

Conservation of Living Religious Heritage



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Papers from the ICCROM 2003 Forum
on Living Religious Heritage: conserving the sacred

EDITORS

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ISBN 92-9077-189-5

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International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

Via di San Michele, 13

00153

Rome, Italy

www.iccrom.org

Designed by Maxtudio, Rome

Printed by Ugo Quintily S.p.A.



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NICHOLAS STANLEY-PRICE

Director-General

ICCROM

Preface

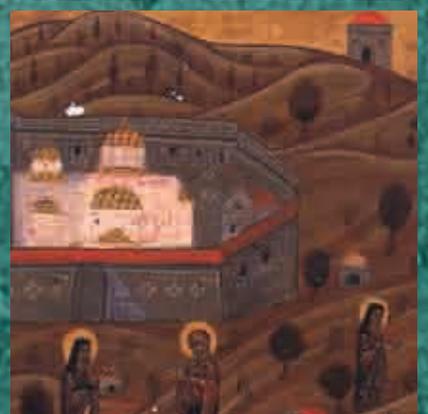
THE ICCROM FORUM IS DESIGNED to promote discussion of key contemporary scientific, technical and ethical issues in heritage conservation. It brings together invited speakers from different backgrounds to discuss a theme identified by ICCROM as being both topical and important for the better understanding of heritage conservation.

The first ICCROM Forum of a new series was held on 20-22 October 2003, on the theme of ‘Living Religious Heritage: conserving the sacred’. It was held at the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in the Palazzo Corsini in Rome. We are grateful to the Academy and especially to its then President, Professor Edoardo Vesentini, for allowing us to use its beautiful premises for the meeting.

The invited participants were leading professionals, scholars and managers with experience of managing ‘Living Religious Heritage’ in different regions of the world and with respect to many of its major faiths and traditions. They were asked to prepare papers in case study form, which were circulated to all participants in advance of the Forum. M. Jean-Louis Luxen (Culture, Heritage and Development International (CHEDI), Brussels, and former Secretary-General of ICOMOS) was invited to give a keynote address on the theme.

The present publication consists of papers submitted to the Forum, extensively edited and revised by the authors and editors. Many of the points made by M. Luxen in his keynote address have been incorporated in the Introduction written by Herb Stovel. In addition to the authors of papers published here, two other speakers made valuable contributions to the Forum as speakers, discussants and authors of pre-circulated papers: Sami M. Angawi (Amar Centre for Architectural Heritage, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia) on the theme ‘Concept of universal balance and order: an integrated approach to rehabilitate and maintain traditional architecture in Makka’; and Mons. Ruperto Cruz Santos (Philippine Pontifical College, Rome) who presented a case study of ‘Manila Cathedral: preserving the past, anticipating the future’. The paper on Christiansfeld published here by Jorgen Boytler was presented at the Forum by Jorgen From, Mayor of Christiansfeld, who has been an energetic supporter of the Christiansfeld conservation programme.

I am indebted to Herb Stovel (now Carleton University, Ottawa) for agreeing to take on the organization of the Forum, ably assisted by Britta Rudolff (now University of Mainz), and to both of them for their commitment to ensuring the diversity and challenging nature of the issues discussed at it. Many other members of the ICCROM staff made important contributions in planning and organizing the event, and in participating in its proceedings as chairpersons and discussants. To them and to all contributing authors I am deeply grateful.



Introduction

THE TOPIC CHOSEN FOR THE ICCROM FORUM IN 2003 was ‘Living Religious Heritage’. Implicitly, this choice suggests that ‘living religious heritage’ may differ from other forms of heritage in some way, and that therefore its conservation might also be subject to different considerations. In what ways might living religious heritage differ from cultural heritage in general?

Several of the papers published here address this question. Gamini Wijesuriya suggests that what distinguishes religious heritage from secular heritage is its inherent ‘livingness’, that the religious values carried by a stupa embodying the living Buddha, for example, can only be sustained by ongoing processes of physical renewal of the stupa. In ensuring continuity of forms, in effect, ‘living’ heritage values are being elevated above the more familiar ‘documentary’ or ‘historical’ heritage values. The primary goal of conservation becomes continuity itself, based on processes of renewal that continually ‘revive the cultural meaning, significance... and symbolism attached to heritage’.

In turn, Nobuko Inaba notes that, while ‘living’ may be understood as the opposite of ‘dead’ and refer to a place still in use, alternatively, it may be used to denote the presence of residents in settlements on or near the site. Like Wijesuriya, she suggests that attention to the ‘living’ aspects of religious heritage reflects efforts to go beyond the ‘material-oriented conservation practice of monumental heritage’ and to give attention to ‘human-related/non-material aspects of heritage value and trying to link with the surrounding societies and environments’. She further suggests, more provocatively, that ‘fruit from living heritage can be thought of traditional life before modernization and globalization’.

In fact, all religions have regularly had to confront change and modernity; what is different now is the increasing pace of change, fed by improvements in electronic communication which permit ideas that challenge and undermine religious beliefs to be communicated more quickly, and more widely, than ever before.

The pace of change has undermined the strength of traditional belief systems to maintain their place in secular societies, and has also increased tensions between multicultural societies which may previously have lived in relative harmony. These forces have exacerbated extreme nationalism, and polarized relations between and among religious groups, with heritage authorities seeking - often with insufficient understanding of them - to fossilize or freeze various aspects of heritage in the name of conservation.

Taken to an extreme, cultural heritage may be used as a weapon in furthering the competing claims of various faiths. Places and objects of perceived heritage value to two different faiths may be demolished by the adherents of one faith in order to give ascendancy to the other. Such efforts may result in the preservation or reconstruction of buildings selected to reflect favoured versions of history. Jean-Louis Luxen noted in his introductory remarks on the occasion of the forum that ‘religious

conviction contributes to the social cohesion of a community, giving it landmarks and self-confidence... but that...the risk of excessive and chauvinistic assertion of identity, fed by fundamentalism, may lead to the destruction of religious symbols’.

If, as it seems, living religious heritage does have characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of heritage, how might its conservation also differ?

The effectiveness of conservation treatments depends on our ability to define clearly heritage values and to design treatments around respect for the values. Gamini Wijesuriya stresses the differences between ‘religious heritage’ and ‘heritage’ by noting that religious heritage has been born with its values in place, while with other forms of heritage, we need time and distance to be able to ascribe values to heritage (p. 31). These differences will cause the conservator to ask different questions in defining heritage values in the two different situations: for religious heritage, what values are already recognized by the religious community? For secular heritage, what process (involving whom?) will be needed to define these values?

Nobuko Inaba further reminds us to focus on more than typological differences among heritage properties in trying to improve care for religious heritage. She argues that we ought to treat religious properties in a holistic manner, recognizing them ‘as a total expression of their host culture, combining tangible (both immovable and movable) and intangible expressions of heritage together with the natural/cultural landscape’ (p. 44). She notes that in many cases, clear typological distinctions are neither possible nor useful, recognizing that religious forces are based on belief systems which have been at ‘the core of our life’, and noting that ‘any form of living heritage is inseparable from the frameworks of the religion or belief system of its society’.

Other factors are important in trying to define appropriate care for heritage. As several authors note, religious heritage is perhaps the largest single category of heritage property to be found in most countries around the world. Paradoxically, though, it is difficult – in a conservation world where charters are commonplace – to find the kinds of modern rules or doctrinal texts that have so frequently been developed for other aspects of heritage. In fact, in several jurisdictions, religious property is specifically exempted from legislation concerning heritage. But why the relative lack of guidelines and charters? This may be due to a perception in the conservation world that responsibility for religious heritage rests with the religious community or that the religious context is too sensitive for conservation professionals to treat with objectivity and fairness; or it may be due simply to a lack of systematic attention to this type of heritage.

Where there has arisen a proposal to prepare doctrinal texts, as Janis Chatzigogas notes with respect to the monasteries of Mount Athos, this has hitherto consisted of efforts to encourage the resident monks themselves to debate a possible conservation charter. Hence, a general caution is strongly evident among conservation professionals with regard to efforts to define general rules or prescriptions which would reconcile the demands of faith with conservation goals.

A different approach to defining a role for conservation professionals was suggested by Jean-Louis Luxen in querying the tension between the singular and the universal. He noted that some religious properties may have universal appeal or outlook and some a kind of singular appeal. He was referring to those properties linked to single communities, or even those where particular taboos

inhibit the sharing of knowledge and understanding with those outside the faith. In Luxen's view, that tension is best addressed through following UNESCO's goal of instituting dialogues among cultures by 'promoting shared knowledge and reciprocal esteem that contribute towards peace among peoples'.

In summary, it is clear that encouraging dialogue among those involved rather than following prescriptive codes of practice offers a more positive role to conservation professionals to play with regard to living religious heritage. By defining both the needs of the religious community and those of the conservation world, conservation professionals can help to identify options for reconciling needs, to define good practice, and ultimately to build confidence and trust among all partners. The goal of the ICCROM Forum has been to bring together cases where this has been achieved or where the potential for it evidently exists.

Issues In reconciling faith and conservation

The primary challenge addressed by the forum was the reconciliation of faith and conservation requirements. In introducing the forum theme, the author identified six different contexts of interaction between the two:

DEALING WITH CHANGING LITURGICAL AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

Changes in liturgy or the practice of worship may result in the need to alter the layouts of religious buildings, to move altars or to change the focus of symbolic ceremonies. Equally, changing functional needs (improving the comfort of worshippers in cold or hot climates, for example) can place daunting demands on historic structures and spaces that have long enjoyed a climate equilibrium.

The question for the forum to address was: how to maintain heritage values in the face of changing needs of religious practice?

DEALING WITH THE COMPETING REQUIREMENTS OF CO-EXISTING FAITHS

Reconciling faith with conservation is difficult when there are two or more faiths which hold sacred a particular property but which cannot reconcile their own beliefs. Perhaps the most dramatic recent example is the destruction by the Muslim Taliban of the two Buddha figures at Bamiyan in Afghanistan, effected only two years after a decree for the protection of all cultural heritage (including Bamiyan) had been published by the Taliban. The destruction by Hindus of a sixteenth century mosque at Ayodhya in India provides another dramatic example, with both religious groups making claims based on mutually exclusive interpretations of the archaeological evidence from the site. The Haram al-Sharif (or Temple Mount) in Jerusalem remains a flashpoint for conflict among Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities, leading to periodic violent confrontations and loss of life.

The question for the forum was: how to encourage support for shared use of such sites, and to promote mutual understanding?

DEALING WITH FLUCTUATING INTEREST IN RELIGION

History shows that interest in religion ebbs and flows with time; how can we anticipate and deal with the consequences of such changes? In Eastern Europe, the Orthodox Church is reclaiming its traditional role in society, lost during the seventy years of Soviet dominion in the region. Many religious buildings

were abandoned and converted into storage depots or, infrequently, museums. Orthodox Church authorities are seeking compensation from the State for seventy years of official neglect. In Christiansfeld, Denmark, on the other hand, in the face of a shrinking congregation, the Moravian authorities and the secular community leaders are engaged in actively maintaining centres of worship.

The question for the forum was: how to maintain sacred and heritage values in the face of increasing or decreasing interest in religion in society?

DEALING WITH GROWING SECULAR PRESSURES ON PLACES OF RELIGIOUS VALUE

There are many pressures on well-known religious sites, particularly those brought about by visitors and tourists. The number of pilgrims or worshippers at such places tend to be far fewer than the visitors who are non-adherents of the faith. For example, how can the World Heritage site of Patmos in Greece, home to the monastery of St. John and the cave of the Revelations, manage the hundreds of passengers arriving daily in the summer months on well-paying cruise boats? How can the Taj Mahal continue to accept increasing numbers of visitors when carrying-capacity has been far exceeded and where, as an anti-pollution measure, the parking of vehicles delivering the visitors has been removed far from the site? At Uluru, on the other hand, a site of great importance to the aboriginal peoples of Australia, much has been achieved in sensitizing visitors to the indigenous values of the place and the need to explore it in an appropriate manner.

The question for the forum was: how to maintain both sacred values and heritage character while responding to expressions of public interest and the desire for access?

DEALING WITH THE MUSEIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS PLACES AND/OR OBJECTS

A key concern here is how to deal with situations when sacred places or objects are deconsecrated and structures become museums and sacred objects enter museum collections. A good example is the World Heritage site of Kizhi Pogost in Karelia, Russia, which was converted into a museum in the 1930s. In 1980, engineering analysis of the major building on the site, the 1740 Church of the Transfiguration, already considered a museum object, revealed worrying evidence of structural instability. The structural solution (insertion of a steel frame within the wooden building) resulted in the removal of the iconostasis from the building and its relocation in sections to seven different buildings around the island for storage and occasional display. Treatment of the iconostasis was dictated by an understanding of the building and its components as museum objects, rather than as a living church.

The questions for the forum were: while there are many examples of beautifully exhibited religious objects in tasteful and well-interpreted museum displays, what has happened to the intrinsic religious meaning of the object in such cases? How can sacred values be maintained in museum settings?

DEALING WITH CONSERVATION INTERVENTIONS: CONTINUITY OF FAITH VERSUS 'SCIENTIFIC' CONSERVATION

Sometimes the conservator's instincts (to preserve material fabric and to minimize change) run counter to the religious community's interest in continuity and renewal. The traditional desire of resident monks to renew painted surfaces can sometimes conflict with official conservation policy, as has

happened at the World Heritage site of Dambulla in Sri Lanka. At Anthony Island on Canada's West Coast, also a World Heritage site and home to the last surviving in situ cluster of Haida Indian totem poles, the choice of 'continuity' as the primary conservation goal has meant allowing poles to decay, while resisting calls from conservators to have them removed to museum environments.

The question for the forum was: how to maintain continuity while respecting the conservation professional's interest in minimizing change?

Towards some solutions

The papers published here illuminate principles that are important in reconciling conservation and faith. Some of the different contexts identified in the previous section receive more attention than others. The following sections, in summarizing the papers, highlight the principal cases and discussion points to which the forum gave rise.

RECONCILING THE VALUES OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY WITH THOSE OF THE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

Perhaps the most important issue arising in the papers is the conflict that can arise between the traditional values of a religious community and the goals of modern conservation. Modern conservation philosophy is rooted in contemporary secular values. Thus, in many cases, conflicts in the management and care of living religious heritage reflect tensions between traditional religious values and the core values of contemporary societies.

Dean Whiting describes how the development of contemporary approaches to conservation in New Zealand, with the emphasis given by conservation professionals to retaining 'material information', initially appeared to be at odds with the guiding precepts of Maori social organisation and community life. The Maori meeting-house, through its design, construction and decoration, represents the tribal ancestry of the Maori people, and is regarded as a living entity. Maori elders have the duty to protect and sustain cultural and spiritual values imbedded in the meeting-houses which are passed down to them in order to 'preserve the spiritual essence of the place and structure and maintain its *mana* or strength and integrity' and its *tapu*, or sacredness'. Doing so requires an approach to repair and adaptation which may require renewal and cleaning of surfaces and forms to preserve the freshness of the house for the spirits within it. It also provides an opportunity for renewing traditional arts and knowledge.

The Maori community and conservation professionals have gradually developed positive forms of collaboration around these issues. One mechanism has been to focus on the 'cultural safety' of those conservation professionals who are invited to work on technical conservation problems. This is in order both to reduce the personal exposure and risk of conservators to what may be unsuitable or spiritually damaging compromises, and to ensure appropriate 'sensitivity towards the intangible values and knowledge of the protocols and customs' that surround the meeting-house structure and site. Ensuring cultural safety requires the 'support of tribal elders and *tohunga*' and ultimately results in 'tribal-specific conservation practices and support systems' which will 'ensure that local needs are met by local solutions'.

A similar conflict, but with a different resolution, between the conservator's concern with the material conservation of an object and the congregation's worship of it was reported from Mexico by Valerie Magar. The treatment of a small sixteenth century polychrome sculpture of the baby Jesus,

which had become distorted as a result of centuries of overpainting, took full account of the concerns of the community, leading eventually to their direct involvement in the conservation process. The sculpture now returns every year to the national conservation laboratory for an annual maintenance check; the working table where conservation is carried out is transformed virtually into an altar; and community members and conservation staff alike make their offerings on it as a part of the treatment process. Conservation and faith have been brought together here in an atmosphere of mutual trust, laying the foundation for a dialogue that gives equal weight to the beliefs and goals of the community and to the interests and needs of conservation.

The case studies presented by Phatisa Nyathi and Chief Bidi of Zimbabwe also recognize that modern secular values, rooted in the desire for economic development and nurtured equally during colonial times and the post-colonial independence period, are at odds with the traditional values of the religious community, in this case the people of the Matopo Hills. Their traditional belief system ensured the survival of important shrines such as the Njelele rain-making shrine and the grave of King Mzilikazi, and provided sustainable management for the cultural landscape of which the shrines form part.

However, the present Western model of environmental protection adopted by the Matopo National Park authorities does not recognize the potential interest, beliefs and capacity of local people to care for the sites that were in evidence before the Park was designated. Not only has the model failed to ensure the survival of cultural and natural resources, but it has also diminished the use of the indigenous knowledge systems and ideologies, which could be considered the best long-term guarantee of survival of the area's significant values.

A similar situation, though with better resolution, is evident today in the planned Moravian community of Christiansfeld in Denmark, as reported in the paper by Boytler. Its religious heritage is preserved for the faithful (the Congregation) to practice, but the same heritage, considered as cultural heritage within a national system for conservation, is preserved for the public at large to enjoy. Inevitably, the goals (and the values) of the secular public and the Moravian faithful do not fully coincide. If responsibility for its religious heritage is retained by those who have built and cared for Christiansfeld, then the values of the congregation will be maintained and the benefits of conservation can be integrated within its framework for development. But the shrinking congregation lacks the resources to care for this heritage; so they need to work in co-operation with the secular authorities (for whom the religious structures bring both civic pride and economic well-being). This pattern of co-operation is now being extended to other Moravian communities in the USA, South Africa, the Netherlands, the UK and Germany.

The interaction between maintenance of religious values and conservation of the cultural values of a place is also examined by Gamini Wijesuriya, with reference to Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka. If responsibility for the religious heritage is retained by the 'associated community', then its protection is assured from within, while benefiting from the conservation expertise acquired through dialogue with the conservation community. The contemporary debate in Sri Lanka justified the restoration of stupas to their original form, not only because of their historical significance but also so as to retain their religious function as the home of important relics of the Buddha and his followers.

The importance of 'dialogue' comes out also in the work of the Catholic Church in reconciling the viewpoints of the faithful with the preservation of its cultural heritage as such. As Cristina Carlo-Stella

describes, the Roman Catholic church has developed sophisticated systems to define and inventory its heritage, and to develop policies for managing it. These reflect the workings of the Church – paralleling the commitment to maintain globally ‘the dogmatic principles of Christian faith, as contained in Gospel teachings’ while at the same time ensuring that the ‘way they are taught and put into practice through local vernacular expressions by the local Church communities reflects the social and cultural traditions of the local territories’.

The Cathedral Workshops described by Carlo-Stella illustrate the promotion by the Holy See of dialogue to provide ‘an inter-cultural community of solidarity at international level in the field of cultural heritage’. They examined the survival of artistic crafts which have contributed in a special way towards the development of religious heritage in Europe. The Church’s commitment to dialogue and to craftsmanship led to the choice of a specific religious heritage typology that encompassed these two concepts as fundamental features for its development, namely the cathedral.

RECONCILING CONSERVATION WITH RELIGIOUS LAWS

A full adherence to the guiding laws of some religions may impose certain limitations on the use of conventional conservation treatments and materials. Thus Michael Maggen notes that Jewish Law, as codified in the ‘Halacha’, provides a basis for defining the conditions for the treatment and the preservation, maintenance, storage and disposal of the holy books and other sacred objects. These prescriptions extend to both the materials that may be used in treatment (‘kosher’ materials only) and to the identity of the conservators (only those who are Jewish). Binders that use pigskin or certain marine animal derivatives are not permitted. Similar restrictions exist within Islamic law (‘Shari’ah’) where the concepts of ‘ritual pollution/purification’ and ‘unclean substances’ guide possible conservation treatments (paper by Mandana Barkeshli and Amir Zekrgoo).

Rather than complicating conservation treatments, a compliance with religious laws places conservation activity within a religiously appropriate framework of care, and consequently inspires and strengthens faith and, in some way, the sacredness of the object being treated. Observance of Jewish religious law associates the conservation act with the Jewish search for purity (‘Taharah’) and with efforts to strengthen one’s relationship with God.

In the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, a manual for conservators has been developed describing the policies and procedures to be employed by the curatorial department in managing the collection. As with Jewish religious law, the search for purity (Taharah) guides the prescriptions of the manual which help to ‘forge a path of healing, renewal, transcendence and reintegration, establishing harmonious triangular links with the individual, the cosmos, and the social structure’. Here conservation may be understood as ‘preservation of a tradition; something that the peoples of Islamic faith have been doing in a very natural manner’ over long periods of time as a part of the Islamic way of being.

Both papers note, with reference to Islam and Judaism, that in the face of modernity it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain this former natural balance between concern for conservation and concern for maintenance of religious values. Thus, guidelines such as the manual developed by the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia become increasingly necessary.

At the same time, appropriate solutions must be developed and judged within the particular context of local circumstances, needs and practices. Dean Whiting points out that a conservator asking Maori

visitors to use cotton gloves to protect religious objects and surfaces from hand oils and acidity is at odds with the desire of the Maori ‘to connect with their ancestor by touching and rubbing’. In this case, Maori were deemed by the conservation community to be ‘polluters of their own cultural property’. The Islamic Museum in Kuala Lumpur demands that gloves be used by non-Muslims to avoid the ‘pollution’ caused by those not of the faith. In one case, the use of gloves inhibits sensitive conservation, while on the other hand, the use of gloves favours it. Whiting argues that it is a dependence on knowledgeable elders and a trust in process (still possible where traditional respect for religious values is high within society) rather than the codification of religious law that guides conservation practice.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH MODERNITY

The relative isolation enjoyed by the twenty monasteries of Mount Athos in Greece for over one thousand years has resulted in the survival of structures, objects, works of art, writings, garments and traditions which together provide stronger testimony to the medieval origins of the Greek Orthodox church than may be found elsewhere in Greece. This society is confronted today by strong external pressures to harmonize religious life on the peninsula with the principles of Greek secular life (for example, in the treatment of women). Moreover, there is a strong move within the European Union to fund the ‘modernization’ of the monasteries, thereby putting this longstanding traditional way of life at risk. As in other examples quoted here, the survival of the heritage of Mount Athos requires efforts to integrate the aspirations of the various monastic communities with the goals of heritage conservators. Janis Chatzigogas suggests trying to codify conservation principles in a Charter for the Mount Athos context.

The encounter with modernity of a religious tradition of multiple origins is exemplified by the case-study of Vallepietra in the Lazio region of Italy, presented by Paola Simeoni. The worship of the Most Holy Trinity of Vallepietra in a cave used since Neolithic times is testimony to the syncretistic ‘santissima’, itself evidence of the survival of a pre-Roman agrarian cult apparently based on Mother Earth. It is the focus of a series of popular processions and ritual performances held every summer.

The Roman Catholic church has regarded the confusion of the santissima with the Virgin as almost heretical, and thus views the festival with ambivalence. While ‘modern’ influences have always shaped and re-shaped activities at this site, today’s increasingly rapid pace of change sees also a growing popularity of the festival. A self-conscious desire to moderate the pace and direction of change calls for management measures, both to document the annual activities at the site and to guide changes in ways that remain faithful to the core values of the cult. What is less clear is which of the interested parties should define those core values and then initiate such management measures.

The Vallepietra case illustrates the interdependence of intangible and tangible values of a particular cult and place. In Japan there is experience of over fifty years of designating and caring for intangible and tangible heritage in an integrated way. At the same time, Japan illustrates how responses based upon misunderstandings can enter the repertoire of conservation options. In her paper, Nobuko Inaba reminds us that the often-cited ritual re-building of the Ise shrine at twenty-year intervals does not reflect modern Japanese conservation philosophy. Rather, it is an important ritual practice, now unique within the Shinto religion in Japan, linked to early beliefs of prehistoric cultures practicing wetland rice agriculture. The Ise shrine is not designated a ‘national treasure’ and its care and rebuilding are not governed by the country’s conservation laws and practices. However, as a survival of a once widespread

Shinto practice in Japan, the site and its associated traditions are now being considered for designation as ‘intangible heritage’ of national importance.

By way of conclusion

The wealth of material presented at the forum, and the complexity of the topic, render problematic any synthesis. Nevertheless, in the discussion during the final session of the forum, a series of conclusions were proposed with regard to understanding living religious heritage.

1. Living religious heritage is of particular importance, given its vital role in conveying, expressing, and sustaining the faiths which give spiritual identity, meaning and purpose to human life.

Living religious heritage is the tangible and intangible embodiment of the many and diverse faiths which have sustained human life through time. These faiths take many forms, from traditional belief systems to formally organized religion. All, in their intertwined development, illustrate certain core ideals (respect for the environment, respect for all forms of life, respect for a greater purpose than self alone) which all human societies share and which, more than other forms of cultural heritage, have given shape and purpose to human life in all its diversity. As a result, efforts to conserve tangible and intangible living religious heritage deserve particular support for their role in supporting and testifying to the nature of our search for the fundamental meaning of human existence.

2. Understanding living religious heritage requires recognizing that the intangible significance of tangible religious objects, structures, and places is the key to their meaning. The tangible and intangible cannot be separated since all cultural material has intangible value.

Living religious heritage is expressed in cultural material: the tangible structures, objects and works of art created to support forms of worship within particular faiths and in associated intangible rituals, celebrations and devotional activities. In all cases, the tangible and intangible manifestations of the heritage carry intangible values, expressing the significance of the heritage for the communities who consider it important. Many current initiatives are strengthening concern for protection of intangible heritage. It is important that these initiatives, for example the recent UNESCO International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, are implemented in ways that strengthen the long-recognized ties between the tangible forms and intangible values.

3. Living religious heritage is at risk in a number of ways: from fluctuating commitment to faith itself in different parts of the world, from a lack of understanding of the nature of religious heritage and the role that conservation can play in sustaining faith, and from a lack of respect for the aspirations of religious communities. Efforts to counteract these trends and to strengthen conservation of living religious heritage should be a priority in global conservation policy.

The risks to living religious heritage are many and of diverse sources. Some of the sources of risk may lie within the religion or faith itself where waning interest or changing priorities may threaten the survival of religious heritage and values, reflecting an inability to sustain religious interest in changing circumstances. In societies where the paths of faith and secular development have diverged over time, the risks may be external, and religious heritage becomes threatened by secular visions or frameworks

for development of society that undermine the religious values of the heritage. These risks may manifest themselves in a secular determination to destroy the places of faith, as in the former Soviet Union; or, more subtly, they may reflect well-meant efforts to preserve physical testimonies of faith within broad conservation policies which do not, however, recognize the specificity of religious values. The nature of these risks, and the responses to them, need to be carefully defined. Institutional and governmental policies to conserve heritage must recognize the special nature of living religious heritage, and give it priority. They need to be developed following dialogue within the religious community and between it and the secular authorities.

4. The care of this heritage is primarily the responsibility of the religious community for whom this heritage has importance, at local and/or global levels. The conservation of living religious heritage is ideally initiated by the religious community and carried out in collaboration with conservation professionals and all those concerned in ways which:

- Recognize and promote the important custodial role that has been played by the religious community over time in maintaining and caring for religious heritage;
- Generate mutual understanding and trust in positive dialogues about conservation decisions;
- Reflect the living character of this heritage, retaining objects of religious value in their context of faith;
- Challenge those involved to reach choices based on the fullest respect for the practices and values which sustain faith in the religious community;
- Recognize that respect for the faith may involve restrictions, rules and exclusions regarding what conservation treatment may be appropriate and who may be involved with such treatments.

The goals of religious communities often appear to be in conflict with the goals of conservation authorities for conserving heritage. Reconciling these conflicts requires recognizing the complementary nature of the advice available to both. The survival over time of religious values has generally depended on the respect that the religious community has granted them and the religious heritage associated with them. But the conservation profession can also contribute enormously to the long-term care of living religious heritage. Its expertise can help the religious community evaluate the technical, scientific and philosophical implications of the conservation choices available, and choose the option which maintains fidelity to religious community values, while best protecting conservation interests and goals.

5. The evolution and adaptation of religious practices, rituals, or festivals to contemporary circumstances should be understood as a normal part of the continuity of living religious heritage and should be respected in conservation decision-making. Lay authorities uniquely responsible for conserving heritage may impose limits on the degree of change to be tolerated in living religious heritage.

The forms of expression of faith have always evolved over time, as a result of interplay within faiths, and also as a result of changing external circumstances. In other words, faith and its outward expression – the associated religious heritage – are living. Hence, it is important that conservation efforts do not attempt to freeze either forms or traditions at a moment in time, but rather guide the inevitable changes in ways which are sympathetic to the survival of past expressions. Where religious authorities share responsibility for living religious heritage with secular heritage authorities, it is reasonable to accept

that the latter may establish guidelines limiting change that are respectful of the goals of both. This approach provides a conservative framework for retention of qualities and heritage expressions, thus giving the benefit of the doubt to surviving significant qualities in the face of contemporary changes that are often hard to evaluate.

6. Respect for religious values in a multicultural context (or of particular orientations within a single religion) is essential for promoting peace and a tolerant society, and is best promoted through strengthening interfaith dialogues on conservation issues.

Of course, strengthening dialogue between conservationists and the religious community is not sufficient if the religious community does not speak with one voice. The dialogue must bring together all those involved within both the conservation field and also all interests within the religious community. Dialogue must be organized to build understanding and, better, sympathy for the different points of view which may exist in various multi-cultural contexts, and which may need to be reconciled as a part of efforts to protect religious heritage.

Maori meeting-houses are the predominant built heritage found on Maori communal land in New Zealand. They express and contain important religious and cultural values that are a central part of Maori identity. To conserve Maori built heritage requires knowledge and understanding of the culture itself to ensure these intangible values are enhanced and retained. The conservation of these living cultural buildings offers many challenges, and is best addressed through Maori working from their own cultural base.

In preserving Maori built heritage it is important to recognise Maori for their role as guardians of their cultural heritage. Differences in values and approach have at times created unease among conservation professionals and Maori communities. It was not until Maori themselves were trained as conservation professionals that conservation work found wider acceptance. Care is now needed to ensure that, along with developing conservation technical expertise, support is also provided for the cultural and spiritual well-being of professionals and workers in the field.

Conservation work currently being carried out on the meeting-house *Rongopai*, in the Gisborne District of New Zealand, illustrates the varied approaches that have been adopted in the preservation of this building by conservators and the Maori community to which it belongs.

DEAN WHITING

Conserving built heritage in Maori communities

This paper explores the evolving approaches that have been undertaken to conserve Maori built heritage in New Zealand. Maori meeting-houses are the predominant built heritage found on the Maori communal land, known as *marae*, and express and contain important religious and cultural values that are a central part of Maori identity. To conserve Maori built heritage requires knowledge and understanding of the culture itself to ensure these cultural values are enhanced and retained. The conservation of these living cultural buildings offer many challenges, and is best addressed through Maori working from their own cultural base. Care is needed to ensure that along with developing technical expertise, support is provided for the cultural and spiritual well-being of

professionals and workers in the field. Conservation work currently being carried out on the meeting-house *Rongopai*, in the Gisborne District of New Zealand, illustrates the varied approaches that have been taken in preservation by conservators and the Maori community to which it belongs.

BELIEF AND VALUE SYSTEMS

Before we can discuss the conservation work within Maori communities, we need to understand the values and relationships that Maori have with their cultural heritage. This is a layering of values and relationships that are not fixed by time, but have a fluidity depending on occasion, people, and purpose. Maori religious beliefs are traditionally based on

the creation story of the primal parents, *Ranginui* (Sky Father) and *Papatuanuku* (Earth Mother), and their children. This story describes the world existing within the embrace of the parental gods, an embrace that was so close that their children lived in darkness. One child, *Tane*, the god of forests, decided to separate his parents and forced them apart by pushing with his legs against his father and with his hands against his mother. His actions let light and warmth into the world on which he created the first people from whom Maori descend. This first family set the physical and spiritual framework where the tangible and intangible worlds of the Maori could coexist. These genealogical relationships with gods and ancestors reached their height with the development of the ancestral meeting-house (*whare tupuna*) and the associated art forms of woodcarving, weaving and painted artwork.

The meeting-house represents a tribal ancestry as a living entity through its design, construction, and decoration. When you walk into a meeting-house, you are entering the embrace and body of the tribes founding ancestor, or *tupuna*. The carved *koruru* figure at the apex of the roof is the face of the ancestor; the large bargeboards on each side are the outstretched arms welcoming those that approach the building. The interior walls are often adorned with ancestral figures that are carved, woven or painted. These connect to the main meeting-house ancestors through the *heke* (rafters) and *tabuhu* (ridge beam). The *tabuhu* is the most sacred part of the meeting-house and represents the backbone of the ancestor. Residing within it is the *mauri*, or the life spirit, that binds the people and the building

together. The meeting-house is a powerful genealogical map that ties the descendant people together as tribal, sub-tribal or family groups and relates to the past through the representation of ancestral figures.

Meeting-houses also interacted with the Maori spiritual realm and are considered the medium where *Ranginui* and *Papatuanuku* touch one another. Meeting-houses are often referred to as representing *Tane*, since they are built from trees that are the children of *Tane*, and physically stand between the Sky Father and Earth Mother. This is illustrated in some meeting-houses by the absence of roof guttering, allowing the tears (rain) of *Ranginui* to fall onto *Papatuanuku*. This personification of structure and relationship with gods permeates all the elements of the building.

Other structures on the *marae* provide a supportive role. The *wharekai*, or dining halls, are where the meals are provided for visitors staying at *marae*; the *pataka* (food-store) a rarer structure, traditionally used to hold important resources of the *marae*; and the *whare mate*, used in funeral ceremony to separate the sacred rituals associated with death. These structures form the *marae* complex that supports and provides for the tribe's needs.

With the arrival of Europeans in New Zealand, many Maori were converted to Christianity through the work of early missionaries. New religious movements started in some areas, based on variants of Christian faith and Maori traditional belief, and brought a new order to Maori society that did not rely solely on tribal genealogy for membership. Ringatu, Paimarie, Ratana and Kingitanga movements were some of the many political/religious movements that developed

FIGURE 1
Rongopai Meeting
House, Te Whanau
a Kai Tribal Area



in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These movements were a reaction to the diminishing rights and control Maori had over their land and resources, and helped to unify Maori in the face of the flood of settlers from Europe. This change in social structure led to the rapid creation of new art forms and new meeting-house styles to support the many and varied needs of these new groupings. The traditional art forms were transformed in some instances to become more accessible and relevant to current issues and social climate. The highly structured and ritualised art forms such as carving gave way to more collectively produced art forms such as *tukutuku* (woven latticework) and painted artwork.

Today there are over one thousand *marae* in active use throughout New Zealand, most of which contain meeting-houses and associated support buildings. Over half of the *marae* were built between 1880 and the 1950s. *Marae* are still being built today, or redeveloped, to support the needs of the many individual sub tribes (*hapu*). Generally, each *marae* represents a sub-tribal unit of 100–2,000 people. There are larger *marae* that service the requirements of the whole tribe, *iwi*. These often contain much larger buildings within a central location. *Marae* land on which meeting-houses stand is usually designated as a Maori Reservation, a piece of land set aside by the tribe for the purposes of a *marae*. It is common land for those affiliated with the tribe and termed their *turangawaewae*, standing place.

GUARDIANS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE – KAITIAKI

In preserving Maori built heritage, it is important to recognise Maori for their role as guardians

(*kaitiaki* or *hunga tiaki*) of their cultural heritage. For Maori are tied by their ancestral obligations to protect and sustain the cultural and spiritual values of these buildings and places, as these have been handed down by their ancestors. This guardianship role can translate into the physical preservation of built heritage, but more so into the preservation of the spiritual essence of the place and structure, and the maintenance of its *mana* (or strength and integrity). The *tapu*, or sacredness of the building and site, is a cultural state that protects the spiritual values of the place. Depending on the occasion, on the people and their relationship to the tribe, and their gender and age, prayers, *karakia*, and rituals will be observed to ensure that the intended activity or occasion can be carried out unhindered, and that those involved are protected and nurtured. The meeting-house is configured through ritual to accommodate the changing circumstances and activity. This work demands specialist knowledge, experience, and status, to ensure proper customary process is observed. Tribal elders, *kaumatua*, and priests, *tohunga*, provide guidance and leadership in these matters, and a balance between sustaining tradition and facilitating change.

Traditional repair and renewal practice

Traditional repair and renewal practices are centred on the continuation of the arts and cultural practices. Meeting-houses were, and are, built to be durable and of benefit to the present and future generations through repair and renewal practices. They had to adapt over time to the changing needs of the tribe, through additions and alterations, to provide new or expanded functions. Many meeting-houses show these phases of change: earth floors are changed to timber floors, timber frame structures placed over older traditional structures, and thatching replaced by iron roofing. Change and adaptation is also a feature of the artwork and decoration elements. Through repair and renewal, new materials and techniques were introduced, and new ideas and expressions added through additional artworks such as *tukutuku* (woven lattice-work), carving, and painted work to give depth or reflect changes in the tribes' social state. In some parts of the country, the older houses

FIGURE 2
Cleaning work
on wall tukutuku
panels, Rongopai
Marae



are plain structures with little decoration. They could have been built when limited resources did not allow for a fully-carved house, or religious influence may not have allowed carvings to be displayed. These houses often change as resources become available, or there is a shift back to revitalising identity through artistic expression.

Throughout this progression, adaptation, and change, the meeting-house is viewed as the carrier of cultural and spiritual values that have been passed from distant ancestors to the present. Even if the house has little of the original structure remaining, the *mauri* (life spirit), the history and *mana* (integrity) have been transferred unbroken through ritual and ceremony. The important feature is that the renewal is seen as an opportunity for application and practice of traditional arts and knowledge. There are also examples where the original building was intended as a temporary structure to provide the functional capacity until a more elaborate and larger structure could be built.

It can be difficult to apply conservation processes when many of the buildings are living structures that are in a constant process of change. Conservation work can be seen as an intrusion on a cultural practice, lessening the role of traditional carvers and weavers. However, it is important that the traditional owners of *marae* have knowledge of the options for retaining a building, and can make decisions based on all appropriate information. The opportunity should be taken more often to strengthen the relationship between the traditional arts, such as carving, weaving, and painting, and conservation practice, so that the two perspectives on retaining cultural and spiritual values of a place become complementary.

Conservation practice

Conservation practice on Maori built heritage has been active for over 30 years. Initially, there was a period of debate on the application of conservation and its relevance to Maori. While the general notion of restoring and preserving Maori cultural material was not new, it was different in that the approach was built on a scientific basis and originated from non-Maori sources.

Institutional conservation practice emphasised retention of the material information—the tangible elements held in the structure such as paint layers and tooling marks—as evidence of history. These values were applied by conservators whose experience came from working with collections within institutions, not with communities whose built heritage expressed ancestral connections and identity. The conservation profession was growing up in New Zealand at the time, trying to find a place

within institutions, and asserting its professionalism in the heritage sector. Conservators believed that they were the object's advocates and guardians. While this approach had its place within institutions, the reality of working within Maori communities required a different one.

Many Maori were suspicious of outside intervention, particularly when it involved their cultural heritage. The difference in values and approach could at times create unease between conservation professionals and Maori. Even quite ordinary conservation practices could appear to be insensitive. Museum conservators, for example, would often hand out white cotton gloves and insist that they be worn to protect the treasures from hand oils and related acidity when handling. For Maori visiting their most important ancestral treasure, this practice was at odds with their desire to connect with their ancestor by touching and rubbing. The fact that many of these treasures had been kept and looked after by Maori families over centuries before coming to the museum did not at times deter museum staff from insisting on using gloves. The conservator would often quote scientific reasoning for this approach, without thinking that it was degrading the relationship between Maori and their treasure, an intangible value fundamental to its meaning and integrity. Maori had become polluters of their own cultural property. Conservators needed to understand that the intangible dimension was as an important consideration as humidity, light and handling practices. Allowing a group to handle their treasure was not a compromise, but a valuable interaction that added to the meaning and integrity of the object. The perceived damage caused by handling was more often insignificant, and was an aspect that required management rather than a blanket policy of no touching.

