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Towards the Cape Town Document

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Abstract The Modern Heritage of Africa (MoHoA) initiative was conceived at a critical confluence of existential planetary conditions and rising global inequality, exacerbated and accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ukraine -Russia war, and a resurgence of racism and extreme nationalism. These phenomena share a common root in being products of the modern age and yet, paradoxically, endanger its legacy through the pursuit of inequitable and unsustainable practices. It is one of the key questions and concerns for MoHoA. MoHoA seeks to decentre, reframe and reconceptualise the legacies of the recent past in light of these existential crises, and to acknowledge the inequitable ways in which this past has been researched and recorded, and consequently valorised and protected. This article addesses these issues in the context of African cultural heritage and the long duree of its global connections.

The Modern Heritage of Africa (MoHoA) initiative was conceived at a critical juncture in the course of human society, with our species standing at a crossroads of opposing trajectories pointing in one direction towards conciliation, and in the other to conflict. What distinguishes this crossroads from others that we have encountered in the past, is the confluence of existential planetary conditions and their exacerbation and acceleration by the Covid-19 pandemic, and, at the time of writing, the revived threat of thermonuclear conflict arising out of the continuing war between Ukraine and Russia. A resurgence of racism – emboldened by and an ingredient of – ethnic tensions fuelling the rise of nationalism, irreversible climate change and biodiversity loss, and global inequality are among the primary challenges not merely of our time, but of all human time. These phenomena share a common root in being products of the modern age and yet, paradoxically, endanger its legacy through the pursuit of inequitable and unsustainable practices. Herein lies one of the key questions and concerns for MoHoA.

Modern Heritage of Africa was established to decentre, reframe and reconceptualise the legacies of the recent past in light of these existential crises we presently face, and to acknowledge the inequitable ways in which this past has been researched and recorded, and consequently valorised and

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protected. It is our belief that a truly sustainable future can only be achieved through a thorough re-evaluation and reconciliation of this past.

Modern Heritage of Africa's conception coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Modern Heritage Programme, initiated jointly in 2001 by UNESCO, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and the International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods (DOCOMOMO). This occasion presents a timely and critical opportunity to reflect on the transformative cultural experiences and global consequences of the past two decades, which heralded the dawn of the Anthropocene and its many impacts on climate, society, and the planet. Despite these impacts, the "modern" era and its legacies are undervalued, underrepresented, and overlooked in comparison to other heritage types, and remain disproportionately concentrated in Europe and North America or interpreted through cultural conceptualisations derived from these regions. The historical reasons for this inequitable recognition of the recent past are complex, but they have significant consequences in the present that cannot be disassociated from colonial and imperial experiences dating back to at least the 15th century when Africa began to attract the unwanted attentions of early European colonialists. Modern heritage, as a legacy of these experiences, is therefore a particularly well focussed lens, temporally and disciplinarily, through which to observe the inequities and iniquities of the recent past – a modern age constructed by, for and of a dominant minority to the detriment of what the writer and anti-racist activist Campbell-Stephens (2021) has coined the "global majority".

Few sections of the global majority have been subjected to this othering more acutely and on such a scale, culturally, geographically, temporally, or racially, than the continent of Africa and its myriad diasporic communities. In focusing on modern heritage, MoHoA extends beyond the question of underrepresentation on heritage registers globally, and seeks instead to explore and expose other critical reasons for this underrepresentation, based on historical racial, disciplinary, and geo-cultural prejudices that are inherently linked to modernity and its associated notions of development and progress derived from the European Enlightenment. Rather than being subjected to a singular modernity defined and constructed by the west, MoHoA contends that Africa's experiences of plural or multiple modernities includes the confluence of positive and negative, colonial and post-colonial, tangible and intangible, urban and rural, and cultural and natural that are simultaneously of the local and the global.

Redressing centuries of inequitable historiography and decades of disciplinary and organizational orthodoxy that has privileged western accounts of and approaches to the past demands an enormous effort on the part of academics, practitioners, and related scholarly work within and, necessarily, beyond Africa. This is one of the central tasks of MoHoA: to make a significant contribution to this endeavor and to facilitate the construction of new knowledge that is instructive and transformative in framing modernities and modern heritage not only within Africa, but also globally, as well as to address the challenges of sustainability on a planetary scale.

