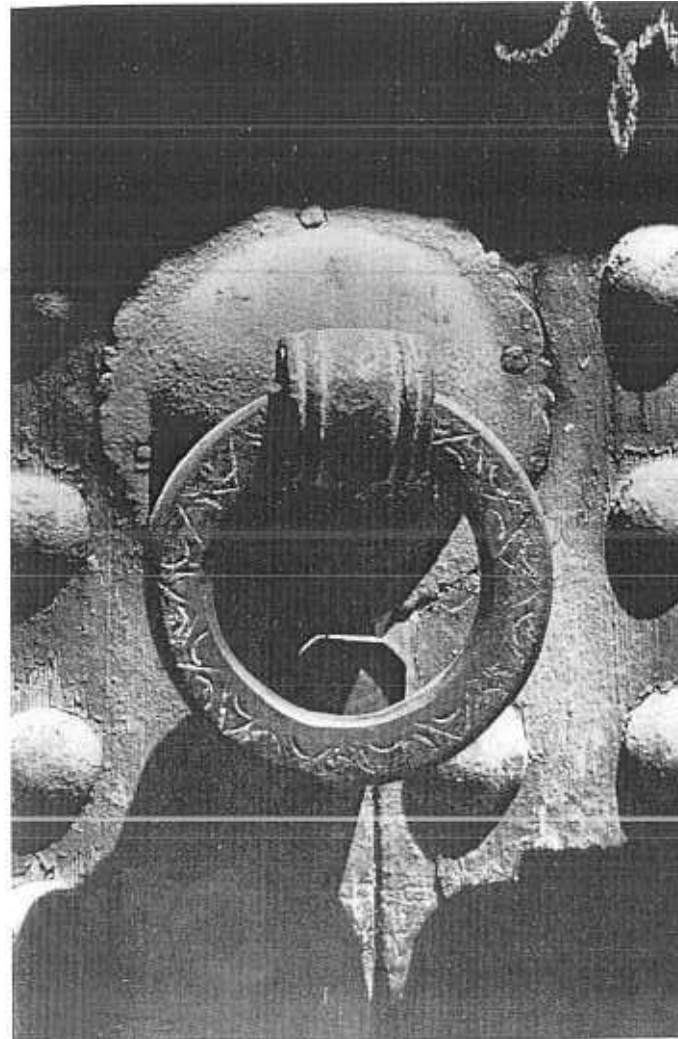


## An inside view of the Convention

FRANCOIS LEBLANC\*



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*(Facing page)* The historic centre of Rome; Piazza della Minerva. In the background is the Pantheon, and in the foreground an Egyptian obelisk mounted on an elephant by Bernini.

A bronze door-knocker in the Medina, Fez, Morocco. (*Ur-esso: Dominique Roger*).

My acquaintance with the World Heritage Convention dates from only three weeks after I arrived in Paris in May 1979. I had just taken up my new position as Director of the Icomos Secretariat and everything was new to me, including this international convention of which I had never heard. One morning, I was asked to accompany several Icomos officers to Unesco as the World Heritage Bureau was to hold a meeting and it was important I be present to understand Icomos' participation in this Convention.

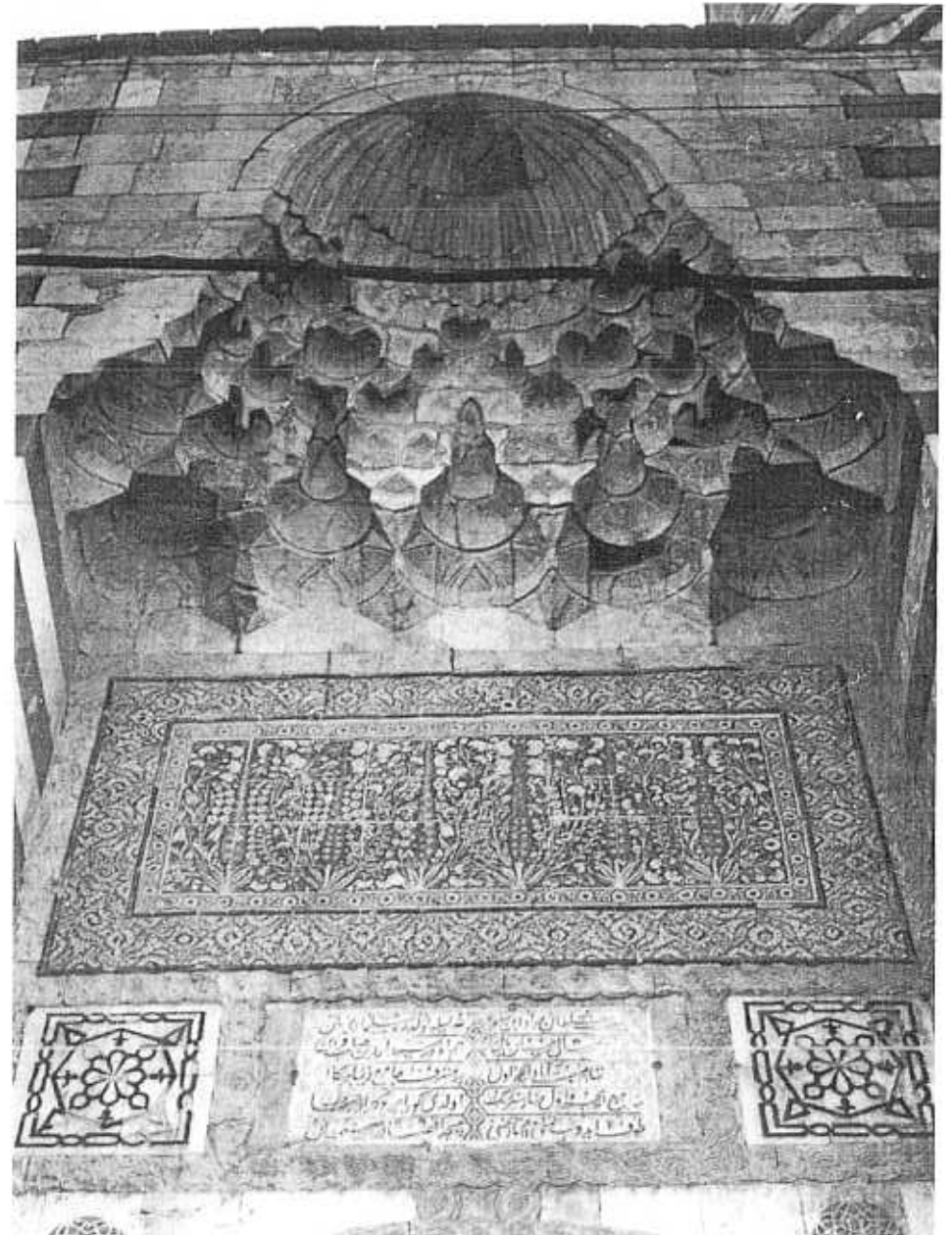
A Bureau of the World Heritage Convention is generally made up of six representatives from States party to the Convention, four or five persons from Unesco representing the Director-General and the Secretariat responsible for implementing the Convention, one representative from the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), the advisor for the evaluation of natural sites, and two or three representatives from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (Icomos), the advisor for the evaluation of cultural sites. The Bureau meets once a year in May or June at Unesco's Headquarters in Paris and the working languages are English and French.

