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## THE RELEVANCE OF THE VENICE CHARTER TODAY

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**ABSTRACT:** The intention is to verify how current the *Venice Charter* is and how valid it still is today. The main criticism was that the Charter was an expression of a Eurocentric mentality or a Western-only vision. But, bearing in mind all the signatories of that document, we instead see how it was the fruit of varied experiences and expressions from various parts of the world.

**KEY WORDS:** Venice Charter, Eurocentrism, universal Validity

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## The universal importance of the Charter of Venice

The Venice Charter, far from being the result of a partial or Eurocentric view, is still wholly valid today and represents a shared worldwide viewpoint.

One of the strongest criticisms levelled at the Charter was that it was the product of an almost exclusively European conservation approach, both in regards to authenticity and the principles of architectural and archaeological restoration. Another, was that it did not address the issues of landscape and environmental protection.

One only needs to scroll through the names of the non-European signatories of this 1964 international document to realize this is not the case.

Let us look at the non-European signatories of the Charter.

The Latin Americans included: Victor Pimentel Gurmendi from Peru, Carlos Flores Marini from Mexico, and Deoclecio Redig de Campos (who was born in Brazil but moved to Europe as a young child). Other non-Europeans present were, Hiroshi Daifuku (of Japanese descent) and Slimane Mustapha Zbiss from Tunisia.

All of them made important contributions, drawing on the experience gained in their countries of origin.

Victor Pimentel Gurmendi played a key role in the conservation and preservation of historic centres in Peru<sup>1</sup>. He regularly criticized the use of restoration for tourism and defined as aberrations the stylistic renovations and rebuilding carried out under that guise<sup>2</sup>. On the contrary, he proposed that the recovery of all cultural values should be in respect of their authenticity<sup>3</sup>. His legacy was taken up by José Correa<sup>4</sup>, active mainly in Lima<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Pimentel Gurmendi V. (1966). La restauración de monumentos en el Peru, in *Patrimonio Cultural, Cultural Property*, 1, Preservación de Monumentos, Preservation of Monuments (pp. 49-52). Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> Pimentel Gurmendi V. (1973). Regeneración urbana y patrimonio monumental. *Boletín del Centro de Investigaciones Históricas y Estéticas* (pp. 91-97). Caracas.

<sup>3</sup> Bengolea del Carpio J. L. (2015). *Víctor Pimentel Gurmendi y el patrimonio monumental. Textos escogidos*. Lima: Editorial Universitaria.

<sup>4</sup> Correa Orbegoso J. (1978). *De la arqueología a la obra contemporánea*. Oiga, 32, Septiembre 1978 (pp. 16-18).

<sup>5</sup> Correa Orbegoso J., Hayakawa Casas C. (2011). La formación en Restauración de Monumentos Arquitectónicos en la Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería. *Ciudad & Arquitectura*, 4 (2).



Fig. 1, 2 The Peruvian signatory of the Charter of Venice, Victor Pimentel Gurmendi, in his study, and Peruvian architect José Correa Orbegoso, who collected the legacy of Victor Pimentel Gurmendi, in Lima. (Public domain Photo)

Carlos Flores Marini was only 26 when he attended the conference<sup>6</sup> as delegate of the art historian Francisco de la Maza, whom he had collaborated with on various restoration projects. He was interested in ancient-new relations within an historical setting, and gave a paper in Venice on the modern interventions at the pre-Hispanic site of Tlatelolco in Mexico City<sup>7</sup>.



Fig. 3, 4 The Mexican signatory of the Venice Charter, Carlos Flores Marini, wearing a white shirt, during the Icomos Congress in Campeche in October 1994, and Carlos Flores Marini (centre) with Nemesio Maisterra and Silvia Segarra Lagunes, both from the Mexican Icomos, in the archaeological area of Kalakmul, in October 1994. (Archive Photo by Silvia Segarra Lagunes)

He was chosen as a signatory, instead of Ruth Rivera Marín de Coronel (daughter of Diego Rivera) who was also present, because he was head of the Colonial Monuments Directorate of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, while she represented the Instituto de Bellas Artes which had little to do with architecture<sup>8</sup>. Thanks to his Venetian experience, refined over

<sup>6</sup> Flores Marini C. (2005). *Souvenir de la Charte de Venise*, [in:] E. Kovács (Ed.). *The Venice Charter: 1964-2004-2044? The fortieth anniversary (Hungary, May 22-27, 2004)* (pp. 27-39). Hungarian National Committee of ICOMOS.

