Section A1: Concepts, definitions and theoretical considerations
Session A1 : Concepts, définitions et théories

THE CULTURAL CONSISTENCE OF BUILT HERITAGE CONSTITUTES ITS INTANGIBLE DIMENSION
Joao CAMPOS*, Portugal

1. MEANINGS AND CONCERNS

The importance of intangible values in cultural heritage began to be widely discussed in the international arena linked to questions of preservation of identity and cultural diversity.

The grouping of ideas in order to focus on subjects such as traditions or contacts among peoples and civilisations (linked to the diverse "routes" and their respective indicators in different places) is easily assimilated into an organisation like ICOMOS, to such a point that the General Assembly has not forgotten its duty to accomplish this Scientific Symposium.

The intangible is the domain of the inexplicable, and what cannot be named cannot be the object of objective or comparative verification. In a potential galaxy within a vast universe of subjectivity, the viability of a declaration of the outstanding value of an intangible heritage, in which Humanity recognises itself, is a matter of concern.

However, there is one point in which we can and should agree: there is no built heritage without an "intangible dimension". Here lays, paradoxically, the aim of the debate, and we must point out that there is no cultural value for heritage without this unique cement that endows it with consistency for the general acceptance of its distinctive condition.

Its verification derives from that which originated it, as well as everything that made a given creation last throughout Time, marking the essence of the authenticity that is inherent to the universal acknowledgement of a certain cultural heritage.

This immeasurable *dimension* should be enhanced in the wider process of preservation of monuments and sites, when regarding stones and landscapes, namely those inhabited by Man.

It is necessary not to fall prey to the difficulties, oddities or destabilising dangers that such a theme conjures up. Excessive interpretations of the tangible may lead to misunderstandings through lack of references in the sharing of concepts. And, even worse, it may result in a sort of anti-pedagogical *free-for-all*, given the lack of coinciding guidelines with regard to essential elements and the possible overestimation of marginal subsidiary aspects.

Another relevant aspect of the negative potential of the uncontrolled process of valuing "intangibility" is the desire to strengthen specific positions or particular facts, through which reduced arguments are promoted, leading to disproportionate scopes in terms of the understanding of the heritage concerned.

I would like to bring to mind one of the symbolisms of the Portuguese figure that is helping the heathen enter into heaven in the "Last Judgment" of the Sistine Chapel. Would (will) this apparently altruistic gesture, superbly illustrated in the fresco by the Master, have the same interpretation for Indian or African cultures than that which Michelangelo and Julius II (i.e. the European civilisation) attributed to it?

2. MEMORY: TIME AND SPACE

The *intangible dimension* is found everyday, each time contributing new explanations, renewing facts and artefacts with physical, visual and aesthetic expression, i.e. providing the Space in the lived Time.

Those that we describe as *historical heritage*, providing a sort of common-sense award in the act of acknowledging the nature of some buildings and sites as heritage, manage to transport memory from a distant Time. They will possess a continuous, already long-lived identity which is desired to perpetuate, as an illusion.

Although we know that evolution is an inherent condition of living creatures, in fighting the *mummification* (and even the *museumisation*) of cultural heritage, we oppose the mission to safeguard cultural values in a wider context of heritage protection. I refer not only to the objective product of a given culture, with its artefacts, buildings or festivals, but the overall context that generated the product itself.

The balance of an adjusted action seems to be in the ability to avoid transformations that correspond to the extreme fixation, in Time and Space, of a given configuration.

Michel Foucault warns us of the boundaries of the museum: "the desire to enclose in one place all times, the epochs, the forms and tastes, the idea to build one place for all times that is, itself, outside Time (and inaccessible to its corrosive action), the project to organise, as such a kind of perpetual and undefined accumulation of Time in one Place that does not move – all this belongs to our modernity" (L'architettura-cronacca e storia, nr. 150).

But it is not viable for containers of illusion to expand to the entire scale of the environment, without condemning heritage to an inadequate condition.

3. PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS

One of the most obvious parallels that can be established is the danger of converting the *historical* into a consumer product, serving the people who visit it without any links to the people who live in it.

