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Tourism and religion: sacred spaces as transmitters of heritage values

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ABSTRACT

Religious heritage can act as a transmitter of the age-old values linked to the identity of a territory, while reflecting on the relationship between the religious value and the monumental value of a place. This reflection is based on the initial premise that at present there are elements related to the architectural heritage of the church that have wholly or in part lost their use value as places of worship. After introducing the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage at religious sites and the role of tourism helping in the preservation (or not) of these values, the current situation is analyzed through a case study. The case study is focused on the Catalonia Sacra project and analyses 325 religious heritage sites from the region of Catalonia, in the north-east of Spain. Several sets of data were collected referring to the monumental and architectural values of these places and also the religious use of them, among others, with the aim to compare the relationship between the monumental values and the religious use of these sites.

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1. Introduction: religion and sacred spaces today

In this article, we set out to reflect on how religious heritage can act as a transmitter of the age-old values linked to the identity of a territory, while reflecting on the relationship between the religious value and the monumental value of a place. This reflection is on the basis of the initial premise that at present there are elements related to the architectural heritage of the church that have wholly or in part lost their value of use as places of worship.

The article is structured in five main sections, the first of these being the introduction in which the main objectives of this article are set out. [Section 2](#) is a review of the bibliography on religious tourism and religious heritage, as a basis for identifying what relations can be established between these two elements. [Section 3](#) is a reflection

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on religious heritage and the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage, sacred spaces and sacred time. [Section 4](#) presents a case study of the Catalonia Sacra project and describes and considers the methodology adopted and the results obtained. Finally, in [Section 5](#), we offer some reflections on the subject and present our conclusions.

The principal objective of the article is to analyze the nature and role of the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage in the transmission of the heritage values of religious elements. On the basis of an analysis of the relationships established between tangible and intangible assets, we set out to analyze possible variations in the transmission of heritage values varies and the extent to which this affects the management of these spaces in terms of tourism and religion.

The religious phenomenon is a crucial part of human history, in every period of which we find plentiful evidence to support the existence of religious activity, and while this takes a great diversity of forms at different times and in different cultures and situations, there is no doubt that these forms display a unity which allows us to identify and draw parallels between these apparently very dissimilar phenomena that are present in the various religious traditions (Velasco 1982).

The definition of religion is a complex issue and one that has been addressed from different perspectives. It is not easy to explain what exactly the nature of the religious phenomenon consists in, and, given the ambiguity of the term, there is a want of consensus. As Díez de Velasco (1998) has observed, it encompasses extremes that range from the phenomenological definition, according to which religion is a 'universal phenomenon, innate and congenital to man, which makes the human being a *Homo religiosus*' (Díez de Velasco 1998:22) to those that, from an atheistic perspective, regard religion as an entirely human invention, following the line advanced by authors such as Feuerbach (1995) and Marx (2007) who regard religion as a process of alienation by which people seek an essence outside of themselves rather than finding it within, so that religion is the splitting of the human with respect to itself (Bautista 2002; Comstock 1981; UNESCO 2015).

It is accepted that the word 'religion' comes from the Latin verb *religare*, which means 'to unite, to tie'; and generally refers to the set of beliefs or dogmas concerning the divinity (which unite a group of people in so far as they share the same feelings of veneration and fear of God or the gods, as well as certain moral norms for individual and social conduct and certain ritual practices such as prayer and sacrifice).

The sacred spaces are those sites that serve in some way to articulate the relationship between the community and its religious practices and to manifest the relationship between the human and the transcendent, the divinity (reflecting again the uniting sense of *religare*). Traditionally, the concept of the sacred has been approached from sociology (Durkheim being the maximum exponent of this school), from phenomenology (with Otto being one of the most influential authors) and from hermeneutics and the comparative history of religions (Eliade's work in this field is of particular importance) (Ries 1989). Most authors agree on the difficulty of defining the term, and this being so, how can we know and talk about the sacred?

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the act of manifestation of the sacred,

we have proposed the term hierophany. It is a fitting term, because it does not imply anything further; it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, i.e. that *something sacred shows itself to us* (Eliade 1981, 10)

The history of religions is full of hierophanies. If the number of known religions is great, and these are different from each other, the phenomenon of the sacred is present, and shares common features, in all of them. Constructed, man-made sacred spaces are representations of these manifestations, either because the place in which they are located (the natural environment) is considered to be a manifestation of the divine, or because the construction as such embodies the different symbolisms of the sacred.

When we speak of sacred spaces, the concept of religious tourism will almost inevitably be referred to. Although some authors consider that religious tourism or travel for a religious purpose has been present in the history of humanity since the earliest times, it is clear that the motivation and characteristics have changed over the millennia. For example, the social and technological developments that facilitated the emergence of mass tourism also facilitated a vast increase in travel in general as well as travel for religious motives (Nolan and Nolan 1992; Blackwell 2007; Aulet and Hakobyan 2011; Raj and Griffin 2015).

Religious tourism takes many more forms than that of pilgrimage, and Cohen (1998), for example, makes it clear that many of the people who visit Israel go there not only to visit the sacred sites, but also for the Jewish atmosphere. He remarks, too, that while visits to the great cathedrals of Christianity are not pilgrimages, they should surely be regarded as religious tourism (Uriely 2005). It is interesting to note that the most visited tourist attraction in Europe is Notre-Dame de Paris, with 13 million visitors a year, and that six other churches – Mont Saint-Michel, the Sacré-Coeur Basilica, and the cathedrals of Rheims, Chartres, Vézelay and Sainte-Chapelle – are among the 20 most visited places in France (Bywater 1994).

2. Religious tourism and heritage

Where religious people have created a space of interaction with sacred powers, tourist practices can establish a place that is worth visiting (Bremer 2006, 25). It is undeniable that sacred places are visited by different people and for very different reasons, ranging from the faithful and those who seek to have a transcendental experience to those who are drawn there by factors as diverse as nature or art.

It could be said that the relations between tourism and religion are becoming increasingly close and the conceptual boundaries are becoming increasingly diffuse. The most visible connection between tourism and religion are the thousands of sacred buildings that are of interest to and are visited by tourists. It should be added, however, that the basis of this interest must increasingly be attributed to their cultural and historical value as heritage elements, rather than to their religious purpose (McGettigan 2003; Costa, Aulet, and Amat 2017).