In Maori communities conservators found it difficult to gain acceptance and soon learned that they had to recognise the relationship Maori had to their *marae*, arts and land-based heritage. Maori were guardians of their own cultural heritage, and had their own systems of decision-making, values and processes. Outside of the institutions, the ownership and management of Maori built heritage is essentially in Maori control. For any conservation programme to be relevant, the approach had to adapt and change to fit a Maori structure rather than the reverse.

An example of this shift was the traditional renewal practice of over-painted carvings and painted artwork. Maori would express the importance of visual uniformity in the building to allow spiritual entities to move through the structure unhindered. Conservators needed to carry out more restorative work in such a way that the meeting-house was

presented in its best possible condition, while still allowing these spiritual forces to move freely within the structure. Treatments that could protect the original artwork with barrier layers, while allowing new work to be placed over the top, were successfully used on many *marae*.

It was not until later on, when Maori themselves were trained as conservation professionals, that conservation work found wider acceptance. In the mid to late 1980s, the New Zealand government financed the training of Maori in conservation through participation in the University of Canberra conservation course in Australia. Five Maori conservators were trained: two in the area of built heritage, and three others to work in museum institutions. The latter were given post-internship training and were subsequently employed by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. It became increasingly important that Maori conservation practice developed in its own right and, more importantly, was led by Maori themselves. The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value, established during this period, reflects the different value system of Maori, whereby they had control over their cultural heritage.

CULTURAL SAFETY

One issue of concern is the cultural safety of people working in the field. The term ‘cultural safety’ was first used in New Zealand in the health sector to promote cultural and spiritual understanding of Maori patients and medical practitioners. This holistic approach was developed not only to heal the body but also to show an awareness that medical practices can affect the soul and spiritual well-being of a patient in both a positive and negative way. There is a strong parallel with the preservation of cultural heritage. The spiritual safety of Maori working is important to ensure that people are not put in positions of risk. Meeting-houses are at the core of Maori cultural identity and belief, and working on such places requires sensitivity towards the intangible values as well as knowledge of the protocols and customs that surround the building and site. Spiritual elements are not always positive and, without depth of understanding or support, a person can get into difficulties. The intangible values of a place may even be compromised or damaged, and the burden and stress of having broken the sacredness can be devastating on a personal level.

Institutions developing Maori professionals need the support of tribal elders and *tobunga* to ensure that they are working in a culturally safe manner. It is unfair to expect such people to meet the expectations of both parties when they are caught between

the values of the organisation they work for and the values that their own people uphold. Heritage organisations need to understand the personal cultural risks that professionals and workers are sometimes exposed to, and ensure that they have access to tribal or religious leaders for guidance and support in their work. This issue reinforces the need for more Maori conservation professionals working within tribal organizations and structures. This would develop more tribe-specific conservation practices and support systems to ensure that local needs are met by local solutions.

Rongopai Wharenui, Waituhi, Gisborne District, New Zealand: a case study

The prophet and leader *Te Kooti* emerged in the 1860s as a powerful and charismatic leader of the *Ringatu* Faith, a variant of the Old Testament with a strong affinity to traditional Maori belief systems. It became an important political movement and attempted to turn the tide of land acquisitions and the erosion of Maori rights at the time. Many tribes supported his movement and built meeting-houses as places where his teachings were upheld. The meeting-houses of the *Ringatu* Faith are distinctive in their style and expression. They extensively used colour from newly acquired European paints, which shifted the emphasis from the carved to the painted art form. This was an important evolution and adaptation of Maori art: it provided a more flexible and expressive medium for the artist; one that was not so restricted as traditional carving conventions. Designs, which depicted natural forms, plants, places, people, rather than the more abstract style of traditional carvings, were all elements that made *Ringatu* houses distinctive and recognisable.

Rongopai represents the crossover of traditional Maori belief and the rise of new religious orders by Maori in New Zealand. *Rongopai* was certainly an expression of this, and was built to honour the anticipated return of *Te Kooti* to his home area in 1889. The building was started in 1888 under the direction of *Wi Pere*, Minister of Parliament for the Eastern Maori at the time. It was said to have been completed with great speed in three months, with the construction involving at times up to 500 people. It was one of four houses built for *Te Kooti*, and was named following the expression used by *Te Kooti*: *Kei to pai, hoki atu ki te Kainga, Whakahauingia te rongopai i runga i te aroha me te ngawari* (Go home and build the gospel on love and charity). However, the houses were never visited by *Te Kooti*, as nervous European settlers successfully lobbied the government to stop his return to the area.



FIGURE 3 Teaching conservation treatment to Maori arts course students, Rongopai Marae

The meeting-house continues today as an important *Ringatu* house and has regular services. The building is not only a functioning cultural and spiritual building for followers of the faith, but it also represents the ancestral connections for the tribe of *Te Whanau a Kai*. It therefore has the duality of being a place of worship, and a place where there is a strong connection with the teachings of *Te Kooti* and genealogical connections to *Whanau-a-Kai* ancestors.

Important early conservation work was carried out on *Rongopai* in the 1970s. It was one of the first large-scale conservation projects on a meeting-house. Initial discussions with the Auckland Museum suggested that the building should be dismantled and removed to the museum for preservation. However, the *marae* elders requested that the work should be undertaken on the *marae*. The museum viewed the building as an object of the past, while the Maori community saw it as an opportunity to revive and bring life back into the building once again. The New Zealand Historic Places Trust provided the services of a painting conservator from the Dunedin Art Gallery to work with the *marae* community on the project. The conservator was employed to restore the painted artwork within the building and recover early images of nineteenth century painted art that had been overpainted and concealed on the interior wall uprights. The project was set up as a series of

training workshops where local people were taught the skills necessary for the conservation work. The project was successful and helped establish the New Zealand Historic Places Trust *Marae* Conservation Programme. However, local Maori expectations were for the meeting-house to be restored and the artwork renewed to give *Rongopai* the *mana* (pride) that it deserved. Presenting the meeting-house in its deteriorated state was certainly not an acceptable outcome and the interior was overpainted.

During the last 30 years, *Rongopai* has also undergone a series of changes and adaptations that highlight the different approaches taken to its preservation and the need for the building to continue serving its people. Deteriorated sidewall panels of woven lattice (*tukutuku*) were replaced in the 1980s with copies. The whole porch area was extended to make it more comfortable for people during the funeral ceremonies that take place there. A door was also cut through to a new ablution block to allow old people easier access to these facilities when staying at the *marae*. These adaptations and changes were undertaken by the *marae* community to ensure that the building remained functional in their day-to-day lives, and they demonstrate the underlying strength of its relationship with its own people.

The current conservation project at *Rongopai* is to conserve the remaining original woven panels, *tukutuku*, on the front and back walls. The approach used has been to retain as much of the original fabric as possible, and to repair losses with a combination of conservation treatment and traditional weaving techniques. An expert Maori weaver leads the project work, with the support of a New Zealand Historic Places Trust conservator to develop and teach treatment processes. The approach allows a balance between the traditional arts and conservation practice.

A major achievement for the project is that the leaders and experts for the project have been found from within the tribe. It is important from a cultural viewpoint that leadership and expertise is developed in this way so that the role of guardianship and the authority of decision-making are retained by the tribe. Because of the important spiritual nature of the building, the tribe has ensured that the proper customary ritual has been performed to allow work to proceed unhindered.

One of the interesting and significant outcomes for the weavers is the knowledge gained about the early methods of weaving used on these *tukutuku* panels, which has bridged a 120-year gap in traditional weaving knowledge. Other *marae* also benefit from the experiences of this project. The knowledge that has been gained will be utilized in related

marae projects to ensure that traditional knowledge is retained and re-taught. This ensures the retention of *tukutuku* weaving and strengthens similar conservation projects by developing a growing pool of skills in the area. There is also a better understanding and awareness of the conservation process, which will assist in the maintenance of these places in the future.

Summary

Today there are more Maori considering a professional career in conservation to meet a growing demand. The conservation of Maori cultural material has found a degree of acceptance and relevance that will continue as long as Maori have a role in the development, decision-making, and implementation of the work. While progress has been made in training some Maori professionals through institutions, more support and guidance is needed from Maori communities to ensure that they are prepared to work in areas that are potentially sensitive, and even risky from the perspective of cultural safety. Technical conservation knowledge is not enough to deal with the complexities of recognising and maintaining the cultural and spiritual values of a site or place. Emphasis should be placed on developing conservation positions within tribal frameworks so that these support systems are embedded

Rongopai is also a good example of the issues often faced by Maori communities, which must balance responsibilities as guardians of their cultural heritage against the needs of the current generation. It also highlights some of the small but successful steps taken to bring traditional artists and conservators together. Important synergies must be strengthened between the arts and conservation so that more collaborative partnerships evolve to retain these buildings and their associated art forms. It is hoped that in the future more leadership will come from within Maoridom to develop conservation programmes through tribal frameworks, so that conservation practice will be supported from a Maori cultural base.

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Christiansfeld, a late eighteenth century Moravian settlement in Denmark, was established according to a distinctive urban plan, regarded as the ideal plan for Moravian communities. The urban structure includes several community buildings such as the Saal, and the Gemeinhäuser or Gemeinlogi. The contemporary utilization of these buildings is considered in this paper, with the aim of reconciling their traditional religious purpose with modern community needs, particularly economic ones. This paper attempts to identify possibilities and strategies to preserve Christiansfeld's physical

structures as well as the integral intangible values of the settlement. In this regard the author states that the best way to preserve both is to keep the responsibility in the hands of those who built the settlement i.e. the Moravian Church community. The community has the ability to foster a dialogue between different stakeholders, create awareness and understanding of the religious and cultural values of the settlement, and to gain funding and political support.

[JØRGEN BØYTLER]

Christiansfeld: a religious heritage alive and well

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY INFLUENCES ON A LATE EIGHTEENTH-EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY MORAVIAN SETTLEMENT IN DENMARK

This paper will deal specifically with the case of the Moravian religious settlement in Christiansfeld, Denmark, which was founded on 1 April 1773. The paper's focus is the current utilization of some of the larger buildings and town squares in the settlement. The paper shows how the Moravians and their cultural heritage are under pressure from economic, political and social forces, bearing in mind that the Moravians themselves are an integrated part of a twenty-first century society. Published and unpublished documents, from Christiansfeld and elsewhere, and including the author's previous publications, are the primary source materials (see the bibliography

below). The Christiansfeld settlement is used as a case study, with arguments in the paper based on visible and historically documented facts, well-described religious and cultural values, and the accumulated experience of the settlement. A case study approach moves from the particular to the general, but to counteract this weakness the paper will also look at how general theories apply to the particular case of Christiansfeld. The limited length of this paper is a constraint, and further studies in the subject may be necessary in order to deliver a full argument.

As the author is working as the minister (pastor) for the Moravian Congregation in Christiansfeld and

(ABOVE) FIGURE 1 The Sisters' House



FIGURE 2 From the church square. On the left the Saal, in the centre the Widows' House, and on the right the Sisters' House.

FIGURE 3 The Saal on the church square.

is chairing the Steering Committee of a renovation project for the settlement, he is part of the situation being studied. Hence his objectivity should be scrutinized. Having said this, the author will build his arguments on commonly agreed sources, whenever applicable. The key issue in the paper is to identify and describe how the settlement can maintain and develop its tangible heritage structures and related intangible values in the present context. The solution proposed is that the best way of preserving the settlement is to keep the responsibility for the property in the hands of those who built the settlement, i.e. the Moravian Church.

The Moravian Church, history and development

The origins of the Moravian Church go back to 1457 when a pre-Reformation church was founded in Bohemia and Moravia, in the present Czech Republic. The church was based on the teachings of John Huss and founded in reaction to the Roman Catholic Church, especially to its heretical teachings and practices. The original Moravian Church survived for a couple of centuries in Central Europe, but by the end of the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) was almost extinguished when the principle of *cujus regio ejus religio* (whose rule, his religion) was enforced.

The Moravian Church in its present form developed around 1720 when the settlement of Herrnhut in the Kingdom of Saxony was founded, under the patronage of Count Zinzendorf. The vision of Zinzendorf was to establish a village as an *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (a church within the Church). The basic theology was influenced by the European reformers, especially Martin Luther, and by the pietistic movement common in Northern Europe at that time. Herrnhut was the first Moravian community, and notably the concept of congregational life developed simultaneously with the town.

The congregation was divided into 'choirs.' A member of the congregation belonged to a choir according to his or her age, gender and marital status. Unmarried sisters, unmarried brothers and widows lived a communal life in 'choir houses', while married couples and children lived in private houses. The choir houses are characteristic of all Moravian settlements. Life in the settlement was focused on the church where the congregation would meet several times a week, and sometimes several times a day. The choir houses contained Saals, large rooms designed to serve as the church for that particular choir.

The Moravian Church subsequently spread worldwide. During the eighteenth century, settlements were founded in Germany, Holland, Denmark, North America, and South Africa. Remains of Moravian settlements have also been found in Western Russia, the West Indies and Greenland.

Today, the Moravian Church has 800,000 members, mainly in Africa, the Caribbean and Central America, but as the Moravian Church no longer founds settlements, most members today have no experience of the Moravian settlement pattern.

Principles behind a Moravian settlement

The people living in the first Moravian community at Herrnhut lived under strict rule. The village itself operated on a communal basis. Each person contributed to the welfare of all, and each received

according to his or her need. There was no competition in business, and the congregation owned and controlled all the resources of the community. Crafts and industry were carried on within the village, and many Moravians were noted artisans. Discipline, order, control and piety were decisive factors in designing and constructing not only Herrnhut, but many of the other towns as well, which were often built in a relatively short time. This was a new and very practical way of interpreting *praxis pietas*. The economy of the settlements as a whole was built on agriculture, industry, building construction and trade. Businesses were controlled by the Elders who, by granting permissions to individuals and choirs, secured the variety of craft and industries necessary to supply what the inhabitants needed.

An ecclesiastical theology developed that formed the basis for the congregational practices and the buildings. A key factor in understanding the layout of a Moravian settlement is the idea of the Christian pilgrim (or wanderer), dedicated to serving where and when the church, or in this case, the Board of Elders, wishes. In the 1740s up to one third of adult Moravians were wanderers (Schempp 1969: 39), moving between settlements and mission areas. The design of the towns and buildings had to accommodate these temporary newcomers, who were normally lodged in the Sisters' or the Brothers' House.

Spaces for communal activities were also required, to meet the needs of communal life. The Moravians saw themselves as proselytisers; this was the common task and the towns were constructed to

serve this purpose. Towns were designed to provide ample opportunities for effective industry and agriculture, and thus for maximum interaction with the local populations.

The philosophy of the Moravian Church, in common with many other Christian groups, includes the concept of liturgical life, namely that any work or task is a service to God. In contemporary Moravian understanding this includes supporting the church through living in consciousness of the environment and maintaining the buildings as heritage. The liturgical life is an integral part of living as a Moravian in a Moravian settlement, and can be understood as a meeting point between the spiritual and the physical life. The physical assets provide a framework for the spiritual life, and the spiritual life is revealed in a very 'down-to-earth' sense by working through the visible and physical structures.

THE IDEAL PLAN

A perfect plan for a Moravian community can be imagined (Merian 1975: 468). It shows the centre as the square (Platz). The church hall (Saal) is situated immediately on the square, in a central place. Along with the church, and facing the square, are the congregational houses (Gemeinhäuser), with private and individual houses behind. The number of streets varies, but they should form a symmetrical pattern focused on the square. Traffic should pass by on the outskirts of the town. The choir houses should be situated according to the church, meaning the Sisters' Houses should be close to that end of the



FIGURE 4 View to the east through Lindegade, one of the main streets.



FIGURE 5 View to the west through Lindegade. No new buildings have been allowed, and the view to the open land is intact.



(CLOCKWISE) FIGURE 6 Briant's House, the parsonage, FIGURE 7 Prætorius House, FIGURE 8 The old pharmacy store in Lindegade, with a new roof. FIGURE 9 Lindegade No. 19, then the pharmacy store, the Spielwerk building and the hotel.

church where the sisters sit. The inn (Gemeinlogi) should be close to the main entrance of the square on the brothers' side. Private houses of prominent persons may be placed facing the square (Merian 1975: 467–8).

The idea of the utopian city, popular among many writers, was presented in Johann Valentin Andreae's *'Christianopolis,' a utopian city*. This may very well have fertilized the design of the Moravian settlements. (Bøytler 2003: 17)

The settlement at Christiansfeld

The settlement at Christiansfeld was founded in 1771. The Danish government wanted the brethren to settle there in order to bring development and prosperity to the area, while the brethren wanted a settlement as a base for their activities within Denmark.

The plan of Christiansfeld follows closely the ideal plan, although the square is not circular but square. The axis dividing the church into a sisters' side and a brothers' side divides the whole structure,

making the location of the Brothers' House, the Sisters' House etc. obvious. The square is principally devoid of traffic, leaving space for people to meet in individual or communal circumstances. It is more than likely that the cross being formed by the pathways and the water fountain in the centre of the square carries the symbolism of Christ, being the invisible centre of the community (Bøytler 2003: 16).

THE HOUSES AND SQUARES

The Saal¹

The church building measures 31.2 x 15.0 m (Varming 1984: 496) and was built in 1776. It still serves as the sanctuary of the congregation. It is situated in the most prominent place on the church square. The building contains the largest open hall (without columns) in Northern Europe from this period and is unique in its architectural simplicity. The architect, probably working under supervision of the Provincial Directors based in Barby, Germany, is unknown. (Varming 1984: 495). It was extended to its present size in 1796. The Saal itself is painted white with hardly any decorations and through the years it has been maintained and repaired; the last major restoration took place in the 1970s.

Naturally a lot of attention is focused on this building. While the idea of using this as a sports hall was aired some years ago, few now have difficulties in understanding its religious and cultural value. Donations to the congregation made the last restoration possible and there is a strong will within the congregation to maintain the building. It strongly defines the identity of the congregation and is protected as cultural heritage, as are the other buildings described here.

The Sisters' House

This is one of the large choir houses and was the dwelling of the unmarried sisters of the congregation. It was begun in 1776 and built in phases. It was owned by the congregation. The sisters lived in the house on a communal basis, forming their own entity within the settlement. The house was meant to create income-generating activities (Høy 1956: 30). As the system of choirs was gradually abandoned, the use of the Sisters' House changed. For a time it was a home for elderly people. Currently most of it is rented out as office space for several Danish mission societies. The Choir Saal² in the Sisters' House is particularly beautiful. The house is well kept and was re-roofed a decade ago.

The use of the Sisters' House for housing offices of organizations related to church work is not without significance for the Moravian congregation,

and is well in accordance with the original intended use of the house.

The hotel

One of the four houses founded on 1 April 1773 was the Gemeinlogi.³ In the ideal plan (Merian 1975: 468) the location of the Gemeinlogi is mentioned. The idea of having a guesthouse in a Moravian settlement relates to the ideal of an open and inviting community, able to provide shelter for whoever might come by.

Under the present renovation programme, the continued functioning of the hotel is an important priority. The utilization of the building, the type of hotel, the groups targeted by the hotel as customers, the level of prices, and the quality of the services are all-important factors. Efforts are being made to improve its chances of being economically sustainable, but complications have arisen from the congregation's idea of how the hotel should function. The congregation's goal is an average-priced hotel, affordable by guests coming to Christiansfeld to visit the congregation. The hotel should offer accommodation and catering, and its success should not jeopardize the economy of the congregation. This is a different model from the one proposed by the consultancy company that has been engaged to provide a sustainable business model. The hotel provides an example of an institution in which architectural, economic and cultural heritage interests collide with the convictions of the congregation.

Spielwerk building

The settlement was originally served by a trading company (*Gemein Laden*) that provided utensils, cloth and hardware for the citizens of the settlement (Engquist 1984: 446). The Spielwerk building, erected in 1778, is one of the oldest in Christiansfeld. It currently houses stores and apartments, and is typical in containing both business and private facilities. This mixed use, and the situation of the house in the centre of the business district, gives the building prominence in the town. The value of the house to the congregation is both architectural and economic. Important space for present-day stores is offered within the house. Although it has no religious value as such, it was one of the houses that underpinned the economy of the early settlement.

Briant's House

Briant's House is one of the earliest houses constructed in the settlement. It is the parsonage and is used by the congregation as a staff house. The rent is paid by the staff living in the house. The house has significant architectural and cultural value, and a



FIGURE 10 The Moravian Church hotel. To the left a corner of the Spielwerk building can be seen.



FIGURE 11 The Prætorius Square and the hotel.

strong use-value in the eyes of the congregation. It is less complicated to explain the use and value of this house than many others, because of the obvious need of the pastor for a dwelling.

Prætorius House

This building is located next to Briant's House, in a prominent position on the church square. Its values are equal to those of Briant's House, but the use is different. All of the space is rented out as flats for living quarters. Originally, it was built by the first minister and one of the founders of the settlement, and served as a parsonage for a few years before the pastor moved into Briant's House. As with several other buildings, this house is rented out under normal market conditions. The income is not sufficient to finance the cost of renovating the roof.

Church Square

The church square is the epicentre of the settlement according to 'the perfect plan' (Merian 1975: 468), and is clearly the most important square in Christiansfeld. An early painting of 1800 (Turistforeningen 1939: 17) shows the design of the church square, all the important buildings around it, the trees, the fountain in the centre, and the pathways forming a cross. It is the natural meeting point in front of the Saal, for churchgoers, guests and tourists alike. As a 'town room', it is well known for its architectural and aesthetic qualities.

In general, the architecture is of high aesthetic value for those living in or visiting a Moravian

town. The idea of the central square as a place for celebration of life, with the church being the obvious focal point, is significant. Equally, the organizational scheme for the other houses on the square, the business and private quarters, and God's Acre, has many clear aesthetic qualities (Bøytler 2003: 22).

May of the buildings around the square, including the Saal, have been renovated within the last three decades. The value of the square itself to the settlement is beyond dispute. Social and economic pressure on the square is moderate, and design and situation of the square makes its function quite obvious.

Prætorius Square

This area only became a square quite recently. It is situated behind the hotel in the business centre of the settlement, and used to be the backyards of the hotel and other buildings, used for storage and parking. Changes in traffic infrastructure in the 1930s demolished several buildings and left an open space. The design and use of the square is currently under extensive discussion. To most people, it is the very centre of town, surrounded as it is by shops, offices and the hotel.

Prætorius Square is an example of a structure developed through decades of utilization independently of the intentions of the town planners. The pressures from trade and business and from architectural interests are significant. From a preservation point of view the discussion on its future can be followed with mixed feelings, because the original

intention of the space is so far away from today's reality. Social and economic pressures in opposition to the interests of history are very real here. The congregation is generally willing to cater for business interests, but is also aware of the call for aesthetic improvements to the square.

God's Acre,

God's Acre, the cemetery, is unique in the Danish context. Most Danish cemeteries are connected to the Danish Folk Church. God's Acre is mentioned right from the founding of Christiansfeld. The cemetery is, apart from a few soldiers' graves, exclusively for the use of members of the congregation. It has an aesthetic value, and obviously a very functional value for the congregation. It is one of several spaces with trees and grass that at one point resulted in Christiansfeld being labelled as 'the first green city of Denmark'. Though slightly exaggerated, this description has much truth in it. The status of God's Acre is not an issue for discussion at the moment. Its future has generated some interest from the public in ensuring that graves are not removed.⁴ A few years ago, in a public discussion in Denmark about the right of immigrant Muslims to establish a cemetery, God's Acre was presented as a parallel example, one where the graves should not be destroyed.

General issues of concern

Relating to Christiansfeld means relating to a complex reality, where few, if any, have the ability to grasp all aspects. Yet in working towards the preservation of the settlement, forgetting even one aspect might be fatal. The economy has to be taken into account, as well as the needs of the citizens, the potential of local politicians, the values of the congregation, the cultural heritage, aesthetic and architectural values of the settlement, historical building techniques, the interests of tourists, and the sense of ownership by the various groups and individuals. But perhaps the most important aspect is the changing philosophies that move the process. The settlement is built in modern or even pre-modern times, but the religious body, a Christian congregation, treasures several qualities deeply rooted in the past, not in a way that romanticizes this past, but in a way that sees it as offering novel solutions to the present. The present post-modern era calls for other ways of dealing with problems. Transparency is important, decision processes are industrialised: it is possible to make decisions based on the views of experts whose relation to the project is as long-lived as their paid contract. Responsibility is counted in money, not in history, values or sheer idealism.



FIGURE 12 From the Prætorius Square. A house is in the process of being restored. The fast-food place will be taken away and the business will be moved into the building.

FIGURE 13 Restoration of Museumsgade No. 6. The roofing, windows and the wall exterior are being renovated.

It is thought possible to recreate a cultural and social environment by carrying out desk research, mentioning a few statistics, and presuming that the public will be more than happy to participate in the new model of social reality created. This is usually followed by the delivery of a report containing some recommendations, and then the collection of the fee. In other words, an artificial reality has seen the light of day; 'authenticity' is fitted into this reality, to whatever degree it is economically or even culturally viable. The cultural heritage is re-created to fit the needs of those people who wish to spend time in an 'authentic' environment. The problem is that the cultural heritage has changed into something



FIGURE 14 The road to God's Acre, Linden trees on both sides. Linden trees are common in Christiansfeld.



FIGURE 15 The entrance to God's Acre.

else in the meantime. Cultural heritage rooted in a religious presumption, or principle, or conviction, is an endangered species. The religious body is part of a game, which it is not well equipped to play. This very body itself is part of the heritage. The values of the religious body might be out of step with the perceptions of the well-meaning public, and the religious cultural heritage might not fit the management culture of the day. In other words, once the religious

dimension, on which a certain religious cultural heritage is founded, is overruled or even overrun by new economic, political and cultural interests, the next generation will inherit something different; what was there is gone forever.

Secularisation of society at large means less understanding of religious values; these are changed into 'cultural' values. It is increasingly difficult for a person dedicated to a religiously rooted conviction to make him- or herself understood, because such conviction might question the present-day relativism. This development is not, by any means, only negative, but overlooking these facts may have a destructive effect on the religious heritage in question. Cultural heritage has value *per se*, which is also relative, because all cultural heritage is valuable. As Northern Europe has moved into a post-secular society, religious convictions and pretensions change, new ones develop, and the religious heritage may be conceived differently from how the present-day religious body understands it. The relevant question might be: what could happen to the cultural heritage in that process? The answer might be: the cultural heritage is still cultural, something can still be inherited, but its character has changed. This leads to yet another question: to what extent is authenticity important, or its maintenance possible? Others must answer that question. It is evident, however, that any solution must recognize that those closest to the tangible and intangible values of the cultural heritage are the ones best positioned to take care of and to develop the heritage in question. But other present-day interests must also be acknowledged, and an environment of mutual respect between all stakeholders must be created.

The economy of the settlement is subject to current market forces. Private donations for upkeep are being sought, and Christiansfeld is discussing how to increase the rental value of the houses so that rents will cover maintenance costs. No assistance from the national government has been forthcoming, and the congregation is left to contend with market forces, relying on private funds and the local political administration.

The needs of the citizens include having modern, well-kept, moderately priced apartments, together with shops, schools, health facilities and other necessities in the neighbourhood, and having the satisfaction of living in a culturally interesting and friendly environment. It is long time since a majority of citizens had links to the Moravian Church, so for many the sense of ownership is less directed towards the religious values of the place, than to their own quality of life, including that of living in a peaceful and harmonious neighbourhood.



FIGURE 16 From the God's Acre. Newer houses can be seen outside God's Acre.



FIGURE 17 Prætorius Square, looking towards the southwest. To the left is the hotel, and to the right the Spielwerk building.

One of the important factors in Christiansfeld in developing a positive view of the heritage is the constructive interaction between the municipal political administration and the Moravian congregation. Historically the settlement was based on a specific interest of the Danish king in having a settlement in the region. The rules of the game were listed in the 1771 concession, and since then the relationship has developed according to the dictates of *realpolitik*. The politicians of Christiansfeld play an important role as facilitators of the current renovation project. Realities in the local municipal economy limit the scope of economic support for the cultural heritage to assistance in renovating living quarters.⁵ Christiansfeld is a comparatively small municipality of approximately 9,500⁶ people and has a comparatively large cultural heritage, the preservation of which requires external support. Expertise is also needed from outside. On the other hand, the identification of the citizens with their cultural heritage is rather strong in this small community.

Christiansfeld is significant as cultural heritage also on a regional and national level. Public attention to the restoration process is significant, as are efforts to preserve the settlement. The trick is to attract what could be called 'qualified attention' from 'qualified bodies,' i.e. from organizations within the government administration, as well as those without. It is less than helpful when the heritage authorities make a decision based on insufficient knowledge of the issue. Educating the authorities, equipping them to make decisions that serve the interest of the cultural heritage, respect the religious heritage, and

consider the quest of keeping the town alive, is an important and at times rather time-consuming task.

The values of the congregation reflect several intangible factors. As part of the general Christian conviction (see, for example, Hutton 1999), the congregation treasures functionality rather than luxury (Gollin 1967: 217). This is revealed by the architecture, and by the way in which the tangible assets are managed. This conviction can collide with present-day ideas, the development of luxury apartments for wealthy clients for example, or the addition of a gourmet restaurant in the hotel. It is not that wealthy citizens are unwelcome, but that such an exclusive approach conflicts with a basic, inclusive, inviting attitude that is deeply rooted in the life of a Christian congregation. In fact, to many in this part of the world, cultural heritage suggests expensive to build, exclusive buildings such as castles and churches. But Christiansfeld is a cultural heritage built not by wealthy noblemen, but by average income craftsmen, traders and workers. Present-day citizens of Christiansfeld are average income people; this is perhaps the most important factor in sustaining it as a living town, and not as a museum or a reserve of the privileged. Although congregational life in Christiansfeld is less significant now than in the past, what observers often do not register is that it is still alive and active. The widespread network of Moravians in many parts of the world is adding to its strength and developing its identity. The congregation understands the settlement as living religious heritage rather than as cultural heritage. This difference in understanding

can complicate relations between the congregation and well-meaning non-Moravians. This difference also gives the congregation the important task of ensuring that it is understood.

The so-called ‘Christiansfeld Initiative’ has shown, in an encouraging and constructive manner, viable ways of creating a dynamic interaction between the public (the municipality), economic resources, and the Moravian congregation. The ‘Christiansfeld Document’ of September 2000, which was a result of the first Christiansfeld Conference, served several objectives: the definition of strategic approaches enabling all stakeholders in Christiansfeld to maintain the Moravian heritage values, environment and relationships in the living town; and an exchange of information with other communities facing similar issues elsewhere.

A partnership was formed to focus on planning and implementation of renovation works in the town at large, on the promotion of Christiansfeld and its Moravian heritage, and to seek funds to undertake the necessary work (Christiansfeld document (in Danish), Sep 2000). It has had the two following results so far:

- 1) Funds for beginning the renovation activities have been obtained, and a partnership agreement signed between the donor ‘Fonden RealDania’⁷ and the Moravian congregation. The funds are being used for preservation planning and for renovating selected parts of the settlement.
- 2) A network of cities worldwide that have been initiated or founded by Moravians has been established. The Danish government has provided seed funding.

Conclusions

How can the settlement of Christiansfeld maintain and develop tangible and intangible values in the present context? There is a shared understanding that:

- Christiansfeld has high value as cultural heritage;
- Christiansfeld is a living town, and should continue as such;
- the Moravian congregation is not able, by its own means, to carry the economic burden of restoring the houses, and should be assisted in doing it;
- the public, the society, has a responsibility to assist in furnishing the means of the restoration work.

Opinions largely differ on:

- the understanding of the importance of intangible values in relation to tangible assets;
- how to maintain the idea of a living town with its cultural (architectural and aesthetic) values intact in the face of commercial interests.

The process of securing Christiansfeld for the future will be long and complicated. In order to move forward it is important that a common understanding is reached on the aim of the process, the fabric of the religious heritage including its intangible values, the precise definition of the cultural importance of the heritage, and the tasks and responsibilities of the stakeholders. The key idea is that the Moravian settlement, including its tangible and intangible values, is an important cultural asset that should be safeguarded for future generations.

This process will be furthered through a dialogue between the stakeholders, by the presence of financial support without qualifications that might be unacceptable, and through a dialogue between the experts and the citizens, including the congregation. The access to reliable scientific information and to experiences gained in similar religious and cultural contexts is important.

A preliminary conclusion at this time (late 2003) is that when public authorities and the religious body maintaining the heritage join forces, and assuming they agree on important principles, this optimizes the chances of preservation. Furthermore, the interaction between the public and the religious body seems

FIGURE 18

View to the west along Nørregade. From right to left: the former girls’ school, now a public library; a house owned by the Municipality; the Sisters’ House; and the Widows’ House.



to create a deeper understanding among all partners of the heritage values, including tangible forms and intangible values.

The understanding of what constitutes cultural heritage should in this case be tempered by an understanding of religious values. This calls for a trans-disciplinary⁸ approach to the discussion. The sustainable partner in this discussion, and in the follow up action is, the Moravian congregation. The best sources of assistance in the exercise of securing the religious heritage include the municipality, private⁹ and public funds.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Saal is a German term commonly used for the Moravian Church building. The basic design dates back to the church buildings of the ancient Moravian Church, founded in Bohemia in 1457.
- ² The expression Choir Saal is used for a Saal in a Choir House. These Saal were used for meditative and liturgical activities by the dwellers of the particular Choir House.
- ³ Gemeinlogi is a German word referring to the hostel or

guesthouse of the congregation. Later on, in 1854, it was called a hotel, reflecting the fact that guests without any particular relation to the Moravian congregation were invited to stay.

- ⁴ The normal state of affairs in Denmark is that graves are kept for a number of years, and when eventually the family decides to stop keeping and decorating the grave, or if the family simply disappears for any reason, the grave is cancelled, and can then be used for a new burial. The graves at God's Acre are never cancelled.
- ⁵ See <http://www.retsinfo.dk/DELFIN/HTML/A2001/0013529.htm>.
- ⁶ See: http://kommunefakta.netborger.dk/produkt/kfv3/dinkommune_resultat.asp?=-netborger&komid=509#gruppenr1.
- ⁷ 'Fonden RealDania' is a foundation, the result of a fusion between the credit association (or building society) Realdanmark and the Den Danske Bank. The main undertaking of the foundation is to support courses of public utility.
- ⁸ See <http://perso.club-internet.fr/nicol/ciret/english/charten.htm> (Charter of trans-disciplinarity, especially Articles 7-10). I am aware of the relativistic nature of the concept of trans-disciplinarity, but in the common interest of humanity for preserving a cultural heritage as Christiansfeld, trans-disciplinarity is a useful tool. Theology can have a dialogue with other sciences, while still upholding its truth.
- ⁹ The foundation 'Foreningen RealDania' is currently sponsoring phase 1 of the Christiansfeld renovation project.

Since its introduction to Sri Lanka in the third century BC, Buddhism has been an essential component of the living traditions of most Sri Lankans, and continues to be so. From the time of his birth and enlightenment in the sixth century BC, the Lord Buddha, his teachings (Dhamma), the order (Sangha), and the associated heritage have continued to live into the present. They are being protected, worshipped and followed by present generations.

Under colonial rule (1815–1948) traditional heritage protection practices (and even the notion of heritage) disappeared, and the newly-introduced ideas of archaeology and conservation began to play a major role in protecting Buddhist heritage sites, as well as other heritage sites. Despite moving toward formal conservation, in the beginning of the twentieth century the public began to restore religious edifices neglected for many years for other reasons – as a means of regaining their lost identity and, more importantly, to re-use them as places of worship. The colonial rulers had a mixed reaction towards this. After independence in 1948 demand for the use and ownership of religious heritage places increased, and so did their restoration. Sri Lankan professionals, who had welcomed international developments in conservation, were compelled to respond to the demands of the public to facilitate the religious use of, and practices on, Buddhist heritage sites. By trying to respond to these challenges, Sri Lanka has gained unique experience in reconciling religious use and practices with modern 'conservation' needs, and this is illustrated through several case studies.

Thereafter he placed in charge Loke Arakmen (Chief Conservator of Monuments) who was there present, and offered him also (to the Ruwanveli stupa). Enjoining on him to restore the Mirisaweti and other viharas, he (the king) gave him unlimited wealth and thus beautified the city as it was in former time, like the city of gods.

THIRTEENTH CENTURY INSCRIPTION FROM SRI LANKA

[GAMINI WIJESURIYA]

The past is in the present

PERSPECTIVES IN CARING FOR BUDDHIST HERITAGE SITES IN SRI LANKA

During the last century, conservation principles of the western school were applied all over the world, with little or no concern for the diversity of heritage or cultures. Those principles were developed at a time when they were required, and served their purpose, and their expansion in the light of the diverse issues confronted by conservation professionals was also a need of the day.

The past plays a major role in Buddhist communities, inspired by the religion itself (Wijesuriya 2003: 276). As expressed in the title of this paper, it will be shown that the past is 'living in the present' within the Buddhist context as a whole, a principle equally applicable to heritage. The idea of 'livingness' embedded in the religious heritage is synonymous with continuity, which is also a fundamental premise of conservation. The most important phenomenon of

this continuity is the survival of the original values and the associated communities of this heritage. The existence of continuity, original values and associated communities has greater implications for the conservation of religious heritage than for other types of heritage. For most other types of heritage we need to assign or recognise values, and identify communities for their protection, or to ensure their continuity for the future. Here the religious community does that for itself.

Sacredness is the inherited value that makes religious heritage different from other types of heritage. Recognition of these implications, and the development of appropriate principles, is required to maintain a balance between conservation needs and the accomplishment of the needs of religious communities. This paper attempts to illustrate this need by looking at Buddhism, and at several examples of the conservation of Buddhist heritage sites in Sri Lanka.

Buddhism is one of the earliest of the world's major religions, beginning in India in the sixth century BC with the enlightenment of Prince Siddhartha. Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka in the third century BC, from which time it was protected and propagated, creating a wealth of cultural heritage. As a result, a large proportion of Sri Lankan cultural heritage (including four of the six World Heritage Sites) belong to Buddhist traditions. History reveals an illustrious past devoted to the continuous care of Buddhist religious heritage (embracing restoration, repair and also new construction), much of which began to disappear with European colonial occupation in the nineteenth century. From this time, a centralised, government-controlled, European heritage management model (Wijesuriya 2003) was introduced and extended to Buddhist heritage sites that had been neglected for centuries, as well as to other heritage sites. Simultaneously, however,

the Buddhist community continued to care for its heritage, independently of government actions. The colonial government had a mixed reaction to this, and preferred heritage conservation to remain under government control, enacting strong legislation for this purpose. However, there were occasions when the government supported restoration of religious buildings.

After independence from colonial rule in 1948, the pressure from the public to use Buddhist heritage places for religious use and practices began to increase. This was a new challenge to those professional conservators who followed the European model, while serving the government. However, the living religious flavour of the heritage has to be considered a key element of the massive conservation programme undertaken in the country over the last half century. Although the professionals had to work within the framework of strong legislation and international norms, it will be shown that religious importance became the determining factor in conservation decision-making, thereby compelling the use of a bottom-up approach.

A review of sources already available on this subject forms the next part of this paper. Buddhist literature and other relevant sources are then examined in order to understand the nature of Buddhist heritage, the continuity or conservation ideals that exist in Buddhism itself, and their applicability to Buddhist heritage. While this will highlight the special nature of the religious heritage, case studies will show how a balance between modern conservation needs and religious requirements has been met.

Sources

The main source for this paper is the work of the Department of Archaeology of the Government of Sri Lanka, from its inception in 1890. Its records, both written and graphic, and mostly published, have formed a massive database available for scholarly work on the subject. Although the Department was started as a survey for recording monuments, issues related to the protection of living religious heritage had surfaced at very early stages.

In 1890 the British colonial government of Sri Lanka invited F.R. Oertel to prepare restoration plans for sacred monuments in the country. Oertel subsequently wrote that 'with the recent revival of Buddhism, it is natural that its votaries should desire

FIGURE 1
Restoration work starting on the Mirisaweti stupa at Anuradhapura



FIGURE 2
Work in progress
on the exterior
of the Mirisaweti
stupa



FIGURE 3
The Mirisaweti
stupa after the
completion of the
restoration



to have at least one of their historical shrines at their sacred city restored as near as possible to its original appearance' (Oertel 1895). He was referring to the ruins of the sacred city of Anuradhapura, which date from the third century BC to the eleventh century AD.

Even before independence, the Department had recognised the need for sensitivity in dealing with religious heritage. This was at a time when strong legislation had been introduced by the colonial government to control interventions on religious buildings. In 1945 Paranavitana, the first Sri Lankan to head the Department of Antiquities, wrote that such interventions had to be carried out without hurting the religious susceptibilities of the people, and that there was a need to convince the religious authorities that intervention by the Department did not affect their vested interests and traditional rights (Paranavitana 1947). Conservation principles had been developed to meet this situation.

