A Conservation Code for the Colony: John Marshall's Conservation Manual and Monument Preservation Between India and Europe

Indra Sengupta

Abstract This article addresses the framing of the rules of preservation of ancient buildings in colonial India and the resulting code of practice that the first Director-General of Indian Archaeology, Sir John Marshall, published in 1923. The code or John Marshall's *Conservation Manual* was designed as a prescriptive colonial text, setting down stringent rules for the practice of monument preservation in a colony, and thus constituted a text of authority. Yet, it was also the product of the kind of tension that was implicit in the operation of colonial state power in India, which resulted from the need to reconcile ideas produced in the metropolitan culture of contemporary Britain with local pressures on the ground in the various regions and localities of India. The intentionality of the text that thus emerged must therefore be understood in the context of the multiple audiences that it sought at the same time to address. By examining the context in which the *Conservation Manual* was conceived and finally produced, that is, from the early years of the twentieth century until its appearance in 1923, this paper hopes to contribute to a clearer understanding of the problems of the preservation of monuments, especially religious structures, in colonial India during two decades of the most intense legislation and regulation of ancient monuments.

Keywords John Marshall • Conservation Manual • Archaeological Survey of India • Cultural heritage • Colonial India

Birth of a Colonial Conservation Code

This is the story of a text, an authoritative text produced by colonial policy makers in early twentieth-century India. Specifically, it is the story of an officially produced handbook, consisting of seventy-odd pages, which despite its size came to form the

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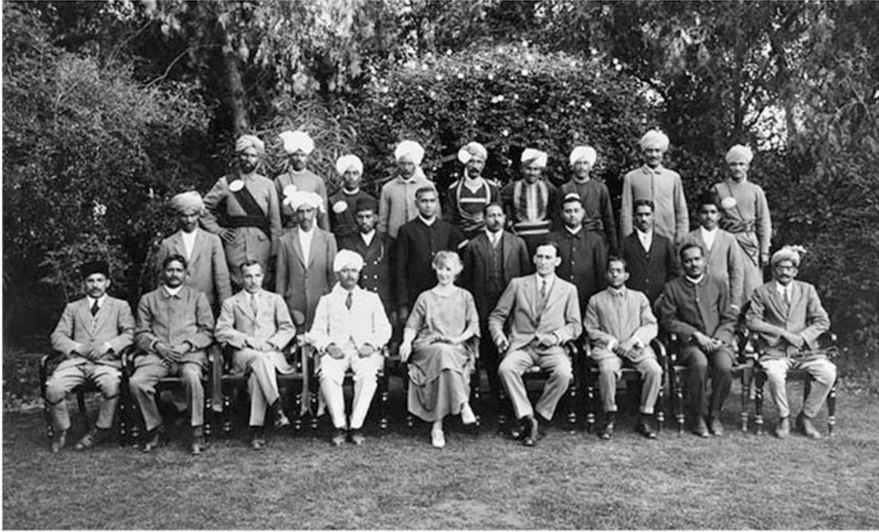

Fig. 1 John Marshall and his wife Florence with the Staff of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1925. (The Alkazi Collection of Photography)

basis of the state-driven monument preservation and general archaeological policy in colonial India. This paper examines how this code of practice, the *Conservation Manual*, written by John Marshall, the Director-General of the restructured Department of Archaeology or the Archaeological Survey of India,[1] and published in 1923 was conceived as an authoritative text on monument preservation in colonial India (as it remains to this day), and how it sought to resolve the tension between laying clear, fixed, and universal rules of the principles and practice of preservation while allowing enough room for local conditions. In other words, this paper will examine the ambivalence inherent in the authority of colonial rule, as on the one hand colonial officers grappled with the task of enforcing the authority of the colonial state on the philosophy, principles, and practice of heritage making in India, and on the other, justifying its policies to the various watchdog groups in metropolitan Britain, who often tended to perceive the colonial rulers of India as traditionalist and behind the times (Fig. 1).

In December 1906 John Marshall, the Director-General of Archaeology of India wrote an impassioned letter to Viceroy Lord Minto defending the work of his department, which ended with the following words (also quoted above):

> Surely the judgment of [. . .] men arrived at on the spot is worth a great deal more than the dogmas of a Committee, the majority of whose members have probably never set foot on Indian soil! (John Marshall, Director-General of Indian Archaeology to Duncan Smith, Secretary to the Viceroy, 28.12.1906. Archaeological Survey of India (henceforth ASI), Archaeology File no. 202, 1906).

[1] The Archaeological Survey of India came into existence in 1861, but had a chequered history until its final establishment in 1873. The first Director-General was Alexander Cunningham. For a general history of archaeology in colonial India (Singh 2004; Chakrabarti 2001; Roy 1996).