The best-known classification of religious tourist attractions was published by Nolan and Nolan (1989), who propose a classification of religious tourism resources on the basis of three types that intersect with one another, these being pilgrimage temples, religious tourist attractions and places where religious festivals are held. The

difference between pilgrimage temples and religious tourist attractions is that the former is the object of pilgrimage travel and have little tourist value, while the latter is visited by tourists as well as devotees but are not considered places of pilgrimage. Nolan and Nolan include in this latter group the majority of monasteries and cathedrals, although it is evident that there are also pilgrimage temples which rank highly as tourist attractions. In fact, in these places, it is not unusual for tourists to outnumber pilgrims, as they are often famous for art, architecture and/or other features.

According to a study conducted by Future for Religious Heritage (2014), in Europe today, there are some half a million religious buildings (churches, temples, mosques, synagogues, etc.), most of which have a long history, a high-value heritage and a rich artistic content. Again according to this study, four out of every five Europeans consider the monumental religious heritage as an essential element of European identity that should be preserved for the future.

Although the original function of most sacred places is linked to religion, we could add another function, directly related to tourism, as proposed in Table 1, taking into account, moreover, that within the religious heritage, it is important to draw a clear distinction between the movable and the immovable heritage (Costa, Aulet, and Kanaan 2017).

In the case of religious heritage, it is clear that the original function (but not always the principal one) is to cater to the religious needs of the believers. The other, secular function can in some cases eclipse the religious function and can sometimes complement it. This second function can be applied to a group of religious elements which includes numerous buildings that are not of a religious character in the traditional sense of the word, and which in many cases belong to religious organizations and are also used by believers. These are buildings that can be included among the tourist services on offer and are used to cater in some way to visitors (regardless of their motivation): monasteries, convents, seminaries, religious schools and so on (Robles Salgado 2001; Petrillo 2003; Olsen and Timothy 2006).

The visitor to the sacred memorial may have two orientations: the maintenance of the cult in its original sense of religious respect; or the cult rendered to physical monuments of the collective memory (Riegl 1987).

In this context, MacCannell (1976) introduces the concept of authenticity. The tourists who look for authentic experiences are like secular pilgrims, seeking to endow life with meaning through these experiences that are lived in a different space than usual. An inauthentic attitude toward the place essentially amounts to having no sense of place, which implies not having an awareness of the deep symbolic significance of places and failing to appreciate their identity (Cresswell 2005).

Table 1. Classification of religious heritage in tourism.

	Movable heritage	Real estate
Religious function	Liturgical objects in use in religious spaces	Religious spaces and temples in use (property of religious communities)
Tourist-cultural function	Liturgical objects no longer in use, on display in museums	Religious spaces no longer in use/monuments (generally not belonging to religious communities) Ancillary buildings belonging to religious communities

In a religious place, the tourism discourse on authenticity coincides with this same discourse. In fact, ‘Tourists, every bit as much as devotees, have a keen interest in an authentic experience of the place’ (Bremer 2006, 32). When tourism and sacred spaces brought into contact, it is necessary to ensure that these places do not lose their identity and reason for being.

The cathedral as heritage tourism attraction is also sacred space, identified as such by the majority of its visitors even if they do not know the correct means of behaviour and are unable to articulate the significance of its seeming immutability as a component of their experience. It becomes important that the cathedral appears to be untouched by the modern world, even if in practical terms this is romantic, but impossible, as the building has been continually modified since its construction. The tourist, however, sees it as a space to be preserved rather than used, to be gazed upon but not changed (Urry 1990). (Shackley 2002, 350)

The insertion of tourism as an activity in these spaces can generate transformations in their territorial and environmental reality, as well as leaving a mark on the sociocultural characteristics that make them what they are.

The practice of tourism involves the consumption of places and their adaptation to accommodate tourism by systems of intermediation, interpretation, representation and transformation. Tourist sites need to be symbolically recognizable and to maintain a dialectic between what is safe and comfortable, on the one hand, and what is unknown and surprising, on the other. And this being so, they require appropriate forms and content (Anton Clavé et al. 2009).

The religious comprehension of a place creates a particular set of spaces, while tourist interpretations produce a different type of space. Certainly, this simultaneity of places offers abundant opportunities for superimposition and convergence: the sacred for the devotees, the aesthetic and commodified for the tourists.

Tourism development also creates new tensions, between the use of sites as tourist destinations and the maintenance of “sacralized” notions of space. There is a serious risk that some monasteries may find themselves “invaded” by increasing numbers of tourists. Songtseling, for instance, receives a large number of tour groups every year, and the sale of tickets to tourists is currently a key income source for the monastery, as well as a source of revenue for the county government. Economic concerns have led to a situation where tour groups and their guides have been admitted to the monastery from morning to evening, regardless of what rituals are being performed. It is obvious that the presence of tour groups and their guides wandering around the premises must be disturbing on some occasions. The monastery has issued complaints to the local government about this, but the problem is currently far from being solved. (Kola’s 2004, 274–275)

For this reason, some countries have adopted policies to discourage tourism. For example, the kingdom of Bhutan in the Himalayas has imposed controls on access to certain places, keeping visitors out to protect the indigenous culture. Bhutan has decided that the benefits deriving from tourism are outweighed by the problems it creates, which include the theft of relics, the desecration and looting of monasteries, and the corruption of the local population (Hough 1990).

Although devotees and tourists may occupy the same place at the same time, their practices are different and their respective interpretations of the site create different realities. In this way, the sacred spaces maintain what Bremer (2006) calls

simultaneity of space. An individual's experience may be transversal, spanning both religion and tourism, when tourists take part in religious activities or when the religious observances are what attract them to the sacred site.

Graburn (1983, 29), in relation to tourism, concludes that:

1. Tourism, although often dismissed as frivolous and superficial, is felt by millions of people to be a measure of their quality of life, and is an important and necessary compensation to achieve the balance that is lacking in their daily routine.
2. The behavior of tourists and their aspirations are direct or indirect indicators of what is significant and meaningful in people's lives, their perceptions, their class or group identity and their social aspirations.
3. The styles of tourism may be the main indicators of fundamental changes that lie latent in the more restrictive institutions of the everyday world, because tourism is the short portion of a person's life in which they feel free to indulge their fantasies, to improve physically and culturally, and to expand their horizons.

