

## WORLD HERITAGE: THE NEED FOR RECOVERY

Khujamov Sanat

Researcher of the National Archaeological Center of the  
Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Khudoiberdieva Tozagul

student of the Samarkand State Architectural and  
Civil Engineering Institute

### INTRODUCTION:

Terrorist attacks and natural disasters have led to the fact that today the world cultural heritage is suffering heavy losses. That is why, despite the opposition of experts, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee is increasingly inclined to support the restoration of damaged or destroyed monuments.

The unprecedented destruction of cultural heritage across the planet, which has taken on an unprecedented scale in our time, raises the question of the reconstruction and restoration of important cultural and historical sites.

The destruction of the Buddha statues in the Bamyan Valley in Afghanistan in 2001 heralded a wave of deliberate profanation of the most important places for world culture, such as the Syrian cities of Palmyra and Aleppo. UNESCO believes that these attacks against important World Heritage sites are a form of "cultural cleansing". This requires the adoption of new national and international measures, the intervention of the UN, Interpol and the International Criminal Court. Natural disasters that because significant damage are also to blame for the destruction. For example, the 2015 earthquake in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal destroyed hundreds of buildings in an ensemble of world significance.

The idea of reconstruction is not new. It stems from the Western culture of the XIX century, when active industrialization and the inevitable break with the past imposed by it helped for the first time to fully realize the

meaning of history and, accordingly, to create the very concept of a historical monument. Architects began to restore the lost parts of historical buildings to give them their original grandeur and luxury. A vivid illustration of this trend was the reconstruction of the fortress city of Carcassonne in France by the architect and theorist of Gothic restoration Eugene Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc. In the XX century, this movement was especially strongly manifested in North America, where museums were created around historical replicas that embodied interpretations of the past and were very successful with the public. The most famous example is Williamsburg in Virginia, where 350 buildings were restored from the ruins in the 30s, while more modern buildings were destroyed. This was done in order to recreate the appearance of colonial America of the XVIII century.

The 1972 World Heritage Convention stems from the UNESCO initiative concerning the dismantling and subsequent restoration of Nubian monuments from Abu Simbel to Philae in Egypt. This unique archaeological zone with its three-thousand-year-old monuments and temples was supposed to be absorbed by the Aswan Dam. However, thanks to an unprecedented international campaign conducted by UNESCO for more than 20 years, from 1960 to 1980, these treasures were saved.

### METHODS:

But the question still remains: is it necessary to restore historical monuments?

Heritage conservationists usually oppose reconstruction, because it can falsify history and create fictitious objects in a form in which they have never existed before. This position, which originated in the XIX century, was based on the opinion of the French art historian and archaeologist Adolphe Napoleon Didron: "In fact, it is better to strengthen ancient monuments than to repair, it is better to repair than to restore and it is better to restore than to create anew...".

In 1883, in his "Prima carta del restauro" (Charter of Restorers), the Italian architect Camillo Boito derived eight principles of heritage preservation, insisting on the honesty and transparency necessary for the restitution of missing parts of buildings. These ideas were finally expressed in the key doctrinal text of the XX century, which is fundamental for the International Council for the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS): the "International Charter for the Preservation and Restoration of Monuments and Places of Interest" (1964), known as the Venice Charter. This document excludes reconstruction and declares that restoration should end where the guess begins. The norms and guidelines formulated since then have always been very reserved about the reconstruction of historical places. However, with some exceptions: The "ICOMOS — Australia Charter for the Preservation of Places of Cultural Significance" (the Burra Charter), adopted in 1979, allows for reconstruction, in cases where it is an expression of a traditional practice or custom of cultural value. However, it prescribes a "cautious approach to change".