The committee in question was that of the London-based Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings[2] and the occasion was the rather gentle rebuke that the society had levelled at the Government of India and its archaeological department for not adhering to the principles of preservation of monuments that the society had been campaigning for in Britain and Europe since it was founded in 1877. Furthermore, the SPAB reminded the Government of India of the lack of a code of practice for the preservation of ancient buildings in India. By 1923, when his *Conservation Manual* for India was published, John Marshall had made his peace with the society: in the preface to the manual he thanked it for its "friendly interest" and "numerous useful suggestions" and in the manual itself incorporated the main ideas of preservation that the society had been propagating in Britain and Europe since its inception (Marshall 1990, ii). What made John Marshall change his mind so dramatically about the society? And why did he react so strongly to it in the first place? Engaging with these questions will, I hope, help us to understand some of the fundamental problems that colonial archaeological preservation in India was confronted with.

The principles of preservation and monument making, as they are known in India today—that is, state-driven, bureaucratically controlled, and centralized—were introduced under British rule. Throughout the entire period of the rule of the East India Company from 1765 to 1858 little more than sporadic attempts were made by the company to preserve historical structures. These efforts were largely limited to the heartland of the former Mughal Empire in Delhi and Agra and, as recent research suggests, had much to do with the efforts of the company to legitimize its rule as the natural successor of the Mughal rulers of India (Etter 2011). The real impulse of a frenetic phase of state-driven conservation came with the appointment of George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, or Lord Curzon (1859–1925) to the office of Viceroy of India, which he held from 1899 to 1905. As has been adequately documented, Curzon not only had a deep interest in preserving India's architectural heritage, he saw this as the fundamental, divinely ordained duty of the colonial government and thus outlined a clear line of archaeological policy to be pursued by the state.[3] In addition to using India's pre-colonial, Mughal public buildings to stage elaborate imperial rituals of state power, and vigorously insisting on the employment of the so-called Indo-Saracenic building style in order to create the illusion of British rule in India as a natural and legitimate successor to Mughal rule,[4] he also radically restructured the department of archaeology. This last included a

[2] Henceforth referred to as SPAB.

[3] See, for example, the many speeches of Curzon on the subject, both in India and in Britain. Probably the most famous, and certainly most often quoted of these is the speech he gave to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1900, in which he rather grandly proclaimed that India's ancient, religious architecture was "a part of the heritage which Providence has committed to the custody of the ruling power." Lord Curzon, Speech before the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 7 February 1900 (Curzon 1906).

[4] On Curzon's attempts to use India's architectural heritage for staging imperial power (Metcalf 2002).

centralized department of archaeology and appointing a Director-General of Archaeology who would be responsible for this centralized policy and its implementation.[5] The man chosen for the position was a young scholar of the classics and archaeology, aged twenty five and with no previous experience of, or family history related to, India. Nevertheless, he was the personal choice of the viceroy, who wished to entrust the task of India's monument management to a scholar of the classics and European archaeology rather than a philologist and orientalist. That man, of course, was John Marshall.[6] Curzon also dramatically increased the government's expenditure on archaeology and succeeded in passing the Ancient Monument Preservation Act in 1904.[7]

Despite these measures, what remained unclear was the precise way in which preservation should be undertaken, which as late as the early twentieth century remained ad hoc and unregulated. Curzon's early response to the way in which the colonial state in India went about the task was unequivocal: "[...] there is neither principle nor unity in conservation or repair, while from time to time horrors are still committed that make the student shudder and turn grey" (Roy 1996). The appointment of John Marshall, with his experience of working in Crete, Turkey, and Greece, was expected to change all this. Marshall himself tried to define the task that the Director-General of Archaeology in India should undertake:

> the most important of his functions is to secure that the ancient monuments of the country are cared for, that they are not utilized for purposes which are inappropriate or unseemly, that repairs are executed when required, and that any restorations, which may be attempted, are conducted on artistic lines. (Chakrabarti 2001, 122)

But what were the principles of preservation that Curzon and Marshall were referring to? Curzon's choice of the terms "conservation or repair" is an unwitting reference to what was a central issue in the debate on preservation that had been going on in Britain and Europe for the better part of the nineteenth century, i.e. how were the material remains of the past to be presented to the present? Were they, with the help of modern technology, to be restored to their original form? Or should they be conserved in the state of decay or ruin that they were in, in order to preserve their historical authenticity? These were the questions that John Marshall sought to address in his *Conservation Manual* and in his dealings with the SPAB (Fig. 2).