Heritage constitutes the core reason of being for a kind of organism that evolved inside each community and in its relationship with others.

The outsiders' pleasure of benefiting from *historical heritage* must be subservient to the truth of its existence, and not to the dream of the tourist, the Utopia of the traveller.

From the Heritage viewpoint, where the Past is intrinsic to the Future, it is natural that there is an overriding wish to turn heritage into allusions, ideas that fit in with models and myths that, at a given moment, are established by the predominating interpretation. Pure nonsense: instead of the impossible Place outside Time (i.e. Utopia or *Non-Place*) we design an *Other-Place* (a *Heterotopia*, as termed by the aforementioned author), developing from an imaginary that is external to the specific environment in which we operate – a Place outside the historical truth, which was the aim we wished to attain.

In today's civilisation, when it unrealistically seems that we have overcome the frontiers of Time, we should not fall into the error of designing attitudes without a genuine recognition and respect for the will of the people to whom any kind of heritage belongs, as the irreplaceable reason for their existence and their future.

4. AUTHENTICITY AND VIRTUAL MEANING

Placing the question of intangibility in the field of *authenticity* (*essential* condition for all Cultural Heritage), another problem arises in addition to the specific issue of the observed reality with something undetermined, as a self dimension that awakens emotions in each person.

Thus, reality takes the shape of *something new* that one wishes *not temporal*, *absolute*, *unreal*: "à la façon d'un signe ou, plus exactement, d'une allégorie, elle exprime sans équivoque une signification transcendante et multiplie les notations capables de composer sans ambiguïté le discours virtuel qu'elle est censée porter" (Bordieu et al., 1965).

That *virtual speech* of reality will be, finally, what we hope to integrate, by means of the intangible dimension, into the essential make up of the cultural meaning of heritage. Such a concept will be unique and unrepeatable, projecting, in this present time, the memory of its reason for being.

Semiotics teaches us that, in general, human space (the entire environment worked and inhabited by Man) always implied something more than the description of its physical characteristics.

The implication of a *sense of message* ("cette opération mystérieuse par laquelle un message quelconque s'imprègne d'un sens second, diffus, en général idéologique" – Barthes, 1964) is part of the intangible dimension of Heritage.

According to Roland Barthes, given meanings are, like mythical beings, of extreme inexactness and at any given moment change into the meaning of *another* thing, sometimes even removed from the dimensional limitations of observed reality.

5. ICOMOS AND ITS TASKS

At the International Meeting on the Intangible Dimension of the Historic City, held in Oporto two years ago, with the participation of members of the CIVVIH/ICOMOS from 25 countries, our colleague Alvaro Gomez-Ferrer stressed out in his intervention that we must react, in a technical sense, to provide expertise and sometimes solutions or concrete advice for the safeguard of heritage. Although new paths are being opened, he reminded us that "we also have the obligation to achieve a specific solution".

The intangible dimension of cultural heritage has to be incorporated into the tasks of protection that concern ICOMOS, without diluting the physical component in approaches that belong mainly to other specialised fields.

In its fundamental concepts, expressed in the remarkable document that is the Venice Charter, ICOMOS cannot abandon the primordial relationship with the monuments and sites built by Man. This is its specialisation, and the means through which it assembles specialists from all over the world, asserting its specificity while acting as organisation particularly with UNESCO and the World Heritage Convention.

It is ICOMOS that has the responsibility to defend, inside the complex inter-relationships of the safeguarding of cultural heritage, the acknowledgement of the outstanding value of what Man's creative genius offers to all Mankind in the expression of built heritage.

Paying a special tribute to the broadening concept of embracing mixed cultural and natural properties, culture-nature relationships, spiritual and sacred values, traditions and oral knowledge, ICOMOS tasks can be stimulated and enhanced with such cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary exchanges, while never forgetting the central role of material legacy, constituted by the most beautiful works built by the different civilisations.

6. THREE PRACTICAL CASES

To illustrate the practical importance of intangible values on the safeguarding of monuments and sites, I have the pleasure of showing you, very rapidly, images from three cases sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

This Portuguese private institution has been developing co-operation efforts regarding the preservation of built heritage of Portuguese origin all over the world.

