

Conservation of Architectural Heritage in India: The Fundação Oriente Experience

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ABSTRACT: In the course of the last decade Fundação Oriente has been involved in several projects of heritage conservation in India. The present paper presents that experience by looking at the way a sponsor and promoter of heritage conservation – in this case Fundação Oriente – has to deal with the different dimensions involved in a conservation project.

1 FUNDAÇÃO ORIENTE AND ITS HERITAGE CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN INDIA

Fundação Oriente is a Portuguese private trust institutionalized in 1988 with headquarters in Lisbon, Portugal, and Delegations in China (Macao), India (Goa) and East Timor (Dili). Fundação Oriente aims to carry out and support activities of a cultural, artistic, scientific, social and philanthropic nature, in order to maintain and strengthen the historical and cultural ties between Portugal and Asian countries.

1.1 Fundação Oriente activities

Through all these years Fundação Oriente has been sponsoring a varied span of artistic, scientific and other cultural activities, including:

- Exhibitions of Portuguese artists in India and Indian artists in Portugal, India and other countries.
- Performances by Portuguese artists in India and Indian artists in Portugal and other countries.
- The publication of books, music compact disks, and other cultural media products.
- Heritage conservation.
- Research projects.
- Scholarships for Indians, Portuguese nationals and citizens of other countries willing to pursue studies, research or apprenticeship in Portugal or in India.
- Activities carried out by organizations dedicated to social welfare and philanthropy.
- Workshops, conferences, seminars, teaching and training.

Fundação Oriente started to operate in India in the year 1992 under the supervision of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. In 1995 Fundação Oriente established an office in India located in Fontainhas, Panjim, Goa.

1.2 Activities in heritage conservation

As mentioned above, one of the domains where Fundação Oriente has an intervention is heritage conservation, including the restoration or renovation of heritage structures. In this field there is a set of principles that direct our action:

- Focus on relevant heritage sites. The decision to fund or manage a heritage conservation project is based on the architectonic, historical, artistic or cultural value of the site. Priority is given to sites of Portuguese origin or related to Portugal. Often we look forward to protected monuments or to sites that are of high importance even if not listed in the local protection regulations. We also focus on projects in critical need of conservation either because of the dilapidated state of the structure or because of threads of demolition and similar hazards.
- Supportive or catalyst role. Fundação Oriente, not being an institution specifically dedicated to heritage conservation directs its activities in this field to the support of entities that have as their mission the promotion of heritage conservation. We also focus on projects that may act as catalysts to further actions of heritage conservation by other parties.
- Intervention on request. A consequence of the previous point, we don't take the initiative to present projects in this field. Instead we address requests that are presented to us by the owners of the structures or other interested and legitimate parties.
- Partnership with public sector or major private institutions. Preference is given to projects in partnership with local public authorities, or with major cultural or social private institutions. These partnerships are institutionalized and formalized in terms of a memorandum of understanding, contract or whatever other instrument is considered appropriate.
- Financial, technical and management contribution. We may consider several levels of involvement with the projects that are presented to us, including:
 - Pure financial sponsorship where our contribution is exclusively in terms of funding the project.
 - Technical resources contribution. In this case we provide technical expertise. Since we don't have our own technical staff this usually means we outsource that expertise.
 - Project management, where we manage the full heritage conservation project from its conception to the end. Once more, this usually implies the outsourcing of all functions except for project coordination and financing.
- Development of local capabilities. In our projects we try to use as much as possible local expertise. If we need to bring experts from outside we have them working with local people in order to enhance the capabilities of the latter.
- Conservation and after. In our projects we always consider what happens after their completion. We prefer to be involved with projects where the future upkeep of the structure is ensured or where the structure will be-reused in a sustainable way, specially if the renovation is for cultural purposes.

2 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION PROJECTS NOT REQUIRING STRUCTURAL CONSERVATION

Most projects we have been involved with did not involve structural conservation. Here goes a brief description of the major ones:

2.1 *Customs House*

The building that houses the Customs Office was built in 1834 and is located on the waterfront by the river Mandovi. The Custom House or Alfandega of the pre-liberation days wore a very dilapidated look as a cumulative result of poor maintenance and insensitive interventions over the years to accommodate changing spatial requirements. The addition of modern equipment like air-conditioners and exposed plumbing had also lead to considerable damage to the façade.

