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**LIMINALITY
OF (IN)TANGIBILITY**
NATURE AND CULTURE ACROSS TIME AND SPACE





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To my God, Family, and Friends as well as Gurus!



WHY THIS BOOK?



Merriam-Webster defines the term “meet” with many meanings.

As a transit verb, “meet” is interpreted as

- (1) to come into the presence of for the first time: to be introduced to or become acquainted with; to come together with, especially at a particular time or place; to come into contact or conjunction with; to appear to the perception of,
- (2) to encounter as antagonist or foe,
- (3) to enter conference, argument, or personal dealings with,
- (4) to confirm to, especially with exactitude and precision,
- (5) to pay fully,
- (6) to cope with,
- (7) to provide for,
- (8) to become acquainted with,
- (9) to encounter experience,
- (10) to receive or greet in an official capacity.

As an intransitive verb, the term means

- (1) to come face-to-face, to come together for a common purpose, to come together as contestants, opponents, or enemies,
- (2) to form a junction or confluence,
- (3) to occur together.

The term “tangible” is interpreted as

- (1) capable of being perceived especially by the sense of touch, substantially real,
- (2) capable of being precisely identified or realized by the mind,
- (3) capable of being appraised at an actual or approximate value.

On the contrary, “intangible” denotes “not tangible”. It is impalpable.

In my view, cultural heritage lies in the liminality of tangibility and intangibility, if it could be intentionally met or encountered by happen. Whatever, they meet in flexible liminal spaces and negotiate or confront or assimilate. It is also mentioned that World Heritage Criterion (vi) is where (in)tangibility meets nature and culture in liminality.

With this understanding, I introduce the articles related to notions of “meet” and “(in)tangibility,” either inscribed to UNESCO World Heritage or not, hoping to contribute to better communication between faiths and other issues in the current conflicted society.

The text and images are taken from my earlier writings in different academic journals and Proceedings that do not conflict with legal issues.

Helsinki, 1 December 2025

Hee Sook LEE-NIINIOJA, PhD



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SUPPORTIVE THEORIES IN BRIEF

ACANTHUS¹

The plant acanthus weaves its coils, a brilliant sight to see, whose marvel will delight your soul (Theocritus).

Acanthus (fig. 1), a Mediterranean plant, has a large leaf with a broken edge. Two principal species are *Acanthus spinosus* and *Acanthus mollis*. The former species, *Acanthus spinosus*, has narrow, spiky, and pointed lobes of Greek origin, while the latter, *Acanthus mollis*, is broad, blunt, and soft in texture, reflecting its Roman heritage. Its name was derived from the Greek *akantha* (thorn), probably due to *akē* (a sharp point). The motif started to support plant-like volutes in architectural enrichments and form the calyx from which spiral scrolls arise. It has been formalised, simplified, and modified in a variety of ways. The formalised decorative motif was inspired by the deeply serrated and scalloped leaves, along with strong, graceful, curving stems of this European plant. In classical Greek and Roman ornamentation, its appearance on Corinthian and Composite capitals was popular, and the motif was synonymous with formal classical architecture. *Acanthus spinosus* was used in Greek, Hellenistic, and Byzantine capitals; *Acanthus mollis* in Roman, Romanesque, and Early Gothic ones.

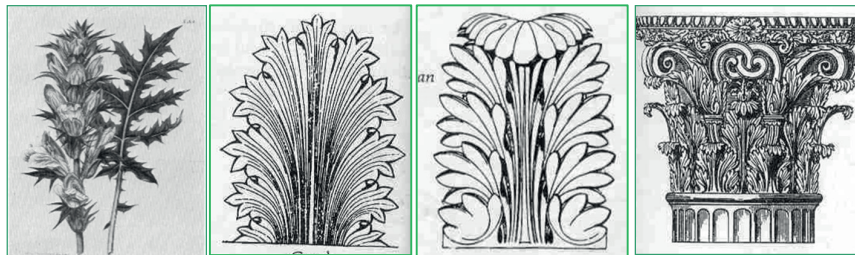


Figure 1. Acanthus leaf; *Acanthus spinosus*; *Acanthus mollis*; Corinthian capital

ACANTHUS AS SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE AND AESTHETIC BEAUTY

The acanthus represents life, immortality, the horns of the lunar crescent, and veneration of the arts in Mediterranean countries, but its thorns signify pain, sin, and punishment in Christianity. In the ancient world, decorative plants were often associated with gods or the belief that they possessed magical powers (Cooper, 1978). As acanthus appeared first in Greek monumental art, often on burial urns in association with death and mourning, a relationship between the plant and the tomb is believed. In Vitruvius' book, written between 30 and 20 BC, acanthus is related to the female and funerary, and phrases in Greek mythology indicate the sepulchral significance of the plant. The reason is that thorny and barbed bushes and herbs were often considered plants of bad omen under the power of the underworld and used as a common means of prohibiting dead people from returning to haunt the earth. The first Corinthian column was placed in an internal Ionic colonnade as a cult statue, becoming an object of worship. The acanthus capital at the Temple of Apollo at Bassae (420-400 BC) suggests a particular role in cult images.

