

ICOMOS TO MAKE PROFESSIONALISM THE RE-ECHOING THEME FOR 2015

Dear Colleagues of ICOMOS,

Let me wish you all and especially those newly elected in Florence an ACTIVE and forward VISIONED icomos in the TRIENNIAL ahead of us. I am sorry I was not with you due to an eye operation.

Now with better vision and in retrospect let me remind ourselves why Professor Gazzola in 1967 told us, as students in Rome University, why he included FIVE VICE PRESIDENTS to the Bureau of ICOMOS. He said that these were to CARE for the different CONTINENTS of the WORLD.

Could not this VISION of the FOUNDER be implemented even after FIFTY LONG YEARS? And even have a continental REGIONAL OFFICE of ICOMOS attached to him, or this located within the UNESCO office in the country where the REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT RESIDED?

If such an arrangement is carried out, even the WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE of UNESCO will be able to ease its conscience due to the serious EURO-CENTRIC imbalance of World Heritage Sites that exists at present as seen below:

Africa:	52
America and Europe:	428
Arab States:	69
Asia-Oceania:	158
Latin America and Caribbean:	94

We cautioned the World Community of being over Euro-Centric as far as policy was concerned as early as 1983 when we were invited to a World Congress on the VENICE CHARTER in Basle in 1983 to view the effectiveness of this hallowed document prepared mainly by an European Body thus: “Has the experiences of treating monuments of the north and the south, and of the east and the west, been brought together, to share the benefits of the gathered knowledge of all countries, and of all peoples? Such action will surely eliminate the possible segregation of regions and of communities from one another, as is the case with professions like medicine, where the Ayurvedic system is frowned upon, in preference to the universality of Western Medicine. The barefoot conservators of China and Japan, of India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, have looked after their precious monuments from periods before Christ, and their practices can add to the principles of preservation in a new International Charter, commencing perhaps here in Basle, if serious headway is made from this significant first meeting”(1) Despite this earnest urge, there has been no sensitive response to this voice from an “Asian Wilderness”.

An important follow-up on ‘Authenticity’ was, however, initiated in 1994 by ICOMOS International on the request of the Japanese Colleagues during our period as President of this World Body to discuss the subject and a whole world of researchers amounting to over one hundred arrived in Nara and were hosted by Japan. Although the host country benefited immensely by this necessary International gathering to have the term “AUTHENTICITY” re-interpreted to have the wonderful shrines of Japan to be on the World Heritage List, the proceedings of this scientific gathering recorded by myopic editors in a well bound book, had even omitted the Chairman’s Presentation on the Asian Traditions to the embarrassment of even the Nara Hosts, although a promise was made twenty years back to correct this omission, it still remains unimplemented.

Here, we quote one such reference from a South Asian Text titled the *Mayamatiya* of the ninth century, apart from others, which devotes a whole Chapter to cover Authenticity in Conservation and is titled, ‘Renovation Work’ thus: “A temple (may be) ruined, broken down, fallen down, aged as to its materials or decrepit. Those (temples) whose characteristics are perceptible in their principal and secondary elements (are to be renovated) with their own materials. If they are lacking in anything or have some similar type of flaw, the sage wishing to restore them, (must proceed in such a way that) they regain their integrity and that they are pleasantly arranged (anew), this (is to be done) with the dimensions – height and width – which are theirs, with decorations consisting of corner, elongated and other aedicule, without anything being added (to what originally existed) and always in conformity with the advice of the knowledgeable”.(2)

However, we have still failed to see such parallel data in the waste array of Occidental texts on Architecture until the Venice Charter of 1964. Hence, the need to have gathered the experiences of the North and the South, East and the West before a World Charter was conferred the ‘Imprimatur’ for International acceptance.

With warm personal regards,

Yours very sincerely,

Roland Silva
Honorary President ICOMOS,
1st January 2015.

1. R. Silva, *A. Keynote Delivered at the First International Congress on Architectural Conservation*, Basle, 1983.
2. Bruno Dagens, tr (1993), *Mayamata*, II, New Delhi, 803-05.