From Cultural Heritage Protection to the Culture of Protection

Bruno Helly

Monuments and vernacular constructions

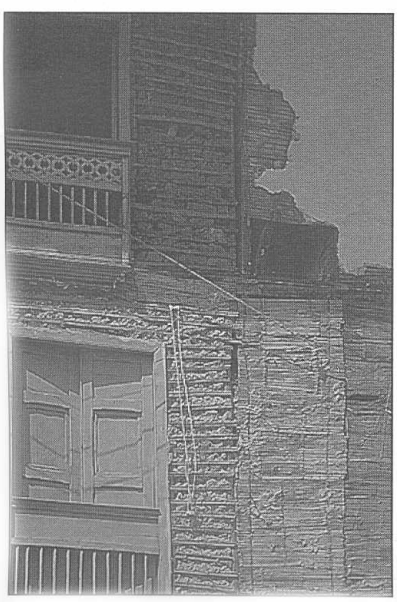
It is widely thought that cultural heritage protection is "luxury" which only a handful of countries can afford, and that the protection of human life and property should be given priority.

The following observation springs to mind: if we are faced today with protecting the cultural heritage of seismic areas, it is because monuments and historical inner-city areas have withstood all the earthquakes in those particular regions.

Ten years of research carried out by experts in a variety of disciplines and countries have shown that old buildings in areas regularly struck by earthquakes were often constructed using refined anti-seismic techniques. Or else restoration work was carried out using specifically established criteria following a serious earthquake.

These techniques are evident in monuments, as well as in vernacular architecture, i.e., common historical buildings constructed for domestic use.

The main point is this: monuments are public property, and any interventions are carried out by highly qualified scientific institutions. As a result, they are well protected. Vernacular constructions, on the other hand, are privately owned and therefore any interventions are carried out by local technicians who are not always properly qualified to do so. Thus, buildings constructed with traditional anti-seismic techniques undergo modifications which do not always respect the original plans, and techniques which are still valid today are completely ignored.



Old "bahareque"" building techniques using bamboo have been recovered,improved and used as a - seismic measures in Manizales, Colombia Photo: O. D. Cardona

Local seismic culture and the vulnerability of the system

The lack of knowledge about the origin and anti-seismic efficiency of many local building techniques has had a considerable effect on increasing the physical vulnerability of old, and also low-cost, constructions.

It may happen that construction features which have a specific anti-seismic function are removed because they appear to be purely decorative; or that "reinforcements" are built which turn out to worsen the dynamic behaviour of the building (for example the replacement of traditional lightweight roofing with a more "resistant" concrete roofing).

Following an earthquake, technicians, who are often unaware of local technical traditions, intervene. This can result in two possible scenarios: a risk of a building collapsing is underestimated because it shows little outward damage (thus increasing the risk factor if further quakes were to occur), or else it is considered unhabitable, when, in fact, it is not.

In the rebuilding phase, local technology is often replaced by imported materials which cannot be repaired. This results in the destruction of maintainance culture and paves the way for greater vulnerability in the future.

By carrying out a critical reappraisal of traditional anti-seismic technologies it may indeed be possible to make preventative action become more effective, improve the efficiency of rescue operations, and see that rehabilitation schemes cause less damage.

A six-day course, which will illustrate various traditional anti-seismic techniques used around the world, and instruct the participants about methods and instruments, which in turn can guide a multi-disciplinary team of experts instructing their local communities, will take place in Ravello. It does not propose a general catalogue of traditional anti-seismic techniques, but illustrates a selection of operational catalogues of various anti-seismic techniques.

In 1996 the European University Centre for Cultural Heritage will publish its report on ten years of research in this sector. In an attempt to widen the area of research and involve those interested in issues at hand, the Centre is offering to:

- encourage experts from seismic regions to take part in the courses organised at Ravello, so as to enable them to carry out

direct actions in their own regions;
- provide consultancy and collaboration when organising training courses, held directly in countries which request them.