Despite its symbolism, the ornamental acanthus has kept its popularity longer, as its earliest examples were added to the palmette for a visual effect. During the Hellenistic period (323-30 BC), the acanthus had a firm position. As decoration, it exploited affluent imagination, first on funerary stele and later capitals, testified by the column topped by a group of three dancing girls from Delphi (3C). At the Bel Sanctuary of Palmyra (AD 32), acanthus rises from a conical stem to an elaborate spiral. Its beam soffits contain many examples of purely Greek derivation, forming full figures and decorating capitals. As an architectural enrichment, the acanthus spread into the Roman Empire. It also became part of Buddhist art in India and China, while it developed into an intricate and varied ornament, named "arabesque" in the Islamic world. It was in Romanesque capitals that the acanthus played its best ornamental role. Cluny hemicycle capitals, an allegory of the monastery as a spiritual gymnasium, had Corinthian ones that were decorative. In the Early Gothic, acanthus was dominant as a supporting motif in all fields of ornamentation, especially in carving and manuscript illumination. Although Hauglid (1950) claimed acanthus as a decorative motif ("What perhaps was once the symbol of death became later on the life of life in European ornamentation"), the plant proves both its significance and beauty, creating a living tradition on capitals across time and space.

GREEK ACANTHUS SPINOSUS (1000-323 BC)

In the early stages of Greek ornamentation, Assyrian sculptures played an important role, and there is no trace of the acanthus. The palmette finial of a girl's gravestone with an acanthus leaf from Paros Island (c. 460) is the earliest known ornamental sculpture, displaying variety and richness in its development from the fourth century to the end of the classical period. In the latter part of this century, acanthus appeared as a covering leaf to mask the branching scrolls of carved anthemion in the Erechtheion (fig. 2). A capital from the Tholos of Apollo (fig. 2), Epidauros at Basse (400 BC), provided the prototype for the Roman Corinthian. Its leaves were looser, the volutes slenderer and more volatile. The first internal

¹ The acanthus in the Buddhist and Islamic worlds appears in *The Death of Acanthus*, written by the Author.

Corinthian capital among Ionic colonnades in the temple cellar was a combination of the simple bell shape of the calathos with an acanthus leaf and tendril that became popular on the Athenian grave stele. As this would be the position of a cult statue, the column could act as the object of veneration for one of Apollo's attributes: the god of sudden death. The first external appearance of the acanthus was in the Temple of Zeus Olympius (174 BC) at Athens. When a standard form of the Corinthian capital was established in the late first century, the acanthus leaves became taller, and the stalks of the volutes were encased in a fluted sheath. The palmette, or flower, moves up from the volute member to rest on the abacus.

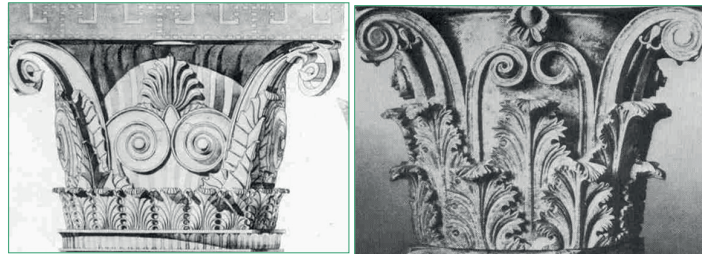


Figure 2. Acanthus frieze from the Erechtheion; the Tholos of Apollo, Epidauros

HELLENISTIC ACANTHUS SPINOSUS (323-146 BC)

The slender Corinthian order, more decorative and less severe than its Ionic forerunner, corresponded to Greek designers' desire to decorate interiors. The order was chosen for architectural projects. An example is the column topped by a group of three dancing girls from Delphi (3C BC). The column showcases several motifs that were prevalent in large-scale architecture. Each column drum arises from a bell of broad leaves. Their tips curling back towards the base became the forerunner of later columns in the Ptolemaic (305 BC-AD 79) palaces and wall paintings. The floral motif spreads out to form a base for the sculptured group. The classical feature of the Corinthian capital in the Hellenistic version is seen at the Olympius of Athens (561-527 BC, fig. 3). The calathos are heavily laden with acanthus leaves, forming two high crowns, and from these, the leaves that follow the lateral volutes project to a higher level. In the centre, emerging from their rigid caudicles, two decorative volutes face one another, while above them, in the central groove of the moulded abacus, the convolvulus flowers appear in the channel of the Ionic capital, as at Sarids. At the Temple of Apollo, Didyma (4C BC, fig. 3), sculptors spread decorative motifs with subtlety and brilliance. Succeeding sculptors improved all the resources such as octagonal bases, historiated capitals, foliated friezes, and foliate motifs with animals.



Figure 3. Temple of Apollo, Didyma; Temple of Zeus Olympius, Athens

BYZANTINE ACANTHUS SPINOSUS (AD 330-1453)

Constantine's churches emphasised the spiritual world, the mysteries of the incarnation and sacrifice, and the glorification of Christ. Pagan temples were terminated and supplied with building materials for churches or converted to Christian use. During the reign of Emperor Justinian (r. 527-565), the acanthus foliage resembled the sharp Greek one, but after AD 300, a clear change happened. The tendrils became rigid, and the flat acanthus style was dominant. On top of the capitals in Sancta Sophia (532-537, fig. 4), the foliage is spread so thickly that the background almost disappears. The stem and leaf became one; the tendril became a single leaf with barbed offshoots. The vigorous and elegant cushion capitals with corner volutes are made of Roman composite and Byzantine flat acanthus. The leaf ornamentation on columns seems like lacework, characterising Byzantine innovation compared to the traditional capitals. The carving takes the old upright acanthus leaf pattern and sweeps it around as if 'blown up' by the wind. Abstract patterns, Christian symbols, basketwork, and chequered details are replaced. In San Vitale, Ravenna (547, fig. 4) the spatial effect, marble decoration and sculpted capitals with stylised acanthus foliage show the Byzantine influence. Some forms are the concave Corinthian outline with acanthus leaves and volutes. The leaf was alternately arranged in two tiers as in ancient examples, with 'blown up'.



