On the Greatest Challenge in the Management of Living Religious Heritage: Linking the Authenticity of Heritage and the Authenticity of Tourist Experiences to the Authenticity of Religious Tradition

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Abstract. The greatest challenge in the operation and management of living religious heritage is considered to be the reconciliation of heritage protection, tourism development and maintenance of religious function. The key concept associated to these differing uses of heritage is the same, 'authenticity'; yet, this concept is sensed and applied in differing ways: authenticity of heritage, authenticity of tourist experiences, and authenticity of religious Tradition.

The paper explores the three different concepts of authenticity on a theoretical level. Subsequently, three case studies are discussed: the monastic site of Meteora in Greece, in which the concepts of authenticity are separated from each other; the project of the conservation and restoration of the Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem – a central theme of the present Conference –, in which the authenticity of heritage is linked to the authenticity of religious Tradition; and the Toplou Monastery in Crete, Greece, in which the authenticity of tourist experiences is linked to the authenticity of religious Tradition.

The theoretical part uses material from disciplines associated to the three concepts of authenticity: heritage conservation, business/tourism management, and theology. Regarding the case studies: Meteora is based on my Ph.D. at University College London and on subsequent research; the conservation project of the Tomb of Christ on the exhibition guide of 'The Tomb of Christ: the Monument and the Project' at the Byzantine and Christian Museum and on my personal visit to the exhibition; and Toplou Monastery on my personal visit to the Monastery.

The ultimate aim is to embrace heritage protection and tourism development within the maintenance of the religious function of heritage. To this end, the attempt is not to draw a direct link between heritage protection and tourism development – as is normally the case – but an indirect one, through the maintenance of religious function. Also, the religious communities are promoted as the community group with the highest responsibility in the operation and management of their sites: good practices are highlighted, as well as practices that should be better avoided.

Keywords: Living religious heritage · Authenticity · Heritage management · Tourism · Tradition of the Church · Meteora · Tomb of Christ · Toplou Monastery

1 Introduction

The greatest challenge in the operation and management of living religious heritage is considered to be the reconciliation of heritage protection, tourism development and maintenance of religious function [21, 23]. The key concept associated to these three differing uses of heritage is the same, authenticity; yet, this concept is sensed and applied in differing ways: authenticity of heritage, authenticity of tourist experiences, and authenticity of religious Tradition.

2 The Three Concepts of 'Authenticity': Authenticity of Heritage, Authenticity of Tourist Experiences, and Authenticity of Religious Tradition

2.1 Authenticity of Heritage

Authenticity emerged as the key concept of heritage conservation internationally, with the adoption of the Venice Charter in 1964 and especially the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) in 1972 and the accompanying Operational Guidelines. In the context of the World Heritage Convention, authenticity may be seen as an 'effort to ensure that those values are credibly or genuinely expressed by the attributes that carry those values' [20].

Authenticity is essentially a product of Western European cultural history [8, 12, 22], and is rooted in a feeling of dissatisfaction with the present caused by the rapid change and mobility experienced by the Western world in the last centuries. In this rapidly changing reality, the past affords a comfortable and controllable context, and is thus seen in a nostalgic way. In this context, the discipline of heritage conservation has as its fundamental objective the preservation of physical heritage of the past (with an emphasis on material remains) from loss and depletion in the present [16]. A notion of discontinuity is thus imposed between the monuments, considered to belong to the past, and the people and the social and cultural processes of the present/future [9]. The role of the protection of the physical heritage is assigned to specially trained conservation professionals, i.e. archaeologists and conservators, the so-called 'experts', while local communities and religious communities are given a clearly secondary role, if any at all.

Despite attempts to expand the concept of authenticity, such as the adoption of the Nara Document on Authenticity in 1994 and the Nara+20 Document in 2004, authenticity is still attached to the discontinuity between the monuments of the past and the people of the present, the preservation of the material/fabric of the monuments and the power of the conservation professionals at the expense of the local and religious communities [17].

