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Knowledge, documentation and dissemination of intangible heritage in Archaeology

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Abstract – **As concerns the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, drawing is a crucial tool to document, understand and portray complex architectural and archaeological reality. Graphic data or informative documentation about an extremely interesting historical and artistic site can be enriched by its intangible values: atmosphere, colour, light and the environment.**

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper will present current progress in a study aimed at adding alternative graphic representations to the analytical data provided by a metric survey. Representations produced by graphically interpreting the artefact can be used to determine and communicate the intangible values that can be spontaneously perceived and put on paper only during direct experience of the site. These extremely characteristic elements increase its value and include: the quality of the light falling on the artefact, variations in colour, material surfaces, spatial ratios and relationship with the context, accessibility and possible fruition.

Additional knowledge can be accrued by adding graphic images, perceptive close-up sketches and a visual survey accompanied by notes, remarks, reconstructive hypotheses and other, freer interpretations such as post-production graphic images. All this provides additional levels of knowledge and constitutes a series of subjective interpretations of the multiple elements of a site or artefact including its morphology, geometry and structure.

In fact, a graphic representation has an intrinsic value; it is a compositional choice describing the contents, but at the same time it also conveys information provided by its author. A drawing always interprets a monumental object, gathering and communicating information that is influenced by the author's impressions.

II. INTANGIBLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND REPRESENTATION

The key element of the study, which began in Petra (Jordan), is a structured implementation of documentation regarding extremely important cultural sites, especially the ones included in the UNESCO World Heritage List for which evolving legislation has envisaged different levels of protection and is increasingly focused not only on their subjective comprehension and interpretation, but also on greater active participation by the public, albeit with the necessary precautions.

The goal is to create guidelines that can help draft technical sheets containing the intangible characteristics and values of the cultural objects on the UNESCO list and use drawing to convey all the multifaceted aspects of these objects.

The procedure envisages a first stage focusing on gathering existing drawings, past and present; these drawings provide scientific documentation that can be immediately interpreted and also define impressions and material consistency. They are not only contributions frozen in time, images of a precise historical period, but also a tool that can be used to perform in-depth monitoring of the state of conservation of the site and thereby influence its maintenance and management.

The study method is being proposed as part of the guidelines for the drafting and implementation of UNESCO's heritage management plans within the framework of the *Knowledge Management Project*, a computer system that will monitor the status of resources and heritage. The representations can also be exploited by the *Observatory of cultural heritage*; they can provide operators with explanatory material since their data can assist in the decision-making process governing site management, and thereby achieve harmonic, sustainable development.

The catalogue data sheet of the Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation (ICCD) – which now has to be compiled digitally - has different fields for historical

information, geographical position, era, chronology, characteristics, and methods used for the reconnaissance and identification of the site. The environmental features section (EF) specifies that one field of the data sheet is required to be filled with written "Indications about the environmental context around the heritage at the time the data sheet is compiled; it is possible to insert in the paragraph any data about the environmental context around the heritage throughout its existence".

The data sheet then has fields for geological and pedological data as well as technical data about the characteristics of the soil around the heritage. This is followed by the section focusing more specifically on the problems tackled in this contribution: "Sources and reference documents". *Photographic documentation* is the first field where it is possible to insert documents, including digital documents, either by hand or remotely. The data sheet also asks for information about the photographer and when the shot was taken so as to understand the status of the site or fragment at that moment in time. The next field is entitled *graphic documentation* to be filled with "information about the graphic documentation of the catalogued heritage, attached to the catalogue data sheet, or already present and deposited with the Filing Agency or in other collections".

It is also necessary to specify the type of graphic documentation (draft drawing, final drawing, preliminary handmade sketch). Since it involves a free vocabulary, different kinds of drawings can be attached. It is possible to add indications about the author and anything that can be useful to understand the object in question.

In the current, complex legislation governing cultural heritage, cataloguing is linked to the identification of intangible heritage. The Code of Cultural Heritage and the Landscape refers to the "cataloguing of intangible cultural heritage". UNESCO's Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage proposes to create "inventories of intangible cultural heritage" regarding individual elements of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). In the ICCD catalogue intangible cultural heritage is still closely linked to everything to do with the folklore and traditions of places.

The data sheets regarding this kind of heritage may not successfully represent the intangible value we wish to describe using hand-drawn images. However, an ICCD website entitled "Regulatory experiments" provides regulatory tools one can use for temporary cataloguing, before they become national standards. Studying the creation of a data sheet in which to highlight the intangible values of a site – one which has traditional, original manual graphic representation as its main tool, later to be inserted in a shared digital context – is just another step towards an awareness that even in the past used drawing to historically describe a heritage or place. We are talking here about an evolving sector in which the subjective value of the cataloguer emerges and provides added value.