My impression of this first meeting was that there seemed to be quite a misunderstanding between the representatives of the States party and those of Icomos on the latter's role and responsibilities. Sixty nominations of cultural properties had been introduced by various States. Icomos gave a detailed description of the contents of every file, pointing out the missing elements (plans, photographs, signatures, etc.). Icomos also gave a very general verbal evaluation of the cultural values of the properties, stating (in its opinion) which of the six criteria used to appraise the cultural properties applied in each case. Obviously, the States' representatives wanted more. They seemed quite lost when faced with so many nominations and I can understand that easily, because I was quite lost myself!

Nothing much happened within Icomos between that meeting and the meeting of the Committee of the World Heritage Convention which is made up of 21 representatives of the States party. It usually meets once a year in October or early November in a host country and its major responsibilities are to examine the Bureau's recommendations for listing (or not listing) the various properties presented by States party to the Convention, and the various requests for technical and financial cooperation. It also adopts the annual budget.

In 1979, the Committee was hosted by the Egyptian government and met in Luxor. I was representing Icomos along with Mr K. Pawlowski from Poland, one of the Vice-Presidents of Icomos at that time. Again at this meeting, the Committee members pressed Icomos to give more details on the reasons for its recommendations for listing the cultural properties. That information not being readily available, an adjournment was requested during which Mr Pawlowski and myself feverishly

(facing page) A detail of the Muqarnas in the Sinan Pasha Mosque, Damascus, Syria.