The attitude of conservation professionals against the local communities and the religious communities can be demonstrated in the cases of the World Heritage Sites of the Great Zimbabwe [14] and Angkor in Cambodia [13].

2.2 Authenticity of Tourist Experiences

'Experience' is a key concept in the tourism and the entertainment industry [6], and recently in the cultural and creative industries as well [18]. 'Experience', differentiated from 'service', is a personal, particularly strong connection, based on emotions and imprinted in memory, that the company develops with its customers [6, 19]. Thanks to the experience, the loyalty of the customer to the company is enhanced and thus the customer becomes a 'friend' of the company. Experience comprises various services that contain personal, innovative elements in the points of contact of the company with the customer and that are connected to each other in a unified context, with unified objectives [25].

Authenticity has emerged as a key component of the 'experience model'. The 'experience', as described above, targets all customers. At the same time, however, individual, 'authentic' experiences are designed for different customer segments, so that the customers develop an even more personal and stronger, an intimate connection with the company [7].

A characteristic example of a cultural organisation that, as explicitly stated by its director, applies the experience model, centred on authenticity, is the Cerritos Public Library in the State of California, US. Cerritos Library does not simply offer books, book services and programming ('service'), but also 'quiet areas for study and contemplation as well as lively areas where the imagination could run wild' ('experience') (Waynn Pearson cited in [11]; see also [3]). At the same time, individual, 'authentic' experiences are designed for different customer/user segments: for example, the 'Study Room of the Old World', which is decorated with old furniture and a fireplace, targets the older users, while the 'Children's Library', which is equipped with statues of dinosaurs and an aquarium, is for the children [10]. Another example of a cultural organisation that introduces elements of the experience model, centred on authenticity, is the Acropolis Museum in Athens, Greece [18]. A strongest element of experience is the visual connection between the Parthenon sculptures (exhibited at the upper level of the Museum) with the Parthenon Temple on the Acropolis Site. At the same time, individual, 'authentic' experiences are designed for different customer/visitor segments, such as the educational programmes on goddess Athena addressed to the children.

2.3 Authenticity of Religious Tradition

The concept of authenticity in the context of the Orthodox Church is linked to that of Tradition. Tradition means any teaching or practice that has been transmitted from generation to generation throughout the life of the Church; it is 'the very life of the Holy Trinity as it has been revealed by Christ Himself and testified by the Holy Spirit' [1, 5]. Church is considered a community of saints operating on the basis of Tradition: saints are the authentic, the real Christians, 'the living examples of authenticity', they 'become Tradition themselves' and are 'sons of God by the grace' [4, 24].

Tradition defines the Church as a whole, including the Holy Scripture, the writings of the Holy Fathers, the decisions of Ecumenical and local Councils, the administration,

the liturgical life, and the art of the Church in all its expressions such as architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry and music.

The worship, i.e. the Holy Liturgy, is the most significant aspect, the core of the Tradition, since it unifies the faithful with Christ [15]. It is the Holy Liturgy that gives meaning to all the other elements of the Tradition of the Church. All the aforementioned elements of the Tradition, including art, are purely functional, acquiring their existence and meaning serving the worship of God [24].

In this context, the primary aim of the religious communities is to maintain the function of their churches and monasteries as places of worship. The arrangement and use of space in churches and monasteries is centred on the central church building, where worship is conducted.

3   Separating the Authenticity of Heritage and the Authenticity of Tourist Experiences from the Authenticity of Religion Tradition: A Case Study of Meteora, Greece

Meteora, a World Heritage site, comprises monasteries built on top of high rocks – the term 'Meteora' means 'floating in the area'.

Meteora can be seen as an example in which the concepts of authenticity became separated from each other over the course of time [16]. Specifically, since the construction of the monasteries in various periods between the 11th and the 15th century until approximately World War II, the artistic appreciation of the monastery architecture and art was inevitably attached to their monastic function, and the visitors were attracted to the site for exclusively religious purposes, as pilgrims.

