

# Museum International

Facing history: museums and heritage in  
conflict and post-conflict situations

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# Editorial

## Facing history: Museums and Heritage in Conflict and Post-conflict Situations

This issue had hoped to be a milestone in the reflection on the destruction of heritage and its repercussions in the international arena. Our wish was also to undertake an analysis of this destruction in terms other than those of the loss of cultural identity and its symbols. We had hoped, on the one hand, to consider their significance in the historical long term, in keeping with the analyses of Dario Gamboni.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, and following the *World Culture Report* on 'Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism',<sup>2</sup> we had also intended to address destruction in the dynamic process of conflicts, since reclaiming cultural forms of heritage and identity was a component of the majority of conflicts that arose within nation-states during the final decade of the twentieth century. Recent history, however, has overtaken this initial intention and ambition.

Preparation of this issue of *MUSEUM International* has therefore been a lengthy, painful and arduous process.

Lengthy because the topic has been on the journal's publication agenda for several years. Three years ago, when developing the new editorial approach, it was acknowledged that the heritage and museum community had recently experienced difficult times. The final decade of the twentieth century had brought its burden of destruction and questions concerning the role of heritage in political conflicts. After the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, it was thought that a limit had been reached in attacks on heritage, and that the unanimous reaction of international opinion acknowledged a threshold in the consciousness of the instrumental role of heritage during conflicts. We believed that the time had come for shared, prospective reflection on the reasons and contexts of this destruction.

But then came the looting of the Baghdad National Museum and the destruction of an incredible number of cultural testimonies and symbols of civilizations and ancestral history in Iraq.

The process of reflection that had been carefully thought out for this issue of the

journal, once again turned into a painful record of what was new or rated higher on the list of destruction, looting, thefts and disappearance of cultural heritage. We thus modified the contents of the issue on conflicts to respond to legitimate demands for information on the role of UNESCO and the community of experts to assist in the rescue and protection of cultural heritage in Iraq, and also Afghanistan.

That was when the exercise revealed itself to be very difficult.

First of all, because the majority of the most well-informed experts were engaged in operations in the field and only a small number had the time to draft yet another report on their work. *MUSEUM International* is, on UNESCO's behalf, all the more grateful to those experts who did contribute to this issue, despite their emergency workload. Secondly, was the situation clear enough, notably in Iraq, so that the contributions could be more than just unanimous condemnations, still necessary of course, of what has happened, or presentations of what is hoped to be done? Furthermore, the quality and intensity of the coverage of situations in Afghanistan and Iraq, by the international press, for the general public and for professionals, questioned the relevance of the issue itself.

UNESCO is, however, with the support of specialized non-governmental organizations, the world's leading intergovernmental agency for the safeguarding of cultural heritage. For this reason, its task is to explain, make known and disseminate the objectives and methods of its safeguard operations to its member-states and their professional communities, as well as to the international public.

That is the essential reason for the publication of this issue of *MUSEUM International*. A second, equally important, reason takes the form of a question: what have recent events taught us to help us reflect on the protection of museums and heritage in situations of conflict and post-conflict?

In our mind the destruction of cultural heritage, even though it has existed throughout the course of history, now indicates a shift in the relationship that societies have with the testimony of cultures and heritage. While the final decade of the twentieth century was marked by destruction of heritage on a symbolic scale that has been unrivalled for the past several centuries, it was also a period that witnessed innovations that led to the significant renovation of heritage categories. The emergence and affirmation of the notion of intangible heritage epitomise these transformations. Should we see a link between these two manifestations of heritage? Could it suggest that too

much attention given to the physicality of heritage objects, in a process of excessive heritage production, world-wide, has encouraged material destruction?

If such a link of causality exists, it is doubtless difficult to prove. The hypothesis is worth investigating, however, in order to understand the mechanism behind the propensity to obliterate what we also endeavour to preserve in its most diverse aspects. Admittedly, much has been preserved, with the help of technology and an increased knowledge of materials and contexts. None the less, have we, for all that, encouraged a better understanding of heritage and improved access to its meaning, aesthetic as well as historical and cultural?

The unanimous adoption of both the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage and the Declaration Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, at the same session of the General Conference of UNESCO,<sup>3</sup> was not a matter of chance scheduling. It was instead the result of the need, acknowledged by the entire international community, to work on the educational, intellectual and political significance of heritage. We are convinced that it is a significant convergence in the practice and history of heritage.

It is true that the adoption of a convention whose objectives cover practices, representations, knowledge and know-how,<sup>4</sup> enables, first and foremost, many countries to place their cultural testimonies on an indisputably equal footing with those from a western tradition that is monumental, architectural and archaeological. However, with this fundamental affirmation of the diverse content of heritage, the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage* opens up other paths: that of the radical reform of heritage policies, starting with the significance and function of heritage.

For the moment, the heritage object, in situations of conflict and post-conflict, is subject to a contradictory tension between sanction and reconciliation. The *Declaration Concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage* reinforces a corpus that already comprises two conventions and two protocols laying down international legal obligations for the protection of cultural heritage. Moreover, experience acquired by UNESCO in Cambodia, South-Eastern Europe, Afghanistan, the Middle East and East Timor (today Timor-Leste), among other places, justifies and authorizes the setting up of a programme for the conservation of cultural heritage aimed at fostering dialogue and reconciliation between communities. But this raises the question of how an element of heritage, whose destruction provokes condemnation by the international community, can become, in a post-conflict situation, the subject of a programme of reconciliation.

Even if it cannot be compared with the subjects of major debates on history and human rights, such as genocides, heritage is in no way a neutral subject in the politics of memory. As David Lowenthal<sup>5</sup> points out, it is precisely its absence of neutrality that explains why it is irreconcilable with history.

A loophole in this contradiction can be found in the intangible aspect of the tangible, that is to say in the historical content and meaning as well as in the symbolism of practices, in order to devise heritage programmes whose objective is dialogue and reconciliation. This signifies perhaps that less attention need be paid to the materiality of heritage or, at least, that equal attention should be given to the expressions of intangible heritage related to it. The use of Living Arts as an element that triggers heritage consciousness has proven worthwhile in post-conflict situations, where cultural heritage has played a unifying role between communities. This is the case in the revitalization of the Royal Ballet of Cambodia and the Ramayana Festival within the framework of the programme for the safeguarding of Angkor.<sup>6</sup> Its success, as revealed by this year's launching of the decade for the development of Angkor, encourages to seek in the complementarity of approaches between the tangible and the intangible, the impetus for community reconciliation programmes based on appreciation and protection of cultural heritage.

This double issue of *MUSEUM International* comprises three phases. The first section brings together a number of articles that evoke the various components of a post-conflict situation: tracing stolen or missing works of art, implementing international legal instruments, reopening museums and reforming museographic programmes. The second part, devoted to Afghanistan, describes a situation of reconstruction and transition from conflict to post-conflict through the rehabilitation of administrative infrastructures, preliminary safeguarding measures and the launching of restoration projects in the short and medium term, and finally, the interrupted efforts of museum institutions and their foreign partners to safeguard – beyond the objects themselves – the memory of scientific research garnered over several centuries. Iraq is the subject of the last section, which focuses on the period of conflict and a return to ground zero in terms of heritage memory.

Admittedly, heritage is not history. But its destruction forces us to face our history.

Isabelle Vinson

## | NOTES

1 See Gamboni, Dario, *The destruction of Art, Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*, Yale University Press, 2002 and 'World Heritage: Shield or Target?' in *Conservation*, the Getty Conservation Institute Newsletter, Volume 16, No. 2, 2001

2 See 'Cultural diversity, conflict and pluralism', *World Culture Report 2000*, UNESCO Publishing 2000.

3 The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* and the *Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage* were adopted at the 32nd session of UNESCO's General Conference that took place from 29 September to 17 October, 2003.

4 The definition of the Intangible Heritage appears in article 2 of the Convention. The text of the Convention, as well as the text of the Declaration, can be retrieved on the site <http://portal.unesco.org/culture> under the heading 'Normative Action'.

5 See Lowenthal, David, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

6 *MUSEUM International* has published a paper on the subject, see 'The Ramayana Festival, the intangible heritage of Angkor' in *Angkor, a living museum*, *MUSEUM International* vol. 54, No. 1-2, 2002. At the date of publication of this issue, the Royal Ballet of Cambodia has been proclaimed *Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* in the framework of the second Proclamation (November 2003).



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1. The Warka Vase, in alabaster, is the world's oldest carved-stone ritual vessel datable to about 3000 BC. After looting, it was returned to the Iraq National Museum. Relief decorations represent a ritual ceremony in four sections.

# | Stolen History: looting and illicit trade<sup>1</sup>

*by Neil Brodie*

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In the days following the sack of Baghdad's museums, the first question asked was: Why had coalition war planners and military commanders not done more to stop it from happening? Looking to the events of April 2003, and beyond, another and more fundamental question is: Why has no concerted international action been taken to block the trade and sale of material looted from archaeological sites and cultural institutions during wartime? The simple answer seems to be that there has not been the political will when required.

