

# SANTA ROSALÍA DE PALERMO. COMPLEX BUILT CARRIER OF TRADITIONS

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**Abstract:** This work occurs like an agitation of the community to safeguard the parochial house and the Temple of Santa Rosalía de Palermo in Borotá, Lobatera Municipality, Táchira State, Venezuela. It has as an objective, to formulate an experimental project with the purpose of preserve the group built as historical legacy of a town. Methodologically three action lines were settled down: the first one value the place and it involves the owners, the community and government entities, in order to create citizen conscience; the second one foretell the technical advice of specialists for the preservation of the place, and the third one approaches the academic flexibility, conforming work groups, integrated by academics specialist and Architecture students. The constructions have Cultural Value, their presence in the town mark cultural patterns and therefore they are not carriers of testimonial values not only by its proprietor but also for the whole community who submit cult to the virgin of Santa Rosalía de Palermo, their guardian.

The work that we present had as main objective to generate a conservation project for the built complex conformed by the temple of Santa Rosalía de Palermo, and the parochial house, located in the town of Borotá, capital of the Constitution Parish, Municipality Lobatera of Táchira State, Venezuela, in order to maintain this urban group as historical legacy of a region that newly begins in the conservation practices and restoration of the real estate properties.

This project, among other aspects, constitutes a leading experience in the tachirens region, since it has allowed to link different academic, social, government and religious entities, represented through the Universidad Nacional Experimental del Táchira, the Pro-temple Committee and the Ecclesiastical Parish, the community and the City Hall of the Constitution Municipality, respectively. All of them joint in pro of an only mean “to maintain this patrimony in views of the transmission to the future generations and, what is also important, for the enjoyment, delight up to the knowledge of our contemporaries” (Gnemmi, p.43, 1997)

The work was carried out with scientific approach and it was supported in historical bases and in the socio-cultural meaning that for the population of Borotá has the group in study. As fundamental factor the spirit of the time was contemplated, palpable in the temple and the parochial house, through the handling of the ornamental resources, of the real estate of the church and of its guardian, the virgin of Santa Rosalía de Palermo. See figure 1.

Methodologically three work lines were settled down: The University and the Pro-temple Committee; technical advice and the conformation of work groups among university teachers and students.



Figure 1. The virgin of Santa Rosalía de Palermo

### **University and the Pro-temple Committee**

This work line had as purpose to form conscience in the borotense population about the importance of conserving this built patrimony, not only in view of its permanency and transmission to the future, but also for the use and social utility of the community and furthermore, to constitute a point of historical reference about the tachireense religious architecture at the end of the XIX and beginning of XX century. To complete such an end three work environments were settled down which are going to be expose next.

### ***Cultural Valuation***

This investigation allowed, besides a better knowledge of the place, to establish the value from the historical, aesthetic, social and scientific point of view, concepts emitted in the Letter of Burra (1997). The techniques for the summary of the information were based on the documental revision, the temple and their groups were considered like important documents throughout the investigation, to which it was appealed to acquire precise knowledge about the same one. The search of testimonies was carried out under interactive practices of investigation; informal interview and survey were used.

The historical study had as objective to find the meanings of the building and to gather all the possible data that helped to understand it in all its parts, in order to conserve it with scientific approaches, restoring the architectural work to its historically established world. Also, the spirit of the time was examined, for that which we remit ourselves to the conservationist fundamental documents for the discipline like the Letter of Krakow, which sustains that "the intention of conservation of historical buildings and monuments, be in urban or rural contexts, it is to maintain its authenticity and integrity including the internal spaces, furniture and agreement decoration with its original conformation", (Letter of Krakow 2000), what was considered, as "the spirit of the time" in this case, between the ends of the XIX and beginning of the XX century, noticeable even nowadays in this group.

The aesthetic study was based on the description of the stylistic and architectural characteristics of the construction and of its immediate context.

The social study allowed investigating in the feelings, values and meanings that the Borotá inhabitants and other adjacent Villages, assign to the built group of Santa Rosalía de Palermo. It was focused as a qualitative study.

The technological study allowed knowing the materials and constructive technical employees in the constructions.

### ***Determination of the Cultural Value***

The carried out study of the historical, aesthetic, constructive and social aspects, allowed determining the following values in the construction:

*Historical value:* Expressed by the presence of the temple in the population of Borotá, where cult and homage to the Virgin of Santa Rosalía de Palermo is given. The temple historically was product of the evolution of the Catholic Church in Táchira State; it has also been a concentration place for the celebration and commemoration of cultural and religious acts of the town and nearby villages. Although this construction dates from the end of the XIX century, the temple has maintained its location for more than two centuries, becoming into a landmark inside the town. See figure 2.



Figure 2. The temple of Santa Rosalía de Palermo

*Aesthetic value:* It was determined in the temple, because it is a contained construction of architectural-artistic elements, representative of a use and symbolism of the distribution of the first churches and Christian temples. In this case referred to the distribution of the spaces and formally it represents a case of stylistic eclectic configuration. The Parochial House, equally has aesthetic value, its mapping is similar to the pattern of the colonial houses: the central internal patio that distributes the housing environment and the backyard toward where they find the services and the connection with the temple. Toward the street the main office is located which one can go through from the entrance vestibule. See figures 3 and 4.



Figure 3. Internal view of the temple



Figure 4. Internal view of the Parochial

*Scientific value:* Although it is certain that the constructions have been object of strong interventions, these constitute a potential for investigation of the place, product of the constructive technique used, brick walls, solid brick, leaves of the roof, because they can throw scientific valuable data.