Similarly, the 1960s was a period of few visitors in the site, before the establishment of an organised tourist system. In this period, Meteora functioned primarily as a monastic site. The local community was involved in the ritual life of the site, comprising the congregation of the monasteries, which means that at that time the interest in the authenticity of tourist experiences was embraced within the authenticity of religious Tradition. The monastic communities and the local community, with the support of the official Church, attempted to protect the material of the site, something that indicates that the interest in the authenticity of heritage was embraced within the authenticity of religious Tradition.

The situation changed in the 1970s and the early 1980s, with an increase in the number of visitors in the site and the development of state-sponsored organised tourism that served primarily non-religious purposes. In this period, the monastic communities were primarily concerned about the financial gains derived from tourism and did not actively encourage the visitors to participate in the ritual life of the site, while the local community started to be less involved in the ritual life of the site, as the congregation of the monasteries, and increasingly involved in tourism. This means that the authenticity of tourist experiences started to evolve separately from the authenticity of religious

Tradition. Also, at that time, the State became increasingly concerned about the protection of the material of the site mainly as a means to serve and promote tourism, with the consent of the monastic communities that did not have to pay for the protection needs. This shows that the authenticity of heritage started to evolve separately from the authenticity of religious Tradition, and in connection to the authenticity of tourist experiences.

The mid-1980s, especially the mid-1990s, to present is the period of the development of mass tourism industry on the site. Mass tourism has had huge implications for the site and for the broader region. The monastic communities became even more actively concerned about the financial benefits derived from it. Elements of the local community became clearly interested in the tourism industry, ceasing to constitute the congregation of the monasteries. Also, at that time the State established the heritage significance of the site at an international level, by promoting the site for World Heritage inscription, and linked the inscription to the promotion of tourism at the area. The World Heritage inscription process was carried out without the involvement of the monastic communities. Therefore, the site remained a monastic one, operating on the basis of the authenticity of religious Tradition, but the authenticity of heritage and the authenticity of tourist experiences were developed and established clearly separately from the authenticity of religious Tradition, with the acquiescence and even the encouragement of the monastic communities. Today, the operation of the site has become formalised as follows, responding mostly to tourism needs: the monasteries are mainly occupied by the visitors from ca 9 in the morning to ca 5 in the afternoon (possibly with a small break); outside these hours the monasteries are exclusively used by the monastic communities. Furthermore, it is important to stress that the entrance fees go to the monastic communities and not to the state/the Ministry of Culture; the monastic communities also make money through pilgrim donations and through their museum shops.

Tourism has become the decisive factor for the operation and use of the site, often at the expense of the monastic function and the heritage protection. Specifically, the monastic communities find it hard to conduct worship (the core of the Tradition of the Church: see above) in the monastery space that is occupied by tourists, i.e. in the *katholicon* and the refectory, and thus feel the need to construct new space for the conduct of worship, separated from tourists. Yet, such construction works are illegal given the limitations imposed by the national and World Heritage status of the site. However, the monastic communities proceed with construction works in an authorised way (i.e. without the agreement of the state authorities) and through their own financial resources gained through tourism. A most characteristic example to this end is the unauthorised five-storey wing/building and the unauthorised two-storey building in the Roussanou Monastery [16]. Still, despite such construction works at the site, the monastic communities often find it hard to conduct worship because of tourism, and thus feel the need to leave the site other monastic areas.

4 Linking the Authenticity of Heritage to the Authenticity of Religious Tradition: A Case Study of the Restoration and Conservation of the Tomb of Christ in Jerusalem

In the project of the restoration and conservation of the Tomb of Christ in the World Heritage city of Jerusalem, there was a consistent attempt to link the authenticity of heritage to the authenticity of religious Tradition, as demonstrated in: (a) the management of the project; (b) the technical operation of the project; and (c) the communication of the project to the general public e.g. through the exhibition entitled 'The Tomb of Christ: the Monument and the Project' hosted first by the National Geographic Museum in Washington DC and then by the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens.