Figure 4. Hagia Sophia; Basilica di San Vitale, Ravenna

ROMAN ACANTHUS MOLLIS (27 BC-AD 476)

The Romans modified a variety of the acanthus, learnt from the Greeks, particularly from the Hellenistic. The rounded serration of the acanthus scrolls, bold and vigorous in conception and execution, dominates Roman architectural ornament, despite a deficiency in refined and delicate Greek art. In addition, different types of foliage are displayed in various capitals. The Corinthian capital of the Parthenon has the foliage of the simple olive leaf; the Composite of the Arch of Septimus Severus has serrated foliage; and the Corinthian of the Temple of Vesta, Tivoli has the parsley leaf. The capital of the Temple of Castor and Pollux (73 BC) is of a more standard type with distinctive, lively acanthus leaf carving and intertwining smaller volutes. They have a simplified form with uncut leaves, either for economy, deliberate effect, or to contrast with more elaborate capitals. The wide use of Roman Corinthian capitals (fig. 5) has survived until the present time. Its elegant proportions, the sculptural opportunities of the capital, and the wealth of carving are still popular. The precise columns and decorative Tuscan Corinthian capitals at the Maison Carrée in Nîmes (16 BC, fig. 5) are a Vitruvian approach to the most classical form.



Figure 5. Corinthian capitals: The Temple of Vesta, Tivoli; The Maison Carrée at Nîmes

ROMANESQUE ACANTHUS MOLLIS (8/10-12C)

During Charlemagne’s rule (8C), the acanthus reappeared in much of its old form. The tendril is often schematically treated but with a naturalistic type of its classical origins. On the French Romanesque column, the capitals were the Corinthian type in general, but had a heavy abacus, and modified proportions and details. Moissac (fig. 6) is an example of a Byzantine character in the Corinthian tradition. Romanesque capitals started by substituting non-religious decorative motifs for the foliage on the Corinthian capital with the plasticity of conception and the depth of carving. Its best characteristic is the sculptural quality of its structure, due to the capitals’ following context: The symbol of the column (base/capital) derives from the shape of trees (root/crown). An architectural intermediary between support and burden was the capital; it was earthy at the bottom; and above it faced the heavens. Romanesque sculpture in Burgundy culminated in figured capitals (fig. 6). Dissimilar to the ancient Corinthian capital, the abbey church of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul in Cluny (c. 1100, fig. 6) has two capitals bearing eight personifications of the notes of Gregorian chant. Here, the Corinthian capital is pure decoration without a symbolic meaning.



Figure 6. Cluny hemicycle; Moissac cloister; Vézelay nave

EARLY GOTHIC ACANTHUS MOLLIS (12C)

Although Gothic emerged from Romanesque for its symbolism and mysticism to express aspiration, a feeling of upward movement towards God, allegorical figures do not exist in capitals. Instead, plant forms animate the architecture in harmony with the sense of a living organism. As the perfect decorative method, foliage carving with upward thrust became popular when buildings seemed to be enlivened with vegetation and animal carvings to visualise spiritualising

and earthiness (fig. 7). The ordinary and familiar world of nature is transformed into an ascending ladder as the decorative mouldings and capitals direct the gaze upwards; at the same time, the writhing masses of interlaced vegetation are touched by primitive, almost pagan symbolism. Foliage in the early French capital (11-12C) recalls the Corinthian type by its bell-shaped core, square abacus with the corners cut off, and volute-like corner crockets. The round-lobed foliage of the Choir and Trinity Chapel of Canterbury (1174-1179, fig. 7) is like Saint-Rémi at Rheims (1170-1181) because of the introduction of Roman conventional foliage and a more naturalistic kind by a French architect. Much later, the Corinthian leaf at Canterbury was split up into leaflets, not lobes, but still attached to the centre stem, called “Early English”.



Figure 7. Canterbury Choir (left); Southwell Minister (right)

VINE SCROLLS

Vine has the same function as acanthus: both symbolic and aesthetic. In early Christian decoration, vines with bunches of grapes became an image of the Saviour who said of himself, “I am the true vine” (John 15:1). He is the vine; the faithful are the branches; thus, it is also an image of the church. Encyclopaedias are full of descriptions of Christian imagery of vintage and winemaking, relating them to the Eucharist.

Around the sixth century BC, Greek artists adopted stylised plant forms from Egypt and the Near East and transformed them into the first classical vine scroll. Since then, as one of the most powerful narratives in the history of ornamentation, the vine scroll has been elaborated and given pseudo-naturalistic details. Together with the acanthus, it was disseminated across the Hellenistic world, Egypt, Syria-Palestine, Asia Minor as far as Afghanistan and northern India. In its Mediterranean homeland, the vine scroll was a vehicle of tradition and innovation.

The Hellenistic and Roman periods saw the development of the ‘inhabited’ scroll, whose tendrils supported a variety of living creatures, as seen in the Roman Ara Pacis (13-9 BC). The combination of plant and animal refers to the prosperity of the Golden Age, and the ornate acanthus was a characteristic Roman ornament – bold and vigorous in conception and execution, despite lacking the refinement and delicacy of Greek art. In Byzantium, Hagia Sophia (532-537, fig. 7) displayed a geometric expression on the acanthus. The interior was adorned with vine scrolls, taken from a Roman model, but Byzantine in form which was physically and conceptually flattened into a single plane without the illusionistic depth of earlier styles.