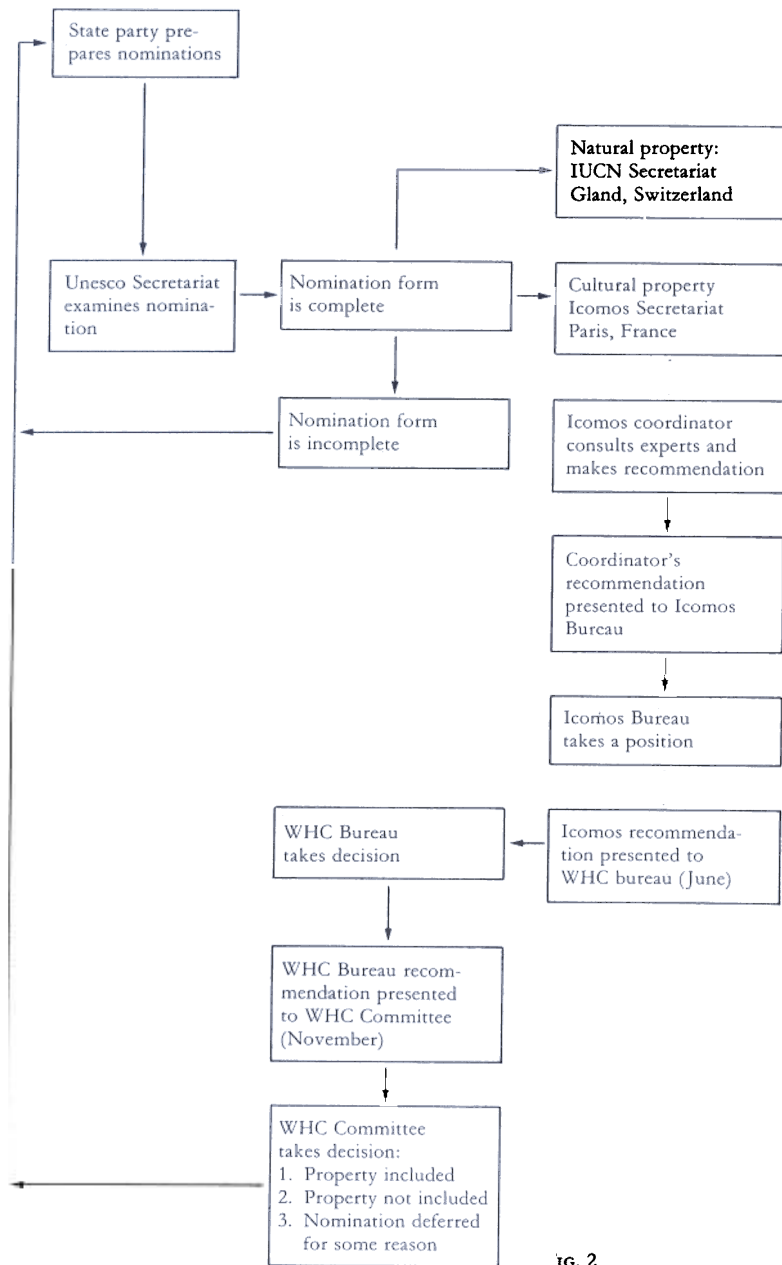


FIG. 2

reorganized the data. The presentation we then made to the Committee was satisfactory and it was requested that Icomos recommendations be presented in the same manner at future meetings. In my opinion that session marked a turning point in the participation of Icomos in the World Heritage Convention. We had been given the mandate to present much more detailed justifications of our recommendations and to be more severe in applying the criteria of 'outstanding world significance' to cultural properties. We were given an annual budget of US\$35 000.00 to accomplish this task, which was a substantial increase over the amount in the preceding year. We came back to Paris with a clear objective and the means to attain it.

### A new procedure

With the help of Dr E.A. Connally, former Icomos Secretary-General, we began to structure what we thought would be an appropriate procedure and methodology for examining the nominations introduced by the States party. It was agreed that the services requested of Icomos were much too demanding for the staff we then had at the Secretariat, and it was decided to call upon a Coordinator who would be responsible for organizing the professional services necessary to assess the various nominations. Dr L. Pressouyre, a renowned archaeologist and art historian from France, agreed to act for us.

The final procedure adopted by Icomos to examine the nominations is as follows (see Fig. 2):

1. The State party to the Convention wishing to nominate a cultural property to the World Heritage List fills out a standard form which it can easily obtain from Unesco and prepares a detailed file containing plans, photographs, books and articles on the property.
2. This file, when signed by the proper governmental authority, is forwarded to Unesco's Headquarters in Paris. All files received before 31 December each year are processed in the following year.
3. Unesco's Secretariat examines the files to make sure that all requested documents are included, and then forwards it to Icomos for appraisal.
4. When it arrives at Icomos, it is examined by the Icomos Coordinator for the World Heritage Convention, Dr Pressouyre. If it is a widely known property such as the Pyramids of Egypt, the historical centre of Rome, the Palace of Versailles, or a property that he knows very well himself, he immediately proceeds to write the assessment. If it is a property of less worldwide renown, or one which has only recently been studied, he then consults other experts on that particular property, type of property or historical period. Very seldom has it been necessary actually to visit a site in order to make an evaluation. We will discuss the problems of expert opinions further on. When our

Coordinator has built a strong case and formed his own opinion he then prepares draft notes recommending one of the following options:

- a. That the property be included on the World Heritage List.
  - b. That the property not be included on the World Heritage List.
  - c. That the nomination be deferred for one reason or another. The most common reasons for deferring a nomination are lack of information supplied by the State party, a property insufficiently studied or researched, lack of precision concerning the degree of protection of the property, the impact of new constructions being built near the property, the absence of any development or management plan, or the existence of other properties in the same country known to be more representative.
5. At this point, the Icomos Coordinator presents his conclusions to the Icomos Bureau, namely, the President, the five Vice-Presidents, Secretary-General and Treasurer-General. He goes through the obvious or widely known nominations fairly quickly and opens discussion on the nominations which appear to be more difficult to evaluate. The Bureau members have the opportunity to study the nomination files several days prior to the meeting, so that everyone knows what is being discussed. We now decide on an Icomos recommendation for each nomination. It will be carefully phrased in the following weeks and sent in both French and English to Unesco, which acts as the Convention's Secretariat, and it will be distributed to the Convention's Bureau members, made up of six State party Representatives.
  6. In May or June of each year, they meet to review our recommendations and those of IUCN for natural sites, and also discuss other questions. The discussions in the Bureau meetings are generally quite lively. Members feel free to challenge our opinions, to ask for more detailed explanations, or to raise new problems brought forward by certain nominations. In most cases, the Convention's Bureau has adopted Icomos' recommendations. They have sometimes slightly modified it, but never opposed it.
  7. The Bureau meeting report, along with all the IUCN and Icomos recommendations, is sent to the 21 States members of the Convention's Committee. As mentioned earlier, that Committee meets once a year alternately in a host country and at Unesco's headquarters in Paris in October or November. It is this Committee that decides if a property is to be included on the World Heritage List or not. The Committee's report is sent to all States party to the Convention who are then informed of the new inscriptions on the World Heritage List and the other issues which were discussed. The one year cycle is now complete, and we can begin again with new nominations or nominations which had been deferred and are brought back for re-evaluation.