The request for this restoration work was made in May 1997 by Mr. P. Subramani, the then Commissioner of Customs. Since the customs office could not be closed, the project only included the external architectural restoration. Fundação Oriente managed the project that was carried forward in 1998-1999 by a local contractor under the direction of a local team of architects.

The windows on the façade along with its cast iron railings were repaired or replaced to its original details and the numerous air-conditioners were discretely relocated behind the cast iron railings and all exposed drainage and plumbing lines were concealed within the walls. The entrance archway was restored to its original character after the removal of the polished granite cladding that was introduced there not very long ago. New permanent weather shades of durable metal sheets were introduced in place of the old temporary cast iron corrugated sheets keeping in mind the long term maintenance convenience.

The façade was repaired and re-plastered where needed using a plaster made of lime, sand and a small quantity of cement and then painted with a shade of the traditional ultramarine blue, which contributed immensely to give a facelift not only to the building but to the precinct as a whole.

2.2 *Police Headquarters*

The present Goa Police Headquarters came into existence during the period of governance of D. Manoel de Portugal e Castro, the 51st Viceroy (1827-35). The entire police complex was built with materials that were retrieved from buildings and churches ordered to be demolished after 1811 at Old Goa and brought to Panjim. The building itself was completed over a span of several years.

The proposal for the restoration of the façade of the Police Headquarters was initiated by Mr. Qamar Ahmed, IPS, who was the Dy. Inspector General of Police, Goa at the time. Approval for the project was also given by the Home Department, Government of Goa.

The project, managed by Fundação Oriente and executed by a local contractor under the guidance of a local team of architects (the same that directed the works at the Customs House), was executed in the year 2000. It only included the architectural renovation of the façade.

The one hundred and twenty meters long façade has a rhythmic arrangement of windows on each of its two stories. The intricately designed grills on the windows of the ground floor (a relatively recent addition) were replaced by new ones with an unobstrusive design and the ones on the upper floor were removed and the windows and its architraves were repaired. Modifications were made to some of the windows to accommodate air-conditioners behind cast iron railings. The façade was painted in a shade of yellow ochre with white used to emphasize details. The footpath along the building was renovated using pre-cast concrete curbs and paver blocks and cast iron lamp posts were introduced to enliven the street.

2.3 *Saptakoteshwar temple*

The Saptakoteshwar Temple has great historical importance and is a State Protected Monument. The Original temple, which was situated in the island of Divar, was the favoured deity of the Kadamba Kings. The present structure located at Narve in Bicholim, which has a linga of Lord Shiva (known as Dharlinga), was renovated by King Chhatrapati Shivaji in the year 1668.

The request for the restoration was presented to Fundação Oriente in May 2000 by the Directorate of Archives & Archaeology, Government of Goa, and by the temple committee.

The intervention consisted in a comprehensive architectural restoration of the whole structure both from outside as well as inside. The major work involved plastering, painting, structural improvement and roofing of the Mandapa & entrance veranda area of the temple.

The project was managed by us and subcontracted to a local contractor. The technical supervision was entrusted to a local engineer that worked closely with the contractor and with our office. The works were also supervised by the Directorate of Archives & Archaeology, Government of Goa. It was executed in 2001.

2.4 *Other works*

Other architectural conservation or restoration works undertaken by Fundação Oriente:

- Todo-o-Bem chapel, Verem (1997-2000) – repairs, restoration and development of premises;

- St. Michael's Church, taleigão (1998) – electrification and painting;
- Poço do Rego garden, Fontainhas (1998) – beautification of the area;
- Penha da França church (1998) – conservation of the roof and small museum for sacred art;
- Reis Magos church, Verem (2000-2001) – conservation of the roof and restoration of the ceiling above the main altar (the Reis Magos church is a State Protected Monument and the works were carried under the supervision of the Department of Archives & Archaeology, Government of Goa);
- Our Lady of Hope church, Vaypeen, Kerala (2005) – interior architectural renovation.

It is important to notice that the works at the Customs House and at the Police Headquarters had an important catalyst impact since they served as the model for the extensive urban conservation works conducted by the local authorities in Panjim in recent years.