This consciousness of the religious flavour of heritage under the care of the government continued throughout the history of the Department. Godakumbura, Head of the Department during 1960 and 1961, acknowledged that most of Sri Lanka's monuments were inseparably tied up with the

religion of the majority of the citizens. The UNESCO sponsored Cultural Triangle Project had the principle of caring for religiosity at the top of its agenda and stated that 'these sites will have to be considered as religious sites with monks and pilgrims playing their part in religious establishments' (Silva 1990: 235).

Legislative provisions of 1940 reflect the importance given to religious sensitivity:

Any person who does in, upon, to, near, or in any respect of any ancient monument which is held sacred or in veneration by any class of persons, any act which wounds or offends or is likely to wound or offend the religious susceptibilities of the class of persons by whom such ancient monument is held sacred or in veneration shall be guilty.

(ANTIQUITIES ORDINANCE 1940)

Roland Silva's work, in his capacity as the principal conservator for the Department for 30 years, followed by my own work over 17 years, reflects the continuity of the tradition of treating living religious heritage in a special manner. Wijesuriyah (2001b) examines the views on conservation held by both archaeologists and conservators, comparing them with the conserva-

tion of Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka, understood as a living religious heritage. The study revealed the relevance of religio-political influences on the conservation of religious heritage, the significance of user values, and the fact that restoration is inevitable in some cases. Questions were raised about the emphasis on materials, as against other intangible values of this heritage. Subsequently, I highlighted the loss of documentary value where work was undertaken by the public, noting that the public were usually labelled as ‘pious vandals’ by professionals working on the restoration of Buddhist monuments (Wijesuriyah 2001a). However, one main question remained unanswered at that time, which I propose to answer today: what about the user values of religious buildings as opposed to the documentary values?

Finally with regard to sources, Buddhist literature itself contains numerous guidelines for the planning and conservation of Buddhist monastic architecture. There are numerous inscriptions dating back to the third century BC, first written in Brahmi scripts and later in the Sinhala language, and occasionally in Sanskrit. Chronicles, including the Mahavamsa written in the fifth century AD, are also a source of inspiration on monastic architecture and its restoration.

Buddhist Heritage

In Buddhism, there are references to the Buddhas of the past, as well as to those of the future. The Sakyamuni Buddha, born in Nepal in the sixth century BC as Prince Siddhartha, and who attained enlightenment, belongs to the present. It is acknowledged that the demise of the Buddha took place in the same century, but this does not prevent followers from recognising that he is the Buddha of the present. His teachings, known as Dhamma, are current all the time, and his order of Sangha monks is the living legacy of the Sangha of the past. The Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, known as the Triple Gems, constitute the very core of the religion and have continued from generation to generation. This continuity was not limited to the Triple Gems, but also included those establishments, including monastic ones, that fostered the religion for centuries. It is in this context that one has to understand the Buddhist heritage.

Buddhist heritage can be understood in three categories: intellectual, intangible and tangible. The intellectual heritage is the plethora of writings containing the teachings of the Buddha, as well as commentaries and other literature added to the original work. All those written in the Pali language, and some in Sanskrit, are said to have originated in Sri Lanka, and will not form part of the present study. This study will explore the tangible and intangible (mostly inseparable) heritage created to support

and sustain the religious establishments, most of which are considered sacred by the followers of the faith. These range from the early sites associated with the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha, to ritual buildings of different forms, and to the monastic remains. Some of these are in a ruined condition, while others are still being used. In addition, there are iconographic materials such as sculptures and paintings.

For the purpose of this discussion, it is important to understand the patronage given by the religion itself to the creation and protection of the heritage. In the second week after enlightenment, the Buddha paid tribute to the peepal tree, *Ficus religiosa*, now known among Buddhists as the Bodhi Tree, which provided shelter for him to attain the Buddha-hood by gazing at it for one week. During his lifetime, when devotees requested a symbol to represent the Buddha while he was away, he advocated the Bodhi Tree be worshipped. This led to the planting of Bodhi Trees in temples and to shrines evolving around them. These shrines later became one of the most significant ritual buildings within a Buddhist monastery, and were known as Bodhi Tree Shrines. A sapling of the original Bodhi Tree, under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, was brought to Sri Lanka in the third century BC, and is still regarded as one of most sacred objects of worship.

Similarly, the Buddha advocated the worship of bodily relics of himself and his followers who attained higher status in religious life, called Arahant. This led to the development of another unique architectural tradition: stupas. These were built to enshrine relics and became permanent features of Buddhist monasteries. Under no circumstances could attempts be made to remove the relics once enshrined, although continued care for the stupa was necessary. The concept of the stupa was introduced from India, but its architecture reached a status in Sri Lanka far beyond its counterparts in the former country. The largest stupas built in the Buddhist world are found in Sri Lanka. The stupa is still the most significant ritual symbol of Buddhist monasteries in this part of the world, and is still being constructed in monasteries:

A cetiya (stupa) should be treated as a living Buddha. All the respect and honour that one pays to the Buddha should be paid to the cetiya as well.

(RAHULA 1956: 284)

In addition, there were several buildings advocated by the Buddha for ecclesiastical, ritual and living purposes. Living in the right atmosphere,

and in the right buildings, was part of the code of discipline. Vinaya, the Code of Discipline for Monks, even provides measurements for certain types of building. There are references to Buddhist monks as advocates for building monasteries, and sometimes they acted as architects. A sixth-century text, Manjusri Vastuvidyasastra, is a treatise entirely devoted to the building of Buddhist monasteries. It contains twenty-seven typical monastic plans.

According to the Buddhist text Mahaparinibbana Sutta (the story of the Buddha's demise), Buddha advocated pilgrimages to four places (where he was born, where he attained enlightenment, where he delivered the first discourse, and where death occurred). Pilgrimage therefore became an essential part of the Buddhist way of life. All these places have been centres of pilgrimage for centuries, and two of them are now World Heritage Sites: Lumbini, the birthplace, and Bodh-Gaya, the place where he attained enlightenment. Visits to these places are well recorded, firstly by Emperor Asoka in the third century BC, followed by well-known Buddhist pilgrims like Fa-hsien in the fifth century.

Worship of images was developed at a later stage than that of the stupas and the Bodhi Tree. However, with the advent of images to represent the Buddha, an entirely new architectural and artistic tradition of images and image houses evolved. The scale of the images varies considerably, and they are found in large numbers. All of them were made either as movable objects, or *in situ* from large rocks, but with a shelter to cover them. Here again, intangible values are strongly attached to tangible materials.

The Buddhist considers constructing monastic buildings and attending to repairs meritorious acts. There are numerous stories to this effect:

The restoration of religious buildings was regarded as being so meritorious that, according to an inscription, Monk scarified his ration of food for the restoration of Jetavana stupa.

(EZ. VOL. 3: 132, IN RAHULA: 1956 186).

LIVINGNESS—CONTINUITY—RENEWAL

The Sangha continued to carry the message of the Buddha, supported by the rulers and the associated community who placed their trust in the religion. Sacred places also continued to survive, while new ones were continually being added. Continuity of the heritage is the most significant phenomenon that is discussed below. Buddhist heritage places were born with a value attached to them. Contrary to the Buddhist concept of impermanency of things,

continuity of these heritage places was guaranteed throughout. The impermanency of materials was accepted, but the monuments continued to live with the replacement of decayed materials. For this process, contributions were made by monks and rulers as well as by the general public.

It is believed that some of the early stupas were built on places sanctified by the Buddha in his visits to Sri Lanka, and these are considered to have enshrined relics still surviving, although they have been subject to numerous repairs. The significant values attached to them make it impossible to present them in a ruined or dilapidated condition. If a stupa is to be considered as the living Buddha, it should be seen in its full functional state and convey the symbolic meaning it represents. However, because building materials are subject to decay, continuity can only be guaranteed through renewal by means of repairs. Religion itself, and its patrons, has provided sufficient knowledge and support for this continuity.

According to the Code of Discipline for Monks, monks are allowed to be involved in repair work (Cullavagga, in Rahula 1956: 185). Dilapidated monasteries are not suitable for the meditative life of monks (Visuddhimagga), therefore 'whatever place the monks may be attached to, they should not allow it to become dilapidated.' (Ez. 1: 4, in Rahula 1956: 185). There are numerous examples of monks' involvement with repair work.

In the Mahavamsa, the Great Chronicle, a text compiled by Buddhist monks in the fifth century AD (although it contains historical material dating back to the sixth century BC), there are hundreds of references to the continuous repair/restoration/renewal of religious buildings by the rulers and the public, as well as by monks. The following are some of the references to be found in the Mahavamsa:

Ruler of men restored the (Lohapasada) by raising again its 1600 pillars. In the ancient parivenas, the Thuparama and others, he saw to restoration of whatever was decayed or had fallen in... On Cetiya-giri he had sixty-four thupas rebuilt and had restored on the old buildings whatever was decayed or had fallen in.

(MHV. 78: 96–109)

...ruler of men, and in like manner the restoring of ruined buildings must be carried out.

(MHV. 35: 75)

Stone inscriptions also contain many references to the repair work done by the rulers. To illustrate

this, here is the current information about the first stupa built in Sri Lanka in the third century BC:

King Devanampiya Tissa built it (247–207 BC).

King Lajjatissa (119–110 BC) added a stone mantling to the thupa.

King Vasabha (67–111 AD) built the thupaghara (Vatadage).

King Gotabhaya (249–263 AD) restored the thupaghara.

King Upatissa I (365–406 AD) made a gold casing for the pinnacle of the thupa.

King Dhatusena (455–473 AD) carried out repairs.

King AggaBodhi II (604–614 AD) completely renovated the thupa and thupaghara, his repairs extending to the temporary removal of the collarbone relic from the relic chamber. The relic chamber itself was renovated and many new reliquaries were placed inside.

King Kassapa II (650–659 AD) restored the thupa.

King Manavamma (684–718 AD) restored the roof of the thupaghara.

King AggaBodhi VI (733–772 AD) repaired the doors and transposed the pillars of the thupaghara.

King Mahinda II (777–797 AD) enclosed the thupa in a gold and silver casing.

King Dappula II (815–831 AD) covered the thupaghara over with golden bricks and installed doors of gold.

King Sena II (853–887 AD) restored the gold plate casing.

King Udaya II (887–898 AD) also covered the thupa with gold plate.

King Mahinda IV (956–972 AD) covered the thupa with strips of gold and silver, and installed a golden door in the thupaghara.

King Parakramabahu I (1153–1186 AD) restored the thupa and thupaghara

(NICHOLAS 1963: 131–32).

In the last century, this particular stupa was restored to its present state with public patronage.

The rulers played a major role in protecting religious buildings. Chroniclers have highlighted that the foremost duties of the newly-crowned king were to pay respect to the monastery and the Sangha, attend to repair work, and donate wealth for their maintenance, thus demonstrating their interest in the religion (Rahula 1956: 70).

Anuradhapura, the first capital of the country, where Buddhism was established in the third century

BC and which continued to prosper until the end of eleventh century, had been the centre of attention of all the rulers, even though they had to change their seat of government from place to place. Parakramabahu I, King of Polonnaruva (1153–1186 AD), sent a Minister in charge of restoration work to the monasteries of Anuradhapura (Mhv. 78: 101), which over the centuries had become dilapidated through neglect. His successor, King Nissankamalla (1187–1196 AD), appointed an officer to be in charge of the restoration work, as mentioned in one of the inscriptions:

Thereafter he placed in charge 'Loke Arakmena' who was there present, and offered him also (to the Ruwanweli stupa). Enjoining on him to restore the Mirisaweti and other viharas, he gave him unlimited wealth... and thus beautified the city as it was in former time, like the city of gods.

(EZ. VOL. 2: 83)

The post of the officer 'Loke Arakmena' has been translated as 'Chief Conservator of Monuments' in present-day context. One of the last kings of Kandy, King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe (1747–1780), also made a mission to repair many of the ruined temples, and especially attended to the repair of the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree.

There seem to have existed severe penalties or consequences for not attending to repair work on religious buildings. In the first century BC, King Elala ordered his own death after his chariot had damaged a stupa (Mhv. 21: 22–25). Whatever the truth may be, the chronicler's intention had been to draw the attention of the rulers to the seriousness of the destruction of monuments. Another event recorded in Mahavamsa provides evidence to this effect: the king had neglected the restoration of Thuparama when it became dilapidated. One night, he had a dream in which he was threatened that, if the repairs were not attended to, the relics of the Buddha enshrined in it would be removed. The following morning the king attended to the restoration work (Mhv. 41: 52–56).

There are many references in Mahavamsa that illustrate concern for monuments and their state of conservation. The condition of the buildings and interventions in Polonnaruva in the thirteenth century are described in the chronicles:

Some of these (buildings) stand erect, covered with grass, trees and whatever else has grown upon them. Others have collapsed without support as the whole of their pillars perished; others again alas! will fall, being under the weight of walls cracked from top

to foot, because other support is wanting. Some of these, through decay and old age are like greybeards, and unable to stand erect, they become more bowed from day to day. With many the joists are broken and their pinnacles destroyed, with others the roofs have decayed and bricks are broken. In others, by the breakage of the damaged roof tree, the bricks of the roof have fallen and only the walls and pillars remain. In others again, the gates have fallen in and the hinging of the gateposts destroyed...of what use are many words? This town, which has lost all its glory, we shall again make glorious.

(MHV. 88: 90–101)

Another example of inscriptional evidence is the following text:

Viharas which were so (completely) destroyed that (the very sites) were not recognizable (even as to say) this was such a place and was such a type; these royal cities, viharas, etc. (he reconstructed) at their original site.

(EZ. VOL. 1: 53)

Continuous renewal work would have been supported by principles and procedures. We have already noted logistical aspects, such as the appointment of ministers and officers. It is a well-known fact that Indian literature such as Mayamatha, a treatise on architecture with a chapter on restoration, was in circulation in Sri Lanka. The following principle quoted from Mayamatha, which would have guided conservation work of religious buildings, has a very modern outlook:

Those temples whose characteristics are still (perceptible) in their principal and secondary elements (are to be restored) with their own materials. If they are lacking in anything or have some similar type of flaw, the sage wishing to restore them (must proceed in such a way) that they regain their integrity and that they are pleasantly arranged (anew); this (is to be done) with the dimensions – height and width – which were theirs and with decoration consisting of corner, elongated and other areas, without anything being added (to what originally existed) and always in conformity with the initial appearance (of the building) and with the advice of the knowledgeable.

(MAYAMATHA, IN DAGENS 1985: 335)

In addition to having officers appointed to overlook restoration, there are references to the methodical development of technical skills required for conservation work. The following text from a ninth century inscription provides ample evidence for this:

(There shall be) clever stonecutters and skilful carpenters in the village devoted to the work of (temple) renewal. They all... shall be experts in their (respective) work. To each of them shall be given a field of one and a half kiri (in sowing extent) for their maintenance... an enclosed piece of ground. And one hena (or a plot of dry land) shall be granted to each of them for the purpose of sowing fine grain. Means of subsistence of the (same) extent (as is) given to one of these, shall be granted to the officer who superintends work. Moreover, when thus conferring maintenance of latter person, his work and so forth shall (first) be ascertained, and the name of him (thus) settled (with a livelihood), as well as his respective duties, shall be recorded in the register. Those of the five castes who work within the precincts of the monastery shall receive (their) work after it has been apportioned; and they alone shall be answerable for its correctness. The limit (of time) for the completion of work is two months and five days.

Blame (shall be attributed to) the superintendents, the varikas and the labourers who do not perform it according to arrangement. Those who do not avoid blame, (and) do not do (the work) or cause it to be done (as arranged), shall be deprived of their share. (Ez. Vol. 1: 8–9)

Maintenance

It is an interesting phenomenon to note that properties were granted to a newly built monastery for its regular maintenance (there are many references to this in Mhv. and Ez). Maintenance refers to both the supply of the four requisites of food, shelter, cloth and medicine for the inmates, and to repairs in connection with the monastic buildings. There were grants of properties made exclusively for the purpose of repairing monastic buildings (Ez. Vol. 1: 239). Taxes from some of the properties were set apart for the maintenance of monasteries. Every law made in connection with monastic properties was meant to be applicable infinitely, and was expected to be honoured

by future rulers. That Queen Leelawathi ‘caused an alms house with the title... to be established, protected and maintained’ (Ez. Vol. 1: 18) is a statement typical of those found in the chronicles and inscriptions.

The properties donated for the purpose of maintenance of monasteries were protected by law and were exempted from all taxes, etc. (Ez. Vol. 3: 105). One such piece of legislation from the eighth century AD, written on a stone pillar known as the Atthani pillar, is worth quoting. The first part of it refers to the boundaries of the village donated to the monastery and the second part reads as follows:

To the villages, royal officers and irrigation officers shall not enter. Those of the archery department, the tax officers (melassi), headmen in charge of districts and of provinces shall not enter. The employees at the two offices, deruvana, perelaki (function not known), archers, guards, and those of the paid services shall not enter. Carts, oxen, labourers, imposts of cooked and raw rice, and periodical gifts of milk and oil should not be taken... having forbidden the entry of the aforesaid persons, we, two of us (the two officers who planted the pillar), have given to these villages the immunities (sanctioned by) the Council.

(EZ. VOL. 3: 105).

Contrary to present day practices where we assign values, religious buildings were born with values and built to last forever (Tuan 1977: 106). Literary and archaeological evidence shows that they were renewed continuously and retained the intangible dimensions of the values. The continued care of religious buildings from the time they were constructed, according to set principles and tradition, and with a skilled workforce, has been a part of the traditions and the livingness of the religion. Continued maintenance, and adequate funding with political and community support, were the other important factors.

The phenomenon of the past becoming a part of the living present can only happen with a very strong tradition of continuity – a sense of conservation – and the above discussion proves it beyond doubt. Such continuity requires a well-established process. Buddhist literature, chronicles, various historic documents, and traditions reveal that Buddhism contains a profound commitment to the conservation of its intellectual, intangible and tangible heritage. The present generation, therefore, not only has a right to use religious heritage, but also

has the obligation to care for it. Continuous renewal (using different terminologies) of heritage property is part of this process. The purpose of such renewal is not necessarily to retain the material contents, but to sustain the cultural meaning, significance of places, and symbolism attached to heritage.

Conservation issues at living religious sites today

The concept of built-in continuity, and the existence of original values and associated communities, make it necessary for professionals to re-examine their approach to conservation of sacred heritage. As stated earlier, conserving the sacred has been a central goal in Sri Lankan conservation history. There has been a continuous debate on the subject that reflects different reactions from different groups. It has been an issue involving all cross-sections of the society in a country in which 69% are followers of Buddhism. Conserving the sacred involves a range of management issues and a long process of consultation and consensus building, as I have discussed elsewhere (Wijesuriya 2000).

The case studies are presented below from the point of view of modern conservation professionals. They illustrate the debates that took place about a complex set of management issues, and they show how the professionals modified their approaches accordingly. These approaches ranged from the adoption of new legal frameworks to the control and facilitation of the conservation of sacred heritage through integrated planning. When dealing with the conservation of sacred heritage, the more familiar top-down process of decision-making was changed to a bottom-up approach, placing priority on inherent values and the voice of the associated communities.

The first case study, on stupa restoration, illustrates the long-standing debate on interventions on sacred buildings. The views of the associated communities and their attitudes towards conserving their sacred heritage and the professional views are well reflected in this discussion. The case study shows how the professionals managed early in the process to bring in tough legislation and use existing management regimes to control or prohibit conserving sacred heritage. The case study also shows the transformation of the same legislation and management systems for the professional interventions in conserving sacred heritage at a later stage. Although the main emphasis is on restoration (the end product that the public would like to see), the process involves a range of conservation management issues that cannot be discussed in this paper due to the limitation on length.

The second example deals with the conservation of a large geographical area with many sacred buildings and sites. This illustrates how the sacredness of the ancient city centre of Anuradhapura has moved the entire political and administrative structure of the country to invent innovative approaches to conserving the city centre.

The third example relates to a micro-level conservation approach adapted to one site within the above-mentioned sacred city of Anuradhapura. This concerns an archaeological site with remains from the third century BC as well as one of the most sacred stupas built in the second century BC. This example shows how sacredness dominated the decision-making process and the approach to the conservation of the entire site.

CASE STUDY 1: CONSERVING STUPAS

As already mentioned, the stupa is the most sacred building in a Buddhist monastery. Some of the stupas in Sri Lanka built in the third century BC continue to serve as sacred objects of worship to the Buddhist. It is believed that most of the early stupas have enshrined the relics of the Buddha. Their values have never diminished, and the followers have a great faith in the old stupas when compared to the modern. These stupas were subjected to continuous renewal, but the traditional systems of renewal came to a halt with the beginning of colonial occupation in the nineteenth century.

Modern western heritage management systems began to appear in the country from the end of the nineteenth century (Wijesuriya 2003). Pressure for renewal of stupas for religious use began to surface eventually among the Buddhist community, which had also started a campaign for national independence. They themselves began to restore stupas; the colonial government brought in new legislation to control this. Very soon however, the government itself recognised the religious significance of the stupas and became involved in restoring stupas to satisfy the religious community. What is presented below is the experience of the evolution of professional involvement in conserving the most sacred buildings. The study shows how the balance between modern conservation needs and the needs of the religious communities has been established.

Restoration restoration societies

With the colonial occupation in the nineteenth century, the traditional social system began to collapse and the major religious centres such as Anuradhapura were totally neglected. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the colonial government began an archaeological survey and documentation of the ruins in

the jungle. A major religious revival movement also appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Restoration of some of the well-known stupas was one activity of this movement, which was led by Buddhist followers and monks, and was independent of government support. They organized 'restoration societies' to undertake these projects. Local traditional skills were utilized, but there was very little modern technical know-how. Badly dilapidated stupas were restored in entirety, though the accuracy of this work cannot be judged at present. Documentation of how they arrived at the restored form of the stupa is lacking, as well as information about how the structures were strengthened.

The colonial government did not interfere directly with these restorations. However, in 1888 when the King of Thailand, who was on a pilgrimage to Anuradhapura, offered money to restore one of the oldest stupas (known as the Miriwasweti), the colonial government sought the assistance of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain for an expert to draw up restoration plans. F. R. Oertel, an architect and engineer, was assigned the task. He prepared restoration plans and implemented the restoration work, but could not see it through to its conclusion. However, his views on the restoration of at least one of the stupas are worth quoting:

As regards the general principles that should guide us in the task of conservation, I need hardly say that we should confine ourselves to preservation, and that restoration is only justified when the preservation of the rest of the structure demands it. In this light, the restoration of Mirisaweti must be regarded as an exceptional case. With the recent revival of Buddhism, it is natural that its votaries should desire to have at least one of their historical shrines at their sacred city restored as near as possible to its original appearance, to what these mysterious monuments were like when complete, and to serve as a guide in similar restorations which may be undertaken in the future. It cannot be doubted that the government is justified in assisting these efforts, both as the custodian of Ceylon's ancient monuments and for reasons of policy, for it must be remembered that Ceylon is still regarded with special veneration by all the southern Buddhists in Burma, Siam (Thailand), Annam, and throughout the Indian Archipelago as the source from which the sacred law emanated.

(OERTEL 1903: 9)

Although Oertel expressed his views on the need to limit restoration, this particular work to regain the outer ‘appearance’ by restoration was supported as a need of Buddhist devotees. Concern for saving material remains was not the main purpose of his restoration plans. It is interesting to note here that, at this time in England, people like Ruskin were vehemently opposed to the restoration of religious buildings. In fact, as early as 1905, Coomaraswamy, the well-known oriental philosopher, introduced the philosophy of Ruskin and others to the country. In an open letter he requested the chiefs of the Kandy area (where most of the historic buildings of the seven-teenth and eighteenth centuries had been preserved) to protect historic buildings, and he introduced the following words of William Morris on restoration to the Sri Lankan society:

It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them to put protection in the place of restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; in fine, to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying.

(COOMARASWAMY 1905)

H. C. P. Bell, the first Commissioner of Archaeology (1890–1910), was not involved in any restoration work, though he occasionally remarked upon ‘unsuitable restoration work’, and stressed the need for continuous supervision by a person qualified in such matters (Hettiarachchi 1990: 66). However, when the country’s largest restoration project was started in the 1930s (the restoration of the Maha stupa), pressure from the government against such work began to mount. This was instigated mainly by foreign archaeologists serving in the government, and led to the emergence of new legislation aimed at limiting the restoration of monuments by the general public. Those who restored religious buildings were labelled as ‘pious vandals’, the terminology used in England for a similar group who restored religious building in the 1840s (Wijesuriya 1993). The situation

is well expressed in the statement of the Department as follows:

In the course of an address before the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch) in 1930, Dr. Goloubew, the well-known archaeologist of L’Ecole Française de l’Extreme Orient, referred to the ‘pious vandals’ who were at work in Ceylon. Anuradhapura is being gradually spoilt by this desire for restoration. Nothing, however strong, that one might say on this subject can compare with the strong expressions of opinion of foreign archaeologists who have visited Anuradhapura on the amazing lack of regard that the Buddhists of Ceylon seem to have towards the proper conservation of their sacred buildings. It should be stated, however, that many prominent Buddhists view with alarm the activities of certain restoration committees. It is to be hoped that public opinion will soon put a curb on these acts of ‘vandalism’.

The Archaeological Department will never see eye to eye with ‘restorers’ who wish to erect an entirely new structure upon the ancient remains of the original fabric. Such restoration is opposed to all archaeological principles. The archaeological attempts to discover and uncover (excavate) the remains of ancient buildings with a view to ascertaining by scientific process the history of associated with buildings. The final duty of the archaeologist is to conserve the ruins that have thus been exposed. He is permitted to reconstruct, from the material which he finds, his conception of the morphology of the buildings. But he must not add new material except in so far as such additions may be necessary to give strength and thus assist in the art of conservation.

It will doubtless be a disappointment to many devout Buddhists to know that the programme of the Archaeological Department will never include grandiose schemes for the restoration to a semblance of their former glory of some of the palaces and holy places of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. So far as the archaeologist is concerned these ancient cities will never be anything but cities of ruins.

(ASCAR 1931)

The Department of Archaeology's determination to consider ancient ruins only as materials moved it to prohibit restoration work through legislative means, and to suggest that:

the present Antiquities Ordinance of 1900 is inadequate and the Department finds that the extension of the Ordinance is being frustrated, and in practice it is found difficult to maintain actions for unauthorized restoration work. A fuller, more definite and more drastic Ordinance, on the lines of the Indian Act, is necessary.

(ASCAR 1933)

This is further highlighted in the annual report of the following year:

The deplorable manner in which ancient religious monuments in private ownership have been restored in recent times has repeatedly been commented upon, both in the reports of this Department and elsewhere. There are signs that the Buddhists themselves are beginning to realize the harm done to their religious shrines by the pious and well-meant but ill-planned efforts of the restorers; and letters on this subject appear in the daily press very frequently. But unfortunately, those who actually exert themselves in these works of restoration do not yet seem to have realized that they are doing anything but meritorious work, in completely renovating the ancient edifices according to their own standards of beauty; and on the other hand those who make public protests against what they call acts of vandalism do not generally belong to the temple-building section of the Buddhists.

(ASCAR 1933)

With the ambitious aim of controlling restoration work, the new Antiquities Ordinance became law in 1940. Its focus was mainly on monuments that were under private ownership.

It is above all in the provision which it makes for the protection of ancient monuments other than those on the crown land, that the new Antiquities Ordinance makes an advance on its predecessor.

(ASCAR 1940–45)

By the time this new legislation came into effect, restoration societies had completed several

restorations of old stupas from different parts of the country. This legislation, on the other hand, provided for controlled restoration to be done under the care of professional input from the Department. Restoration plans were to be approved by an advisory body comprising representatives from all cross-sections of society. In 1948, Sri Lanka regained her independence, after which Buddhism also began to regain its position in the society.

Restoration by conservation professionals

Within the provisions of the new legislation, the Department embarked on a major programme of conserving sacred buildings belonging to private parties. These were mainly Buddhist temples. The Department had to recognise the importance of the religious structures and add the religious flavour to their conservation work. Paranavitana writes:

In controlling the restoration of ancient shrines by private bodies, the Department has undertaken a task bristling with many difficulties. It has to be carried out without hurting the religious susceptibilities of the people; for this, much work of an educative nature has to be undertaken to convince the religious authorities that intervention by the Department does not affect their vested interests and traditional rights.

(ASCAR 40–45)

After independence in 1948, the Department had to undertake more restoration work, due to mounting religious-political pressure. Maintaining a link between the work carried out by the Department and the modern notions of conservation was indeed a challenge. The Commissioner of Archaeology reports:

Most of our monuments are inseparably tied up with the religion of the majority of the citizens and this often makes it difficult to hold the balance between the conflicting interest of science and religion... as we proceed to write this report on yet another year's progress of the Department we sincerely hope that we have satisfactorily met the demands of both religion and science.

(ASCAR 1961/62)

The Department experimented with several models for conservation of ruined stupas, but the most acceptable to the religious community was complete restoration. In line with the provisions of the law, it developed a set of principles to be used

in restoration work. What follows are some of the principles adopted as early as 1947:

It has to be kept in mind that the proper restoration of an ancient monument is a work of highly specialised nature, requiring in the person who carries it out a thorough knowledge of evolution of art, architecture and culture which produced it and a feeling therefore, often to be required by a lifetime devoted to it. Modern technical and scientific developments have also to be called into aid if such restoration is to be carried out efficiently, without endangering the ancient fabric.

(PARANAVITANA 1947)

Restoration plans were to be prepared by qualified persons and approved by the Department of Archaeology, where there had been an architect since 1942. There were provisions for supervision and monitoring of the work. Provisions were also available to consult an advisory board that comprised representatives from professionals, the public and religious authorities.

The principal motive behind preparing restoration plans was the religious significance and the user value attached to the stupas under consideration. Restoration plans were prepared to achieve the objective of regaining the complete form with its symbolic meaning. This was considered more important than the protection of material remains, as such new materials for missing parts were added. Principles adopted by the Department in its restoration work were:

- restoration plans were prepared with archaeological and other relevant data;
- conjecture was accepted, if carried out in sympathy with styles;
- detailed records of all interventions, and modern additions were kept;
- the latest historic phase was selected so as to protect the layers underneath (some earlier phases were displayed);
- selected samples were restored rather than committing to restoring all stupas;
- development of an in-house skill base for future work was emphasized;
- new materials were used, but of the same type and dimensions, and with a contemporary stamp;
- minimum damage to the old materials was desired;
- use of modern materials and technology to guarantee the stability of the structure were encouraged.

CASE STUDY 2: CONSERVING A SACRED CITY CENTRE

Anuradhapura was the capital of the country from the sixth century BC to the eleventh century AD and has numerous Buddhist monastic remains. Its living nature is well reflected in activities which occur daily, monthly on the day of the full moon, and annually in June on the day of the full moon, when over one million people visit. This day marks the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka from India, in the third century BC. It was the most sacred city for Buddhists in Sri Lanka and a great centre of pilgrimage for the entire Buddhist community.

The Anuradhapura Sacred Area Planning Scheme was one of the earliest integrated conservation planning exercises. Special legislation was introduced for this purpose. Under this, a development plan was prepared for the entire ancient city of Anuradhapura, covering an area of 14 square miles and including several sacred sites, fifteen hundred years of buried cultural deposits, and many archaeological remains on the surface. The programme aimed at providing:

- an appropriate environment for pilgrimages;
- protection of the eight most sacred places in Anuradhapura;
- infrastructure;
- density and character control;
- smooth functioning of archaeological activities.

Under the programme, a new town was built to resettle the people who had built houses on the sacred sites. This has sometimes been misunderstood, or misinterpreted, as a removal of local communities who had maintained a traditional way of life. In fact, these were people who had settled on the sites in the recent past: they had not been present over generations and did not have traditional lifestyles. The sacred atmosphere that should exist in and around monuments and sites was severely affected (quite apart from site destruction) by these people, and numerous activities were being carried out that were incompatible with a religious environment, such as alcohol consumption and the sale of meat. In fact, it is Buddhists from all over the country who make up the community that is attached to these sacred sites. It was not thought justifiable to deprive the Buddhist community (two-thirds of Sri Lanka's population) of their rights simply to accommodate the wishes of several hundred families. This was why the people living at the site were removed to a new location where they were provided with modern facilities and the means of living.

Most importantly, this project provided a new management structure to bring all the stakeholders under one umbrella, and received the highest political patronage for conserving the most sacred city in the

country. It provided the flexibility that was not available within the government system to carry out an integrated approach, drawing resources from all concerned agencies, the general public and religious communities. This is the system presently being used for managing the World Heritage Site of Anuradhapura.

CASE STUDY 3: CONSERVING AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

The third example is an archaeological site that contains one of the largest monastic complexes in Anuradhapura. The history of the site dates back to the second century BC, as evidenced by the remains and references in the chronicles. It is recorded that there was a ruin of a stupa from the second century BC, and that the monastic complex continued to evolve and function until the end of the eleventh century AD. This stupa was called Mirisaweti, and was a sacred site well-known to Buddhists. The stupa is the main feature of the site, but there are also extensive archaeological remains spanning fifteen hundred years that comprise buried deposits and standing buildings.

The stupa had to be restored to its former glory at the request of the religious community, and the restoration was fully financed by the government. Considering the need to maintain a balance between religious significance/use and archaeological values, a conceptual framework for the conservation of the entire site was developed. The concept was dominated by the significance attached to the religious sentiments of the Buddhist community. This concept had three objectives: worship, understanding and impressions.

Worship

This objective was to provide an atmosphere conducive to religious activities and pilgrimages, but limited to the precincts of the stupas. This was supplemented by structures such as flower altars within the compound and a residence for the Buddhist monk, who is the guardian and is in attendance to perform religious activities on a daily basis. The residence was located within a reasonable distance, but with minimum disturbance to the ruins.

Understanding

This objective provided for the interpretation of the site. Typical features of a Buddhist monastic complex are the stupas, image house, chapter house and the Bodhi Tree Shrine, which were in close proximity to each other and surrounded by the residential buildings. For the purpose of presentation, the image house, chapter house and two of the residential complexes were excavated and consolidated.

Impressions

It was decided to leave the balance of the archaeological remains without restoration to allow the public to walk around and form their own impressions.

A circulation pattern was established for anyone entering the site to visit one or all of these features without disturbing the religious activities.

This was an acceptable solution for the religious and political community.

Conclusions

Conservation of Buddhist heritage places needs to be looked at from the perspective of Buddhism being a living religion. Livingness has the concealed meanings of conservation and continuity. In addition, it is necessary to recognise the fact that these heritage places have passed down to the present generation, with their original values still intact and linked to their associated communities. This is clearly revealed from the Buddhist literature and the historic records presented in this study.

In this context, it is clear that this heritage belongs to the present, and the present generation has the right to use it, and the fulfilment of their satisfaction cannot be undermined or undervalued. Although there is very strong legislation to regulate conservation of the Buddhist heritage of Sri Lanka, this cannot alone achieve its purpose. On the other hand, professional contributions have been well recognised, with the proviso that religious values govern conservation decisions. The examples presented here show that it is not impossible to reconcile religious use and practices with conservation needs. In a world of conservation, where we have placed a great emphasis on the protection of material remains and ensuring the authenticity of materials, it may be difficult to understand these new approaches. However, a wider dialogue is already in place and, certainly, the ICCROM Forum was one event that promoted such a dialogue.

Abbreviations

Ez.	Epigraphia Zeylanica
Mhv.	Mahavamsa and Culavamsa
ASCAR	Archaeological Survey of Ceylon; Administrative Report.
JRAS (CB)	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)

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Following discussion of the key terms implicit in the phrase 'living religious heritage', two case studies from Japan are presented. The first, the Ise Shrine, is an example of a periodic rebuilding ritual; the second, the Gion Matsuri Festival in Kyoto, is an annual religious festival. As background to the case studies, the Japanese system of heritage protection is explained, as well as tangible/intangible issues and the question of authenticity.

NOBUKO INABA

The Ise Shrine and the Gion Festival

CASE STUDIES ON THE VALUES AND AUTHENTICITY OF JAPANESE INTANGIBLE LIVING RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

Terminological issues

WHAT DOES 'RELIGIOUS' MEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF 'LIVING RELIGIOUS HERITAGE'?

If we approach 'Living Religious Heritage' only from the aspect of the physical expression of heritage and its conservation, the confrontation or contradiction of needs between material-oriented conservation and the religious activities utilizing the heritage would be unnecessarily overemphasized. The awareness of the communities to which the concerned heritage belongs (in this case the religious communities), as well as the conservation or regeneration of structures of heritage value satisfying conservation ethics, are already under discussion around the world.

What kind of heritage are we going to talk about under the theme of 'Living Religious Heritage'? Are we speaking of the buildings or the objects that are used for religious purposes, which therefore qualify them to be identified as 'living'? Or are they the ongoing, literally living religions or religious activities themselves? Or something else?

Religion: from this most important keyword, we are immediately reminded of the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues, or many other similar

tragedies resulting from religious conflicts. Today, any discussion on and around religion may bring us to a discussion on world peace. How can we develop our discussion positively without revealing only the difficulties between religion and heritage?

Responding to this question, the first thing that came to mind was the strength of peoples' faith, which is still playing an important role in communities in many Asian countries. In some temple compounds in small villages in remote areas of Asia, not only the statues enshrined there, but also ornaments and utensils are of heritage value, and are still in use for the village residents' rituals and festivals, which are also themselves heritage. Instead of removing these objects from the original place to a modern museum, it is more important to pursue a holistic approach that recognizes these properties as a total expression of their host culture, combining tangible (both immovable and movable) and intangible expressions of heritage together with the natural/cultural landscape.

What is clear from the beginning, and therefore what we should bear in mind when developing our discussion, is the fact that, whatever the heritage types, the relationship between religion and heritage – whether the conditions are negative or positive – depends very much on the characteristics of the

religions themselves and their relation to the society.

To explain this more clearly, it can be said that the conditions for our discussion are quite different when we talk about the major worldwide established religions with influential power – such as religions which have been given the status of state religions in many countries – as opposed to when we are talking about the minor or indigenous religions which are integral parts of the culture in smaller communities that are threatened and are to be protected. It should be clear what the status of the religion is in terms of the discussion in relation to the society, if we would like to proceed with the discussion on religious heritage.

WHAT DOES 'LIVING' MEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF 'LIVING RELIGIOUS HERITAGE'?

Let's move on to another point of discussion on the theme of this volume: living. The wording 'living heritage' or just 'living' has come to be used widely recently, reflecting the increasing awareness of the importance of this concept. Some use the word 'living' as an antonym of 'dead', meaning to indicate a type of heritage still in use. Others use this concept for heritage sites where people actually live in or around the site. The usage or the definition of the concept differs, depending on the objectives of the discussion. However, whatever the sphere of our discussion, it is certain that we are currently in the

middle of a larger effort to explore a new, more holistic approach to heritage conservation, giving attention to human-related/non-material aspects of heritage value and trying to link with the surrounding societies and environments, going beyond the classical material-oriented conservation practice of monumental heritage.

Pursuing the discussion around the keyword 'living' in this larger movement of the heritage conservation society, we find that this has also been much discussed through another keyword, the term 'intangible'. The deliberations involving the keywords of 'living' and 'intangible' are very much interrelated in recent vital discussions among heritage experts exploring the future of the heritage profession.

UNESCO has recently adopted a new international Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at its 32nd General Conference held in Paris in October 2003.¹ Professionals in the tangible heritage field have also been working to develop the concept of cultural heritage, paying attention to the value of the intangible manifestation of heritage. Preceding the new UNESCO convention on intangible heritage, already in the early 1990s, the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the 1972 World Heritage Convention) introduced the new category of 'cultural landscape', as well as new wording to be used in the identification of cultural



FIGURE 1 Ise Shrine. Aerial view of the inner main sanctuary after completion of the sixty-first renewal ceremony, showing the two sites side by side, with the new shrine buildings on the right. The former building site on the left is now empty, and is waiting for the next renewal ceremony. The sixty-first ceremony started in 1985 and the two main sanctuaries' renewal was completed in 1993.

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FIGURE 2 Ise Shrine. Aerial view of the inner main sanctuary during the sixty-first renewal ceremony, showing both the old and the new complexes. The old buildings were removed after the deity-transfer ceremony was conducted.