The forms of tourism linked to sacred spaces and to religion represent, from the tourist's point of view, a search for the authentic and an experience of the sacred. This is, then, tourism with spiritual connotations, which would alleviate the apparent ephemerality and lack of meaning of everyday life (Gil de Arriba 2006).

It follows that when we talk about sacred spaces and tourism we must allow for different typologies of tourism; rather than confine ourselves to religious tourism, we must extend the field of study to other types, such as cultural or spiritual tourism.

Man, as a social and cultural being, modifies his natural environment, constructing concrete and tangible material goods (architecture, cities, and objects). These expressions acquire complete meaning only when, above and beyond the object itself, their underlying value is revealed. At the same time, man also constructs another type of manifestation to which he gives a particular significance, and which are expressed in a preferentially intangible and immaterial way. These goods are the markers of an identity rooted in the past, actualized in the present and reinterpreted by successive generations, which have to do with everyday knowledge, familiar practices and social networks. (Carrera 2003)

We define religious tourism as a type of tourism which is primarily motivated by religion (whether in combination with other motivations or not); which has a religious place as a destination, and which may or may not be linked to participation in ceremonies and religious activities. The main difference between it and pilgrimage is that in the latter the path or route is an important part of the pilgrim's experience (Shackley 2006; Leppäkari 2008; Aulet and Hakobyan 2011; Ambrosio 2015; Raj and Griffin 2015).

The attitude of both the pilgrim and the religious tourist in a sacred space is one of veneration and respect, and both seek to have an experience that will put them in contact with the divinity and with a transcendental beyond (Parellada 2009).

Spiritual tourism refers to the type of recreational travel whose objective is to please the spirit, and is, therefore, emotionally satisfying. It may be religiously oriented or not, since in addition to the visiting of sacred spaces and participation in retreats or pilgrimage routes it can also be carried out in cultural and natural settings and include activities of relaxation and well-being for the body.

Alzamora (2006) outlines three visions of spirituality, namely as the innermost center of the person, as an opening to the infinite and encounter with mystery, and as an encounter with the other (the ethical dimension). According to this author, spiritual tourism is centered on valuing aspects strongly related to the experiences that one hopes to encounter at the sacred site (Olsen and Timothy 2006; Ron 2007; Jauhari and Sanjeev 2010; Willson, McIntosh, and Zahra 2013; Aulet 2018).

Cultural tourism is the type of recreational travel that takes people to specific cultural attractions, such as artistic heritage sites and cultural events, away from their usual place of residence, with the aim of acquiring new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs (Richards 1996; McGettigan 2003; Galí-Espelt 2012).

Art, in different ways in different individuals, acts as a powerful mental stimulant with intense effects.

Down through the centuries a special spiritual and cultural dimension has been attributed to art, which would in some way distinguish it from the more prosaic paths of happiness, mainly related to the sensory system. The “fine arts” would arouse positive emotional reactions, to so describe the pleasing and even euphoric sensations to which art can give rise, superior to merely sensory responses. (Punset and Ubach 2006, 168)

Here once again, then, art, religion and tourism are mixed, the common feature being that they can provide highly intense experiences, whether it be through contemplation, creation or participation in worship or cultic observances.

Olsen (2010) holds that classification in typologies is an outmoded approach on the basis of the supposed existence of *ideal types* (as theorized by Weber), and while this categorization may serve to identify regularities, we don't find ‘a religious tourist’ a ‘pilgrim’ in the pure state. The visitors to sacred spaces coexist and share their different degrees of intensity in their respective forms of religious, cultural and spiritual experience (Aulet 2012).

The identification of these parameters or regularities between different types of visitor should be a basis for better management of sacred spaces and help to avoid such conflicts as may arise between different expectations. In fact, as Collins-Kreiner notes:

Davie finds that tourists who visit European cathedrals and other historic churches – even if part of the so-called heritage industry – have a distinctive approach to visiting religious buildings. First, they view them as public spaces that should be free to access. Second, they tend to view visiting such spaces as different from visits to museums or heritage centers. There is evidence of an unclear search for what might be called some form of “spiritual experience. (Collins-Kreiner 2010, 156)

3. The religious heritage, the relationship between sacred space and sacred time

Sacred spaces and religious sites can be studied from different perspectives. The approach proposed takes into account the relationship between the tangible and the intangible heritage, that is, between sacred space and sacred time (rituals being regarded as part of the intangible heritage).

In general, when reference is made to sacred spaces or to sacred time, reference is made to heritage elements. The concept of cultural heritage can be very broad, it is a

complex and difficult to define and has changed over time. The World Conference on Cultural Policies organized by UNESCO in 1982 in Mexico defined the cultural heritage of a people as that which includes:

[...] the works of its artists, architects, musicians, writers and scientists and also the work of anonymous artists, expressions of the people's spirituality, and the body of values which give meaning to life. It includes both tangible and intangible works through which the creativity of that people finds expression: languages, rites, beliefs, historic places and monuments, literature, works of art, archives and libraries. (UNESCO 1982)

Subsequently, in 2003, UNESCO introduced the concept of the intangible heritage, understanding it as the various forms of traditional and popular or folk culture, including customs, rites and festivals.

The intangible cultural heritage (Carrera 2003; Vecco 2010) is:

- Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time: intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part.
- Inclusive: we may share expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are similar to those practiced by others. Whether they are from the neighboring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are intangible cultural heritage: they have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and they contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future.
- Representative: intangible cultural heritage is not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis, for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities.
- Community-based: intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage.

Sacred spaces are constituted of movable and immovable elements, but at the same time they have a function in worship that is related to rites and festivals, including elements of the tangible heritage and intangible heritage (buildings and monuments, artistic objects, and also texts, legends, rites and so on).

The cultural heritage has a clear significance in terms of cultural identity, and the religious heritage, in its various manifestations (tangible and intangible), is a good example of this. In fact, to speak of sacred sites or religious sites is to refer to places rather than spaces. It should be noted that the concept of place is endowed with a specific meaning that clearly differentiates it from that of space. The place is 'a certain portion of space'. Cresswell (2005, 7) defines the place as a meaningful location, as a way of looking, of knowing and of understanding the world.