Some rules are observed by the Foundation. First, it is never responsible for co-operation initiatives, being the heritage owners who first manifest their interest. Secondly, the partnership that is created presupposes that the other party approves and manages all the aspects of the agreed intervention, according to the established principles. Thirdly, the Foundation never keeps any ties with the managing of the rehabilitated heritage, removing itself completely once works are finished.

1. THE HOLY ROSARY CHURCH AT DHAKA

The restoration project of a church, whose present configuration dates from 1677, was concluded two and a half years ago in the capital of Bangladesh. However, the main chapel's body (owing to its building characteristics and proportions) likely dates back to the last quarter of the 16th century. This early construction would become the first church of the Portuguese Factory, whose urban layout subsists, even today, in the centre of Dhaka (including the church complex, with schools and hospice).

The Holy Rosary Church (figs. 1, 2 and 3) displays a strange baroque style, materialising an architectural theory of a huge heterodoxy. Due not only to its exotic character, but mainly to the great erudition of its design, it constitutes an example of the greatest heritage interest.

We witness the fruitful result of inter-cultural relationships, which occurred in the golden age of the Moghol Empire, with the presence of factors favourable to inter-religious exchanges (Hinduism, Christianity and Islam).

The existence of an ethnological, religious, linguistic and artistic network such as the one displayed in this building, explains how it is possible to interact while perpetuating fundamental features particular to each community, with courses or relevant physical gaps imposed by History and Geography.

It also explains the way in which those reasons propitiated independent protagonist roles assumed by different peoples (Bengali and Portuguese), each in their own way, in the continuity of Humanity itself…

Although everything seems to be discovered, in the attractiveness of novelty we see the image of dozens of Portuguese names on hundreds of graves, setting in stone unsuspected memories of origins that explain, in some way, the strength of such new and particular identities.

In architecture, and by a majority of reasons in the Holy Rosary Church, simplistic explanations are not possible: the supposed Portuguese origins, although there, are mistaken with other traditions, which we identify as derived from acquired elements that, together, also carved the cultural path of Portugal.

The originality of some local architectural structures (such as the Holy Rosary Church), belonging to other non-Portuguese communities, does not admit explanations on the basis of the simple impact of temporal/spatial processes: they are new identities.

The Holy Rosary Church, hybrid product of a crossbreeding, but authentic assertion of a way of being, is one of such new realities, a new soul with its own identity in which, in the end, we re-unite in a strange way.

2. THE FORECOURT OF THE VILHENA PALACE AT MDINA

The first stage in the restoration of a singular monument at the city of Mdina, built by a Portuguese Grand-Master of the Order of the Knights of St. John, António Manoel de Vilhena, was finished in Malta, making use of History and feelings of attachment.

The magisterial palace (figs. 4 and 5) is itself a splendid example of *avant-garde* Baroque, designed by French architect Mondion during the third decade of the 18th century. However, the main reason that lead to the support of the proposal presented by our colleague Ray Bondin (in charge of the Mdina Restoration Committee), was based on the exceptional meaning of the character of the ruler of Malta at that time, and who is still popular nowadays amongst the citizens of the island.

The supranational character of the Order is well known, from which paradoxically derived its sovereignty and spirituality. Perhaps we can assert that the Knights of St. John, at the time of their presence in Malta, were the most advanced interpreters of a modern sense of multiculturalism, producing the finest examples of excellence that the country has inherited.

At Mdina, Grand-Master Vilhena created something new. The restructuring of the urban layout of half of the city, destroyed in the earthquake of 1693, included the particular decision to build the Magisterial Palace as a delegation of the Order in the old capital of the island, respecting the prerogatives of local nobility. It is no hazard that the program for the Vilhena Palace included, from its original conception, the installation of the Local Council with its Court, at the same noble level as the living quarters of the Grand-Master.

Vilhena solved the problem of the lack of communication between the people then living in Malta, not only between local inhabitants and the Knights, but even amongst different sections of the Order, whose elites kept themselves to life inside the several *tongues*, with their own activities at each Auberge.