It was in the Islamic world that the vine scroll had its most significance as a form of arabesque, due to Islam’s hostility to artistic representations of living creatures. The *hadith* (Traditions of the Prophet) says that it is not a temptation to idolatry but a usurpation and mockery of God’s creative power. Originally, arabesque is related to the acanthus and the vine scroll from the eastern Mediterranean before the advance of Islam. Curving vine scrolls first appeared in the Dome of the Rock (691) and Mshatta Umayyad Palace (744, fig. 8) in the form of *horror vacui* (fear of empty space) and were established in the stucco and mosaic decoration of the Great Mosque of Cordoba (785, fig. 8) two centuries later in the form of half-palmette.

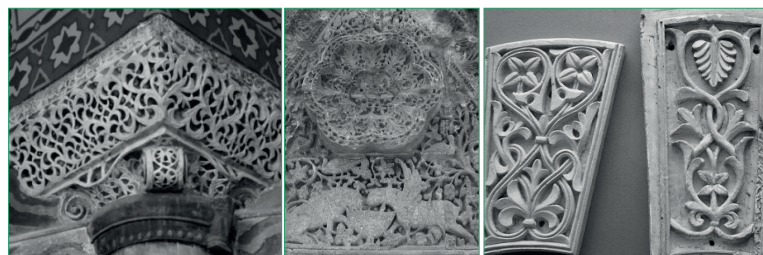


Figure 8. Byzantine Hagia Sophia (6C); Mshatta vine scroll (8C); Mezquita arabesque frieze (9C)

COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Memory was treated as a treasure of knowledge in medieval Europe. Hugh of St Victor (c. 1096-1141) framed his discourse on the art of memory in terms of material wealth in *The Three Best Memory-Aids for Learning History*. He then adopted the metaphor of the moneychanger to explain the need to store information systematically and that memories should be exchanged for distributing culture like money.

My child, knowledge is a treasury, and your heart is its strongbox. As you study all of knowledge, you store up for yourselves good treasures, immortal treasures, incorruptible treasures, which never decay nor lose the beauty of their brightness. In the treasure-

house of wisdom are various sorts of wealth, and many filing-places in the storehouse of your heart [...] The orderly arrangement is clarity of knowledge [...] illuminates the intelligence and secures memory.

In the accumulated culture of societies, three types of memory (personal, cognitive, and habitual) are identified. Personal memory is a recollection of a specific past occurrence in an individual's life; cognitive memory is knowledge and understanding shared by the whole community. Habitual memory involves the attainment of intuitive skills, rather than being learnt. The culture of any society is supplied by these types of memory (Connerton, 1989).

The idea of collective memory went through developing discussions, and its main contributors were Carl Jung (1912), Emile Durkheim (1912), and Maurice Halbwachs (1925). Jung proposed a theory of the collective unconscious, suggesting that universal human tendencies, such as the fear of fire and desire for social status, originate from this collective unconscious, which includes memories from past generations. Durkheim observed the connection between a new generation and the past, as they learn about history and pass on their memories. With a focus on social memory, human necessity connects to prior generations and searches for repeating actions associated with the past. Religion is a repetitive social practice because people keep on following the same belief structures and worshipping in similar ways over time.

Durkheim's study of religious traditions reveals that rituals transfer traditional beliefs, values and norms, and shared rituals offer a sense of "collective effervescence", the transcendence of the individual and the profane into a united sacred group. For example, totems are considered sacred, for their immense power, providing individuals with a device for remembering the unity of the effervescent group experience. In other words, collective thought is necessary for individuals to partake together in their universal experience in sharing within the group. Since this type of collective experience necessitates physical gatherings, groups must devise strategies to maintain unity in the event of their destruction. Although Durkheim's collective effervescence was the transmittal of the past to the present, his argument on collective thought was based upon individual memory, and the celebrations and totems triggered those memories.

The phrase "collective memory" emerged in the second half of the 19th century. As a sociologist and a student of Durkheim, Halbwachs coined the term as a foundational framework for studying societal remembrance. His analysis of collective memory in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (1925) suggests a possibility of construction, sharing, and passing on by any size of social groups, communities, nations, and generations. All individual memories are recorded through the filter of their collective and social memories, built within social structures and institutions. For Halbwachs, individual memory is understood through a group context, while collective memory is further developed as people keep their history. Symbols, architecture, and literature are references to bind people to past generations and influence their memory. Every collective memory relies on specific groups described by space and time; the group constructs the memory, and the individuals do the work of remembering.

Hakoköngäs (2017) sheds light on Halbwachs' new concept of 'the present' in collective memory because the need for the present would influence social constructions of memory. Current issues and understandings shape collective memory, and groups take different memories to explain them. To illuminate the present, groups reconstruct the past through rationalisation by choosing which events should be remembered or removed. Once done, they rearrange events to conform to the social narrative. Connerton (1989) maintains the delivery of various forms of collective remembering and commemoration for a shared past. Families have stories of childhood or the life of their ancestors. Nations carry narratives of their country's origin, myths or National Days for citizens' shared historical roots.

Halbwachs' theory casts two issues: (i) Collective memories depend on the context of remembering. To deal with this, a group can seek reassurance for their decisions from the past. By doing it, collective remembering brings a selection of narratives that respond to present and future needs. Memory notions of the past and their significance for the present are discussed at multiple levels of the social environment (Pennebaker, Páez & Deschamps, 2006). (ii) Collective memory paves a group's way to the future.