In terms of management, the project was conducted upon the initiative, under the supervision and to some extent with the financial contribution of the three Christian communities, the Guardians of the Holy Tomb, who are considered to be the bearers of the authenticity of the religious Tradition in connection to the Holy Tomb: i.e. the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Order in the Holy Land, and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The National Technical University of Athens Interdisciplinary Team, i.e. those responsible for the authenticity of heritage of the Tomb, run the project in close cooperation with the three Christian communities. Representatives, namely the leaders, of the three Christian communities were physically present at key moments of the project, as for instance at the opening of the Tomb of Christ for the first time after five hundred years.

In terms of the technical operation of the project, the National Technical University of Athens Interdisciplinary Team, through their intervention on the physical heritage (the material) of the monument, gave emphasis on, and actually served, the religious significance and function of the Tomb of Christ. Consequently, the authenticity of heritage was highlighted in connection to, and embraced within, the authenticity of religious Tradition. It is worth noting to this end that, as noted in the associated exhibition in the Byzantine and Christian Museum (see also below), the National Technical University of Athens Interdisciplinary Team chose not to imprint their names in any way on the monument itself, so that they do not divert the focus from the religious significance of the Tomb (author's personal remark on the Byzantine and Christian Museum exhibition).

The exhibition, curated and organised by the National Technical University of Athens Interdisciplinary Team in collaboration with the National Geographic Museum and the Byzantine and Christian Museum, was made possible thanks to the blessings of the three Christian communities. The exhibition directly linked the restoration and conservation project (the authenticity of heritage) to the religious significance and function of the Tomb of Christ (the authenticity of religious Tradition). This was achieved in a variety of ways. First, the exhibition made strong statements on the religious significance and function of the Tomb of Christ highlighting the authenticity of religious Tradition. Characteristic examples are as follows:

'THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF RESURRECTION begins with the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ' ([2], p. 8).

'A monument of the utmost importance to Christianity' (Charis Mouzakis, member of the Interdisciplinary Team, cited in [2], p. 11).

'When, after five centuries, on 26 October 2016, we opened the Tomb of Christ and National Geographic transmitted the news and the image to the world, over two billion people kneeled with us, in spirit, before it. The Tomb of Christ is alive for all humanity' ([2], p. 12).

Second, the exhibition emphasised the celebration of the Resurrection that takes place every Easter Sunday in the Church of Resurrection in Jerusalem (where the Tomb of Christ is located), with the miraculous (with or without quotation marks) transmission of the Holy Light – which is considered a most remarkable, as well as visible, sign of the living presence of the Holy Spirit (the authenticity of the religious Tradition) throughout the history of the Church to the present. The celebration of the Resurrection, with the transmission of the Holy Light, is portrayed in the video presentations of the exhibition (author's personal remark on the Byzantine and Christian Museum exhibition). Furthermore, as it was characteristically noted,

'The Holy Light, which the Patriarch of Jerusalem transmits on Holy Saturday, illuminates their coexistence, which, more than two centuries later, was expressed through their [the Christian communities'] common agreement regarding the rehabilitation project of the Holy Aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre' ([2], p. 7).

Third, the exhibition makes a clear statement that the findings that arose throughout the project and especially after the opening of the Tomb confirm the accounts of the New Testament on the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ, in the context of the authenticity of the religious Tradition. A strong example to this end:

'The project has finished. Research continues. Historians, Archeologists, theologians, sociologists from around the world, based on the data of the project, will have a lot to say in the future about the values and the history of the Holy Aedicule and the Tomb of Christ. We have highlighted its values and we have scientifically confirmed its history' ([2], p. 17).

