

“Research, global thematic survey and data analysis”:

Multidisciplinary research programme proposal on Heritage of Religious Interest, including relevant study and survey activities, as well as those related to the management and use of World Heritage cultural and natural properties of religious interest

This multidisciplinary research programme proposal is developed in support to the elaboration, by the World Heritage Centre/Advisory Bodies Steering Group, of a thematic paper proposing to the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention general guidance regarding management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest, requested by the World Heritage Committee.

Effective implementation of the Committee’s Decision could be ensured, including through regional studies, comparative analysis, associated research, as well as organization, in close coordination with the States Parties, the Advisory Bodies and all other partners concerned, of the meetings, conferences, workshops and activities within the framework of the preparation of the above-mentioned thematic paper.

This research programme could be proposed to be implemented by the relevant UNESCO Chairs specialized in the domain of World Heritage and Intercultural/interreligious Dialogue.

It contributes to the implementation of the Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th, 36th and 37th sessions.

PRIORITY TOPICS TO BE INVESTIGATED / RESEARCHED BY UNIVERSITIES

Research needs have been identified from World Heritage Committee decisions, Strategic guidance adopted by the World Heritage Committee that may affect management of properties, Advisory Bodies statements, heritage managers and decision-makers.

Future research needs in the area of management of World Heritage properties of religious interest are clustered under **4 themes**, namely:

1. Understanding World Heritage of religious interest.

A research project, based on a study of the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists, should establish an inventory of World Heritage properties of religious interest by categories and sub-categories, define under-represented categories, analyse the concept and definition of heritage of religious interest, develop a working definition of "religious interest", as well as the meaning of sustainable management for each of these categories.

“The World Heritage Convention recognizes that heritage can be defined as ‘monuments, groups of buildings and sites’. In practice, a broad set of typologies has developed” (extract of the manual “Managing Cultural World Heritage”, page 12).

The term "Religious property", as used in the ICOMOS study "Filling the Gaps - an Action Plan for the Future", defines "any form of property with religious or spiritual associations: churches, monasteries, shrines, sanctuaries, mosques, synagogues, temples, sacred landscapes, sacred groves, and other landscape features, etc."

The term "Sacred site" embraces areas of special spiritual significance to peoples and communities; and the term of "Sacred natural site" corresponds to the areas of land or water having special spiritual significance to peoples and communities," as proposed by the UNESCO/IUCN Guidelines for the Conservation and Management of Sacred Natural Sites, 2008.

Since this Committee's Decision adopted at its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011), the term "Heritage of religious interest" is now used by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in all its official documents and correspondence regarding the activities aiming to implement the above-mentioned Committee decision.

This research should use the existing classifications defined by ICOMOS, ICCROM, as well as within the framework of the Periodic Reporting exercise, and propose the meaning of the sustainable management for each category of WH properties of religious interest.

At the 24th session of the World Heritage Committee in Cairns (2000), ICOMOS presented broad categories/types of cultural heritage that could be used as a basis for analysing the World Heritage List.

The World Heritage Committee, at its 26th session (Decision 26 COM 13, Budapest, 2002) invited ICOMOS to revise the broad categories presented as agreed at its 24th session [Cairns, 2000, VI.2.3.2 (ii) and (iii)], clearly defining each of them, and adopt a multiple approach combining (a) geographical, regional and (b) chronological factors, with (c) the diversity of uses (e.g. religious, civil, military etc.) and (d) thematic analysis (e.g. cultural landscapes, urban centres).

In conformity with this Decision, ICOMOS revised these broad categories of cultural heritage and adopted a multi-faceted approach to the analysis of the World Heritage List. Following the suggestions of the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS adopted three complementary frameworks for this analysis:

- A typological framework which is based on categories that have been used for the classification of cultural heritage in past ICOMOS evaluations of nominations for inclusion in the World Heritage List;
- A chronological/regional framework which classifies cultural heritage in relation to time and space,
- A thematic framework, which classifies the relationship between people and things, and allows new aspects and contexts to be included in the World Heritage List.

The ICOMOS Analysis of the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists and follow-up action was presented at the 28th session (2004) of the Committee:

<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2004/whc04-28com-inf13ae.pdf>
<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2004/whc04-28com-13e.pdf>

In total 10 categories or themes, related to geo-cultural regions of the world are summarised. This list could form a concrete focus for a follow-up to the Global Strategy programme, as well as providing information to be disseminated to States Parties for national or regional action (WHC-04/28.COM/13, p. 7).

