



Heritages and Memories from the Sea

1st International Conference of the UNESCO Chair in
Intangible Heritage and Traditional Know-How: Linking Heritage
14-16 January 2015. Évora. Portugal
Conference Proceedings

Filipe Themudo Barata and João Magalhães Rocha (Eds.)



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Organization and Scientific Committee

University of Évora, CIDEHUS and Department of Architecture, Portugal

University of California, Portuguese Studies Program, Berkeley, USA

Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco

University of Cabo Verde, Republic of Cabo Verde



UNESCO Chair

Filipe Themudo Barata | ftbarata@uevora.pt

João Magalhães Rocha | rjoao@uevora.pt



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Executive coordination: Filipe Themudo Barata and João Magalhães Rocha

Technical coordination: Cornelia Fischer

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HERITAGES AND MEMORIES FROM THE SEA

EDITOR'S PREFACE

FILIPE THEMUDO BARATA

ftbarata@uevora.pt

JOÃO MAGALHÃES ROCHA

rjoao@uevora.pt

These are the proceedings of the first international conference organised by the UNESCO Chair in Intangible Heritage and Traditional Know-How: Linking Heritage, dedicated to the theme “Heritages and Memories from the Sea”.

This international meeting, as well as the chosen theme, seeks to address the need to discuss the present situation of sea heritage, deconstructing past ideological representations with a view to developing a sense of a common history and a shared future.

In the following lines, we would like to explain this choice more clearly. Part of Portuguese, European and world history was built around the capacity to access the sea and control maritime routes. To look no farther, the Romans were organised around a sea they called their own, the city-states of Italy and the North Sea left their mark on history by controlling maritime traffic, and the European colonial empires were largely maintained by their ability to control trade routes and strategic areas such as straits. In the Indian Ocean, the Omanis and many Indian states, as well as the Chinese in their cyclical expansionist movements, also regarded the sea as a key element in their strategic policy.

As is known, these expansionist or territorial defence policies – often undertaken for military purposes, or driven by a clear religious proselytism – eventually gave rise to an extraordinary architectural heritage that includes forts of pioneering military engineering, religious temples of the most varied origins and port infrastructures of different dimensions.

However, the legacy that is the subject of this meeting goes far beyond these constructions, hence the use of the plural form: ‘heritages’.

Every sea and ocean has always secured the livelihoods of families, groups and communities. It is no wonder, therefore, that there is a special correlation between this strong link to the sea and the maritime economy that sustained it, or the social practices attached to it. This aspect makes maritime heritage a very special case in which various ‘heritages’ almost merge together into the definition of local identities, and places and the sea itself merge with the intangible heritage associated with it. Perhaps due to the dangers involved in sea activities, these social practices are mixed with religious and cultural expressions – particularly interesting, even striking, phenomena for those who experience or observe them.

But these were not the only reasons for the choice of the conference theme. Indeed, in the contacts made by members of the Chair team in several countries during research work – from San Francisco and Boston in the US, to Cape Verde, Morocco and Italy – the strong connection of the Portuguese to the sea was frequently evoked. Although this image is strongly anchored in the architectural heritage, built and spread across

the five continents from the beginning of the 15th century onwards, it clearly transcends this legacy.

In many Moroccan cities and regions the Portuguese were regarded as fortress builders, but also fishermen and partners in the pioneering industry of fish preservation. In California, the Portuguese – in particular from the Azores – were the formidable fishermen who taught the art of whaling, at a time when the early days of the Azorean diaspora left indelible marks in Hawaii, before the gradual migration to the Californian coast. In the Indian Ocean region, though, what remained is a history of war and conquest, the taking of markets and military power, mixed with the memory of cordial, peaceful relations, and a culturally friendly environment, as in the case of some regions of present-day Bangladesh and Vietnam. In this context, important documents such as *The Suma Oriental* of Tome Pires: An account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512–1515 need to be pointed out, not to mention the importance of cartography as a unifying element between science and the art of representation in the various regions where the sea is a central element.

Today, Portugal – the country with the largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in Europe – is gradually becoming aware that the resuming of this connection to the sea is of particular importance, though it has not yet managed to turn this into a clear advantage. In this respect, drawing attention to the ‘heritages’ of the sea is also a way to support this process and a reminder for the future. Academic research, particularly in the fields of the social sciences, history and architecture, can decidedly contribute to an enhanced knowledge of that heritage and, at the same time, help in building a real and sustainable ‘economy of the sea’. Establishing a relationship with this vast cultural sea heritage – the main part of our geography – will lead us to discover a common heritage and a privileged meeting place full of memories.

This book is organised into broad subject areas which are the responsibility of the editors and intended to arrange the variety of papers presented at the meeting into thematic lines:

1. Uncovering heritages and memories
2. The floating memory of rivers and seas
3. Anthropological approaches to heritage and memory
4. Otherness and closeness in cultural heritage
5. On the relationship of material and immaterial heritage.

The views on the sea proposed by the various researchers prove that this legacy is a dynamic historiographical element of particular interest and relevance.



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It is not possible to organise a meeting of this kind without the efforts and dedication of many people. As one can imagine, this support varied in nature and extent. It is now our turn to publicly acknowledge these contributions.

Our first thanks go to all those who registered and participated in the conference; above all, it is for them that these proceedings were published. The success of this meeting would not have been possible without the participation of the invited keynote speakers who kindly agreed to open the various sessions, setting the tone and covering important agenda items that helped to enhance the quality of the discussions. Thus, we owe special thanks to Tiago Castela from the University of Coimbra (Portugal), Matt Kondolf from the University of California, Berkeley (USA) and Hiram Morgan from the University College Cork (Ireland).

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Filipe Themudo Barata

João Magalhães Rocha

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