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FIGURE 3 Ise Shrine. Misoma-hajime-sai Ceremony, the ceremony to report to the deity the official start of the cutting of trees to be used for the new sanctuary's buildings. A photo of the ceremony in June 1985 for the sixty-first renewal ceremony.

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heritage, such as 'living tradition', within the criteria for the inclusion of cultural heritage properties on the World Heritage List.² The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is working in the same direction and it adopted 'Place – memory – meaning: preserving intangible value in monuments and sites' as the theme of the 14th General Assembly held in Zimbabwe in October 2003. It is clear that we can also observe a similar movement in the field of movable heritage, as evident in the programmes of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). The theme of the General Conference of ICOM in October 2004 was 'Museums and Intangible Heritage'.

All of these initiatives in the fields of both intangible and tangible heritage are based on the current global movement, which is trying to promote awareness of the importance of respecting cultural diversity, especially those of minorities and folk cultures.

We are attempting to deal with heritage that is by nature living and changing. The issue before us

is not so much about whether the form of heritage is tangible or intangible. No intangible heritage can exist only as itself. Always it is associated with people, objects, structure or place. It is the living tradition at large which encompasses both tangible and intangible expressions, and which is confronted with the contemporary globalization of society.

In this regard, the definition of intangible heritage in the new UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is very thought-provoking. In Article 2 it defines intangible cultural heritage as:

'The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage'.

This definition is the definition of living heritage itself, encompassing both tangible and intangible expressions of our traditional culture.

Returning to the theme of 'Living Religious Heritage', the same question regarding the word 'religion' arises. What does the word 'religion' signify in this movement for the promotion of the concepts of living or intangible heritage? Although the word 'religion' is carefully avoided in the definition of intangible heritage in the new UNESCO Convention on intangible heritage, probably in order to avoid potentially divisive debates among religions, it is obvious that religious aspects are necessarily included within intangible heritage. Regarding this point, the UNESCO convention on intangible heritage states:

'For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development'.

Living heritage can be thought of as fruit from traditional life before the modernization and the globalization of the world started in the last century. It is closely related in a complicated manner to our traditional social system itself. As religions or belief systems were the core of our life, any form of living heritage is inseparable from the framework of the religion or the belief system of its society.

The issues are therefore integrated into the changing nature of living heritage itself, whether the heritage is religious or not, in the discussion of living heritage. They challenge us and our concepts of heritage which have been developed around material-oriented preservation practices. They press us to abandon our preconceptions of heritage. What are we preserving? What can be changed? What can't be

changed? How can we assess authenticity?

Regarding the issue of religion and living heritage, it should be noted that traditional social systems sometimes enforce taboos or discrimination against gender, class or race, these often being derived from religious or belief systems and which challenge the human rights principles of our contemporary society. Admitting the importance of supporting the preservation of living heritage, we also ought to be aware of this important aspect. Again, situations differ very much from place to place or from society to society, according to the religions themselves and their relation to the societies.

RELIGION AND HERITAGE IN THE HERITAGE PROTECTION SYSTEM IN JAPAN: THE BACKGROUND OF THE TWO CASE STUDIES

Bearing in mind the points demonstrated in the previous sections, two case studies of living religious heritage in Japan will now be presented. They are both examples where the religious activities themselves are recognized as heritage. The first is a periodic rebuilding ritual of shrine buildings of an indigenous Japanese religion, and the second is an annual religious festival held by local Japanese people.

These were selected as examples of living religious heritage, especially those of the intangible type of living religious heritage in Japan, considered suitable for examining the following two aspects:

- the way existing religions are handled in the

formal heritage protection system in Japan;

- the way the continuously changing character of living religious heritage is handled by the value or authenticity judging system at the core of our modern heritage conservation ethics that are scientific and international.

The examination of the two case studies from Japan is valid only in the context of a clear understanding of the status of religion in the national legal system, as well as the exact system, in terms of definition and criteria, of the preservation of the living or intangible heritage in the formal heritage protection system. In this section, the legal status of religions and their relation to the formal heritage protection system in Japan will be explained.

RELIGION AND HERITAGE IN THE JAPANESE LAW

To explain the status of religions in Japan, nothing can make the point more clearly than introducing Article 20 of the Japanese Constitution, which stipulates the following:

‘Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.’

The important point of this article, particularly for the theme of this book, is the separation of religion and the state.

Out of the experience in which an indigenous Japanese religion, the then state religion ‘Shinto’, was an integral part of the political system of the government prior to World War II, the importance of the strict separation of religion and the state became one of the fundamental principles of the Japanese political and administrative systems. In Japan, no religion is designated or protected as the state religion. At the same time, the freedom of religion is secured and all religions are equally treated as stipulated in the Constitution mentioned above.

There are no restrictions or specific conditions in the Japanese heritage law to identify, designate, regulate

FIGURE 4
Ise Shrine.
Kozukuri-hajime-sai Ceremony,
the ceremony
to pray for the
carpenters' safety
before starting
the carpentry
work. A photo of
the ceremony in
April 1986 for
the sixty-first
renewal
ceremony.

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and provide public support to religious heritage or heritage possessed by or in the custody of religious bodies in Japan. The same conservation standards are applied to any kind of heritage. All heritage sites, objects, etc. are treated equally whether or not the heritage concerned is religious or is owned by religious organizations.

Actually, among examples of tangible heritage, 70% of the buildings and structures designated as architectural heritage by the central government are owned by religious organizations. The assessment of the value and authenticity of tangible heritage is determined mainly on the basis of its material expression. As observed elsewhere throughout the world, conflicts between conservation standards and the utilization of heritage by custodians are occurring also in Japan.

Is it more difficult to preserve the heritage used for religious purposes than that used for other purposes? The answer to the question is probably both 'yes' and 'no', again depending on the religion involved and its relation to the society. On the one hand, temples and shrines which have been continuously used for the original functions since the time of their initial construction are in much better condition than buildings which have lost their

original function and which were remodelled in order to survive. On the other hand, there are also temples and shrines where the conservation experts are in constant conflict with the religious communities, whose activities tend to change the perceived heritage value of the concerned sites.

However, for heritage of intangible form, the conditions of its relation to religion must be looked at rather differently. For this type of heritage, religion is not just the external function of that heritage, but rather an inseparable part of the heritage substance itself. In this regard, when formal protection by the authorities is considered, the principle of the separation of religion and the state becomes important.

In Japan there is no restriction on designating and supporting religious heritage as long as it meets the criteria established for designation as a type of cultural property. However, if there is any doubt relating to the principle of separation of religion and state stipulated in the Constitution, the designation is sometimes made only for those parts of the heritage which are shared by the public at large, while carefully avoiding designation of those religious rituals executed as part of the on-going ordinary functions of the religious bodies. For example, many festivals are closely related to the ritual ceremonies of the community temples and shrines, but their designation as heritage is sometimes limited to festival activities executed by the communities, avoiding ritual activities performed by the priests in the shrine or temple complex. This is discussed further below.

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE CONCEPTS IN JAPAN

It is understood that systems for the conservation of living heritage, especially those for heritage of intangible form, are different from country to country – since such systems are inseparable from the cultural structure of the concerned society. The extent of these systems is far greater than the material-oriented tangible heritage conservation systems. As another condition for the case-study discussion, the formal system for the protection of cultural heritage in Japan will be examined in this section, in particular that relating to intangible heritage.

Japan has more than half-a-century of experience in the protection of heritage of intangible form, having introduced this concept into its formal modern heritage preservation system in 1950. It would be

FIGURE 5

Ise Shrine. Okihiki-gyoji Ceremony, the ceremony to bring the wood for the rebuilding to the sanctuary sites. A photo of the ceremony in April/June 1986 for the sixty-first renewal ceremony.

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worthwhile to examine this experience now, at a time when UNESCO has just adopted a new Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and when many heritage experts are becoming aware of this relatively new concept in the international heritage preservation arena. It has been recognized that many experts have not yet come to understand this concept fully, as very few countries are actually

and intangible forms has its own system of identification in the Law. The Law defines five categories of cultural properties according to their forms and value assessments (the phrases related to the value assessments are italicized in the text below):

Yukei Bunkazai (tangible cultural properties)

Among tangible cultural properties both of immovable and movable forms, are buildings and other structures, and fine and applied arts and other historic materials which possess *a high historical, artistic and/or scientific value in and for this country.*

Mukei Bunkazai (intangible cultural properties)

Among intangible cultural properties, are the artistry and skills employed in drama, music and applied arts, and other intangible cultural properties which possess *a high historical and/or artistic value in and for this country.*

Folk-cultural properties (including tangible and

intangible)

This includes properties related to the folk-culture both of tangible and intangible forms, such as manners and customs related to food, clothing and housing, to occupations, religious faiths, festivals, etc., to folk-entertainments, and clothes, implements, houses and other objects used therefore, which are *indispensable for the understanding of changes in people's modes of life.* In addition to manners and customs, skills and techniques nurtured in traditional folk industries such as rice-wine making or traditional regional cooking will be added to this category of intangible folk-cultural properties in the forthcoming revision of the law expected to be approved in 2004.

Historic sites, places of scenic beauty and natural monument

This category includes:

- historic sites: shell mounds, ancient tombs, sites of palaces, sites of forts or castles, monumental dwelling houses which possess *a high historical and/or scientific value in and for this country;*
- places of scenic beauty: gardens, bridges, gorges, sea-shores, mountains, and other places of scenic

FIGURE 6
Ise Shrine.
Kawara-oharai ceremony, the ceremony to purify the offerings to the deity. A photo of the ceremony in October 1986 for the sixty-first renewal ceremony.
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handling this type of heritage as part of their routine heritage preservation practice.

DEFINITIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE LAW

The present Japanese national law, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, was established in 1950, but its origin dates back to the old law of 1897, the Law for the Preservation of Ancient Temples and Shrines. It underwent major revisions in 1954, 1975 and 1996, and a major revision was in preparation in 2003. The history of these revisions is explained as the expansion of the concept of heritage, moving from the preservation of monuments, sites and art objects to the inclusion of new categories such as intangible heritage, folk-cultural heritage, traditional techniques, as well as historic districts.

The uniqueness of the Japanese law on cultural heritage can be summarized by saying that it covers a very wide range of heritage types from intangible heritage to tangible heritage – both movable and immovable – as well as natural heritage, including even rare animal or plant species. It also should be noted that ‘folk-cultural heritage’ in both tangible

beauty which possess a *high value from the point of view of art or visual appreciation in and for this country*;

- natural monuments: animals (including their habitats, breeding places and summer and winter resorts), plants (including their habitats), and geological features and minerals (including the grounds where peculiar natural phenomena are seen) which possess a *high scientific value in and for this country*.

Groups of historic buildings

This category includes groups of historic buildings, or conservation areas including such, that are of *high value which form a certain antique beauty in combination with their environs*, such as towns with fortified buildings, farming and fishing villages, etc.

Cultural landscapes

Cultural landscape areas are to be introduced as a new category of cultural properties as part of the forthcoming revision of the Law expected to be approved in 2004. This category will include landscape areas associated with the life or livelihood of the local people that are indispensable for the understanding of changes in people's modes of life and livelihoods, such as agricultural fields, forested areas, canals and reservoirs.

Besides these five categories defined as cultural properties, the Law also provides the following two heritage categories to support the protection of cultural heritage:

- traditional conservation techniques: traditional techniques which are necessary for the

production of materials and the repair of cultural properties;

- unexcavated archaeological cultural properties: a zoning system for areas that are known to have archaeological value but are left unexcavated, mainly to protect them from development.

The systems for identification and evaluation (criteria/authenticity assessment) and conservation standards as well as the systems of public support differ from category to category.

HOW THE PROTECTION SYSTEM FOR HERITAGE OF INTANGIBLE FORM WORKS IN JAPAN

Among the categories of cultural heritage in the Japanese system explained in the previous section, we can identify two categories as heritage types of pure intangible form: *Mukei Bunkazai* (intangible cultural properties) and intangible folk-cultural properties. Besides these two categories, the category of 'traditional conservation techniques', although it is defined in the Law only for those techniques necessary for conservation, has actually been working to protect traditional craftsmen's skills in general. These three categories complement each other, covering all types of intangible expressions of Japanese heritage.

Properties of intangible form (*Mukei Bunkazai*) are also included in the category of intangible folk-cultural properties. To try to explain the differences between these two categories, we can say in short that *Mukei Bunkazai* covers those properties which are highly artistic and/or historic, while intangible folk-cultural properties are defined as properties which are 'indispensable for the understanding of changes in the people's modes of life'.

It would be worthwhile to note that the definition of intangible heritage in the new UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage would fit best the intangible folk-cultural properties category. It is also worth observing that the Japanese system for the protection of intangible heritage has been a significant influence in the development of the UNESCO strategy for intangible heritage, although the details of the Japanese system are not widely understood. The reasons for keeping *Mukei Bunkazai* separate from folk-cultural properties, as well as the reasons for the existence of differences between two systems, are closely related to the special circumstances of Japan.

The protection of intangible heritage

FIGURE 7

Ise Shrine.
Sengyo Ceremony,
the ceremony
to transfer the
symbols to the
new buildings
which took place
in 1987 for the
sixty-first renewal
ceremony at the
sanctuary Izanagi-
no-Miya, one of
the 14 associated
sanctuaries.

Jingu Administration
Office © Jingu shicho



can only be performed by those individuals or groups of people who are able to transmit such intangible heritage to the next generation. The system for the protection of intangible heritage in Japan is designed as a combination of two inseparable components: the designation of the properties themselves, and the recognition of persons or groups of persons who possess the skills and techniques to represent the high standard of such properties (the wording for these persons or groups or persons in the translation of the Law is ‘holder’ or ‘holding body’). For the categories of *Mukei Bunkazai* and traditional conservation techniques, the recognition of such persons or groups of persons is regulated by the Law to be included as part of the process at the time of the designation. There is no such rule established for intangible folk-cultural properties in the Law. However, as a matter of common practice, groups of people are also identified whenever the properties are designated. (For this category of intangible folk-cultural properties, only groups of people are identified, not specific individuals.) The support systems for the protection of these intangible cultural properties are realized mainly through these recognized individuals and groups.

ABOUT SO-CALLED ‘LIVING HUMAN TREASURES’

The individuals recognized in the category of *Mukei Bunkazai* (artistry and skills of high historical and artistic value) are known as ‘*ningen kokuhō*’ or ‘living human treasures’. Although in the Law there is no such wording as ‘living human treasures’ to name such individuals, this charming term has long been recognized in Japan. The public has been using this wording, ignoring some people’s concern that the system should not be utilized to award or honor individuals. Observing that UNESCO has introduced a similar system officially under the wording of ‘Living Human Treasures’, and that UNESCO defines such a person as one ‘who embodies, or who has to the very highest degree, the skills and techniques necessary for the production of selected aspects of the cultural life of a people and the continued existence of their material cultural heritage’, it should be noted that the so-called ‘living human treasures’ system in Japan is basically a support system for the protection of related intangible heritage, and it should be reiterated that such wording does not exist in the Law.

It is clear that what must be preserved are the identified intangible-form properties themselves and not the individuals as mentioned above. In any case we cannot preserve human bodies alive forever. The death of a person does not mean the disappearance of the heritage embodied by that person. The Law states

that only if all holders die, or the holder body ceases to function, should the designation of the property be annulled. The important point of this system is the transmission of such skills to the next generation. The measures for preservation of intangible-form properties are mainly dedicated to the training of successors and to providing opportunities for their practice, and not only to the documentation of their skills.

QUESTIONS REGARDING AUTHENTICITY IN LIVING HERITAGE OR INTANGIBLE HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Having examined the basic structure of the intangible heritage protection system in Japan, there is still a fundamental question remaining regarding the system. This is the issue of authenticity and the fundamental role it plays in heritage conservation, and it is concerned in part with the following questions:

- creativity is one of the important factors that preserve the vitality of the artists (holders) of intangible-form heritage. Doesn’t this contradict the principles of heritage preservation?
- the authenticity of intangible-form heritage exists not in material but in process. How can we assess the authenticity of intangible heritage without material indicators?

These issues will be dealt with later in the case studies. A famous ‘living human treasure’ of *Kyogen* performance said:

‘I developed my own style following my nature as an artist, but I taught my son only what my father taught me.’

Case Study 1 The Ise Shrine and ‘Shikinen Zotai’, a periodic rebuilding ritual of Japan’s indigenous religion

HOW THIS SHRINE IS KNOWN IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION WORLD

The Ise Shrine is unique in Japan and is also well known abroad in the heritage conservation field, especially among material-oriented heritage conservation experts. Its importance might be more interestingly presented if it were recognized as the living religious heritage site of a Japanese indigenous religion and its culture, namely Shinto, including *Ise-mairi* or *Ise-ko* (a pilgrimage to Ise) a practice which spread throughout Japan in the Edo period (1603–1867). But unfortunately foreign scholars have commented only on the periodic rebuilding rite of the shrine buildings, which takes place every



FIGURE 8 Gion Festival: Floats turning a street corner

From a publication of the national association for the protection of Japanese traditional float festivals (Zenkoku Yama-Hoko-Yatai Hozon Rengo-kai)

FIGURE 9 Gion Festival: Aerial view of the floats' procession

Kyoto Newspaper Company



twenty years. This site is frequently, and mistakenly, presented as an example of the origin of Japanese architectural conservation practice.

This periodic renewal of buildings provides the conservation experts with a very interesting topic of debate on value assessment and authenticity. This site is a unique historical example of a method of building maintenance in which one hundred percent of the original design is preserved, while zero percent of the original material is retained.

Wooden buildings located in a country such as Japan, which has a subtropical climate with high tem-

peratures and high humidity in the summer season, need regular maintenance. This implies the need for replacement of material when wood-rot sets in. Some researchers try to make the point that this kind of regular maintenance custom for wooden buildings is among the reasons leading to the primitive origins of this ritual. However, there is no current relationship between this ritual of the particular religion Shinto and the construction and maintenance methods developed for other Japanese wooden buildings in general. This includes the buildings of other religions such as Buddhism, to say nothing of the contemporary architectural conservation standards and practice in Japan for buildings and structures protected under the categories for tangible heritage.

'SHIKINEN ZOTAI', A PERIODIC REBUILDING RITE OF JAPAN'S INDIGENOUS RELIGION, SHINTO

Shinto is an indigenous religion of Japan, which was derived from nature worship, rooted in beliefs related to the wetland rice agriculture of prehistoric times.

Shikinen zotai is a rite of Shinto that calls for periodically rebuilding or renewing the shrine buildings of its entire precinct. In the case of the Ise Shrine, this is every twenty years. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, a certain number of Shinto shrines had been carrying on this rite, but at present only one Shinto shrine, namely the Ise Shrine, continues this practice in the pure form. Of course, it should be noted that there are some examples of Shinto shrines which continue periodic rebuilding, or renewal rituals of Shinto symbols or some secondary shrine buildings, such as *On-bashira Matsuri* of Suwa Shrine where a festival involves replacing sacred posts in the shrine compounds every six years.

However, there are no other examples that continue the rebuilding ritual of the entire shrine compound in its pure form as a core ritual of the established Shinto religion.

Included for renewal are not only the shrine buildings but also the objects to be enshrined, as well as offerings and instruments used for the ceremonies that take place during the rite. In the case of the Ise Shrine, it takes almost nine years from the initial ceremony (the observance of the cutting down of the trees for building material) to the climax year in which there are a series of ceremonies for the

building construction. It culminates in the most important ceremony (*sengyo*), which is the transfer of the symbol of the gods (*kami*) from the old building to the new building, followed by other sacred ceremonies.

The oldest record of this rite at the Ise Shrine dates back to the seventh century. Since then, for more than 1300 years, it has been carried out every twenty years, although scheduling irregularities or temporary periods of discontinuation have occurred for various reasons at certain times throughout the shrine's history. The Ise Shrine possesses and maintains its own mountains as well as agricultural fields for material supply, and employs craftsmen's teams in the various fields necessary for this ritual, from building construction to ritual object production. The latest rebuilding was the sixty-first, for which the building reconstruction completion and the *sengyo* ceremony took place in 1993.

There is no definitive explanation for the origin of this rite. On the one hand, some architectural historians suggest that the ritual originated as a maintenance system for the shrine buildings, one that probably needed to take place regularly and on a major scale since the ancient structures were constructed of organic materials (a primitive wooden structures with embedded wooden pillars and thatched roofs). On the other hand, other scholars seek anthropological meanings. Shinto rites were developed from annual agricultural rites, those of rice paddy agriculture. Purification rites play an important role in Shinto, and therefore periodic renewal is a consistent part of Japanese culture.

RELIGIOUS RITUAL AS HERITAGE

There are two points for further discussion regarding the Ise Shrine, both concerned with the fact that the site is not protected under Japanese law by any category of cultural heritage.

The first point is directly connected to the religion itself, namely Shinto, the former state religion of Japan. Shinto was re-established as 'State Shinto' or the state religion by then imperial government with a policy of realizing the unity of religion and politics after the Meiji restoration in 1868. This policy was continued until the end of the Second World War.

The current policy enforcing the separation of religion and politics in the Constitution is based on the experiences of that period. Among Shinto shrines, the Ise Shrine was located at the top of the Shinto shrine hierarchy, and was protected and strongly supported by the then government as the first 'State Shinto' shrine. The shrine still has a strong connection with the rituals executed by the imperial family. While it is understood that the political-

historical situation of the Ise Shrine is not among the primary reasons why it has not been designated by the government under the current heritage law, the separation of religion and state, as well as the appropriateness of the argument regarding whether the government can support such Shinto shrines, require further discussion.

The Ise Shrine is just one example, but is the most important symbolic example of its type in Japan. There exists a very delicate relationship between religion, particularly that of Shinto, and heritage in Japan. Without proper understanding of this situation, the heritage protection system in Japan cannot itself be fully understood. This is why in discussions of living religious heritage the status of religion in each culture must be made clear.

The second point of discussion is the categorization of cultural property designated by law for those sites where buildings and objects are renewed every twenty years. This is a more interesting theoretical exercise for conservation experts compared to other issues.

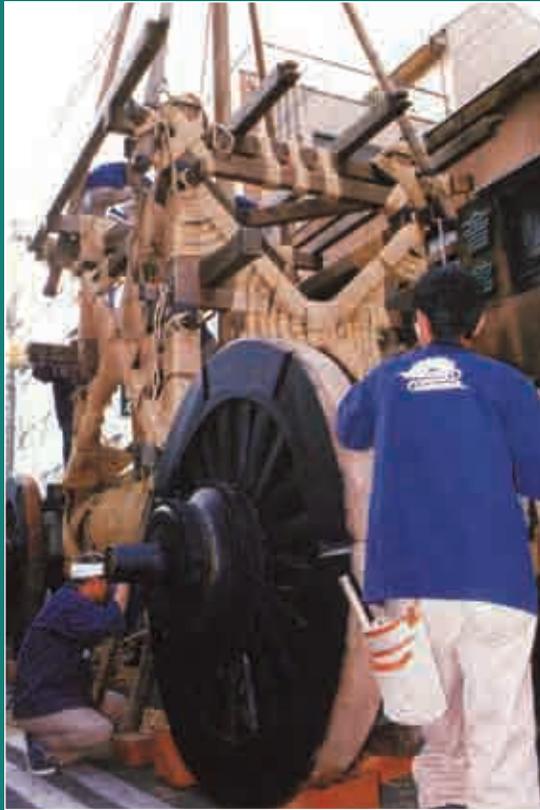
The periodic rebuilding ritual of the Shinto religion – *shikinen zotai* – has no relation to the current practice of modern Japanese architectural conservation, although many foreign experts have used it as a unique example of conservation practice cultivated in Eastern countries. Japan started its formal protection of cultural heritage by issuing the 'Proclamation by the Imperial Cabinet for the Protection of Antiquities' in 1871. During the establishment of the 'Law for the Preservation of Ancient Shrines and Temples' in 1897, when the designation system was introduced for both immovable and movable tangible heritage, full-scale architectural conservation practice began. For this type of heritage, assessment is made on the basis of issues of value and authenticity.

The standards of Japanese architectural conservation developed along with this very important concept. A remarkable debate on material authenticity, similar to the one between those favouring Viollet Le Duc and those favouring Ruskin (Ruskin and Viollet Le Duc did not debate directly), took place in Japan at the end of the 19th century, just after modern architectural conservation started.

The type of heritage protected by the Law of 1897 has been retained in current legislation as *Yukei Bunkazai*, or tangible cultural properties, expanding the typology of heritage from only those properties owned by religious bodies to other types. At present, roughly 2000 architectural heritage sites are designated as *Yukei bunkazai* by the central government. All buildings protected under this category have tangible or material values, and conservation or repair of these buildings has been

FIGURE 10
Gion Festival:
Reassembling a
float

From a publication of
the national association
for the protection of
Japanese traditional
float festivals (Zenkoku
Yama-Hoko-Yatai Hozon
Rengo-kai)



performed accordingly. This is illustrated by the fact that some Buddhist buildings of the seventh century still remain standing with their original material.

Among these buildings are a certain number of Shinto shrines, but even though they are Shinto shrines, none of them carry out the rituals in as pure a form as at the Ise shrine. In other words, if a Shinto shrine practices the rituals in their pure form (as at the Ise Shrine) with the result that the shrine buildings are periodically replaced *in their entirety*, it cannot in any way be designated as *Yukei Bunkazai*, as this classification is based on assessments of value and authenticity of the tangible form.

To explain this concretely, we can identify some examples of Shinto shrines designated as *Yukei Bunkazai*. Until the middle of the 19th century certain Shinto shrines had been carrying out the rebuilding ritual, for example the Kamigamo and Shimogamo Shrines in Kyoto and the Kasuga Shrine in Nara. These shrines, which have a long history, have all stopped the custom of renewing the entire compound of shrine buildings. They last performed the *shikinen zotai* ritual in 1863, and nowadays only repairs such as the repainting or re-roofing of buildings are carried out. The buildings resulting from the 1863 *shikinen zotai* ritual at these shrines were all designated as heritage by the central government in the category *Yukei Bunkazai* in 1901, at a very early stage of the

history of the Japanese architectural conservation and just four years after the first heritage law of 1897. The conservation or repair of these designated buildings has been carried out following material-oriented conservation standards. In other words, these shrine buildings are protected to preserve the material evidence of the architectural style of the 1863 structures, while the shrines recognize that they are conducting the ritual by replacing renewal with repair. Which is more important in terms of heritage for these Shinto shrines? What we can say to this question is that if the shrines were to restart the ritual in its entire form, then the designations of these buildings under the Law would be cancelled.

Then another question arises: in which categories should we designate and protect this Shinto ritual itself, putting to one side for the moment the debate on the policy of the separation of religion and state? The five categories of cultural properties defined in the Law are carefully divided by forms and type of heritage, as well as by the criteria for assessment of value. The standards for conservation are set according to these criteria. Clearly the use of *Yukei Bunkazai* would be inappropriate.

The Ise Shrine would fit better into the category of intangible heritage. However, *Mukei Bunkazai* (intangible cultural properties) is only designated where the artistry and skills are of historical and artistic value. The criteria citation for Intangible Folk-cultural Properties – ‘indispensable for the understanding of changes in the people’s modes of life’ – is also not appropriate for this ritual, as it is an example of an organized religion that exists nationwide. If we try to find the appropriate category from among the existing definitions, the category of Historic Site is probably the only possibility.

Taking into account all forms of heritage, from architecture and objects to festivals related to rituals, together with the magnificent landscape and the history which depicts Japanese indigenous culture, there is no doubt that the Ise Shrine constitutes a very important heritage complex for the Japanese people. The debates regarding the identification of this site as heritage are providing us with many interesting points from the legal perspective, as well as contributing to discussions on the assessment of value and authenticity.

Case Study 2 Yamaboko Gyoji (the procession of floats) of the Kyoto Gion Matsuri/Gion Festival: an example of living religious folk-cultural heritage in Japan

GION MATSURI/GION GORYOE

Festival, festivity, fête, ritual, observance, feast, functions, etc.: there are many similar words found in dictionaries, however none of them seems close enough to the meaning of the Japanese word *matsuri*. Throughout Japan, many types of *matsuri* can be found from town to town and from community to community, with a great degree of local diversity. From large-scale annual festivals participated in by large numbers of people to seasonal folk customs and functions of all sorts performed by family members, *matsuri* are an integral part of people's lives. *Matsuri* are based on Japanese indigenous nature worship or agricultural folk religious faith (folk-Shinto), but they have been blended with Buddhism and other religions. One important characteristic of popular religious life and culture is that they have developed as folk-religious customs outside of the established religions.

Various rituals are performed in the preparation of symbols such as *yorishiro* (temporary dwellings for deities or *kami*), and the setting out of offerings. *Yorishiro* symbols, often trees or other natural objects such as mountains, are the principal permanent objects of worship, but sometimes these are in the form of floats (*yama*, *hoko*, *dashi*, or *yatai*) with *yorishiro* symbols or palanquin-style portable shrines (*mikoshi*), if they are for temporary religious activities. We can find many local annual *matsuri* throughout Japan, with processions of gorgeously decorated floats or *mikoshi* forming the climax of these events.

The Gion Matsuri in Kyoto is one of the most famous and splendid *matsuri*, characterized by the processions of decorated floats (*yama* and *hoko*). Originating from a religious ritual (*goryoe*) to appease the divinities or souls, and to ward off the epidemics that were among the greatest fears of the urban population, the ritual has gradually taken its current form as an annual religious festival. The first record of a *goryoe* ritual is found in a document of the ninth century. The Gion Goryoe at Gion-sha (Yasaka Shrine), which developed into the current Gion Matsuri, started in the tenth century. Since then, the Gion Goryoe ritual/Gion Matsuri festival has been continuously performed annually, having more than a millennium of history, with only short interruptions during the civil war in the fifteenth century.

The historical core of this ritual is the divinities' journey to an *otabisho*, a temporary dwelling in the city. In these processions the divinities are carried by *mikoshi* (movable palanquin-style shrines). The basic structure of this event is found in other Japanese religious festivals. Entertainers, musicians

and dancers, as well as lines of shrine maidens and ordinary people, some on horseback, hold offerings and ornaments and follow the divinities and entertain the people of Kyoto. The details of past Gion festivals are known only through historical paintings and documents. The large-scale processions of *yama-boko*, or *yama* and *hoko* floats, conducted by the local citizens, which is the highlight of the current Gion Goryoe or Gion Matsuri, are not found in the early records of this event. The first records of floats are in documents of the early and middle fourteenth century. We know that the floats' processions took place after that time, even in the years when the procession of divinities on *mikoshi* was cancelled. From historical studies we know that groups or societies of people, as self-contained communities or later as neighbourhood associations composed of newly powerful merchants, existed to manage and conduct the floats' procession in parallel with the events conducted and supported by the Shrine and the authorities. It is understood that the *yama-boko* floats' procession started in the fourteenth century, reflecting the power and unity of *machishu*, the townspeople of Kyoto.

As is often the case with folk festivals supported by the people, the form of Gion Matsuri has continuously changed and developed over time, including the dates and sequence of the events involved. The current Gion Matsuri begins on the first of July and continues throughout the month of July. After a series of purification rituals and other preparatory events, the highlight takes place on 17 July. On this day the divinities, carried on three *mikoshi* (portable shrines), proceed from the Yasaka Shrine to the *otabisho*. They stay there until 24 July when they return in procession to the shrine.

Also on the seventeenth, but as a separate event, each of the thirty-two local communities organizes a float with musicians on it. These are pulled through the streets by the local citizens in a procession that forms the climax to the festival.

The floats have many different designs, but all are beautiful and striking, reflecting the power of the townspeople. Two main designs were elaborated from the *hoko*, or 'spear' style, and the *yama*, or 'mountain' style, which gave rise to the generic term *yamaboko* (*yama-hoko*) for these floats. Another is the *kasa* or 'umbrella' style. As the event is annual, it is thought that the floats were renewed every year. Historically, however, the float designs have been getting larger, with more decoration and ornamentation, sometimes becoming quite eccentric in order to attract attention. With lively competition among the hosting neighbourhood associations, the floats have finally become semi-permanent structures. The

designs were developed further during the flourishing of the townspeople in the Edo period (1603–1867). From the examples of this period twenty-nine original floats remain, and three floats have been reconstructed in recent years. Thus there are currently thirty-two *yamaboko* neighbourhood associations hosting the same number of floats for the current Gion Matruri *yamaboko* floats' event (7 *hoko* floats, 23 *yama* floats and 2 *kasa* floats).

The reassembling of float segments, as well as the rehearsals of the musicians who ride on the floats, are also presented to the public in each neighbourhood community. In July, a festive atmosphere sweeps all of Kyoto city, and this is the reason that Gion Matsuri is said to be a festival for the townspeople of Kyoto.

THE DESIGNATION OF YAMABOKO GYOJI OF GION MATSURI AS FOLK-CULTURAL PROPERTY

Thus, the Gion Matsuri is composed of two major components: a *goryoe* ritual hosted and conducted by the Yasaka Shrine, with its ritual transference of deities and associated procession; and the separate procession of *yamaboko* floats, hosted and conducted by the neighbourhood associations of Kyoto.

Only the second of these, the *yamaboko* floats' procession, is designated under the Law as both tangible cultural property and intangible property. The reason for not designating the first is related to the problem of the separation of religion and state, as the Yasaka Shrine is one of the major shrines of the 'Shinto' religion.

Integrating tangible and intangible heritage identifications

The section on Folk-cultural Properties in the Law separates that category into two sub-categories, namely tangible and intangible. The *Yamaboko* floats' procession of Gion Matsuri is among the more important examples protected under both sub-categories. All original twenty-nine floats were collectively designated as a Tangible Folk-cultural Property in 1962, while the *yamaboko* procession itself was designated as an Intangible Folk-cultural Property in 1979. The recognition both of tangible and intangible features of the heritage is important. However, there are concerns about how the two different categories, with their different sets of criteria, are applied to this type of living intangible heritage.

Intangible heritage cannot exist by itself: it can only be expressed through some tangible media, for example, musicians and music instruments for musical arts, or dancers, costumes and settings for dancing performances. The *Yamaboko* floats'

procession needs the floats themselves and the people who move them, as well as the utensils and supplies for all of the rituals and events associated. A holistic approach to the recognition of heritage elements, combining tangible and intangible manifestations of the concerned heritage, is necessary not only for the total understanding and assessment of value but also for conservation and promotion. This approach is particularly essential for intangible folk-cultural heritage. Only through this approach can we find effective methods of support, from the training of performers and/or craftsmen to the securing of material supplies, for the maintenance of the intangible heritage. The bold and violent pushing and pulling of the floats during the procession is one of the important characteristics or values of the event. The floats are dismantled after the festival and are kept in storage until the next year. A strict approach to the protection of the material value of these floats as tangible heritage is not appropriate. What are the values to be protected in the concerned heritage? What can be changed and what cannot be changed? The heritage experts should be able to provide proper guidance to people who would like to maintain the heritage.

Changes in the structure of the communities supporting the event (occupations, age groups and population)

The Gion Matsuri has developed as a festival of the townspeople of the city. This is especially true of the procession of floats, which was established and developed by the townspeople, reflecting their strong sense of identity and pride. However, the community structure has been changing. For intangible heritage, it is essential to identify the people who practice and realize this heritage. For the *yamaboko* floats' procession, thirty-two *yamaboko* neighbourhood associations were identified at the time of designation, each owning one float, maintaining it, conducting the necessary rituals and participating in the annual procession. This is the important historical element of this heritage. Kyoto is a large city. Changes in the make-up of the old residential neighbourhoods are accelerating. The occupations of the people who live in the centre of Kyoto are changing. Office buildings are replacing merchant houses. Depopulation is also ongoing. Traditional *kaisho* buildings for peoples' gatherings, rituals and other activities for the preparation of events have disappeared, and these functions now take place in the street-level spaces of modern buildings. An NGO has been set up to recruit volunteers who wish to participate in the procession and pull the floats. Do these

changes in the community structure also change the historical meaning of the festival, and do they affect its authenticity?

Women's participation in the event

As is often observed in other aspects of traditional folk culture, restrictions on women's participation are also found in the *yamaboko* floats' procession. Although there is evidence from historical paintings that women participated in the event until the early seventeenth century, it has been prohibited for a long time. Among the thirty-two existing floats, only one has been allowing women (musicians) to ride on the float on the day of the procession, a practice that is carried on matter of factly but without any official acknowledgement. Another float allows women's participation only on the night before the procession. Women with a strong desire to participate established an association in 1996 to promote their own participation by adding a new float for women, but the union of thirty-two neighbourhood communities hasn't allowed it. In 2001, the union finally decided to let each association officially bring up the issue of women's participation in the procession, providing a procedure by which the union would be notified of their participation. One authority on heritage administration provided the following opinion: the assessment of value prepared at the time of designation does not refer to the gender of participants; therefore women's participation does not require permission.

Maintaining change instead of stopping

It is more appropriate to consider the protection of intangible folk-cultural heritage as a scheme to provide an integrated support system for communities who want their traditions to continue as part of everyday life, even with the normal changes that inevitably occur. It is not our intention to freeze the material expression of the heritage to an unnecessarily extreme extent, by restricting the creativity and the vitality of the supporting communities.

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Endnotes

- ¹ See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf> (accessed 03/02/2005).
- ² See Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention at <http://whc.unesco.org> (accessed 03/02/2005).

The Matopo Hills area, located about 60 kilometres south of Zimbabwe's second largest city of Bulawayo, is a unique place. Covering an area of 3,100 km, the landscape contains both cultural and natural attributes of exceptional aesthetic, scientific, religious and educational significance.

The cultural landscape reflects the geomorphology of the hills which gave rise to micro-climates and soil conditions that support a unique landscape comprising extensive grasslands with rock outcrops interspersed with wetland/marshes and streams. This cultural landscape is dominated by several Shona/Kalanga rain-making shrines, the most prominent of which is Njelele. The shrines espoused an ideology of conservation, which ensured balance in the ecosystem. The political and religious authorities worked in complementary fashion in shaping and maintaining the cultural and natural landscapes. Colonization brought in its wake new ideologies, which ran counter to those espoused by the rain-making shrines.

Consequently, the existing equilibrium was threatened as the environment was caught up in conflicting demands from disparate ideologies. Economic interests were pitted against those represented by the living religious heritage institutions.

[PATHISA NYATHI AND CHIEF BIDI NDIWENI]

A living religious shrine under siege

THE NJELELE SHRINE/KING MZILIKAZI'S GRAVE AND CONFLICTING DEMANDS ON THE MATOPO HILLS AREA OF ZIMBABWE

The Matopo Hills, covering an area of 45,000 ha, are situated about 60 km from Zimbabwe's second largest city of Bulawayo. The unique geomorphology, carved out of granite rocks, gave rise to microclimates and soil conditions that support a unique landscape of extensive grasslands, with rock outcrops interspersed with wetlands (marshes and streams). The mosaic of highly varied habitats in the Matopo Hills area, including caves, whalebacks, patches of bare rock, broken rock, forest stands, grasslands, granitic sponges, rivers and aquatic vegetation, constitutes a self-sustaining cultural landscape. Prominent in the cultural landscape are a number of religious shrines, the most important of which is the Njelele shrine.¹ For the purposes of this paper, the Njelele shrine will be treated as being representative of all other rain-making shrines within the precincts of the hills.

King Mzilikazi² was the founding king of the Ndebele state that was in existence from 1820 to 1883. He died in September 1868 and his remains were interred in a cave within the Matopo Hills (Nyathi 1994; Nyathi 2000). The Njelele shrine is a living religious heritage site where annual rain-making rituals continue to be held. In addition, individual and group visits are undertaken for consultations.

King Mzilikazi's grave is included in this study because it represents a unique case. The Ndebele do not traditionally attach any spiritual significance to graves, especially after the bringing home ceremony, *umbuyisa*, has been conducted.³ However, as a result of contact with other people, they have adopted new spiritual beliefs and visits to King Mzilikazi's grave are now undertaken clandestinely. This has been reported in the local press:

The Department of Museums and Monuments has started erecting a stone wall around King Mzilikazi's grave, which has been lying derelict in the Matopos area, amid reports that some unscrupulous traditional healers are clandestinely performing rituals at the sacred place.

(*THE CHRONICLE*, 22 MAY 2003 (BULAWAYO))

In practical terms, therefore, the grave has become living religious heritage. Consequently, issues such as custodianship now need to be addressed and the values that should be respected by the National Museums and Monuments personnel who have the mandate to manage this national monument.⁴

Both the grave and the shrine derive their importance not only from their historical significance, but also from the perceived power or influence that they purportedly exert over the people, the environment and, indeed, national politics. Whereas, the power of the Njelele shrine is recognised within and without the boundaries of Zimbabwe, the shrine is yet to be declared a national monument, a status that would go a long way toward preserving this living religious heritage. In legal terms, the Museums and Monuments staff has no jurisdiction over the shrine. However, in practical and informal terms, the staff offers advice and guidance.