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This endeavor aligns with the practical work of our partners, including the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), which has identified modern heritage as one of the most marginalized heritage categories on the continent, and demands investment in research and documentation to better protect, strengthen resilience and increase Africa's representation on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Through improved methods of understanding and assessing significance, raising public awareness and promoting inscription on local or global registers, Africa's modern heritage has a vital role to play in contributing to rural and urban sustainability in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda (NUA), the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL) approach.

Intellectually, the work of MoHoA challenges three broad assumptions that have dominated global discourse throughout the 20th century. All three were predicated on the experiences and consequences of colonial endeavor mostly by European powers, since the 15th century. The first is the assumption that the path to modernity was prepared by European and North American cultures and countries. Indeed, this assumption is based not only on the idea that modernity originated in the west, but also on an underlying linear conception of progress in which the movement from tradition to modernity is predetermined. These, in turn, uphold other binary constructs which, deliberate or not, have successfully advantaged the west at the expense of others: rural/urban; black/white; developing/developed; uncivilized/civilized; Third World/First World; South/North; etc. Such binaries are not only confined to western and non-western formulations, but also exist within cultural groupings. In South Africa, there is a literature that speaks of School people and Red people, meaning modern people who value modern knowledge in contrast with those who prefer to stick to tradition. And in China, the varied terms used to denote the modern, such as "modeng", "jindai" or "xiandai", reveal the contested conceptualisations of the notion over recent time, space and experience. Many will argue that such binary conceptions persist at a global geopolitical level, and remain central to the institutional work, practices and structures of global organizations, including UNESCO, despite strenuous efforts to redress past practices and champion equitable futures.

A second assumption rests on the idea that, because the west was held up as the mirror of progress to the rest of the world, the west's experiment of social change associated with progress was already embedded. All that needed to be done to achieve progress and enjoy the fruits of modernity was to apply these lessons as a set of top-down technical exercises. This model was institutionalized on an international scale after World War II, with the introduction and widespread application of development loans from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and similar proto-global institutions, including a rapidly expanding aid sector, mostly from Europe and North America.