The place not only has a location (it must be located in a physical space) and a visible material form; it must also have some relationship with human beings and the human capacity to produce and absorb meaning. Drawing on the theories of Agnew, Cresswell (2005) refers to the 'sense of place' as the emotional and subjective link that people have with a place. Shackley (2001) uses the term 'spirit of the place' to refer to the atmosphere that surrounds the sacred space – an atmosphere that can be affected by the inappropriate behavior of tourists and/or visitors. Seamon and Sowers (2008) adopt the idea put forward by Relph (in *Place and Placelessness*) that the essence of the place is its definition as the center of human existence. Sacred spaces or religious heritage sites have a strong symbology and acquire a strong emotional and experiential component.

According to Bremer (2006), there are two fundamental characteristics of the place: that it is a social construct and that it manifests a temporal dimension. Every religion constructs space and time through its specific ontological commitments, and it follows from this that, in order to understand the nature of religious landscapes, representations and practices, it is necessary to contextualize these within the religion's temporal and spatial framework (Brace, Bailey, and Harvey 2006).

Sacred spaces must be read in light of the idea of a site that is located in space and time and has a meaning for a group. This concept generates a strong sense of identity and belonging.

At the same time, a clear distinction is established between sacred spaces and profane spaces. The sacred appears as a stable or ephemeral property of certain things (cultic objects), certain real human beings (priests), imagined beings (gods, spirits), certain animals (sacred cows), certain spaces (temples, holy places) and certain periods or times of the year (Holy Week, Ramadan). A difference is also established between space and time, in that we can speak of sacred space and profane space and of sacred time and profane time. These concepts are closely related (Eliade 1981; Durkheim 1993; Brace, Bailey, and Harvey 2006; Aulet 2009).

It follows, therefore, that the tangible religious heritage is formed by those movable and immovable elements that make up the material heritage of the church. This tangible heritage represents in some degree the sacred space and reproduces, among other things, all the symbolisms of the sacred. This heritage also includes those objects of the movable heritage, such as paintings, altarpieces, ornamentation and elements of the liturgy, which can be classed as artworks.... Tangible religious heritage can at the same time represent an interest in art, architecture or history above and beyond purely religious interest; it can also be linked to motivations which are largely but not exclusively secular (such as cultural tourism, for example).

In contradistinction to the above, the intangible religious heritage is made up of the rites, cults and events that take place in these sacred spaces. We could say that this heritage is a clear manifestation of sacred time, of the devotion of the people toward a certain element and of the rites of integration practiced in these places, and we could, therefore, associate these elements with a strictly religious motivation.

In accordance with what has been seen so far, the values of the religious heritage can be both monumental and religious: in other words, these are spaces that enhance the value of cultural and historical elements (architecture, for example) and religious

elements (their value of use and of worship as sacred spaces). As we can see in [Figure 1](#), different relationships can be established between the tangible and intangible heritage, or between the monumental value and the value of worship of sacred spaces. It can be observed that in broad outline there are four possible relationships between sacred time and sacred space. Emblematic sacred places are those that have a high monumental value and are also used as places of worship. In addition, there are also elements where the intangible heritage clearly possesses greater values than the tangible, and these have been called sacred spaces of worship, in which the religious function is primary. In contrast, in the monumental sacred spaces, the tangible heritage values (monumental and artistic) outweigh all other values. The fourth typology encompasses those elements in which values of worship as well as monumental values are of little or no importance in comparison with other heritage spaces.

The case study is the basis for the attempt to identify which elements of the Catalan religious heritage are identified with the different typologies and establish what relationship they have with the transmission of the different heritage and worship values.

4. Case study: Catalonia sacra

The starting hypothesis, as has been said, is that at present there are many elements related to the religious heritage whose use as places of worship has been lost, wholly or in part. What is more, some of these elements may have great value as sacred spaces but at the same time be of little value as places of worship (sacred time), and vice versa.

What is proposed is an analysis of the different elements of the Catalan religious heritage in order to determine the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage, between sacred space and sacred time, and between cultural and historical motivations and religious motivations. This study has confined itself, in this first phase, to analyzing the spaces but not their users.

The Catalonia Sacra project, which seeks to articulate the tourist routes of the Heritage of the Catholic Church in Catalonia, is an initiative of Interdiocesan Secretariat for the Custody and Promotion of the Sacred Art of Catalonia (SICPAS), co-financed by the Tarraconense Episcopal Conference and the Generalitat de Catalunya through its

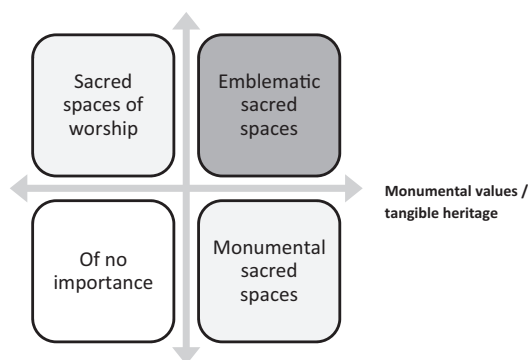


Figure 1. Relation of tangible heritage and intangible heritage in sacred spaces (Source: the authors).

DGT Office of Tourism. The elaboration of the project has been coordinated by Dr Dolors Vidal at the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Girona.

As part of this valorization of the church's heritage, each of the Catalan dioceses proposed a series of religious heritage elements (between 20 and 60 per diocese). It is worth noting here the lack of homogeneity of the dioceses in terms of size, with some extending over a large geographical territory (such as Urgell) and including areas to which access is difficult, while others are much smaller and better connected (for example, Barcelona or Terrassa). This disparity is reflected in the choice of assets, in that there are large dioceses covering more terrain and possessing more assets for which the selection is more difficult. In total, 325 items were selected.

The selection of the different religious heritage elements has been carried out by the heritage delegation in each diocese. This being so, the criteria vary from one diocese to another, but in general the choice has taken into account the extent to which the element is important and representative of the diocese and suitable for inclusion in a proposed itinerary.

As can be seen in [Figure 2](#), the great majority of these elements are religious buildings with a corresponding religious function (churches, chapels and hermitages, cathedrals, mainly), with varying degrees of importance in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In this group, it is worth noting the remarkable presence of monasteries, in which there are communities of monks and nuns (9.5%), and of sanctuaries and shrines, which although they are not parish churches are in many cases emblematic places of pilgrimage (7%). It is also worth mentioning the presence of elements with no religious function (around 4%), in the form of museums or buildings with civil uses, such as former pilgrims' hospitals, which are part of the religious heritage of the church.