This paper will explain why this has been so, and the possible implications in terms of medium- to long-term conservation of the living religious heritage, which is also impacted upon by new Western and Christian ideas on the utilization of the environment and its conservation.

The cultural landscape of the Matopo area includes more than the mere living religious heritage. Rock art, attributed to the San people, is an important feature

within the cultural landscape. The rocky granite topography boasts more than 2,000 sites of the San (Bushmen) tribes, which hold the spiritual significance of bygone rituals (NMMZ 2000a). It is this cultural heritage that has been dealt a devastating blow by tourism. The rock art has been defaced by graffiti.

There are also Late and Early Stone Age archaeological sites such as Bambata cave, where stone tools have been found during excavations, and the earliest human remains in Zimbabwe have been unearthed in the Matopo area. The hills have always provided shelter for people fleeing from wars. In some cave sites there are granaries where grain was kept in times of hardship. Iron Age people have left behind iron smelting furnaces that exist to this day.

Monuments of the early colonial period include historical graves of early colonists like Cecil John Rhodes, Leander Starr Jameson and Charles Coghlan. On World's View, the location of Rhodes's grave, there is also a monument where the remains of the members of the Shangani Patrol are interred.⁵ There are several fort sites from the 1890 war such as Fort Inungu, Fort Umlugulu and Fort Usher, and the famous Indaba site where Rhodes negotiated a truce with the Ndebele. Christianity has left its own mark: on one hill is a cross erected by Father Odillo of the Roman Catholic Church.

The hills constitute a rich cultural landscape which the San, the early Bantu people, the Nyubi, Kalanga and the Ndebele all regarded as their home for over thousands of years. The white man was the last to appropriate the hills, and this is evident in several monuments, including the remains of the World War I victims whose remains are interred besides a hill.⁶

It was precisely on the basis of this rich cultural heritage that the Matopo Hills has been declared a World Heritage Site.⁷ However, it must be appreciated that it was the interaction between the geological landscape and natural landscape that served as a draw to the hills, resulting in this rich cultural heritage.

IDENTIFICATION OF SUBJECT AREA

African tradition, an important player in the creation and preservation of the cultural landscape, places certain demands on the use of the environment. As pointed out above, the cultural landscape and its many features, which have attracted tourism to the area, have

FIGURE 4
Matopos shelter
with lost art



recently fostered a totally different management tradition. The two posit different views on the conservation of the environment. King Mzilikazi's grave and the Njelele shrine will be used to illustrate this conflict in perceptions and how these are reconciled, if at all.

The paper will deal with the Njelele shrine from the period prior to the advent of the Ndebele and the white man, and trace its circumstances to the present. Throughout, attention will be paid to how religious values were respected in the management of the shrine. Secondly, attention will be paid to how modern economic use of the hills area impacts on the preservation of both the shrine and the broader environment.

King Mzilikazi's grave was declared a national monument in 1937. Ideas on how it is to be respected and preserved make interesting reading. For example, the authorities' idea of respect includes keeping the grass around the grave trimmed, and constructing an all-weather or tarred road to the site. The Khumalo hold a different view on the desired condition of the area around the grave.

- to examine, within the broader context of the cultural landscape, the two living religious heritage sites, namely King Mzilikazi's grave and the Njelele rain shrine;
- to illustrate the contradictory demands on the hills made by the demands of tradition and the modern interest in conservation and tourism;
- to investigate the extent to which traditional religious values are respected by those who manage the two living religious heritage sites;
- to indicate the forces at work threatening the conservation of living religious heritage and the wider hills environment; and
- to suggest ways in which the living religious heritage and the broader natural environment can be conserved.

METHODOLOGY

The time factor, resources at our disposal, and the fact that the authors both are engaged full-time, dictated the research methodology employed.⁸

Essentially, we consulted relevant published books in personal libraries, public libraries and the Bulawayo branch of the National Archives of Zimbabwe. We also consulted various files containing newspaper cuttings on the subject at hand and have contributed several articles to the *Sunday News* on the Matopo Hills and its shrines and general history.

We also carried out interviews with museum officials to gain some insights into how they manage the living religious heritage. We were also provided with copies of the dossiers submitted to UNESCO as part of the evidence to support the application for World Heritage Site status for the Matopo Hills. The National Museums and Monuments Act Ch 25:11 was made available to us to examine the extent to which it enshrines

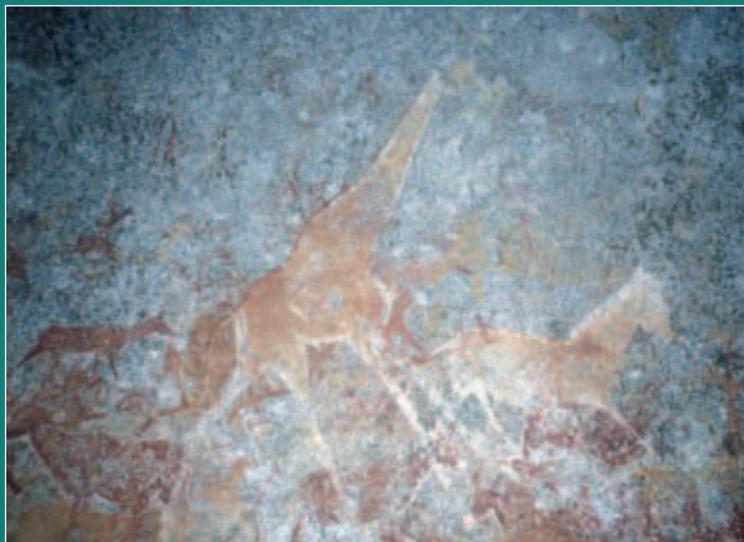
measures to conserve the living religious heritage.

Equally important in preparing this paper was the desire to illuminate our own perceptions and views, so that we could add to the expanding pool of ideas and guidelines on living religious heritage.

CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

With sufficient time at our disposal, we could have read more about the topic, especially accessing invaluable information on the Matopo Hills. This would have given us deeper insights into the topic

FIGURE 2
Rock art at
Nswatugi, Matopos



It is hoped that these two living religious heritage sites hold lessons true for the general area of the hills. While King Mzilikazi's grave is not the only grave in the area, it is the only one whose upkeep is guided and influenced by African tradition. White traditions on the upkeep of graves coincide with the views of the Department of Museums and Monuments.

In that light, therefore, this paper has the following objectives:

- to indicate the totality of the cultural landscape of the Matopo Hills;

and stimulated our own perceptions and views.

Given requisite resources, we could also have conducted more field interviews to capture the views of the rural folk who are the custodians of the traditions that support the living religious heritage. Local community leaders, church leaders, chiefs and shrine custodians would have been targeted.

To measure the influence of the Njelele rain-shrine it would have been imperative to determine the extent of its catchment area and the number of pilgrims. To achieve this, we would have had to cover the whole of Zimbabwe, and even areas beyond Zimbabwe's boundaries as the shrine had/has adherents in countries such as South Africa, Botswana and Mozambique. Claims about influence certainly would have needed quantification.

Limitations and constraints notwithstanding, we did manage to gather sufficient data to enable us to make generalisations and to draw conclusions. As a result, the paper makes meaningful and substantial contributions to a better understanding of living religious heritage, one under onslaught from a set of values that stand in opposition to those enshrined in the living religious heritage.

Undoubtedly, some of our perceptions, views and recommendations will find expression through the management structures and culture of the newly declared World Heritage Site. The new status presents great hope for throwing the spotlight on the living religious heritage, particularly on its conservation vis-à-vis the conflicting demands of modernity and economic exploitation of the Matopo Hills resources.

The main argument of this papers therefore, is that living religious heritage is vulnerable when the wider community's religious values, views and perceptions are no longer in tandem with the main heritage values recognized by the public.

Whereas in the pre-colonial period, political authority and religious authority worked closely and espoused common values, colonization resulted in the divorce of the two. Western values, expressed largely through Christianity, western education and science, challenge the very core values enshrined in the living religious heritage. The principal questions become: what is the lifespan of the living traditions? What measures can be put in place to lengthen it? Essentially, therefore, the question is one of conflict resolution. It is also one of globalization (as an expression of ruling or dominant values) and the fate of 'imploding' or dying values. In practical terms, there is conflict between traditional demands and economic demands (as represented by tourism for example) in relation to environment conservation.

This thesis is pursued through the pre-colonial, colonial and independence eras. However, the first two periods will be dealt with only briefly, to illustrate the former historical equilibrium and the eventual tipping of scales in favour of new values. Independence did not mark any significant departure from the colonial period in terms of the continuing conflict between traditional demands and 'modern' demands.

The Pre-colonial period

The pre-colonial period was characterized by an association between the people of the Matopo Hills area and their natural environment. Man depended for his sustenance on the environment. Yet on the other hand, the environment depended for its own sustenance on rain. But rain came from the shrines, which had the power to give or withhold it.

The local people believed ancestral spirits resided in forests, mountains, caves, hollowed trees and pools:

The adherents of the traditional Mwali and the traditional spirits therefore attach great respect to the environment because, they argue, by despoiling it, they will be depriving their God and their spirits of a home to live in.

(NOMINATION DOSSIER 2000)

As a result of this close relationship the environment took on a sacred character with numerous taboos relating to environmental use.

Before getting to the site today, one passes through a well-maintained forest that stretches for more than 500 metres. In the pre-colonial period the forest was more extensive and in a more pristine condition.

The animals in the forest enjoyed spiritual immunity. When one animal was killed, its meat was taken to the local spirit medium and the chief, both of whom were custodians of the local tradition.

The animals in the sacred areas did not belong to an individual and so no one could hunt them with impunity. That way the wildlife was protected against poaching.

(NMMZ NOMINATION DOSSIER: 43)

The co-operation between the religious and political authorities served to generate taboos that ensured environmentally friendly economic and social practices. The political authority enforced the observance of taboos. The religious shrines were conserved by wider society who espoused the same

FIGURE 3
Cave mouth at
Silozwane, Matopos



values as those enshrined in the Mwali rain shrines. The Mwali shrine taboos ensured sustainable use of the environment. Both the shrines and the environment were respected.

In other words, the entire natural and cultural landscape, held in very high esteem by the local people, enjoyed an unfettered benefit from traditional conservation practices as enshrined in the Mwali religion. For example, certain tree species could only be cut with permission of the traditional leadership.

It should be pointed out that the traditional authority enjoyed full authority over all aspects of human life. In terms of values they did not represent values that contradicted those espoused by the religious authority. The entire community was no exception either. The evolving management culture was hammered on the anvil of traditional religious values. This was a period of harmonized management of living traditions. Colonization would soon put an end to this sort of harmony. Conflicting ideologies were at work, as is still the case today.

That situation had implications for the conservation of the living religious heritage and the natural environment.

The pre-colonial period, in relation to King Mzilikazi's grave, was characterized by non-spiritual perceptions of the grave. The grave's importance lay in its historical significance, as being the grave of a founding king.

However, the people did believe that witches and wizards, if allowed access to the king's property and bones, could cast a spell on the nation. Consequently, the grave was guarded to deny entry into the burial cave by men and or women of evil intentions.

With the advent of colonization there was a re-imagining about the graves. Individuals and

groups visited the grave in the same manner that whites visited Rhodes's grave. However, the visitors to King Mzilikazi's grave attached a new spiritual meaning and role to the grave, which the whites did not do with Rhodes's grave. It was this re-imagining of the grave that gave it a new practical character – the grave perceived as living religious heritage.

The Colonial period

Colonization of Zimbabwe in 1890/93 can be viewed in several ways. In terms of the subject at hand, it marked the loss of political power and the introduc-

tion of new knowledge systems and new ideologies. Slowly, the religious values began to change.

The two main sources of new values and ideas were western education and Christianity. A number of church denominations opened up schools. In fact, the churches had a three-pronged approach to their endeavours: evangelism, education and health provision.

The new religion, for example, agreed with western science in saying that rain is a natural phenomenon. Essentially, therefore, the authority and significance of the rain shrines was undermined. The political authority that had hitherto ordered society in collaboration with the religious authority was supplanted. The new political authority espoused an ideology different from that enshrined in the living religious heritage.

At the same time, new religious values were emerging, new values which were in conflict with the old traditional values. A new duality, a new political authority and a new religious authority, emerged which was pitted against the former traditional duality.

The new duality contained varying perceptions of the environment and the living religious heritage. Complexes emerged as the colonizer regarded himself as superior to the colonized and extended his superiority to the arena of religion.

Initially therefore, the shrine's power was restricted to fertility matters as the locals had been pushed out of the political arena. The Njelele shrine was said to have played a role in the 1896 Ndebele-Shona uprisings, during which Njenjema, the shrine custodian, was arrested. Earlier, two white scouts claimed to have shot Mwali, the God.

The shrines were therefore not to be encouraged. When the colonial government declared national

monuments, the Njelele shrine, though a recognized living religious heritage, was not declared a national monument.

Traditional religious practices were regarded as pagan – ‘native rubbish’ – which was best left alone. As a result the shrines were left alone to face the onslaught from westernizing influences. Such non-interference can hardly be regarded as respect for the living religious heritage. Respect requires a positive frame of mind linked to equally positive and supportive behaviour.

The Africans did not allow the status quo to go on unchallenged for long. When the Matopo National Park was being set up, Africans were evicted from the Matopo Hills area. These evictions were met with resistance. At that time, what historian Terence Ranger calls the re-imagining of the shrines began. The cultural nationalists in Bulawayo and the resisters began to perceive the shrines in a new light.

The shrines came to be thought of as symbols of African ownership of the soil. The shrines both represented and gave legitimacy to the nationalist struggle to regain the land.

(RANGER 1999: 209)

In 1953 nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo went to consult a shrine at Dula. His visit was purely political. Efforts were thus being made to re-establish a long lost alliance between political authority and religious authority. This was not to be achieved until 1980 when independence was won.

The conflict between the two worlds crystallized during this period. Various human activities – mostly

economic – illustrated this conflict in significant ways during this time. Rhodes had always loved the hills for their beauty. A railway line was constructed from the main Bulawayo-Mafikeng line to the northern fringes of the hills.⁹

A network of tarred roads was built to afford tourists and visitors easy access around the hills. Tourism increased. Tourism-related infrastructures were built, along with chalets, dams, telephone lines and water pipelines.

The locals were practising mixed farming; they cultivated the marshes as part of market gardening efforts to supply farm produce to the nearby Bulawayo market. They also kept livestock, all of which put more strain on the already fragile ecosystem.

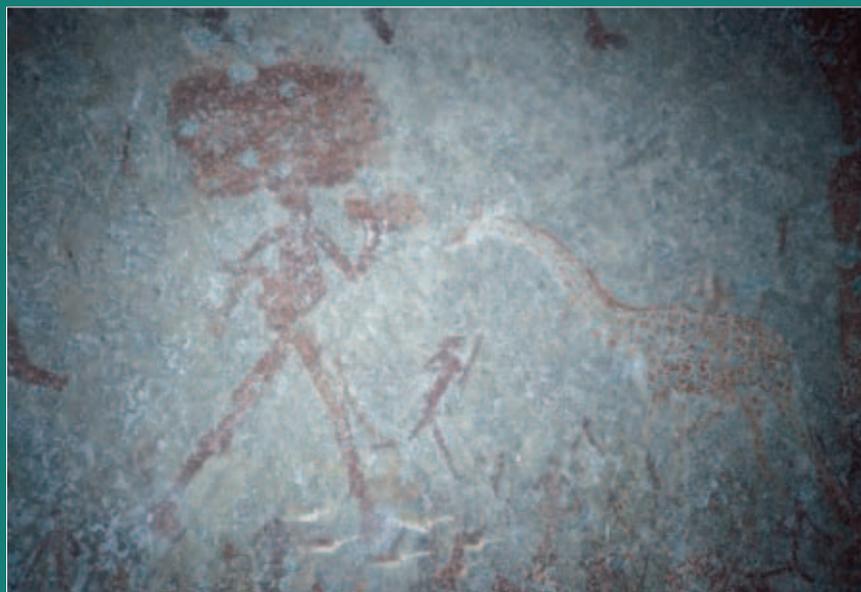
Economic activities going on in the hills were no longer influenced by the conservation-conscious ethic of the living religious heritage. Money was at war with God, and the latter was certainly losing the battle.

As the war of liberation intensified, the shrines came to gain some of their lost political influence. Consultations were, however, taking place clandestinely. Both ZANLA and ZIPRA¹⁰ guerillas consulted the shrines. With independence just around the corner, there were great expectations that the shrines would regain their lost status, and that the conservation of the environment and the living religious heritage would be re-initiated. The Matopo Hills would once again become Zimbabwe’s Garden of Eden. This was not to be, as the attitudes of the colonial period the living heritage were perpetuated in the independence era.

At King Mzilikazi’s grave, there was not much difference from its treatment during the colonial period, save that now the grave was seen as a source of political power, as with the Njelele shrine. The grave graduated from the status of a mere historical monument – as perceived by whites – to that of a venerated place where communion with the departed ancestors could take place.

From time to time the Monuments authorities cleared the areas around the grave. If the blacks did not honour the grave area, they

FIGURE 4
Rock art at
Silozwane,
Matopos



certainly did not expect whites to do it on their behalf. Members of the cultural group, Matabele Home Society, used to visit the grave, particularly in the 1940s. The royal praises of King Mzilikazi were recited.

As with the Njelele shrine, hope was high that the grave would receive more respect after independence. The Khumalos – King Mzilikazi belonged to this clan – had their own ideas about respect, ideas that the Museum staff respected and followed.

However, independence did not restore the expected glory and power to the shrine. The same modernizing influences were at work. If anything, these forces were given more vigour as more churches opened up in the Matopo Hills area.¹¹ The peace and tranquillity that followed the end of the hostilities in 1979 and the dissident era (1983-1987) saw tourism boom. The old ideology of the shrine was not restored. The environment became the victim of the conflict between economically driven human activities and the conservation conscious ideology of the living religious heritage.

The Independence period

Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980. The guerilla war that had reached the Matopo hills came to an end. Internal strife lasted from about 1982 to 1987, when the Unity Accord between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU was signed.

With peace prevailing and Zimbabwe re-admitted into the world of nations, its status as a pariah state ended. Tourism boomed. Human economic activities in the area were accentuated. More schools, both secondary and primary, were opened up. The health delivery services were expanded with the establishment of rural health centres. These social services, coupled with the introduction of more churches, brought new knowledge and value systems and their adoption by the community.

Economic activities, now totally freed from religious dictates and directions, combined with an increasing population of 'freed Africans' to undermine the influence of the shrines. A dual onslaught ensued: the *raison d'être* of the shrines themselves was being questioned, and a decline in their influence meant, in practical terms, disregard for the conservation of the environment.

The delicately balanced ecosystem came under threat, particularly in the communal areas where there was greater pressure on the land. The establishment of the Matopos National Park now holds out the hope of conserving the environment.

Government policy has not helped the situation either. The religious shrines have not been declared

national monuments. The National Museums and Monuments Department plays only a supportive role. In the name of respecting traditional religious values, the staff of the department left custodianship to the local leadership, which included the chiefs. Without any legal mandate for the shrines, NMMD staff have their hands tied. The perceived political power of the shrines has not helped the situation either. The political leadership has interfered in the choice of shrine custodians: the perceived political influence of the shrines is seen as an opportunity for unlocking the door to economic power.

Chiefs and government officials from Matabeleland South will convene an urgent meeting in the provincial capital Gwanda this week to seek ways of resolving the dispute at the Njelele rain-making shrine.

(THE CHRONICLE, 22 DECEMBER 1999)

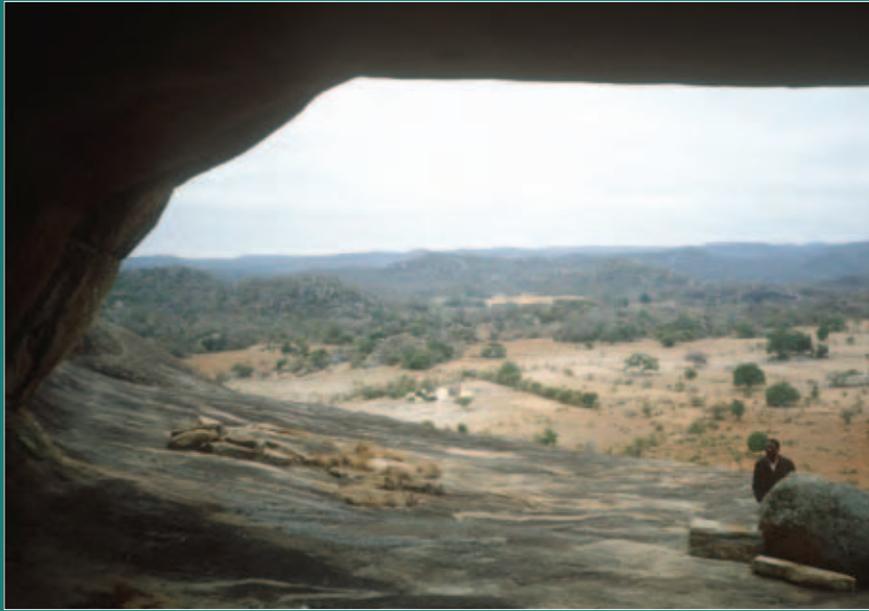
The Matopo Hills areas should be viewed as an oasis in an area that is otherwise arid. On the basis of its geomorphological uniqueness, a natural habitat with a wide variety of flora and fauna, and a cultural landscape found nowhere else in Zimbabwe, there is a need to conserve this legacy for the benefit of current and future generations. This will happen if all concerned inculcate the ideology of environmental conservation. The rock art holds out the promise of providing a clearer understanding of the human history of the area. The art goes beyond the history of mankind to embrace the natural landscape, especially the flora and fauna present in the Matopo Hills area in centuries gone by.

The absence of an empowered conservation ideology will affect both the natural and cultural landscapes. For centuries the locals espoused that ideology. With colonization, their ideology has been tampered with. While this has been happening, the new Western ideas on conservation have not yet been embraced. This transitional period, lacking any ideology, poses a real threat to the unique environment of the Matopo Hills. For example, the demand for curios has led to a serious depletion of the grey mukwa tree (*Pterocarpus angolensis*). The taboos that related to the cutting down of trees have not been respected. They no longer hold sway over the population, whose immediate concern is maximizing profits. Depletion of the forests alters the micro-climates of the area, making it more susceptible to general erosion and degradation.

The attraction of the Matopo Hills area is based on *inter alia* the pristine condition of its forests. As the trees are harvested and the grass cut down to thatch rural houses, the economic base of the

FIGURE 5

The panoramic view from inside the cave



area will shrink. A Matopo Hills area devoid of the vegetation will attract fewer tourists, and yet it is the tourists who provide the market for curios carved from the forests.

Where tourists and locals are not guided by a conservation ideology, the rock art with all its history and spiritual significance will be threatened. Vandalism is already on the increase and graffiti proliferating. Once again, the Matopo Hills area without its rock art is a mere conglomeration of rocks.

The stark contrast between the nearby rural areas and the Matopo National Park bears proof of how easily the environment can be altered. Trees have been cut down to fence the fields and for construction work. Trees are also cut down for firewood. With the veld exposed, soil erosion has taken its toll. The ecosystem is disturbed. Dams are silted. The aesthetic and economic value of the area is reduced, to the detriment of both the local inhabitants and the intending tourists.

While the Matopo National Park pushes for the conservation of the environment, the rural folk in adjoining communal lands see things differently. Stripped of their religious ideology, they are infused with a new economically-driven and conservation-unconscious ideology. They want to cut down trees for various economic purposes. The rock dassie (or Hyrax) and other animals are hunted with impunity. The perpetrators feel no sense of guilt at all, and meanwhile the government is not using its power to promulgate and enforce conservation laws. In any case, the best approach for conservation should flow from an inner conviction rather than from fear of breaking the law. The latter is not sustain-

able. In the absence of alternatives, the rural folk will continue to exploit the resources of the Matopo Hills area. As more and more pressure is exerted on the environment, breaking point will be reached.

It is hoped that the declaration of the area as a World Heritage Site will throw a positive spotlight on the area, especially with regard to conservation of the living religious heritage and the wider natural environment. After all, it is

the natural and cultural landscapes that make the Matopo Hills unique.

With regard to the living religious heritage, it is vital that its management is well thought out. Archaeology deals with three-dimensional objects and not spiritual matters. The management of this aspect of the Matopo Hills area is best undertaken by these with knowledge and insights into religious matters. Those without this background will be confounded by the seeming intricacies of the spiritual world and leave everything to the local leadership who, with their limited academic grounding, will yield to the dictates of technical experts, be they ornithologists, botanists, zoologists, environmentalists or, indeed, archaeologists. Respecting living religious heritage is not the same as abandonment, born of little knowledge. Archaeology will have to yield to ethnography if meaningful and sustainable progress is to be made.

The same issues emerge with regard to the grave of King Mzilikazi. Failure to understand Ndebele religious philosophy has led to a lack of guidance on the matter. That failure is passed off as respect for traditional religious values:

We [the museum's staff] gave the Khumalo clan the mandate to choose the stones that are to be used as well as the supervision of the whole project, everything is being done according to their requests as the custodians of the grave.

(THE CHRONICLE, 25 MAY 2003)

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight the uniqueness of the Matopo Hills area, a uniqueness that reflects the particular value of its cultural and natural landscapes. Over the years conservation ideology espoused by the rain-shrines has preserved the environment and ensured the survival of the ecosystems.

When indigenous knowledge and ideology systems began to diminish in the face of Western and scientific ideas, this unique environment became the victim. Human economic activities impacted negatively on the environment. Traditional religious ideology has been in conflict with the forces of modernization.

It is clear that when traditional religious values are no longer in tandem with the broader current values, the former becomes the victim. When those traditional religious values which hold out hope for the conservation of the environment are not respected, ultimately it is the environment that suffers. An ideology of conservation is necessary if the environment is to be conserved. The values need not necessarily be religious in origin. What is critical is the existence of a set of values that guide human activity in the exploitation of environmental resources.

A management structure and culture should be in place to guide the conservation of the living religious heritage. The structures should be buttressed by legislation which is cognizant of all the necessary dynamics. The said structures must be manned by people with relevant qualifications. A full understanding of man and his motives requires a multi-disciplinary approach in which ethnographers and historians play development roles.

If maximum benefits are to flow from the Matopo Hills area, now and in the future, it is imperative that the area is well managed. The fragility of the ecosystem should be appreciated. It is the delicately balanced ecosystem that draws people to the Matopo Hills area, as well as its rich and diverse cultural landscape. The hills area is a World Heritage Site, a legacy bequeathed to us, to hold in trust for all future generations.

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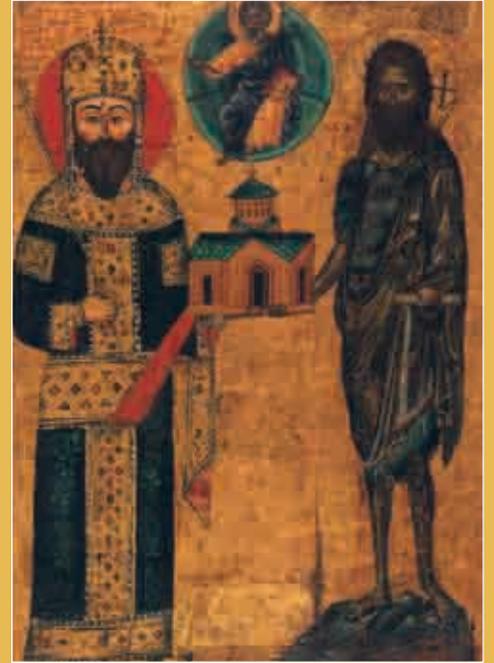
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Endnotes

- 1 Njelele Hills is situated to the west of the Matopos National Park, within the Kumalo Communal Lands.
- 2 King Mzilikazi founded the Ndebele nation. He led his people out of Zululand and settled in present day Zimbabwe in about 1839.
- 3 The ceremony serves to summon the spirit of the departed ancestor so that it comes to look after the living progeny.
- 4 King Mzilikazi's grave is one of several monuments in the Matopo Hills area, including the following: World's View, Bambata Cave, Nswatugi Mtshелеle Valley Cave, Fort Umlugula, and Rhodes's First Indaba site.
- 5 The Shangani or Wilson Patrol comprised thirty-four white men who pursued King Lobengula beyond the Shangani River in December 1893. All were killed and their remains interred, initially at Great Zimbabwe. Their final resting place was a monument on World's View.
- 6 There is a memorial, MOTH (Memorial to the Order of Tin Hats), next to a hill called Madzi.
- 7 An earlier submission was rejected on the basis that it ignored the cultural landscape and concentrated on the natural landscape.
- 8 Pathisa Nyathi is an Education Officer with the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture, while Chief Bidi is a Member of Parliament, in addition to being a traditional chief.
- 9 The line, from Westacre, is long discontinued.
- 10 ZIPRA was ZAPU's armed wing, while ZANLA was ZANU's armed wing. Both parties were engaged in the armed liberation struggle.
- 11 The traditional churches that made inroads into the area were the Anglican Church, the London Missionary Society and the Brethren in Christ Church, BICC. Recently there have been new churches such as the Watch Tower and the Presbyterian Church.

Mount Athos, a Greek peninsula that provides living space exclusively for many orthodox monastic communities, has in an exceptional way kept itself isolated from the influences of the modern world. The cultural heritage of Mount Athos comprises not only monastic buildings and religious art and objects, but also religious traditions and practices carried on in an atmosphere of religious devotion and worship. The harmonious relationship between buildings and nature, the use of principles of recycling and ecological architecture, as well as the independence of the community from outside influence, frame this unique cultural landscape. This ensemble is currently threatened by attempts to modernize and secularize various elements. It is therefore very important that a framework for the conservation of Mount Athos is based on its value as a living religious heritage site.



[JANIS CHATZIGOGAS]

The challenges in reconciling the requirements of faith and conservation in Mount Athos

The uniqueness of Mount Athos

Mount Athos is a unique example of a natural and built landscape whose forms and traditions continue today to reflect faithfully their origins, more than a thousand years ago. Although it is geographically inside Greece and the European Union, Mount Athos is autonomous and reports primarily to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul and only secondarily to the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek state. Moreover, it is a place, perhaps unique in the world, where women and indeed all female species are denied entry. According to religious traditions, in Mount Athos human and animal reproduction is excluded. This creates an opposition between human rights and religious beliefs, which today continues to generate controversy.

According to mythology, the peninsula of Mount Athos, which today reaches eastward into the Aegean

Sea, was formed from a stone thrown by the giant Athos at Poseidon. For Christians, Mount Athos is understood as the garden of the Virgin, and is regarded as a gift of Christ to his mother. In 963 AD, the first monastery – the Great Lavra on the easternmost point of the peninsula – was established by St. Athanasios the Athonite. That first monastery was soon joined by many others, some of which have disappeared and lie in ruins on the peninsula. Today twenty monasteries, twelve *skites* (houses of groups of monks) and approximately 700 independent hermitages, cells and religious houses survive. In addition to the holy settlements, the town of Karyes, seat of civil government for Mount Athos, is also present on the peninsula. Karyes contains the headquarters of the representatives of the various monasteries, as well as of those of various state services. Finally, Karyes is also home to the oldest church on



Mount Athos, the Church of the Protaton, part of which dates to the ninth century.

The population of resident monks stands today at fourteen hundred, perhaps 15% of the population of the peninsula at its height of activity in the Middle Ages.

Access today remains limited to those who request permission in writing to travel to the monasteries as pilgrims. Passports to visit the monasteries according to a pre-arranged itinerary are issued in limited numbers, to ensure that the number of visitors on the peninsula does not exceed two hundred individuals a day. Accommodation and

meals are provided within monastic settings without cost to the travellers. Pilgrims are expected to adopt the daily rhythm of the monastic community, including attendance at services within the churches, and sharing meals with the resident monks, as a mark of their respect for the religious values and traditions of Mount Athos.

The peninsula, and its institutions and residents, have enjoyed relative independence for over one thousand years. The basis for this independence was first laid out in an agreement (the first *typikon*) concluded between the Emperor Jean Tsimitzes and the monks of the peninsula, and reinforced and amplified in six subsequent *typika*. Those internal agreements have been confirmed in modern times, notably in 1926 when the government of Greece ratified a charter based on the long tradition of the *typika* agreements, providing secular recognition for this long maintained traditional independence. This was further reinforced in 1977 when the special status of Mount Athos was confirmed in an agreement between Greece and the European Common Market.

The legislative power, granted by the 1926 charter, is wielded by a *Synaxe* (Holy Assembly) containing one representative from each of the twenty monasteries (the head monk, or *Igoumenos*). This Council meets twice a year to address certain regulatory issues and dispositions. The administrative authority is maintained by a 'Holy Community' which numbers twenty delegates, again one for each of the monasteries present in Mount Athos. Finally, the executive power is exercised by the 'Holy Epistasy' (Commission) composed of four members, each representing a group of five monasteries. The civil authority for Mount Athos is maintained by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and ensures the faithful application of the charter of 1926, and public order. This office also ensures the existence of Mount Athos as an autonomous entity within the Hellenic State.

Mount Athos also has procedures and institutions intended to strengthen conservation of the heritage. The entire peninsula is recognized as an archaeological site under the laws of Greece, where changes to buildings or objects require the permission of the archaeological authority. This process is managed by a special service devoted to conservation issues within Halkidiki and Mount Athos, the 10th Ephorate for Byzantine Antiquities. The work of this service is supported by a special unit set up on Mount Athos, the Centre for the Preservation of Mount Athos.

Because of the special regulations that are in effect, Mount Athos has avoided the contemporary forms of human intervention, both positive and negative, that have characterised the secular Greek world outside Mount Athos. As a consequence, Mount Athos has become a natural and architectural museum of great international importance, unique testimony to traditions, ways of life and attitudes unchanged since the Middle Ages. At the same time it is a living place of faith (Christian Orthodoxy), and it constitutes the original and best-preserved form of such expression. The relationship between faith, the design of space and the management of the natural environment, is of high interest. Life on Mount Athos is characterized by simplicity, mildness and familiarity, the use of traditional materials such as stone and wood, recycling, the use of renewable sources of energy, a collective coenobitic existence, a unique relationship between the buildings and the natural landscape, self-dependence and multiformity, and the rational organization of production. The rhythm of life in this place is totally different, even the way time is measured (the first hour of the day depends on the time of sunrise). The basic goal is the worship of God and every activity serves this goal.

Architecture and arts

One has to take into account the fact that Mount Athos was designed from the beginning as a place of leisure and rest for the emperors and officials of the Byzantine Empire, at a time when it was the strongest empire in the world. As a result, the best craftsmen and workmen worked in Mount Athos, using the best and most expensive materials and building methods. Their work deserves to be the subject of

future *in situ* research.

The two major threats facing Mount Athos today are: (a) the failure to understand the importance of this World Heritage, and its consequent decline and destruction, (b) an offhand and superficial modernization, with poor adaptation of new materials and methods using unsuitable workmanship or kitsch aesthetics. To cover a concrete wall with a thin layer of decorative stone is not at all the same as using appropriate stone from an appropriate quarry in a load-bearing role. Unfortunately, this distinction is not easily appreciated by those making building improvements today.

The incorporation of art (painting, colour theory, and wood carving) and acoustics in the architecture of Mount Athos is also of great importance. Old workshops for the production of such items as religious paintings, olive oil and metalwork, as well as watermills, have been preserved and merit careful study and conservation.

Many of the architectural and construction principles that are incorporated in the architecture of Mount Athos are clearly of universal importance. Some of these principles are:

- maintenance of the harmonious relationship between the buildings and nature;
- honest use of materials and the construction;
- commitment to recycling and the use of ecologically sensitive architecture;
- maintenance of the original expression of ideas and faith ceremonies, and the creation of spaces that accommodate these ceremonies (the dome, the regulation of the incoming light, the shape of the cross and its relation to the cardinal points of the compass);





- ensuring the security of the autonomy and self-dependence of people, buildings and natural environment.

Safeguarding traditions

Mount Athos is also a place that maintains age-old traditions. But here the meaning of tradition is very different from what we in the secular West would normally define as tradition. This influences the relationship which people on Mount Athos develop with what we consider to be the ‘heritage’ of the place. For example, the monks avoid the self-conscious exhibition of their treasures (movable or immovable) outside Mount Athos in museums or showcases. They try to keep objects, buildings and the natural environment alive as living parts of their daily existence, as these traditions constitute their everyday reality. The conservation of the built heritage, religious objects and collections can happen only through recognition of the need to work within a framework of lively continuation of the place as a home for the expression of faith. It is, therefore, difficult for the monastic community to imagine a museum being created there, or its collections being exhibited outside Mount Athos. A unique example was the ‘Treasures of Mount Athos’ exhibition, which took place in Thessaloniki in 1997. Only a very small part of the religious objects and materials present on Mount Athos were exhibited. This exhibition brought some criticism from the monastic community of the peninsula and is not likely to be easily repeated. The incorporation of the objects and the buildings within the continuity of life and faith on

Mount Athos is viewed locally as the best, indeed the only way for this important heritage to be conserved and developed.

Visiting Mount Athos

The normal experience of the tourist, visitor or observer moving through unknown locales is transformed here because of the continuity of the life entered by the visitor, and the extreme care taken to limit numbers and forms of contact with visitors. Once the visitor arrives and starts observing the surroundings, the visitor gets the feeling of belonging to a wholly different way of life. This particular characteristic is a ‘dangerous’ element in visits to Mount Athos: after being there for some days, one has to choose between the rhythm of life one is used to and the one that dominates there, between the role of the observer and the role of the religionist who participates in the life and the worship. One could, for example, begin to observe a religious ceremony out of curiosity and find oneself after several hours taking an active part in the ceremony. The place, its scale, its natural and artificial lighting, the sounds and the music, the collectivity, and the strictly allocated roles create an atmosphere of devotion and worship. Using a totally different vocabulary, one could compare the experience to that of audience participation in a contemporary theatre play, or a session of group therapy, or a very well organized opera with two male choirs, musical scores and choreographies. This is the important thing in the case of Mount Athos (and also a discovery of contemporary science): no observation can take place without, at

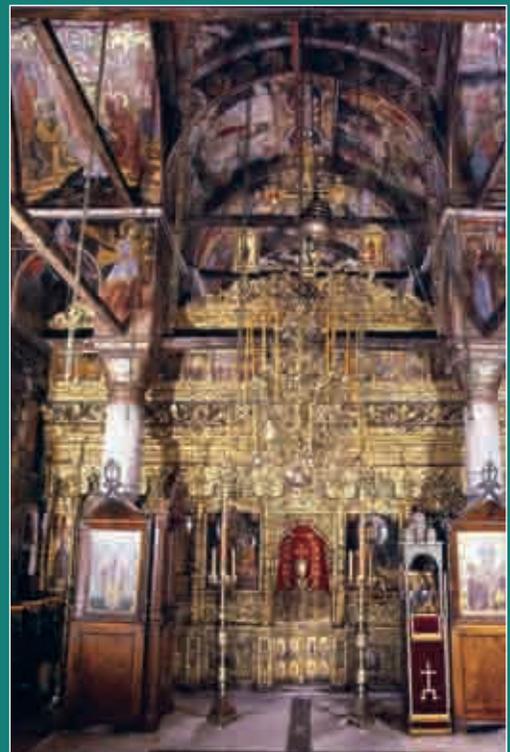
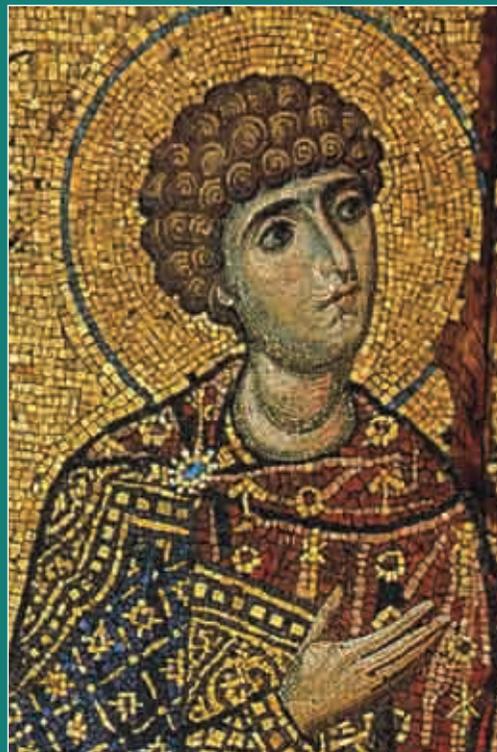


the same time, offering the potential to transform not only the observer but also the observed object. The quality of the visitor's experience depends on whether the monks will trust the visitor and allow access to all parts of this whole 'system', and this in turn depends on perceptions by the monks of the openness and interest by the visitor in the experience offered. The visitor cannot observe from a distance: the visitor

must enter in all ways to observe and learn.