Instead, we now have history as "collective memory", that is as a fabricated narrative (once called "myth") either in the service of social-ideological needs, or even expressing the creative whim of a particular historian. (Gedi & Elam, 1996:40-41)

The concept of collective memory met further exploration from various angles. Young (1994) regards "collected memory" as the fragmented, collected, and individual character of memory. Assmann (2008) develops "communicative memory", a variety of collective memories in everyday communication. This form resembles the exchanges in an oral culture or the memories collected through oral history. With this activity, each memory makes itself up in communication with other groups, who formulate their unity and characteristics through a universal image of their past. Everyone is the property of such groups and treats collective self-images and memories.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Culture consists of behavioural patterns, explicit and implicit, constituting the characteristic achievement of human collectives. Acquired and transmitted by symbols, the core of culture is composed of traditional ideas and their attached values.

It denotes a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life. (Geertz, 1973: 89)

Culture can be viewed as a set of social rules, providing a framework that gives meaning to events, objects, and people. Through these rules, people can make sense of their surroundings, lessening the uncertainty of social circumstances. Samovar et al. (2009) hold the opinion that culture is (i) learnt, (ii) transmitted inter-generationally, (iii) symbolic, (iv) dynamic, and (v) ethnocentric. Accordingly, cultural heritage (tangible/intangible/natural) is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society, preserved in the present and standing for the profit of future generations. Intangible cultural heritage designates the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills, in addition to the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces that communities and individuals identify as components of their cultural heritage. It was transferred through generations and recreated according to their environment and history, putting forward a sense of identity and continuity, as well as strengthening esteem for cultural diversity and human creativity.

Tangible and intangible heritage require different approaches to preserve and safeguard it— a motivation for the conception and ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Convention stipulates the interdependence between intangible, tangible, and natural heritage and avows the role of intangible cultural heritage as a source of cultural diversity and a driver of sustainable development. Cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of objects but extends to inherited traditions or living expressions, such as rituals, festivals, and social practices. Facing globalisation, a better understanding of the intangible cultural heritage can enhance intercultural dialogues and mutual respect for ways of life beyond spaces. A pool of knowledge and skills transmitted through generations facilitates social and economic value for everyone.

TANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

As part of the UNESCO World Heritage List inscription process, each nomination asset may select its appropriate Criteria from the ten Criteria² (cultural: i-vi; natural: vii-x).

- (i) to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- (ii) to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- (iii) to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living, or which has disappeared;
- (iv) to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- (v) to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- (vi) to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- (vii) to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix) to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x) to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

UNESCO's 2003 ICH Convention proposes five broad areas: (i) oral traditions and expressions, including language; (ii) performing arts; (iii) social practices, rituals, and festive events; and (iv) knowledge and practices of nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship. However, intangible cultural heritages are not limited to a single manifestation, and many contain components from multiple domains. A shaman ritual has traditional music/dance, prayers/songs, clothing, and sacred objects, including rites and knowledge of the natural world. Festivals are comprehensive expressions of intangible cultural heritage that engage singing, dancing, theatre, feasting, oral tradition and storytelling, craftsmanship, and other entertainments. Accordingly, the borders between domains flow from one place to another. When the Convention undertakes a framework for identifying intangible cultural heritage, the list of domains is inclusive; thus, States can apply a dissimilar system of domains in variation.

Four key definitions of intangible cultural heritage are as follows:

- (i) Traditional, contemporary, and living simultaneously: It represents traditions and contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups participate;
- (ii) Inclusive: People can share cultural expressions like those practised by others beyond their locations, such as the neighbouring village or a city on the opposite side or migrating settlers in a different region. It has been passed down through generations and evolved in response to their environments, contributing to identity and continuity. It connects people to the future;

² <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>

- (iii) Representative: It is not a simple cultural product for its exclusivity or exceptional value, but it flourishes within communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills, and customs is transferred to the rest of the community;
- (iv) Community-based: It is only recognised by the communities, groups, or individuals that create, maintain, and transmit it.

DESIGN ELEMENT

Design elements include line, colour, shape, texture, space, form, and value; design principles are unity-variety, balance, emphasis, rhythm, proportion, and size. Principles show the way in which the elements are aesthetically combined to arouse a sensory response. Elements, the raw materials of design works, are arranged to produce order in composition, supported by principles. The beauty of design depends on how you apply design elements and principles.

Without a study of Greek, we could not know the meaning of great design, of harmonious lines and masses, of proportion and composition, of thoughtful correctness in figure-drawing, of the pleasant and proper disposition of the materials or motifs of an ornament. (Collingwood, 1883)

LINE

The line consists of extended points, featuring length (Ching, 1996). It links other visual elements, draws the outline of boundaries, produces shapes, and lends clarity to the surfaces of planes. The character of lines—bold/soft, elegant/shabby—is determined by humans’ perceptions of their length-width proportion, outline, and degree of continuity. The line is a making of the human sense of sight, constructed for simplicity, borrowing the French Romantic artist Eugène Delacroix’s (1798-1863) idea of the straight line as “never occurs in nature; they exist only in the brain of man” (Arnheim, 1974). Line proposes a direction, one way or in diverse ways, although it does not possess actual movement (Krommenhoek, 1975).