A database has been created to collect the most significant data in order to make known the religious heritage elements proposed by each diocese. This database is intended as a consultation and management tool, not as an exhaustive inventory of the religious heritage, and has been the principal resource for the development of this

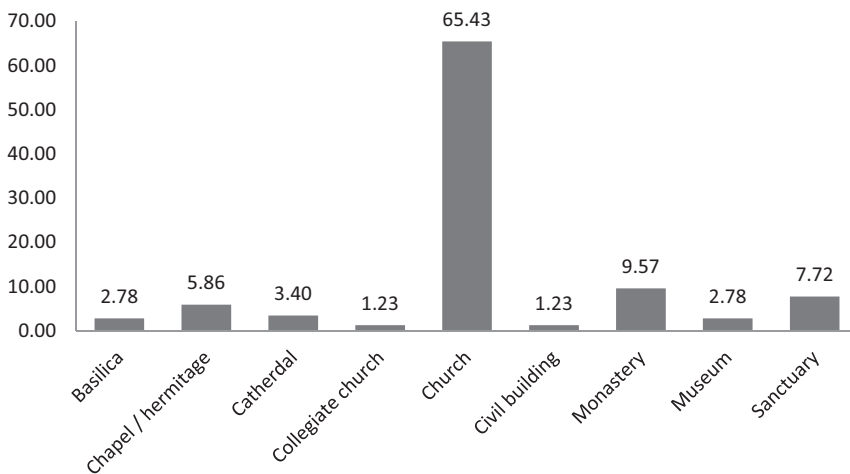


Figure 2. Elements of the religious heritage by typology (in %) (Source: the authors, based on data from the Catalonia Sacra project).

research. While it is not an inventory of assets, in addition to collecting data on the movable and immovable religious heritage elements of the database also reflects its particularities, thereby greatly enhancing its potential value as a tool. The methodology adopted for the collection of data combined site visits and face-to-face interviews with the people responsible for the spaces with extensive documentary research in archives and libraries on published material relating to the sites.

In order to analyze the relationship between the tangible and intangible elements of the church's heritage, a series of parameters have been defined from which to assign a numerical value reflecting the importance of the different aspects analyzed.

The tangible heritage as a representation of the sacred space

In order to determine the importance of the tangible heritage from the collected data, different parameters have been taken into account, such as the level of protection and the elements of special interest.

Table 2 sets out the criteria taken into account in analyzing the importance of the tangible heritage. Although it is difficult to draw up an index in order to give value to tangible assets, an index has been drawn up that contemplates different elements and allows a certain hierarchy of these heritage elements. Some of the best-known and used systems in the inventory and hierarchy of tourist resources are those proposed by the Organization of American States (Navarro 2015) or the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2015). In both cases, they are based on different criteria to establish the relevance of both natural and cultural resources in a territory. In this case of study, the objective is to have a numerical value that allows the subsequent comparison with other parameters such as the importance of intangible heritage. In this sense, they have been taken into account from the forms of heritage protection (World Heritage, BCIN/Cultural Assets of National Interest, local authority protected, or unlisted); as well as, the architectural and artistic significance of each space has been evaluated on the basis of the generic description and the information obtained from various published materials and archival sources, and the historical period, the relative importance of the element in its period, the presence of some unique or emblematic feature (movable or immovable) and so on have been taken into account in some way.

In order to determine the valuation of the tangible heritage of the church, on the basis of the aforementioned criteria, the values assigned according to the level of protection and the most prominent elements have been added on. The result is a ranking of tangible assets on a scale from 0 to 10. A value of 0 means that the element does not have any

Table 2. List of criteria analyzed in relation to monumental or tangible heritage value.

Aspect analyzed	Criterion
UNESCO World Heritage Site	Yes/no
Level of protection	National/regional/local/without protection
Architectural heritage elements of note featured in the description of the monument	Number of elements
Movable heritage elements of note inventoried	Number of elements
Included in art history catalogues and reference books	International/national/regional/local/not included
Elements of note included in promotional materials	International/national/regional/local/not included

Source: The authors.

measure of protected status or any element of outstanding value or importance, while a value of 10 means that it enjoys one or more measure of official protection and also has one or more elements of special value from a heritage point of view.

The results of these evaluations can be seen and compared in Figure 3.

As we can see, with regard to tangible assets, most of the elements have a score of less than 5 (63.07%). It should also be noted that 53.24% of the elements are between 3 and 5, and in fact, the median score is 4.

It is worth remarking that only 4.62% of the elements have a heritage value of zero or less than 1, while 13% of elements have a value of 7 or 8, which can be considered outstanding, although it is true that there are very few elements in the highest ranks of the table: those with a score of 9 and above amount to less than 1%.

The average value is 3.79, with a standard deviation of 2.23, which in view of the number of elements in the sample – 325 – is a significantly low figure. The religious heritage of the church in Catalonia is very extensive, and as a result, the artistic and architectural importance of all the many elements is not homogeneous, as we have seen, and includes elements of exceptional importance alongside others that are not so highly valued.

The built heritage of the church in Catalonia is large and varied in terms of typology. The history of Catalonia dates from around the year 900 CE, when Wilfred the Hairy (Guifré el Pelós) broke with the Frankish kings and founded the hereditary earldom of Barcelona. The creation of the first Catalan counties is clearly related both to the profusion of Romanesque churches (10th c.) and to the founding of monasteries and abbeys. The repopulation of the lands of New Catalonia sometime later is also linked to monasteries. The development of Gothic art, which in Catalonia presents certain specific features in relation to architectural trends in the rest of Europe, coincides with a period of rapid economic and cultural growth. It was at this time that Catalan expansion across the Mediterranean was consolidated and the first institutions of government were established.

At the same time, however, the values noted above are also conditioned by the use that is made of this heritage and by the importance of cult values, which are considered below.

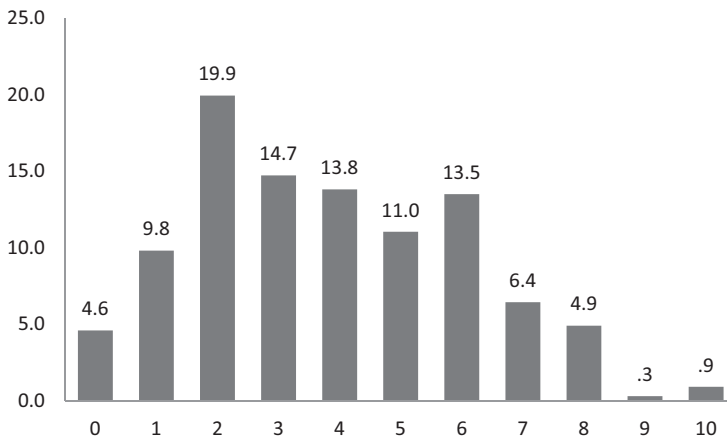


Figure 3. Assessment of the tangible heritage in percentages (Source: the authors, on the basis of data from the Catalonia Sacra project).

