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There are many reasons why a volume providing a comparative global framework is valuable and timely. The world is witnessing a fundamental shift in geopolitical power and relations. The twenty-first century is now commonly referred to as the 'Asian century', and the rapid modernization of China and India and the growth of their economies are already challenging the economic dominance that the United States has enjoyed for the last hundred years. Japan may have declined in relative terms, but its economy remains one of the global leaders. The so-called Asian Tigers—Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong—continue to prosper, and Vietnam has enjoyed unprecedented growth since the mid-1990s. Brazil has emerged as an economic powerhouse in South America, while Turkey’s economic influence now spreads across Central Asia, the Middle East and southeastern Europe; and there is rising wealth in parts of Africa, with that continent's enormous mineral potential starting to be tapped. Meanwhile, the European Union faces financial crisis, the full social and political consequences of which are yet to be seen.

This global shift will eventually be fully reflected in the field of cultural heritage conservation, as in other forms of cultural production. Consequently, we need to know more about the heritage places, site management projects and conservation approaches belonging to the world outside Europe and North America. Zeynep Aygen is to be commended for bringing into focus in this important book the cultural heritage of societies that should have been better represented in the international heritage discourse. Many would argue that the Western world—essentially Europe and North America—has dominated the cultural heritage field for too long.

This is seen most clearly in the World Heritage system, UNESCO's flagship program created under the 1972 World Heritage Convention, where the bias is distinctly Eurocentric. The system's headquarters are located in Paris (UNESCO World Heritage Centre), and the advisory bodies named in the convention are situated in Gland, Switzerland (IUCN; International Union for the Preservation of Nature), Paris (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) and Rome (ICCROM; International Centre for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property). Moreover the system's
centrepiece, the World Heritage List, when it was created in the late 1970s soon began to lean towards Europe. Nearly two-thirds of the 216 Cultural Places inscribed in the 1996–2000 period were European. The credibility of the List as a representation of the world’s cultural heritage was at risk.

The World Heritage Committee, aware of this problem, set in training in the 1990s a number of changes designed to reduce the imbalance by extending the World Heritage system to regions, countries, cultural groups (including minorities) and cultural features not well represented on the List. These included the widening of the inscription criteria by introducing the concept of Cultural Landscapes in 1992 and the establishment of a Global Strategy in 1994 to encourage countries that had not already done so to join UNESCO and for more Member States to ratify and become States Parties to the World Heritage Convention and then to begin submitting applications for World Heritage listing. In parallel with these moves, and under pressure from non-Western countries, most notably Japan, the need for new intellectual approaches to understanding and conserving heritage places was also recognized. An experts’ meeting was held in Japan in 1994 which produced the important Nara Document on Authenticity. This statement asserted that societies view heritage through their own cultural lens and should be allowed to protect their heritage in a way that is appropriate in their specific cultural context. This has had enormous implications not only for conservation practice related to heritage places but also extends into the practices applied in museums and galleries, with the International Council on Museums supporting different societies’ right to develop their museums in their own ways rather than following a European approach.

A further major shift away from what had become the conventional way of understanding heritage came with the greater emphasis placed on intangible cultural heritage, again a development promoted strongly by Japan, including through Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO’s Director-General from 1999 to 2009. This shift underlay the increased interest in the ‘associative’ values of cultural landscapes and spiritual places within the World Heritage system. It also inspired the development of UNESCO’s Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2000 and the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in 2003 with its new system of committees and inscription and monitoring processes. Again, these changes at the global level have flowed through into heritage practice at the national and local levels.

Zeynep Aygen outlines the emergence of new heritage approaches and projects in the non-Western world. Her discussion is rich, highlighting conservation ideas, practices and projects that readers in what she refers to as the ‘core’—Europe, North America, Japan and Australia—will find new and sometimes challenging. Each of her detailed chapters ends with a case file that both sharpens the chapter’s focus and allows the main points to be summarised. Her discussion of the modernizing impact of colonialism on the non-European world in Chapter 4, for instance, ends with a fascinating case file on East Africa and the Gulf States.