Lines can be divided as straight or curved. A straight line is meant as the shortest distance between two given points. It can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal, and appears stronger and more direct than a curved line. A vertical line is structural, upward, and the strongest, expressing a state of equilibrium with the force of gravity. A horizontal line represents stability on the ground plane, creating geometric shapes, whereas contour lines define space, and repeated lines create texture. A diagonal line indicates action, due to its disturbing effect (Stoops, 1983; Alexander, 1965). In Gothic architecture, vertical lines of columns glorify God’s existence.

This upward surge of lines, characteristic of Gothic art, was an element of beauty which at the same time responded to a profoundly appealing feature of medieval mysticism. (Aubert, 1959:31)

In classic Greek art, the term “beautiful” was bound up with the idea of organic undulating lines, and logarithmic spirals enhanced the dynamism of the curve. Referring to a curved line in particular, the English painter and social critic William Hogarth (1679-1764) introduced the aesthetic notion of his precise serpentine line as “the line of beauty”. In *The Analysis of Beauty* (1735/1955), Hogarth regarded S-shaped curved lines as the ideal sign of artistic craftsmanship. The term “the line of beauty” describes S-shaped curved lines (serpentine lines), which appear within an object, either as the border line of an object or as a virtual border line between objects. As the birth of Rococo, it is a part of Hogarth’s theory of aesthetics, because S-shaped curved lines represent vigour and action, stimulating the viewer’s attention, while straight lines signify death and stagnation. However, the S-shaped line should be understood in the context that a composition is made by many types of lines in various relations to each other without destroying its simplicity.



Part of “Sign painter from Beer Street” (1751) by William Hogarth: see the S-shaped line of the painter.

The Austrian art historian Alois Riegl in *Stilfragen (Problems of Style, 1893)* claimed that line was the primary tool of the artist, and decorative art was the application of line to solve ornamental problems. As a member of the Vienna School of Art History, he practised formalism, joining the establishment of art history as an academic discipline. With the idea that a work’s aesthetic value is decided by its form, formalism underlines design elements rather than context and content. In symbolism, lines are associated with the ideas of praise, aspiration, and ascension. Vertical lines increase this feeling; downward-bent lines convey despair. A line is the most sensitive and vigorous speech for all purposes as a language

(Crane, 1900). It is applied to record nature and human features, appealing to human emotions and evoking sympathy for the life of nature and humanity.

COLOUR

Where flower and fruit with trembling pearls are freighted/ And all around a paradise appeareth/ Colour on colour from background cleareth (Goethe: Faust, part 2, act 1)

Colour evokes the highest emotional response, suggesting mood and depth of experience. It is an art and a science. Physicists discuss abstract theories of colour concerning light and optical principles involved in colour sensation; chemists formulate rules for blending colours; psychologists are concerned with emotional responses to colours. Colours have two primary meanings. Objectively and psychophysically, they explain the characteristics of light (wavelength/luminance/purity). Subjectively and psychologically, they are objects derived from one's perceptions (hue/lightness/saturation).

Colours have a crucial role in our lives as a driving force of identity, emotion, appreciation, and creativity, while emotions are a key point of interest in personality theories, attacking the senses, providing feelings, or causing reactions to colour in a space. Each colour has a history and a set of meanings physically and emotionally. Red has the longest wavelength, demanding attention and creating excitement. Yellow is an intense, bright colour and is expansive and stimulating. It has the highest reflective level of all colours and echoes the dual nature of red. Despite feelings of cheerfulness and happiness, people become annoyed or angry when subjected to an excess of colour. Yellow ribbons were worn as a sign of hope as women waited for their men to return during the war.

Green is the most restful colour; it is often used in institutions. It is associated with nature and tranquillity. Blue is a calming colour in nature. Rarely disliked, it can turn from positive to negative. Black absorbs the lightest of any colour and is opaque. It is a multi-dimensional colour that can mean classical or futuristic. Western cultures use it to symbolise death at funerals because of its ominous nature. It has an air of intelligence, marked by rebellion, shrouded in mystery. White reflects the lightest of all colours and is often associated with cleanliness or sterility. Doctors wear white to convey these attributes. The colour is also associated with neutrality – a white flag stands for surrender. A bride wears white, a custom dates to ancient Greece. The temple for the goddess Athena was made of white marble, which linked to the colour to virginity.

"Colour symbolism" refers to using colour as a symbol. One colour may perform different symbolic functions in the same place, as well as cross-cultural diversity across time and space. However, the connection between symbolism and religion is apparent. In Mayan culture, the cycles of creation bear five colours (red: blood/birth; yellow: the nourishing corn; blue-green: water/fertility; black: death; white: mutation). Ancient Chinese created five primary colours to represent the five basic elements, the five directions and the four seasons. They employed the Yin-Yang and Five Element Theories to describe the phenomenon of the universe. They are the core reasoning behind natural science because the production, development, and changes of all things were believed to be the outcome of the interaction of Yin and Yang spirits. The interaction is also applied to the five symbolic components of the cosmos. Yin-Yang depicts the opposing, interdependent, waxing and waning, and transformational nature of all things in the cosmos. The Five Elements explains characteristics and the law of mutual nourishment and restraint. Yin-Yang and the Five Elements are practised in conjunction with each other. The nature of the human body is as follows:

(Wood) east/spring/green/sour-anger (Fire) south/summer/red/bitter-joy (Earth) centre/late summer/yellow/sweet-desire (Metal) west/autumn/white/spicy-sorrow (Water) north/winter/black/salty-fear

In religious monuments, bright and deep red is sacred; it strikes a chord with more cultures than other colours, probably due to its association with intensity, passion, and an inherent physiological response. Opposed to red, green is a hope for Christian virtues, underlined by a reflection of greenery from the Garden of Eden. In the Middle East, greenery implies cool shading, the presence of water, wealth, and happiness. Green, a sacred colour for Muslims, recalls the "garden of delights" in Paradise. The Prophet's green robe became the colour of Islam, and the green flag comprised the emblem of salvation and the symbol of all riches, materially or spiritually.