The third assumption was that non-European or non-western nations possessed no history or culture that presupposed progress. Other histories were stagnant, detached from the evolutionary inevitability of western progress and needed to be removed from the framework of modernity. Western scholars have successfully constructed all manner of models, theories and concepts to assert and reinforce such an assumption. One of the most visually striking, albeit offensive, representations
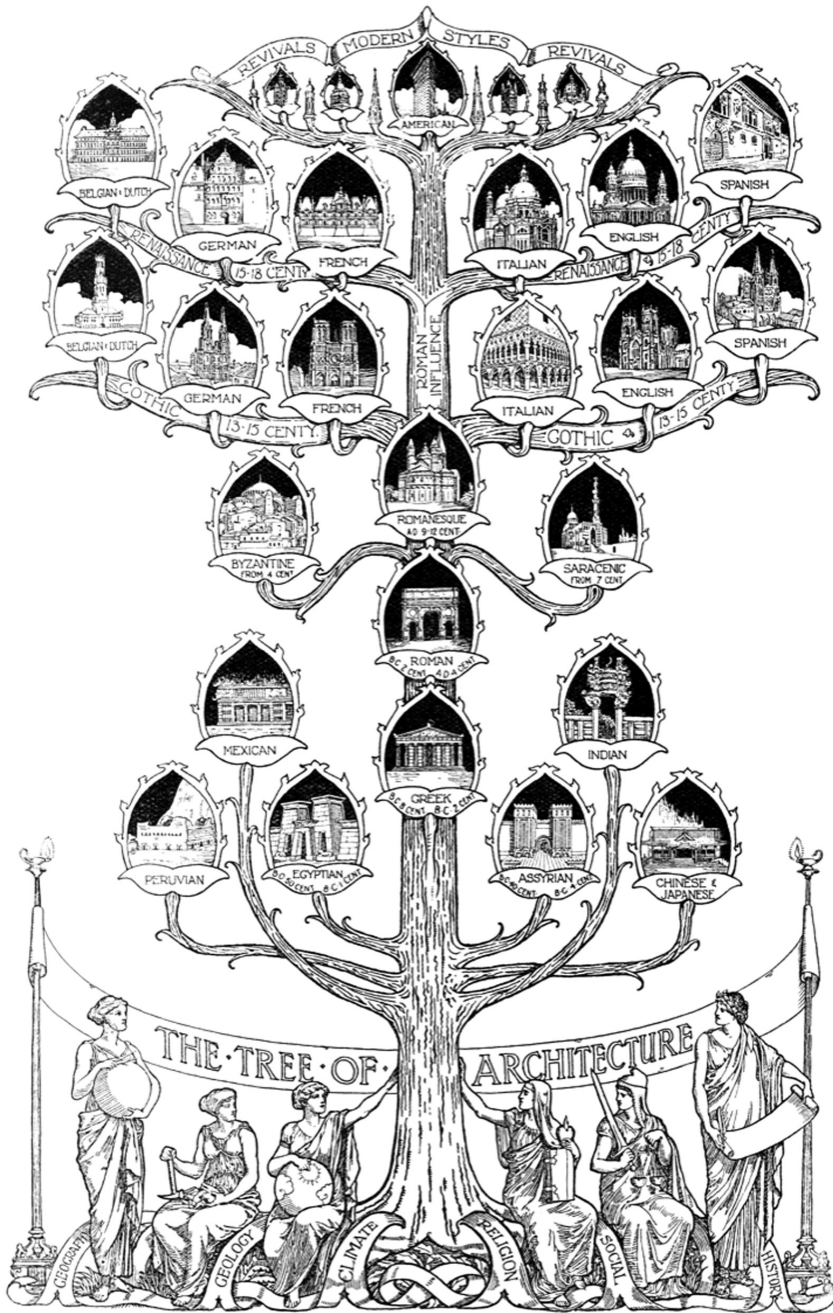
BANISTER FLETCHER, INV.

This Tree of Architecture shows the main growth or evolution of the various styles, but must be taken as suggestive only, for minor influences cannot be indicated on a diagram of this kind.

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Figure 1. Fletcher's Tree of Architecture illustration from the 1921 (sixth) edition of A History of Architecture illustrates the cultural erasure of Africa's many architectural traditions, styles, and practices. Illustration: RIBA Collections. [Correction added on 25 November 2022, after first online publication: Figure 1 is inserted.]

comes from the field of architecture and the infamous "Tree of Architecture" that first appeared in the 1905 (fifth) edition of *A History of Architecture* by Sir Banister Fletcher. Updated in the 1921 (sixth) edition, the "Tree of Architecture" clearly represents the European origins of this discipline in the central trunk and flourishing canopy (Figure 1). The "architectures" of others are displayed as sub-branches sustaining no subsequent growth and leading nowhere. Africa, with exception of Egypt, is entirely absent from this conceptualisation. A continent without history.

Architecture is significant as an example because it is among the group of cultural fields of study that were central to the creation of heritage as a modern discipline in the 20th century. The Venice Charter of 1964, the World Heritage Convention of 1972, together with the Nairobi Recommendation in 1975 (UNESCO) and the Washington Charter in 1987 (ICOMOS), were key milestones in the global institutionalization of heritage formed around tangible artifacts, including architecture, that placed precedence on the "design, materials, workmanship and setting" of monuments, buildings and sites. The "design, materials, workmanship and setting" were the original attributes set out in the first editions of the operational guidelines. "Monuments, groups of buildings and sites" remain entrenched in the definitions of cultural heritage in the Convention.