This might seem a complex procedure to someone not familiar with the day-to-day work of the Convention, but in summary, one could say it is a two-step procedure with Icomos: the Coordinator recommends and the Icomos Bureau decides; and a two-step procedure within the Convention itself: the Bureau recommends and the Committee of the World Heritage Convention takes the final decision.

### Some problems and difficulties

In trying to fulfil its role of adviser to the Convention, Icomos faces many obstacles and challenges. Primarily, these relate to the availability of expert advice, the comparison of cultural nominations, the standards of presentation, and the reporting and monitoring of the listed properties. The problems of each are detailed below.

#### *Expert advice*

To obtain good expert advice from one or several professionals as to whether a property should be included on the World Heritage List or not sounds easy; I can assure you that it is not so.

One obstacle is that experts in a specific field often have little mutual affection, or make a point of opposing each other. In several cases with which I am very familiar, some experts have flatly told us they would not participate in any meetings to appraise certain properties if another known expert in the same field was to be invited. Also, it often happens that one known expert will believe that such and such a building or site is most representative of a lost civilization, while another expert in the same field who has performed different research or is from a different professional background will have a totally different point of view.

A second obstacle has to do with credibility. Take for instance the case where a property is nominated by a State. If the Director of Archaeology of that country is asked his opinion of this nomination when he has spent 15 or 20 years of his life studying it and has been paid by his government to do this research, what do you think his answer will be? What sort of credibility will his opinion have for the International Community? Generally, we try to obtain opinions from experts outside the nominating State. If their assessment agrees with that of the State party's nomination file, then all is fine. But when it is not (as in several cases) then we have a problem!

A third obstacle has to do with confidentiality. Take the case of some experts working in a foreign country in the framework of a bilateral governmental cultural exchange. The site on which they are working is being nominated to the World Heritage List and we have asked them what they think of the nomination. As from professional to professional, they tell us in confidence that in their opinion the nomination is not the best property to represent what it claimed, but if we were ever to mention

this they would deny it strongly and publicly because it would probably mean the end of their research programme. By making inquiries this way, we may get a good first-hand professional opinion, but it is very difficult for us to use it.

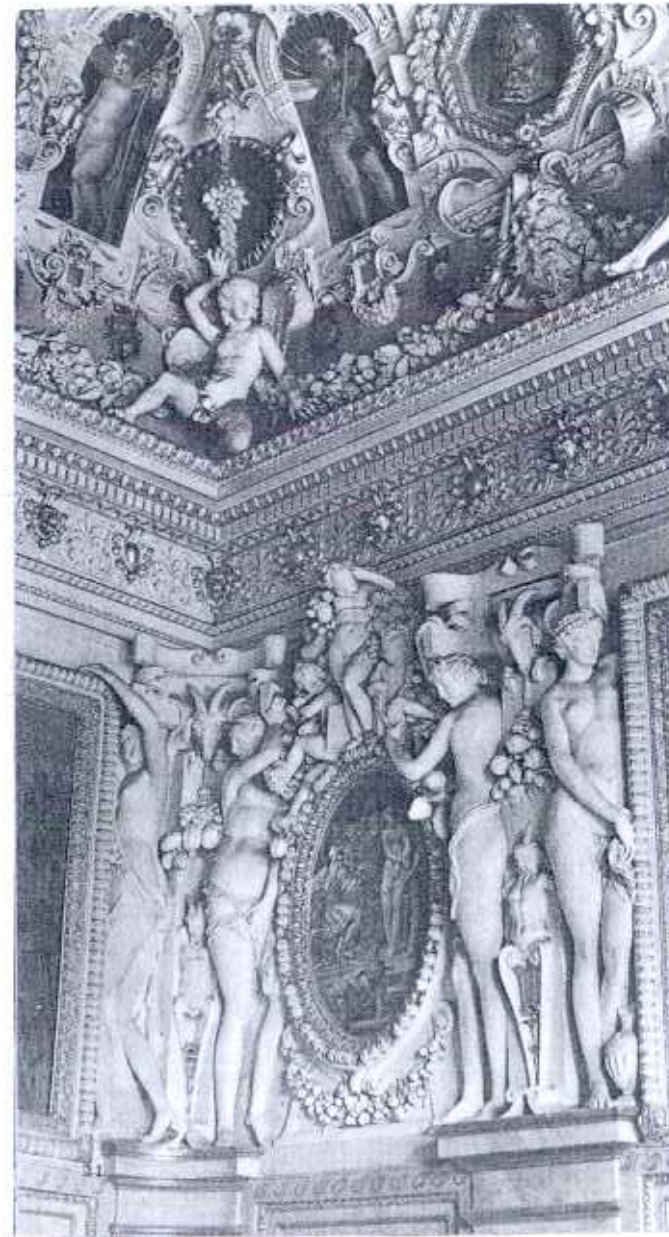
A fourth obstacle has to do with the lack of expertise and knowledge. Many architectural and archaeological remains of lost civilizations have not yet been fully studied in a scholarly way and therefore there are no acknowledged experts to assess their relative values.