The next course (6th Intensive Course - "Local Seismic Culture") will be held in Ravello in mid-October 1996. Information and material are now available from the secretary's office.

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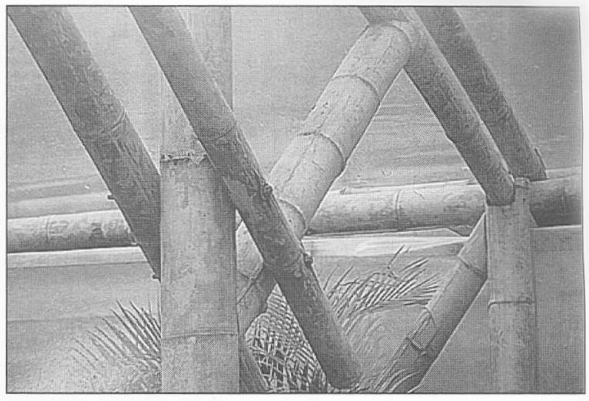

Disaster Management Course by Caritas in Indonesia

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world. Its geographical location makes it vulnerable to geological, hydrological and technological disasters. Since its early stages Caritas Indonesia has been involved in relief and rehabilitation of disasters such as famines, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, fires, floods and political disasters.

As a form of participation in the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction (1990 - 2000), Caritas Indonesia / LPPS-KWI organized a Disaster Management Course from 17 to 27 July 1995. Its objective was to improve disaster management knowledge and skills. Twenty-four participants - priests, nuns and lay people- attended the course.

The resource personnel for the training came from the Indonesian National Coordinating Body of Disaster Management, National Body of Search and Rescue, UN Development Programme, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center of Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Indonesian Red Cross, Caritas Germany, Caritas Indonesia / LPPS and Institute of Governmental Sciences of Department of Home Affairs.

The organizing committee requested that each participant prepares the profile of his / her organization, draft of action and plan for disaster management. The participants discussed various issues related to disaster management and visited the field for hazard and risk assessment in an international trading center and a shopping mall in Jakarta. They also viewed relevant videos.

The participants evaluated this course as being useful because they not only learned disaster management skills, but also had an opportunity to share their experiences, deepen their understanding of disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation, and strengthen their commitment to those who are most vulnerable to disasters.

Further information can be requested from Caritas Indonesia, Institute of Social Research and Development, Jalan Kut Meutia 10, Jakarta, 10002, Indonesia. Fax: (62-21) 390.14.80

"Operation USA" Carries Out Clinic Emergency Preparedness Training (CEPT)

Since a destructive earthquake and other serious emergencies could strike southern California at any time, Operation USA believes it is essential that medical facilities of all sizes be capable of providing aid to potential victims. On 17 March, 1994, Operation USA launched its CEPT programme, encompassing an on-site training to 52 clinics. It is conducted by two trainers experienced in clinic operations and disaster preparedness, and tailored to the needs of each individual clinic.

The 1994 Northridge quake confirmed that after a disaster, community medical clinics must be an integral part of the health systems emergency care network. Clinics must not only be prepared, but also able to teach disaster preparedness to economically disadvantaged citizens, who are most vulnerable to injury and displacement.

Operation USA is addressing both these needs by training clinics in disaster preparedness and advocating that they be recognized in official disaster response plans.

The CEPT's objectives are:

1. Increased readiness of 30 clinics ensuring the safety of their staff and facilities during and after a disaster;
2. Increased ability of clinics to provide triage and medical services;
3. Increased capacity for clinics to take the lead in community disaster preparedness and planning through outreach programmes;
4. Greater integration of community clinics into the Los Angeles county disaster response network;
5. Completion of non-structural hazard mitigation in 30 clinics to ensure staff and patient safety and prevent the loss of medical records, laboratory instruments and computers.

Further information can be obtained from Breck Jones at Operation USA, 8320 Melrose Avenue, Suite 200, Los Angeles, CA., 90069, USA. Tel. (213) 658-8876, Fax (213) 653-7846