Long before the manual was published, in 1906 John Marshall brought out a shorter and less ambitious version called *Conservation of Ancient Monuments:*

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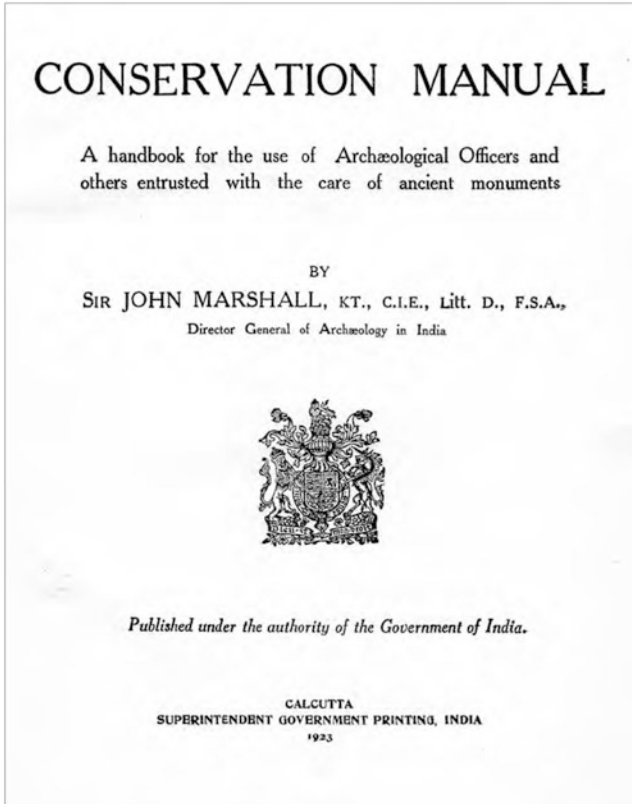
[5] For the restructuring of archaeology by Lord Curzon (Chakrabarti 2001; Roy 1996).

[6] On the background to Marshall's appointment (Lahiri 1997).

[7] For instance, in 1898–1999 the total expenditure of the Government of India and all provincial governments on archaeology was a total of £7,000 a year; by 1904 this had gone up to £37,000. IOL, IOR/L/PJ/6/674 File 803, President of the Council of the Governor General, or Viceroy Curzon, 18 March 1904, Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, Act VII, 1904, Judicial and Public Dept.



CONSERVATION MANUAL

A handbook for the use of Archæological Officers and others entrusted with the care of ancient monuments

BY

SIR JOHN MARSHALL, KT., C.I.E., Litt. D., F.S.A.,

Director General of Archæology in India

Published under the authority of the Government of India.

CALCUTTA
SUPERINTENDENT GOVERNMENT PRINTING, INDIA
1923

Fig. 2 Title page of the first edition of John Marshall's *Conservation Manual*, 1923. (Source: Marshall 1990, title page)

General Principles for the Guidance of Those Entrusted with the Custody of and Execution of Repairs to Ancient Monuments. In this pamphlet Marshall spelt out the precedence that preservation should take over restoration. "Officers charged with the execution of the work of repair," Marshall wrote, "should never forget that the reparation of any remnant of ancient architecture, however humble, is a work to be entered upon with totally different feelings from a new work or from the repairs of a modern building. Although there are many ancient buildings, whose state of disrepair suggests at first sight a renewal, it should never be forgotten that their historical value is gone when their authenticity is destroyed, and that our first duty is not to renew them but to preserve them" (Marshall 1906, 3–4).

It is fairly evident from these remarks that the principles of preservation of ancient structures that Marshall was articulating stemmed from a philosophy of preservation and heritage management that had become dominant in Victorian

Britain and large parts of Western Europe by the late nineteenth century.[8] With the growing influence of historicism in art and architecture in Britain and Europe from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, severe criticism came to be directed at the often arbitrary reconstruction of architectural styles of the past that fell under the banner of restoration. Led by influential intellectuals and thinkers such as John Ruskin and William Morris the anti-restoration movement came to champion the historical specificity of the production of a work of art or an ancient building. In his classic work on architectural conservation, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin defined the seven guiding principles of architecture, emphasizing the innate historical worth and importance of historical buildings as a document of human history. Building on this Ruskin argued that any restoration or reconstruction of an old building, however faithfully executed, was still tantamount to its destruction: "Do not let us deceive ourselves in this important matter; it is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture" (Ruskin 1989, 194).[9] By the 1860s Ruskin's ideas had developed into a full-fledged, influential anti-restoration movement that emphatically promoted the conservation of ancient buildings in order to retain their historical character and their value as material traces of the past, which was essential for the study of human achievement in the past. While not unchallenged, the conservation movement began to exercise increasing influence on prominent architectural and antiquarian bodies of Victorian England, such as the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). In 1877 at William Morris's initiative the movement got its own learned society, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, also known as the Anti-Scrape Society. The SPAB was rooted in the Arts and Crafts movement, and came to stand for a particular notion of aesthetics which held that the value of historical buildings lay in their age, in the continuity of material over time, and that the aesthetics of old structures was to be found in their age.[10] In the manifesto of the SPAB, written by William Morris, he made a plea to the architects of the day who were wedded to the principle of restoration:

> [. . .] we pray them to remember how much is gone of the religion, thought, and manners of time past, never, by almost universal consent, to be restored; and to consider whether it be possible to restore those buildings, the living spirit of which, it cannot be too often repeated, was an inseparable part of that religion and thought, and those past manners (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings 1877).

Against the prevailing trends of Gothic Revival and energetic church restoration undertaken, especially by the parishes and defended by restoration architects such as George Gilbert Scott as befitting places of worship in the mid-nineteenth century,

[8] For a recent study of how such ideas established themselves in Britain and Western Europe (Swenson 2007).

[9] For a discussion of Ruskin and architectural conservation (Jokilehto 2009, 174–182).

[10] For an account of the beginnings of the SPAB and William Morris' role in its foundation and early years (Miele 2005).

younger architects, antiquarians, and preservationists, usually members of the SPAB, began to militantly assert that the worth of old buildings and structures lay in their age and beauty. Some architects, such as John James Stevenson emphasized that an important purpose for engaging with old buildings was antiquarian research and that churches, for example, were merely records of history.[11] So steady was the growth in influence of the preservation movement that by the end of the nineteenth century opposition to restoration or any attempt to 'de-historicize' ancient buildings had become the most prevailing trend in thinking about built heritage.

The Colonial Setting of a Victorian Debate

What did these developments in Britain have to do with the context of colonial India, with John Marshall and his *Conservation Manual*? Starting from the Romantic nostalgia for ruins in Europe after the French Revolution to the passionate attempts of the SPAB in Victorian Britain to preserve, rather than restore, ancient structures, the preservation movement, as we have seen had a very European history. It was rooted in the specific cultural concerns of nineteenth-century Europe regarding modernity and history, the relationship between past and present, and the consequent relationship between cultures and their monuments and ruins.[12] The interest of British artists, scholars, and statesmen in colonial India—beginning with the rule of the East India Company—and in India's ancient architectural structures and ruins was not unaffected by these cultural currents. The prodigious works of art depicting architectural ruins from the early days of British rule are indicative of the way in which Indian landscapes were being drawn into the contemporary Romantic notions of the picturesque,[13] which consisted of the artistic fascination for ruins as the symbol of the 'pastness' of the past and the construction of nostalgia for a past that was lost to the present.[14] The landscapes of William Hodges or the uncle and nephew team of Thomas and William Daniell are evidence of this fascination. Yet, as scholars such as David Arnold and Michael S. Dodson have pointed out, the context of colonial rule imbued these notions of the picturesque in relation to India with another, more sombre, meaning (Dodson 2010). Landscapes of ruins and

[11] One can get an idea of the defining of positions amongst the architects of the time in an essay written not many years after Reginald W. J. Davies had settled the issue. The essay was entitled "The preservation of ancient monuments" and was awarded the RIBA Silver Medal for an Essay in 1913 (Davies 1913).

[12] Historians such as Peter Fritzsche and David Lowenthal have very skilfully conceptualized the renegotiating of the relationship between past and present in European culture after the French Revolution (Fritzsche 2004; Lowenthal 1985).

[13] Editor's note: Whereas Sengupta's essay analyses a prescriptive colonial text in from of a manual to transform (translate) Indian sites into heritage sites under colonial rule, the contribution of Weiler in this volume discusses the 'archaeologizing' transformation (translation) of the same sites into 'picturesque texts' through the medium of photography.

[14] For an analysis of British artists in India and the picturesque (Tillotson 2000, esp. 37–57).

ruination could, in the colonial context, also serve as a metaphor of general decline and death, and thus serve as justification for colonial rule as the facilitator of progress in India (Arnold 2005, 74–80).