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

In the early years, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee followed the ICOMOS doctrine and opposed reconstructions. He deviated from this rule in 1980, when the issue of the historical center of Warsaw was being

resolved. In this particular case, the large-scale restoration was perceived as a symbol of the revival of Polish patriotism. But until recently, the Committee, despite rare exceptions, remained mostly adamant about other requests. Thus, in 2005, the decision to reconstruct the Old Bridge area in the historical center of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina was justified by the need to return its cultural value, which is an intangible asset. Regarding the burial of the kings of Buganda in Kasubi (Uganda), destroyed by fire in 2010, the Committee gave its preliminary consent to the reconstruction, provided that the new structure will rely on solid documentation, traditional forms and techniques, and will not change its purpose. In fact, the current version of the "Guidelines for the Implementation of the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" of the World Heritage Committee still complies with the Venice Charter. It says: "As far as authenticity is concerned, the reconstruction of archaeological sites, monuments or historical quarters is justified only in exceptional circumstances. Reconstruction is acceptable only if it is based on documented facts, and not on assumptions."

Nevertheless, in the light of recent extremist attacks against cultural complexes of world significance, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has become more flexible about reconstruction issues. The new view is partly justified by the ideas set out in the Nara Document on Authenticity (developed in the spirit of the Venice Charter in 1994 and adopted by ICOMOS), which refers to expanded characteristics that include intangible aspects, and thus provides an additional argument in favor of reconstruction.

These changes can also be attributed to the deliberate destruction in 2012 of the mausoleums of the holy Sufis in Tombuktu, a historical city that is a monument of world significance. Despite the calls of the Director

General of UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee to protect these graves, so revered by believers, the extremists attacked them and completely destroyed 14 mausoleums. Since then, UNESCO has taken over their restoration, which was completed in record time in 2015. This illustrative example can help to reconcile opponents and supporters of reconstruction. Recall that the characteristics listed in the Declaration of Outstanding Universal Value emphasize only the historical value of Tombuktu mausoleums, without mentioning their importance to the community and the traditional techniques used in their construction. Only after the destruction were the spiritual, religious and other non-material aspects of these monuments mentioned.

The arguments in favor of reconstruction relate mainly to local communities: traditional construction techniques are passed down from generation to generation, the restoration project unites all residents: thus, the function of cultural space and the aesthetic component is preserved. The participation of the local population in the restoration of graves is also perceived as a process of reconciliation and a means of renewal.

As for the opponents of reconstruction, in addition to the arguments given in the "Guide to the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention", their arguments are mainly the lack of transparency in the decision-making process of UNESCO and concerns that decisions are made outside the local community, specialists and representatives of government organizations. In order to avoid these reproaches, we will try to provide the necessary information so that future generations understand how decisions were made and choices were made, which options were provided, which values were preserved and which were created anew.

There is another consideration: after a shock like the events in Timbuktu, it takes a

certain period for the realization of what happened and for subsequent generations to review the events. According to this principle, the complete restoration of all mausoleums can erase dramatic events from memory and, thus, deprive the people of the opportunity to comprehend their history. For example, the destroyed Genbaku dome, which is the central element of the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima, Japan, serves as a terrible reminder of the most destructive force ever created by man.

### **CONCLUSION:**

On the issue of reconstruction, the decisions taken by the World Heritage Committee in each specific case seem to outline a new path. These changes are a challenge for such defenders of the doctrine as ICOMOS. After all, thanks to the decisions of such a prestigious international organization, new conservation standards are gradually gaining more and more authority. In the changed circumstances, we need new guidelines. Charters for the preservation of monuments should be open to new ideas, and tools for the protection of world heritage should be updated. Since the emergence of the principles of conservation in the XIX century, each generation has brought its own ideas and directives. The doctrine based on material aspects, as expressed in the "Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention", remains an important element of our professional experience. The Burra Charter has made a radical turn and now supports conservation based on spiritual and cultural values. The Nara Declaration, which emphasizes cultural diversity and the relativity of values, calls on heritage specialists to interpret the Venice Charter through this new prism. This augmented approach is a good starting point for reviewing the issue of the reconstruction of monuments that are our common heritage.

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