## **Looting during wartime**

In the past, war has perhaps been the greatest enemy of cultural heritage, and many successive international agreements and conventions have been drafted in consequence. There are three ways in which war might have a damaging impact. First is what the military would call collateral damage – accidental damage caused to a cultural monument or institution, or archaeological site, during an attack on a legitimate military target. Second is the age old practice of taking booty – the forcible removal of cultural material for profit or purposes of aggrandizement. Finally, there is the deliberate destruction of religious or other culturally important structures or artefacts for the purpose of erasing the material symbols of an ethnic or



religious group – what would today be referred to as cultural cleansing. Perhaps all destruction during wartime comes out of a confluence of all three causes, but in some recent conflicts looting for saleable material has certainly been to the fore, and has exacerbated an already disastrous situation. Two, in particular, are well documented: Afghanistan and Cambodia.<sup>2</sup>

After the Soviet withdrawal from Kabul in 1992, the various Mujahideen factions began fighting amongst themselves for control of the city. The National Museum was repeatedly hit by rocket or artillery fire and it was also badly looted. By 1996 more than 70 per cent of the museum's collections were missing, with only the less valuable pieces left behind, a sure sign that the plunder was commercially motivated, and not carried out for reasons of cultural cleansing.<sup>3</sup> Once aware of the commercial potential of Afghanistan's archaeological remains, local militia commanders also began to sponsor illegal excavations of archaeological sites and used the money gained from the sale of artefacts to pay soldiers or buy munitions.<sup>4</sup>

But not all of the damage in Afghanistan can be attributed to the search for saleable material. In 1996 the fundamentalist Taliban took over in Kabul and issued an edict banning all forms of figurative representation, but also decreed that ancient cultural objects were exempt, and to be protected. Nevertheless, in 1997 a Taliban commander besieging Bamiyan threatened to destroy the two monumental Buddhas for which the town is famous.<sup>5</sup> The central government again warned against such vandalism but in 1998 the head of the smaller of the two Buddhas was blown

off in a deliberate act of iconoclasm. This prompted the issue of a new law decree in July 1999 which outlawed the excavation of historic sites, but in March 2001 the Taliban leader ordered that all religious 'idols' were to be destroyed, and the larger of the two Bamiyan Buddhas was subsequently blown up with high explosive.

In Cambodia military factions have engaged in the plunder of Khmer temples and monuments. It is reported that Angkor Wat alone used to have 1000 Buddha statues but that now only 18 survive.<sup>6</sup> Many were vandalized during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–79) but since then they have been looted and sold. In 1999 more than 20 tons of archaeological material were found hidden in the headquarters of the last Khmer Rouge commander, and not long afterwards the temple of Banteay Chmar was attacked and stripped of its famous bas-reliefs by renegade units of the regular army. Material from Cambodia is smuggled into Thailand and sold in the River City area of Bangkok, for export abroad, although the Banteay Chmar *reliefs* were intercepted on the Thai side of the border and in March 2000 were displayed at the National Museum of Thailand prior to their return to Cambodia.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear from these two conflicts that when central authority breaks down, the existence of an international market intensifies the looting as material is sought out and sold, with the proceeds helping to keep soldiers in the field. Yet the occasional recovery or return<sup>8</sup> cannot disguise the fact that in wartime the money pumped into the market by western collectors not only fuels archaeological destruction, but also helps underwrite and thus prolong the conflict.



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2. Outside view of the Conservation of Angkor in Siam Reap, Cambodia, where thousands of statues are stored

But not all willful cultural destruction during times of civil disturbance or war is commercially driven. The fighting in former Yugoslavia has seen massive destruction of religious and other buildings and monuments. It is estimated that in Bosnia more than 12,000 mosques, together with 300 Catholic and 100 Orthodox churches, were destroyed during the fighting,<sup>9</sup> and since the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, mosques and orthodox churches in Kosovo have also been damaged or destroyed. In 1993 the sixteenth-century bridge over the river Neretva at Mostar, a long-time symbol of a multi-ethnic state, was deliberately blown apart by a Bosnian Croat tank. It is a measure of the importance that might be attached to such architectural symbols that the international community and the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina have decided to restore the bridge using the original stones.

The *1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Event of Armed Conflict* was drafted with World Wars One and Two in

mind, but most recent conflicts have taken the form of civil wars or guerrilla actions. With this in mind the 1999 Second Protocol to the Convention was adopted for 'dirty' armed conflicts. Yet although the former Yugoslav states are all parties to the 1954 Hague Convention, the destruction proceeded nevertheless.<sup>10</sup> During the Serbian bombing of Dubrovnik in 1991–2 houses protected under the terms of the Hague Convention seem to have been deliberately targeted.<sup>11</sup> In conflicts such as this, when cultural obliteration is a primary war aim, it is difficult to see how international protective legislation can be effective.

### The terminologies of culture

From a legal perspective, Merryman (1996) has identified three competing images of the international debate over cultural, including archaeological, material. First there is his nationalist image, the discourse of source nations which stresses the relationship between cultural objects and a national heritage, and which expects such

objects to remain in their country of origin. Second, there is his internationalist image, which maintains that cultural heritage is international and that objects should be free to circulate. Finally, there is his object/context image of archaeologists and ethnographers, which places primary emphasis on the information or meaning held trapped in the relationship between an object and its context.

Through an archaeological lens, however, these images refract into alternative discourses, with different concepts requiring different terminologies. Merryman's nationalist and internationalist images are in fact manifestations of an object-centred discourse of ownership, while archaeologists and ethnographers are but part of a larger (perhaps western) academic discourse which values knowledge over property.

Collectors, dealers, politicians and lawyers are largely (though not exclusively) focused on issues of ownership (as is Merryman). This is quite clearly seen in the use of the term 'cultural property' to describe the material under consideration. The concept of private property as enshrined in the common law of the United Kingdom and the United States is very much a European (ultimately English) one, and implies rights of uninterrupted ownership – rights of an owner to exploit, alienate and exclude,<sup>12</sup> unencumbered by any greater, public, interest. Conceptions of property in other cultural traditions differ, and might recognize rights in an object other than those of the owner, or deny alienability. Differences between common law and civil law have to be taken into account. In common law, the concept of exclusive, private ownership is a powerful one, as, since the end of the seventeenth

century at least, it has been thought fundamental to the constitution of liberal society,<sup>13</sup> and appeals made to the rights of a private owner are guaranteed a sympathetic ear.

In contrast, as Merryman correctly points out, many (though not all) archaeologists subscribe to an ideal of knowledge, and the information-rich relationship between object and context. A forthright statement of this position has been made by Vitelli: 'Frankly, my major concern has never been with who owns or possesses an archaeological object, where the object resides, or, for that matter, whether an object was traded licitly or illicitly. My real concern is with information, which, for archaeological objects derives from their original context'.<sup>14</sup>

Vitelli is making two points. First she is expressing dissatisfaction with current object-centred concepts of property, as they are applied to archaeology and to debates over ownership that pervade the non-archaeological literature. But Vitelli is also questioning the very nature of the enquiry. She is stressing the importance of intangible relationships, the archaeological context where information resides, and downplaying the role of artefacts, of the material objects themselves.

It has been proposed that the less ideologically loaded term 'cultural heritage' should be substituted for cultural property, the word heritage being chosen to express better the idea of a cultural object as something to be shared and conserved, not something to be bought and sold, used in exclusion and, even, possibly, consumed.<sup>15</sup> This change in terminology has already occurred in some areas. The term cultural property was first used in the 1954 Hague Convention and then in

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the 1970 UNESCO Convention, but by 1972 it had been replaced in the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage*, and now also in the UNESCO draft *Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage*. The 1995 *Unidroit Convention on Stolen and Illegally Exported Objects* avoids the use of either term.

Nevertheless, the discourse of ownership is the dominant one, and archaeologists are forced to enter the debate over cultural material on, quite literally, disadvantageous terms. There are huge quantities of decontextualized antiquities in circulation, that can only be talked of as objects, and which are categorized on the basis of monetary value.

### Illicit antiquities

Much of the plunder of archaeological sites and cultural institutions is thought to be commercially motivated. Concerns raised by this plunder during the late 1960s led to the drafting of the *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* which was adopted by UNESCO in 1970, but since then the situation has grown out of all control. This seems to be for two reasons. First, the means of destruction have become much more powerful. For millennia, the tools of the tomb-robbing trade consisted of little more than simple digging implements and probing rods, but they have been joined over the past couple of decades by bulldozers and mechanical diggers, dynamite, metal detectors, power saws and drills and, underwater, propwash deflectors. Second, improving technology has also opened up areas

which had until recently been out of reach, as all-terrain vehicles probe deep into the desert, helicopters hover over the jungle and, on the deep seabed, remotely operated submersibles nose out long-lost wrecks. Access to sites has also been made easier by the falling cost of international travel and the erosion of political barriers. This new combination of destructive power and easy communication has proved disastrous for the world's archaeological and cultural heritage, and it seems that no site or museum around the world is now safe from the attentions of archaeological bandits – the nighthawks, *tombaroli* or *huaqueros* – who have been joined by treasure salvors, militiamen and common thieves.

But this calamity is not purely a technological phenomenon, detached from any socio-cultural matrix. Stolen material needs a market, and in this instance it is provided by private and institutional collectors who regard archaeological or ethnographic objects as works of art, investment opportunities, or even as fashionable decorations. There is a global aspect to the problem too, an imbalance, as the market – museums, collectors and salerooms – is concentrated in the countries of Europe and North America, what have been called the 'demand' countries. Those countries whose cultural heritage is under serious threat of plunder – the so-called 'source' countries – are found largely in the developing world, although the archaeology and culture of demand countries themselves are not immune.

