2nd ICOMOS THAILAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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INTERPRETATION

FROM MONUMENT TO LIVING HERITAGE FROM MONUMENT TO LIVING HERITAGE

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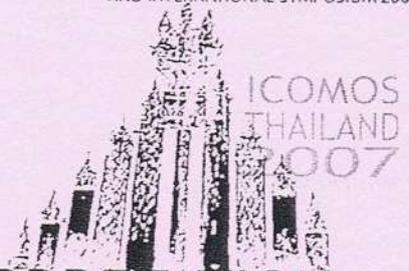Cha Fa Ltd., part.

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"Authenticity" and the Sense of Place
Timoticin Kwanda

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INTERPRETATION
FROM MONUMENT
TO LIVING HERITAGE

The Interpretation of Cultural Heritage: the Living "Authenticity" and the Sense of Place

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Abstract

The scope of this paper is to examine the interpretation of the notion of authenticity in conservation of cultural heritage. Over the few last decades, the notion of authenticity has been an ongoing debate. The early concept of authenticity as indicted in the Venice Charter was more emphasized on physical quality of cultural heritage. In practice this early concept has been challenged for inconsistency and complicated applying in the conservation of modern historic buildings, even for some of the World Heritage List in Europe, and in other region of the world with perishable structures, such as wood, and earth. As a result, the notion of authenticity has been revised since the adoption of the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity, in which the new notion of authenticity is a mixture of tangible and intangible attributes such as traditions, techniques, language, as well as spirit and feeling. In Asian regions, the Nara Documents has a great impact on emphasizing the intangible cultural heritages in the concept of authenticity, as indicated in the Hoi An Protocols and the INTACH Charter. It is argued that these intangible cultural heritages or living heritage is the living authenticity and an important element in maintaining the sense of a place.

Introduction

The concept of authenticity has been an ongoing discourse in conservation especially in Europe that began in the eighteenth century and reached its climax with the declaration of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) Manifesto of 1877. This declaration reacted forcibly and uncompromisingly to the mid-nineteenth-century fashion for the stylistic remodelling of Gothic monuments that without respect for historical layers and authenticity. Later on, the notion of authenticity became an international attention in the second *International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments* held in Venice, in 1964 that delivered the *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (the *Venice Charter*), following the first 1931 International Congress in Athens that formed the *Athens Charter*. This remarkable attention on the notion of authenticity is caused by the moral responsibility of the present generation to pass the cultural heritage in its authentic state for the future generations to learn about and to identify themselves with, as stated in the Preamble of the Venice Charter (1964):

> *People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their **authenticity**.*

Afterwards in 1970s, the concept of authenticity has become the universal concern of the conservation profession since the adoption of the 1972 UNESCO *World Heritage Convention*. This universal concern also spurs the ongoing debate of the concept of authenticity. Thus, the question remains what is the latest debate on the concept of authenticity in conservation of cultural heritage so far. This article highlights the challenge and change of the concept of authenticity in conservation as described in some recognized charters and international documents on conservation of cultural heritage. The first concept discusses the importance of physical authenticity which origins from the European context. The second concept develops from the challenge of the tangible quality of authenticity and consequently the intangible values are added into the authenticity concept. The third and final concept is the living "authenticity" embodied in the local community way of life. This living "authenticity" is an essential factor to maintain a strong sense of place.

Challenging the Notion of Authenticity

The Early Notion of Authenticity

In the early emergence of the notion of authenticity, the concept as defined according to the Western perspective is associated only with physical or tangible qualities. For many decades, this notion of authenticity has been widely influenced the conservation practice throughout Europe and even the international sphere as chronologically stated in many recognized charters and international documents. The *Athens Charter* (1931) for example, was the first document to set out the scientific principles for the preservation and restoration of historic monuments at the international level, however states no words on authenticity yet the closest meaning that comes to authenticity is stated in Article VII ", ... steps should be taken to reinstate any **original fragments** that may be recovered." It states the physical qualities as "original fragments". Second, the *Venice Charter* (1964) represents a revision of the 1931 *Athens Charter*, is the first stating the concept of authenticity in the preamble "... to hand them on in the full richness of their **authenticity**." Again, the means of achieving this authenticity is realised solely through the retention of the original material as stated in Article 9, "Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for **original material** and **authentic documents**." Third, the UNESCO *Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas* (1976) refers only once to the word of authenticity that also associates only with the physical fabric, with the exception of "unsuitable use:

> *Historic areas and their surroundings should be actively protected against damage of all kinds, particularly that resulting from unsuitable use, unnecessary additions and misguided or insensitive changes such as will impair their **authenticity**.*