#### *Comparing cultural nominations*

Making comparisons between elements or cultural values is also a major difficulty for Icomos. Our colleagues from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) have an advantage over us in this respect. When they say that a species of animals is endangered because the conditions for its reproduction are no longer guaranteed, this is a fact that can be verified; or when they state that a certain natural park contains the greatest number of skeletons and remains of dinosaurs in the whole world, this is also a measurable element and comparisons can be made. The most significant in terms of quantity and size are criteria often used by IUCN.

The World Heritage Committee expects similar comparisons to be made in the field of culture. Why should we consider so many cathedrals, castles, archaeological sites, mosques or colonial buildings? Is not one of each sufficient to illustrate each culture or type of architecture? Can we not decide which is most representative and leave it at that? The answer is no. Culture is not, and cannot be, considered in terms of quantity and size. The Gothic or Romanesque cathedrals which contain most stones do not necessarily have an important cultural significance; nor does the biggest Roman archaeological site in terms of size. We have to decide on aesthetic masterpieces which are the ultimate expression of a culture and not a series of cathedrals or castles; bisons have more in common than cathedrals!

The six criteria used in the Convention to establish what is of outstanding universal significance are well defined. What cannot be defined by the Convention is how to compare cultural elements and values. For instance, if we take the case of historic towns or city centres: how many are really of outstanding universal significance? How many is it really necessary to have on the World Heritage List before we can say that we have a significant sampling? How can we really compare the 400 year-old historic town of Ouro Preto in Brazil with its Baroque colonial architecture, Islamic Cairo in Egypt which is over 1000 years old and offers marvels of Islamic architecture, and the historic centre of Rome in Italy which is over 2500 years old and contains hundreds of treasures such as St Peter's and the Pantheon. Which is most significant? Can we



Detail of the King's Staircase, Fontainebleau, France.

establish a hierarchy between these historic centres without establishing a parallel hierarchy between cultures and civilizations?

The only way out of this dilemma for Icomos is to exploit to a maximum the tentative lists which each State party is requested by the Convention to prepare. Each State has to prepare a list of the properties it intends to nominate to the World Heritage List. It is not binding for the State, nor is it restrictive; and it can be enlarged or reduced at any time. The advantage of such lists for Icomos is that we can compare potential nominations and find if too many properties of a similar type or nature will be presented (cathedrals, castles, forts, prehistoric sites. . .) or if, on the contrary, properties representing various aspects of architecture, history archaeology or anthropology have been forgotten.

#### *Documentation*

Finally, ensuring that the States present well-prepared dossiers for their nominations is also an important problem which both Icomos and Unesco are trying to resolve. Some of the advanced European states have presented nominations in such a poor way that we would be ashamed to show them to anyone. In some instances they were so bad we had to return the dossiers saying that Icomos would not study such poorly prepared nominations coming from States reputed to have a profusion of scholars. We have agreed to complete and evaluate nominations lacking some technical documents ourselves when they have come from States known not to have sufficient specialists. But it seems that the various government administrations responsible for preparing the nominations cannot bring together the minimum professional expertise necessary to prepare good, well-structured and illustrated files. Many times, we are under the impression that the forms have been filled in by students or by administrative personnel with little knowledge of architectural history or archaeology. But the most frequent case is that they seem to be completed by one professional who sees all the properties nominated by his country from a single point of view. He is either an archaeologist specialized in antiquities, for whom the Renaissance has never happened, or a conservation architect for whom events or prehistory mean nothing.

The absence of interdisciplinary consultation to prepare the arguments of each nomination or the tentative lists is obvious. We must hope that in the coming years greater efforts will be made by the States party to the Convention to upgrade the quality of the nomination files. This is important in helping Icomos to make a well-informed judgment, and also because all the original files of the cultural properties listed on the World Heritage List are kept in the Unesco-Icomos Documentation Centre and can be studied by anyone having a direct interest in the Convention. Eventually, when the need arises for universities, conservation schools or other institutions to have copies of these documents, we will reproduce

*(facing page)* Patakro, Ghana; a detail of the shrine building, an example of traditional Ashanti architecture.



them on microfiches. If the files are well made, this will be to the credit of the nominating States.

#### *Reporting and monitoring*

The States party to the Convention have listed properties on the World Heritage List and they would like to know periodically what is the state of conservation of all these. It might be thought nothing could be easier; but this is not the case. The States are sovereign, and by signing the Convention they have agreed to take good care of the properties of outstanding universal significance which are on their territory. Many States are very sensitive on this issue and do not accept that their good faith be challenged by anyone, and certainly not by any foreign 'inspector'. Very few States have a monitoring and reporting system for their national monuments and sites. Therefore, in conjunction with Unesco, Icomos is preparing a simple and efficient reporting and monitoring system for the Convention's properties, and also a Manual for the Management of Cultural Properties which will be distributed to all States party. This work is just beginning, and any contributions from specialists on this subject would be greatly appreciated.

#### **The non-participation of Icomos National Committees**

We can count on the fingers of our hands the number of Icomos National Committees that have played, as such, an active role in this Convention; but numerous Icomos individual members have taken an important part in the preparation of the Convention itself or in helping us to make the evaluations. It has been an implicit policy of Icomos not to involve its National Committees directly in making these evaluations of nominations. The first and most important reason has to do with credibility, as mentioned earlier. Another reason is that the Bureau of Icomos wishes to keep its judgment as free as possible from any pressure. This does not prevent it from requesting the advice of reputed Icomos individual members when necessary, and by doing so we have the best advice possible without involving our National Committees directly and formally in any issue.