Historic centres of towns and cities, historic or cultural landscapes, mixed natural-historic sites and serial nominations, not to mention intangible heritages, were yet to come. The central disciplines that the World Heritage Convention drew on were architecture and town planning, and to some extent archaeology. With knowledge of western architecture as the theoretical framing and practical approach to World Heritage nominations, reliant on diverse categorisations with all their sub-meanings, it is small wonder the World Heritage List is so skewed in favor not only of European sites, but also of European conceptualisations of non-European sites. From Tel Aviv's focus on the literal and metaphorical whiteness of the Bauhaus to Mumbai's Art Deco (an artistic appellation that did not even exist at the time the buildings ascribed to it were designed or built), the framing of the modern is enabled by its deference to European precedents. Any architectural heritage that did not fit this pattern was either not ascribed the same value or assigned as primitive, indigenous, traditional or vernacular, regardless of its design, purpose, or history, and therefore unmodern.

Despite all the changes, amendments, new and evolving Conventions, projects, policies and approaches unfolding within the vast UN system, significant as they are, the perspective remains based on Eurocentric notions of what constitutes knowledge, rationality and technology, as determined by experts invariably trained in western universities in association with the administrators and political leaders of state parties. The MoHoA project aims to offer a different way of conceptualizing the world, its peoples and its multiple histories that more fairly and accurately reflects the experiences of all, rather than a few.

Without rejecting advances in knowledge-making from science and technology, we should acknowledge that Africa was a significant contributor to that knowledge. Long before the dominance of Europe through colonialism, Africa lay within global exchange systems of ideas, material culture, and commerce. Africa learnt from others through global networks stretching from the Levant and what is now referred to as the Middle East, to Asia, and was often one of the transmitters of that knowledge to Europe. Yet, at the same time, it was also the source of slaves, and experienced the exploitation of its resources, especially to the Americas. It is through these positive and negative contributions to the world that Africa needs to be incorporated centrally into the reconsideration of what constitutes modern heritage.

One of the enduring misrepresentations of Africa in conventional historiography is that it is a "dark" continent, beset by endless wars and tragedies, offering nothing except its mineral and environmental resources to the world. And to add insult to injury, it was other powers, whether these were from the ancient Mediterranean or the Levant, or from Europe or Asia, who extracted these resources. In other discussions of Africa in the modern period, it is said that civilisation was brought from the outside, most commonly delivered through Christian salvation and institutionalized through colonial subjugation and capitalist economies. Until recently, Africa is presented as the grateful recipient of others' gifts – knowledge, religion, science, technology, cultural advancement – in a word "modernity". In response, some Africans have argued that Africa's engagement with the world has led to its arrested development, and that only national liberation struggles starting in the late 19th and 20th centuries created the conditions for new kinds of progress to be made. Focusing specifically on cultural heritage, the continent has come to the fore in this post-colonial period. It has led especially to recognition of those intangible aspects of African civilisations, the great diversity of its languages and cultures. It has influenced the politics of identity and inscribed the recognition of diversity and difference as intrinsic to human rights. These are no small achievements.

Yet these experiences have had unintended and potentially damaging consequences. They dislocate Africa from the wider networks and contexts of social relationships on a world scale, locking the continent, as well as nations and ethnic groups, into a form of parochialism that is both historically and culturally without basis. They detach the continent from the fundamental levers of economic and political power that existed outside the continent, but also within the continent's powerful polities, whose influences run along and against the grain of global engagements.

The question then, is how do we conceptualize the deep, long and complicated history and entanglement of Africa with the rest of the world from the time of the rise of the major historical civilisations that stretch from China, across Africa to Europe? How do we disentangle those connected histories over time so that we are able to distinguish those that are endogenous to the continent and its local manifestations, from those that are imposed? And, most crucially, what arises or emerges from these global entanglements and how can these experiences be understood and, in terms of cultural heritage, be evaluated equitably without being refracted through centuries of prejudicial perception?

