APPLICATION OF SACRED LANDSCAPES IN MODERN CITIES

ABSTRACT

Many of the bustling metropolitan cities are bound to rapid urbanization that unavoidably change their culture, traditions, and, history. This extremely rapid transformation of social economic construct could lead to the diminishment and disappearance of urban cultural interactions, and thus poses a huge threat to big cities. Sacred landscapes can provide a solution towards preserving and protecting the core cultural values while, at the same time, dealing with new social challenges. A sacred landscape is a cultural construct that mirrors our memories and myths and is a treasury of intangible human values that nurture our lives. It connects elements of nature such as mountains, rivers, trees, and caves to human values such as religion, culture, and history.

Recent studies suggest that the concept of sacredness is associated with people’s backgrounds, environmental elements, and cultural values. Critical to the notion of sacred landscape are the concepts of imaginary and cultural landscapes in which our sense of place and memories inhere. In this paper, we aim at finding some of the key and tangible values of sacred landscapes that can be applied to modern urban areas to preserve and protect our cultural and social values.

INTRODUCTION

People from diverse backgrounds have different perception of sacredness. Indeed, it is the places, traditions, and activities of ordinary people that gives meaning to the spirit of a sacred site. The history of sacred landscape originates from Africa where people found their physical and spiritual energies by interacting with nature, hunting animals for food, and finding shelters to protect themselves from dangers. Inspired by the elements of nature in their surroundings, they also painted on cave walls and ceilings to communicate with others and demonstrate their traditions and ceremonial activities [1]. Painting and story-telling are two key elements in linking arts and sacredness together. Narratives of place, stories of certain areas, and historical anecdotes that refer to specific sites help passing along the rich mythical and experiential memories of the sacred places of the past to younger generations. In the case of Maya civilization, many of the cultural and spiritual values were demonstrated through paintings and rock arts [9]. Maya Mountains have approximately a dozen caves decorated by rock art, such as Roberto’s Cave and Actun Dzib in Belize. Their complex archaeological cultures show all diagnostic traits of highly diversified societies and cultural constructs.

REFERENCES

[5] Robertos Cave, exemplary of symbolic landscape (photo on the left by Joachim Huber, originally posted to Flickr as "Tribal Art, Botswana", photo on the right photography of LascouxC stenciling posted to Flickr by Prof ess)
[7] O’Donnell, Patricia M. (1992). "The modern reader – whose religious background, either by faith or socialization, may lie in one of the major monotheistic traditions, or who regards the conceptual and spatial separation of secular and sacred realms as a natural given – will find it hard to fathom, let alone reconstruct, the very sensation of witnessing the local polytheistic system of Rome at work." With the existence of many religious micro-environments around the city, Roman sacred landscape really stands out as a unique example of a city that preserved its cultural and spiritual values while being constructed and reconstructed by its citizens.

Fig. 1: Robertos Cave, exemplary of symbolic landscape (photo on the left by Joachim Huber, originally posted to Flickr as "Tribal Art, Botswana", photo on the right photography of LascouxC stenciling posted to Flickr by Prof ess)