> [. . .] When transferred to a nascent colonial setting, the aesthetic of the picturesque—and most especially the representation of architectural ruination—can arguably also be interpreted as a call for British interventionism and as a defense (sic) of colonial governance through a pictorial invocation of *terra nullius* or perhaps Asian civilizational degeneration. (Dodson 2011, 128)

Thus, historicism and the picturesque could serve as an effective tool for the justification of colonial rule in India. Out of this emerged an authority over India's fate, and indeed its past, that the colonial state and its various officials vested in themselves. Even academic histories of Indian architecture, such as the study by James Fergusson from the mid-1840s to the 1870s, reveal the responsibility that colonial scholars and officials felt to document a history and tradition threatened by decay and extinction.[15] Finally, as is well known, such an understanding of India's past could be used discursively to argue, as the Viceroy Lord Curzon did in his public speech of 1900, that it was the divine dispensation of colonial rule to assume custodianship of India's past and its architectural heritage.

Even a brief glance at the instructions and the philosophy of preservation spelt out in the manual written by John Marshall for India reveals the close attention that Marshall had been paying to the discussions on the subject in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. In their repeated reference to conservation, repair, and restoration, India's Viceroy Lord Curzon and its Director-General of Archaeology, John Marshall—both of whom trained in the classics and were well acquainted with archaeological and preservation work in Europe—were addressing a debate that had been central to thinking on heritage and preservation in Europe since the late eighteenth century. Indeed, the highest officials of India's archaeological department, certainly from the late 1890s onwards, were made aware of these debates in Europe: the files of the archaeological department, kept in the Archaeological Survey of India in New Delhi today, reveal copies of printed and commented extracts from *The Care of Ancient Monuments,* one of the most influential tracts on conservation in early twentieth-century Britain written by the renowned proponent of preservation and state intervention in the management of built heritage, G. Baldwin Brown, professor of art at Edinburgh University. These extracts, designed to serve as guidelines for conservation, were printed and distributed to the officers of the archaeological department as early as 1905—the very year of its publication. The first lines of the work betray its historicist agenda, which forms the basis of an invocation of what we can instantly recognize as modern-day practices of monument making:

> The subject of this book is the Care of Ancient Monuments, and the term 'monument' embraces all old buildings and other memorials of bygone days. These are the heirlooms from the past and appeal to the piety and patriotism of the present. (Brown 1905, 3)

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[15] For a more in-depth discussion on James Fergusson's work (Juneja 2001).

Thus, there seems to be enough evidence to indicate that John Marshall was in fundamental agreement with the SPAB on the philosophy and principles of preservation. Why then did he react so angrily to the society's note to the Government of India in 1906, referred to at the beginning of this paper? The occasion was the SPAB's response to the way in which the care of ancient monuments in India was conducted in colonial India. Responding to the first printed report of the ASI on the care of monuments in 1902–1903, the society pointed out what appeared to be some glaring contradictions in the policy of the colonial Government of India. With reference to specific projects for the care of historic buildings that the colonial state had undertaken the society pointed out that, while on one hand the Archaeological Survey's efforts to adhere to the principles of conservation advocated by the society were laudable, they were lacking in consistency and, in practice, the survey was not averse to resorting to restoration. In the case of the throne of the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan at Delhi, for instance, the survey expressed an eagerness to acquire from Europe the stones that were missing from the throne and to have the panels behind it executed in Florence; likewise, a temple had, by the survey's own admission, been restored with the help of a painting by Daniell. Such attempts, declared SPAB, were an "unnecessary falsification of history" (SPAB 1906)[16] (Fig. 3).

In a final rebuke the society pointed out the need for a code of "clear and definite instructions regarding works of repair and preservation" and for "clearest and most rigid instructions on this point" (SPAB 1906).[17]

John Marshall's response to this, as we have seen, was verging on irate. Although Marshall was known to be impatient and occasionally highhanded,[18] he was not merely irritated at being put in his place, as it were, by the one of the most influential bodies of the preservation movement in Victorian Britain. The reasons for his irritation lay with Marshall's understanding of the specific conditions in India, conditions that were less related to natural factors such as climate (although this too played a part), than to the political considerations and moral dispensation behind colonial rule. In his response to the comments of the SPAB, addressed to Lord Minto, the new Viceroy of India, Marshall wrote:

> [...] there are very essential differences between Saracenic monuments on the one hand, and Buddhist, Jain and Hindu on the other, and these differences must inevitably reflect themselves in the character of the repairs executed. [...] restoration has been confined almost entirely to Saracenic structures, and the policy of restoring these monuments has been definitely and deliberately accepted by the Govt for many years past. [...] it appears to me that the Society must be totally ignorant of the conditions affecting monuments of India, and that it has failed to comprehend the real meaning of its petition (John Marshall, Director General of Indian Archaeology to Duncan Smith, Secretary to the Viceroy, 28.12.1906. ASI, Archaeology File no. 202, 1906).

[16] Letter from Thackeray Turner, Secretary to the SPAB, 12 October 1906. ASI, Archaeology File no. 202, 1906.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Nayanjot Lahiri has addressed Marshall's impatience with colleagues and staff and his difficulties in dealing with them (Lahiri 2000, esp. 101–104).