Archaeological objects which have been torn from monuments, stolen from museums or illegally excavated and/or exported have been christened 'illicit antiquities'. This is not a legal

term, but has been coined by archaeologists to highlight a unique characteristic of the trade in such material, which is that although in most countries of the world (with important exceptions such as the United States and the United Kingdom) archaeological heritage has been taken into public ownership, so that its unlicensed excavation or export is illegal, its ultimate sale in a country other than that of its origin may not be. Thus the antiquities are illicit inasmuch as the method of their original acquisition was, it says nothing of the legality or otherwise of their subsequent trade.

An illicit antiquity may change hands several times before being bought by an institutional or private collector and details of its illicit origin are lost or erased in the process. Ultimately it is sold without provenance – without indication of ownership history or find spot. However, once published in an academic paper or exhibition catalogue, or even sale catalogue, it acquires a new, respectable pedigree as an object of scholarly interest or of esteem,<sup>16</sup> and its illicit origin is quietly forgotten. Illicit material is, in effect, ‘laundered’ by sale or publication in Europe or North America. This was the case in 1997, for example, when two Attic kylikes stolen from the Corinth Museum in 1990 were offered for sale in a major New York auction house described as the property of an American private collector.

Although stolen, most illicit antiquities, particularly those which have been clandestinely excavated, evade detection because they were not registered on any museum or excavation inventory prior to their theft and disposal. The Corinth kylikes had been inventoried and were identifiable, and were, in consequence, recovered. Most material

is not. Even when a piece is recognized to be from a country which claims ownership, it will not be treated as stolen unless the country in question can prove that it was exported after the date of the relevant national patrimony law. Obviously, if an antiquity has been secretly excavated and smuggled, the date of its export is unlikely to be revealed. For example, there is the case of the Roman statue of the ‘Weary Herakles’. The upper half of this statue surfaced in the United States in the early 1980s, and is currently in the joint ownership of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and a US private collector. The lower half was excavated near the Turkish town of Antalya in 1980. But despite this fact, the US owners of the top half insist that there is no evidence to show that it was stolen as it may have been removed from Turkey many years – centuries even – before the relevant 1906 patrimony law. Without evidence to prove otherwise, the Turkish government has not pressed its case.

The situation is further clouded by what has been called a ‘loophole’ in international law. Many antiquities and other cultural objects are sold in civil law countries of continental Europe, whose property law differs from that of US and UK common law in that title to a stolen object can be obtained by means of a ‘good faith’ purchase. So, even if it can be demonstrated unequivocally that an antiquity was taken illegally from its country of origin, if it was subsequently bought in good faith in a country such as Switzerland, it will no longer be regarded in law as stolen.

Illicit antiquities move erratically across many national borders and jurisdictions. This allows them to be easily laundered, but it also

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facilitates the entry onto the market of fakes. Without a verifiable provenance, objects that are faked, completely or in part, can easily be passed off as genuine, and it is left to the connoisseur or scientific test to determine their authenticity, and both have, in the past, been proved fallible. There are now many fakes in private and institutional collections around the world, their true number will probably never be known, although it has been estimated that nearly 80 per cent of the terracotta statuettes which have left Mali since the 1980s may be forgeries.<sup>17</sup> While the fakes remain undetected, perhaps even unsuspected, the effect on scholarship can hardly be guessed at.

Not all antiquities are illicit, however. Dealers are keen to stress that large quantities of antiquities moved out of their countries of origin during the 'grand tour', or in colonial times, and that documentary proof of original provenance is long lost. They are right, and this is the crux: in the absence of provenance, how can licit material be distinguished from illicit? 'From an old European collection' is a common enough auction appellation, but one that might hide an old family heirloom or a recently looted (or fake) piece. Who is to know? The only cautious response is to regard all unprovenanced material as looted.

The misunderstandings that arise out of this clash of terminologies can only be addressed by archaeologists adopting a more positive or proactive stance towards public education.

### Archaeology and public participation

Public enthusiasm for archaeology in demand countries is often sparked by the perceived romance

of treasure hunting, and the challenge for archaeologists is to redirect this enthusiasm, without dimming it, towards a more nuanced understanding of the past.

Although many modern archaeological techniques require specialist skills or instrumentation, there is still a role for active public participation and employment in fieldwork, particularly in the so-called source countries. This has been shown on several occasions to be an effective strategy for dealing with looting. In Agua Blanca, in Ecuador, local *huaqueros* were trained in archaeological techniques<sup>18</sup> and at Sipán, in Peru, *huaqueros* were also employed on the excavation. In the United Kingdom, the technical expertise of metal detectorists is increasingly called upon. There are two reasons for the success of these experiments. First, the perception often held by locals that (outsider) archaeologists are interested only in stealing their patrimony is exploded, the true nature of archaeological concerns are revealed and accepted as valid. The archaeology is seen as something to be understood and curated rather than consumed. Secondly, the work is legal, probably less hazardous than tomb robbing at night and remuneration is guaranteed.<sup>19</sup> Interpretations, too, can benefit from the multiple perspectives which are engendered through such cooperation.

### Cultural tourism

It is well established that archaeological sites and museums can act as the mainspring of tourist developments, with the economic benefits that accrue. In Turkey an archaeological museum was founded in Bodrum in 1959 at a time when the town received almost no tourists, but by 1990 it



was the second most popular museum in Turkey and the population of the town had tripled. In the Cypriot town of Kyrenia the number of visitors doubled in the three years following the opening of a museum to display a fourth-century BC shipwreck.<sup>20</sup> The several museums and monuments along the Kenyan coast in 1989 attracted 167,000 foreign visitors, and continue to have a beneficial effect on the entire regional economy.<sup>21</sup> At Chiclayo, in Peru, the nearest big town to the archaeological site of Sipán, a spectacularly rich (and partly looted) Moche site in Peru, in the ten years following the plunder and then excavation of the site the number of tourists grew from 'a handful' to between 40–70,000 a year.<sup>22</sup>

The long-term benefits to a depressed economy of cultural tourism have rarely been quantified, although it has been estimated that at Sipán, after careful excavation, the subsequent display of both artefacts and site now generates something in the region of \$14 million a year in tourist revenue, a far cry from the \$250,000 the looters are thought to have earned for their initial finds. The Swedish Tourist Board has estimated that every year the salvaged seventeenth-century AD battleship *Vasa* attracts several hundred million dollars into the Swedish economy.<sup>23</sup> The economic reality is that the curation and imaginative display of archaeological material in local museums, and the development of archaeological sites for public presentation, can create a resource which will help to attract tourists, and that sustainable employment will then follow.

It is essential that the income derived from tourist support be used for the benefit of communities in the immediate vicinity of sites, and

not be siphoned off by a central, and perhaps distant, government or by outside commercial concerns. Where possible, local people should be employed and the development of the necessary infrastructure should be under local guidance and meet local needs or aspirations.

### A free trade?

Dealers and collectors, who adhere to the liberal ideology of Merryman's internationalist image, demand a free trade in archaeological and other cultural material. Suggestions that the trade has a damaging effect on the world's archaeological and cultural heritage are dismissed, and instead it is claimed that free trade acts in the common interest: it puts money into the pockets of the poor, it preserves valuable material for posterity and it promotes a universal appreciation of a diverse range of artistic forms. This claim can be opposed from the theoretical position that there are social inequalities which are deeply rooted and not so easily overcome, and that the concept of a common interest has no grounding in reality. But, as more case studies are reported and quantifiable data are made available, each of the individual propositions has become more amenable to empirical examination.

First is the proposition that the trade is justified on economic grounds. Often, particularly in developing countries, the money derived from illicit digging can supplement a small and uncertain income. For example, the cemetery at an-Naq' in Jordan has for years been looted by impoverished locals and this is not unusual, but those who dig are swindled out of the true value of their finds by the middlemen who organize the trade and the

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dealers who make the final sale. Studies suggest that diggers routinely receive less than one per cent of the final sale price of an object.<sup>24</sup>

What, in Western terms, is a small sum of money might represent a substantial amount to a poor subsistence farmer. But it is a short-term gain. Once removed from their original contexts, archaeological and other cultural objects become commodities on the art market, and presumably continue to increase in monetary value, or at least are thought to have done so in recent times. But again, this appreciation, or profit, is lost to the original finder, and to the economy of the country of origin. And again, it is to the long-term benefit of western economies as jobs and income are generated on the back of this expropriated material. Thus, in reality, the original diggers are swindled twice over: first, out of the initial monetary value of their find, and then out of its long-term economic potential. Governments who are prepared to allow treasure salvors to operate in their territorial waters in return for a share of any treasure found are cheated in similar fashion, out of a long-term economic resource in return for a one-off, undervalued payment.

The second proposition used to justify free trade is that the market ‘rescues’ what are euphemistically termed ‘chance finds’ which are thrown up during the course of industrial or agricultural development projects, or through urban expansion or renewal. Without the market these pieces would simply be discarded and destroyed, but their monetary value guarantees their recovery and their ultimate sale and collection ensures their survival.

The final proposition is that a free trade in archaeological and other cultural material can help to promote a universal appreciation of human creativity and engender mutual respect. For this to be true, however, there would need to be a *fair* exchange of material, while at the present time the exchange is manifestly unfair. Material flows from source countries to demand countries and there is no countervailing flow, no fair exchange. Thus free trade does not promote international harmony, it merely sustains economic inequality and causes resentment amongst those whose culture is traded.