Conservation of movable treasures

As far as the heritage of the movable treasures and paintings is concerned, as already noted, they are part of the process of worship, and so it is generally almost impossible to take them out of their context for exhibitions. In the few instances where this has happened, only objects of lesser importance were exhibited, and only if they were completely movable and not being used in worship. As far as paintings are concerned, the paintings of Panselinos, perhaps the greatest painter of the Eastern world and recognized as being on a par with Michelangelo and El Greco in terms of impact, constitute a basic element of the dining area of the churches. In certain cases, they have been subsequently covered by later paintings of lower quality, and it has been necessary to use the very expensive technique of removing the top layer to reveal the original. Among the movable treasures there may be, for example, an archdiocese's bar or crown that belonged to the Byzantine emperor Justinian whose value is immeasurable. If the object is being used in worship, it is not possible for it to leave Mount Athos. It is also not possible for the visitor to observe this object unless he happens to participate in the single annual ceremony when it is used.





Conservation of Mount Athos as living religious heritage

Mount Athos is a historical monument of living religious heritage. However, today Mount Athos is at a turning point in its history, given the strong contemporary pressures to modernize and even secularize. These tendencies are influenced by the availability of European Union funding, pressures from outside to secularize, and by problems of lack of cooperation among monasteries. Given the special and relatively complex forms of administration on Mount Athos (a rotational system of leadership within assemblies, assemblies covering legislative, administrative and executive power which are not fully harmonized, the relative autonomy of the twenty monasteries, and the varied orientations among the monks), it is very difficult to envision or propose an appropriate perspective for technological modernization. There are indeed relations with the outside world and sometimes these contain temptations. The donation of a car, or of one hundred metres of asphalt or reinforced concrete, is easy to encourage and

realize. Yet these materials and the modern technology they contain constitute threats to Mount Athos, if they cannot be incorporated into the existing way of life.

On the other hand, since its foundation as a place of worship and recreation for the Byzantine Empire, Mount Athos has always managed to incorporate and assimilate the best and most advanced materials and technologies. However, there are certain needs that have to be taken into consideration. For example, as far as the issue of an all-weather road for motor vehicles is concerned, current proposals range from the exclusion of motor cars and asphalt (understood as a material from the devil's domain) to those that, at the other extreme, would lead to an influx of luxury jeeps, the expansion of the existing road system and the creation of traffic problems. The views of the monks may be grouped as: (a) the fundamentalists, adhering to the old tradition; (b) the modernizers, anxious to take advantage of what may be gained through strengthening links to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the European Union; and (c) those monks possessed by a passive and perhaps even unknowing resistance to change (this being very different from the conscious maintenance of tradition). However, after a period of decay and loss of vitality in the 1950s, Mount Athos is now experiencing a period of revival, with the arrival of a generation of young, motivated and creative monks.

As far as the issues of conservation are concerned, it is necessary to recognize the unique qualities of the heritage of Mount Athos, and determine which of these qualities are still alive and can continue to exist and which are historically out-of-date, and which techniques and ideas can be transformed and incorporated in the new constructions. Particularly in the case of buildings (monasteries, churches, arsenals, iron workshops, painting workshops, windmills, wine production workshops and storage places), a detailed examination is needed to determine the damages of time and to provide appropriate and sensitive treatment. Any restoration that takes place has to be done in ways that will re-incorporate the restored buildings into the everyday life of the community. For example, a waterfall that formerly transformed water energy into rotational energy can serve today as an electricity generator (which has already been done in certain monasteries). For this to happen, the conservation of nature and the routing of water without huge hydraulic works are necessary.

In addition, the understanding of the Christian Orthodox faith is a fundamental prerequisite for the conservation of the elements of Mount Athos, because every decision that is taken is in a way affected by and related to issues of faith and religion. Bearing this in mind, we, as members of the European and world community, should try to assist in creating a positive and faith-based framework for the conservation of the buildings and collections of Mount Athos.

It would be premature to propose here all the components of this framework. Significant research is still needed to clarify the traditional basis and function of the many elements and processes within the complex system of the peninsula's monastic communities. The results of the research in Mount Athos could be incorporated into a wider framework, which would include the results of analogous research being done in other faiths and religions. The comparisons to be made, and the parallel research itself, could help foster greater mutual understanding and the drawing out of important universal characteristics. This could also lead to the making of an International Charter of principles, characteristics and building methods that would assist in the long-term maintenance and co-existence of faith, heritage and tradition at Mount Athos, and would also be useful to the international universal village we aspire to be part of. ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) in Greece is attempting to work with the monks of Mount Athos to develop such a framework, and ultimately a related charter. We (and I am a member of ICOMOS Greece and a part of this initiative) undertake this with some sense of urgency, given the ever-increasing interest in, and fascination with the possibilities offered by modernization and secularization.

Sources

This paper makes use of material from the World Heritage nomination document for the inclusion of Mount Athos in the World Heritage List and from the ICOMOS evaluation document.

The Most Holy Trinity worship of Vallepietra (Lazio) is a very complex religious reality, with multiform religious ritual performances and meanings, which combine in an apparently incoherent way. Of particular interest is the spontaneous, authentically felt worship that the faithful have for the Most Holy Trinity image of the sanctuary and the deep, more or less unconscious, perception of addressing their belief in a feminine divinity.

The sacred place, very atmospheric and of extraordinary natural beauty, is an ancient cave, located 300 m from the bottom of a 1000 m long cliff face. The ritual performances, the songs, and the penitential faith of thousands of believers together create a sensation of powerful fascination. The area has been frequented for centuries: Neolithic objects have been found and, in the cave itself, the remains of an ancient Roman cult.

The devotional image of the Most Holy Trinity, not actually orthodox for the Catholic religion, is a fresco from the twelfth century AD, painted on the wall of the cave, which represents three identical figures of Christ. Thousands of pilgrims, most of them organized in 'companies', show deep love and gratitude for the miraculous image.

The feast is celebrated the first Sunday after the Catholic festivity of Whitsunday, on a night of the full moon, during which a passion play, 'The Wailing of Virgins', is performed. A second celebration is held each year on 26 July, the feast-day of Saint Anne (the mother of the Virgin Mary) who has a shrine near the holy cave. These and other ritual elements reflect the ancient pre-Roman cult of Mother Earth.

Safeguarding this religious heritage involves studying and documenting the event, and involving believers in an understanding of their ancient religious values. At the same time, it is important to realize that transformations are an unavoidable part of tradition and that the spontaneous and creative invention of culture must be supported.

[PAOLA ELISABETTA SIMEONI]

Popular worship of the Most Holy Trinity of Vallepietra, central Italy

THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITION AND THE SAFEGUARDING OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

The primary purpose of this paper deals with the following subject: how to conserve and better safeguard the sacred in its intangible dimension, which is in a constant creative flow and continually challenged by ‘glocalization’ (the dynamic exchanges between global and local patterns of culture).

This paper stresses the importance of involving the community as ‘subject’ in the conservation of its religious heritage, through understanding and documenting both intangible religious events and tangible ritual objects. It is also important to respect popular religious values during the heritage management process, and to support people’s cultural inventiveness and creativity.

A SACRED SPACE, A PLACE OF ANCIENT WORSHIP

The sacred space is extremely fascinating and has extraordinary beauty. Mount Autore, at a height of 1853 m, dominates the central section of the Simbriuni Mountains. It is largely covered with centuries-old beech forest. Springs (the *Simbrivio*) issue from the mountainside, cutting through a great open amphitheatre of rock, and flowing past the village of Vallepietra on into the Aniene River. Within the amphitheatre is a flat area (mesa), 1,000 metres wide, supported by colossal rock towers known as Colle della Tagliata (Fig. 1).

The naked rock face here is about 300 m high. At the foot of this incredible natural apse, which is in the form of a large shell, there is a huge cave, 15 m deep, containing the sanctuary of the Most Holy Trinity (Mezzana 1943: 11–12) (Fig. 2).

This landscape, of rocky mountains, numerous springs and streams of water, has always favoured its perception as sacred and ensured a continuity of worship (Dini 1980). The remains of a Roman shrine were found in the cave, while Neolithic artefacts have been found in the surrounding area. The mountain is situated at the border of Abruzzo and is at the crossroads of three ancient cattle-tracks (*tratturi*) that connected the area with the Roman countryside and Campania (Fedeli Bernardini 2000: 36), more recently the Pontifical State and the Kingdom of Naples.

THE SANCTUARY AND SACRED IMAGE OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

The naturally formed cave has suffered from human intervention (Mezzana 1943: 16–20). It has been subdivided into a rear section called ‘the Cave of the Angel and the Holy Water’, where according to tradition an angel is said to have miraculously created a source of water with healing powers (Ciangherotti



FIGURE 1
The Colle della Tagliata of Mount Autore and the Village of Vallepietra (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

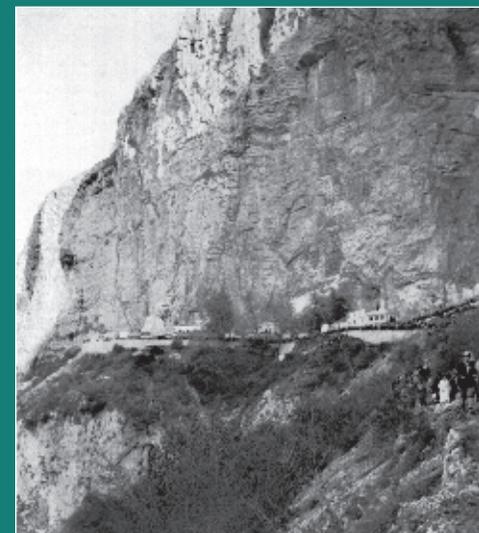
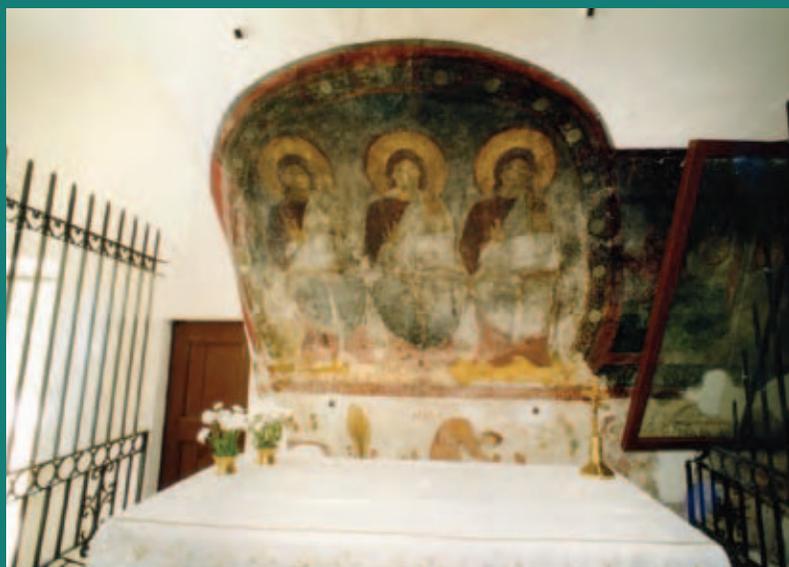


FIGURE 2
The sanctuary, as it was in the early 20th century (Archivio Fotografico Storico ICCD Foto Luciano Morpurgo, 1918).

2000: 23), and a front section, where two levels have been carved out.

On the upper floor of the front section is the present-day sanctuary, with, on the west wall, the famous fresco depicting an unusual representation of the Most Holy Trinity. Dating to the twelfth century AD,¹ the fresco portrays three identical figures of Christ, bestowing blessings (in the Greek

FIGURE 3
The Holy Image:
la Santissima Trinità
di Vallepietra
(Archivio
EtnoAntropologico
ICCD Foto Angelo
Palma, 2003).



manner) and holding in their left hands an open book (Zuccalà 2000: 16).² (Fig. 3)

A chapel dedicated to Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, was built in 1888 on the left side of the sanctuary. In this chapel, there is a painting showing Saint Anne and Mary as a child, flanked by Saints Peter and John. The presence of the two saints refers to a legend about the founding of the sanctuary.³

THE CELEBRATION OF THE CULT

The feast of the Most Holy Trinity is a movable one,⁴ celebrated on the first Sunday after Pentecost, at the height of the full moon (Fedeli Bernardini 2000: 35). The feast-day of Saint Anne on 26 July is also celebrated.

The sanctuary has a vast area given over to devotional use and frequented mainly by pilgrims organized in ‘companies’ (i.e. groups), coming from towns in Lazio and the neighbouring areas of Abruzzo and Campania. It is their beliefs and customs that constitute the religious foundation of the feast. Most importantly, these are connected to the traditional popular aspects of the activities of the cult, and this usually ensures their complete autonomy from the church authorities (Cocchia 2000).⁵

In the past the pilgrims reached the sanctuary by foot, or on mules and asses, following ancient mule-tracks. Today, many of them arrive by automobile or in buses, even though over the last ten years there has been a rediscovery of the pilgrimage on foot. Many pilgrims reach the sanctuary by themselves, in family groups or with friends. Individual pilgrims and companies return more than once during the opening period of worship, which runs from the 1 May to the end of October⁶ when the sanctuary is closed for the winter.

THE LEGENDS OF THE FOUNDING OF THE CULT

A popular legend tells of a peasant whose oxen and plough fell from the mountain above the *Tagliata*. He found the oxen on the surrounding mesa unharmed and in adoration in front of a cave upon whose wall appeared the mysterious fresco of the Trinity. The plough, on the other hand, remained stuck in the stone halfway down the rock wall. It was identified with a curved wooden trunk that emerged from the rocky wall (Ciangherotti 2000: 25).

In a literary account of the legend, transcribed in 1887

from an older written work dated 1735 and known as the Papal Bull of the Trinity, two inhabitants of Ravenna, living in Rome, go to Mount Autore to escape the persecution of Nero. Here, they are visited by the apostles Peter and John, who had crossed the Kingdom of Naples. The mountain is described as sterile, without water or grass, and treeless. An angel appears to them, a spring bubbles up, and they have a vision of the Trinity in mid-air. The mountain opens, a dragon comes out and is slain by the angel. In an instant, the mountainside bursts into flower, and trees and grass flourish. The next day, the Most Holy Trinity appears and blesses the mountain as an equal to Mount Sinai and the other holy places of Palestine. This account also mentions that the spot is given over to the followers of Saint Basil, and includes a prophecy that it will be the baptismal place of the ‘Great Tartar’ (Caraffa 1959: 220; Fedeli Bernardini 2002: 53–54).

A third legend is recounted in Vallepietra and Subiaco: the ‘Three Persons’ of the Most Holy Trinity arrive in Subiaco, lodging in a village inn. The next day they leave, taking the road towards the sanctuary. They rest for a while against a tree, whose branches are on three occasions cut down by the inhabitants of Subiaco; and then the ‘Three Persons’ finally reach the holy cave (Fedeli Bernardini 2002: 37).⁷

THE DOCUMENTED HISTORY OF THE CULT

A document dated 1079 (Caraffa 1969: 217ff.)⁸ states that the Church of Most Holy Trinity of Mount Autore was a part of the feudal lands of the Benedictine Monastery of Subiaco. Already, in 1294, it appears that this church was under the authority

of the Bishop of Anagni. For the period between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, there is very little information.

In the seventeenth century, records show that the church of the ‘Santissima’ had been an abbey. Its importance seems to have grown. In documents from the eighteenth century we finally find a mention of the important influence of the pilgrims, many coming from the Kingdom of Naples.

A document of 1705 briefly describes the cult: ‘the priests of Vallepietra, accompanied by the people, climb in a procession to the sanctuary, where the mass is celebrated ‘con canto’ (with song) on an altar placed outside the church to make it easier for the faithful to get there’ (Caraffa 1969: 233).

Finally, the description left to us in 1759 from the then Bishop of Anagni, reports that the cult was celebrated on the night before the feastday of the Most Holy Trinity with the pilgrims who arrived in great numbers from the countryside and the Kingdom of Naples. They climbed the stairs of the church on their knees, in an expression of devotion as is done on the Holy Stairs (of Rome). The faithful had the custom of touching the walls of the cave. There was also another door from which the faithful left without disturbing those who entered (Caraffa 1969: 273–75). In the 1800s the importance of the sanctuary grew progressively. (Fig. 4) A document of 1854 records that ‘it is continuously visited by the devotees and especially, on the feast day, there being a crowd of eight thousand or ten thousand people, in the main, from the nearby Kingdom of Naples’ (Caraffa 1969: 242). The sanctuary became an ever-

greater source of wealth from offerings, monies left by the devoted to the church, ex-voto, donations, etc. In 1856 was begun, in fact, the present construction of the Church of Mount Autore was begun in 1856 and carried out in Neo-Classical style with a balcony and railing. In 1882 a pilgrimage is documented for the first time on the feast of Saint Anne, whose small chapel, dug out from the rock, was built in 1888.⁹

The Pilgrimage

The pilgrims leave from their villages and follow a standard route, with the image of the Most Holy Trinity of the sanctuary (the three identical Christs) or other images of the Trinity, or in some cases with images of Saint Anne. In the past, it might have been a beech branch, divided in three ‘fingers’. The pilgrimage can sometimes last five or more days, and for the most part is on foot. They walk through the mountains and the beech woods, crossing streams of water, and singing the traditional pilgrim hymns to the Most Holy Trinity (known as the *Treppa*, an abbreviation for the *Tre Persone* – ‘Three Persons’).¹⁰ (Fig. 5)

Following the traditional itinerary, they eat and sleep in the mountain, where they light bonfires. Others rest in the streets of the village or are given hospitality by the villagers. They sing and dance popular musical repertoires, accompanied by accordions, brass and woodwind instruments, and sometimes bagpipes.

The main part of the worship is celebrated for three days, beginning two nights before the feast-day, the last day being the feast of The Holy Trinity.



FIGURE 4 The crowd of pilgrims at the sanctuary in the early twentieth century (Archivio Fotografico Storico - ICCD – Foto Luciano Morpurgo, 1920-23)



FIGURE 5 Pilgrims passing *Renzio* bridge. Ritual behaviours (Archivio Fotografico Storico ICCD Foto Luciano Morpurgo, 1937?).

The arrival of the companies takes place almost uninterrupted during the day and the night. Some of these,¹¹ passing through Vallepietra, stop at the village church, where a painting that represents the image of the 'Three Persons' is hung. They make their devotions, praying, singing, and walking by the image, which they touch with their hands, or rub with a handkerchief or hat, as if to capture part of its holiness. Imparting kisses, they then implore its blessings.¹² (Fig. 6)

Some companies then return home. Others proceed towards the sanctuary following a path that was used before the modern road was constructed. (Fig. 7) This is a mule-track that begins in the lower part of the village and, running along the cemetery (where the pilgrims first stop), rises to a flatland among cultivated fields, pastures, springs, small streams and waterfalls. In the second section, the track rises steeply to the *Tagliata*.

Reaching the sanctuary and without stopping to rest, they queue up behind their standard to go into the sacred temple and to pay homage to the Most Holy Image. (Fig. 8) Each company competes to distinguish itself from the others. The men wear handkerchiefs on their necks and brightly coloured hats. Proudly carrying the standards, they sing the hymn to the *Treppa*. Each company has its own particular version of the hymn, as well as a particular blend of musical instruments. They go up and down the stairs of the sanctuary three times, passing before the Holy Image in the cave, some barefoot and/or kneeling, as in ancient times. (Fig. 9)

Before entering, at the foot of the stairs, they dip their fingers in the healing water to sign themselves with the sign of the Cross. Until a few years ago the special water was placed outside the Cave of the Angel. Still praying and singing, they then enter the shrine, touching with their hands the lintel of the door. Some of them rub their fingers along the wall of the cave. There are old graffiti on the cave wall, and until a few years ago there were also votive offerings and old lamps hung from the ceiling. In front of the image they stop for a while. Most of them show deep emotion and expressions of love, some bursting unrestrainedly into tears, while others clasp the railing of the shrine and cry for mercy, exalting the Most Holy Trinity. Almost all of them leave some money offerings. Some bring votive offerings or flowers that they have brought from far away. (Figs. 10 and 11)

The companies or single pilgrims pay the priests to celebrate a mass for the souls of their dead relatives and, after they have gone to confession, they attend church services. They then buy souvenirs from the numerous stalls, especially gaily-coloured paper flowers and medals with the Three Person images.

These can be put on their hats, pilgrim-sticks or the standard of the company. They also collect a special plant with a plume (*pelucche*), which can be found only in that season in a particular mountain ravine. (Figs. 12–15)

Some companies sleep in the sacred place of the sanctuary,¹³ some in the area outside it, in the beech woods in the mountains above the *Tagliata*, and some in the streets of Vallepietra, or near the village where they pitch their tents or sleep on the ground. There, the pilgrims light fires, eat, drink wine and sing, playing their musical instruments. Singing and drinking, they enter into competition and may become extremely drunk.¹⁴

Finally, they return home, travelling over the ancient path or streets again. Along the way, the pilgrims stop on some occasions to rest. One of the rest stops, where the steepest climb begins, is a bridge over the waters of the Simbrivio. There some of them, following tradition, toss stones into the water to liberate themselves from their sins, pronouncing the ritual chant: *a balle li peccati mei* (down away my sins).

Others form family-like relationships in the water of the stream. These are rarely seen. They follow a precise ritual, crossing their fingers in the water, pronouncing the 'Credo', they sign each other with the sign of the Cross and promise eternal friendship. (Fig. 16) When they reach their villages, the inhabitants who had not participated in the pilgrimage welcome them up to the church where the standard is lodged near the altar.¹⁵

THE PIANTO DELLE ZITELLE (THE WAILING OF THE SPINSTERS)

At dawn on the feast of the Trinity, there is a sung performance of the passion of Christ. This is known as the *Pianto delle Zitelle* (the Wailing of the Spinsters) and has been included in the cult since the second half of the nineteenth century (Cocchia 2000).¹⁶ (Fig. 17)

The *Pianto* can be viewed as 'the confirmation of a pre-Christian substratum of the worship-rites included in a funeral context' (Migliorini 1999: 76). It is sung in its entirety, in the contemplative form of a prayer rather than as true narrative (Colacicchi 1936: 3). According to Migliorini, 'there is an organic relationship between funeral rituals and agrarian rituals: 'wailing', purification, orgiastic behaviour, joyfulness, penance, branches pulled up, people and means of transportation decorated with multicoloured flowers' (Migliorini 1999: 77).¹⁷

Fourteen young girls (spinsters, i.e. virgins) of Vallepietra, dressed in white, except for the one in black representing the Madonna, sing the *Pianto*.



FIGURE 6 In the Church of Vallepietra, pilgrims perform particular rituals (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 7 The 'companies' take a mule-track to climb towards the sanctuary (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 8 Thousands of pilgrims generally organized in 'companies' reach the sanctuary (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 9 Pilgrims going up the stairs of the sanctuary (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 10 and 11 Pilgrims worship before the Holy Image (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 12 Pilgrims buy gaily coloured flowers and put them on their pilgrim sticks (Archivio

EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 13 ...or on their hats (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 14 As it was in the early twentieth century (Archivio Fotografico Storico ICCD Foto Luciano Morpurgo, 1937?).

FIGURE 15 ...and collect a special 'plume' (plant) (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003)

FIGURE 16 Pilgrims, forming family-like relationships, cross their fingers in the water (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 17 The spinsters go in procession to the balcony of the sanctuary where they perform the spinsters' wailing (Archivio Fotografico Storico ICCD Foto Luciano Morpurgo, 1937?).

Every spinster sings her ‘Mystery’ or performs as a divine figure.¹⁸ As late as the 1950s, the sacred performance or ‘lauds’ was celebrated on the balcony of the small church of the Most Holy Trinity and acted with minimal gestures. In the 1930s it was sung in a different manner and, according to different ethnomusical hypotheses, some musical notes were similar to those of popular funeral dirges. Today, it is staged by a producer and a music-master, and performed on a platform constructed in front of the sanctuary. It is at the same time a cultural and a popular performance, which is included in a sort of liturgical framework composed by the *Veni Creator* and the *Oremus* (Cocchia 2000: 45). (Fig. 18)

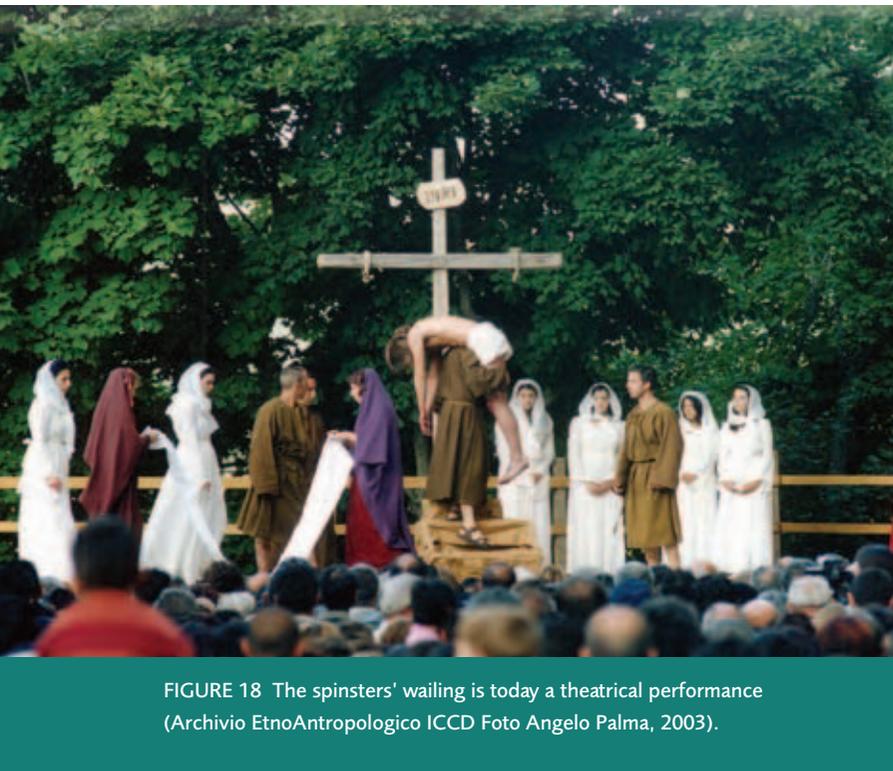


FIGURE 18 The spinsters' wailing is today a theatrical performance (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

This musical performance probably has a medieval origin. In 2001, UNESCO proclaimed, for the first time, some of the world's most remarkable examples of the oral and intangible heritage. One of these is the ‘Mystery Play of Elche’ in Spain, a sacred musical drama of the death, assumption and crowning of the Virgin Mary. Performed without interruption since the mid-fifteenth century, it is a living testimony of European religious theatre of the Middle Ages and of the medieval cult of devotion to the Virgin. Influenced by Byzantine rites, it is in some aspects similar to the ‘Wailing of the Spinsters’ of Vallepiedra, except for the fact that the divinity worshipped is the Most Holy Trinity, though with a profound feminine perception of it (*la Santissima*).

The feminine perception of the worshipped divinity. The ritual complex

The Most Holy Trinity cult of Vallepiedra shows a considerable degree of complexity, with various religious performances and meanings, and different ritual elements, articulated in an apparently incoherent manner from the historical, cultural and religious points of view, and defying a unitary system of comprehension.

One must note, as a very interesting and upsetting fact, that a large number of pilgrims have a more or less conscious perception of worshipping the ‘Madonna’ (the Virgin Mary).

An Italian student of history of religions, Angelo Brelich (1976), was amazed to observe that ‘though they (the pilgrims) sing hymns to the ‘Three Persons’ and cry ‘Viva la Santissima Trinità’ (‘Hurrah to the Most Holy Trinity’)... they name the worshipped divinity only as ‘la Santissima’ (the Most Holy, feminine in the Italian language)... Furthermore, they often think that they go to the pilgrimage for the glory of the Madonna’ (Brelich 1976: 76).¹⁹

Brelich charts the origins of the present cult of the Most Holy Trinity of Vallepiedra to an ancient cult of the Great Earth Mother and a complex of pre-Roman rites with strong agrarian elements (Brelich 1976: 100–101).²⁰

A sanctuary in a cave of a mountain and a source of water, dedicated to the ‘Santissima’ divinity, where, in a particular period of Spring and in a night of the full moon, the faithful come from a vast geographic area and where, in a particular religious occasion, a ‘Wailing’ is celebrated for a dead god. The pilgrims, returning to their villages, disguise themselves, carry trees and branches, form family-like relationships, toss stones over heaps of rocks and also toss them in the stream.’

(BRELICH 1976: 79ff.)

He compares these various elements to religious complexes of other religions of the ancient world and finds them ‘in the ancient Mediterranean world, before the cultural Hellenic hegemony...which cannot be referenced to an autonomous Mediterranean civilisation...but rather at a cultural ‘koiné’, to the formation of which Sumerian, Oriental and Occidental Semites, Aegean-Anatolian populations, and Egyptians have contributed.’²¹

Today, the priests deny such dedication,²² but then admit that some of the faithful say that they are going ‘to the Madonna’. They attribute this

belief, above all, to those companies that come from the south (the Province of Frosinone) and suffer from confusion due to ignorance or for reasons of tradition.

Many faithful seem reticent; they know that such confusion is not well accepted by the Church. Other devotees, without embarrassment, declare that it is true, because Saint Anne is celebrated with the Trinity (and, therefore, the Virgin Mary). It is quite certain that Saint Anne also assumes on occasion the connotation of the Great Mother (*Bibliotheca Sanctorum* 1961: 1271).

To hear the ‘Santissima’ cited, to name the Trinity of Mount Autore, does suggest that the Trinity cult of the sanctuary underlies a more or less conscious perception of a feminine divinity to whom the cult is dedicated – a belief that is obviously officially inadmissible.

It is possible to give an historical interpretation to the religious practice of the ‘Santissima’, which probably represents the survival of an agrarian cult. It is not known whether this is directly connected to an ancient pre-Roman religious complex but surely it is linked, until recently, to peasant and local pastoral ambiances. These various cults have created, in the course of the centuries, stratifications of the rituals and various religious syncretisms. Furthermore, in the Jungian interpretation, the popular rites of the cult as a whole can be related to a cult attributed to the Great Earth Mother (Jung 1979 (original edition 1940); Neumann 1975 (original edition 1953) and 1981 (original edition 1956)).

In effect, the cult of the ‘Santissima Trinità’ and that of the Virgin Mary (today probably linked with the celebration of Saint Anne) have been juxtaposed without denying each other’s validity. In fact they tend to overlap to such a degree that they are partly confused. What can be the reason for which in the worship of the ‘Santissima’ one wails for the dead Christ? Why is it a cult of the dead?

The attempt to comprehend the apparent conflict of various ritual and worship elements, within a matrix of religious and cultural reference to the Great Mother, is, in my opinion, partly a matter of history and gender. It also illustrates how the official Church has reacted to the contradictions posed by historical and cultural traditions: the veneration of an heretical image, the feminine perception of the cult, the performance, outside the Catholic liturgical context, of the ‘Wailing of the Spinsters’²³, the cult of Saint Anne and the cult of the dead.

Recent changes

Today, in a period of general transformation of society, of its values, habits and ritual practices, many

young pilgrims appear to be attracted to the possibility of hiking to the *Tagliata* of Mount Autore. The not so young are attracted by their vibrant devotion to a divinity still deeply venerated. They demonstrate, in their ritual Catholic gestures (the signing of the Cross, the behaviour in church, praying, etc.), their distance from the liturgical practices of the Church. Others tenaciously repeat the traditions left to them by their elders, undertaking the pilgrimage in memory of them.

The local church, on the other hand, is continuously demonstrating its ‘managerial’ capacity, providing the sanctuary with flowers, repairing the roads leading to it, and undertaking the general maintenance of the sanctuary.

Some years ago, the water source of the cave, considered to be of a healing nature, was brought to the entrance of the sanctuary by the Prior, with directions to use it only to make the sign of the Cross (indications which are often ignored by the faithful).

The crosses, which are planted in devotion by the companies in various parts of the sacred place, have been moved along the path leading to the foot of the sanctuary. Due to increasing imitation, or to competition among the companies, crosses and stone slabs have multiplied in the last few years (today their number is more than 150). (Fig. 19)

This year, the cross of Pereto (a village in Abruzzo region) was also moved to the roadside. It was considered the first and oldest, visible in the photographs of Morpurgo from the beginning of the



FIGURE 19
A cross (Archivio
EtnoAntropologico
ICCD Foto Angelo
Palma, 2003).

1900s. It was set in an open space along the road where the pilgrims stopped to pray and sing before it, and to toss stones and set down their candles.

In 2003, the sanctuary was also 'cleaned' inside by the new Prior. The ex-voto offerings, which had been hung on the walls, were removed and gathered together in a small museum underneath the sanctuary, as they were considered a distraction to the devotees. The centuries old graffiti (Mezzana 1943: 46) also disappeared under a layer of paint.²⁴

TRADITION, TRANSFORMATION, SAFEGUARDING HERITAGE

What are the consequences of this perspective for what we have briefly discussed here? What are the best ways to safeguard our intangible heritage? It is characterised by an almost non-existent tangible component, by transformation, by the fact there are living and vital cultural events in the constant, creative flow of the adaptation of people with respect to the socio-economic and religious environment in which they live.

It represents at the same time worldviews and specific cultural systems, reflecting social and human values, and singular and particular hereditary identities, all of which are fundamental to the socio-cultural survival of the community that expresses them.

An extremely rapid transformation, due to the ever increasing globalisation of the 'market place', accompanied by the mass cultural phenomena carried out by the communications media, produces an

insidious effect on local cultural dynamics, crashing over them in a raging flood which devastates the relationships between generations and their different perceptions, values and experiences.

The first thing for an anthropologist or ethnologist to do is to document the unique event being observed (Fig. 20). He must safeguard the memory of traditional oral and intangible culture, recording first of all the knowledge that older people still retain of their own culture, as well as the transformations observed by the younger generations. Audio and visual documentation must be undertaken, and every witness to the cultural phenomenon and data on the subject collected (bibliographic, archive, photographs, films, and audio recordings). It is important to have a convincing interpretation of the events observed and the dynamics of their transformations.

To verify continually and to monitor the continuation and the transformations is another important task of safeguarding (Tucci 2002). This is the first act of safeguarding a heritage, the most important perhaps because one must know that the event observed will change and never be the same, due both to human individual variability and to historic, social and cultural transformations. (Fig. 21)

It is fundamental that all the material collected and conserved must be divulged and communicated at different levels of social and cultural usage. The data regarding intangible heritage, in particular, have to be contained in audio and visual archives from which one can publish field research, archived studies



FIGURE 20 A company, walking backwards, leaves the sanctuary, playing instruments and singing hymns to the *Santissima* (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

FIGURE 21 The challenge of transformation: several ephemeral small crosses are 'planted' in devotion (Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

or documents, and catalogues, as well as forming the basis for further research.

In Italy, to conserve data regarding cultural heritage, we use aids such as cataloguing systems,²⁵ today managed by a computerized system known as the Sistema Informativo Generale del Catalogo (SIGEC – the General Informative System of Cataloguing) created by the Central Institute for Documentation and Cataloguing (ICCD).

To save and conserve this sort of cultural heritage, strongly tied to the everyday life of the people, is to respect them as ‘subjects’, to respect their culture, their values and feelings. This is why nothing must be done without them. They are the first owners of their cultures. When asked for information, during interviewing, filming and recording, they will remember, reflecting about themselves, creating self-observation and a self-conscious level of their cultural pattern, and so conserve their cultural performances or invent new cultural activities.

This is why I believe that one instrument of safeguarding is involving the community in conservation of religious heritage, respecting popular tradition and cultural and religious values, maintaining cultural patterns, and permitting and supporting communities in the creation of new patterns and the adaptation of current practices to the future realities.²⁶

There are often, as we have had occasion to see, ‘strong’ interventions by the Catholic religious authorities, but also on the part of the civil authorities. How can we interpret these? Are they part of the entire picture of the event, where the religious, economic, social and political forces in the field undergo anthropological studies and consequently are allowed to ‘react within the context’? Or are they outside of the picture and therefore require action by us?

But safeguarding intangible and tangible cultural heritage is the problem of another authority, the ‘cultural’ one, which gives directions regarding the intangible heritage in order to safeguard it from extinction. Rather than a question of orthodoxy (of faith) or of political and/or economic convenience, it is a matter of sustainable development. (Fig. 22)

Conclusion

I believe it to be opportune:

- to identify rules and methodologies for intervention (or non-intervention) within popular traditions;
- to establish rules and methodologies on the basis of scientific knowledge of the phenomena and with the help and collaboration of the local population, respecting on the one hand their way of ‘feeling’ the event and on the other their will to



FIGURE 22 The future is just beginning
(Archivio EtnoAntropologico ICCD Foto Angelo Palma, 2003).

express themselves regarding the events, and to oppose, if necessary, that which is often imposed upon the community by the outside world, the Church, etc.

- to ensure that the cultural authority (or authorities) identifies pilot projects as methodological and scientific points of reference and develops an ethical and institutional code of conduct.

Dealing with intangible heritage, whose fragility is well known, and the practice of safeguarding, implies not intervening in cultural religious dynamics with actions that are the result of authoritarian external impositions.

Scientific and well-documented knowledge of the beliefs, rituals and religious events and subsequently of tangible sacred objects or instruments of cult, deeply respecting the local people’s values, is, I believe, the main path to conserving the sacred. Their historical, social and cultural transformation, if periodically monitored, can be an important method for discovery the rules of safeguarding religious heritage. Last but not least, the training of a team of experts should be the method for carrying out the rules for good cultural practices.

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- represent the symbol of the Trinity was made to me by a Greek Orthodox theologian.
- 3 As well as the chapel of Saint Anne, there is also a small chapel dedicated to Saint Joseph, where the women who performed the 'Pianto delle zitelle' changed their widows' dresses.
- 4 As in all feasts of agricultural origin.
- 5 See also the demo-ethno-anthropological archives of the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione (ICCD) (Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation). In the larger towns, such as Anagni, Sora, Alatri, the 'companies' can be quite numerous.
- 6 The sanctuary is officially opened on 1 May, and usually closed (with a formal ceremony) on the last Sunday of October by the community of Vallepietra within whose territory the sanctuary is found, and which, in a certain way, feels a sense of proprietorship of the sanctuary. The celebration of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary on 8 September is another day of worship, when companies arrive on foot. There is also a ritual occasion during the closing period of the sanctuary: the Feast of the Holy Image on 16 February.
- 7 This legend holds that the miraculous apparition of the Image of the Trinity, not painted by human hand, appeared on 16 February.
- 8 This is the first document which we possess about the sanctuary (Filippo Caraffa was a professor at the Lateran Pontifical University).
- 9 There is information, however, that in 1782 a bishop of Anagni visited the sanctuary on Saint Anne's day. This might indicate a celebration in honour of the saint (Ciangherotti 2000: 27).
- 10 The refrain goes thus: *Le Tre Person(e) divine* (the three divine persons). Many of the pilgrims pronounce it in another way: *Le Tre - ppe(r)- son(o) divine* (the 'Three Persons' are divine).
- 11 In particular, those coming from the southern regions
- 12 Once, the faithful 'banged' their sick little children on the Holy Image, asking for the healing of their illnesses. A special miracle is recounted: after the Second World War, a little mute girl recovered her power of speech, saying 'mamma'.
- 13 According to an ancient rite, called 'incubatio' by the Romans.
- 14 Once Vallepietra inhabitants arranged wine shops ('frascette') near the sanctuary, carrying the wine on mules. In field research undertaken in 2003 we documented these traditions of drinking, singing, playing and dancing that always take place at night, even on the *Tagliata*.
- 15 There are many different rites, and every village has its own special traditions.
- 16 These recent additions could also have a more ancient tradition. With regard to the 'Pianto delle zitelle', Cochia states that 'the first written transcription of the 'Misteri' of 1836 seems to originate at the end of 1600 or the beginning of 1700... This more ancient written document, conserved at the 'Curia' of Anagni is probably a transcription of an orally transmitted musical and poetic work... Nevertheless, it does not provide us with any indication of the musical aspect, which so remains completely unknown' (Cocchia 2000: 43).
- 17 These rites, executed in spring and dedicated to a dead god, are specific moments of a particular funeral ritual. Migliorini writes 'According to a fantastic explanation, under the heaps of stones they toss while walking, were to be found ancient pilgrims who had died during the pilgrimages' (Migliorini 1999: 76).
- 18 The 'Misteri' are the principal events of the life of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. In the 'Pianto' of Vallepietra, they are meant to be musical verses of the wailing sung by each spinster

Endnotes

- ¹ The painting is 2.10 m wide and 1.60 metres high in the central section (Mezzana 1943: 17-18). On the east wall there are traces, barely visible, of another fresco which represents the Trinity and which is described, according to the archives, in a pastoral visit of 1759. It represents three figures of Christs who bless in the Latin manner, in contrast to the main fresco (Zuccalà 2000: 16). Furthermore, above the exterior stairway of the sanctuary in a large niche dug out from the rock, there is a fresco of the Trinity representing the Father who supports his crucified son and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (Ciangherotti 2000: 23).
- ² Some scholars maintain that the founders of the place of worship were oriental, and attribute the cult, which dates from the Middle Ages, to Basilian Monks (Zuccalà 2000: 16). The suggestion that the three fingers used in the blessing

and which representing an object or a figure of the Passion of Christ (the calyx, the ropes, the column, the lashes, the thorns, Judas, Pilate, *Ecce Homo*, the nails, the bile, the lance, the crucified, the cross; then Magdalene, the Madonna, and Martha.