The best way in which our National Committees could be of use both to the Convention and our organization would be by helping their own country prepare well-balanced tentative lists and well-documented and illustrated nomination files. If the ground work is prepared in a scholarly manner, our evaluations will be easier to make and the nominating States will benefit from the results much more quickly. It is important to know that a State party can at any time request the help of a 'Convention Expert' to explain how to prepare the tentative lists or properly complete the nomination forms. The World Heritage Convention Fund has provisions for this type of support.

#### **How do we all benefit from this Convention**

First, I would say that knowledge and understanding are the most important immediate benefits. As we start discovering all these masterpieces and unique treasures of vanished or living civilizations, our minds start to open up. We had not known that there were so many important cultural properties and of such high quality. 'I have never heard this name before'... is probably a common reaction to names like Tikal, The Cavalier of Madara, Shibam, Mesa Verde, Taxila, Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump, Polonnaruwa, Valcamonica, Ouro Preto, Ohrid and Roeros. I can assure you that a visit to any of these sites would be a revelation. Many of us tend to think that because there are satellites above our heads that can photograph every square metre of this planet everything has been seen and recorded. The World Heritage Convention makes one realize that this is not true. We are just beginning to discover and understand many of the marvels of this world left by civilizations that reached levels of refinement we are unlikely ever to reach ourselves. The World Heritage Convention is a great lesson in modesty, and when all the material gathered on the cultural properties is published in an accessible form, it will be realized how much knowledge and understanding have been engendered by this Convention.

Secondly, the monuments and sites included on the World Heritage List receive special attention from their own governments and from the international community; this means more money and more protection generally. For the time being, the funds available to cultural and natural properties included on the List total about US\$2 million per year. It is not very much, but it is a start and everyone hopes that more and more money will be made available for the protection of these monuments and sites that have been declared of outstanding universal significance.

Thirdly, more and more Icomos experts and professionals are being requested to give advice or to prepare conservation programmes for the listed properties. It is my belief that the World Heritage Convention will progressively provide a great opportunity for many qualified professionals in our discipline to exercise their skills on an international level.

Finally, I would say that the World Heritage Convention is a crucial instrument in developing world interdependence for the conservation of historic monuments and sites. The Pyramids of Egypt, the Pantheon in Rome, the Palace of Versailles or the Ashanti buildings in Ghana are no longer the sole responsibility of the countries in which they are located. It is for all of us to make sure that these treasures at least be kept for future generations.

## Résumé

L'auteur prit connaissance de la Convention du Patrimoine Mondial juste après sa nomination au poste Directeur du Secrétariat d'Icomos en 1979 et ce qui le frappa dès la première réunion du Bureau, ce fut le malentendu entre les délégués gouvernementaux et ceux d'Icomos sur le rôle et les responsabilités de ces derniers; il y avait un total de soixante propositions d'inscriptions; Icomos fit une description détaillée de chaque dossier et donna une évaluation verbale de l'importance de chaque bien culturel en précisant les critères choisis parmi les six que la Convention avait définis. Or il apparut clairement que les délégués—ainsi que l'auteur d'ailleurs—étaient embarrassés par un nombre aussi élevé de propositions. Aussi, à la réunion suivante qui rassembla vingt et un délégués gouvernementaux fut-il demandé à Icomos de détailler encore davantage les recommandations pour l'inscription sur la Liste. Après une réorganisation fébrile de la documentation, le Comité fut satisfait et demanda que les recommandations futures soient présentées de cette manière.

Pour l'auteur cette réunion fut capitale quant à la participation d'Icomos à l'application de la Convention. On lui avait en effet demandé d'être plus sévère dans son attribution à un bien culturel d'une 'valeur universelle exceptionnelle'; d'autre part, il lui fut attribué un budget de US\$35.000, soit une augmentation substantielle. C'est avec l'aide du Dr E.A. Connally, alors Secrétaire-Général d'Icomos, que la procédure d'examen fut restructurée; le Dr L. Pressouyre fut nommé coordinateur.

La procédure qui est maintenant celle d'Icomos est illustrée (Fig. 1); en bref elle comprend les étapes suivantes: un état partie à la Convention désireux d'obtenir une inscription sur la Liste du Patrimoine Mondial remplit un formulaire et prépare un dossier détaillé sur le bien en question; après approbation officielle du gouvernement, le dossier est envoyé à l'Unesco à Paris qui le transmet, après vérification, à Icomos; Dr Pressouyre décide alors s'il peut immédiatement rédiger le document d'évaluation du bien culturel ou si l'avis d'autres experts est nécessaire. Puis il prépare une recommandation soit positive soit négative, à moins encore qu'il ne suggère que la proposition soit différée; ce document est soumis au Comité d'Icomos qui, à son tour, fait une recommandation au Bureau du Comité du Patrimoine Mondial qui lui-même le soumettra à l'ensemble du Comité pour décision finale quant à l'inscription sur la Liste.