<sup>7</sup> Flores Marini C. (1971). The "Plaza de las tres Culturas"; [in:] *Il Monumento per l'Uomo, Atti del II Congresso Internazionale del Restauro, Venezia 25-31 maggio 1964* (pp. 914-916). Padova: Marsilio.

<sup>8</sup> Rivera Marín de Coronel R. (1971). The protection of the artistic and cultural patrimony in México, [in:] *Il Monumento per l'Uomo, Atti del II Congresso Internazionale del Restauro, Venezia 25-31 maggio 1964* (pp. 667-668). Padova: Marsilio.

the years, he became chairman of the Mexican Committee of ICOMOS on several occasions, and was a member of Carimos, where he played a primary role in the protection of cultural heritage.

Among the Mexicans was Salvador Aceves, a very young (25 years old), interested in contemporary architecture, who was personally invited by Piero Gazzola.

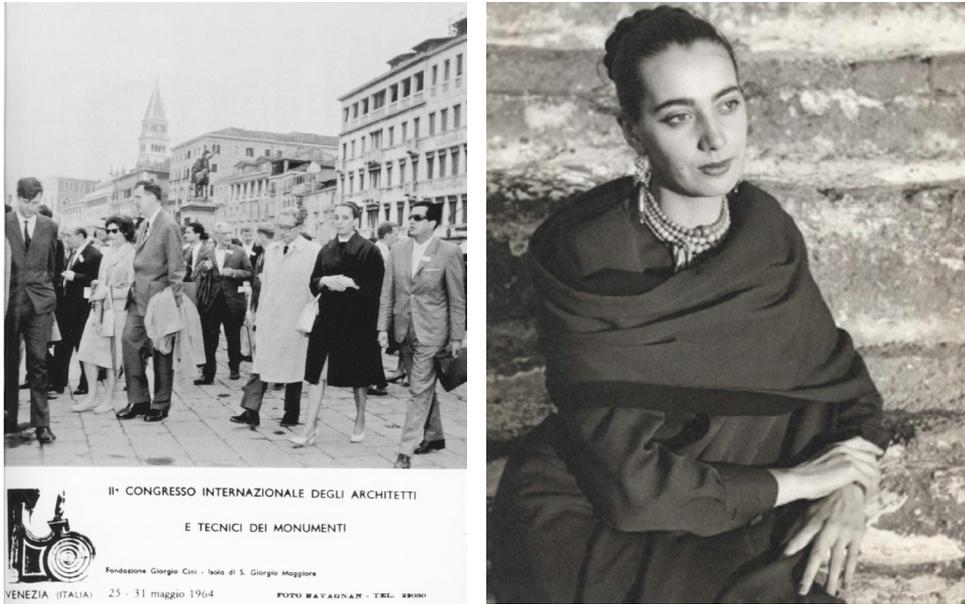


Fig. 5, 6 Roberto Pane, Ruth Rivera Marín de Coronel and Carlos Flores Marini (the last three on the right) in Venice for the Second International Congress of Architects in May 1964 (Archive Photo by Icomos México, Photo Mavagan, 1964), and an Image of Ruth Rivera Marín de Coronel (courtesy of Archive Martín Yáñez Molina, Ciudad de México)

Dioclecio Redig de Campos, son of a diplomat, was born in Belém do Pará (Brazil) on March 6, 1905. Following his father's diplomatic appointments, he left Brazil at the age of five, first moving to Berlin (Germany) where he began his schooling, then to Bern (Switzerland). In 1918 his father was appointed commercial attaché to the Brazilian Embassy in Rome. Deoclecio Redig de Campos followed him, continuing his studies at the Chateaubriand Lycée, after which he graduated from the University of Rome in Letters, specializing in Art History under the guidance of Adolfo Venturi. In March 1971, as soon as he retired, Pope Paul VI appointed him Director General of the Vatican Museums, a position he held until 1978, when he became Director General Emeritus<sup>9</sup>. Although he left Brazil at a very young age, it is probable that his memories and family environment provided him with a cultural imprint of his Brazilian roots.

<sup>9</sup> Pietrangeli C. (1989). Membri dell'Istituto scamparsi: Deoclecio Redig de Campos. Studi Romani. *Rivista trimestrale dell'Istituto di Studi Romani* (37, 3) (pp. 344-346).