3 ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION PROJECTS INVOLVING STRUCTURAL CONSERVATION

There are two single projects carried forward by Fundação Oriente in India that required structural conservation: The renovation of the premises of the Delegation and the restoration of the chapel of Our Lady of the Mount.

3.1 *Fundação Oriente's office*

In 1994 Fundação Oriente acquired for the premises of its Delegation in India an old house situated in the quarter of Fontainhas, Panjim, Goa. Fontainhas is one of the most characteristic quarters of the city marked by an architecture and urban landscape that are typical of Portuguese colonial settlements.

The work, executed by local contractors under the technical direction of local architects, aimed at the conservation of the façade of the building while renovating the interiors in accordance to the new usage to be given to the structure.

The work was executed in compliance with the regulations that define the quarter of Fontainhas as a protect zone.

3.2 *Chapel of Our Lady of the Mount*

The Chapel of Our Lady of the Mount, Old Goa, a State-protected monument was in risk of collapsing. Built during the early period of Portuguese rule in Goa, the chapel was in a state of neglect due to lack of maintenance & non-use. In 1998 Fundação Oriente was approached by Dr. Wilfred de Sousa, then Chief Minister of Goa, requesting us to support and carry out the restoration work of this monument.

The works of restoration began in January 1999 after a tripartite agreement was signed between the Government of Goa, the Church authorities and Fundação Oriente. The restoration work was carried out by a team of architects, engineers, art restorers and contractors from Lisbon, Mumbai and Goa.

- Phase I consisted of the structural conservation involving the consolidation of the foundation of the structure and the reinforcement of the vaulted roof; and architectural conservation and restoration (plastering and painting, installation of electrical wiring and lighting, flooring and paving, doors and windows, and other works).
- Phase II involved landscaping, electrical works, flooring and restoration of the ancillary rooms.
- Phase III invoved the restoration of the mural paintings, altars and works of art inside the Chapel.

3.3 *Church of Santana de Talaulim (under consideration)*

One of the most important churches in Goa, Santana de Talaulim has been neglected and subject to the degradation of time and nature. It suffers from several major structural problems including sizable vertical cracks in the bell towers that will lead to their collapse if unattended.

The World Monuments Fund started a project to the conservation and restoration of the church and required Fundação Oriente to associate with it. A team of Indian architects and engineers has been preparing the technical and financial project for the conservation works, with contributions from a Portuguese expert in architectural conservation. A decision on our involvement in this project will be reached after the delivery and analysis of the final project.

4 OTHER HERITAGE CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Fundação Oriente has not restricted its heritage conservation projects to structural or architectural conservation. A wide set of other projects was pursued through time. These include:

4.1 *Conservation and renovation of art*

The chapel of Our Lady of Victory is located at the Old Goa Medical College, Panjim, Goa. Fundação Oriente undertook the restoration of the altar and woodwork under the guidance of a Portuguese expert (1999).

The conservation works at the chapel of Our Lady of the Mount, Old Goa, included an extensive intervention in the altars (2001-2002). That intervention was conducted by a team comprising two Portuguese experts and local crafters.

The same team also undertook the conservation and restoration of the altars and pulpit of the church of Our Lady of Hope on the island of Vaypeen (2004-2005). This church is part of a group of Catholic churches built by the Portuguese in the state of Kerala during the period of the Portuguese presence in Fort Cochin.

Other interventions include:

- Pilar Seminary, Pilar, Goa, restoration of paintings (1999);
- Sponsorship of the renovation of the *azulejos* (painted tiles) at the St. Lucas chapel, St. Monica Convent, Old Goa (2002)
- Chapel of the Military Hospital, Panjim, Goa, conservation of paintings (2003).

4.2 *Other conservation projects*

Menezes Bragança was one of the most respected intellectuals in Goa during the first half of the XX century. His mansion in Chandor is a fine example of Indo-Portuguese architecture from Goa and there is preserved the Menezes Bragança library. Fundação Oriente sponsored the conservation and preservation of its valuable books (1999-2000).

Scattered around Old Goa can still be found several old road markers that have been threatened by changes in traffic, road widening and neglect. The Goa Heritage Action Group undertook a program for their preservation with the sponsorship of Fundação Oriente (2004).