Fourth, the exhibition under discussion was connected with another temporary exhibition run at the same period in the Byzantine and Christian Museum, on an international competition of contemporary icons on the theme of the Resurrection of Christ, crafted in a variety of countries such as Latvia, Ukraine, Romania, the Northern Republic of Macedonia/Skopje, Poland, Russia, Serbia and Greece. In fact, the exhibition on the icons of the Resurrection was displayed at the entrance that led the visitors to the exhibition under discussion, serving in a way as an introduction to the exhibition (author's personal remark on the Byzantine and Christian Museum exhibitions). Through the connection of the two exhibitions, the relevance of the significance of the Resurrection of Christ to the contemporary world was highlighted.

5 Linking the Authenticity of Tourist Experiences to the Authenticity of Religious Tradition: A Case Study of the Toplou Monastery in Crete, Greece

Toplou Monastery in Crete offers individual, 'authentic' experiences, centred on the significance and function of the Monastery, designed for different customer segments. Indicative examples of activities to this end, developed upon the initiative and under the supervision of the Toplou monastic community, are the following:

The space is arranged in such a way that a variety of modern-day visitor facilities are provided that are centred around the *katholicon* of the monastery: an ecclesiastical museum, which was developed in cooperation with the local Antiquities Service; a small café; an olive oil factory; a winery; and a sales point for the products of the monastery, mostly olive oil and wine. The Monastery also offers the visitors the opportunity to stay as guests and participate in the monastic life.

The Monastery is active in the promotion and exportation of olive oil to foreign markets all over Europe, with tailor-made promotion activities e.g. to the German-speaking market (pers. com. Elena Paschinger, tourism communications specialist and blogger).

The Monastery – in cooperation with local partners such as the local Bishopric and the Technological Education Institute of Siteia on Eastern Crete, and taking advantage of nearby mature tourist destinations such as Vai Beach, the town of Siteia and Siteia Geopark – links religious tourism to other types of tourism such as culinary tourism, and is working towards the development of cultural routes.

6 Conclusion

For the reconciliation of heritage protection, tourism development and maintenance of religious function, i.e. for the linking of the three authenticities, it is most important to examine the way each of the authenticities evolve and the relationship among them, as well as the approach of the religious communities to this evolving relationship. Specifically:

As the case studies of the Meteora and the Toplou Monasteries demonstrate, the most decisive factor in the operation and management of living religious heritage is usually tourism development. As a general rule, tourism does not emerge as a result of the activity or the interests of the religious communities of the sites, but is the result of broader, global changes supported by government authorities. In the majority of living religious heritage sites, however, the religious communities tend to accept tourism. It is, therefore, important to study at which scale the religious communities accept tourism in relation to the other two authenticities. To this end, Meteora monastic communities, on the one hand, gave emphasis on tourism development, and did not encourage the participation of the visitors in the conduct of worship at their monasteries (i.e. did not embrace the interest in tourist experiences within the authenticity of the religious Tradition) and in the long term found it difficult also for themselves to conduct worship (i.e. to continue their own connection to the authenticity of the religious Tradition), seeking

alternative, new space to construct within the site of Meteora – and even seeking space outside the site. Toplou monastic community, on the other hand, encouraged the participation of the visitors in the conduct of worship at their monastery (i.e. embraced visitors within the authenticity of the religious Tradition).

The Toplou Monastery and the project on the restoration and conservation of the Tomb of Christ give some suggestions of broader applicability on the approach of the religious communities towards the evolving relationship of the three authenticities. First, in any heritage protection or tourism development project, the primary aim should be the maintenance of the religious function of the site through the conduct of worship (i.e. the maintenance of the authenticity of religious Tradition). Thus, the attempt should not be to draw a direct link between heritage protection and tourism development– as is normally the case–, but an indirect one, i.e. both heritage protection and tourism development through the maintenance of religious function. Second, the management leadership of any heritage protection or tourism development project should be in the hands of, and under the continual supervision of, the religious communities. Third, partnerships for the implementation of the project, as well as the communication of the project to the broader public, should serve the aforementioned primary aim (i.e. the emphasis on the authenticity of the Tradition) and should be built under the aforementioned management scheme (i.e. under the leadership of the religious communities).

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