Collectors and dealers claim that, although in the first instance they may be acting out of self-interest, their actions ultimately have beneficial consequences. But it is difficult to muster empirical support for this position. A free trade in archaeological and cultural material seems to bestow few, if any, long-term benefits on those who, in the source countries, are its ultimate victims.

### Conventions and ethics

No country has the resources necessary to protect its archaeology. Even rich nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom suffer from looting. It is futile to demand that large countries such as Mali or India should protect their own heritage from depredations fuelled by rich collectors and institutions abroad. Countries such as these are dependent upon the international community to ensure that their own domestic laws are not broken, which in practice means enforcement of instruments such as the 1970 *UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*.



As today, only two of the major market nations (United States and France) had ratified the Convention, although Switzerland is currently drafting implementing legislation and in March 2001, the United Kingdom Government announced its intention to accede. Implementation of the Convention by these latter countries will allow their participation with the United States in future multilateral agreements, an eventuality envisaged by the United States at the time of its ratification.<sup>25</sup>

It could be argued that the main effect of the UNESCO Convention has been moral rather than material. For a long time, museums acted to underwrite the trade, buying material on the open market and accepting as bequests privately accumulated collections. The research interests of individual curators in the past has influenced the composition of museum collections, but attitudes now appear to be changing. In no small part this is due to the introduction of ethical codes which call for acquisition policies to be adopted in accordance with the principles laid down in the UNESCO Convention. Section 3.2 of the 1986 ICOM Code of Professional Ethics states for instance that: 'A museum should not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object unless the governing body and responsible officer are satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the specimen or object in question and that in particular it has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin and/or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned (including the museum's own country), in violation of that country's laws ... So far as excavated material is concerned, in addition to the safeguards set out above, the museum should not acquire by purchase objects in any case where the governing

body or responsible officer has reasonable cause to believe that their recovery involved the recent unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of ancient monuments or archaeological sites, or involved a failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land, or to the proper legal or governmental authorities'.

Archaeologists too are responding. In 1988 the International Congress for Classical Archaeology recommended in the Berlin Declaration that archaeologists should not provide expertise or advice to dealers or private collectors. Principle No. 3 of the 1996 Society for American Archaeology's Principles of Archaeological Ethics warns that archaeologists should be aware that the commercialization of archaeological objects results in the destruction of archaeological sites and of contextual information, and recommends that archaeologists should discourage and avoid activities that enhance the commercial value of an object. The Archaeological Institute of America's 1990 (amended 1997) Code of Ethics also requires that its members do not encourage or participate in the trade in unprovenanced antiquities. In the United Kingdom, the British Academy in 1998 passed a resolution affirming its adherence to the principles laid down in the 1970 Convention, and in 1999 the Institute of Archaeology in London became the first university department to adopt an ethical policy based on similar principles. These principles are also guiding the editorial policies of some academic journals such as the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

The 1995 Unidroit *Convention on Stolen and Illegally Exported Cultural Objects*, designed to augment the 1970 UNESCO Convention looks set to be equally influential on the development of

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codes of due diligence, which are intended to help prevent the inadvertent purchase of illicit cultural material.

Nevertheless, many museums continue to collect or display unprovenanced material in complete contravention of ethical codes, although in so doing they risk public embarrassment and financial loss.

### Conclusion

Gill and Chippindale (1993) have written of the material and intellectual consequences of collecting. By intellectual consequences they mean the ‘corruption of reliable knowledge’, which is caused

by the revaluation and reinterpretation of decontextualized objects in a modern setting. Our focus has been more on the material consequences, the damage caused to the material record by irresponsible collecting, and for good reason: it seems that those who benefit from the illicit trade – the dealers and collectors – are in a state of denial. The scale of the trade is often played down and the damage it causes is discounted. For this reason, eye-witness testimony and factual, preferably quantitative, data are invaluable in what is an ongoing debate. Recently, the US implementation of the UNESCO Convention was challenged in the US Senate, and in the United Kingdom both Parliament and Government carried out enquiries into the trade in illicit material. The Second Protocol to the



© Guimet Museum

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3. Third- to fourth-century ivories from Begram were among Kabul Museum’s prize possessions; now for sale on the international art market after being looted.

Hague Convention was adopted as well as the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. These are positive signs of the willingness to change the present reality of archaeological plunder and stop the theft before extinction.

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- 1 This article is a summary of two publications written by Neil Brodie: 'Spoils of War' published by Archeology, July/August 2003 and the introduction to the collective volume *Illicit Antiquities: The Theft of Culutre*

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and the *Extinction of Archeology* published by Routledge in 2001. Some adjustments have been made to take into account the changes into UNESCO's programmes since 2001.

2 See the special focus on Afghanistan in the current issue of *Museum International*. The Journal presented an in-depth study of the situation in Cambodia in its May 2002 double issue devoted to the site of Angkor.

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# | Angola's National Museum during the Civil War

by *Fernando Vuvu Manzambi*

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4. Angola's National Museum of Anthropology, in Luanda, has played a key role in promoting tolerance and cultural diversity.

During the first years of Angola's independence, a museum policy was developed which, in contrast to the years of colonization, gave priority to the educational function of the museum in highlighting its collections. It was a matter of disengaging museums from their colonial policies in order to place them at the service of the Angolan people who, for many years, had been deprived of their fundamental right to liberty in all its forms.

In fact, the museums that appeared in Angola during the 1930s, were regulated by the standardized instruments of the administration under Governor José Mendès Ribeiro Norton de Matos (1912–1915). In one of the edicts, no. 266/1912, the Governor had decided to create the Ethnographic Museum of Angola and the Congo<sup>1</sup> to enable researchers, colonists, businessmen and government employees who were arriving to settle in the region, to become familiar with 'the type of semi-civilized populations whose characteristics were considered both curious and little studied'.<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, other legal provisions were adopted for the study of traditional institutions, as well as indigenous habits and customs that would facilitate a better understanding of the native populations in order to colonize them more effectively. These were the provisions that defined the functions of colonial museums and determined the orientation of



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Portuguese colonial policy concerning its strategy of cultural colonization. These retrograde policies adopted during the colonization of Angola are one of the reasons that the war for liberation broke out, leading the Angolan people to independence in November 1975. Unfortunately, the post-colonial period plunged the country into a civil war that resulted in total upheaval.

The aim of this article is to discover the role of the National Museum of Anthropology in Luanda as an institution of cultural education, and the significance of museum policy in the sociocultural education of populations that, directly or indirectly, experienced the trauma of the war that lasted for many years. It also aims to show the museum's work to eliminate, through the message conveyed by exhibitions, the distrust and hatred that pervade Angolan society as a consequence of this war.

Has not the time come to ask whether the museum, through its educational role, laid the necessary foundations for a culture of tolerance, and dialogue for accepting difference, bringing people from various ethnic groups closer together by advocating, through its cultural message, a culture of peace in post-war Angola?

### **Angolan populations confronted with civil war**

The phenomenon of war is so complex to define that we will address it here from an anthropological point of view. Several other authors, consider war as one of the forms of a bloody settlement of a conflict, because it opposes independent political units situated within a space whose dimensions vary considerably. Whether it involves communities

(clans, tribes), kingdoms or nation-states, the common denominator is the ability to control, at least temporarily, the use of internal violence in order to turn it against an external enemy. This definition of the concept of warfare leads us to distinguish two categories of war: conventional and unconventional, according to whether or not the adversaries hold similar views on the stakes and the methods of the conflict in which they are engaged.

Let us say that in this definition, war is nothing other than an armed conflict in which opposing groups use violence to try and resolve their disagreement. Michel Adam,<sup>3</sup> aware of the difficulties that exist in defining the concept of warfare, adopts the commonly accepted definition which considers war to be a violent expression of the balance of power that exists between groups of humans. The main feature of war is its act of violence. In spite of its violent nature, however, it is defined as a social phenomenon, concomitant and perhaps, as suggests Adam, correlative to living in society. As a social phenomenon that involves an act of violence, we accept that it also lies outside the social pact. Thus, war emerges either from a breach of this pact, or from beyond the perimeters of this pact, in a political sphere that lies outside its power.

In fact, the author demonstrates that war is not a relationship between men. According to Adam who refers to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, war is a relationship between states in which individuals are only enemies by accident and not at all as men or even citizens, but as soldiers. In this way, Michel Adam is of the opinion that each state can only have another state as an enemy, and not men. In this case, war responds to pre-established norms

which the parties in conflict must abide by. These norms correspond to a war that is defined as conventional. Contrary to conventional war, there is another category of conflict designated as unconventional. This category comprises two sub-categories: civil war and war for liberation.

As far as we are concerned, Angola experienced these two categories of war, between 1961 and 1974 for the war for liberation and between 1975 and 2002 for the war that we have designated as the civil war.<sup>4</sup> Angola's civil war was an armed conflict between groups and citizens of the same State. It involved partisans from different groups who diverged in their objectives or political ideologies from the liberation movements during the war for liberation. These liberation movements based their struggle more on the ideological antagonisms and ambitions of the groups than on the noble objectives of liberating the country from the colonial yoke. This antagonism between the liberation movements was transformed into a conflict that, at the moment of independence, opposed armed branches of the liberation movements (MPLA, FNLA, UNITA) who were supported by civil populations according to regional social bases, militants and sympathizers. This war induced peaceful citizens to take sides, consciously or unconsciously, to defend the interests of political groups which, despite their nationalist roots, identified themselves with regional causes, namely, the FNLA in the north, the MPLA in the central north and UNITA in the south.