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How will such an understanding and evaluation of historical differences, similarities and unequal development help to achieve a peaceful, prosperous, equitable and sustainable future? We propose three phases towards achieving these aims. Firstly, we need to disentangle those exogenous multi-directional influences in the various historical periods from, secondly, those that are endogenous to the continent and its local historical manifestations. For example, over the last two millennia there have been vital connections not only with Europe before, during and after the colonial period, but also with Central and East Asia via the Indian Ocean and the Middle East. How can these be disentangled from the traditional mechanisms and oral traditions that have been preserved and passed on through myriad similarities and differences in ideas such as exchange, markets, reciprocity, and care? Thirdly, and perhaps most centrally, we need to acknowledge what is distinctive that arises or emerges from this entanglement with the rest of the world over this long period. Such examples include those processes that have transformed culture within and beyond Africa, including diasporic experiences.

Through these phases, a heterogenous and historically complex understanding of Africa should allow the continent's cultural experiences and differences to be an enjoyment, a way of life of exchanging views, goods, services, and markets, and a recognition and appreciation of its "politics", rather than its enslavement. It should be the starting point for genuine freedom and equality for the future, and serve as an example to others around the world whose pasts have been overlooked, marginalized or suppressed.

It may be helpful to provide some examples to underline these points and approaches.

The first example is about historical and traditional leadership and how its intersection with contemporary laws promotes participatory democracy at the local level through the South African Constitution. The Constitution protects traditional leadership, but is also fundamentally about democratic participation at all levels including that practiced by traditional councils and leaders. In a small town, Cala, in the Eastern Cape province, it recently came to pass that one of the traditional leaders' positions became available. Some of the local leaders appealed to the local provincial government to appoint a new leader without consultation and discussion. The local people opposed this proposal. Notwithstanding substantial research into the historical processes by which traditional leaders were elected, the provincial government disputed the findings and challenged the process in a "western" style court. A professor of African Studies, Dr. Lungisile Ntsebeza, was able to show that for more than 200 years local traditional chiefs had always been democratically elected. The judge was impressed by the thorough research, but what was most pertinent was the judgment that there was no separate policy or legislation for traditional leaders. While they are protected under the Constitution, it also meant they must be subject to the same conditions as everyone else: under one single law of the constitutional democracy that currently exists. This is the kind of necessary recognition of customary practices, in a context where elders and other authoritative leaders must accept democratic participation as a cornerstone of protecting and enhancing tradition. There must also be space for change to include those who have been excluded in the past, such as women.

A second case is from the intersection of indigenous knowledge, plant biology and the pharmaceutical industry. The global pharmaceutical industry is always looking for plant ingredients for use in the production of medicines and phyto-chemical nutrients. Historically, while the colonial powers were carving up the continent and extracting raw materials and human capital, European scientists were documenting newly located plant materials. In many cases these "discoveries" were taken back to Europe and circulated to benefit emerging botanical sciences. Yet the knowledge of these plants was gained by asking local people about the life cycles of the plants and what they were used for. Scientists used this indigenous knowledge combined with laboratory experiments to extract active ingredients that formed the basis of the pharmaceutical and herbal treatment industry, and sold these back to African countries. As in other examples of cultural heritage, such as the whiteness of architectural modernism derived from North Africa, what is needed is the rightful reclamation of this intellectual property and the acknowledgement of a creative and sometimes commercial debt to Africa. An example of this process is the world famous "Rooibos" (redbush) tea, which has been shown to reduce anxiety and assist in promoting a healthy heart. Despite being used by the San and Khoi peoples for centuries, some European entrepreneurs comparatively recently tried to copyright the word and claim intellectual property rights over the product. This was resisted by the South African government and today many San and Khoi enjoy the benefits of the return of their intellectual property as indigenous knowledge, and the rewards arising from co-operative production of the plant as a beneficial tea sold all over the world.