The intangible heritage as a representation of sacred time

Sacred time is the time in which the rites and ceremonies related to worship are carried out. These aspects have been incorporated into the database as instances of the intangible heritage and manifestations of popular culture. As has been seen, UNESCO defines the intangible heritage as those practices, representations and expressions, knowledge and techniques, which provide communities, groups and individuals with a sense of identity and continuity.

As in the case of the tangible heritage, it is no simple matter to define a set of criteria with which to quantify the cultic or worship value of the religious heritage, and the aim here is not so much to be exhaustive as to arrive at orientative values that allow for a comparison/correlation with the values obtained in the previous section. The various elements that have been taken into account are mentioned in Table 3. For example, in order to identify the importance and relevance of the intangible heritage in this case study, liturgical celebrations and masses and the frequency of these, and whether there are gatherings, pilgrimages, processions, acts of popular devotion and so on, have been taken into account. For example, note is taken of whether worship is performed regularly and frequently (daily, weekly) or on a more occasional basis (monthly, annually).

Other elements that have been taken into account, other than worship and its regularity, are other liturgical acts such as the celebration of the different sacraments (such as Baptism or Marriage), the celebration of the Divine Office or the celebration of other acts such as the Rosary prayers. Another element that has been taken into account in order to assess the importance and continuance of rituals in sacred spaces is the manifestation of different forms of popular devotion and the celebration of festivities, which, therefore, form an important part of this intangible heritage. Many of these elements are linked to what is known as popular religiosity. In order to be able to evaluate all these aspects, we have worked with data referring to gatherings, principal Saint's Day festivals, pilgrimages, nativity scenes, legends and so on. These data were extracted from direct observation of the sites, from information on these acts found on official pages such as the respective bishoprics, and from interviews with the managers and/or parish priests of the sites.

The result is measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being assigned where no kind of worship or cult activity is performed, and 10 where acts of popular devotion take place in addition to regular and frequent worship or cult activities.

Looking at Figure 4, we see at a glance that none of the rankings clearly predominates over the others, and that, especially for the scores in the middle range, there is little divergence in the rate of incidence.

Table 3. List of criteria analyzed in relation to the religious value of the intangible heritage.

Aspect analyzed	Criterion
Celebration of mass	Daily/weekly/monthly/sporadic/not available
Celebration of other liturgical acts	Type of liturgical events celebrated Frequency of celebration
Manifestations of popular devotion	Typology and number of samples of popular devotion Frequency of celebration
Presence of pilgrimages and processions	Yes/No Approximate number
Devotional area	International/national/regional/local

Source: The authors.

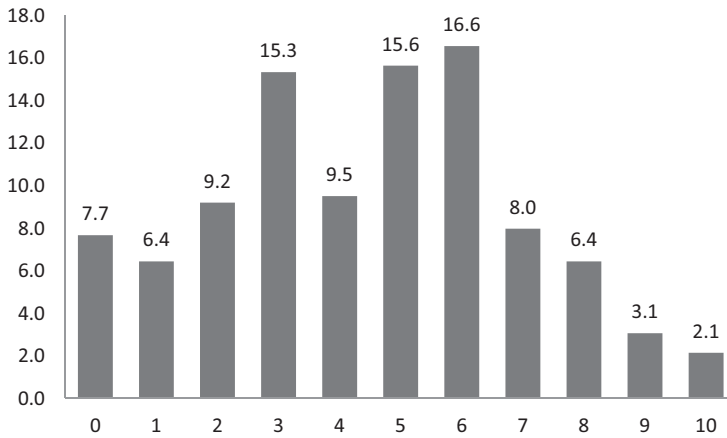


Figure 4. Assessment of the intangible heritage (liturgical acts and popular religiosity) in percentages (Source: the authors on the basis of data from the Catalonia Sacra project).

At the same time, we see that some 23% of elements have a score of 2 or less. In general, these are elements which do not have a worship or cult function (museums, for example), but also included here are elements in which there is usually no practice of worship or cult but there are occasional cult events or instances of what we have called popular religiosity, especially in the case of shrines and hermitages.

We can also see that some 65% of the elements here score in the range from 3 to 7, which is to say that there is regular and more or less frequent worship or cult practice, complemented by other instances of popular devotion.

Meanwhile, the small number of elements that rank near the top of the assessment scale (none scores a 10) suggest that there are very few elements that span the whole range of religious acts capable of being celebrated.

In general, and leaving aside the type of elements that have lost their former religious function, these are spaces in which religious worship and values are conserved as a living presence.

Reflections on the case study

If we compare the data obtained, we can appreciate the relative importance of tangible and intangible assets. ICOMOS emphasizes the dialectical nature of the relationship between the material and intangible heritage. The two types of heritage – the tangible and the intangible – make up the cultural heritage, and their relation to each other is dialectic in that the tangible element only manifests itself in all its richness when it reveals the intangible soul, while the intangible becomes closer and more apprehensible on being expressed through the support of that material (Manuel 2006).

The intangible heritage permeates every aspect of human life and is present in all of the assets that make up the cultural heritage: monuments, objects, landscapes and places. All of these elements, which are products of human creativity and thus cultural phenomena, are inherited, transmitted, modified and optimized, between one individual and another and from generation to generation (Carrera 2003; Maronese 2004; Mitchell, Rössler, and Tricaud 2009; Vecco 2010).

From all that has been said it can be concluded that the distinction between tangible and intangible assets is not absolute, given that the two categories are continuous and will overlap at times, and that there are intangible values underlying the material elements of the cultural heritage (Manuel 2006). This fact is especially evident in the case of the religious heritage.

As a general principle, the tangible and intangible aspects of the elements analyzed are or should be complementary, because the devotion of a community to the Virgin Mary cannot be explained if there is no physical image of her in the sacred space, and, conversely, the architectural structure of sacred temples and spaces is not readily explicable without some understanding (as we have seen) of the role they play in acts of worship.

