

ICOA990: CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A TOOL FOR PEACE: A CASE OF SUDAN

Subtheme 02: The Role of Cultural Heritage in Building Peace and Reconciliation

Session 3: Recreating Ideas of Memory

Location: Silver Oak Hall 1, India Habitat Centre

Time: December 14, 2017, 12:15 – 12:30

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Abstract: UNESCO constitution says, 'Since war begins in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed'.

Warfare is about destroying identity, self and to a larger extent, humanity. By targeting heritage, destruction of bridges, mosques, temples, churches and others, the assailant aims to cleave the connections to the past and vision into the future of the victims. Culture plays a central role in identifying the root cause of a conflict and facilitates in determining steps for ensuring everlasting peace and security.

One of the biggest challenges we are facing today is to unite people to share a peaceful coexistence. Cultural heritage catalyzes social cohesion and reasons social exclusion and xenophobia. Ingress to cultural services and active participation in cultural activities allows the destitute and impecunious to conquer their adversities and partake in their inclusion in society.

It is through cultural programs, one can foster respect and value of diversity, understanding of the "universal element" in all cultures, helping to "humanize" the other. Strategies should be multicultural and inclusive, promoting gender equality.

In post conflict situations, cultural heritage becomes a tenacious means in restoring of communities, aiding them to regain a sense of normality and reconnect with their identities. Reconciliation strategies should be explored through cultural diplomacy.

Cultural heritage promotes democratic values and induces tolerance. Increasing acceptance and understanding over cultural borders contributes to cultural freedom in a country, which is an important democratic value. It is through these measures that formalization of the community organization and the cooperation between Albanian and Serb craftsmen is seen in a Serbian enclave in Kosovo. These can be perceived as building blocks contributing to sustainable peace and democratic development.

Key words: *peace, reconciliation, conflict, identity*

DISCUSSION

Cultural heritage, tangible or intangible is an important part of our identity, helping us understand who we are and where we have come from. It is a collection of memories from the past, from the lives of our ancestors. It is our duty to protect our irreplaceable cultural heritage and pass it on to the future generations without letting it get depreciated by natural disasters.

It was during the 18th and 19th centuries that the idea of heritage was first introduced in Europe.¹ As analyzed by Hobsbawm and Ranger, coining of heritage “seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” and somehow ‘thickens’ the existence of a nation.²

Meskeil observed heritage to concerning matters of identity, locality, religion and economic value.³ Thus, as per the primitive western concept of heritage, it is an “instrument in the ‘discovery’ or creation and subsequent nurturing of a national identity”.⁴

Knowledge and access to culture and cultural heritage is a fundamental right and thus, our responsibility for conservation of cultural identity and dialogue is even higher. The need for cultural coexistence and intercultural dialogue has become even more glaring over the years. Hardly any domestic or foreign policy fields are independent of cultural policy. On the other hand, the rate of cultural conflicts is growing at an alarming rate and is even more than the non- cultural conflicts since the mid 1980s.

Heritage monuments in some situations are memoirs of hatred and preserved as instruments for promoting peace. Preservation of structures that are memories of the painful events of the past, serve as bulwarks and a lesson to create a more amicable and tranquil future. The Auschwitz Birkenau which served as the German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945) is an example of the torture brought upon the Jews by the Nazis. It stands today as a testament to one of the most cruel and inhuman acts done in history. Another such example is the Island of Goree in Senegal, one of the most figurative places of Slave trade, where the houses of the slaves have been preserved till today as a memory of the gory practice.

Cultural heritage sites need to be preserved to also prevent a loss of cultural knowledge and collective memories of the past. Heritage sites are amongst the first to get targeted by the combatants in search of expressing public aggression against a particular state. In Syria, the UNESCO world heritage site of Palmyra was razed to ground by the militant group ISIS as an attempt to abolish idol worship. This attack is not only a loss of cultural heritage for the people of Syria but also many other communities since Palmyra is a cultural mix of architectural influence from Greece, Rome and Eastern nations.

¹ Poulot, 2005; Choay, 1993.

² Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992, p. 1; see also Anderson, 1991, chapter 10: “The Map, the Census, the Museum”, p. 163-185.

³ Meskeil, 2002.

⁴ Graham et al., 2005, p. 27.