This facility for closeness and friendship is a trace of Portuguese character, and Vilhena surely represents, in its historical context, an epitome of the Portuguese nation.

There is a kind of intangible dimension that derives from its author and the way in which a monument was built, as it always occurs when a given creation lasts throughout Time.

At Mdina we could indeed work with History, that is, find and add new explanations, trying to catch the sense of continuity of the breeze of identity, within the global framework that generated this heritage.

The Gulbenkian Foundation intended to give its contribution to maintain and develop those links, which can justify the progress of the superior mission of culture, that is to say, the well-being and peace of Humanity.

The involvement of feelings of attachment that is inherent to that stance is symbolised in the olive trees that a Portuguese lady of Maltese origin offered to the project. These old trees come from a Portuguese piece of land and represent the living contribution for the complete understanding of the profound significance of what the Gulbenkian Foundation and Maltese Authorities achieved at the Magisterial Palace at Mdina.

3. THE SWIMMING POOLS OF THE SULTAN PALACE AT YOGYAKARTA

Presently, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is involved in a rehabilitation project at Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In this city, near Borobodur, itself being an example of complex cross-interpretations of different cultures, is located a large city-palace built in the mid 18th century by the first Sultan of the Dynasty that still rules today the Special Territory of Yogyakarta.

As in Bangladesh or Malta, Portugal never had local sovereignty on the land of Yogyakarta, and there was never a Portuguese fortress anywhere in these countries. Nevertheless, Portuguese influence is marked by cultural contributions of the highest significance for local populations, to the point that, in the case of the city-palace of Yogya, its conception is attributed to a Portuguese architect, probably summoned from Goa, and whose name is unknown.

Of the urban and architectural complex built 250 years ago, several archaeological elements of the large compound of 12.6 hectares surrounded by walls remain today.

In an exotic conception, vast lakes and canals, underwater paths, bridges and palaces for the Court and its guests, sumptuous gardens, a Mosque, unique in the world, as well as a pool complex for the pleasure of the Sultan and his family were built.

What led the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to support the rehabilitation of the pool complex (figs. 6, 7 and 8) was the perceived importance of the multicultural memory of the site, recognising the popular symbolism inherent to the attributed author of this special urban ensemble.

Besides the recognisable traits of an architectural theory with possible European and Portuguese origins, it is important to identify other elements, namely, from Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. The conception of a Mosque inside a large artificial lake, with a circular plan in two levels with continuous cradle vaults, where the characteristic dome of this type of religious architecture is substituted by a central void, and where a stair with five flights of steps covers the space devoted to ablutions – all of these features, by themselves, can only be conceived by someone capable of understanding and practicing a process of approach to different ways of being, allowing himself to be touched by and to touch local idiosyncrasies.

Therefore, a mixed halo of cosmopolitism and humbleness to recognise ourselves in the Other is the constant that should be enhanced in the Portuguese contribution to the global cultural process.

Such a modern sense seems to integrate a process that goes far back in time and into the future. Portugal is that process itself, with the subsistence of a phenomenon that lasted for nearly five hundred years.

No other country promoted such diversity, both in Space and Time, leaving a synagogue in Amsterdam or a fortress in the most hidden part of the Amazon, or influencing the remote lands of Asia, creating an Indo-Portuguese style, as an exercise of the Enlightenment in the middle of Indonesia.

This verification is a factor of identity and authenticity that is readable in the intangible dimension of the peoples with whom the Future was designed.

7. CONCLUSION

First, I would like to underline the essential character of the intangible dimension in terms of cultural heritage. But, at the same time, I think we should urge that ICOMOS, as a specialized organization of experts, never forgets the concern of appreciating immaterial values in the context of built heritage – primordial objective of our tasks.

It will always be necessary to impose methodologically, to ourselves, the demand that the virtual speech of intangibility finds its due echo in each of our actions.