Fourth, the first UNESCO World Heritage (1977) *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* in Article 7 and 9 sets six (6) criteria for cultural properties to be included in the World Heritage List and "in addition the property should meet the **test of**

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authenticity in design,materials, workmanship and setting; ... ." Design together with other aspects, such as materials, workmanship and setting are certainly the visual of physical qualities.[1] Fifth, the word of authenticity appears also once in the Washington Charter (1987), and is associated with physical qualities. In Article 2 states that "Any threat to these qualities would compromise the **authenticity** of the historic town or urban area." These qualities refer to historic character and all the elements of the expression, such as urban patterns, the formal appearance of the buildings (scale, size, style, construction, materials, colour and decoration), the surrounding setting, and the functions of the area. Finally, the *Burra Charter* (1988, and 1999 revision) has no mentioned of the concept of authenticity, however throughout the Charter the emphasis is strongly towards retaining fabric "in its existing state", hence authenticity is perceived to be residing in the original fabric. Fabric means "all the physical material of the place including components, fixtures, contents, and object.

This concept of tangible authenticity has been challenge in the implementation of authenticity. According to the first UNESCO (1977) *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, the implementation of authenticity in conservation works is measured by four parameters, such as design, material, workmanship and setting, which are basically in reference to the tangible material of heritage.[2] However, in practice of conservation this notion is difficult to be implemented, in which early in the inclusion of the European cultural properties has demonstrated inconsistency. For instances, the historic centre of Warsaw that destroyed totally during the Second World War was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1980. The concept of authenticity in this inclusion is attributed to the reconstruction of the Old Market Place and adjacent groups of buildings as bearing witness to the will of people deeply rooted in their past and to the scientific excellence of restoration, not to what had existed previously as a medieval town. Similarly for the case of Rila Monastery in Bulgaria that founded by St. John of Rila in the tenth century and destroyed by fire and rebuilt between 1834 and 1862. Despite the refusal of the ICOMOS advisory report describing the very little remained of the earlier fourteenth century of monastery, the monastery was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1983 for its grandiose reconstruction as a representation of a significant nineteenth century Bulgarian Renaissance and the claims of identity imbued with national history and orthodoxy (Pressouyre, 1993, Rodwell, 2007, and the World Heritage List).

Some other examples as described by Pressouyre (1993) in his report for the UNESCO *World Heritage Centre*, in which the concept of authenticity was applied during the evaluation of the Town

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[1] This concept of authenticity was set into the first World Heritage is derived from the American's concept of integrity brought by former ICOMOS Secretary-General Connally in 1977 (Stovel, 2007).

[2] To be inscribed on the World Heritage List "Properties do not merit inscription on the World Heritage List simply because they are greatly authentic; rather, inscribed property must demonstrate first their claim to "outstanding universal value", and then demonstrate that the attributes carrying related values are "authentic", that is, genuine, real, trutful, credible" (Stovel, 2007).

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of Carcassonne. The nomination of the city was rejected in 1985 because of the Viollet-le-Duc's interventions, but not in the case of the Medieval City of Rhodes, included in 1988 despite of the embellishments of the fascist era. In the case of Carcassonne, however, the city was later inscribed as the World Heritage Site in 1997, in the light of the *Nara Document*. In the new advisory report, the ICOMOS describes that the restoration is exceptional as 'a real element in the history of the town'. The report admits that the stylistic restoration of Viollet-le-Duc challenges the philosophy and principles of authenticity in the *Venice Charter*, but describes it as his master work, and recognizes that our cultural heritage today owes much to restoration work of the architect in the nineteenth century. This judgment corresponds with the *Nara Document*, Article 11 in which 'It is thus not possible to base judgments of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must [be] considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong (Rodwell, 2007).

Furthermore, outside Europe, in Asia for instance, the concept of authenticity as defined according to the European concept cannot be applied. In Japan, the method of dismantling and assembling is used periodically for wooden buildings, and introducing new elements as required while preserving its original form yet gradually loss of its original materials as was done in the case of the *Golden Pavilion* in Kyoto (Sekino, 1972). Similarly in China, for example the *Chengde Imperial Summer Resort* has been restored and reconstructed with material authenticity is lesser significance than restoring the design authenticity. This replacement of materials is acceptable because the significance of the place resides mainly in its continued spiritual meaning and symbolic value related to daily use rather than pre-eminence of the material itself (Pressouyre, 1993, Taylor and Altenburg, 2007). This is common practice for all types of structure in some Asia regions where the main materials of buildings are perishable, for instance In India, the concept of *jeernodharanam* or regeneration of what decays is the traditional ways of building and maintaining architectural heritage and still exists today.