- ¹⁹ A fact Brelich could observe by himself when a pilgrim indicated him the path '*to go to the Madonna*'. He also refers to a small publication (1945) of a priest of Vallepietra, who writes that often he heard say '*I go to visit the Madonna*'.
- ²⁰ According to Brelich, the agrarian references can be compared to 'the Eleusinian Mysteries and to the Phrygian Cult of Cybele and Attis'.
- ²¹ During my last field research (2003), the investigation of the hypothesis of a feminine perception of the 'Santissima Trinità di Vallepietra' cult produced interesting evidence of this phenomenon. Documentation and cataloguing is continuing under a project entitled '*From Photographic Archives of the Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation (ICCD) to anthropological field research. Luciano Morpurgo Photographs and the Cult at the Most Holy Trinità of Vallepietra*', under the auspices of ICCD (Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Cultural Activities – Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali).
- ²² But then they tell the story of a company from a southern Lazio village (Porrino) that comes to the '*Santissima*' with a standard representing the Virgin with the Child rather than the traditional Most Holy Trinity. Among the famous photographs of Luciano Morpurgo (1917-1920) there is one which documents a company of pilgrims preceded by a standard that shows the Virgin (Di Nola and Grossi 1980).
- ²³ For example Magdalena's love for Christ in a verse of the '*Pianto delle zitelle*'
- ²⁴ The sanctuary priests discovered thirteenth-century graffiti; Mezzana found some dating to 1450; and many others from succeeding centuries are known.
- ²⁵ Cataloguing systems were created in 1978: the FKO (for objects), the FKM (for popular musical repertory), the FKN (for formalised narration), and the FKC (for ceremonies). The FKO was computerized for the first time in 1999, with subsequent variations. Today it is called the BDM (Beni Demo-etno-antropologici Materiali), while a new system has been created which unifies the other systems, the BDI (Beni Demo-etno-antropologici Immateriali).
- ²⁶ As coordinator of the research for documentation and cataloguing for the ICCD on the Most Holy Trinity of Vallepietra, I have involved young anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, ethno-photographers, and the local cultural association ('Associazione Culturale Don Salvatore Mercuri di Vallepietra') with which we meet periodically to discuss research problems (their support is very precious). I have also involved various institutes, such as the Soprintendenza Archeologica del Lazio, the Soprintendenza Architettura, Storica, Artistica, Demoetnoantropologica del Lazio, the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari, the Region Lazio, the Province of Rome, and other associations or institutes that have the authority to deal with cultural heritage in this territory.

This paper deals with a changing approach towards the conservation of religious heritage within the National Co-ordination of Conservation of Cultural Heritage (CNCPC) in Mexico. Several situations within different communities have slowly proven the importance of respecting the local religious values associated with the heritage, and of involving the community in the decision-making and in the conservation of the religious heritage.

The case study of a wooden sculpture representing Jesus as a baby, the *Niño pa* from Xochimilco, a community located in the southern area of Mexico City, offers interesting lessons learnt over time, both by the local community, with their responsibility to take care of a highly worshiped figure, and by the conservation community, as they were forced to review their attitudes towards conservation.

A new approach has been developed within the CNCPC, which is slowly producing results for the conservation of religious heritage, trying to balance both religious requirements and the conservation needs.

[VALERIE MAGAR]

Conserving religious heritage within communities in Mexico

Conservation of cultural heritage in Mexico

In Mexico, the care of all historic religious heritage, as well as of all archaeological sites, some of which are still in use for religious purposes, is a responsibility of the State. During the 1930s, an institution was created to carry out research on, and conservation of this heritage: the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH). INAH is a centralised organization within which there are two areas for the conservation of movable and immovable heritage, the National Coordination of Conservation of Cultural Heritage (CNCPC) and the National Coordination of Historic Monuments (CNMH) respectively. Conservation practice, especially after the 1960s, followed more or less the principles and standards established by international conventions. However, the policies

that derived from this position have slowly proved to be insufficient and in many cases inadequate to deal with the vast and rich religious heritage found throughout the country.

Many of the problems came from the fact, usually overlooked, that Mexico does not have a culturally unified society. The country is characterised by many differences and inequalities, among which one can note the presence of dozens of indigenous groups who have their own religious beliefs, usually a mixture of Catholicism with more or less strong remnants of the Pre-Columbian traditions, the existence of regional cultural differences, a general contrast between the rural and urban cultures, and deep economic differences throughout the country (Bonfil 1994).

This situation has resulted in a series of varied problems when dealing with the conservation of religious

heritage, ranging from an insufficient number of conservators to more complex problems of conciliation of the religious beliefs and the ceremonial needs associated with it, in the face of conservation requirements.

As mentioned earlier, all archaeological and religious heritage from before the nineteenth century is under the custody of the State. There are an estimated 200,000 archaeological sites, of which 30,093 have been catalogued and less than 200 are open to the public, 53,586 historical monuments have been catalogued and 324 conservators (both architectural conservators (177) and objects conservators (147)) are employed by INAH. These demands and the limited local resources have resulted in a lack of proper preservation and maintenance of the buildings and the objects contained in them. Moreover, the catalogue of the heritage under INAH's custody is far from being complete, and there are important limitations to the enforcement of the existing regulations for the conservation of cultural heritage.

There are also important problems related to the lack of awareness and participation from the public in the conservation of cultural heritage. In many cases, the fact that the historical religious buildings are under the custody of the State has caused the population and the priests to lose interest in their maintenance. Many sites have been abandoned and left to decay, and it is considered the State's responsibility to take care of those ruined buildings and their contents.

In other instances, the local communities undertake repairs, but frequently without any official supervision.

It is very common to find interventions carried out by *Santeros*, who are the craftsmen who traditionally create new religious figures for local celebrations. Their treatments on historic sculptures and paintings usually consist of heavy repaints, to make them look 'as good as new'.

Another problem is with craftsmen or painters who claim to be conservators. They carry out treatments with no previous evaluation of the object, and the results are usually disastrous, both for the material stability of the object and its aesthetic appreciation, and sometimes for its meaning within a community. Such was the case in the small town of Tzintzuntzan, in the western part of Mexico, where a polychrome sculpture of a Christ was the victim of a 'restoration'. The sculpture was overcleaned, with the irreversible destruction of some of the original paint layer.

When this sculpture was returned to the community after the intervention, there was quite an uproar around its pale appearance: the inhabitants

named it the *Cristo gringo*, the latter word being a slightly pejorative expression used in Mexico for a person from the USA. The sad result was that the sculpture lost its central place in the Church, and was left in a corner. The statue is no longer worshiped, as it is considered that it has lost its power because of its 'new car-like' finish.

As mentioned, the number of professional conservators working for INAH is clearly insufficient to supervise all religious heritage throughout the country, and until now few efforts have been made to explain the existing regulations and requirements for conservation projects. Indeed, the existence of the professional conservator is hardly known.

Those sites that have received proper conservation treatments are usually not monitored, and in most cases no maintenance programme is foreseen. After a few years, new conservation problems usually arise.

Finally, another problem is associated with the conservation community itself, as there has been a frequent tendency to forget the values associated with the religious heritage, and to consider only the conservation of its material aspects.

One of the early examples of the importance of considering the local community occurred in the 1980s, in the Maya community of San Juan Chamula, in the State of Chiapas, in the southern part of Mexico. Chamula is essentially a monolingual community, where its 40,000 inhabitants, who have maintained many of the social and religious characteristics from the pre-Columbian period, speak the *tzotzil* language.

The Spanish missionaries erected a church in the village in the sixteenth century, over what used to be the ceremonial centre. The church is now believed to be the true centre of the universe, or the 'belly button of the earth' (Gossen 1989), according to the Chamulas vision of the world. The altarpieces located inside the church, with their sculptures and paintings, were incorporated into the system of beliefs, and many of the Catholic saints were attributed characteristics of the pre-Columbian deities. For a very long time, no Catholic priest has been allowed to be in the Church, as they have their own way of interpreting religion and carrying out the religious rituals.

The sculptures are handled during the ceremonies according to the way the saints responded to prayers: a saint who granted a request will be nicely dressed and will receive important offerings, while a saint who did not will be left undressed and turned to face the wall as a punishment.

The paintings in the altarpieces are hardly visible any more. During the religious ceremonies large

amounts of copal resin are always burnt, along with candles, and these have created a heavy layer of soot, almost completely obliterating the figures.

The natural reaction of an art historian was to ask for the paintings to be cleaned. Conservators were sent to San Juan Chamula to carry out a simple process of superficial cleaning, in order to recover the visibility of the paintings. However, when the population found out the intentions of the conservators, there was an immediate gathering at the Church. They almost 'lynched' the conservators for their intention to harm their paintings: in the Chamula tradition, it was considered that the paintings had been gaining a 'warm power' with the accumulation of soot, and a cleaning would have resulted in a diminution of that power. Most of the Chamula rituals are accompanied by a ritual language, flowers, music, candles, incense, tobacco, rum, fireworks and leaves, all of which are considered warm elements. These produce heat, smoke, smells or sounds, which act as food for the deities (Gossen 1989). Faced with the threat to their safety, the conservators withdrew from the place, and no conservation treatment was carried out.

This initiated some reflection on the need to understand and respect the living traditions linked with a particular site, although for a long time it was still considered as an isolated case. With time it became clear that there was a real need for a different strategy, one that included a different approach to conservation by the professionals, the raising of awareness and concern from the public, the encouragement of their participation, and training for local custodians and for priests.

However, due to the fact that the social, economic, educational and even religious situations can vary considerably from one area to another throughout the country, it was not very realistic to prepare a general policy for all areas, as the results would have been poor. It would have been difficult to raise awareness and develop a sense of care for the heritage if a general approach was taken. There is no real sense of identity throughout the country; some areas are still very isolated, with extremely low levels of education and specific religious beliefs. Although it may seem a slow strategy, given all the prevailing conditions, it was considered more appropriate to establish a community-by-community approach, with specific conservation projects in each. These are now being developed at the CNCPC, where a specific unit was created for this purpose in 1995, the area of integrated projects for the conservation of cultural heritage with communities (*Subdirección de proyectos integrales de conservación del patrimonio cultural con comunidades*), whose head is now the conservator Blanca Noval.

The Niñopa from Xochimilco and initial changes within the CNCPC

Deeper reflection was generated with the arrival of a small polychrome sculpture at the conservation laboratories of the CNCPC, nine years ago. The sculpture represents Jesus as a baby, and it is one of the most worshiped figures in the country, as it is considered to produce miracles. There are important ceremonies and pilgrimages associated with this small figure.

The sculpture has been traditionally cared for by the community of Xochimilco, a formerly prosperous village located at the southern end of the lake that used to exist in the valley of Mexico. The lake disappeared a long time ago. Xochimilco is now part of the suburbs of an expanding Mexico City, but the community's traditions have been maintained.

The Niñopa is thought to be a sixteenth century sculpture, originally owned by the last *cacique* or local chief of Xochimilco, called Martín Serón (Fig. 1). With time, custody became the responsibility of local families, called *mayordomos*, who have this duty for one year at a time. The *mayordomos* must apply for the position well in advance, and demonstrate their belonging to Xochimilco and their commitment to provide everything for the Niñopa during their period of duty. Being a *mayordomo* is considered an honour, and it is also an important social position, even if it implies spending all the family's savings. The chosen family must provide a comfortable room for the baby, as well as enough clothing, jewels and toys for all occasions. They also



FIGURE 1 The Niñopa fully dressed in its ceremonial clothing, at the end of the first conservation treatment.

have to organize several festivities, with food, music, dancers and fireworks. The waiting list to become a *mayordomo* is now twenty-two years.

The Niñoopa first arrived to the CNCPC after the community heard that another sculpture from Xochimilco had recently been restored, recovering the original paint layer. Throughout the years, the Niñoopa had been heavily repainted, with several coats of new paint applied by local *Santeros* from Xochimilco. As a result, the sculptural traits were severely distorted. There was a desire within the community to recover the original aspect, although at the same time they were reluctant to remove the figure from the community for long.

The CNCPC assigned Alicia Islas, a conservator, to assess the state of conservation of the sculpture. It was clear that the sculpture had several problems, mainly caused by the daily handling of the figure every time it was dressed and undressed, and by repeated touching by all the visitors.

X-ray analyses were also carried out to define the presence and state of the original paint layer. The results showed there was very little original paint preserved. A removal of the over-paints might have revealed the real traits of the figure, but the result of this effort would have looked terrible.

Cleaning might have been an option if it had been a museum object. But in this case, there was a considerable risk of altering the value attributed to the sculpture by the community, and there was also a concern for exposing the few original remains to the frequent use of the sculpture during the processions, and during the transport of the figure when lent for visits to hospitals or for certain celebrations outside Xochimilco.

After a series of discussions with designated members from the community, it was decided to undertake a minimum intervention treatment composed of a light cleaning, and a consolidation and integration of the damaged areas of the new paint layer (Islas 1995).

However, as soon as the treatments started, it was quite obvious that this was not a common object.

A first and very obvious change from normal conservation procedures was the continual presence of members of the community, accompanying the child during the day and observing all the treatments it was subjected to. Initially the community wished to remain also at night in the conservation laboratory, but they were persuaded that for safety reasons this was not possible. However, they had to be assured that a member of the security staff would remain nearby, as the baby had never been left alone before.



FIGURE 2 Conservation laboratory at the CNCPC where the working table with the Niñoopa soon looked like an altar, with flowers and offerings.

FIGURE 3 Conservator A. Islas, carrying the Niñoopa and the Mayordoma at the end of the first visit to the CNCPC, surrounded by a barrier of both conservators and community members from Xochimilco, all carrying flowers.

A second change was also visible. The working table soon looked more like an altar, with special blankets for the baby, and a daily increasing number of flowers and toys offered to the Niñoopa (Fig. 2).

Finally, there was an interesting change within the conservators working at the CNCPC: almost everyone made at least one visit to the Niñoopa, always in a silent, respectful way, many of them bringing offerings. The cotton swabs used during the cleaning process became quite prized.

During this first visit, it was established that the figure would return every year to the CNCPC for a periodic maintenance.

When the conservation treatment ended, the return of the Niñoopa to its community became

FIGURE 4
Mayordomos carrying the Niñoopa at the end of its eighth visit to the CNCPC, following all the preventive conservation measures.



FIGURE 5 The Niñoopa at the entrance of the CNCPC in 2002, carried by the Mayordomos, surrounded by Chinelos, the traditional dancers, and musicians.



quite an event, to which the whole conservation community was invited. The figure left the lab in a procession, carried by the conservator, with music, fireworks and with flower petals laid on the floor (Fig. 3). The sides of the walkway were crowded with community members and conservators. Outside, a large number of community members were waiting, with traditional dancers and music. The procession continued until they reached Xochimilco, where a large meal had been prepared.

This created a deeper reflection on the need to reconsider the way conservation had been traditionally carried out, with the need to include the important voice to be heard from living traditions. In the case of the Niñoopa, however, as it was situated within an urban community, it was fairly easy to establish good communication between community members and the conservators, and to reach a consensus and obtain concessions on both sides. The presence of the

mayordomos was permitted inside the conservation lab, as well as the presence of offerings and numerous visitors. In addition, the *mayordomos* agreed to receive training on better ways of handling and dressing the sculpture in order to diminish possible damages, but without interfering with the religious needs. When possible, the Niñoopa was to be transported in a shrine, and the visitors asked to touch the figure's clothes rather than the sculpture itself. This has been clearly understood by the community members. They did not keep the shrine, as it was considered uncomfortable for the figure. Instead, a baby carriage is used, as well as a large umbrella to protect the figure from the sun (Fig. 4). All other regulations have been carefully respected.

For nine years, the Niñoopa has returned every year for its 'check up', and the impact is always the same within the conservation community (Fig. 5). A strong bond has been created with the community, and the results have shown the importance of correctly assessing the values of cultural heritage, especially when religious aspects are involved.

A changing situation, the integral projects

In a parallel way, other conservation projects were attempted in rural areas, where situations were more complex. Along with specific religious traditions in the different regions, with which the conservators are not always familiar, there are also difficult social situations caused by the migration of most of the young men, and sometimes also young women, to the USA, to look for better working conditions. The villages are left only with women, children, and elders. There is usually a deep social rupture, and when the men come back important changes occur. A visible consequence is a change in the way they dress, as the traditional clothes and hats are replaced by tennis shoes, blue jeans, T-shirts and caps. There is generally a will to extend these kinds of changes to the religious heritage. They usually want to invest a part of their savings in their churches, which they want to transform totally: all new things are better, including modern materials. In some instances, the destruction of historic religious heritage has been quite dramatic.

Reaching such communities with the aim of raising awareness of the heritage and developing conservation projects is usually quite complicated, because along with the will to modernize, many traditional ways of acting and thinking are maintained, such as the use of local languages to discuss important matters.

Initially, the CNCPC chose the community of Yanhuitlán, in the state of Oaxaca, in the southern

part of Mexico, because of its rich and important religious heritage to raise awareness of the importance of conservation. However, in spite of much effort, the results were quite meagre (Macías 2000). The objectives of the conservation project were achieved, in the sense that the impressive seventeenth century altarpiece was restored, but the involvement of the community was never really obtained. In particular, the goal of having the community actively working in preventive conservation measures and in monitoring the state of the heritage located within the sixteenth century church was not realised.

The conservation project failed to understand from the beginning that the focal religious interest of the population had shifted long ago to a much smaller chapel, located at the other end of the village, where a sculpture representing Christ, the *Señor de Ayuxi*, is highly venerated. When this figure is celebrated, on the first Sunday of May, the otherwise empty village is flooded for several days by all these community members who have migrated from Yanhuitlán, either to other cities in Mexico, or to the USA, particularly to Los Angeles.

Although this very long and complex project did not achieve all of its initial objectives, it did permit the testing of different approaches. The lessons learnt in those five years provided the opportunity to develop and refine a new working method to involve social aspects in conservation projects.

It was then decided that the CNCPC would first develop projects only with communities who sought help and showed some concern for their heritage. In such cases, a series of procedures are now applied to try to establish the best possible communication with the community, and to achieve a good understanding of their traditions and beliefs to ensure that good decisions are taken.

These procedures consist of an initial meeting with an organized group from the community, in order to discuss the problems they have detected. A field diagnosis follows, carried out by conservators, in order to verify the conservation problems, and assess all the possible needs. Anthropologists and historians also participate in this evaluation, in order to define the traditions that should be kept in mind when proposing a conservation treatment.

A second meeting is then organized with the whole community, who are asked to share the responsibility for the decision-making (Fig. 6). There are frequently several groups inside the community, with different conflicting points of view. The conservators initially start with an explanation about the problems of conserving the local heritage, and with an initial proposal for its conservation. At this point, the community members need to decide how



FIGURE 6 Community of Tayata, in Oaxaca, during one of the meetings with the conservators to define the conservation needs at their church.

they are going to organize their share of the work, usually consisting of food and lodging for the conservation team, but also some direct participation in the project, under the supervision of the professional team. Without an answer from the community at this time, there is no project. It has been proven that there is a need to develop a sense of commitment and responsibility if respect and attachment of the people are to be gained.

The next step of the methodology includes the organization of workshops on the local heritage. The aim is to guide the communities in the recognition of the importance of their heritage and the importance of passing this understanding to their children. These workshops include, among other things, the rediscovery of daily places or actions that have lost their value, workshops with anthropologists to recover languages and traditions, and also the recovery of information and oral history. The latter is usually carried out with children who are asked to interview their grandparents on specific topics. At the end of this workshop the children are usually asked to draw what they consider to be the different elements of their heritage, and an exhibition of all the drawings is organized inside a heritage building. There are also training courses for adult members of the community, basically dealing with preventive conservation measures for their heritage. For these short courses, a series of booklets has been prepared, dealing both with general preventive conservation measures within religious buildings, and more specific risk preparedness measures against theft or fire. Another important course includes training for the preparation of a catalogue of all the heritage elements within the community. Most of the religious objects are usually found inside the churches, but

it is also quite common to find that many of them are kept by some community members, for religious purposes or also for security reasons, as the churches are not considered very safe.

During these workshops, it was crucial to transmit the importance of carrying out treatments that will ensure the good condition and presentation of the heritage, but at the same time respect its age. As I mentioned earlier, it is quite common to find a desire within the communities to replace ‘old things’ with new materials. To counteract this, a way was devised to show community members that new things may not necessarily be better, and that not every kind of intervention is suitable when dealing with heritage. The figure of an elderly woman, whose clothes are torn, is used to compare with the aged and decayed heritage. The same figure is then shown wearing very modern clothing, and the emphasis is placed on how an elder person does not look fine in this way. Finally, the figure is shown wearing clothes, properly cared for, and in accordance with her age (Fig. 7).

All the information retrieved in these first contacts allows the definition of a final working plan, for which the criteria are discussed with the community. Again, the specific activities are determined in a co-ordinated way with the community, so as not to overlook any tradition or belief. In the village of Jaltepec, in the state of Oaxaca, a specific timing needed to be observed before starting the conservation process of an altarpiece. A specific ritual needed to be carried out before removing the images from the altarpiece, which included fasting and the killing of chickens towards the cardinal points, and finally it had to be explained to the figures in the altarpiece what would be done to them.

These projects have revealed an amazing labyrinth

FIGURE 7 Cardboard figure of an elder woman, called Doña Lourdes, used during the courses and talks with the communities. a. Doña Lourdes, wearing a torn dress and looking very untidy. b. Doña Lourdes, wearing modern clothing, quite inappropriate. c. Doña Lourdes wearing appropriate clothing in accordance with the age, and looking well cared for. This figure is extremely useful with communities who want to change their old buildings for new modern ones. It is very useful to retrieve the value of ancient heritage, and to define how it should be conserved and cared for.



of meanings in the religious cultural heritage, and it is very clear that we must comply with these conditions if we want real trust to be developed. In this way, we will ensure not only the success of a particular conservation project, but also a better future for the heritage.

Final comments

A slow, yet significant change in attitude has been taking place in Mexico. The methodology now employed has produced specific yet interesting results and, although there are still more goals to be achieved in terms of diffusion and long term monitoring, its importance is readily visible. It has also been recognised by the Organization of American States, and it has been incorporated into the *Permanent Portfolio of Consolidated Programs in Culture*. The first step will be to send conservation professionals from different Latin American countries to Mexico, where they will learn the approaches used in different communities. The idea is then to copy this model for other areas in Latin America.

There is undoubtedly much that still needs to be done, but an initial attempt has been launched to apply effectively critical judgement and evaluate all aspects of the heritage. Conservation is no longer considered as the monopoly of a group of experts. Cultural heritage belongs to all, and members of local communities have important roles to play, both in the decision-making process of the treatments and in long-term continuous care, to ensure the preservation of both the tangible and intangible aspects, which form our heritage, in ‘the full richness of their authenticity’.

A further note

During the ICCROM Forum, Gaël de Guichen mentioned a similar case in Rome some years ago, when a highly revered painting from the Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere was taken to the laboratories of the *Istituto Centrale del Restauro* for a conservation treatment in the early 1960s. During the analyses of the paint, a large number of superposed layers of paint were found. The most recent and visible one represented a heavily repainted Madonna della Clemenza. The X-rays and stratigraphic analyses showed the presence of a very ancient painting, depicting the same subject, dating from the seventh century, and with the particularity of having been made using the rare encaustic technique. Given its uniqueness and its antiquity, it was then decided to remove all the most recent layers, and to expose the first painting, even if it was partly damaged. When the painting returned to the Church, the community refused to accept that image,

and demanded that a new painting should be made, replicating the painting as it looked before the restoration. This was done, and for many years the replica stood in the altar of the Chapel, while the original one was kept in a side-room. Only years later was the value of the original appreciated and it was returned to the chapel, where it remains. (See ‘Il restauro della madonna della clemenza’, *Bollettino dell’Istituto centrale del restauro* (1964), 41–44, 219).

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The preservation and management of religious heritage is dealt with at both ontological and technical levels in this paper. By ontological we mean understanding the core of the religion and the power that distinguishes a sacred object from other similar artefacts. A sacred object for a man of faith transcends its physical appearance and transforms the faithful to a state of spiritual presence. This relation by itself is an essential aspect of religious heritage.

This paper – presented in the format of a case study – will focus on shariah concepts of 'ritual pollution/purification' and 'unclean substances' as well as the distinction between the realms of 'religious', 'sacred' and 'secular' for Islamic objects as important principles in setting up guidelines for the management of Islamic collections. Following this, the particular guidelines established in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia illustrate the process of handling objects in the collections as valuable items of religious importance.

AMIR H. ZEKRGOO AND MANDANA BARKESHLI

Collection management of Islamic heritage in accordance with the worldview and Shari'ah of Islam

Before proceeding to the issue of management of a religious heritage, one must understand what 'religious heritage' is all about, and why and in what way it shall be preserved. Religious heritage includes not only tangible items, but also covers, in a wider and deeper sense, the intangible reality from which the artefacts and the whole religious culture issue. The intangible religious reality is the powerful force that lives in a religious person, gives meaning to his life, signifies his place in the universe, and defines the relationship of the universal element to him and to another in accordance with divine law. The many layers of religious cultures that have developed so colourfully since time immemorial until the present age, and have produced exquisite artefacts, all emanate from that single source; the divine source or the unseen universal reality, without which the whole world of religious culture would be but a facade, a

body without a soul. We shall also bear in mind that religious heritage cannot be understood or preserved without understanding its people, and viewing the monuments, the artefacts and the whole culture from the viewpoint of the people who have produced it.

In this paper we will introduce concisely the components of Islamic tradition and give a brief description of *shari'ah* or the Islamic law. We will also deal with the question of 'ritual pollution' and 'ritual purification' since they can help in setting guidelines for the management of Islamic collections. In this respect 'unclean substances' are introduced.

To be able to maintain the sacred boundaries one must be able to distinguish between the realms of 'religious', 'sacred' and 'secular' within the Islamic culture this is another issue of discussion in this paper. In the last section we intend to share with the reader some practical guidelines that we have been following in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

These guidelines were set out as steps towards a reform (however minor) of our process of handling objects so that they should be in accordance with the aforesaid Islamic conventions. In the past few years we have gained valuable information and experience, especially from those visitors who viewed our collection not as objects of mere aesthetic value, but rather as valuable items of religious importance. Inspired by them and taking into consideration the guidelines of Shari'ah, we took small steps towards the establishment of a collection managed according to Islamic values. Such steps will be presented in the format of a case study.

ISLAMIC TRADITION

A religious view is tightly connected with a 'tradition'. Any belief or practice of a 'traditional nature' is:

- 1) received from the hands, lips, or examples of others rather than through discovery or invention;
- 2) received on the assumption that the authors and transmitters are reliable and therefore the tradition valid; and
- 3) received with the express command and intention of future transmission without substantial change. Therefore the source and the path are both considered authentic, reliable, and must be respected.

Hence, as a source of knowledge, tradition is to be distinguished from rumour and fashion. Rumour and fashion, although received from others, cannot necessarily be assumed to be reliable or be accepted as transmission without alteration; on the contrary, they invite speculation and elaboration. Tradition, however, purports to embody a fixed truth from an authoritative source (see Valliere in Eliade 1987: Vol. 15, 1–15).

Religious traditions inform us about the origin and destiny of things. Sometimes they tell of a golden age of the past or anticipate a glorious future, and often they address both past and future as if they are addressing their audience from a timeless status. 'Remember' is the first commandment of a sacred tradition, reminding people of the rules and realities presented to them from pre-eternal times.

In Islam, the formal concepts of tradition, the *Sunnah* 'custom' or 'example' of the prophet, were compiled in the third to fourth centuries AH (ninth to tenth centuries AD) in the six books of genuine *hadiths*. The Islamic faith is based on 'believing the unseen'. It is stated clearly in the Qur'an that the 'divine guidance' provided by the 'Book' would only guide 'those who have faith in the Unseen...'.(2:3)

The first and the most fundamental rule therefore is believing in an unseen source, the presence of the

creator who is 'the knower of the unseen and the manifest' (*al-a'alim al-ghaib wa al-shahadah*). This view explains the universe at two levels of 'concealed' or 'inner' dimension (*al-batin*) and the manifest or tangible dimension (*al-zahir*). The seeker of the two is the one who walks the path, moving from the realm of the manifest to the realm of the concealed. This spiritual path is governed by *shari'ah*. *Shari'ah* is an Arabic term used to designate Islamic law. The word occurs once in the Qur'an, at 45: 18 ('We have set you on a *shari'ah* of command, so follow it'), where it designates a way or path divinely appointed. By following the *shari'ah* a believer may follow the spiritual path (*tariqa*) that leads him ultimately to the realm of Absolute, or the Truth (*Haqiqah*). In other words Islam consists of a divine law (*al-shari'ah*), a spiritual path (*al-Tariqah*) and the truth (*al-Haqiqah*), which is the origin of both the Law and the Way (see Nasr 1985 and 1987).

RITUAL POLLUTION AND PRESCRIBED PURIFICATION

Virtually all aspects of life may be surrounded by the notion of pollution. The concept of pollution and purity are found in all the religious and spiritual orders of the world. Here, pollution and purity are seen from both internal as well as external points of views. The two concepts may not be studied as separate phenomena as they are two separate aspects of one reality; like light that could not be understood without darkness, the very meaning of purification is essentially connected to our understanding of pollution.

The word pure in itself indicates simplicity and originality, cleanness, a substance that is free from any different inferior contaminating material. It has its connection with truth as it carries with it the meaning of absolute, utter, sheer, without any discordant qualities.

Purification in its religious senses is staying or becoming clean and clear from religious pollution. The purification of religious pollution is a major religious theme because it forges a path of healing, renewal, transcendence and reintegration, establishing harmonious triangular links with the individual, the cosmos, and the social structure.

There are wide ranges of human activities that may be connected to the issue of pollution. Such activities may be divided into three general categories, namely bodily function, social bounding, and the maintenance of sacred boundaries (see Preston in Eliade 1987: Vol. 12, 91–99).

Our main concern in this paper is aimed at the bodily function, such as handling objects of religious reverence in a museum, which relates

directly to touching and presenting such objects. Setting guidelines for the handling of such objects will also contribute to the preservation of the core and essence of religious reality that is the maintenance of sacred boundaries. In this respect one of the major issues for a curator, keeper, conservator and restorer is to determine what substances or conditions are considered impure by the authority of a religion.

Ideas about purity and impurity are linked to complex symbolic systems in virtually every society. One of the most widespread concepts of pollution is associated with excretions from the human body. Urine and faeces are particularly impure. Other body secretions, such as saliva, vomit, menstrual blood, and afterbirth, are also considered to have polluting qualities. Sperm is also considered polluting outside the sanctified context of marriage.

All these bodily excretions have social significance. They are usually surrounded with heavy ritualization to ensure that they will be contained with a specific religious, cultural, temporal, or spatial context (Preston *ibid.*).

The Islamic term for impurity is *nijisa* and the impure subjects are defined as *najis*. All major Islamic schools (*Hanbali*, *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Jafari* and *Shafii*) consider the following as ritually impure: dog, pig, corpse, blood, semen, human urine and excrement, and liquid intoxicants. People may also be regarded as impure (*najis*) if they do not have faith in the true God. 'O you who believe truly the pagans are unclean' (Qur'an 9:28).

The leaders of all the Islamic schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) have considered prescribed purity (*taharah*) to be a basic condition for the validity of worship (*ibadah*). It is not an exaggeration to say no other religion has given such importance to prescribed purity as Islam.

Taharah literally means 'purity'. In the terminology of the jurisprudence it implies the removal of physical impurities such as blood and excrement (*khathath*). To attain the state of prescribed purity from a ritual impure state, one should first remove the 'unclean substance' or its traces off the concerned area of the body. A state of prescribed purity may be attained by the removal of impurities and, in some cases, by the performance of ablution (*wudhu*), bath lustration (*ghusl*) or dry purification (*tayammum*) (Bakhtiar 1996: 3–4).

Pure water must be used for the performance of ablution (*wudhu*) and bath lustration (*ghusl*). Dry purification does not concern the subject of this paper. For Muslims, water represents the 'purified example of purity', and for the mystics it is a symbol of the highest ecstasy and spirituality.

Ablution is the ceremonial washing of the human body, or specific parts of it. Ablution is a symbolic action meant not to create only physical 'cleanness' but to remove ritual uncleanness or pollution. Ablution is performed to correct a condition of ritual impurity, and to restore the impure to a state of ritual purity. The ritually impure (or unclean) person is prohibited from performing certain functions and participating in certain rites (Drijvers in Eliade 1997: Vol. 1,

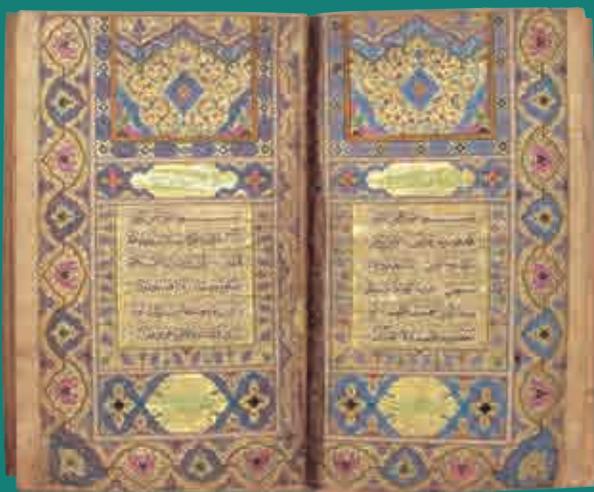


FIGURE 1 Pages of the Qur'an. Iran. 1684 CE. 30 x 6.5 cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.



FIGURE 2 Pages of the Qur'an. Malay Peninsula, Terengganu. Late 18th century CE. 43 x 28 cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

9–13). Among such functions is the touching of the Holy Scriptures. The most holy object for a Moslem is the Holy Qur'an, which is the embodiment of the divine words (Fig.1 and Fig. 2). Handling a copy of the Qur'an with respect is a religious duty.

THE MAINTENANCE OF SACRED BOUNDARIES

The divine words embodied in the holy Qur'an are considered most sacred by the Muslim community. It is important, therefore, to note here that the items inscribed with Qur'anic verses must be treated in a special manner.

Although a wide variety of artefacts may be listed under the general category of Islamic art, not all of these are considered sacred. This is because 'sacred' and 'religious' do not necessarily refer to the same thing. The term 'religious art' may be applied to any form of art related to the manifested body of religion, be it a painted depiction of an event in the history of religion, or a visual description of a religious subject. This subject may be of an earthly

nature, such as a painting of a religious ceremony, or it may have emanated from the supernatural and metaphysical realm referred to in the holy scriptures, such as scenes of creation, paradise, the day of judgement, etc. Objects of ritual importance such as prayer carpets, prayer screens (Fig. 3), portable *mibrabs* (Fig. 4), robes, belt, swords, and portraits of the saints, also fall under 'religious art'.

Not every example of religious art is also sacred art, so the latter may be considered a branch of the former. Sacredness is a quality that transcends the material domain of religion, and associates itself with the divine. Its function is not of a descriptive nature, but of a transforming one. Religious icons such as Christian icons, or statues of certain deities in the Hindu sphere, are considered sacred, as they possess a distinct quality by which the worshipper is transformed to a state of transcendence.

This may confuse, and has confused many western and especially non-Moslem scholars in their study of Islamic art. They look for Islamic elements in, say, a Persian carpet or a Mughul jewellery

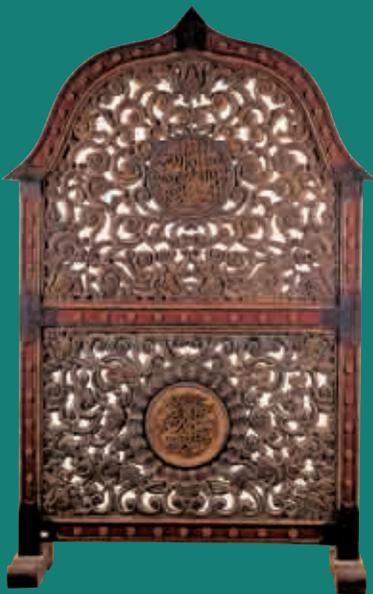


FIGURE 3 Prayer Screen. Indonesia, Jambi. Late 19th century CE. 143.5c. x 95cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

FIGURE 4 Mosque Portiere. Turkey or Syria. 19th century CE. 176 x 294 cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

FIGURE 5 Turban Ornament. India. 18-19th century CE. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

FIGURE 6 Candle-stick. Egypt or Syria. 1293-1341 CE. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

piece (Fig. 5), something that may not be found. It is important to note that for a Muslim anything accomplished with sincerity and good intention is a step towards performing his duty to his Creator and is therefore Islamic. This applies to art as well. An exquisite piece of Mamluk candlestick metalwork (Fig. 6), a fine piece of Iznik Ottoman dish (Fig. 7), an ornamented *keris* – the traditional weapon of the Malay Archipelago (Fig. 8), and a fine piece of calligraphy of Persian poetry (Fig. 9) are all equally recognized as Islamic art.

Such pieces are neither religious nor sacred, yet they are all representative of Islamic art. Technical treatment of such items need not be different from other artefacts. However, if any of the above items carry Qur’anic verses on them (and there are quite a few such examples) then the treatment and handling is different (Figs. 10a-b). The illustrated Ottoman linen tunic, for example, is inscribed with Qur’anic verses and numerals in black and red ink (Fig. 10b). Such tunics were worn under armour and were believed to protect wearers from harm during battle.

Copies of the Qur’an above all else require special treatment, as they are considered to be manifestations of divine wisdom and command. This is because Qur’anic verses carry with them the essence of the sacred. Verses of the Qur’an are not

only important because of the divine message they carry; the script carrying it is considered sacred in itself. Therefore an impure substance, or a person in a state of ritual impurity, shall not come in contact with the scripture: ‘That this is indeed a Qur’an most honourable, in a Book well-guarded, which none shall touch but those who are clean’ (Qur’an 56:77, 78, 79).

The above verse appears on the cover of many copies of the Qur’an. Fig. 11 shows a Chinese manuscript of the Qur’an with the verse in *Sini* style on its cover.