Such an assertion and incentive can only be completed with the profound knowledge that monuments and sites will only constitute outstanding examples of mankind's genius if, to the aesthetic qualities of a know-how developed by different peoples, we add the perception of the cultural value that makes them unique and inter-relatable with a universal sense, in their historicity as well as in their authenticity.

Revealing itself as fundamental to the self-identity of inhabitants and of places, the intangible dimension has to include the recognition of its comprehension applied to a material support, which is specific to each heritage.

The multilateral and interdisciplinary approach can provide new opportunities for our task, and also be a complement to explore new ways to attain sustainable management of cultural heritage and the development of local communities, both for international co-operation, as well as for peace-building.

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ABSTRACT

Monuments and sites will only constitute outstanding examples of mankind's genius if, to the aesthetic qualities of a know-how developed by different peoples, we add the perception of a cultural value that makes them unique and inter-relatable with a universal sense, in their historicity as well as in their authenticity.

Revealing itself as fundamental to the self-identity of inhabitants and of places, the intangible dimension has to contain the recognition of its comprehension applied to a material support, which is specific to each heritage.

Through examples as different as a baroque palace in Malta, the rescue of an ancient Portuguese church in Bangladesh or cooperation efforts being made in Indonesia to safeguard part of an ancient city-palace, we intend to highlight the importance of the immaterial values that justify the need to safeguard built heritage.
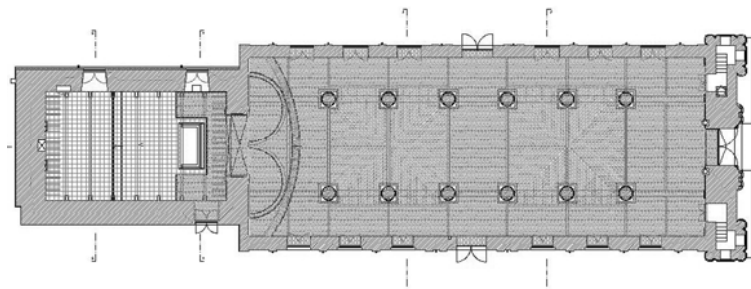
*Joao Campos

João Campos, Architect, MSc on Intercultural Relations.
Member of the Bureau of the CIVVIH / ICOMOS.
Member of SCAT / ICOMOS.

Advisor of the Municipal Board for the Historical Centre of Oporto, Porto (1998-2003).

Consultant for the CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION, which has carried out various missions and projects in Morocco, Benin, Brazil, Uruguay, Kenya, Tanzania, Iran, India, Bangladesh, Holland, Malta, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

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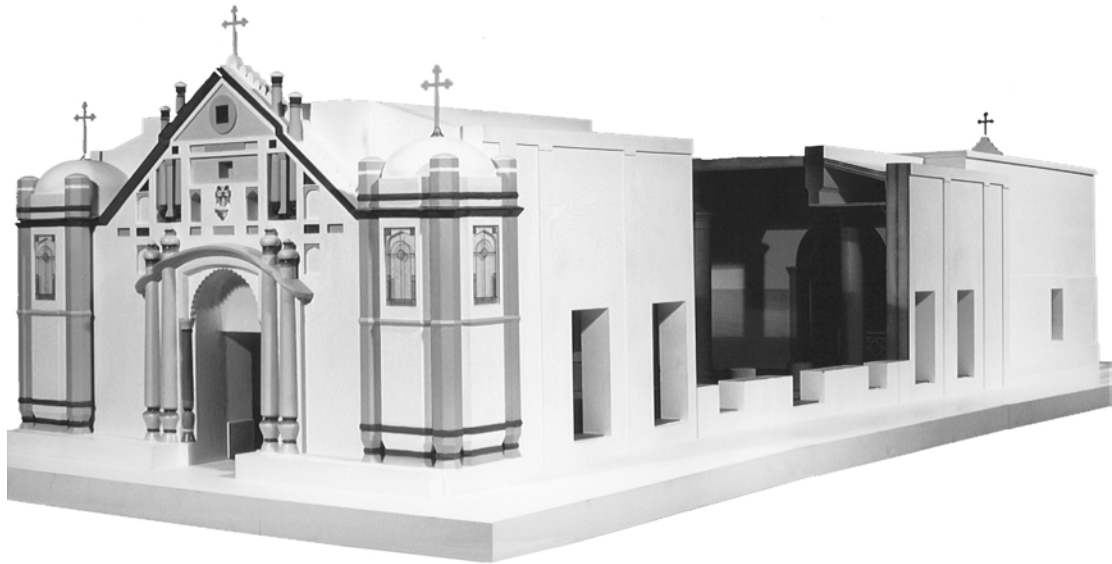## Joao CAMPOS*, Portugal