Typological Framework based on categories/types: The first Typological Framework Analysis, which is based on the categories used for the classification of cultural heritage in past ICOMOS evaluations of nominations for inclusion in the World Heritage List, has shown that **the most represented cultural heritage categories on the List are architectural properties, historic towns, religious properties and archaeological properties.**

Thematic Framework : The third Thematic Framework analysis, which classifies the relationship between people and objects, has shown that most of the occurrences relate to the theme 'expressions of creativity', which has been subdivided into monuments, groups of buildings and sites as defined by the World Heritage Convention ; most of them relating to the 'monuments' section. In a similar conclusion to the 'typological framework' analysis, **religious monuments are seen to have more occurrences than any other types.**

It should be noted that all AB thematic studies and research were based on these analysis. Numerous thematic programmes and initiatives were developed taking into account the results of these WHL analysis.

In addition, the Cultural and Natural Heritage types of the WHP in all European Sub-Regions were very well defined within the 1st PR Cycle (see definition of all categories in the 1st Cycle Periodic report for Europe and North America <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2006/whc06-30com-inf11Ae.pdf>)

2. Research on *Spirit of place*

The research should study the contexts in which the management of the cultural and natural heritage of religious interest is practised.

To date, several recommendations directly or indirectly concern the safeguarding of the spirit of place, namely their living, social and spiritual nature, in particular the Nara Document on Authenticity adopted at the Nara Conference on Authenticity in relation to the World Heritage Convention held in 1994 and the Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place, adopted at the 16th General Assembly of ICOMOS in 2008.

“The diversity of cultures and heritage in our world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all humankind. The protection and enhancement of cultural and heritage diversity in our world should be actively promoted as an essential aspect of human development.”

“Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space, and demands respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems. In cases where cultural values appear to be in conflict, respect for cultural diversity demands acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties.”¹

The religious and sacred properties represent one of the largest categories of properties to be found in most countries around the world. According to ICCROM, living religious heritage has characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of heritage. Sacred sites, which, according to the UNESCO MAB Programme, “are indeed the oldest protected areas of the planet”, and “have a vital importance for safeguarding cultural and biological diversity for present and future generations.”

This heritage provides people with a sense of identity. Collectively, the religious and sacred properties capture a range of cultural and natural diversity, and each can singularly demonstrate the spirit of a particular place.

“Judgments about value attributed to cultural heritage, as well as the credibility of related information sources, may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. The respect due to all cultures requires that cultural heritage must be considered and judged primarily within the cultural contexts to which it belongs” (Operational Guidelines, paragraph 81).

Spirit and feeling is recognised as one of the key aspects when judging the authenticity of a place. However, defining this aspect, identifying its parameters and circumstances to be used need further discussions.

The preservation of the spirit of place, the knowledge and understanding of traditions and the willingness to accept each other, are the necessary components to be respected for the protection and preservation of the living sites. An essential step to be taken is to establish appropriate measures

¹ Nara Document on Authenticity, drafted by the 45 participants to the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, held at Nara, Japan, from 1-6 November 1994, Operational Guidelines, Annex 4, Preamble, paragraph 5, page 95-96; <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide13-en.pdf>)

for respecting the identity of properties with religious or spiritual meaning, for studying the traditions they hold, for collaborating with the communities involved in their safeguarding and for understanding which benefits their protection represent for humanity.

In this regard, it is important to highlight the significance of the International Seminar on the Role of Religious Communities in the Management of World Heritage properties, organized in Kiev, Ukraine, in November 2010, where the role played by religious communities in the creation, maintenance, and continuous shaping of sacred places was recognised and underlined and which resulted in the adoption by the participants of the Statement on the Protection of Religious Properties within the Framework of the World Heritage Convention.²

In the Statement it is “stressed that culturally and environmentally sustainable management of such heritage should be the responsibility of all stakeholders concerned, and that mutual acceptance and respect will bring different and complementary perspectives to shared cultural and spiritual values.”

3. Coexistence of communities - Mutual Respect of values and Constructive Dialogue in a multicultural context.

Undertake a research to define and analyse evidence of common interests and divergences of stakeholders and research the factors and influences that improve or detract from the quality of life of a place or community through a Heritage of religious interest Mapping. This “heritage mapping” should include “mapping” of religious communities and how they relate to each other; “mapping” of the spirit and memory of a place; “mapping” of cultural attitudes and “mapping” artefacts and their messages.

This research should include a study on interactions between different religions/spiritual traditions – site features landscape/surroundings – monument/site – intangible heritage/natural sacred sites - local human religious activities/and tourism, as well as risk and sensitivity analysis.

Understanding the continuing nature of religious and sacred heritage, having the capacity to protect its authenticity and integrity, including its particular spiritual significance, and sharing the knowledge of our common history, are the three pillars necessary for building mutual respect and dialogue between communities.