As was identified in Figure 1, and can be seen in Figure 5, different relationships can be established between the tangible and intangible heritage, or between the monumental value and the cultic or worship value of sacred spaces. In accordance with the established criteria, it clearly emerges that the majority of religious heritage elements analyzed (a little over 50%) are located in the quadrant ‘of no importance’. The religious heritage of the church is very broad, and the elements studied, as a representative sample of this wealth of heritage, demonstrate not only that the religious

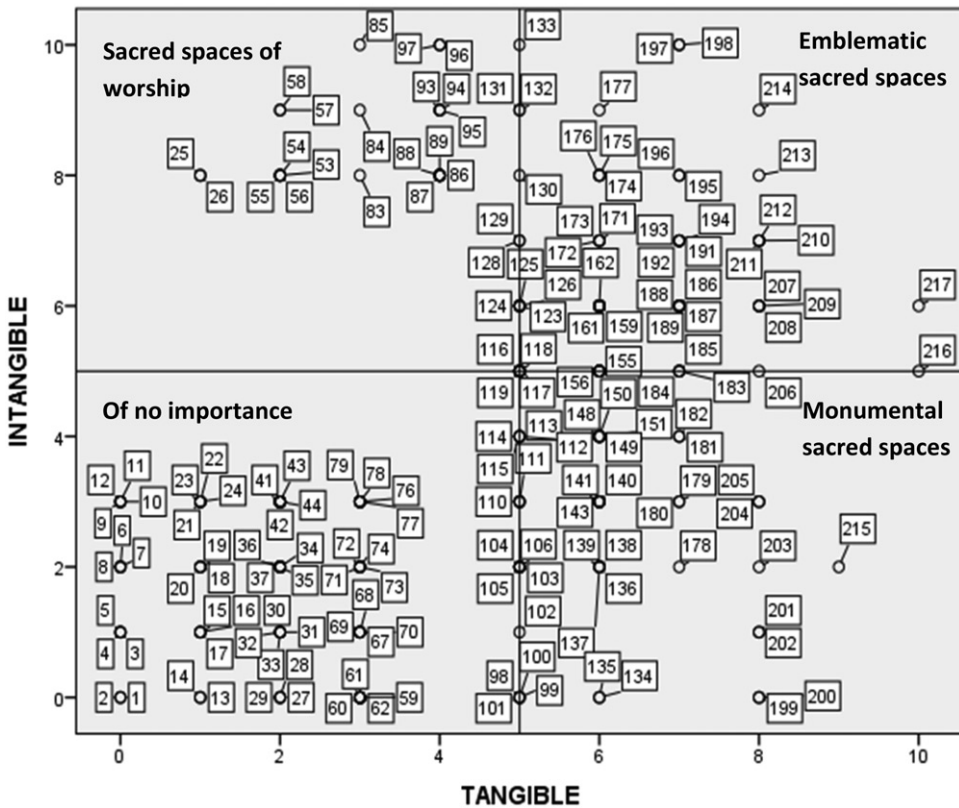


Figure 5. Relationship between tangible and intangible heritage in the elements of the religious heritage analyzed (Source: the authors on the basis of data from the Catalonia Sacra project).

heritage is very extensive but also that only a few of its constituent elements stand out from the rest, either for their value as places of worship or for their monumental and artistic values. The present context in many parts of the European continent is one of 'secularisation', marked by an increasing abandonment of the cultic function of many of these spaces, and at the same time by the problem of how to conserve them, given that a great number of these elements date from between the 11th century and the 17th. The majority of sacred spaces in the case study date from the Romanesque period (10th–12th centuries) and the Gothic period (13th–15th centuries), in which a very great number of religious buildings were constructed, but by no means all of these are of great historical or cultural significance. Nevertheless, these are spaces whose heritage value and cultural value are clearly related to their religious function and, therefore, they are also spaces with which the local community identifies in some significant way.

As we can see in Figure 6, the next most prevalent typology, corresponding to 23% of the elements analyzed, is that of monumental sacred spaces. Monumental sacred spaces are those where the tangible heritage clearly outweighs the intangible heritage, which may be negligible or even nonexistent. In this case, there is little or no practice of religious observance in the elements under consideration, which are valued or visited above all for the importance of tangible heritage, so that they have to some extent lost their original reason for being. At one extreme of this category we find episcopal museums, which conserve and exhibit important examples of sacred art which have lost their original function on being removed from a center of worship to be put on public display as part of a collection; one example is the Museu d'Art de Girona, and other notable examples are the ensemble of Romanesque churches in the Vall de Boí and the Seu Vella, the Old Cathedral in Lleida. In some cases, it might be necessary to consider whether such places have not been excessively musealized and all but converted into theme parks.

Based on the observation of the spaces and the interviews, it has been shown that many of these sites offer resources to aid interpretation (in most cases in the form of

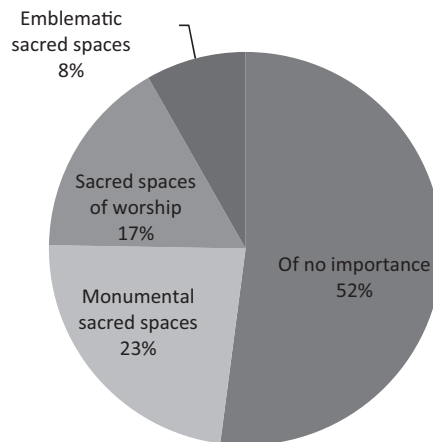


Figure 6. Assessment of religious spaces in terms of the relation between monumental value and cultural value, in percentages (Source: the authors).

audio guides, display panels or guided tours), and while these foster appreciation of the value of their monumental elements (architecture, movable heritage) they do little to enhance an awareness of the religious and cultic values. In some cases, there has been a musealization of the monumental sacred space. There is a good example of this in the Vall de Boí, where an audio-visual project explains the process of painting the frescos in the apse of the little church but offers no explanation of their religious or symbolic value. At the same time, interviews with the people responsible for some of these sites made it clear that the majority of visitors are primarily interested in these monumental values.