Contradictory meanings in colours are caused by (i) cultural associations: the colour of traditions, celebrations, or geography; (ii) political and historical associations: the colour of political parties or royalty; (iii) religious and mythical associations: the colours of spiritual or magical beliefs; (iv) linguistic associations: colour terminology within individual languages; (v) contemporary usage: objects generated by modern conventions and trends. Despite differences in the interpretation of colours, ancient civilisations worked out determined forms of colour symbolism to organise a world of multiplicities, making the primary colours divine. Besides, religions overlaid this with other significances because symbolism is the product of civilization process. Depending on the region in which the civilisation originated, each colour has a variety of meanings.

Returning to the realm of emotions, colour can introduce sensory stimulation. Individual differences happen in how to apply colour to their surroundings, and personal preference depends on the individual's familiarity with certain colours, colour combinations, and emotional connotations. Six/seven main colours convey the following emotions: red (passion), orange (vitality), yellow (cheerfulness), green (serenity), blue (infinity), and violet/purple (majesty).

Colour elicits a response which can occur on many levels. We begin with the physical recognition of colour information contained in light as it travels from the optic nerves to the brain. To this, we add our cultural responses, learned from history or our use of colour in daily life and current styles. Despite work on colour perception by philosophers and artists,

serious work began at the end of the 19th century. Through objective impressions, clinical observations, and introspective-experimental investigations, studies display the association between colours and emotions (table 1).

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Table 1. General colour description, related to emotions.

| Colour | Emotion |
|-------------------------|--|
| passion (red) | ambitious, attractive, beautiful, belonging, centred, committed, constant, courageous, determined, energizing, friendly, grounded, independent, initiating, mobilising, originating, passionate, patient, persistent, physical, pioneering, powerful, proud, warm |
| vitality (orange) | active, adventuresome, amiable, authoritative, busy, bright, cheerful, communicative, concentrated, courageous, creative, energetic, expressive, free, happy, harmonious, intellectual, kind, optimistic, outgoing, powerful, sexual, spontaneous, stimulating |
| cheerfulness (yellow) | bright, busy, cheerful, communicative, creative, curious, energetic, expressive, forgiving, happy, intelligent, independent, logical, metabolic, motivated, orderly, perceptive, powerful, rich, sacred, stimulating, strong, transformative, understandable |
| serenity (green) | balanced, beautiful, confident, connecting, efficient, fertile, flexible, forgiving, compassionate, financial, free, growing, hopeful, just, lovable, lucky, open, peaceful, reconciling, refreshing, safe, satisfactory, secure, sharing |
| infinity (blue) | accepting, calm, classic, clean, clear, contemplative, creative, deep, expressive, faithful, focused, forgiven, healing, holy, honest, imaginative, loyal, meditative, mysterious, patient, reliable, sensitive, soothing, spiritual, tranquil, truthful, trusting, victorious |
| majesty (violet/purple) | admired, clairvoyant, conceptual, coordinating, determined, dignified, dramatic, exciting, conscious, higher self, humble, imaginative, impressive, intuitive, knowing, meditative, motivated, passionate, psychic, respected, spiritual, tolerant, valuable, wise |

FORM

The form is a perfect combination of all visual elements—themes, moods, techniques, functions, structure, and organisation—taking many characteristics of a recognisable appearance or a particular condition in which something manifests itself. In design, it is the shape of a three-dimensional volume defined by the line borders. Forms are divided into natural and geometric forms. The former is representational; the latter is not. In the 20th-century’s theory, five basic geometric forms are the sphere, cube, cylinder, cone, and pyramid. As primary forms, their parts are related to one another consistently and orderly in symmetry and steadiness. Non-primary forms are dissimilar, asymmetrical, and more dynamic than the primary.

Originating from the Latin word *forma*, each form has a primary function and many subsidiaries. It inspires, informs, or moves viewers to action in architecture. To inform means to clarify, explain, and identify; to enlighten means to reveal; to persuade means to suggest. A direct reciprocal relationship between form and space exists, as space creates the distance required to perceive form. The more significance the form displays, the more space recedes from our perception and experience.

As the appearance and use of forms influence culture and viewers’ perception of them, they need interpretation. It is the translation of their meanings through the filter of different perspectives based on viewers’ experiences and the necessity of philosophical ideologies. Under this process, there arises a caution; a form can be ambiguous through interpretations. Contradictory views bring ambiguity to form and function. Nevertheless, ambiguity and contradiction should be accepted in the design work and its interpretation because the form serves to communicate with diverse cultural environments beyond time and space. Form in architecture is related to space and a vehicle for meaning. When the architecture deletes meanings, its form affects people differently.

EMOTIONS

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary relates that the notion of emotion came from the Latin word *exmovere*, meaning to move out, agitate, or excite. Emotion is a neural impulse due to its psycho-physiological state that moves an organism to action, characterised by affective phenomena such as moods and personality traits by temporal duration. Two types of intelligence (rational/emotional) operate independently and are not necessarily consistent with one another (Goleman, 1995). The philosophy of emotions is a mixed cluster of phenomena, which cannot include a single natural kind. They are a key point of interest in personality theory, offending the senses, providing feelings, or evoking reactions to colours (Griffiths, 1997).

