UP IN FLAMES: THE FIRE OF ST PETER'S CHURCH AND THE METAMORPHOSIS OF SACRED *GENIUS LOCI* IN 16TH-CENTURY SIUNTIO

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Resumo | Abstract

St Peter's Church in Siuntio, a Gothic stone edifice of Roman Catholic origin, was built on the southern coast of Finland during the late 15th century. Its historical trajectory has been defined by four fires, the initial occurrence of which transpired in the early 16th century. This paper, utilising an interdisciplinary methodology incorporating archival research, art history, and archaeology, posits that the fire acted as a primary catalyst for the reconfiguration of the Siuntio sacred landscape.

The impact of the fire exhibited a distinct dualism. Sonically, the destruction of the bell tower resulted in the cessation of the parish's communal and «protective» soundscape. Visually, while the mediaeval stone vaults maintained their structural integrity, the thermal intensity of the fire facilitated a chemical transformation of wall painting pigments, resulting in the conversion of vibrant ochres and azurites into sombre reds and blacks. This physical metamorphosis was congruent with the theological transition of the Reformation (1527), which proceeded with relative tranquillity. Furthermore, the disappearance of a Renaissance-style altarpiece by Michael Sittow exacerbated the alienation of community from its established mediaeval «meanings».

Within contemporary World Heritage discourse, the «spirit of place» frequently encounters challenges posed by catastrophic alteration. The conflagrations of the 16th century and 1891 provide a critical case study for current interests in Authenticity and Integrity. Consequently, this research interrogates the preservation of a site's intangible significance when its tangible fabric has undergone irrevocable modification. Aligning these historical precedents with the focus on «finding communities», this paper argues that the *Genius Loci* of Siuntio constitutes a dynamic construct sustained by the evolving relationship between the community and its traumatised architecture. This identity is personified by St Peter; the inclusion of the Saint's attribute in the municipal coat of arms affirms the church's status as the anchor of the community's collective spirit.

Palavras-chave | Keywords

World Heritage; Heritage integrity; Finland; intangible Heritage; authenticity.

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Resumo biográfico | Short biography

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