Even for the most part of the world, the conservation of perishable structures, such as wood requires restoration which ignores the original material concept of authenticity. For examples, the massive replacement of wooden structures of Bryggen, the old wharf of Bergen in Norway, included in 1979, the Old Rauma, included in 1991, the Ashanti traditional buildings in Ghana that inscribed in 1980, and the Old Town of Galle, inscribed in 1988. These replacements of wooden structures have not been considered as determinant of loss of authenticity. Similarly, with regards to buildings predominantly in earth such as mud or unfired brick, for example, Bahla Fort was included in 1987. The Committee admits these fragile constructions require periodic maintenance, however, this earth structure building is considered authentic for its know-how (Pressouyre, 1993).

The concept of material authenticity is also a complicated issue in relation to the conservation of twenty-century buildings. According to Macdonald (1996), some empirical works of many modern movement heritage have run into a number of problems that related to the fundamental

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characteristics of modern architecture, such as new technology and construction, new materials and prefabrication. Similarly to Macdonald, Heynen (2006) also states that the characteristics of modern architecture that require up-to-date materials and technologies, and rational aesthetics has clashed with the authenticity requirements as indicated in some cases of the conservation works, such as the Lever House in New York (1952), the school in Leuven, Belgium (1936 and 1942), and La Concha Hotel in Puerto Rico (1958).[3]

Over the last decades, it seems that applying and interpreting the concept of authenticity has been a complicated issue, even at present day for the World Heritage List as described by Stovel (2007) that "There are a number of sources of continuing confusion found in the interpretation and application of the authenticity concept by States Parties". He further states the need for new framework for authenticity and integrity analysis after acknowledging that "Having failed to find ways to bring States Parties to understand authenticity in completely consistent fashion among themselves over 30 years of nominations".

The Changing Notion of Authenticity

Until recently, however, the emphasis on tangible material of heritage, is changed after the first preparatory workshop held from 31 January to 2 February 1994 in Bergen, Norway and the conference held from 1-6 November 1994 in Nara, Japan which organized by the World Heritage Convention in co-operation with UNESCO, ICCROM and ICOMOS. The conference discussed "the many complex issues associated with defining and assessing authenticity. It was noted that is some languages of the world, there is no word to express precisely the concept of authenticity," as described in the report of the Experts Meeting. The complex issues of authenticity are related to the diversity of cultures and heritage in the world, therefore the experts compromised that the concept and application of authenticity of cultural heritage must consider and judge within the cultural contexts.

In the Article 13, the *Nara Document* proposes that assessments of authenticity should encompass matters relating to "form and design, materials and substance, use and functions, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors". This represents a pace of change from the European-oriented definition of materially original to embrace non-European cultural traditions into the World Heritage Committee. Consequently, the **four elements of test of authenticity** in the earlier version of the UNESCO World Heritage *Operational Guidelines* have been expanded into the elements that almost similar in the *Nara Document*. The latest revised UNESCO World Heritage *Operational Guidelines* (2005) in paragraph 82 have given a new definition for authenticity, replacing the 'test of authenticity' with the 'conditioned of authenticity' (Jokilehto, 2006 and the *Operational Guidelines*):

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[3] For a detailed discussion of these conservation works, see Hilde Heynen (2006), Questioning Authenticity, *National Identity*, 8:3, 287-300.

> *Depending on the type of cultural heritage, and its cultural context, properties may be understood to **the conditions of authenticity** if their cultural value (as recognized in the nomination criteria proposed) are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes including: form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; languages, and other forms of intangible heritage, spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors.*4

To response the concern for cultural context in the *Nara Document*, the ICOMOS National Committees of the Americas held an Inter-American Symposium on Authenticity in San Antonio, Texas from 27th to 30th March 1996 that resulted in the *Declaration of San Antonio*. The declaration's summary of the findings and recommendations refers to authenticity as it relates to:

- Identity refers to cultural heritage is directly related to cultural identity in which cultural diversity in the Americas has formed the national identity.
- History concerns with the history and significance over time are crucial elements to identify authenticity.
- Materials, the material fabric can be a principal component of authenticity.
- Social Values, such as settlement patterns, land use practices, and religious beliefs must be identified, evaluated, protected and interpreted for the tangible elements of authenticity
- Dynamic and Static Sites refers to the different intervention for historic cities that continually used and archaeological sites.
- Stewardship concerns with assessment, conservation and maintenance of heritage sites with regards to cultural identity, history, and materials.
- Economics is largely concerned with the impact and control of tourism.

In this manner, there are actually only two recommendations concerning authenticity, in which tangible authenticity is strongly emphasized identifying through materials and historic value.