Le rôle de conseil qui est celui d'Icomos est pavé de difficultés. Celles-ci concernent essentiellement l'obtention de l'avis d'experts, la comparaison entre les

diverses propositions, le niveau de la présentation, l'inventaire et la description suivie des biens inscrits sur la Liste. L'auteur s'étend sur chacun de ces points. A propos des experts, il souligne la différence entre les diverses opinions, leur crédibilité, le secret dans lequel elles sont formulées et surtout l'inquiétant manque de connaissances dans ce domaine. Il compare le type de décisions qui doivent être prises par l'UICN avec celles d'Icomos et remarque que dans le domaine de la protection d'espèces en voie de disparition ou de squelettes de dinosaures, il s'agit de faits. Or, il n'y a rien de tel dans le domaine de la culture; les cathédrales romanes ou gothiques qui sont formées du plus grand nombre de pierres ne sont pas nécessairement celles qui ont la plus grande valeur culturelle; pas plus que le plus grand site archéologique romain; en fait, les bisons ont plus de points communs entre eux que les cathédrales.

Les six critères adoptés par la Convention pour définir une valeur universelle exceptionnelle sont précis; ce qui ne peut l'être c'est la comparaison de la valeur de divers éléments culturels. L'auteur se demande combien de villes historiques ou de centres urbains ont une valeur universelle exceptionnelle. Quel en est le nombre qui doit figurer sur la Liste du Patrimoine Mondial pour former un échantillon significatif? Comment, par exemple, comparer la baroque Ouro Preto, le Caire islamique ou le centre historique de Rome? Il suggère donc que les listes indicatives présentées par les états soient pleinement utilisées avec le souci d'équilibrer les divers types de biens culturels (cathédrales, châteaux-forts, sites pré-historiques, etc.) et de parer à toutes lacunes d'exemples d'architecture, d'histoire, d'archéologie ou d'anthropologie.

Quant aux dossiers, l'auteur souligne l'importance de leur bonne préparation et il note que la documentation reçue est souvent inadéquate. Or celle-ci est capitale pour qu'Icomos puisse remplir sa tâche. De plus, elle sera conservée au centre de Documentation Unesco-Icomos à Paris. Un dossier bien fait sera tout à la louange de l'état qui l'a fournie. L'auteur demande aussi l'aide de tous les experts pour suivre la condition des biens culturels après leur inscription sur la Liste et permettre ainsi à Icomos de rassembler une documentation complète.

Que peuvent faire les Comités Nationaux d'Icomos? Essentiellement s'assurer que leurs pays soumettent des listes équilibrées, bien documentées et bien illustrées. Celles-ci seront une aide précieuse pour Icomos.

En dernier lieu il énumère les bénéfices apportés par la Convention: d'abord une plus grande connaissance et une plus grande compréhension de la valeur des biens culturels pour tous; en effet, même de nos jours,

nous découvrons encore les vestiges relativement inconnus de civilisations passées, vestiges que nous nous efforçons de comprendre et d'évaluer; de plus les monuments et les sites figurant sur la Liste seront probablement l'objet de soins particuliers de la part des gouvernements et de la communauté internationale. L'auteur voit dans la Convention un instrument permettant de former davantage d'experts—dont le besoin se fait cruellement sentir—qui pourront utiliser leurs compétences au niveau international. Et c'est sur la valeur internationale cruciale de la Convention pour développer la coopération mondiale pour la conservation des monuments et des sites que l'auteur conclut. Car les Pyramides d'Egypte, le Panthéon de Rome, le Palais de Versailles ou les monuments Ashanti du Ghana ne sont plus la seule responsabilité des pays où ils se trouvent.

## Resumen

El presente autor trabajó conocimiento con la Convención poco después de haber empezado su trabajo como Director del Secretariado de Icomos en 1979, y la primera impresión recibida durante la primera reunión de la World Heritage Convention en la que estuvo presente fue la de que parecía existir un mal entendido entre los representantes de los grupos nacionales y los de Icomos sobre el papel y responsabilidades de éstos últimos. Habían sido introducidas sesenta propuestas de propiedades culturales por parte de varios Estados; Icomos hizo una descripción detallada del contenido de cada expediente y una valoración general del valor cultural de las propiedades, indicando cuál de los seis criterios utilizados se había aplicado a cada caso. Para el autor, resultaba evidente que los representantes se sentían perdidos ante tantas propuestas. Lo mismo le ocurría a él. La siguiente reunión del Comité del WHC, formado por 21 representantes del grupo de Estados, insitió en que Icomos diese más detalles de las recomendaciones empleadas para inclusión en la lista. Después de una febril reorganización de datos, el Comité quedó satisfecho y pidió que en el futuro se presentaran del mismo modo las recomendaciones.

En opinión del autor, la sesión marcó el cambio decisivo de la participación de Icomos en la Convención. Se había solicitado mayor severidad en aplicar los criterios de 'notable importancia mundial' y se había otorgado un presupuesto de US\$35.000, que era un aumento considerable. Con la colaboración del Dr E. A. Connally, a la sazón Secretario-General del Icomos, se reestructuró el sistema de escrutinio de propuestas y se acordó pedirle al Dr L. Pressouyre que actuase como Coordinador.

El sistema finalmente adoptado por Icomos para examinar las propuestas se ilustra en la Fig. 1. En resumen, las diversas etapas son como sigue: Un Estado con representación en la Convención que desee someter una propuesta, rellena un impreso y prepara un expediente detallado sobre la propiedad. Después de recibir la firma de la adecuada autoridad gubernamental, se transmite a la Unesco en París, que a su vez lo transmite a Icomos después de haberlo inspeccionado. A continuación, lo examina el Dr Pressouyre, quien decide si puede redactar el informe inmediatamente o si hay que consultar a otros expertos. Entonces prepara un proyecto de recomendación con respecto a la inclusión de la propiedad en la lista, a favor o en contra, o proponiendo que se difiera la propuesta. Este se presenta a la Oficina de Icomos, que hace la recomendación a la Unesco para que se presente a la Oficina de la WHC, cuya recomendación se somete al Comité de la WHC para la decisión final con respecto a la inclusión de la propiedad en la lista.

