

Documentation of wooden architecture in Kizhi Island

Sandro Parrinello¹

Experiences in the scientific field performed within our study led to the perfecting of operating methods for surveying the wooden architecture, entailing investigations aimed at its correct interpretation, essential tools for a critical appraisal and careful assessment of the conservation and restoration work done.

A valorisation strategy of cultural heritage which is up to date in the objectives, strategies and policies put into effect cannot fail to be based on a solid and up to date knowledge of the heritage in question; in fact whatever intervention policy is chosen it is clear that a thorough acquisition of the cognitive data plays a key role in any subsequent decision-making and that a strategy of in-depth knowledge is the essential premise for any plans for safeguarding and valorising such assets.

The documentation aspect becomes even more crucial if the conservation policy regards both the physical, of the object, and the intangible, of the memory of historic, artistic and cultural values, which the artefact keeps alive and communicates over time.

Decades of experience in the political, scientific and technical definition of the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Italy teach us, in fact, how the phase of cataloguing and identifying artefacts or sites has been superseded, with a leap in quality terms, activating more integrated and technologically advanced measures for the safeguarding of the artistic and cultural heritage.

The development of integrated procedures for the documentation of the artistic and cultural heritage today avails of advanced technology to perform up to date surveys focusing on the measurement, geometric, morphological and material features of the existing heritage to enable the creation of open computerised analytical systems.

A database organised by interrelating the considerable wealth of three dimensional co-ordinates and qualitative data on the surroundings and the architectural or artistic artefacts, can be read at an infinite number of levels which are not necessarily limited to the time aspect but which may be integrated and developed in a multidisciplinary approach over time.

Within this strategy, the results of surveying operations acquire a series a values:

- a value bearing witness to and documenting the physical and material characteristics of the artefact and its context, as well as describing its conservation
- a value as a representative model of the object investigated in which the processing of the basic information plays a key role in the analysis of the artefact.

The higher the technological level of the surveying procedures including through the use of sophisticated digital instruments and methods-the greater the need to carefully control the attribution of a meaning to the information acquired, in relation to the formal, functional, constructive and spatial significance of the object surveyed.

In this sense scientific surveying today avails of a wealth of methodological know-how and instruments as well as the description of metric, formal, spatial and material characteristics of the heritage to permit a reconstruction of the historic development of the artefact and the place, reflect the chronological phases, ascertain the formal features, recording any anomalies or static criticality- in brief, capturing its spirit.

“Happiness is drawing. I would like the readers, whom take care about my story and my fate, to keep

¹ Sandro Parrinello, Department of Architecture, Design, History and Project, Faculty of Architecture, University of Florence, Italy sandro.parrinello@unifi.it

always in mind these two factors as a starting point of my world.” (Orhan Pamuk).

The surveying of architecture is an area of study which has had varying connotations over time, specifically linked to the culture and technical-scientific knowledge of each historic period. Each type of architecture is generally composed of a universe of data, spaces and volumes. Colours, materials, planes, light and shade and is usually a structure having a meaning for those using and living in it, made up of signs which in some way recall other signs; the product of a specific culture suggesting metaphors, analogies, comparisons putting abstract ideas and concepts into concrete form in a certain sense.

The product of the surveying operations constitutes an ordered set of data produced by investigation and discretisation, a job requiring knowledge, interpretation, selection and organisation the final product which consists of transmitting descriptive mental models, graphics or whatever else is deemed helpful to transmit the knowledge acquired.

Every shape, object, artefact, or more generally all the things that are not such as we see them in nature, are the result of a process of synthesis (survey) and project (restitution) of the environment and the system in which, as Norberg Schultz says, the man travels as a nomad, to gather items and put them into architecture.

The activity of the surveyor is realised through operative methods defined by a cognitive model that contemplates, in advance, the creation of a model of shared inquiry, which may also be updated, modified and further defined during the deepening of the work itself.

All operations and used strategies of knowledge are aimed at general default.

The modalities for taking the measures, the sample taking and the hierarchy and organization of data must be used to configure the final work product in a manner consistent with the model investigation default.

The survey is therefore an information system that consists of data that can be structured in an organised system, dictated by specific choices and aims.

From what above assumptions it follows that the survey takes shape as aimed and thematic operation. This type of work is often characterised as a preparatory and complementary phase to the design interventions and as fundamental work useful for studies which are often placed in contiguous areas (census, restoration, archaeological surveys, geo-gnostic, chemical and physical investigations and so on).

Therefore it can be considered relevant to the surveyor's activity any strategy for representation and communication that records an architecture, a city or a territory, but also the product of any cultural activity, transformed into scripts, mostly graphical or in any case descriptive, with any degree of approximation. In particular the documentation and the collection of information are an integral part of these activities.

These are not just metrics, but gained through usual techniques and experience and through the application of innovative processes, which have the characteristic of allowing a relatively quick and synthetic read which can be carried out at the different levels of the complex that will be observed.

The survey and the strategies' complex used for this purpose is thus a privileged instrument for the critical knowledge and in-depth of spatial and cultural values of architecture in general.