Unlike a conventional war, civil war is warfare that does not comply with norms, and where violence is not controlled. It is a ferocious war that knows no pity. In Angola, it involved the

civil population and stirred up hatred between groups, to the extent of taking on a violent, regional nature in the traditionally political regions, that is to say, the north and the centre of the country. The politicization of populations and the integration of armed militia to defend the interests of the country, as well as recruitment from other groups of the population to support opposing political groups fuelled the Angolan civil war for many years.

In multi-ethnic countries, like Angola, the tear in the social fabric led to bloody violence and hatred which became ingrained in the various population groups. Each citizen who took part in the war was confronted with a double state of violence: firstly, his involvement in violent acts such as deliberate killing, and secondly, his change in attitude forces him to live on the margins of his own society that he ill treats.

In fact, the state of war that Angola experienced created a climate of tension which has destroyed the social fabric of society. It is this state of war that Michel Adam called 'a situation of counter-society', a situation created by internal tension and a propensity for revulsion. The duration of this armed conflict and its consequences demand that each of the actors involved, whether individual, collective or institutional, or whether political, social or cultural, make serious efforts to restore a culture of peace.

Along with other institutions, the National Museum of Anthropology had taken the necessary measures to contribute to restoring the climate of non-violence and to setting in motion any process that would steer Angolan society towards peace. As such, peace is not necessarily defined by the silence

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of arms, or still less by the signature of peace accords which, of course, is a decisive step on the road to peace. The successive peace accords, from Alvore in Portugal to Lusaka in Zambia, provide undisputed evidence that peace is a process which involves the individual who must become aware of the unwarranted nature of acts of violence and who must renounce those deeds. The individual has first to be at peace with himself, and achieve inner peace in order to contribute to social peace. This individual awareness must become socialised in order to become an act of collective consciousness that would enable society to renounce violence.

### **The collections of the National Museum of Anthropology and the pluri-ethnic foundation of Angolan society**

In the early years of independence, documents on the political orientations of the country, devised by the Popular Liberation Movement (MPLA), acknowledged the existence of different cultures in the territorial extension of the country, based on ethnolinguistic characteristics that define the cultural specificity of each group which would constitute the unity of the Angolan nation. Thus, Antonio Agostinho Neto, the first president of Angola, who was aware of the cultural complexity of the newly liberated country, warned, from the outset, 'that it was easy to narrate the political interpretation of the moment at hand but that it was still more difficult to penetrate the private thoughts of the several ex-nations that made up Angola'.<sup>5</sup>

This awareness has enabled the agencies of cultural coordination, as well as cultural actors, such as museums, to conceive programmes of cultural and patriotic education for the effective

edification of the Angolan nation. The programme had to take into consideration national unity in all its diversity. Cultural differences could not fail to be a resource in this vast country. It is this line of action that laid the ground for the cohesion of the Angolan people, founded on the underlying principles of the war for liberation and accentuating the reaffirmation of the will of a nation that sacrificed its blood to secure its sovereignty. The cultural discourse conveyed through the message of the exhibitions aimed to make the populations aware of a recent phase in the history of the country, that of its liberation and the efforts to be made for the edification of national unity. Thus, for example, we discover in the permanent exhibition of the museum, representations of the political institutions of the various traditional societies, their socio-economic and cultural activities, together with their mores, customs and religious roots.

The message of the exhibition shows the Bantu cultural foundation shared by the Kongo, Tshokwe, Ambundu, Ovimbundu, Nyaneka, Ambo, Herero and the people of the Nganguela (Mbwela, Lwimbi, Nyemba and others) and the Khoisan group whose conviviality unites the two major linguistic families. This exhibition conveys a message of unity and brings down the cultural barriers between groups, asserting that the factors that unite them are more numerous than those that set them apart. The exhibitions show the populations that despite a geo-cultural distribution of ethnolinguistic groups, the cultural roots are always stronger than the frontiers between groups. The aim of this message was to free the populations from the idea of divisions and regionalism, while preparing them for a new Angola that is free and unified in its diversity.



### **The role of the National Museum of Anthropology in the education of populations**

The National Museum of Anthropology, the subject of our study, is a museum in the Angolan capital, Luanda. Our approach here does not address the direct consequences of the war that, for more than 28 years, destroyed material infrastructures and robbed the communities of their cultural resources, human, intangible and material. The National Museum of Anthropology in Luanda was never the victim of destruction or vandalism resulting from the depredation of the civil war which might require the intervention of institutions competent in the protection of cultural assets in case of armed conflict. This situation would require recourse to legal instruments in this domain. Our reflection in this article is directed towards highlighting the contents of the ethnographic collections of the museum in terms of education, maintaining cohesion and social equilibrium in a country where the pluri-ethnic basis of the social fabric was threatened by the violent repercussions of civil war. The National Museum of Anthropology possesses a rich collection of objects of the Kongo, Kimbundu, and Umbundu from regions to which recent political history has attributed the stakes of political tradition. In addition to these collections, the museum provides further representation of the geocultural heritage of Angola with objects of the Tshokwe, Nyaneka, Ambo, and Herero, as well as some from various groups of the Nganguela. This wide variety of objects to be found in the museum makes it the most representative institution in the country. We can confirm that despite its geocultural position in the Kimbundu region, and taking into consideration the population drift from the interior of the country towards the capital (Luanda), as a

result of the war, Luanda has become the place where all the ethnic groups congregate. This testifies to the unifying nature of the diverse populations of the city of Luanda.

### **The exhibitions at the National Museum of Anthropology and the message of unity in diversity**

It is true that the museum provides a society with means of representation as it can display the values it wants to highlight for the education of the public or for its population as a whole. As regards educating the population, heritage objects are contemplated by those who share the values which are inscribed in them.<sup>6</sup>

Museums are cultural institutions that play an important role in the education of populations and, as Oumar Konaré, President of ICOM, said in his speech in 1992, serve three fundamental functions: preserving the collections they manage, showing them to advantage and devising identity markers for their visitors in general and, locally, for inhabitants of the areas in the vicinity of the museums. One of the most striking features of museums is the way the message conveyed by their collections is used.

Annual programming of one or two temporary exhibitions at the museum during the 1990s, on the specificity of the Khoisan, Umbundu, and Nganguela groups, aimed at reinforcing historico-cultural ties that exist between the Angolan peoples. A catalogue and many cultural activities to ensure extensive dissemination of the cultural information accompanied these exhibitions.

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These messages that constitute the material and the didactic equipment to inform and educate the public, transform these institutions into popular schools for all strata of society. These schools for the people are open to men, women, and children regardless of age, sex or educational background. They are the basis for the school of life. The message that comes from the study of objects in the collections and within the sociocultural context of their groups of origin is the product of the philosophical roots and sociocultural code in those societies. The populations identify easily with these messages and assimilate them for their own well-being because they are part of the teachings that ensure a stable society. Thus, the education of the population in museums was considered to be one of the most important tasks of the museum during the period of the war to ensure the cohesion of the Angolan society in its diversity.

In the National Museum of Anthropology in Luanda, the values inscribed in its programme of temporary exhibitions are those of passing on the message of national unity, tolerance, accepting difference and establishing dialogue between the populations of the various ethnic groups that have populated the country. This programme which was developed in the context of the civil war which began in 1976 could only respond to the demands of a culture of peace. The message that emerges from the teachings of the museum results from the objects of the collections in the exhibitions and is a successful contribution of the National Museum of Anthropology to educating its public and the Angolan people in general.

The government mobilized a militia that supported the regular army in its efforts to defend

the integrity of the Angolan territory against the rebel movement which, during the cold war, was considered to be made up of imperialist factions, *inter alia*, seeking to recruit civilians and adolescents into the guerrilla forces in order to seize power. The integration of civilians into both belligerent camps turned the Angolan conflict into a civil war, keeping this pluri-ethnic society on the brink of tearing itself apart.

### Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we can say that despite the risks that haunt the pluri-ethnic societies in Angola, the National Museum of Anthropology has nonetheless made tremendous efforts to provide cultural education through the message of its exhibitions. The permanent exhibitions that related most emphatically the socio-politico-economic and cultural life of various ethnic groups enabled those populations to become more familiar with each other and more aware of the immense cultural resources that the country possesses. The temporary and thematic exhibitions have used didactic material to focus on local identities while at the same time seeking to emphasize the elements of similarity that must necessarily unite the various populations. These activities have enabled the National Museum of Anthropology to contribute to the edification of a culture of tolerance and acceptance of others in their diversity as fundamental prerequisites for national unity within a context of diversity and a culture of peace.

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4 The civil war in Angola had different characteristics. It involved former

armed liberation movements and militia recruited among civilians. Thus, this war is defined as unconventional.

5 Neto, António Agostinho, 1998, Sobre a cultura Nacional. Discurso proferido pelo Agostinho Neto, Presidente do MPLA-PT e da República Popular de Angola e da Mesa de Assembleia-geral da UEA e ao 8 de Janeiro de 1979, p. 13.

6 Caillet, E., *A l'approche du musée, la médiation culturelle*. Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1995, p. 38.