5 OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Fundação Oriente has not restricted its heritage conservation projects to structural or architectural conservation. A wide set of other activities have been pursued through time. These include:

5.1 *Heritage documentation*

Heritage conservation requires good data and information on the existing heritage. Fundação Oriente sponsored the production of documentation reports and publications on built heritage. Some examples follow:

5.1.1 *Old Secretariat of Goa, Panjim*

The old Secretariat of Goa, improperly known as the Idalshah Palace, is one of the most imposing and emblematic buildings in Panjim, Goa. Built in the XVIII century, it was both the residence of the Governor of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* and the siege of the administration. From the middle of the XIX century it lost its residential function to retain only the latter. In 2004 the administrative services of Goa was transferred to a new siege and the old Secretariat has recently been handled to the Ministry of Culture.

Fundação Oriente funded a project for the historic and architectural documentation of the building. The project was executed by a team comprising an architect and an historian. It was delivered to the Chief Minister of Goa in January 2006.

5.1.2 *Hindu temples in Goa*

Changes in demographics and economics have been driving a spur of investment in churches and temples in Goa and elsewhere. Often these mean the destruction of old structures to be replaced by ampler new ones. It thus becomes of utmost importance to document the existing temples in order to be able to advance measures for their conservation. It was in this spirit that the Goa Heritage Action Group decided to execute a project to document the temples of Shri Brhmanimaya at Caranzol and Shri Mulvir at Pernem, both in Goa, with the sponsorship of Fundação Oriente. The report on the first temple has been finished while the documentation of the Shri Mulvir temple is underway.

5.1.3 *Publications and exhibitions*

Fundação Oriente has been supporting heritage conservation through publications such as its own magazine, *Oriente*, sponsoring other magazines dedicated to heritage conservation like the magazine *Parmal*, published in Goa or books such as “Hidden Hands, Masterbuilders of Goa” by Mrs. Heta Pandit.

Furthermore we have been sponsoring temporary or permanent exhibitions that bring awareness to heritage conservation including the temporary exhibition “Houses of Goa” (1998) and the museum set up in Goa based on it (2005), among others.

5.2 *Scholarships, research and study visits*

In the course of the years we have extended our support towards research and capacity acquisition on heritage through scholarships, the funding of research projects and study visits.

5.3 *Living heritage*

The long term sustainability of heritage conservation often requires new usages for the existing heritage structures or the introduction of new activities that spread awareness about the need to protect the existing heritage. This is another field where we have been active through actions such as:

The Monte Music Festival is a festival of Indian and Western classical music that takes place at the chapel of Our Lady of the Mount, Old Goa. It has been organized by Fundação Oriente and the Hotel Cidade de Goa since 2002. It provides an occasion to the cleansing and maintenance of the chapel that could otherwise be left to neglect.

As has been remarked Fontainhas (the quarter in Panjim, Goa, where the Delegation of Fundação Oriente is located) is under pressure for urban development in terms that are not conducive to heritage conservation despite it being a protected area. In order to contribute to the preservation of its architectural characteristics the Goa Heritage Action Group started the Fontainhas Festival of the Arts in 2003. Fundação Oriente has been a consistent supporter of the festival.

The Indo-Portuguese heritage in Kerala is under pressure for renovation that does not respect heritage conservation values. In order to call the attention to this heritage and to foster the interest in its conservation Fundação Oriente is going to start a project under the title *Re-animation of Cochin, Kerala*, that aims at producing a set of touristic circuits centered in that heritage. These circuits are to be promoted by local tourism agents and offered to tourists. The objective is to allow the local stakeholders in the structures to realise their heritage value and the interest

in their preservation, including the economic benefits that can be ripped by linking heritage and the tourism industry. The project is to be done in collaboration with the Government of Kerala.