PLATE XI.

GROUTING MACHINE AT WORK (SEE PARA. 147).

Photo.-engraved & printed at the Offices of the Survey of India, Calcutta, 1922.

Fig. 3 *Men at work:* This picture, taken from Marshall's *Conservation Manual*, entitled *Grouting Machine at Work* indicates how closely Marshall followed the techniques of building construction in Britain, from Marshall's *Conservation Manual* 1923 (Source: Marshall 1990, plate XI)

Marshall then went on to refer to the fabled restoration of the Taj Mahal, pointing out the difference that restoration—and not protection—had made to the monument. Finally, he concluded with a rather curious argument:

> These imperial buildings of the Mughals are valuable to India not merely as antiquarian relics. They are an important asset in the education of the people, and judicious restoration has greatly increased their value in this respect. They are, moreover, a national heritage, which the Indian people have a right to expect will be preserved to posterity as something more than mere interesting ruins. The Taj Mahal is still the resting place of the great Emperor and Empress for whom it was erected, and as such it deserves to be maintained in all its original splendour; while the palaces and pavilions of the Mughals [...] still serve on occasion as the noblest and most imperial settings for the highest functions of the State (John Marshall, Director General of Indian Archaeology to Duncan Smith, Secretary to the Viceroy, 28.12.1906. ASI, Archaeology File no. 202, 1906) (Fig. 4).

It is difficult not to understand such statements as the rhetoric of imperial rule and the language is unmistakeably that of the discourses of colonial power in India. Marshall's words resonate with notions of guardianship entrusted to the colonial power of India, thus echoing the language used by Curzon to describe his

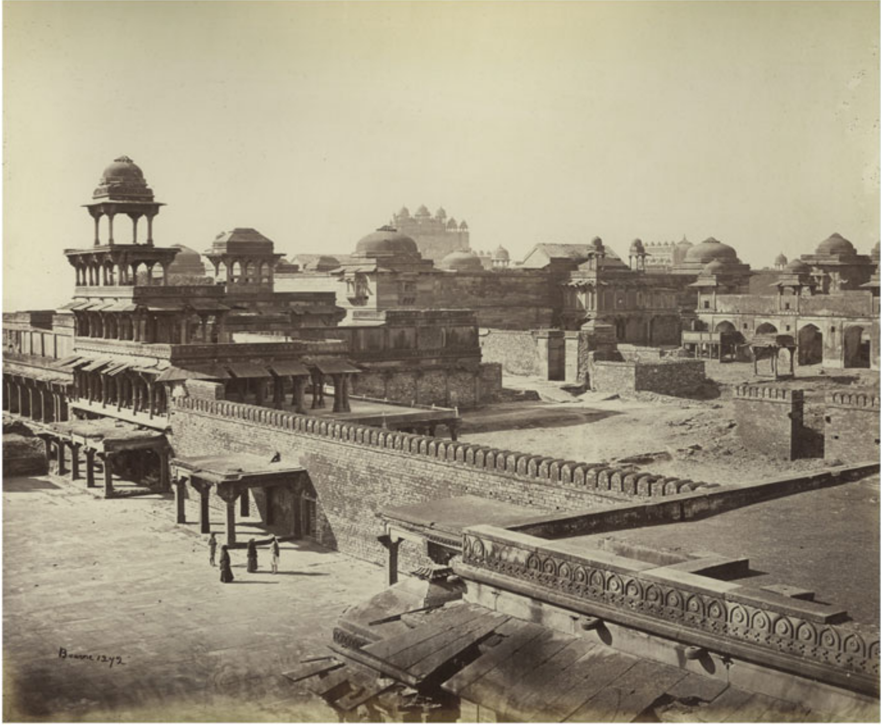

Fig. 4 Fatehpur Sikri in the 1860s. Mughal monuments provided the rationale for departing from preservation norms established in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century. Photograph taken by Samuel Bourne of the famous photographic studio Bourne & Shepherd in colonial India. (RIBA Library Photographs Collection)

government's duty to preserve and maintain India's architectural heritage. The ready use of religious-sectarian categories to define and classify architectural typologies is as evident as in Curzon's own programmatic speeches on the role of the colonial state in preserving India's monuments. Furthermore, the significance of Marshall's reference to Mughal structures in the context of the debate on preservation was no coincidence: since the early years of company rule, much attention had been paid to the repair of Mughal structures; research has shown that this was a systematic policy, thus indicating that colonial rule was always aware of the symbolic authority of Mughal rule and that from the early days of company rule particular importance had been attached to the upkeep of Mughal structures. Scholars such as Anne-Julie Etter have explained this as a conscious choice on the part of early colonial administrators, driven by the political imperative to be seen as both the allies as well as the natural successors of the Mughal rulers of India (Etter 2011).