# | A Role for 'Keeping Places' in the Timor Sea Region

*by James Bennett*

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The creation of the Uma Fukun Cultural Centre,<sup>1</sup> incorporating the most recent public museum to be established in the Australian Asian region, redresses devastation that occurred to the former State Museum of East Timor<sup>2</sup> during the foundation of the new Timor Lorosae nation in 1999. The programmes proposed for this new museum will function in a regional context alongside a number of peer institutions in neighbouring eastern Indonesian and northern Australia. In Indonesia this includes the East Nusa Tenggara State Museum located in the provincial capital of Kupang (West Timor), the West Nusa Tenggara Museum in Mataram (Lombok) and the Siwalima Museum in Ambon (Maluku). In northern Australia there is the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin (Northern Territory) as well as community-based museums in remote areas.

The borders of these three nations converge around the common waters of the Timor Sea that separates a distance of less than a thousand kilometres. Eastern Indonesia and northern Australia, from the perspective of the respective national capitals of Jakarta and Canberra, are often regarded as remote and only come to attention in times of crisis, such as the conflict that gave birth to East Timor. Indonesia and Australia may exist as neighbours but as the historian Charles McKnight

has commented, most people live on the other ends of the block.<sup>3</sup>

### Historical setting

Yet this locality, including East Timor, shares a common ground in the strength and variety of its numerous indigenous cultures despite the contrast between the historical isolation of the Australian continent and long experience of global contact in the adjacent eastern Indonesian archipelago. The 'first nation' identity of Australian Aboriginal peoples formed in an environment very different from Indonesia's cultural pluralism that Sedyawati<sup>4</sup> describes as precluding a minority-majority dichotomy. However, indigenous peoples in both places today face similar challenges to preserve and develop unique, inherited cultural traditions.

In eastern Indonesia and East Timor numerous ethnic groups with distinct identities, such as the Sumbanese, Lio, Atoni and Tetum people, continue to maintain a dynamic presence in contemporary society withstanding the past incursions of European colonialism, the arrival of Islam and Christianity and widespread population movements. Likewise in northern Australia, the Tiwi, Yolngu, Kundjey'mi and other regional language groups have survived the devastation of a white invasion with its subsequent impact of missionary activities, mining industry and pastoral activities. Nowadays Aboriginal people comprise approximately 30% of the Northern Territory population and increasingly claim their rights to social and economic justice.

On both sides of the Timor Sea these societies reflect uniquely similar fundamental values

arising from continuity dating back to pre history. These values are focused around ancestral beliefs expressed through hereditary relationships to land and customary practices that pervade all aspects of community and private life. In both the eastern Indonesian archipelago region and northern Australia indigenous peoples are asserting self-determination, including in the areas of heritage management and cultural property rights. In a sense, East Timor's declaration of independence, and the subsequent establishment of the national cultural centre, may be understood as one particular high-profile example of a phenomenon that is occurring across a much wider sphere.

In the neighbouring provinces of eastern Indonesia, government decentralisation, following the 1998 end of the New Order era, has resulted in a rising affirmation of local ethnicity while maintaining a continued commitment to national unity. Regional autonomy (*otonomi daerah*)<sup>5</sup> is affecting all aspects of Indonesian society but has specific implications in this part of the world, where social identity still remains very much connected to ancestral traditions. Provincial cultural institutions need increasingly to define themselves as relevant to local community aspirations as well as to government policy formulated at a national level. Eastern Indonesian museums are seeking a role as meaningful participants in regional development in order to compete for funding with other local bodies, such as tourism and education. Meanwhile the proliferation of non-government organizations (*lembaga swadaya masyarakat*) such as traditional crafts cooperative groups, reflects growing popular awareness of the benefits in promoting ethnic cultural practice as a means for self-determination through social and economic improvement.

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Across the waters of the Timor Sea in northern Australia the Land Rights movement that commenced in earnest in the 1970s has meant indigenous people assuming a pro-active role in self-determination. One outcome is an astonishing cultural revival, particularly in visual arts and craft practice. Aboriginal people are communicating their authentic status as the traditional owners of ancestral country to an outside white audience, as well as finding a means for economic improvement. Community-based artist cooperatives have become an important vehicle for promoting indigenous cultural property rights and have affected all areas of Australian arts and culture practice, including the museum world.<sup>6</sup>

In recent decades, museums worldwide have been identified by indigenous people as significant sites for the struggle in cultural survival.<sup>7</sup> Museums have a long history in the Australia Asian region. The National Museum of Indonesia was founded in 1778 as the Batavia Society of Arts and Sciences. In 1914 the Dutch East Indies government commissioned a feasibility study to establish a new museum in Bali. The resultant report called for the institution to be more than merely a location for 'a dead collection of this and that' in a proposal that pre-empted a modern interpretative centre with interactive exhibits. Nevertheless, European ethnographic collections established during the colonial period usually emphasized the exotic 'otherness' of indigenous culture. The assumption was that the artefacts represented societies on their way to inevitable extinction or earlier points on a common road to progress. Collections like the Dutch-established National Museum (Jakarta) and Museum Sonobudoyo (Yogyakarta) profoundly influenced

the development of Indonesian museum practice following its independence. The culture of the new nation, according to Joop Ave, was officially born on 18 August, one day after the 17 August Proclamation of Independence. As Ave commented, 'We had a culture that was a political statement. Suddenly the cultures of Aceh, Tapanuli, of Ambon, of Java, were Indonesian'.<sup>8</sup> State museums subsequently focused on the two major themes of cultural history and variety. During the subsequent New Order era collections documented regional variations and similarities of material culture with the intention to raise public awareness of Indonesian culture as one unity in its diversity.<sup>9</sup> Other contemporary issues are now superseding this approach. Nevertheless its wider relevance in recent times is apparent when an East Timor spokesperson, writing in exile shortly before independence, stated that ethnic diversity could become a basis for the national cultural identity of the new East Timor nation.<sup>10</sup>

On the basis of such a vision Indonesian public museum collections have been established over recent decades in Maluku (1973), West Nusa Tenggara (1982), East Nusa Tenggara (1991) and the former East Timor province (1995). The Dili institution described the collection as 'the breath of the museum'.<sup>11</sup> The initial decision to focus on ethnography, history and archaeology recognized an urgent need to counter the unexpected speed in loss of cultural heritage through changing life styles.<sup>12</sup> This policy was also intended to protect movable heritage objects from sale outside the province.<sup>13</sup> All museums in the region continue to share this goal.

### New challenges

Nevertheless, as McLearn<sup>14</sup> indicated, indigenous populations in Indonesia, East Timor and Australia have been in conflict with museums from the outset. In all three countries early ethnographic collections were acquired as a result of imposed intrusion, such as European military and missionary activities, survey expeditions and policies of forced assimilation. An 1848 report of the Batavia Arts and Sciences Society typically described the collection of objects during the sack of Buleleng Palace by Dutch troops.<sup>15</sup> In northern Australia nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific expeditions, such as Herman Klaatsch's 1906 visit to Melville Island, regularly included activities like grave robbing and the desecration of indigenous sacred sites.<sup>16</sup>

The goals of research defined from the European colonialist 'outsider' perspective was an important motivation for many early material culture collections whose rationale continues to have a subtle but pervasive influence on museum practice in this region. The new science of anthropology with its notions of social evolution was based on the studies of objects as technology divorced from the rich and subtle complexities of their actual daily use. There was scant regard for the intellectual property rights of indigenous informants. Inevitably de-contextualized objects became relics. Their definition as 'heritage' dislocated meaning from an understanding of their contemporary significance in the cultures of eastern Indonesia and northern Australia. The idiosyncratic European premise that objects are 'lifeless' permeated museology practice whereas in many cultures – including those under discussion here –

other perceptions of reality adhere to 'real things'.<sup>17</sup>

A collection policy informed by local cultural considerations would present a very different style of display to what we may be accustomed in a museum practice that originated with the presentation of ethnographic items preserved side-by-side with inanimate, lifeless natural science specimens under the same roof. For it is the indigenous populations in this region, formed by the shores of the Timor Sea, that are the principal stakeholders in the ownership of many public collections. As the custodians of traditional intellectual knowledge, they are more appropriately equipped to remove that artificial line so often drawn by the curatorial specialist, acting as interpreter, between the indigenous understanding of an object's meaning and the visiting public.

The survival of a unique selection of 35 ancestral figures following the 1999 destruction of the former Indonesian State Museum of East Timor in Dili highlights the complexities challenging museums to present collections in a manner that articulates the aspirations of traditional owners and makers.<sup>18</sup> The sculptures were reported to have been entrusted to East Timor State Museum by community representatives after they had been illicitly removed from sacred sites in the mountainous Bobonaro region and a plan to sell them illegally outside the troubled province was foiled. Unexpectedly, the valuable wood carved sculptures survived the sacking of Dili despite the disappearance of so much of the museum's collection and the apparent deliberate damage of the remainder. At the time of the 1999 museum salvage operation, Dili informants suggested that looters may have been fearful of removing ancestral



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figures believed to possess magical powers, even after they had previously been taken out of their ritual setting to become part of the museum's collection. The sculptures' survival is a reminder that rarely is there a point at which an object's spiritual function can be assumed to be exhausted thus marking its complete transformation into an item for secular display.

