirty years, a genuine synergy between relevant authorities and resource users must be created.

Ultimately, innovative and effective conservation methods adapted to partnerships between local and institutional communities will be found through the very practice of preventive conservation. Notably, preventive conservation practices can develop along the lines of professional experience developed in the fields of natural heritage and

immovable heritage conservation. However, the views of Western heritage professionals and the principles enounced in universal declarations and cultural conventions should not act as more than as guidelines. It is for preventive conservation practitioners to develop *modus operandi* which are relevant to the conservation of a heritage internationally recognised as diverse in its tangible and intangible characteristics. It is also for local communities to develop procedures for the preservation of their heritage and to advocate for conservation resources adapted to their particular socio-cultural contexts. Yet, if any partnership is to succeed, local communities must wish or need to integrate preventive conservation practice into their socio-cultural traditions and have a sense of ownership for their heritage and its conservation.

The main challenge that preventive conservation practitioners will have to meet in the near future is to create principles and practices relevant to a heritage at risk: the heritage of local communities and the minorities of regions which are economically weak or which are in conflict. At the turn of the 21st century these conditions are prevalent in East Africa. Cultural heritage is sometimes at the centre of ethnic or regional conflicts for it embodies the cultural values of people threatened for religious and/or political reasons. In other cases, economic conditions threaten cultural heritage through trafficking or destruction of natural sites and buildings. Preventive conservation through its holistic approach has the potential to address these issues for the preservation of tangible, intangible and natural heritage. Preventive conservation is also a tool to use against the effects that ‘cultural globalisation’ and conflict have on the dilution of cultural heritage diversity; an asset crucial for both local and institutional communities in East Africa.

To adapt to these threats and develop within the framework of international cultural conventions, preventive conservation must develop in partnership with local and institutional communities, a context intrinsic to the sustainability of conservation practice in today’s East Africa. This means that preventive conservation has to enlarge its activities and applications into other contexts than just museums where only the

respect for cultural and conservation diversity can foster new partnerships. It also implies that preventive conservation should develop along the lines of other academic studies that consider the social, legal and economic realities encountered by local communities and embedded in their cultural heritage. Only preventive conservation education about such a comprehensive approach can in the long term guarantee success in the preservation of a 'living' cultural heritage at risk in East Africa.

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