Collection management

Every museum has its own culture. Culture in this sense is defined as the ‘total of the inherited ideas, beliefs and knowledge which constitute the shared basis of social action’ and ‘the total range of ideas and activities of a group of people with shared traditions which are transmitted by members of the group’. An understanding of museum culture and its collections helps the collection managers to communicate purpose and commitment in their museum. However, to fully comprehend the impact of culture one must understand its symbols, language, ideology, beliefs, rituals and myths. The importance of culture to museums and galleries has only recently received

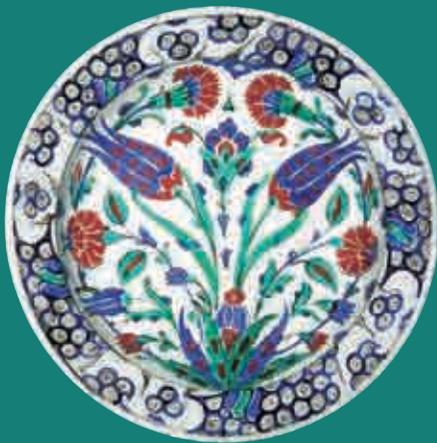


FIGURE 7 Iznik dish. Turkey. 1575-1580 CE. 6.5 x 32 cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia



FIGURE 8 Keris. Indonesia, Riau. 1717 CE. 14 x 41cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

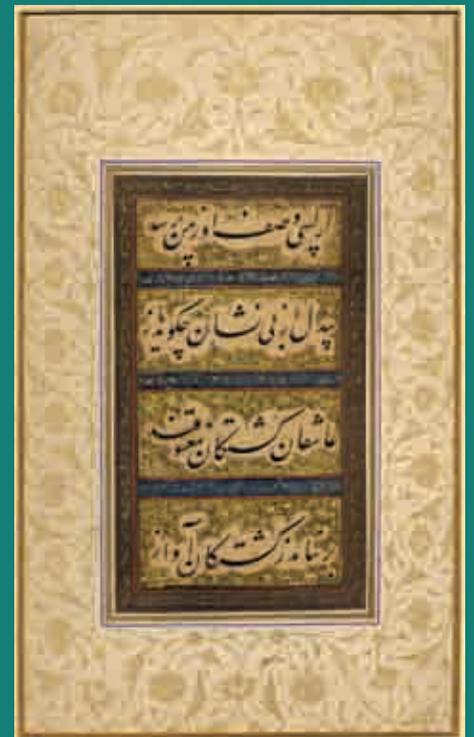


FIGURE 9 A folio of Persian Poetry. Nastaliq style. 17th century CE. 15.2 x 8.6cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

the attention it deserves (Flopp 1997: 161–178).

A collection management policy is a comprehensive statement based on museum culture that sets forth the goals of a museum and explains how these goals are pursued through collection activities. One of the main functions of the policy is to give guidance to the staff members in carrying out their responsibilities related to the museum collection (Fahy 1995: 13).

Managing the Islamic heritage based on Islamic culture and worldview is a new concept and a challenging task. A curator, conservator or restorer must keep in mind the importance of the rules set by the *shari'ah* of Islam, alongside the general knowledge on collection care based upon scientific analysis and museum standards.

The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) located in Kuala Lumpur is a young museum with a commitment to becoming the custodian, preserver, conservator and educator of Islamic art heritage for future generations (Fig. 12) (Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia 2002). As a specialized museum in Islamic arts, we feel that it is our duty to take steps, however small and modest, to give this museum its 'Islamic identity', and to align our moves and acts in the course of collection care as much as possible in accordance with Islamic teachings.

To ensure respect for religious prescriptions and religious expectations in the curatorial department of the museum, we developed an internal manual describing the policy and procedures of the curatorial department to present to the museum management and then the staff. A small part of the manual is a procedure for the handling of manuscripts of the Qur'an in accordance with Islamic values. As mentioned earlier, all Islamic schools concur that it is prohibited to touch the Qur'an without prescribed purity, but they differ regarding the permissibility of someone in a state of minor impurity of blood and



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FIGURE 10a Talismanic Tunic. Turkey. 16th century CE. Shoulder to shoulder: 90 cm; collar to hem: 74 cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia,

FIGURE 10b Detail of Fig. 10a showing the Quranic verses.

FIGURE 11 Qur'an. China. 17th century CE. 27x 19.5cm. Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

FIGURE 12 Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia: The Ceramic Gallery overlooking the Qur'an and Manuscript Gallery.

FIGURE 13
Handling the
Qur'an.



FIGURE 14 At
the exhibition of
'Fakhr Al-Suyuf-
The Glorious
Swords', August
2002. Islamic Arts
Museum Malaysia.



excrement writing a Qur'an, touching it through an intervening medium, and wearing it as an amulet (Bakhtiar 1996). According to the Ja'afari School, it is forbidden to touch the Arabic script of the Qur'an without an intervening medium, irrespective of whether the script is in the Qur'an itself or somewhere else. It is also forbidden to touch the glorious name, Allah, for a person even in a state of only minor impurity (ibid).

This small section quoted below may be considered as a tiny step and modest move towards the preservation and the maintenance of sacred boundaries related to the museum collection management. The following statements are under section 6.3 entitled 'Handling procedures for Qur'ans'.

- The Qur'an is a holy book of the Islamic religion, and therefore should be treated with the same respect accorded to holy books and objects of other religions.
- Given the cross-cultural nature of the people employed with the museum, all staff (Muslims and non-Muslims) should be mindful of the special handling considerations associated with the Qur'ans contained within the IAMM collection.
- Muslims are reminded they should wash their hands according to the prayer wudhu rituals prior to handling the Qur'an.

- Non-Muslims should always wear gloves when handling Qur'ans (Fig. 13).
- The Qur'an should never touch the floor. If a Qur'an is accidentally, or inadvertently, placed on the floor, no-one should cross, or step over the Qur'an.
- The Qur'an should always be carried, placed or stored in a position that is higher than waist level.
- Be mindful that the curatorial affairs staff will be subject to scrutiny from people both within the museum, and from people outside the museum. Therefore, strict observance of this procedure must be followed when handling Qur'ans in the galleries, or when assessing Qur'ans for donation, loan or purchase in front of potential depositors.

Here a note must also be added about the impure or unclean substances that must not come in contact with the sacred scripture. As mentioned earlier, pig and dog are two animals considered impure (*najis*) by the Islamic faith. This impurity, according to many schools, applies to the saliva, blood and other secretions of parts of the body of the said animals. This means that, if a certain kind of adhesive is developed from such material, it will be banned from use in the restoration and the conservation of the holy texts.

For a curator and a conservator of Islamic art, the knowledge of the nature of the material used in the process of conservation and restoration is therefore of utmost importance.

The hair and fur of the said animals when moist or wet can also transfer impurities through touch. Brushes made of pig hair are widely used nowadays. They are used in painting as well as in the restoration and conservation of artefacts. One must ensure that such brushes are not used in retouching a holy text, and other restoration works. As general advice, brushes made of such materials should be substituted with other materials in conservation laboratories and workshops that deal with Islamic artefacts.

In this regard, in the curatorial department of the museum we developed an internal procedure concerning tools such as brushes to be used on Islamic art objects. The small sections quoted below may also be considered as a tiny step and modest move towards the preservation and the maintenance of sacred boundaries. Part of section 1.23 under labelling or marking system reads:

- Brushes made of pig bristle and dog hair shall not be used as tools for labelling or marking Islamic art objects.

Also the following statement in section 4.3 under minimum conservation standard is worth mentioning:

- Tools such as brushes made of pig bristle and dog hair shall not be used for fillings, retouches and other conservation and restoration works of Islamic art objects. Also adhesives and solutions used in the conservation and the restoration of Islamic art objects should be free of ritually impure substances extracted from pigs and dogs.

The exposition of objects, and visitor reactions to displayed artefacts of a sacred nature, is another issue that can be noted here. The Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia has organized with the collaboration of different Eastern and Western countries several national and international exhibitions, which contained significant historical works of Islamic art. Among such exhibitions are: *The Light of Qur'an* (1999), *Dress for the Body, Body for the Dress* (2000), *The Sacred Art of Marriage – Persian Marriage Certificate of the Qajar Dynasty* (2000), *Six Centuries of the Islamic Art of China* (2001), *Islamic Art of India* (2002), *Beyond Boundaries – Tents of the Islamic World* (2002) and *Between Eden and Earth: Garden of Islamic world* (2003).

On 1 August 2002, the management of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia decided to present a special display to the Malaysian public entitled '*Fakhr Al-Suyuf – The Glorious Swords*' from the museum collection. This exhibition featured fourteen replicas of the swords of the Prophet, the *Khulafa Rashedin* and his companions, revered for their contribution to the Islamic faith. The highlight of the exhibition was a replica of the famed *Zulfakar*, the sword of Prophet Muhammad that was handed to the fourth Righteous Caliph, Saidina Ali ibn Talib, after his death (Fig. 14).

According to our monthly comparative study on the museum temporary exhibitions from 1999 to 2002, surprisingly the number of visitors has increased tremendously. Of course the media exposure contributed to this popularity. However, the important aspect that we believe interested the public – men, women, children and the elderly – was the content of the exhibit and the way these swords were connected to their glorious heritage. The idea that these items were carried by the most holy people, those who were the pioneers of the religion, suggested a halo of sacredness around them – something that people could relate to. This is an aspect usually hidden from the eye of 'technical' people, curators and scholars alike – for them, the historical authenticity of the work has primacy.

The point that we would like to make here is that the managers of religious heritage have to extend their vision beyond the mere historical and technical aspects of the artefacts to the realm of the spirit of the religion itself. They must gain an understanding

of the thinking of the faithful people who produced their work.

Conclusion

What we have presented in this paper is nothing new. We have only tried to present a traditional view of the preservation of a tradition – something that the peoples of Islamic faith were doing in a very natural manner as a minor religious duty. The preservation and the maintenance of any heritage will best be achieved if the public are involved. The valuable religious heritage, which we have in our hands today, has survived only through the actions of those responsible communities that have guarded them until now.

In this paper, we have touched only the surface of a vast and deep ocean. But water – even a drop of it – may introduce in its humble way the nature of a great ocean. Speaking of the worldview and *shari'ah* of Islam in such a short paper as this one, setting guidelines for the maintenance of sacred boundaries, and preparing management plans, are definitely beyond the scope of this brief introduction. But then the longest journeys begin with a single step.

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The collections of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem contain a vast number of objects with deep links to the three main monotheistic religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The largest is the Judaica collection. Sacred objects demand special consideration when being collected, displayed, stored or undergoing conservation treatments. It is the duty and responsibility of the conservator to be aware of the sensitivities surrounding a religious object that is brought in for conservation.

A successful conservation treatment can be a failure from a religious point of view. For example, the use of pigskin to carry out the repair, however perfect, of a binding made for an Islamic Koran or a Jewish prayer manuscript would be disastrous in this sense. Conservation practice and ethics cannot depend purely on technique. They must reveal and explore the meaning beyond the physical state of an object.

This paper is concerned with some questions in the field of paper and parchment conservation in relation to Jewish sacred objects. The considerations involved have to do with the materials we select and the treatments we choose. Jewish Law codified in the 'Halacha' has very strict laws regarding the preservation, maintenance, storage and disposal of the Holy Bible and other sacred objects. These limitations place a burden on the conservation process and on providing answers to issues of conservation, and leave many questions yet unanswered.

[MICHAEL MAGGEN]

The conservation of sacred materials in the Israel Museum

Important sacred religious objects belonging to the three main monotheistic religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, are part of the Israel Museum collections. These items have always been subject to research, which adds meaning to our cultural and religious heritage as expressed by the Museum's exhibitions. The Judaica collection in the Israel Museum includes the following objects of sacred materials (the items are ordered by degree of religious importance):

- *Holy texts, prayers books and manuscripts:* Torah scrolls, Sidur¹, the Book of Esther, Passover Hagadah², the Old Testament (Pentateuch);
- *Holy Banners:* Mizrach³, the Ten Commandments;
- *Holy objects associated with the Torah scroll:* the Torah scroll closet and Parochet (the closet

curtain), the Torah scroll cover (which covers the scroll);

- *Ceremonial objects:* candle holders (for Sather day or Hanukah), holy wine cup, and incense holders;
- *Personal holy objects:* Tfilim⁴, Mezuzah⁵ and Talit⁶.

There are also two complete synagogue interiors (one in Italian and the other in Indian Jewish style) within the Judaica permanent display area. There are more objects or documents that can be categorized as less sacred items, such as Jewish matrimonial contracts. However, they have important ethnographic and artistic values. When sacred material becomes part of the museum collections, there are some additional considerations regarding their maintenance, conservation and display. The religious

point of view and sensitivities regarding sacred objects must be respected and understood.

Such considerations can result sometimes in professional conflicts, as the following example illustrates. An enquiry addressed to me by a conservator of manuscripts in a leading museum stated:

We have recently acquired a very large Torah scroll from a private collector in Washington DC...The scroll has no roller bars, nor any protective housing, and it is in somewhat poor condition with many seams coming apart at the top and bottom, localized water damage and associated cockling, and numerous parchment repairs that look like they were applied with some kind of animal glue... finally, are there religious implications for people like ourselves doing this [conservation] work, as opposed to someone trained to write and make Torah scrolls? What should we consider from the exhibition standpoint, if anything?

This paper describes some of the important ethical and professional questions related to conservation practice and display of Jewish sacred materials raised by enquiries of this sort.

The Jewish law (Halacha) and sacred materials

The Halacha is the codex of Jewish law, consisting of rules and regulations on religious observance as well as the rules regarding daily Jewish life. The Halacha is considered to be a continuation of the Law of Moses and has been developed through rabbinical interpretation and supplements over the centuries. Halacha is the legal continuation of the Talmud, which is the accumulated oral traditions of theological thought inside the Jewish community through the centuries, and now transferred to written form. The origins for the Halacha go back more than two thousand years to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Jewish Law codified in the Halacha has very strict laws regarding the preservation, maintenance, storage and disposal of the Holy Bible and other prayer books, documents and objects. For example, the Holy Bible or the Torah scroll is regarded as the most sacred and important object in Jewish religion (other religious manuscripts or prayer books are of a secondary importance). Also important are phylacteries (in Hebrew *teffilin*) and the *Mezuza* which are personal ceremonial objects. The Bible is compared to a king or kingdom and, in this respect, whenever a new scroll is finished and brought into a synagogue, Orthodox Jews celebrate the event as

if a new king was born. The Bible can be used only for one purpose, which is reading and learning God's wisdom; any other use is prohibited. Displaying the Torah scroll in a museum can, from a religious point of view, be permitted only if Jews are present among the visitors. The scroll must be open to allow the visitors to read from it.

There are also some restrictions and limitations from a religious point of view regarding the display and conservation of other sacred objects. A person who is not Jewish cannot carry out any conservation on Torah scrolls; men or women can practice conservation as long as they are Jewish. Of the two categories of conservation materials, organic and synthetic, there are no restrictions for synthetic materials but, for organic materials, the Jewish law would exclude any use of organic material which is not 'kosher'. Organic material such as gelatine glues, which are products of certain types of non-kosher fish, are unacceptable (pers. comm. Rabbi Haim Dinovitch, 2003).

Jewish Manuscripts and Documents

Jewish marriage contracts, called in Hebrew *Ketubbah* (plural *Ketubbot*), have become very popular and sought-after art objects among collectors and art institutions. These documents are vital sources for ethnographic research. Thus Dr Moses Gaster, author of the first book about *Ketubbah*, ended his ground-breaking research on an emotional note: '[the *Ketubbah*] is without a doubt the most fascinating and romantic chapter in the history of Jewish civilization' (Gaster 1974).

In this context, the early sixteenth–seventeenth century Italian *Ketubbot* are rare and highly regarded. Many of these documents were written on parchment and decorated with watercolours. The *Ketubbah*, being a legitimate contract between a husband and wife, ensures the bride rights, property, and prosperity, and was always given to the bride by the bridegroom. The document used to be folded a few times for practical reasons and kept with all the other important family records.

Today, many *Ketubbot*, for similar practical reasons, are unfolded and flattened to meet storage and exhibition needs, leaving only a small trace of the original folds (Fig. 1). From the conservation point of view, such small changes are at the edge of acceptable practice. The example from the Israel Museum collection illustrated in Fig. 2 is a beautiful nineteenth century *Ketubbah* from Rome, written on parchment and painted with watercolours, tempera pen and ink. The gate motif in this *Ketubbah* is richly decorated and illuminated with colours. It is very sad to see



FIGURE 1 Ketubah (Jewish marriage contract), Ferrara, Italy, 1731. The Israel Museum.



FIGURE 2 Ketubah, Rome, Italy, 1857. The Israel Museum.

this impressive Ketubah sliced in the centre, leaving the 'X' mark as apparent damage. Any attempt to 'hide' this damage through conservation (retouching) will result in greater damage. This is because the 'X' mark is a sign that indicates that the marriage was not as beautiful as the Ketubah, and there was a divorce process. The document must, therefore, be kept and protected in its present state, since misinterpreting this mark as ordinary damage can result in losing important information about the history of the document. The conservation procedures in this respect will focus on the best plan to preserve this fragile document for display and storage.

Because religious objects demand special consideration when collected, displayed, stored or undergoing conservation treatment, it is the duty and responsibility of the conservator to be aware of the religious implications of a sacred object that needs conservation treatments. The Passover Haggadah is a traditional narrative prayer book for the Passover Holiday, supplemented by hymns and songs. The Judaica collection in the Israel Museum contains many types of printed Passover Haggadahs and man-

uscripts, which date back to as early as the fourteenth century. The example of the Amsterdam Haggadah, dated 1895, is wood-block printed and hand-coloured with watercolours (Fig. 3, before treatment). The book needed to be restored due its bad physical condition, the binding was broken and worn, and the pages were suffering from tears, paper losses, stains and dirt. A successful conservation process such as the one for this Passover Haggadah, (Fig. 4 after treatment) could be a failure from the religious point of view. For example, a perfect restoration of the binding using unacceptable materials such as pigskin would be disastrous in this sense.

Jewish religion includes basic laws of purity and impurity. It is important to clarify that the Torah does not associate *tummah* (impurity) and *tabarah* (purity) with good and bad. The entire process involves the concept of life and death, and the symbolic emphasis that the Torah places on serving God with optimism and vigour. So long as there is life, there is the opportunity to grow in one's relationship with God. If one takes the hide of a kosher animal, processes it into parchment, and writes upon it the words of



FIGURE 3 (ABOVE) Amsterdam Haggadah, dated 1895, before treatment. The Israel Museum.



FIGURE 4 (TOP RIGHT) Amsterdam Haggadah, dated 1895, after treatment. The Israel Museum.



Figure 5 (BOTTOM RIGHT) Aleppo Codex, dated 910 AD. Permanent loan. The Israel Museum.

the Torah or uses it for bindings, that parchment or skin undergoes an incredible transformation. It has attained a level of holiness. Jewish law permits the use (for conservation, in this sense) only of kosher materials for repairing sacred material. This means that one must assume the set of regulations and restrictions for kosher food. The pig is among the few animals that are forbidden to Jews. Jews are commanded to know the signs that distinguish the types of animals that it is forbidden to eat from the types that are permitted. Anything that comes from a forbidden animal (milk, eggs, etc.) is forbidden. An animal is permitted only if it has a cleft hoof and chews the cud. There are ten permitted types (three domestic, seven wild). All marine creatures are forbidden except for those having fins and scales.

The following example reflects another case of conservation practice in the light of religious restrictions and limitations. In 1996 an intense six-year project of conservation of the tenth century Aleppo Codex (Fig. 5) was completed, followed by a publication (Maggen 1991). This manuscript is the oldest known bible written in Hebrew. The conser-

vation process included the consolidation of fragile inks, integrations and reinforcement of structural damages of the parchment, and surface cleaning, and ended with the making of a special bookcase and a facsimile/dummy for permanent display. Conservation proposals were shared with the Orthodox Rabbinical authorities before the practical conservation was initiated. The conservation proposals were supported with respect and appreciation. However, it was requested by the religious representatives that the author follow the Jewish custom of wearing a hat (a *kipa* in Hebrew, a sign of Jewish believers), whenever the manuscript was to be handled.

There were no special comments from the religious authorities regarding surface cleanings using saliva on the manuscript, which could have been problematic. From a religious point of view, a person must treat a Torah scroll or any other holy text (such as the Aleppo Codex) with great honour. Human secretion such as spit and urine is regarded as impure. One should not spit in front of a Torah scroll or hold a Torah without its mantle. Surface cleaning using saliva is an old cleaning technique frequently used

by conservators. The saliva contains active enzymes which are efficient in breaking down surface dirt composed of fats and starches. In order to respect the request of the religious authorities, whenever this manuscript is on display, there is a note kindly requesting that visitors wear a hat while looking at the Aleppo Codex. Any decisions regarding the display or conservation of a sacred item should be done in consultation with religious authorities and with the maximum sensitivity. The knowledge and consciousness of religious implications regarding sacred material can contribute to a better understanding of these issues.

Conclusions

Sacred materials can pose many ethical and practical problems regarding their storage, conservation and display, as the examples described here have demonstrated. There are still some issues to be resolved and some restrictions which probably cannot be accepted by the professional conservation community. Returning to the example of the museum conservator's enquiry quoted earlier, most of the suggested treatments would be feasible. However, since the conservator is not Jewish, the conservation cannot be done in conformity with a Jewish rabbinical Halacha point of view.

Other considerations have to do with selected conservation treatments and materials. These issues can reach a general understanding or *modus vivendi* with regard to Halacha concepts. But where is the line to be drawn between religion and conservation? The line between religious restrictions and conservation professional needs can result in conflict. In my opinion, the conservation field can and should find answers for most of the issues. However, some cases could be problematic, such as treatment of Torahs carried out by non-Jews.

Professionals such as doctors, engineers, architects, designers and others, could find themselves in the same situation, struggling to find the 'golden path' when professional needs encounter religion. It is with some regret to note that conflicts between archaeologists and ultra-Orthodox Jews have reached extreme levels of tension in Israel, leading to violence, hatred and social and political conflict. Archaeologists have been accused of sacrilege by excavating on the sites of ancient Jewish graveyards. More than once archaeological research was interfered with or stopped, or in order to prevent incidents were carried out sometimes at night.

Whenever there is a sacred object in a public or private cultural environment, it should receive special attention and consideration. Religious artefacts or sacred objects are at the heart of the emotions of

religious believers. We should always be aware and conscious of that.

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Endnotes

- ¹ From the Hebrew word meaning 'to order', this is the Jewish prayer book used for all days except special holidays.
- ² A traditional narrative prayer book for Passover Holiday, supplemented by hymns and songs.
- ³ A decorative plaque inscribed with the Hebrew verse 'I have set the Lord always before me' (Psalms 16:8), hung in synagogues and Jewish homes as a reminder of God's presence.
- ⁴ Usually translated as 'phylacteries', these are box-like appurtenances that accompany prayer, worn by Jewish adult males at the weekday morning services. The boxes have leather thongs attached and contain scriptural excerpts. One box (with four sections) is placed on the head; the other (with one section) is customarily placed on the left arm, near the heart. The biblical passages emphasize the unity of God and the duty to love God and be mindful of him with all one's heart and mind.
- ⁵ The 'Mezuzah' ('doorpost') signifies the sanctity and blessing of the Jewish home. Actually, it is a portion of Holy Torah, inscribed in the same manner and script as a Torah. It is attached to the entrance door lintel of every Jewish home.
- ⁶ A large, four-cornered shawl with fringes and special knots at the extremities, worn during Jewish morning prayers.

The primary objective of this paper is to delineate the process of dialogue as a fundamental component of: the ecclesial approach towards cultural heritage; the relationship between the categories of assets of ecclesial cultural heritage; Church internal governance policy and the policy of the Holy See in relations with international organizations working in this field; and the working method of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church. The Cathedral Workshops, an initiative organized by the Pontifical Commission in the year 2000, provide a concrete example of how this process of dialogue can create an intercultural community of solidarity at the international level in the field of cultural heritage.

CRISTINA CARLO-STELLA

Religious heritage as a meeting point for dialogue

THE CATHEDRAL WORKSHOPS EXPERIENCE

Dialogue: an essential part of the ecclesial approach towards cultural heritage

The process of dialogue can be considered the vital nucleus of the ecclesial approach towards cultural heritage. Evangelization is a fundamental task assigned to the Church by its founder Jesus Christ. In the context of this task, the Church community considers cultural heritage a primary pastoral instrument for conducting activities of worship, catechism, and charity within the ecclesial community or within society in general. Consequently, ecclesial cultural heritage has a precise functional purpose at the service of a community environment. It must therefore relate to and communicate with the community of faithful living in a specific territory, and on behalf of this community within the respective local society.

This implies a process of dialogue through which universal Church teachings (in regards to worship, catechism and charity) undergo *inculturation* or are implanted in the specific cultures of societies of each and every nation where Church communities have been established.

Inculturation implies that the dogmatic principles of Christian faith, as contained in Gospel teachings, remain the same, but the way they are taught and put into practice through local vernacular expressions by the local Church communities reflect the social and cultural traditions of the local territories. A symbiosis between unity and diversity, so often recommended nowadays by many international organizations, reflects the actual way the Christian Church has been founded, has developed through time, and the way it operates: unity of content in terms of dogmatic principles; diversity in the way the faith is adapted to each specific cultural and social reality characterizing humanity around the world.

Ecclesial cultural heritage thus embodies the principle of symbiosis between unity and diversity. This heritage is used to instigate, maintain, and enhance the process of dialogue necessary for the process of inculturation, which involves and implies cultural diversity. It is well known to scholars of Christian art how the entire development of ecclesial artistic heritage has given witness and gives witness to this process of osmosis, dialogue, translation of dogmatic content through a variety of formal expres-

sions adopted by particular cultures throughout time.

At the same time, these various styles are called to serve the specific rituals of worship and charitable actions that characterize this religion: ‘the art of our own times from every race and country shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided it bring to the task of reverence and honour due to the sacred buildings and rites’ (SC¹ 123, Ch. 7). This principle is reiterated in the following passage from the revised Roman Missal: ‘Not only for the building of a church, but also for its furnishings, the Church is willing to accept the artistic style of any culture. She will permit adaptations to suit the religious outlook and customs of the various peoples provided only that they be compatible with the liturgical purposes for which the furnishings are designed...’ (RM² Ch. 6, 287).

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF ECCLESIAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

The cultural heritage of the Church, whose production and development throughout time must be oriented towards a functional and community purpose, comprises both immovable and movable assets or resources. The material cultural heritage of the Church always reflects and should communicate the essential immaterial heritage, in other words the traditions of spirituality (the religious and devotional traditions, customs and practices of worship) characterizing Catholic faith. This immaterial heritage should be considered to be both the inspiring source responsible for the production of the material patrimony and the major reason behind the efforts to conserve and enhance the material forms. The functional nature and character of movable assets indirectly implies and requires a preservation policy that can safeguard their intimate relationship with the liturgical, devotional, religious environment for which they were produced. For this reason, an *in situ* policy has been recommended by the Church, whereby movable assets should never be detached from, but always valued in, the religious-liturgical or devotional, catechetical, or charitable environment for which they were created and for which they have been intended to serve.

However, in the history of the Church, changes in liturgical and devotional practices have either modified the production, or called for a re-evaluation of, ecclesial movable and immovable heritage, which may have caused displacement or dispersal. Today the phenomenon of displacement or dispersal has too often pointed the finger at Second Vatican Council instructions. But if one closely analyzes the content of

these Council documents, it becomes clear that this has occurred as a result of an unfortunate misunderstanding of liturgical reform and the renewal policy recommended. Council instructions underline, on the contrary, the need for dialogue and co-existence of styles and types of cultural heritage assets within the sacred and liturgical environment. Thus it is stated that the Church

‘...has admitted changes in material and style, or ornamentation prompted by the progress of technical arts with the passage of time...’ (SC 122, Ch. 7), and also ‘... in the course of the centuries she has brought into existence a treasury of art which must be preserved with every care (SC 123, Ch. 7). The revised Roman Missal contains the following: ‘...The Church always presses into her service the arts cultivated by the various nations and wishes to give them a place in her worship. While preserving artistic treasures of former times and adapting them to current needs she also encourages new developments in the arts...Artists are trained and works of art are selected by the Church so that faith and piety may be fostered by good and appropriate art...’ (RM 254, Ch. 5)

What may have created some uncertainties leading to the phenomenon of dispersal or even destruction is the evaluation criteria suggested for the liturgical space, and particularly for its movable assets and decorative features, whereby a relative preference is indicated for ‘that noble simplicity which it is possible to combine admirably with true art...’ (RM 287, Ch. 6) or, as stated in an excerpt from the same Second Vatican document, ‘...Ordinaries are to take care that in encouraging and favouring truly sacred art, they should seek for noble beauty rather than sumptuous display. The same principle applies also to sacred vestments and ornaments...’ (SC 124, Ch. 7).

The evaluation process was based on qualitative (and sometimes quantitative) criteria. But even in the context of these suggested evaluations, it is important to remember that the Second Vatican Council also strongly recommends that proper consultation procedures be followed as a necessary step of the actual decision-making process: ‘...When passing judgment on works of art, local ordinaries should ask the opinion of the diocesan commission on sacred art and – when occasion demands – the opinions of others who are experts... Ordinaries should ensure that sacred furnishings and works of value are not disposed of or destroyed, for they are ornaments in God’s house...’ (SC 126: Ch. 7).

THE PROCESS OF DIALOGUE INVOLVED IN CHURCH GOVERNANCE POLICY

In accordance with the governance structure and teachings of Jesus Christ, the Roman Catholic Church throughout its history consolidated a co-participative approach between the central government structure in Rome headed by the Pope and the Particular Church³ and Church communities established in the nations around the world. The latter, headed by their administrative and spiritual leader or Bishop, are in turn made up of smaller local parish communities led by pastors who are assisted in their ministry by the clergy and the faithful. Following the tradition of the early Apostolic community, this means that the Holy See is called to work closely and in communion with these Particular Churches.

As part of the *inculturation* process, the Bishops of each Particular Church in each nation are united in an Episcopal Conference in order to implement the directives issued by the Holy See central government in Rome. The latter, headed by the Pope, has a number of Dicasteries or Ministries assigned to the supervision of priority action areas inherent to the evangelizing and pastoral mission of the Universal Church throughout the world. These Dicasteries (or Pontifical Councils, Congregations, and Commissions) work in close collaboration with the Particular Churches around the world and their respective Episcopal Conferences, in order to implement the directives of the Universal Church. Since cultural heritage has been considered by the Universal Church a fundamental pastoral instrument to carry out its essential evangelizing mission, it is not surprising that one of these Dicasteries, the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, has been assigned to supervise this specific field.

DIALOGUE AS A FUNDAMENTAL CRITERIA BEHIND THE WORK OF THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE CHURCH

Dialogue has represented, at least so far, a major criterion guiding the work of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church. The Pontifical Commission was established in 1988 by Pope John Paul II to emphasize that the cultural heritage of the Church was a priority area of concern, through which the Church can conduct its pastoral and evangelizing mission. The task of the Pontifical Commission is to encourage the Particular Churches around the world to strengthen and increase efforts for the proper conservation, preservation, promotion or enhancement of the cultural heritage of the Church as part of its pastoral mission. This has been achieved so far by:

- the consolidation of an information exchange network between all those nominated by the Bishops in the various dioceses around the world to work in this field of Church cultural heritage;
- the consolidation of contacts with and among the Particular Churches around the world at the episcopal conference level and diocesan levels, in order to encourage the establishment of proper structures that can assure adequate administration, supervision and promotion of cultural heritage issues (proper episcopal commissions, committees and offices); as well as with associations and societies working in this area (such as church archivists societies; international associations of church volunteers, and church museums);
- the drafting and distribution of specific documents on those different cultural heritage issues valued by Church doctrine and teachings as priority action areas (so far on church libraries; church archives; ecclesiastical museums; inventory and cataloguing of cultural heritage);
- consolidation of contacts and cooperation with governmental and non-governmental international and national organizations and entities working in this field (particularly the Council of Europe, OWHC, ICCROM, and ICOMOS). Dialogue with these organizations has involved over the years active participation in and support for some of the major initiatives conducted at European and international level.

All four major actions involve the development of the dialogue criterion: between Church leaders and those charged to look after ecclesial cultural heritage within the individual Church communities; between Church leaders with their collaborators and local government authorities and experts in the field; among Church leaders at the episcopal conference level; between Particular Churches in the various nations; and between the Universal Church and international organizations.

The Cathedral Workshops Project: a practical experience of dialogue and cooperation

The Cathedral Workshops project offers a perfect example of the Holy See's co-participation and support of international organizations' commitment to strengthen dialogue at international level, and the contribution that the Pontifical Commission can make in this regard.

The project was planned as part of an overall program of activities sponsored by the Holy See on occasion of its participation in the Council of Europe's Campaign on cultural heritage, *Europe*

– *a Common Heritage*, which was launched for the year 2000. This campaign's main purpose was to spread awareness in European citizens of the role of cultural heritage as an instrument to promote a re-discovery of their common European identity – meaning also an appreciation of cultural heritage diversity – and strengthen a democratic society of peace, mutual respect and understanding. The re-discovery of a common European identity naturally entails becoming conscious of the common features of material and immaterial heritage that have shaped European culture. Keeping in mind this principal objective, the Holy See proposed to underline the role of religious cultural heritage, specifically ecclesial heritage, as a key factor.

The idea of choosing and organizing a series of workshops dedicated primarily to artistic crafts that have contributed in a special way towards the development of religious heritage in Europe, and to conceive these meetings as intercultural and inter-faith forums, was inspired by two earlier activities conducted by the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Council of Europe. A previous study of the phenomenon of illicit trafficking of cultural assets had foreseen a series of inter-sectoral meetings of representatives of different departments or institutions that have either been combating this problem or have been affected by it. Inter-denominational meetings were thus held, since precious religious artistic movables are often the preferred prey, and these meetings produced an encouraging spirit of mutual collaboration and support. The second initiative entailed an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of legislative measures issued by the Council of Europe in the cultural heritage field. From this analysis, Recommendation R 81 13 on declining craft trades in Europe proved to be the most influential on national cultural heritage policies. This further strengthened the decision to orient the workshops discussions on specific issues concerning the preservation and promotion of craftsmanship in general.

The importance of dialogue and craftsmanship, as underlined by these two activities, led to the choice of a specific religious heritage typology which encompassed these two concepts as fundamental in its development: the cathedral. The project was thus called the 'Cathedral Workshops' to re-propose a reflection on how these religious buildings and their milieu responded and contributed to the development of these concepts. Just as the building of a cathedral represented a united venture of various artistic and scientific disciplines, so the workshops wanted to propose in an innovative manner an inter-disciplinary approach towards the crafts discussed. Experts and

scholars from different fields of competence (art history; conservation; liturgical science and theology; architecture; library science; and archaeology) as well as artists and craftsmen, from different cultural and religious backgrounds, were gathered together to share their expertise. Scholars, experts and artists who participated in the meetings represented: the Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant), Jewish, and Islamic traditions; and the following countries: Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Scotland, Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Turkey, and USA.

The most difficult aspect regarding the organization of the workshops was the selection of locations and crafts. The selection of locations depended upon the selection of crafts, which was done on the basis of one major criterion, that is, on the basis of those crafts that represented to the major denominations of Europe a principal and common denominator of artistic expression for the development of their religious heritage. The choice of locations to hold the workshops was made to cover as much as possible the major geographical regions of Europe (north, south, central, east and west) where the craft discussed was particularly developed and promoted on a European level. In each location chosen, the Pontifical Commission invited the Episcopal Conference to figure as principal host of the meeting, looking after the organization of the meeting premises and the lodging of the participants. The meetings were made possible thanks to the truly exemplary collaboration and support of local Church and government authorities.

The workshops were thus held in the following locations and on the following subjects: Venice, on mosaic craftsmanship in December 1999; Warsaw, on precious metals and liturgical or religious furnishings in April 2000; Cologne, on religious or sacred stone and bronze sculpture in September 2000; Malta, on the embroidery and production of religious and sacred vestments in September-October 2000; and Dublin, on sacred book arts and manuscript illumination in October 2000. In two instances, the subject also touched upon related secondary topics. In Warsaw, the broader issue of conservation, inventory methods, and preventive measures against illicit trafficking of religious or sacred precious movables was discussed. The topic addressed in Cologne, which could have represented a delicate issue for certain denominations, was geared to analyze, in a broader and more general way, the production of contemporary religious sculpture and the use of contemporary art in religious buildings.

The inter-disciplinary, intercultural and inter-denominational methodology promoted by the Cathedral Workshops made the sessions extremely enriching, constructive, and inspiring. The spirit of mutual collaboration and agreement is reflected in the conclusions that emerged from the discussions.

The proceedings of the Cathedral Workshops were published in 2003,⁴ and contain detailed documentation of each session. Here, some of the most important conclusions will be briefly summarized.

The workshops in Venice and Malta brought out several common concerns, for example the need to apply a proper preservation policy and to orient conservation procedures accordingly, as well as for an increased appreciation of and support for the crafts and artists working in these mediums on the part of ecclesial and religious communities. On a similar note, during the discussion session of the workshop in Venice, an appeal was made for proper recognition of professional training programs and professional technical schools on the part of government institutions in order to guarantee proper funding and compatibility of academic standards. An interesting point raised by the Malta workshop was the method of periodic re-utilization as an important preservation procedure of historic textile samples. In addition, it stressed the need to value properly and equally various types and productions of religious textiles, in some cases processes which strengthen the community dimension of religious and Church communities. Both workshops also concurred on the need for a more constructive dialogue between conservators – art historians – and craftsmen or artists working in the medium to gain an accurate understanding of the technique involved. Finally, they stressed the importance of encouraging the transmission of practical experience, know-how, and traditional procedures to younger generations, as both crafts today risk being underestimated and in some areas of the continent even of extinction.

The workshop in Warsaw led to a consensus on three major issues. It was felt that there was a need to work on a uniform methodology of cataloguing and inventorying procedures for religious and sacred movables that can consider the liturgical and religious use of the objects, thus properly considering their sacred nature and spiritual value, as well as the use of compatible computer programs. On this same point, a more intense exchange of information and collaboration on inter-denominational level but also between denominational groups, government authorities, and other groups—police force and museum staff—is needed in order to facilitate the identification and retrieval of stolen precious religious movables.

In Cologne, most of the discussion centred on the didactic role of sacred and religious sculpture, and the need to revitalize knowledge of religious iconography and symbolism, especially among young people. A group of local artists and sculptors held a debate on the latter issue, bringing to the fore the need to develop and strengthen better communication between themselves and Church and religious authorities in regard to the imagery and understanding of contemporary art in general. Vice-versa, contemporary artists need to be more aware of the criteria followed by religious and ecclesial communities to value works suitable or adaptable to a religious, sacred and liturgical space. Dialogue, mutual respect, and collaboration were seen as the three fundamental ingredients to promote adequately the production of sacred art and sculpture, as well as to continue to endow religious and ecclesial environments with a quality-oriented artistic dimension that can share and contribute to the functional purposes assigned to them.

The Dublin workshop, on sacred book arts and the craftsmanship of manuscript illumination, once again stressed the importance of a deeper understanding of the techniques involved, but also of the religious and liturgical use of the texts that in some cases affected the stylistic and iconographic characteristics of the works. On the latter point, it was felt that an increased exchange of knowledge on inter-denominational and inter-disciplinary level would be highly productive. A need to promote this craftsmanship so that it can be appreciated and developed by future generations was also stressed. In this regard, religious communities were called upon to play a more active role, as well as museums through exhibitions that present the intercultural aspect of the craft, while avoiding a syncretic or simplistic approach, and re-create the original milieu where the craft developed and spread. The exhibition organized in the Chester Beatty Library where the workshop was held provided a most inspiring example. In addition, it was stated that proper professional training and training school programmes should be devised and supported by governmental educational ministries to offer young people the opportunity to develop an interest in this field, as well as opportunities of employment, as is done in Ireland.

To conclude, we can say that all the workshops met successfully the objectives of the project. A spirit of sincere, close cooperation and dialogue emerged from all five meetings. What was a particularly enriching experience for all participants was a renewed awareness of shared problems and aims regarding the future of our precious religious cultural

heritage, and how the various facets of the process of dialogue can be woven together to form innovative and inspiring methodologies. In addition, it became clear that too often the development of specific crafts has been constrained to specific geographical areas, and their appreciation to some disciplines more than others. Meetings such as the Cathedral Workshops can serve to enhance both development and appreciation on a European level. The organization and costs involved make projects like these quite demanding, and private sponsorship proves to be an important if not essential component. Nevertheless, the efforts are worthwhile. The Cathedral Workshop project concretely and practically demonstrated to us and to all involved how religious cultural heritage can indeed be a vital channel to spread and consolidate dialogue, mutual respect and collaboration between cultures and faiths. We hope that our experience will continue to be inspiring, particularly to those international organizations that are active not only in the cultural heritage field but also, on a more political level, in the building up of world-wide peace.

Endnotes

- ¹ SC refers to documents of the Second Vatican Council.
- ² RM refers to sections of the Roman Missal.
- ³ A Particular Church is any of the individual constituent ecclesial communities that is in full communion with the Church of Rome.
- ⁴ Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church, *Cathedral Workshops on Religious Arts and Crafts – Proceedings* (Rome: Edindustria, 2003). Copies are available upon request from the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.



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ICCROM

PUBLISHED BY ICCROM

Via di San Michele, 13

I-00153 Rome, Italy

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