“Approaches should build on and facilitate international co-operation among all those with an interest in conservation of cultural heritage, in order to improve global respect and understanding for the diverse expressions and values of each culture.”³

In the above-mentioned Statement it is *“reaffirmed the vital further role of religious communities in conveying, expressing and sustaining spiritual identity, meaning and purpose to human life, considering that these offer significant opportunities in a fast developing and globalizing world, as well as presenting serious challenges.”* It is also *“emphasized that the continuing nature of religious heritage calls for dialogue and mutual understanding between the religious communities concerned and all other stakeholders, who must work together to preserve the significance of cultural, mixed and natural heritage sites associated with the sacred.”*

² *Statement on the protection of religious properties within the World Heritage Convention adopted at the closing of the international seminar on the role of religious communities in the management of World Heritage properties (Kiev, Ukraine, November 2010). Developed in close collaboration with national authorities, international experts, site managers and representatives of religious communities, is the first and most unique document to give general recommendations on this specific issue.*

³ Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), Operational Guidelines, Annex 4, Appendix 1, paragraph 4, page 97; <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide13-en.pdf>

“Mobilize culture and mutual understanding to foster peace and reconciliation” is a one of the actions proposed by the participants of the UNESCO International Congress “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” (Hangzhou, May 2013) to place culture at the heart of future policies for sustainable development.⁴ The Hangzhou Congress provided a global forum to discuss the role of culture in sustainable development in view of the United Nations post-2015 development agenda.

It was highlighted that *“in the context of globalization, and in the face of the identity challenges and tensions it can create, intercultural dialogue and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can forge more inclusive, stable and resilient societies.”*

4. Identification of the main challenges in the governance, management and use of World Heritage cultural and natural properties of religious interest.

The first step in the safeguarding of World Heritage is the full and common understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value of properties by all interested parties, as well as an understanding of the significance of this term. The term “Outstanding Universal Value” is a core concept of processes linked to the safeguarding of World Heritage. Explaining and conveying this term is often difficult, but this concept retains key significance for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention by State Parties.

It must be noted that the analysis and study of all elements justifying value, as well as their interactions, determines the nature of the management and protection plan for the property in question.

Legal protection is not sufficient for the preservation of living religious and sacred sites and their transmission to future generations, as their survival depends on the custodial role played daily by the religious communities in caring for these as living heritage.

Therefore management of living sacred sites is a broad concept which requires the mutual acceptance and respect between stakeholders, as well as adapted operational measures of conservation crucial for enhancing the integrity, sustaining spiritual identity, associated sacred values and the survival of a site's outstanding universal value.

It should be noted that nowadays, within the context of discussions on the criterion defining a property's direct or indirect link to events or living traditions, ideas or beliefs, the question of regarding associated values has arisen. This concerns, in particular, sacred values, which can be associated with both cultural and natural properties.

Case-study approach

It is important to recognize that a large amount of data and tools are already available in the field of cultural heritage. However, a specific research is needed because of the general lack of multidisciplinary research in sustainable management and use of the World Heritage properties of religious interest. There are currently no standards, protocols, indicators and databases within the field of heritage of religious heritage in responding effectively to the range of problems that emerge for such inscribed properties.

A research project on the collection of case-studies on governance, management and use of WH properties of religious interest should seek the view of spiritual traditions from elders and indigenous traditions, custodians, religious authorities, local religious communities and/or folk variants, and other relevant stakeholders that retain a close association with the property.

⁴ *The Hangzhou Declaration “Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies”, adopted at the UNESCO International Congress “Culture: Key to Sustainable Development” (Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, 17 May 2013)*

This research should include a study on decision-making process which bring all relevant stakeholders traditional management systems as well as modern heritage management systems for more effective management of the World Heritage property (ex. The cultural landscape of Bali, manual “Managing Cultural World Heritage”, page 58).

A new Online Information System (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/>) could be used for analysis of state of conservation reports and identification of main threats and existing management procedures in representative properties of religious interest, under different contexts and pressures.

The data collection for cultural properties of religious interest could be developed using “the heritage template for documenting a management system” (see resource manual “Managing Cultural World Heritage”, table 12, page 118 and an example of documenting and assessing the adequacy of a heritage management system for a specific cultural property “Sacred City of Kandy, Sri Lanka”, table 13, page 119).

“A heritage management system is a framework, often permanent, made up of three important elements: a legal framework which defines the reasons for its existence, an institution which gives form to its organizational needs and decision-making, and resources (human, financial and intellectual) which are used to make it operative.”

“Some heritage management systems are based on time-honoured practices that have never been written down or on practices that have evolved, perhaps as a by-product of religious codes. All the same, the nine components (Legal framework, institutional framework and resources, Planning, implementation and monitoring, Outcomes, outputs and improvements to the management system) identified in the framework will still be distinguishable. For instance, the three elements (legal and institutional framework and resources) might be reflected in the distribution of responsibilities and the social hierarchy within the community. Traditional management systems have so far received little attention within heritage discussions but are now recognized to be an important aspect of managing heritage” (extract from the manual “Managing Cultural World Heritage”, page 53-55).