Cultural properties are vulnerable to numerous dangers especially armed conflicts and natural disasters. As quoted aptly in the historians' conference in Halle "Cities have been permanently endangered by disasters throughout history, and that we therefore must assume that our future will likewise not be free of urban destruction."

CASE OF SUDAN

Sudan is the largest post- colonial country in Africa having expansive cultural, ethnic, linguistic, geographical and religious diversity. The country was split up as a result of many civil wars within the country post its 1956 independence until 2005 when a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between North and South Sudan. South Sudan ultimately achieved its independence in 2011. There is an ever existing difference of cultures in Sudan, the tangible heritage in North Sudan (Fig.1) and intangible heritage in South Sudan. The most important aspect of the agreement was advancing the use of cultural heritage as a means to eliminate identity conflicts and encourage interaction between various cultures. The civil war between North and South Sudan went on for 50 years and was often considered as the 'war of visions' based on the issue of identity.⁵



Fig.1- Pyramids of Nubian Desert, www.orangesmile.com

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CAM) brought in use of cultural heritage as a medium of reconciliation understanding the religious, linguistic and cultural diversity. Cultural heritage- making, understood to be the main tool, led to construction of museums and some intangible heritage forms. As a result, cultural heritage began to be used as a means of political contestation by various groups, having ideological differences.

As part of the policy, two different proposals were prepared for North and South Sudan based on the principle of "one State, two systems". For Northern Sudan, the first step was encouraged combined discussions, studies, debates on the country's heritage, law and traditions for a better understanding

⁵Deng, 1995.

amongst the citizens.⁶ The second step involved capacity building and training for preservation of ancient sites and museums, as a method of reconciliation.⁷

The policies emphasized on the need of understanding of cultural diversity for the country to tread ahead on the way to modernization, using the in depth knowledge and perception of the past.⁸ This would help in administration of the Southern state in accordance with their conventional laws and traditions.⁹

To understand the context of Sudan, following steps were taken:

1. Detailed research of heritage, archaeology and ethnography
2. Refurbishment and building up of vital heritage institutions like museums
3. Documentation and recording of archaeological sites for their efficient management
4. Furnishing of trained workers to take charge of the heritage

To advance the heritage-making policies in Sudan, 4 million US dollars were allocated at the Oslo Donors Conference in May 2005. This is indicative of the importance of heritage-making in the reconstruction processes. The National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) in Sudan considers archaeological antiquities as the primary heritage and hence, museums as the main institution.

Due to the deplorable state of museums in Sudan, the NCAM took the following steps:

1. Restoration of existing museums (National Antiquities Museum in Khartoum and Jebel Barkal Site Museum in Karima, in the Northern State)
2. Construction of new museums in capital region states
3. Framing of museum study programs for schools

UNESCO financed, trained and monitored the heritage-policies of NCAM in order to support the operation, develop tangible heritage and promote intangible heritage. The intervention of UNESCO in Sudan was also a part of its 2005 program on post-conflict reconstruction and development, which was also levied in several countries facing difficult situations after dispute. It emphasized on reinstating the education system, safeguarding environment and bio diversity and advancement of cultural diversity through protection of both tangible and intangible heritage.¹⁰

The extensive construction of museums in Sudan seems to be an outcome of the policy of decentralization followed by the government in other areas of policy intervention as well. The focus on construction of museums was not only to develop state infrastructure, but also as a method of political reconciliation as the museums had on display, the official recognition of all the minorities of the country. The overlap of proposed museum locations with the conflict areas further strengthens the ideology.

⁶JAM, 2005, vol. 3, p. 65.

⁷ JAM, 2005, vol. 3, p. 65.

⁸ JAM, 2005, vol. 3, p. 65.

⁹ JAM, 2005, vol. 3, p. 65.

¹⁰UNESCO, 2005c.

As an outcome of the UNESCO project (Preservation of Endangered Objects Project – Sudan National Museum, Khartoum, and Jebel Barkal) that went on from 2004 to 2006¹¹, the National Museum in Khartoum and the museum of Jebel Barkal were restored. These are existing museums of Sudan which have an extensive display of archaeological objects from the primary sites of Sudan- Jebel Barkal and the Napatan region.