A third example is the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Asmara, capital of Eritrea and former colonial capital of fascist Italy, and at the time of writing Africa's only World Heritage Site inscribed solely for its modernist attributes. Inscribed on the List in 2017, the original nomination presented by the State Party sought inscription under criteria 2, 3 and 4. While it is customary for city sites, especially modernist sites, to be nominated under Criteria 2[1] and 4,[2] Eritrea's attempt to also claim Criterion 3 ("bear[ing] a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared"), was an acknowledgement of Eritrea's experiences in the 50 years that separated the end of Italian colonization in 1941 and Independence in 1991, and the essential contribution made by Eritrean skilled labourers in constructing Asmara's modernist buildings and infrastructure. The complex historical experiences during the half century that followed Italian colonization involved further forms of European and intra-African subjugation. This started with a decade of British administration, followed by federation to Ethiopia (in 1952), then annexation (in 1961), first by the imperial regime of Haile Selassie and then (in 1974) by a brutal communist regime sponsored by the Soviet Union. Such experiences were as much a part of Asmara's encounter with modernity as the Italian colonial period, but they do not fit the European conceptualisation that Italian modernist architecture so clearly evokes. Herein lies the second attribute that supports Asmara's case for Criterion 3. Behind the geometric designs and plaster skins of Asmara's flamboyant modernist structures from the Italian period, the dominant materials were not steel, concrete or other components associated with modernism, but rather local stone. Furthermore, this stone was quarried and laid using the knowledge and ancient techniques dating back millennia. Seen through a European lens, Asmara might appear like an Italian town frozen in the 1930s, but architecturally and historically it possesses

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more significance as a unique expression of modernism that combines European and African motifs, construction techniques, skills, and materials. Acknowledging the contribution of Africans to the production of this particular expression of modernism, not to mention their brutal treatment and experiences in this process under a fascist regime and the state-sponsored discrimination this imposed, was the motive for making a case for Criterion 3. However, ICOMOS, the scientific advisory body to UNESCO, rejected this claim and permitted Asmara's inscription only under Criteria 2 and 4. The decision denied African agency in the experience and in the literal and figurative construction of modernism in Africa. This not merely foregrounds, inflates and reinforces canonical and singular conceptualisations of modernism and modernist heritage rooted in Eurocentric formulations, but does so at the expense of the essential contribution of African knowledge, skills, labour and materials. The effect is to sustain and reinforce inequitable practices that are part of a long tradition of ascribing value to European or western cultural experiences and institutional structures of valorisation through the invalidation of others.

The fourth and final example derives from encounters with Senegalese people in South Africa. One of the guest editors, Shahid Vawda, in this volume, was invited to the Grand Magal celebration of Sheik Amadou Bamba, who led one of the earliest pacifist rebellions against French colonial rule in Senegal. The Sheik, like many such leaders in the Dutch, French and British empires sometimes imprisoned far from their homelands, was exiled. In Sheik Amadou Bamba's case, this was an exile to Gabon, where he continued to influence his followers. The principal lesson to draw from this encounter with the Senegalese Mourides (a Sufi Muslim order in Senegal) was that Amadou Bamba emphasized passive resistance long before it became a popular political tool in the early- and mid-20th centuries, often in response to colonial oppression. Secondly, it shows that to overcome colonial exploitation, one has to work hard and innovate in difficult circumstances. Thirdly, it demonstrates the importance of maintaining a purity of religious spirit in defiance of colonial evangelism. And finally, it communicates the need to have a caring disposition for not just one's own family, but also for fellow human beings.

In Sheik Amadou Bamba we see an Islamic scholar in West Africa acting in both secular and spiritual ways. In some senses he was an innovator of a particular kind of political strategy that subsequently became the hallmark of the civil rights movement in the United States and of the independence movements in many colonies around the world. In memorializing these kinds of episodes, we begin the process of contributing to a new understanding of the modern heritage of Africa.

In the above examples, it is the complex and intricate combinations of tradition and modern heritage that need to be identified, protected and enhanced. It not simply a question of identifying a pre-colonial "authetic tradition" that co-exists alongside an equal modern heritage, as if these two forces are independent, but co-existant. Nor is it about a mere synthesis between the modern and pre-modern, or between the pre-colonial and the colonial as the post-colonial, as if this occurs in equal measure, albeit in a different context. However, it does exist in multifarious ways where colonial subjects have been dominated in colonial matrices of power, where new social groupings have grafted previous forms of social relationships, some of which themselves are hierarchical and