The data sheet presented here as an example shows the Great Temple in the archaeological site in Petra (Jordan). The temple, built in the first century B.C. was dedicated to the Nabataean gods and was used until the Late Byzantine era despite the fact that much of the site had been destroyed by an earthquake. The temple was originally very big and majestic, hence its name: Great temple.

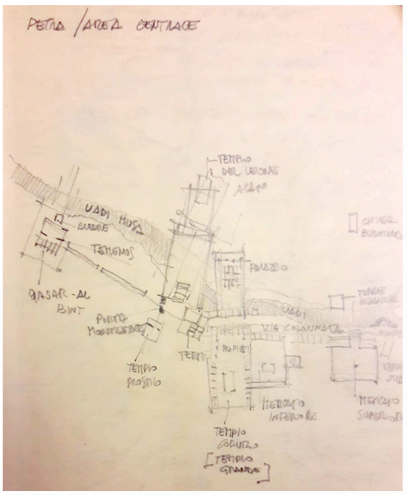
The survey campaign by the Department of Representation and Survey of Architecture (RADAAR) of Rome Sapienza University used advanced technologies to survey ancient theatres in the archaeological area of Petra (the project entitled Documentation of Mediterranean Ancient Theatres. Athena Activities was coordinated by Prof. Mario Docci and Prof. Carlo Bianchini). During the survey a real life drawing campaign focused on representing the intangible values of the site in order to establish its cultural identity. The objective was to integrate the analytical data obtained by the archaeological survey campaign with non-measurable information that could communicate the intangible values of the archaeological site.

One of the objectives of this analysis was to record how the colours of the site varied during the day, especially the colours of the rocks, thereby providing visitors with ever-changing landscapes and panoramas. The rock in Petra is made of tiny grains of sand; the fact it is resistant but fairly easy to shape is the reason why the Nabataeans were able to create so many buildings.

Our numerous drawings prove that by drawing the site it is possible to acquire a critical awareness about the archaeological area. The more concise drawings of the layout of most of the territory provide information about the relationship between the Great Temple and all the other buildings and nearby pathways, including the large, colonnaded avenue.

The next step was to get closer to the building to obtain a graphic interpretation of the layout of just the Temple, highlighting the various parts of the building including the terraces, pronaos and exedras. This concise but proportioned representation underscores the complementary nature of the spaces. The drawing shows that the temple was accessed along a flight of steps leading to the majestic porticoed propylaea where a second flight led to the *temenos*, the lower sacred courtyard, bordered to the east and west by a triple colonnade. A sacred enclosure was located in the upper part of the complex.

A graphic reference plan shows the observation points we chose to execute the real life drawings of certain parts of the building such as the stairs and part of the outer colonnade. These watercolours help to convey the historical identity of the site and its state of conservation.



Petra, Giordania

Il grande tempio

La città antica di Petra si estende su una vasta area di Montagne e Wadi, ma ha un unico punto di accesso, che si trova al centro visitatori di Wadi Musa, come viene chiamato oggi il centro abitato di Petra.

Grande tempio: 1. Cronologia; 2. Caratteristiche.

Documentazione fotografica: 1. Vista dall'alto del complesso (autore, anno, provenienenza), 2. Vista del colonnato (autore, anno, provenieneza).

Documentazione grafica: 1. Planimetria dell'area centrale di Petra (autore, tecnica, anno); 2. Veduta con descrizione cromatica (autore, tecnica, anno); 3. Veduta con descrizione cromatica (autore, tecnica).

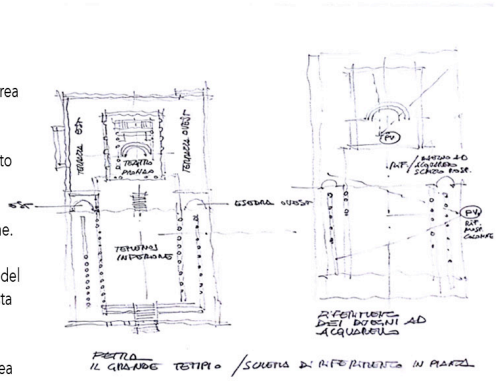


Fig. 1 Data sheet with the intagible values of the Great Temple in the archaeological site in Petra, Jordan

The views were drawn from privileged observation points chosen not only to portray the tangible features of the temple, i.e., the parts and elements that are still visible, but also the atmosphere and landscape around it.

In fact, light, colours and atmosphere are the intangible features of the environment, making it unique and permanently recognisable. This is why we created a digital data sheet with several kinds of non-measurable data that provide not only a critical interpretative key to understand the features of this archaeological site, but also guidelines that together with the drawing can help to explain this complex archaeological complex. These images could also be inputted into the decision-making process regarding management of the site. Within the framework of cultural heritage, when the narrative aspect is always very important, the results of the study will hopefully contribute to the dissemination of knowledge thanks to a merger between the different kinds of representations, thereby reaching as big as audience and as many users as possible.

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