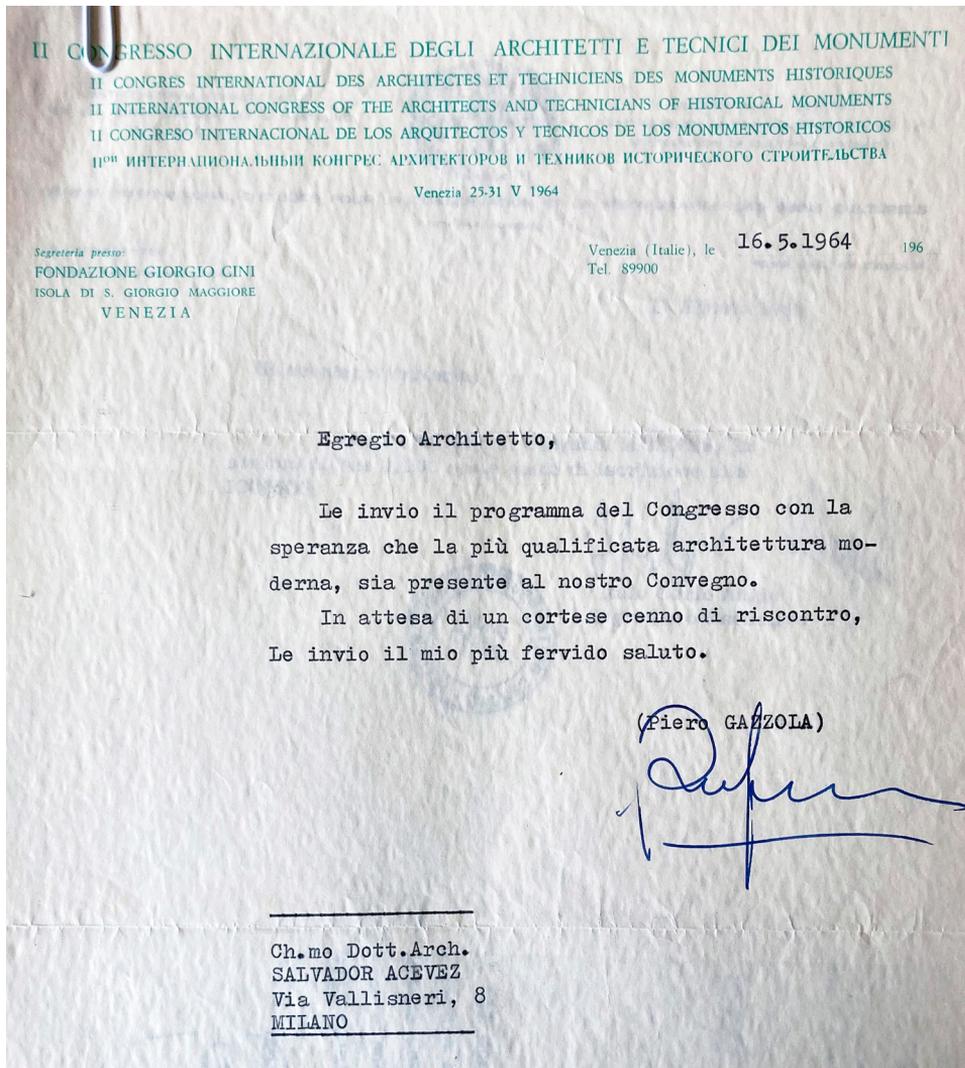


Fig. 7 Invitation letter from Piero Gazzola to Salvador Aceves García. (Archive Photo by Salvador Aceves García)

Hiroshi Daifuku attended the Venetian meeting as a representative of UNESCO. He was born in Honolulu, in the Hawaiian archipelago, but was of Japanese origin (on his father's side, while his mother was Hawaiian). From 1954 he was based in Paris, writing extensively on aspects of minor architecture, as well as on the preservation of wooden architecture in Japan<sup>10</sup>. At the time of the Venice Charter, he was also interested in experimental museums in Africa. His Oriental origins and family education provided him with a broad – three hundred and sixty degree - variety of cultural influences. During his time at UNESCO he worked closely with Harold James

<sup>10</sup> Daifuku H. (1983). Conservation of wooden cultural property Tokio and Saitama, [in:] *International Symposium on the conservation and restoration of cultural property, 1-6 November 1982*. Tokio.

Plenderleith, who was director of ICCROM at the time: the two held similar position and were in agreement with signing the Venice Charter<sup>11</sup>.

The Tunisian, Slimane Mustapha Zbiss, was particularly interested in minor African traditional architecture, with a clear anticipation of some of the themes that would be specific to the Venetian document. However, his most significant essay in this regard - *La Medina de Tunis* - would only be published a decade after the drafting of the Charter, while the year before the Venetian meeting he had published his study on Muslim monuments.