unequal, into colonial and present conditions of coloniality. The protection and conservation of this kind of heritage cannot be done without unlearning much of what we are told about history and historiographic practices. It requires investing unprecedented time and effort in deep historical research to understand how these histories intersect with coloniality. This would allow us to recognize and overcome negative internal and external forces, including conflict and violence, which frequently undermine the long history of positive engagements on the continent. It does not mean the end of conflicts or their omission, but such a perspective allows us to recognize the underlying power in these relationships, so that we can create and build new ideas, concepts and institutions that more fairly reflect the experiences of Africans and those who engaged with Africa, and maintain and create new living traditions that celebrate the continent's diversity as a condition of our collective humanity for the future.

Here, the Indian Ocean is emblematic of what can be done to encourage a historical approach to culture as meaningful for all its citizens, and more specifically, the overlapping and multiple expression of cultures and heritages in Africa. We could, moreover, take cognisance of the Atlantic slave trade, including those who returned as freed men and women, or West Africa and the Mediterranean basin, or the links between the hinterlands and as they stretch outwards towards the oceans, as further examples.

Whichever region one choses, it is an attempt to bring the historical depth of the continent's peoples and the diversity of their polities and countless connections to the rest of the world together with the interpenetrative influences, experiences, and ethnographic details of similarity and dissimilarity. It tries to do this in as broad a way as possible without losing focus on the empirical and analytical questions that need to be addressed: what were the ingredients of power, place, people and their mobility that shaped African societies as distinctive, but at the same time as part of many world systems? What of these do we recognize and make public as heritage in this contemporary era?

A central feature of these centuries of interaction has been the mobility of groups of people who traded and performed labour through various forms of exchange in goods, and financial services such as credit, as well as in capturing, buying and selling of slaves (who served in various capacities ranging from forced labourers to soldiers), and in prestige goods such as gold, silver and ivory. Of course, what constitutes a prestige item for one group of people in a polity, might not be regarded as such in a different area. For example, Chinese ceramics found on the African coast and in the interior may signify the exchange of gold or ivory on regional core-periphery axis, but must also be about the organization of local surplus extraction involving local producers, political authorities, tribute, taxes, and its justification in terms of political allegiances, kinship solidarity, religious domination and other forms of hegemonic ritual and cultural practices. It may also be about initiating conflict and the remaking of internal and external alliances and new polities and hence new cultural practices. Studies of trade and exchange must also consider the political, economic and religio-cultural-ideological dimensions, both internal to the relevant level of political and trade transactions, and the external influences in which such exchange networks operated. The crucial exemplars of these will be the leading villages,

towns and cities on the chains of routes that made up the trade networks, and how these merged with, adapted, assimilated or influenced new cultural practices, or their rejection.

This variation in conceptions of commodities compels deeper reflection about such commodities and how their cultural and symbolic values are constructed, how this was conceived in plans and exchange projects, and their role in actualising the multitude of exchanges that took place between centres and peripheries. But most importantly, exchange should include ideas, knowledge, religions and associated practices, including cultural practices, skills, technology, flora and fauna, and other forms of gift exchanges. These should not be considered merely as additional to a system of commodity or trade, but as entwined in the lives of people. Indeed, the multitude of exchanges suggests the manifest diversity of peoples, cultures and their migrations, particularly in the core urban settlements, rather than a monochrome historical landscape. These kinds of exchanges have, in turn, been linked, with their varying degrees of intensity and density, to the various places and peoples of the Indian Ocean and their hinterlands. Some researchers have begun to see this as an Afro-Eurasian world system beginning in the 10th century BCE up to the onset of European colonialism in the 14th century CE. The modern system comes into being with colonialism, but remained predicated on the mobility of people, ideas, cultures, and religions, albeit on an increasingly planetary scale.

While such a world system approach emphasizes processes of accumulation of capital, regional divisions of labour and hierarchies of occupations within a system of imbalances of power and inequalities termed "centres" and "peripheries", it also acknowledges a differential importance and power of groups or classes of people, particularly elites, in human settlements and their role in trade and exchange at the local level of people's own polities, affecting the internal social relationships of respective settlements – hamlets, villages, towns, cities, chiefdoms, and states.