6 KEY ISSUES IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION: THE FUNDAÇÃO ORIENTE EXPERIENCE

According to our experience the major issues raised by heritage conservation change with the stage of the project:

6.1 Identification of the structure and commitment to the heritage conservation project

Not being an institution fully dedicated to heritage conservation we do not take the initiative to identify structures in need of conservation. These are brought to our notice by third parties: The owners of the structure, heritage conservation entities, government agencies or other interested parties. This stage raises some issues:

- Are the parties proposing the intervention trustworthy?
- Is the intervention needed?
- When we receive several proposals at the same time, which should be considered priority?
- The proponents have a project for the conservation or do we need to work this out? If they have a project, is it sound?
- Are there any specific regulations on heritage conservation that apply to the structure?
- Is the project feasible in financial, technical and logistical terms?
- Are we to manage the project? Who will be party of it?
- What impact will the project in our overall activities, specially in terms of the balanced distribution of financial resources by the different programs and projects?

The answer to these questions determines our decision to be part to the project.

6.2 Preparation of the project

After committing ourselves to a conservation project we proceed to the preparation of the conservation works. At this stage we need to deal with:

Hiring experts and contractors. Of course, the complexity and size of the project dictates who should be in the conservation team. An important concern is to decide whether we stick to local contractors or consultants or else whether we need to bring people from outside, including from abroad. We only do this if we think there are no reliable human resources available at the local level.

We take special care in framing the contracts with the contractors to avoid unpleasant surprises later on. The owners of the structure and the authorities supervising over it need to be involved in this process, of course.

More complex and long projects require a special attention to determine who are the possible stakeholders in its execution. For instance, if the project requires heavy traffic to the transport of materials and equipment and the structure is located in a populated area with poor road access the local population are a necessary part to the project since it will disturb their livelihood. Likewise, a lengthy intervention in a church interferes with the religious functions so the local parishioners have to be involved and alternative solutions have to be found.

6.3 Execution

Heritage conservation works raise their own issues. For a start, since Fundação Oriente is not an entity specialized in heritage conservation we don't have our own technical resources so we have to rely on the experts, contractors and consultants we hire, something that raises concerns on the control of the execution of the works. Some of the problems we had to deal with in the past are the next:

- Conflicts among contractors and consultants. We had situations where there were tensions and conflicts between different contractors or between contractors and consultants. When this happens it is up to us to defuse the conflict and to ensure that the underlying reasons are appropriately dealt with.
- Components of the heritage conservation works that were not considered in the project. The execution may raise new needs not covered by the project, usually requiring additional financing and occasionally imposing the contracting of other human resources. Our policy is to leave those needs unfulfilled if they are autonomous from the project in execution. Only if the continuation of the works to which we committed ourselves requires the execution of the additional works we will increase our commitment to include the later.
- Often there are alternatives in terms of execution of the works with different financial and technical impact. The decision on which of the alternatives is to be executed lays ultimately in our hands after considering the advice of the experts, consultants or contractors involved.

6.4 *After the project*

Once the project is completed Fundação Oriente returns the structure to its owners making sure that these and the supervising agencies are fully satisfied with the works executed. At this stage it is important, from our perspective, to discuss with the owners and the authorities issues such as:

- Measures to ensure the proper maintenance of the structure. We provide guidance in this field, if needed, by requesting the contractors and technical consultants to provide guidelines to the persons that will be in charge of the structure on how to maintain the same.
- It may happen that the structure will be used for new purposes after the conservation works. We also talk with the owners or users in order to ensure that these usages will not be detrimental to the works done.

At this stage we also undertake some measures to ensure the public awareness on the conservation works through the press or specialized publications.

Finally, we attempt to assess the catalyst effects that the conservation project may generate in terms of providing inspiration to other conservation projects.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Fundação Oriente is not an institution fully dedicated to heritage conservation. That limits the scope of projects we can get involved with, both in financial, technical and organizational terms. Still, we have been directing and promoting a sizable number of projects in India. This is only possible due to the fact that we maintain a good linkage and relationship with site owners and supervising authorities. At the same time we developed a pool of technical experts from which to tap in order to source the projects we have been involved with and may get involved in the future.

Among the different type of heritage conservation projects with which Fundação Oriente has been involved the most demanding are those that require structural conservation, both in technical, managerial and financial terms. Due to this Fundação tends to limit its participation in such projects since we need to balance our application of resources among the different fields of our activity.

We hope to have provided an understanding of the wider cadre within which we contribute to the conservation of heritage structures in India.