Universal Heritage, Local Rules

However, imperial rhetoric and concerns about legitimation of rule alone are not adequate to understand the full significance of Marshall's words. In the context of the preservation of historical monuments Marshall was using the case of India to engage with the universalist and historicist claims of dominant metropolitan and European discourses on preservation. He was arguing in favour of exceptions to the stringent rules that the SPAB was trying to spell out for the protection of ancient buildings, and in doing so, was calling into question the historicist claims of built heritage that the SPAB was trying to universalize. By holding up the example of Mughal structures, for example, as something that was much more than merely 'antiquarian relics' or 'interesting ruins' and in fact replete with political and cultural meaning that was rooted in the present, Marshall was precisely challenging the notion of time, of the clear line between the (living) present and (dead) past that characterized European 'modernist' thinking on monuments and ruins, and which the preservation movement and the SPAB had championed in Britain. Thus, Mughal structures, although belonging to a time before British rule in India, were still part of the recent cultural memory of India and thus a part of India's living present. This position was not unrelated to the guardianship role that colonial rule ascribed to itself in the late nineteenth century (i.e. the British as guardians of India's past) and served to legitimize colonial rule. Nevertheless, in the larger context of a debate on preservation and heritage that was trying to formulate universal laws and practice, Marshall was using the specificity of the local and the regional as a counter-argument to the universalist claims of the SPAB.[19] Therefore, in terms of the care of Mughal structures, as Marshall seems to have convincingly explained to Christiana Herringham, the noted Edwardian art copyist and member of SPAB who visited India in 1907, it was not only possible to successfully undertake restoration without compromising authenticity or historicity, it was in fact desirable—and possible—since the building tradition of the artisans of Mughal buildings continued to survive unbroken under British rule. Muslim artisans in contemporary India, he appears to have explained, were proof of this living tradition, as they continued to employ the same building techniques used by their forebears in the heyday of the Mughal Empire. By the time she returned to England, Christiana Herringham was fully convinced by Marshall's argument. In her report on her trip to India, which she sent to the SPAB, she wrote the following:

> The principles that actuate Mr. Marshall and his staff are to save all they can—but to introduce no imitative work in all that regards ancient work belonging to any cult or nationality, but the buildings of the Muslims of the Mogul Empire are sometimes treated differently. There has been no break in the traditions—the old workshops go on, and where pernicious European influence has not penetrated, native building is not much different

[19] Editor's note: For a theoretical discussion of the local, global, and universalist, see this volume's introduction.

Fig. 5 Restoration or conservation? Group of plaster cast moulders at work at the Qutb Minar and Quwwatu'l-Islam mosque complex, 1872. Photograph taken by Charles Shepherd of Bourne & Shepherd. (RIBA Library Photographs Collection)

> now—and these buildings [...] can be repaired as their original builders would have repaired them [...] (Extract from letter of Christiana Herringham to SPAB. *Annual Report of the SPAB*, 1907) (Fig. 5).

It is precisely this kind of thinking that was behind Marshall's rejoinder to the SPAB's criticism a year earlier where he stated that India lacked a code of practice for the protection of ancient monuments. He argued that it was difficult, if not impossible, to frame a single, coherent set of rules and practice for the conservation of ancient structures in India. He wrote to the society:

> In dealing with Indian monuments there are many political, religious and other considerations to be taken into account which may not be appreciated by those unfamiliar with the local conditions prevailing in this country [...] these considerations make it impossible to lay down any such general rule as your Society advocates. [...] The principles enunciated in this pamphlet will be found, it is believed, to be in general accord with those of your Society, so far as the latter are compatible with the local conditions prevailing in India (John Marshall to Thackeray Turner, Secretary of SPAB, 22 May 1907 (hand-written draft). ASI, Archaeology File no. 202, 1906).

In general, in the framing of rules governing preservation of monuments Marshall was very aware of what he described as "political, religious and traditional considerations and [...] a variety of local conditions which [...] render it impossible

to lay down any general rule which shall be applicable to all cases." (John Marshall to Lord Minto, 31 May 1907. SPAB, File on *India*). In his correspondence with the SPAB he consistently made a point of emphasizing the difficulty of reducing specific local factors to general rules. Having convinced the society of the need for restoration under specific circumstances in India, for example, Marshall was unwilling to commit this to writing in his conservation principles of 1906, saying:

> it seemed to me that the question was too complex [...] Indeed, I feel diffident about attempting to lay down any definite principles at all in such a delicate and difficult matter, since so much depends upon the circumstances in each individual case, and even when these are most favourable, the greatest circumspection is necessary before embarking on restoration (John Marshall to Thackery Turner, Secretary SPAB, 1 August 1907. SPAB, File on *India*).