In 2006, a museum in Nyala, the capital of Darfur was opened. The Khalifa House Museum in Omdurman (Khartoum State) and the Ali Dinar Palace in al-Fasher (Northern Darfur state) from the 19th century were also restored. Several museums in other regional states of Sudan were planned- in Dongola and Wadi Halfa (Northern State, Nubia), Juba (capital of Southern Sudan) Kassala (capital of the eastern region). El-Obeid (capital of Kordofan) and Wad Medani (capital of the Gezira region).For Fashoda (Blue Nile state) and Geneina (Western Darfur state), museums were also planned.

CONCLUSION

The paper analyses how cultural heritage was used as a resource to bring about national unity post-conflict. The heritage- making policies were made in contradiction to the concept of conflictive identities brought about during the civil wars. Acknowledgment of diversities at the national level and multifarious identities at local level was a part of the process. The major work of heritage- making was construction of new museums throughout Sudan, where the proposed museum locations overlapped with the conflict areas. The interpretation of antiquities as primary heritage by NCAM restricted the approach towards heritage making in Sudan. However, the reason for citizens using heritage as a political tool is the dubious definition of heritage as was seen in the case of Merowe Dam project in North Sudan, where heritage was used as a powerless man’s ammunition to oppose the construction of the new dam by the people affected.

Propagation of cultural heritage and diversity also led to manifold petitions for identity recognition. This diversion from the intended outcome of the policy indicates towards the need for reformation in the concept of identity to restore peace in Sudan. There should be emphasis on the intercultural exchange and dialogue between the various social groups to bring them together as a nation to focus on their similarities than diversities.

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ICOA990: LE PATRIMOINE POUR LA PAIX

Sous-thème 02: Le rôle du patrimoine culturel dans la construction de la paix et de la réconciliation

Session 3: Recréer des idées de mémoire

Lieu: Silver Oak Hall 1, India Habitat Centre

Date et heure: 14 Décembre, 2017, 12:15 – 12:30

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J'ai été diplômée de l'école d'art et d'architecture de Sushant de la ville de Gurgaon en 2014. Depuis, j'ai travaillé sur plusieurs projets institutionnels de résidences, logements, paysages. Je travaille dans une agence d'architecture de New Dheli. J'ai travaillé en tant que chercheur associée au livre intitulé 'Celebrating Public Spaces of India' qui a été publié en octobre 2016. Mes centres d'intérêt concernent la recherche, le développement culturel et l'architecture.

Résumé: L'acte constitutif de l'UNESCO dit que «*les guerres prenant naissance dans l'esprit des hommes, c'est dans l'esprit des hommes que doivent être élevées les défenses de la paix.*»

La guerre détruit l'identité : la sienne et dans une plus large mesure, celle de l'humanité. En ciblant le patrimoine, la destruction de ponts, de mosquées, temples, églises et autres bâtiments, l'assillant vise à «*couper*» les connexions entre le passé et la vision du futur de ses victimes. La culture joue un rôle central dans l'identification des racines d'un conflit et facilite les pas déterminants pour assurer une paix et une sécurité éternelles.

Un des plus grands défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés aujourd'hui est d'amener les gens à s'unir une coexistence paisible partagée. Le patrimoine catalyse la cohésion sociale et donne des raisons à l'exclusion sociale et à la xénophobie. L'accès aux services culturels et la participation active aux activités culturelles permettent aux personnes démunies et nécessiteuses de vaincre leur adversité et de prendre part à leur inclusion dans la société.

C'est à travers les programmes culturels que l'on peut faire passer les valeurs de respect et de diversité, la compréhension de «*l'élément universel*» de toutes les cultures, aider à «*humaniser*» l'autre. Les stratégies doivent être multiculturelles et inclusives, promouvoir l'égalité des genres.

Dans les situations post conflit, le patrimoine devient un moyen tenace au service de la restauration des communautés, leur permettant de retrouver le sens de la normalité et de se reconnecter à leur identité. Les stratégies de réconciliations devraient être explorées à travers la diplomatie culturelle.

Le patrimoine culturel promeut les valeurs de la démocratie et induit la tolérance. Augmenter la tolérance et comprendre au-delà des frontières culturelles contribue à la liberté culturelle d'un pays, ce qui est d'une valeur démocratique très importante. C'est à travers ces mesures que la formalisation de l'organisation de la communauté et la coopération entre artisans Albanais et Serbes est vue dans l'enclave serbe du Kosovo. Cela peut être considéré comme la construction de blocs contribuant à la paix durable et au développement démocratique.

Mots clés: *paix, réconciliation, conflit, identité*