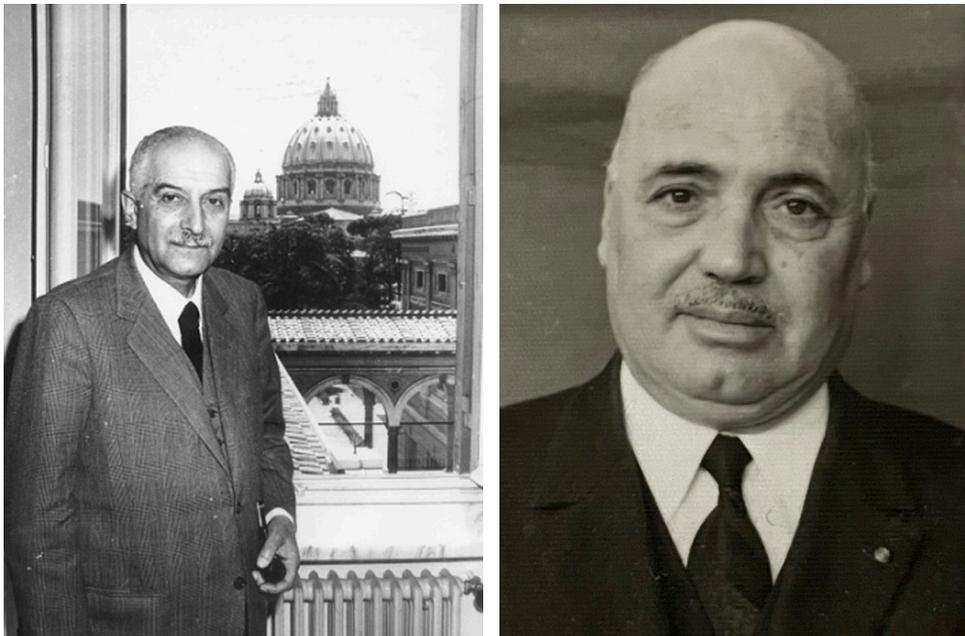


Fig. 8, 9 Dioclecio Redig de Campos and The Tunisian Slimane Mustapha Zbiss. (Public domain Photo and Archive Photo by Slimane Mustapha Zbiss Association)

Also participating from the U.S.A. (but without signature rights) were Charles W. Porter and Charles E. Peterson of the National Park Service, who argued a *sui generis* thesis in favour of massive reconstructions, such as that of the Stoa of Attalus, which was immediately rejected by Roberto Pane.

Undoubtedly, the themes and papers these participants presented in Venice contained a number of points that would be later strengthened, and give rise to a broader approach to the issues of authenticity and cultural identity. Such as: interest in the typologies of historic nuclei; attention to minor and rural architecture; the possibility of inserting modern constructions into historic settings; the study of building types made of wood or simple materials. All would find a greater inclusion from then on.

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<sup>11</sup> Daifuku H. (1967). *Report of mission to the US and to the México. Mission Report*. UNESCO.

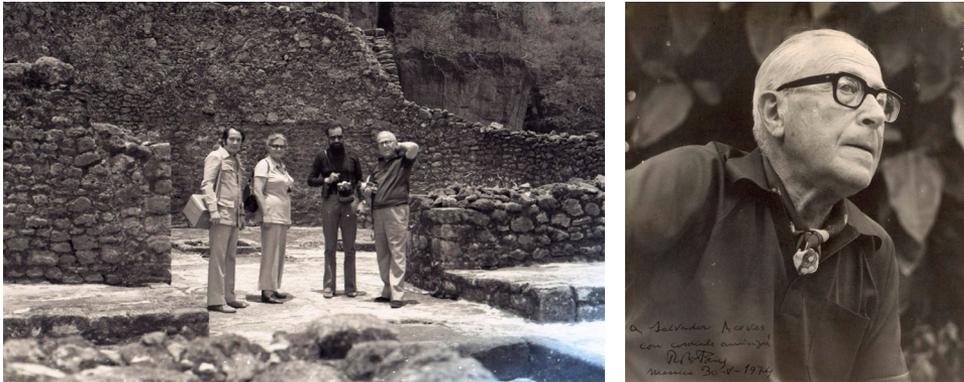


Fig. 10, 11 Javier Villalobos Jaramillo, Miriam Maroder and Roberto Pane with Salvador Aceves Garcia in Monte Alban, and Roberto Pane in the Garden of Gutierre Tibon. (Archive Photo by Salvador Aceves García)

It should be noted that the theme of authenticity is present from the preamble of the Charter, and is taken up again in Article 9, where it is applied as an adjective to the term "document," creating a relationship of value for any historical testimony.