Writing a code of conservation practice for ancient monuments in colonial India was fraught with the tensions of adhering to the broad, general principles of the protection of built heritage that by the early years of the twentieth century had assumed a transnational character in Europe. These were obviously introduced to India by the officials of the colonial state who laid down the rules of archaeological practice and the need to accommodate local practice and custom. This is, of course, an obvious thing to say about colonial systems everywhere; however, what is particularly interesting about the debate on monument protection between John Marshall and the SPAB in the early years of the twentieth century is the discursive employment of the local by the colonial state to engage with a metropolitan/European/global debate on the meaning and making of monuments. The notion of a living past was thus re-introduced into the debate on heritage and monuments by showing the importance of restoration for structures that were not mere relics from the past, but incorporated everyday practices of the present.

Finally, beyond the discursive significance of the arguments John Marshall was making, the debate also provides an insight into a fundamental conflict that was implicit in the colonial management of India's architectural heritage. Unlike the heritage movement in contemporary Britain and Europe, the care and management of historical sites, buildings, and monuments were in the hands of a bureaucracy that saw in its active role as manager of India's past its dispensation to rule. Standards of historical aesthetics were defined and framed by the very same bureaucracy. Armed with vast armies of staff and centralized printed codes of practice, the archaeological department, rather than being committed to cultural indicatives designed to spread awareness of heritage within indigenous communities, let alone being responsive to traditional approaches to architectural relics from the past in India, often found its authority on historic preservation challenged by the situation on the ground. Once aware of the vast sums of money that were potentially available for the preservation of ancient buildings, indigenous communities—often religious trusts and endowments—began to make full use of historicist and heritage arguments in order to avail themselves of government grants, and then sought to dictate the terms of architectural preservation by

obstructing the attempts of the colonial state to inspect, supervise, and control such work.[20] Thus, even a commitment to the local was ultimately a display of the inability of centralized colonial government to effectively control the practice of heritage management in colonial India. Ironically, it was precisely this kind of state control of heritage that preservationist lobbies in late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain, such as the SPAB and G. Baldwin Brown were clamouring for. In the many arguments they put forward to the government and campaigned publicly for, the efforts of the colonial government in India were held up as an example of responsible government that was not averse to discharging its duty to save the historical architecture of the colony.

Marshall's conservation guidelines thus reveal the tension implicit in combining, on one hand, a specific notion of preserving ancient buildings in their state of decay in order to preserve their 'historic' character, and on the other, an energetic, state-driven policy that only a colonial state could apply to ensure that this was done properly. In the final version of the *Conservation Manual*, which appeared in 1923, the attempt to reconcile these conflicting compulsions is clearly evident. As in the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, which had been passed in 1904, the *Conservation Manual* made a distinction between "dead" and "living" monuments.[21] The former category of structures were to be historicized, i.e. their "authenticity" maintained ("it should never be forgotten that their historical value is gone when their authenticity is destroyed") and the "first duty" of archaeology was "not to renew them but to preserve them" (Marshall 1990, paragraph 25, 26). "Living" monuments (defined as monuments still in use for the purpose for which they were originally designed, mostly though not entirely religious structures) on the other hand could be restored "to a greater extent than would be desirable on purely archaeological grounds" (Marshall 1990, paragraph 25, 26), provided the reasons for opting for this course were specified. Read as a colonial text, the manual seems to stand for a strict ordering of monument-making practices in colonial India, regulating every aspect of the protection of ancient buildings. Seen in the context of a wider debate on the subject, a debate that spanned Britain, Europe, and Europe's colonies, the manual and its author stand for an attempt to bring the particular back into the bigger picture. But in both contexts, the manual represents the attempts of a centralized state to regulate the practice of monumental preservation; however, the reality on the ground often turned out to be a sobering experience.

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[20] I have addressed this problem in my work (Sengupta 2009, 2013, also Dodson 2011).

[21] Editor's note: This colonial distinction between 'dead' and 'living' monuments is now renegotiated under the term 'living heritage' in modern conservation sciences (compare Warrack in this volume) as well as in anthropological research (compare Luco and Guillou in this volume). In specific circumstances, *both* criteria may apply to one and the same site (Angkor Wat, see Warrack), a whole ensemble (Angkor Park, see Luco), or a cultural landscape (sacred sites spotted over an 'ordinary' landscape, see Guillou).

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