*Social value:* Determined since the inhabitants have identity with the buildings, mainly the temple, because it is representative of the religious Catholic cult; it is immersed in the inhabitant's collective memory, in spite of the ignorance of their history. From the point of view of the meaning, they are attached to the construction; they see it as a place of respect, in spite of feeling insecure inside it motivated to the deterioration. Everybody craves the old temple of three ships.

### ***Citizen Conscience***

Once determined the cultural value of the group Santa Rosalía de Palermo was planned and they executed mechanisms to involve the community and government entities, to create conscience citizen to the borotense population about the necessity to protect and to conserve the above mentioned group.

In a very elementary form, directed to a non specialized audience and with support of printed and audiovisual material, the cultural value of the patrimonial good and their conservation state was exposed. (See figures 5 and 6). It was called to the attention the importance that represents for the community, to preserve the group as a whole, related with the population's structure and the incidence in the socio economic aspects. It is necessary to mention again, in this consideration, Horacio Gnemmi who sustains that:

We live proving and experiencing, doing and undoing, what implies irreversibly a destruction of the existent thing to give space to a new one. We should, then, look for the balance point once and for all in which the conservation and progress are and interact so that we continue feeling walking toward the future but, attention because that walk alone can be possible if it relies on history, in this case reflected in the architectural testimonies. (Gnemmi, p.29, 1997)



*Figure 5. Citizen conscience*



*Figure 6. Citizen conscience*

### **Technical Advice**

The second line of action foretold the technical advice of specialists for the conservation of the place. Leaving from the concept that the restoration is a meticulous process that must be carried out with the possible biggest truthfulness and it allows to conserve the real estate and properties of a region, as well as to confirm its history, the project of conservation of the group Santa Rosalía de Palermo was undertaken through four phases: the Diagnosis of the Construction; the Project of Architectural Intervention; Projects, others, of Intervention and Maintenance Plan. At the present time two phases of this recommendation have been executed which will be exposed next.

### ***Diagnosis of the Construction***

It embraces the study of the present pathologies in the construction of the temple of Santa Rosalía de Palermo, based on the analysis of the manifestations and the causes that originate those lesions that are affecting the structure of the same one and their possible intervention alternatives.

In our study case, reports were elaborated based on the direct observation, graph and photographic register of the lesions, the first were elaborated in the month of August 2001 (p.p. 1-17). From that date, a continuous follow up and inspection was maintained on the behavior of the physical structure of the temple which is the affected construction. In October of the year 2002 a second report (p.p.1-32) was elaborated, where the upgrade of the pathologies was contemplated, sustained in the study and follow up carried out to the construction and in the visual analysis of the cases.

Considered the two previous studies, in December 2002 the third study (p.p.1-55) was elaborated. This revision and new registration of pathologies included the property of the parochial house, from there the name of Parochial Complex. The observed lesions grouped in order to obtain critical points to be integrally studied. This allowed corroborating the lesions that affect with more intensity the constructive elements of the properties.

### ***Architectural Project***

This project is in an elaboration phase at the moment.

### **Conformation of Work Groups**

This work line was centered mainly in fomenting attitudes of conservation of the patrimony built in the student community of the career of architecture of UNET, two work fronts were structured for it:

***Work with students:*** It was achieved with the incorporation of students of the architecture career UNET to the conservation project, through the program of Professional Internship, where the socio professional experience instructed the group of students in the conservation area and restoration of the built patrimony. This experience allowed the interns involved in the project of conservation of the built group of Santa Rosalía de Palermo, carried out grade works, related with constructions of historical architectural value in the tachirenses region, projecting the University in that environment.

***Work with educators:*** The application on the part of the community of Borotá for the technical advice of the church has reinforced the program of management of the tachirenses built patrimony, created in the University in the year 1996. It has carried out to the layout inside the University; of a work team integrated by professors of the architecture career specialized in the restoration area and history.

### **Conclusion**

In the work development a gap of information was evidenced on the Temple and its group. On one hand, there are a few the articles in the region which make reference to the

mentioned group and to their importance and meaning in the evolution of Borotá. These aspects among other are considered important to give them to know in the county, for the sake of conserving the historical and architectural memory of Táchira.

On the other hand, the scarce graph testimony for the realization of the inventory, the absence of a registration of complete and detailed plans in the regional organisms, of the urban group, are showed up as aspects that should be approached by the public or private institutions, by the universities and other organisms or foundations that endorse this type of investigation to facilitate their development.

It is necessary to establish conscience so much for the transcendence of the academic studies of this nature, as the importance of their materiality through some narrower bonds with the program planning of the different institutions of the municipal, regional and national administration. There it is necessary to open a significant space to the patrimony property like integration source and regional and urban development.

It is convenient that the inhabitant-users of the same one, take conscience of the patrimonial value of these constructions, contained value not only in the building itself, nowadays it is import the intangible values immerse in them. So empiric interventions won't continue being carried out and to avoid in the future irreversible damages in the constructions.

The different entities of the region which work in benefit of the architectural patrimony, should give advice to the residents. The regional practice in the safety of our historical legacy should be known and disclosed in the national and international panorama.

The constructions, have common characteristic to world level, the difference establishes it, so much the geographical context in which they are immersed as to the cultural aspect of each region. In such a sense, the omnipotence of the built group of Santa Rosalía de Palermo like toponym in the whole territory of the Constitution Municipality is proven, fundamentally bound to the religious activity and of community service. In consequence their knowledge should be fomented, that is to say, to create conscience of the value cultural immerse in these productive groups, without isolating them from the context in which they are introduced.

There is a lot to explore, we should be participant of the rural surroundings although it is from the urbanization and in that way to enlarge the information presented through later works.

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