Para llevar a cabo su papel de consejero, Icomos debe hacer frente a muchos obstáculos y dificultades. En primer lugar, está la disponibilidad de asesoría adecuada, la comparabilidad de propuestas culturales, los estándares de presentación y el informe y observación de las propiedades de la lista. El autor describe cada uno de estos aspectos. Comentando la cuestión de la asesoría adecuada, llama la atención sobre las divergencias entre especialistas cuyas opiniones varían, sobre la credibilidad y la confidencialidad, y al problema de la escasez de conocimientos especializados. Compara la clase de decisión que debe tomar la IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) con las de Icomos, señalando que, al tener en cuenta especies amenazadas de animales o esqueletos de dinosaurios, se debaten hechos comprobables. Tales criterios no pueden aplicarse al campo de la cultura. Las catedrales góticas o románicas con mayor cantidad de piedra no son necesariamente las de valor cultural importante, ni lo es la mayor excavación arqueológica romana desde el punto de vista del tamaño. Tienen más características comunes los bisontes que las catedrales.

Los seis criterios empleados en la Convención para determinar lo que es de valor universal notable están bien definidos, pero no la comparación de elementos y valores culturales. El autor se pregunta cuántas ciudades históricas o centros urbanos son de valor universal destacado. ¿Cuántos de ellos tienen que estar en el mapa de la WHC antes de que podamos considerar que contiene una muestra adecuada? ¿Cómo podemos comparar el barroquismo de Ouro Preto, el islamismo de El Cairo y el centro histórico de

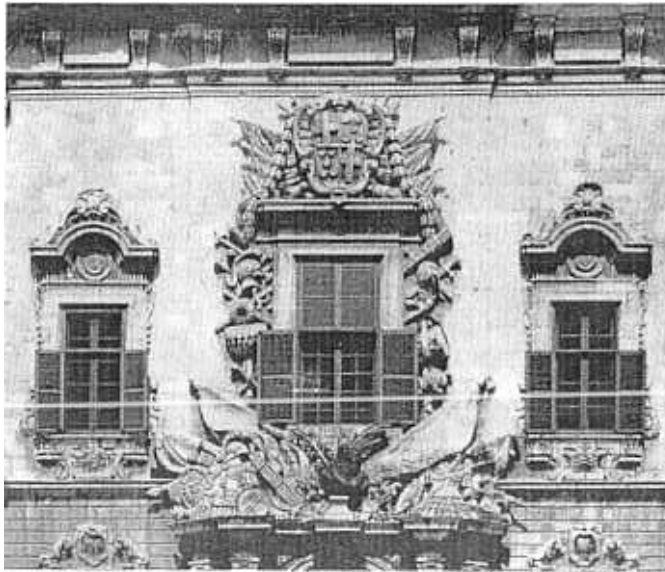


Roma? Sugiere que las listas iniciales sometidas por los grupos estatales deben ser aprovechadas al máximo para tratar de obtener un balance equilibrado entre el número de propiedades de cada tipo (catedrales, castillos, fortalezas, emplazamientos prehistóricos), así como tener en cuenta si se han olvidado propiedades representativas de algún aspecto de la arquitectura, historia, arqueología o antropología.

A continuación, el autor hace hincapié en la importancia de los expedientes bien preparados en las propuestas, indicando lo insatisfactorio de la documentación que se recibe a menudo. Esto es necesario para que Icomos pueda formular un juicio adecuado; pero, además engrosan el Centro de Documentación Unesco-Icomos en París. La preparación de expedientes satisfactorios acreditará al Estado de la propuesta. Después trata de la cuestión de tener en observación a la propiedad después de su inscripción, refiriéndose a los documentos preparados por Icomos y solicitando la colaboración de especialistas sobre el tema. ¿De qué modo pueden colaborar los Comités Nacionales de Icomos? Sobre todo, asegurándose de que sus propios países preparan listas iniciales bien

equilibradas y expedientes bien documentados e ilustrados, los cuales simplificarán la labor de Icomos.

Por último, hace la pregunta del beneficio que obtenemos todos de la Convención. Cree que los beneficios inmediatos más importantes son la ampliación de nuestros conocimientos; incluso en el momento actual estamos todavía descubriendo resultados relativamente desconocidos de civilizaciones antiguas y estamos tratando de comprenderlas y evaluarlas. Indica después que los monumentos y lugares incluidos en la Lista probablemente recibirán atención especial tanto de sus gobiernos como de la comunidad internacional. Considera la Convención como la oportunidad de crear más expertos, requeridos urgentemente, que sean capaces de ejercer sus conocimientos a nivel internacional; y termina refiriéndose al tema internacional, considerando la Convención como instrumento crucial en el desarrollo de una interdependencia mundial para la conservación de monumentos y lugares históricos. Las Pirámides de Egipto, el Panteón de Roma, el Palacio de Versailles o las edificaciones Ashanti en Ghana ya no son responsabilidad única de los países donde se encuentran.



A detail of the Auberge de la Castille, Valetta, Malta.