Museums across the region contain similar types of objects that sit uneasily in the context of exhibition displays based on a worldview of either historical European rationalism or aesthetic criteria. Ancestral sculptures, such as the Bobonaro figures, were traditionally erected at restricted ceremonial sites, like graves, or in ancestral cult houses known as *uma lulik* (Tetum language). Local variants of these structures exist throughout the village societies of the eastern Indonesian archipelago. The ancestral cult house, as well as being the location for ritual activities, is used for the storage of sacred heirlooms sometimes handed down to generations over hundreds of years. Superficially, these cult houses might be thought to resemble the intention of museums developed in a Western context. They are locations to preserve precious things and remember inherited stories. However, the ownership of heirloom items, known as *pusaka*, stored within their walls is defined communally and any transference of this property to outsiders, such as through sale to art dealers, invariably arouses bitter controversy and dispute amongst extended family members. Such artefacts, when removed from the immediate context of possession and use, and housed in a museum become someone else's 'heritage'. Preservation of these items is so often at the price of the dis-empowerment of those to whom they once belonged. As McLear has

noted, museums locate objects in the past and separate them from the present yet indigenous cultures 'give more importance to continuities between the past and the present, and to their continuing presence in contemporary society'.<sup>19</sup>

The decision of the East Timor people to name the new Dili cultural centre, including the national museum, *Uma Fukun* (Tetum language for a meeting place), and not *uma lulik* (ancestral cult house), articulates the democratic hope that this becomes a place where people gather to create a community.<sup>20</sup> The ceremonially powerful ancestral cult house, as the repository of communal and spiritual heritage, is also bounded by hierarchal values of age, sex and clan status embodied in the esoteric language of its rituals. Democratic ideals of cultural self-determination may involve a desire to affirm traditional practices that at times ironically appear restrictive to certain interest groups through the reclaiming of cultural ownership for objects, sites and customary laws. But changing public expectations across the region means that museums need to respond authentically to the aspirations of local indigenous peoples. Thus, to acknowledge the rights of indigenous societies in the Timor Sea region also means to face the question of the future direction of museums. This path may take these organizations away from the ideals of 'pure collections' and instead towards presenting the sometimes controversial stories and issues which they portray.<sup>21</sup>

### Future prospects

The contemporary experience of Australian Aboriginal people could make a meaningful contribution in reassessing the role of museums in



the wider region. There is potentially great relevance for the institution known as the keeping place that is evolving in the setting of indigenous Australian communities. The first keeping place was established as a Men's Museum by the Walpiri people of Central Australia on the remote settlement of Yuendumu north-west of Alice Springs in 1971. It was notable as the first Aboriginal community museum to hold secret/sacred ritual objects that in pre-European contact times would have been stored hidden in formerly remote natural locations such as rock shelters. For Aboriginal culture, just as in the rural societies of the eastern Indonesian archipelago, the taboos of access to sacred heirloom items are in direct contrast to the usual museum ideal of collections held in 'public trust' for the good of a national population.<sup>22</sup> The challenge facing the Walpiri and other peoples to preserve such sacred objects in an appropriate manner, while also protecting them from loss, has a distinct parallel to the situation in eastern Indonesia. The theft of ancestral heirlooms including ancestral sculptures, old trade textiles and foreign ceramics, or their sale forced by economic poverty, continues to impoverish the traditional communities of Timor, Flores, Sumba and other islands.<sup>23</sup>

In the two decades following the establishment of the Keeping Place at Yuendumu, some 30 similar cultural centres have been established on communities and at least another 15 are at the development stage.<sup>24</sup> Growth has not always been easy and these institutions are often troubled by problems of financial viability or management issues. But the keeping place could be tested and developed as a culturally affirmative model for indigenous peoples across the Timor Sea

as well as in northern Australia.

Jenkins defines the keeping place as encompassing the ideals of 'a repository for the special, the treasured, the respected, the revered, the protected and the celebrated'.<sup>25</sup> It provides empowerment for communities to negotiate the presentation of their own histories in an immediate context. The community-based nature of the keeping place enables it to become a focus for the local care of material culture collections, as well as a range of associated culturally affirmative activities including education and heritage tourism. Its availability for access contrasts with major public museums that are often managed by bureaucracies intimidating to village people, and located at distances requiring time and money to visit. As a small institution it encourages a sense of ownership by committed amateurs rather than being the domain of the professional specialist.

The keeping place offers an alternate model to the extremes of the museum either as academic and specialist institution or, conversely, a popular theme park. It is as relevant to eastern Indonesia and East Timor as to the indigenous people of northern Australia. Historically, cultural loss in the eastern Indonesian archipelago has occurred in equal proportion to the expansion of major overseas collections far removed from the people for whom these objects mattered most. UNESCO's universal doctrine that cultural heritage 'belongs to mankind as a whole'<sup>26</sup> continues to be relevant today but perceptions of ownership with responsibility are changing according to our understanding of cultures and objects. Museums increasingly require the specific insights and experience of indigenous peoples working across

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national boundaries to devise more meaningful ways to preserve heritage for the people for whom it has most meaning. The keeping place is one possible solution.

The author thanks the many friends in Biboki (North Central Timor) who are committed to the preservation of Biboki cultural traditions and provided the inspiration for this paper, and Dr. Jeannie Devitt and Ms. Alison Gray for their assistance in its preparation.

### | NOTES

1 Since late 1999, UNESCO – in cooperation with the World Bank, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), and the government of Portugal – has provided technical assistance to the restoration of Uma Fukun, the oldest Portuguese colonial building in Dili, which is to house the East Timor National Museum and Cultural Centre. Other UNESCO projects include training to improve local expertise, and the restoration of traditional houses, Uma Luliks, in the Fataluka area of East Timor, with financial support from various partners, and in collaboration with the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Works salvaged from the old East Timor Museum, which was severely damaged and pillaged, will be displayed in Uma Fukun once it is restored. With help from the Australian Darwin Museum and Melbourne University, UNESCO has saved and restored a unique collection of 476 items that includes ancestral wooden statues, fragments of Neolithic pottery and Chinese porcelain. It is hoped that Timorese artefacts held in other countries would further enrich the collection in the near future.

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4 E. Sedyawati, 'Indonesia's Multicultural Setup', in *Unlocking Museums: Proceedings of 4th National Conference of Museums Australia*, Darwin, Museums Australia Inc., 1997, p. 57.

5 All words in italics are bahasa Indonesia unless otherwise stated.

6 National publications, for example *Previous Possessions, New Obligations* produced by the Council of Australian Museum Associations (1993) and *Valuing Art, Respecting Cultural Protocols For Working With Australian Indigenous Arts* (2001) support the regional empowerment of indigenous people in the arts industry.

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8 J. Ave, 'Museum and Culture', in S. Kartiwa, B. Johnson, T. Tazir, *Empowerment of Museums – Problems and Solutions*, Denpasar, 1999, p. 9.

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10 A. Pereira, 'East Timor: A Historic Record and Cultural Survival in the Diaspora', in *Bensaun Tubarei Metin: Firmly Gripping the Earth*, Fairfield: East Timor Cultural Centre Inc., 1997.

11 *Acquisitions Report* (unpublished), East Timor State Museum, 1994, p. 2.

12 Already during the Portuguese period in the 1960s this cultural loss in East Timor was occurring with a rapid pace. See Glover, I. 1968 'Pottery Making in Oralan Village, Portuguese Timor', in *Australian Natural History* The Australian Museum. Vol. 16, No. 3 September, 1968.

13 *Informasi Museum Negeri Timor Timur*, Dili, undated pamphlet.

14 McLearn, 1996, p. 80.

15 *Journal of the Indian Archipelago*, Vol. II, Singapore, 1848 (Kraus Reprint Nedeln/Liechtenstein, 1970).

16 B. Stehlik, 'Herman Klaatsch and the Tiwi, 19062, in *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 10, Canberra, Australian National University, 1986, p. 69.

17 P. Dellios, 'Museums in the Global "kampun": Mixed Messages', in S. Kartiwa, B. Johnson, T. Tazir, *Empowerment of Museums – Problems and Solutions*, Denpasar, 1999, p. 62.

18 In January 2000, I led the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory team which salvaged the surviving East Timor museum collection. My thanks to Virgilio Smit (Dili) for the information he provided to me at the time regarding these sculptures. See my article 'East Timor

Museum: A Past and No Future?', in *Art Asia Pacific*, Issue 30, 2000.

19 McLear, 1996, p. 83.

20 Mary Gissing, Dili, 2002 (personal communication).

21 W. Jonas, 'Museums Beyond Mabo', in *Museum National*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Fitzroy, Museums Australia Inc., 1998, p. 6.

22 McLear, 1996, p. 101.

23 See Forshee, J., 'Tracing Troubled Times: Objects of Value and Narratives of Loss from Sumba and Timor Islands', *Indonesia* Vol. 74, October 2002, Cornell Southeast Asia, 2002.

24 Ahoy, 1995, p. 45.

25 S. Jenkins, *Keeping Culture: Aboriginal art to Keeping Places and Cultural centres*, Canberra, National Gallery of Australia, 2002, p. 2.

26 M. Makagiansar, 'The Work of UNESCO', in L. Prott and J. Sprech (eds.), *Protection or Plunder: Safeguarding the Future of Our Cultural Heritage. Papers of the UNESCO Regional seminar on the Movable Cultural Property Convention*, Brisbane, Canberra, Australian Government Printing Office, 1989, p. 9.

# | The National Museum of Lebanon in Beirut

by Joseph Pharès

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November 1995. In the heart of Beirut, a deafening sound of machinery and drilling fills the air of the national museum of Lebanon. Archaeologists, assisted by technicians, struggle to break open the carcasses of reinforced concrete that had encased the antique objects of art. Sections fall away. Phoenician and Roman sarcophagi, statues and mosaics – which had been hidden – reappear unscathed after 17 years of war and neglect. A miracle! This building, once a haven of peace and history had, in fact, served, during these long years of confrontation, as a hiding place for snipers and as barracks for army troops and members of the militia. The roof had caved in, the windows had been shattered and the walls were pock-marked with bullet holes leaving the impression of total desolation after successive fires and looting.