### **The validity of the concepts of authenticity and identity present in the Charter**

Conveying authenticity, in its full richness, as expressed in the Charter's preamble below, means that although the concept of authenticity is unique and unitary, it can be applied in a variety of ways according to the cultural context, therefore not only as an exclusively European vision.

“People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity”.

Everything was there from the very beginning of the Charter's enactment.

The Burra Charter and the Nara Document, which would be drafted much later, do not add anything significant to what had already been stated in the Venetian document.

The Burra Charter, adopted by ICOMOS Australia on August 19, 1979, is based on the Venice Charter and the Resolution of the Fifth ICOMOS General Assembly held in Moscow in 1978. It provides some guidelines for the conservation and management of places of cultural interest, but it relies almost exclusively on the knowledge and experience of ICOMOS Australia members, and is therefore of limited value<sup>12</sup>.

The Nara Document drafted in November, 1994, in Japan, states in its preamble that it “is conceived in the spirit of the Charter of Venice, 1964, and extends it in response to the expanding scope of cultural heritage”<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Peters J. A. (1996). The Burra Charter at Work in Australia. *CRM Bulletin* (19,3) (pp. 49-51).

<sup>13</sup> Mairesse F., Peters R. F. (2019). *What is the Essence of Conservation: Materials for a Discussion. Papers from the Icom-Cc and Icofom Session at the 25th General Conference held in Kyoto, 4 September 2019*. Paris: ICOFOM.

## Conclusions

Significant today, is the possibility of further development in both the field of landscape with reference to rural sites in Article 1, and monumental and archaeological sites in Articles 14 and 15.

In fact, the former ICOMOS World President, Roberto Di Stefano, had proposed a review of the Charter in the early 1980s, and in particular an extension of Articles 1, 2, 14 and 15<sup>14</sup>. Di Stefano had proposed, for the article 1, this supplement 1: “This concepts [of monument] includes historic and traditional sites, groups of buildings, singly or together, constituting a human settlement in a rural or urban environment [...] as well as sites created by nature or nature and man together; sites whose the witness value – regardless of time of creation and relative transformation – is recognized from the archaeological, architectural, aesthetic, social or scientific point of view”<sup>15</sup>.

And for the article 14, this supplement: “The safeguard of these sites can only be ensured through their integration in social life to which it does bring the necessary presence of the past, as a factor of identity and culture. Particular attention must be paid to the respecting of rights acquired by the local population. The conservation and restoration of sites is only efficient and must only be conceived within the framework of economic and urban planning extending to the territory of which it is an integral and important part, giving it an exceptional and irreplaceable character”<sup>16</sup>.

But these suggestions did not materialize.

Certainly, at the time the Charter was enacted, the subject of landscape was still conceived in aesthetic-idealist terms, not in the dynamic way it is today. Now the possibility of transformation and integration between nature, natural landscapes, built environment and evolving human settlements is widely accepted.

But the fundamental concepts of an exemplary restoration intervention - not only rapidity, but also a respect for the surroundings, landscape and entire territory - were already present in the 1964 Venetian Document. As is well known they were later developed in a series of subsequent meetings, among which it will suffice to mention: the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage signed in Paris in 2003, the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, signed in Faro (Portugal) in 2005, which were judged by some as a kind of effort towards cultural internationalism.

As mentioned above, if one reads the Venice Charter carefully, the following fundamental concepts are already expressed: respect for tangible and intangible assets, (even oral, understood as a spiritual message of the past - see preamble); the balance between considerations of the cultural continuity, tradition, collective memory and aesthetics of the work, with that of its material characteristics; the need for an appropriate period of time - an 'historical distance' - to judge the cultural significance of a testimony to a tradition or civilization (Article 1).

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<sup>14</sup> Di Stefano R. (1981). *For a New Edition of the Venice Charter*. ICOMOS. Napoli: Arte Tipografica di A.R.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem (p. 43).

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem (pp. 51-53).

The hope is that the principles of the Venice Charter will continue with a greater openness to the issues of landscape and intangible assets, as well as those of identity and specificity of sites and their respective inhabitant. Special attention needs to be focused on globalization and homogenization. The risk linked to these forces is that they could lead to cultural suppression in countries, which through the distinction and the uniqueness of their architecture and art, create the specific nature of their cultural heritage.



Fig. 12 The participants in the drafting of the Venice Charter during the final session of the votes. Venice, Basilica Palladiana, Cini Foundation. From the left, Piero Gazzola, Carlos Flores Marini and Stanislaw Lorentz can be recognized. Archivio Piero Gazzola, Negrar (VR), Italy

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