At the other extreme of this category, we find sacred spaces of worship (17%), elements where the intangible heritage is of greater importance than the tangible heritage. While the elements under consideration here may be of little relevance from the point of view of history or the history of art, they keep alive a strong tradition of popular devotion. Examples of such spaces would be the little rural churches and shrines or sanctuaries, which engender a profound sense of popular devotion which keeps alive the acts of worship there. Good examples of this type include the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Núria, the Sanctuary of the Miracle and the Holy Christ of Balaguer.

On the basis of the interviews carried out, we can say that in general this type of space is mostly visited by people who live in a radius of proximity and make relatively frequent visits (between once a month and once a year) for motives related to the site's religious values: they attend liturgical acts, take part in pilgrimages or simply attend the church to pray to the Virgin (most of them are Marian spaces). It is unusual for such spaces to display information about the religious values associated with them: instead, these values are transmitted by word of mouth, and often by family tradition. In these spaces, the priest or the person responsible for the running of the place plays a very important role in the reception of visitors and in the transmission of these religious values.

In this group of elements, there is no risk of possible conflict between devotees and visitors, *a priori*, because the number of visitors is smaller. However, it should be noted that the value of religious use is high, so that the degree of sensitivity or susceptibility of the faithful may also be high. Where this is the case, it would be necessary to devise suitable strategies for reconciling the two types of interest and, above all, to highlight the intangible heritage to enable visitors to appreciate the nature of the place they are visiting.

Emblematic sacred places are those spaces where both the tangible and the intangible heritage have a significant presence. The paradigmatic example would be a cathedral, which has a rich tangible heritage, made up of monumental buildings of historical, architectural and artistic importance (and more) and at the same time continues to exercise its function as a place of worship, with the added value that it receives a greater than average number of visitors. Nevertheless, we emphasize that among the elements studied only one cathedral, Tarragona, is found in this group, next to the Monastery of Montserrat. In fact, this group of elements constitutes a very small percentage of the total number of elements studied (8%).

These emblematic sacred places tend to attract a considerable number of secular visitors and tourists who share the space with the faithful. The range of motives for

visiting such spaces is considerably broader than in previous cases, and the interviews with the people responsible for these heritage elements indicate that there tends to be considerable diversity in terms of the place of origin and motivation of the visitors. These elements, like the monumental sacred spaces, are usually equipped with resources to aid interpretation and enhance appreciation of their artistic and architectural aspects, and most of them also promote these values through other channels (both online and offline). It is also the case, however, that in common with the sacred spaces of worship they are places with vital links to the religious roots and traditions of the local community, and these values are transmitted in an oral way (mention was made in [Section 3](#) of the fact that the intangible heritage is very often transmitted orally from generation to generation).

It is our opinion that these emblematic sacred places need to ensure the compatibility of the practice of religious observance with the reception of visitors, given that their monumental values generally make them major tourist attractions at the same time as they are centers of religious faith.

5. Conclusions and discussions

The aim of this section is to reflect on the relations between the tangible and intangible heritage in religious spaces or, in other words, between the monumental value and the cultural value of these and to analyze how these relations influence the transfer of heritage values. To this end, 325 elements of the Catalan religious heritage have been analyzed with a view to identifying guidelines for forms of management capable of guaranteeing sustainability and improving the quality of the visitors' experience.

The sacred can be manifested both in the form of sacred space and in the form of sacred time, but we generally tend to associate sacred spaces with the tangible heritage, and to associate sacred time with manifestations of the intangible heritage: those aspects related to worship, rites and so on. As [Section 3](#) set out to show, the religious heritage is clearly bound up with identity and with the notion of a place's meaningfulness. This is especially evident in those elements analyzed where the intangible heritage (values of worship) is particularly significant, as spaces vitally connected to the traditions (both collective and individual) of the local community.

Sacred spaces are complex realities whose internal dynamics must be studied from a multidisciplinary and transversal perspective that draws on anthropology, sociology, theology, philosophy, tourism, culture and more.

However, the information thus obtained is not sufficient in its own right, and analysis of other aspects is required for a fully nuanced representation of the relation between these spaces and their users (devotees and/or visitors) and of the relation between these spaces and tourism.

Another of the elements analyzed in terms of this transmission of heritage values is the importance of the monumental value (architectural and artistic) that some elements of the religious heritage possess. It is clear that the transmission of these values is more purposive (through a variety of interpretative resources) and as a result, these spaces should, according to Nolan and Nolan (1989), be regarded as religious tourist

attractions. At this point, it is interesting to reflect on the concept of authenticity introduced by authors such as MacCannell (1976) or Shackley (2002): to what extent can elements that have lost (totally or partially) their value of worship be considered authentic in the sense that they still answer to their original function? We might recall here that authors such as Hough (1990) have raised the possibility of adopting policies to limit or exclude tourism in order to preserve these spaces.

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from this research, and from the interviews with people in charge of these elements of religious heritage, has to do with behavior: it is clearly the case that visitors ought to treat the space and all of its users with respect, but this does not always happen. Visitors should behave in an appropriate manner, both to preserve the nature and spirit of the place (dressing suitably, keeping noise to a minimum, not interfering with religious activities ...) and to conserve it (avoiding the kinds of deliberate damage mentioned above). This being so we must make proposals that will enable pilgrims and visitors to be enriched by their visits to sacred spaces, highlighting the value of the tangible and intangible elements. Collins-Kreiner (2010) notes the importance of understanding who the different types of visitors are as a basis for better management. This might entail producing informative material such as guides and brochures, publishing monographs and providing explanatory panels, signage and guided visits, and extend to scientific meetings, study courses, specialized conferences, adequately stocked libraries, appropriate periodicals, audio-visuals, artworks and poetry, sacred performances, concerts, exhibitions and more ... These materials, which are already being produced and made available to enhance the appreciation of monumental values, should be extended to include the intangible values and those aspects related to the religious and spiritual nature of the elements of our religious heritage.

To cite Eliade:

To whatever degree he may have desacralized the world, the man who has made his choice in favour of a profane life never succeeds in completely doing away with religious behaviour. It will appear that even the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of a religious valorization of the world. (Eliade 1981, 16)

An interest in the culture of another people often determines a tourist's choice of destination. Tourism offers the possibility of first-hand knowledge, of cultural dialogue without intermediaries, which allows the visitor and the host to discover their respective riches. This cultural dialogue, which fosters peace and solidarity, is one of the most precious assets that derive from tourism. Authentic dialogue will contribute, among other things, to the conservation and valorization of the artistic and cultural heritage of the world's peoples.

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