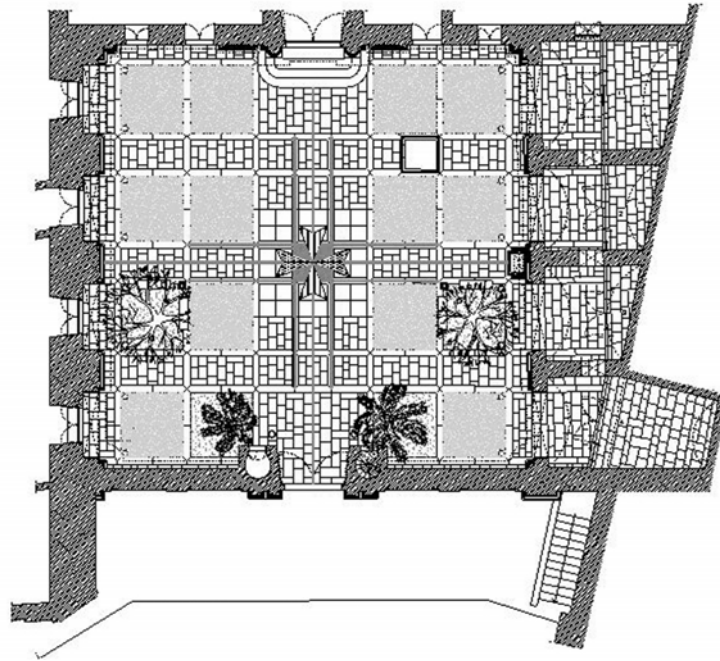Main façade of the Holy Rosary Church (Dhaka, Bangladesh) after restoration works.

Plan of the proposal, integrating aspects of the restoration and findings in the Holy Rosary Church (Dhaka, Bangladesh).

Model of the project of the Holy Rosary Church (Dhaka, Bangladesh).

Birds' eye view of the forecourt of the Magisterial Palace at Mdina (Malta) after restoration works..
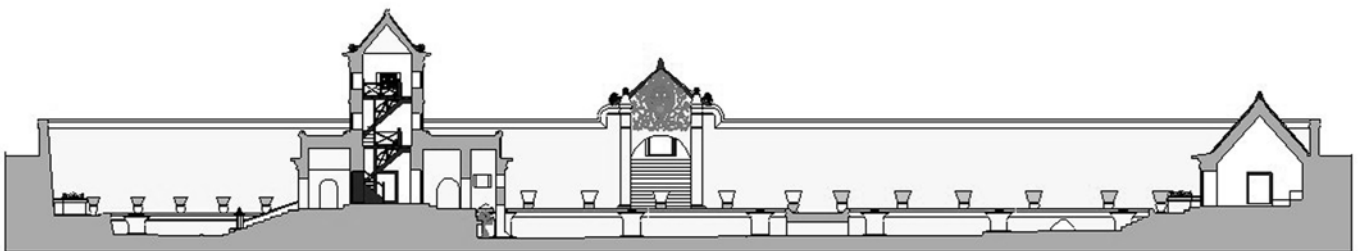
Plan of the proposal for the renovation project of the Magisterial Palace at Mdina (Malta).

Present condition of part of the Pools Complex of the Tamansari Palace of Yogyakarta (Indonesia).

Model of the project for the rehabilitation of the Pools Complex of the Tamansari Palace of Yogyakarta (Indonesia).

Cross section drawing of the project of the Pools Complex of the Tamansari Palace of Yogyakarta (Indonesia)