The *Principle for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China* (2000) was developed in cooperation with the Getty Conservation Institute and Australia Heritage Council. In the *Principles*, the *Venice Charter* is cited in the Preface as "the most representative document of international principles in this field," instead of the *Nara Document*. The term authenticity only appears twice in Article 2 "The aim of conservation is to preserve the **authenticity** of all the elements of the entire heritage site . . . ," and in Article 23 "The aesthetic value of a site derives from its **historic authenticity**." The word original is stated many times throughout the *Principles* as "original fabric" or "original structure" however it is not a similar meaning with authenticity in the Chinese language, *yuanyou, shiwu* or *yuanwu* means for original fabric, and *zhenshixing* for authenticity. Hence, the concept of authenticity in the *Principles* is

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4 In addition to authenticity, a second key concept that a cultural property is assessed to be included in the World Heritage List is integrity. Integrity is defined in the UNESCO *Operational Guidelines* as 'a measure of . . . wholeness and intactness'.

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also tangible quality; this is not surprised because the *Burra Charter* is used for the reference.

In Asia, the response for the *Nara Document* is the conservation experts meeting held in Hoi An, Viet Nam in March 2001 with participants from South, East and Southeast Asia plus the United States, and some European countries and UNESCO. The result of the meeting was the *Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia*. After noting previous international charters and conventions, the *Hoi An Protocals* mainly re-affirmed the provision of the *Venice Charter*, and endorsed the *Burra Charter* and the Nara Document, as relevant to the conservation of Asian heritage. Concerning the concept of authenticity, the Protocols states in paragraph C that "Authenticity is usually understood in terms of a matrix of dimensions of authenticity: of location and setting; form, materials and design, use and function and "immaterial" or essential qualities." The notion of authenticity is primarily similar to the *Nara Document*, the slightly different is the ordering of attributes and element of spirit and feeling is replace with "immaterial" or essential qualities which actually has similar meaning with spiritual or intangible (Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus).

Three years after the *Hoi An Ptotocols*, in November 2004, members of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) gathered in New Delhi, and adopted the *Charter for Conservation of Unprotected Architectural Heritage and Sites in India*. In this Charter, the concept of authenticity as affirmed in Article 3 adopts the *Nara Document on Authenticity*, however within India's cultural contexts this Charter states that "The traditional knowledge systems and the cultural landscape in which it exists, particularly if these are 'living', should define the authenticity of the heritage value to be conserved". Subsequently, the INTACH Charter reinforces the *Nara Document* that the judgments of authenticity may be linked to a great variety of sources such as "the 'living' heritage of master builders, namely *Sthapatis, Sompuras, Raj Mistris* who continue to build and care for buildings following traditions of their ancestors" (Introduction of INTACH).

Briefly, reviewing through all the charters and the international documents, in the early development the notion of authenticity is associated only with tangible values as stated in some Charters before the *Nara Documents.* With the exception of the *Declaration of San Antonio* and the *Chinese Principles*, the changing notion of authenticity is indicated both in the *Hoi An Protocols* and the *INTACH Charter* that re-affirmed the *Nara Document on Authenticity* with strongly emphasizing the cultural diversity and the intangible authenticity. The trend of respecting intangible cultural heritage such as in the *Nara Document* has further developed in the 1998 UNESCO's *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* and in 2003 the adoption of the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. According to Article 2 of the Convention, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is defined as follows:

> The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a **sense of identity and continuity**, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

The rise of interest on the intangible heritage and the including of intangible aspect as a part of cultural heritage in the UNESCO meeting in 1973, has foster the emergence of a different value system that challenged the Western concept of authenticity, one of that is the *Nara Document on Authenticity*. The *Nara Document* has stimulated the search for the Asian approach in conservation in general and the concept of authenticity in particular as noticed in the *Hoi An Protocols* and the *INTACH Charter*. Both documents emphasize the importance of intangible cultural heritage in conservation practice in Asia. Certainly, the intangible cultural heritage is essential aspects of our live as Prof. Nobuo Ita has stated that "Intangible culture is **the mother of all cultures**. As etymology shows, culture is the human product moulded and matured in an inspired or cultivated brain. In this sense, all kind of culture are, in the earliest stage, intangible, and . . .". In line with the important of the intangible cultural heritage, the idea of intangible "authenticity" is elaborated in the next section.