Ancient Greek philosophers, representing three traditions, have discussed the role of emotions in the moral behaviour of Western thought (Price, 2009). (i) Plato (c. 428–348 BC) and Immanuel Kant (1785) posited emotions as a hindrance to good behaviour. Plato compared the rational mind to a charioteer whose task was to keep his horses. For Kant, noble actions were the only true morals without motivation from any emotion. (ii) Aristotle (384–322 BC) and economist Adam Smith (1759) treated emotions as a vital ingredient in generating moral conduct. Aristotelian ethics is rooted in the idea of

virtue – the optimal midpoint between emotional extremes. They argue that certain social emotions, like sympathy, lie at the heart of all ethical actions. (iii) All moral judgements are an expression of the speaker's emotions. For David Hume (1751), a certain action is right or wrong, and the speaker has a feeling or sentiment of approval or disapproval of the action.

A vast number of different theories with dissimilar viewpoints discuss the effect of emotions on the whole of a human being. In the 1870s, Charles Darwin (1913) proposed the evolution of emotions. His evolutionary theory relates that emotions exist because they serve an adaptive role, which motivates humans to respond to stimuli in the environment, improving the opportunities for their success and survival. Recent theories consider emotions innate responses to stimuli, and theorists are inclined to underestimate the influence of thought and learning on emotion. Anyhow, all cultures share basic emotions, including happiness, contempt, surprise, disgust, anger, fear, and sadness. Other emotions are a blend and dissimilar intensities of the basic emotions. Terror is a more intense form of the basic emotion– fear.

The four main theories of emotions appear in contemporary times.

(i) The James-Lange Theory: It is one of the best-known examples of a physiological theory of emotion. In the 1880s, the theory was proposed by psychologists William James and Carl Lange. It says that emotions occur as physiological reactions to events. When people see an external stimulus, it leads to a physiological reaction. Their emotional reaction depends on how they interpret these physical reactions. People experience emotion because they perceive their bodies' physiological responses to external events.

(ii) The Cannon-Bard Theory: In the 1920s, physiologist Walter Cannon disagreed with the James-Lange's theory. His theory was an expansion of Philip Bard's research as a physiologist during the 1930s. For both, physical and psychological experiences of emotion happen simultaneously, and one does not cause another. The brain acquires a message that causes the experience of emotion while the autonomic nervous system receives a message that causes physiological arousal. People feel emotions and experience physiological reactions.

(iii) Schachter and Singer Two-Factor Theory: As a cognitive theory of emotion in the 1960s, Schachter and Singer's Two-Factor Theory combines the two theories mentioned above. When people perceive physiological symptoms of arousal, they search for an environmental explanation and label it an emotion. The label depends on what they discover in their environment.

(iv) Cognitive Appraisal Theory: Thinking should occur before any emotional experiences. Richard Lazarus claims that the sequence of events first involves a stimulus, followed by thought, which leads to the simultaneous experience of physiological response and emotion. The emotions people experience depend on the way they appraise or evaluate the events around them.

GESTALT

Although shapes as a design element have been applied in classical architecture since early civilizations, Gestalt is a product of the 20th century. Owen Jones presented geometry as a general principle in the *Grammar of Ornament* (1856/1982): "All ornament should be based upon a geometrical construction."

SHAPE

The word "shape," derived from Old English *gescep* (a creation), refers to the outline of a plane figure or the surface configuration of a form. It provides the recognition, identification, and categorisation of specific figures and forms in relation to human perception. Shapes are made of lines, areas of texture, value, and colour from simple circles, triangles, and squares to the complex silhouettes of nature and figurative forms. Repetitive shapes establish variety; new shapes increase the sense of movement and countermovement. The primary shapes are a circle, a triangle, and a square, and the perception of all shapes depends on the level of visual contrast between the outline that separates a figure from its ground. The positive shapes are the subject itself and the focus of interest. The negative shapes are the areas surrounding the positive ones, generating a powerful illusion of depth (Handell & Handell, 1995).

Several theories appeared. For Holt (1989), four types of shapes are (i) natural shapes taken from nature and human figures, (ii) geometric shapes as an artificial construction, (iii) abstract shapes stylised by natural shapes; and (iv) non-objective shapes unrecognisable from the sources.

Thus, a shape is never perceived as the form of just one particular thing, but always as that of a kind of thing. Shape is a concept in two different ways: first, because we see every shape as a kind of shape (compare what was said about perceptual concepts...); second, because each kind of shape is seen as the form of a whole kind of objects. (Arnheim, 1974:96)

Arnheim seeks a perceptual approach with three types (physical/perceptual/visual). (i) The physical shape of an object is determined by its borders, regardless of the object's location in space. (ii) Perceptual shape changes when its spatial orientation alters. It is the interplay between the physical objects. (iii) Visual shapes influence one another. The shape of an object is decided both by its boundaries and by how the boundaries are perceived.

Moore's (1976) three shapes are based on various cultural and personal standards: (i) Archetypal shapes, which people share, originate from an old dialectic between columns and walls. (ii) Cultural shapes are those that people share with a culture. Cultural preferences for shape are shown in Gothic architecture. (iii) Personal shapes are a product of people's memories. Gothic builders were occupied by verticality, and patterns of mullions on windows bear connotations, depending on the association that the builders had with their experiences.