

Cultural Heritage. Scenarios 2015-2017

edited by Simona Pinton and Lauso Zagato

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It is my pleasure to welcome the publication of this work, which also allows me to spend a few words about Fondazione Venezia ('Venice Foundation') for Peace Research, which I have now the honour to preside for some years.

The Foundation was established in 1999 under the Veneto Regional Law no. 55 and has the purpose of carrying out research activities, also in co-operation with national and international institutions, on issues related to security, development and peace; issues that now more than ever reflect the anguish of our society.

Among the founders, in addition to Veneto Region, the City of Venice, the Cini Foundation, the Veneto Institute of Science Letters and Arts, there are representatives of different religious movements such as the Lutheran Church and Don Germano Pattaro Center of theological studies.

Today the Foundation includes the University of Venice and the University of Padua and the Querini Stampalia Foundation.

The research program originally focused on the following thematic areas:

- the control and reduction of armaments and of defence systems: in particular, the reorientation of NATO also in view of its enlargement to the Eastern European countries;
- the basic democratic requirements that States must guarantee to maintain peace and security at international level;
- the concept of peace between theology and culture: the attitude of the great religions, in particular Islam and Buddhism, on peace;
- the management and prevention of conflicts, with special attention to conflicts in the Mediterranean shores.

Lately the Foundation has also focused on:

- the role of memory in building peace and in the process of European integration;
- the guarantees of access to natural resources, starting from the problem of access to water to finally address the problem of a sustainable climate.

The Foundation has always made its researches available not only to the scientific community at large, but also to a wider public, in order to favour a deeper awareness and debate on major social issues. For this precise reason, several international conferences have been organized.

In chronological order, the topics discussed at the conferences have been:

- the role of inter-governmental organizations in humanitarian emergencies;
- the rule of law and democracy as preconditions of peace;
- the control of armaments and fight against terrorism by UN, NATO and the EU;
- the ethnic-linguistic minorities in Europe between national and democratic citizenship;
- the memory and reassurance to provide the future with peace;
- the future of peace: the Mediterranean scenario.

Since 2014, the Foundation has been also dealing with cultural issues, including the current publication.

In particular, it has started a collaboration with the American artist Debra Werblud aimed at creating an internet site called *Blind Spots* (<http://www.blindspots.eu/>), designed to collect visual and acoustic contributions from poets about peace.

This site of *Blind Spots* is linked to the site of the Foundation, a site in which we are publishing the papers' production that the Foundation itself has edited in the two series 'Quaderni' and 'Volumi'.

In 2015, the Foundation contributed to the organization of the international Conference on *Cultural Heritage. Scenarios 2015* which consolidated the ongoing collaboration with Ca' Foscari University and other institutions aimed at developing the research on "The Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Transnational Value of Democracy and Access to Peace Itineraries". The present volume is part of this research program.

The safeguard of CH is a topic linked both to the prevention and management of conflicts and to the basic requirements of efficient democratic societies, issues that are at the heart of the Foundation's research activity.

In 2016, the Foundation started also a collaboration with the festival *La Palabra en el mundo* which is today at its tenth edition. Every year *La Palabra en el mundo* brings together poets of different nationalities who carry on moments of public dialogue with people in a way that poetry itself becomes an universal vehicle of peace. Culture, therefore, is promoted as a fundamental element of knowledge that can foster peace.

Heritage and cultural identities are no longer considered elements of diversity, but new means that may lead to peace, as UNESCO pointed out and as strongly advocated by the CoE.

Personally, and on behalf of the Foundation's Board of Directors, I thank the editors Simona Pinton and Lauso Zagato for this wide and qualified work on issues now more than ever actual, especially after the violence we have witnessed against unique cultural goods in the world in the name of a meaningless ideology.