The Living "Authenticity" and the Sense of Place

From the previous discussion, the concept of authenticity is previously emphasis on the physical or tangible value of the cultural heritage, in the latest development however, the concept of authenticity is a mixture of tangible and intangible value. The tangible authenticity can be identified and tested scientifically through the tangible attributes such as materials, form and design, use and function; however, the intangible authenticity can be identified but impossible to be tested. The test of authenticity of intangible value is impossible, however it can be experienced through "observation and understanding" the creation or the physical object, as Jokiletho (2006) discusses the idea of the modern philosopher, Martin Heidegger, the conservation theorists, Alois Riegl and Cesare Brandi's *Theory of Restoration*"

> *For Brendi, as well as for Heidegger – and for Alois Riegl for that matter, the art aspect of a work of art is in the present, i.e. in the mind of the person recognizing it. This art aspect of the* **work of art** *is fundamentally* **intangible***, and it can be* **experienced through critical observation and understanding** *of the* **spatial-material reality** *that it puts forth.*

In other words, intangible cultural heritage or living heritage can be observed and understood critically and verified to look for the truth through the 'creator' or verified between the 'creator' and the result of the 'creation' or the object. Unlike tangible cultural heritage, in the forms of historical monuments, building and art objects, looking for the truth can be confirmed with the people a

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described that "it is human bodies and souls which are the medium for transmitting intangible heritage" (the Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO, 2005). The truth in a dictionary means honesty, integrity, and genuineness or simply authentic, as "we can call that etymologically the concept of 'being authentic' refers to being truthful" (Jokiletho, 2006). Thus, the authenticity of intangible heritage is the **living authenticity** that exists in the local knowledge of the ordinary people who has connections and powerful feeling of belonging of a place creating a strong sense of place, and also a "sense of identity and continuity". The authenticity refers to the truth of the 'creator' not the 'creation'. [5]

Continuing the topic of the sense of place, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) in his well-known book *Genius Loci* or the spirit of place states that each being or place has its *genius* or its guardian spirit that accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character, and that place is a defined built or natural space that has meaning which stem from personal and collective memories as well as from identity. In line with Norberg-Schulz, Garnham (1985) further claims that each place has a unique character or *genius loci* that is fundamental to the bond between people and a place, and elements that contribute to a sense or spirit of place are numerous, but include: architectural style, climate, natural setting, memory, metaphor, or image, use of local building materials, craftsmanship, spatial relationships, cultural diversity and history, societal values, public environments, and daily and seasonal activities.[6]

Hence, these elements for sensing a place is created by the mixture of tangible cultural heritage such as architecture style, local building materials, and the intangible cultural heritage such as memory, craftsmanship, social values, daily activities, and other form of intangible heritage as stated in the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003). Consequently, the conservation of cultural heritage of a place has to be approached in both ways integrating the tangible and intangible heritage. If only one way is taken to conserve a place, especially conserving only the tangible heritage then the results will be seen such as the case of the Chinatown in Singapore.

The Chinatown in Singapore grew as immigrants from south China came to the land, and became the centre of the Chinese coolie trade, crowded with hawkers selling a variety of goods. Noise and congestion made up the daily life of Chinatown in the old days. This is the typical scene continued until the 1980s when 'conservation' was enforced to revitalize the area for national economic development including tourism. Under this development, hawkers in the area were relocated and many old shop-houses were adapted for new uses such as office, boutiques or demolished for new flats. As a result, the place is criticized for the lack of spontaneity and authenticity in representing the real Chinatown spirit (Henderson, 2000), and as Chan (2005) also describes "The new uses . . .

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[5] The experts meeting that adopted the *Yamato Declaration* against the term authentic in relation to intangible cultural heritage because it is constantly recreated (see Article 8).

[6] According to the Burra Charter Article 1.1 (1999), place means "site, *area, land, landscape, building or other work, group of buildings or other works and may include components, contents, spaces and views.*"

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are not generating the desired street activities. As the former vibrancy was due to the shopping and street activities, many feel that the original spirit of the place is now so diluted". In short, the authentic living heritage, the hawkers, the coolie, the daily life of the place was disappeared and it is a placeless or inauthentic.

Conclusion

The search for tangible authenticity in conservation is still an important issue, yet it is complicated and disputable. On the other hand, the emphasis on intangible cultural heritage in conservation is important for maintaining the sense of place. Hence, the living authenticity of intangible heritage or the *Genius* of the place is an opportunity for new approach to interpret and present the place not as the past activity and "freeze" monuments or architectural heritage, but the continuous nourishing living of the local residents in the place, such as the religious practices, craft traditions, art and language. Visitors could be given a sense of participation in a living place where people continue their way of life that has links with the people who created the place hundred or thousand years ago. In other words, the effective way of presenting or interpretation of the cultural significance of the place such as aesthetic, historic, social or spiritual value is the community of the place, in their continuous daily life.

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