Crucial to a historically informed approach to culture and heritage in the present is that built into these exchange relationships are forms of multidirectional reciprocity and hierarchical participation informed by historical precedent, and religion, and sanctioned by other kinds of ideological value systems that emerge over time. By reviewing the current status of research, re-examining the archival material and conducting original fieldwork, we may better come to understand the emergence of cultural practices termed "traditional", and indeed, come to recognize them as under constant change and thoroughly part of globally experienced multiple modernities, rather than the Eurocentric perspective that sees such contemporary practices as unchanged survivals of a past that was displaced by a singular formulation of modernity originating in the west.

In adopting such an approach the MoHoA initiative advocates:

1. Research and framing of questions that relinquishes any dependence on European history as sole source of comparison and ideas to interpret the experiences of Africa's relationship with the rest of the world.
2. Challenges Eurocentric notions of the origins of the modern industrial world in Europe, and points to the salient role played by such regions as Africa in contributing to modernity.

3. Shifts attention away from a fixed spatial territorial approach that confers on places such as Africa perpetual "underdevelopment" status.
4. Focuses attention on who embodies the production, control and distribution of ideas, religion, technology, goods, services, etc, and how and why these may or may not have been accumulated, exchanged and conferred with differential cultural status whose meaning is endemic and differential to various localities.

CONCLUSION

We need to avoid the pitfall of thinking the modern as determined only by Eurocentric ideas of what constitutes knowledge, rationality and technology, and in the process revisit conventional notions in regard to whose history of ideas and technology counts the most. We must in addition, avoid the trap of thinking that the pre-colonial and its present appearances, as indigenous knowledge systems and modes of governance, as essentially good and free from disagreement or antagonistic struggles.

We must consider – especially since the rise of global trade from about 5000 years ago – that this not only brings into being the recognition of the diversity of the world, that is, its multiple localized knowledges, cultures and histories, but also the insertions of these differences and their times, into one another. For us, this is a primary task, to acknowledge the disruptions and the entanglements of the past in the present, but also that the diversity of the world cannot simply be reduced to one category of time, history and the present, dominated as it currently is, by that developed by and in Europe and North America.

Neither must we encourage a singular attempt that, while recognizing diversity, short circuits it to a singular end of history personified as the post-colonial nation state. It should alert us to heritage in these post-colonial contexts, tangible and intangible, recognized often as heterogeneity of cultural or ethnic groups, alongside a plurality of languages, religions or identities, that is not without contestation, violence, and force as key elements in many phases of historical transitions and what of that past continues into the present. We need to ask ourselves why and how does this manifest itself in a national state container or the state party entity recognized by the World Heritage Centre and its various affiliated and advisory bodies.

Modern Heritage of Africa was established to create a platform upon which these approaches could be tested and developed. It is conceived as a collaborative and global forum for discussion and the exchange of ideas that supports the processes of decolonisation, decentring, and reframing of global discourses and heritage practices of the modern era. One of the principal outputs will be the publication and presentation to UNESCO of the *Cape Town Document on Modern Heritage* in 2022.

The *Cape Town Document on Modern Heritage* is conceived in the spirit of the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), which successfully achieved a paradigmatic shift in the global conceptualisation and assessment of the foundational concept of authenticity. The *Cape Town Document* seeks to achieve a corresponding global consensus on the re-conceptualisation of "modern" heritage that is relieved of its Eurocentric, homogenous, universalising, developmental, and colonial associations, and is instead reframed as an inherently plural and planetary phenomenon that heralded the Anthropocene. This wider reframing will permit a fuller and fairer account of the encounters with modernity globally through the recognition and ascription of value to experiences of the modern that have been overlooked, marginalized, or excluded from the existing canon of modern heritage. Modern heritage, in all its forms, is the overarching theme because it presents the paradox of being *of* modernity, and yet threatened by its consequences. **END**

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest with the production of this paper.

NOTES

1. "To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design."
2. "To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history."

REFERENCE

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