A national campaign for the restoration of the museum and its archaeological objects then began. 'Forget the war and the years of sorrow to be reborn from the ashes of the past' seems to have been the slogan of the team from the museum that took up the challenge. Nine years later, the mission

has been completed. The museum has once again adopted its role as guardian of the timeless history of the Land of Cedars.

### **Life and survival of Beirut's National Museum**

In 1919, Commandant Raymond Weill, an officer from the French detachment, received, in an apartment in Beirut, several antiquities that had been found on Lebanese soil. This act announced the birth of the Beirut National Museum. In 1923, a founding committee began collecting funds to build a museum on a tract of land located in the *rue de Damas*, near the racetrack. Two architects, Antoine Nahas and Pierre Leprince-Ringuet submitted a museum project proposal to the examining commission and obtained its acceptance. However, construction of the building was slow to get started and was not begun until 1930. Seven years were necessary to complete the project, and five additional years, to constitute the first collections.

Alfred Naccache, President of the Lebanese Republic, officially inaugurated the museum on 27 May 1942. For more than 30 years, the Beirut National Museum welcomed artefacts from all periods, which emerged from excavation sites throughout the Land of Cedars. Under the archaeologists' picks, the great cities of the Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Mamelukes ... revealed their secrets and the national museum was enriched with works of art which are unique in the world. Within several years, the Beirut Museum, because of the value of the objects exhibited, had become one of the most important museums in the Middle East. Happiness never lasts long, and civil war broke out on 13 April 1975, just over one hundred yards from the entrance to the museum.

The entire country succumbed to violence and death. Fighting broke out around the national museum which closed its doors to the public. The emir Maurice Chehab, assisted by his wife and several employees, took advantage of the ceasefires to empty the display cases and hide the works of art in the storerooms of the basement whose access was walled up. Inside the halls of the museum, sandbags and concrete coating protected the larger items that were too heavy to move.

Months went by, years passed, the violence of the fighting increased, the war seemed to go on eternally and peace seemed remote. A demarcation line, called 'Museum Alley', divided the Lebanese capital in two: East Beirut and West Beirut. Within months, this haven of peace and history became the symbol of death, injustice and abduction. For more than 17 years, the word museum was a synonym for danger and death. In front of its façade, hundreds of people were shot, and thousands of women, children and elderly people waited for hours for permission to pass the checkpoint. The museum became a permanent strategic military position, continually fought over by the militia and the army. They transformed the galleries of art into barracks and used the statues and mosaics for target practice.

These tragic years finally ceased with the end to the fighting. In 1991, the employees from the General Directorate of Antiquities returned to the museum. The damage from the war was dreadful. Graffiti left by the militia and the traces of their fires blackened the walls of the galleries. The repositories that had housed thousands of works of art for more than 50 years were flooded. Thousands of artefacts had been sitting for over a decade in the

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groundwater that the museum had been built on. The laboratory equipment had been stolen. Inventories and identification tags had been destroyed by fires. Nothing was left of the prestigious museum except for the memory, which was to serve as an example during the reconstruction which followed.

November 1997, the doors of the museum reopened for several months to the Lebanese public, which wished to forget the war and reconcile itself with the past, present and future. In July 1998 and up until October 1999, the Beirut National Museum closed its doors in order to complete the repair work, and create the most



5. The National Museum of Beirut after restoration.

Between 1995 and 2000, the museum was transformed into a hive of activity: two parallel teams shared the tasks of restoring both the edifice and the archaeological collections. The restoration and renovation of Beirut's National Museum took place thanks to the combined efforts of the Minister of Culture, the General Directorate of Antiquities and the National Heritage Foundation. In

favourable conditions for the display of artefacts, according to modern museological standards. With a minimum of available means, the results have been remarkable. Two panoramic elevators on the outside of the building have facilitated access. The museum is now equipped with lighting and sound systems, as well as a security system worthy of its collections. The display cases are equipped with

viewers that have adaptable and portable magnifying glasses, which enlarge the exhibits. Responding to pedagogical needs, a film theatre continuously shows videos that relate the history of the museum and its resurrection, presenting the wealth of Lebanese heritage. A gift shop has been opened in the museum.

### The museum and the history of Lebanon

Between 2,500 and 5,000 people visit the Beirut National Museum each month. Few of them are aware of the war's impact on this edifice of grandiose architecture. Thousands of holes left by artillery shells have been filled. The external 'wounds' of the building have been 'bandaged'. Seventeen years of unhappiness have thus been erased from the history of the monument. Inside, new museology highlights the beauty of each object on display. Gentle, discreet lighting creates an atmosphere of serenity and lends a solemn character to the two floors of the building. The ground floor is reserved for cumbersome objects (sarcophagi, funerary steles and large statues) while the first floor is devoted to artefacts that are small in format. Because of major technical constraints, the authorities of the museum have opted for the divided layout of the objects. This can complicate the visit and means that visitors who wish to follow the historic chronology, have to go back and forth between the two floors.

The works of art that are displayed within the galleries bear witness to the grandeur of the civilisations and peoples having lived on Lebanese soil. Pre-history – Palaeolithic and Neolithic – is underrepresented. The rare specimens of stone

tools and pottery on display provide the visitor with a fleeting glimpse of human life on this strip of land. Conversely, the metal age has been given much more space. Urbanization having largely taken place along the Lebanese coast, objects originating from Byblos<sup>1</sup> occupy a prime spot on the first floor. The excavations undertaken by Maurice Dunand and Jean Lauffray from the 1930s to the 1960s have enriched the national collections with several thousand funerary and ritual objects and the sarcophagus of Ahirom undoubtedly remains the highlight of the museum's collections. Votive statues, originating from the Obelisk Temple, and referred to today under the generic term of the *Phoenicians*, are in fact small figurines, with very stylized faces wearing helmets or conic head-coverings similar to those which have been worn by Lebanese farmers for the past three centuries. For art historians, these artefacts from the Bronze Age are considered to be amongst the most well-known objects from the Phoenician civilization, which gained a large part of its wealth from trade with Pharaonic Egypt.

In the history of Lebanon, the Iron Age corresponds to the golden age of the Phoenician cities. Independent and at the same time rivals, the fortified cities managed to preserve their economic development, despite numerous invasions (Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian...) and foreign rule. They developed their trade throughout the Mediterranean and established many colonies. These twin cities, scattered between Africa and Europe ensured the continuation of the export of luxury objects and the import of raw materials. Silver and gold plate, jewellery and pottery from this period are evidence of the sophistication of this seafaring people.





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6. The limestone sarcophagus of King Ahiaram, masterpiece from the National Museum of Beirut, found in Byblos and dating from the 10th century BC, is characterized by the oldest Phoenician inscription.

Small marble sculptures, called *The Babies of Echmoun*, attest to great skill in marble work of the artisans from these cities. They are offerings that were presented to the god *Echmoun* by the kings and wealthy families of Sidon. During the war, this collection of sculptures was stolen from the museum repository and presented for sale in Switzerland. The Lebanese authorities, warned in time by the archaeologist who had discovered these pieces, were able to provide proof of their origin

and ownership and they were restored to the Beirut Museum.

The collection of anthropoid sarcophagi from Sidon, which combines Phoenician, Egyptian and Greek art, is another highlight of the museum. The human shape of the coffin follows the Egyptian model, while the sculpture carved by local artists is of Greek influence. These masterpieces of funerary art will be presented to the public in 2004, in the renovated galleries of the basement that will be reserved for the domain of the dead.

On the first floor, a display case presents objects that were damaged during the war. An amalgam of metal, ivory, glass, and stone is the result of a fire that broke out in a storeroom that was hit during bombing raids. This display case, like the works of art in the museum, shows evidence of its history and that of Lebanon. Approximately 1300 artefacts are currently exhibited from a collection of approximately 100,000 objects.

### The museum is confronted with major problems

The latest inventory of the Beirut National Museum has been completed. Thousands of objects, whose identity tags were destroyed or lost during the war, are listed once again in the catalogue and are available to researchers. However, their state of conservation remains critical, and the absence of a restoration laboratory within the General Directorate of Antiquities, makes any restoration work difficult. 'The local authorities are currently trying to renovate the museum repository in order to place the artefacts in a stable environment and limit their deterioration', explains Suzy Hakimian, Chief



Curator of the National Museum. Unfortunately, budgetary restrictions within the Lebanese government prevent public administrations from recruiting staff. 'We are only three archaeologists in charge of the museum and repositories. We are not, and will not become, restorers. The only possible 'salvation' comes from a new law concerning antiquities, which provides for the creation of an independent public establishment of National Museums, like the General Directorate of Antiquities. If this bill is passed, with an adequate budgetary allocation, we will be able to create specialized laboratories, envisage new projects for the museum, present requests for funding, develop and implement regular cultural and pedagogical activities and meet all the requirements that a museum should fulfil'.

This approach would obviously bear fruit and, within a few years, the museum would be able to meet its aspirations. The success of such an operation is none the less hypothetical because heritage is not a priority for the Lebanese government and undertakings in this sector are essentially supported by local and international NGOs. Like any country emerging from war and enduring from an economic recession, Lebanon is dependent upon foreign collaboration and funding from developed countries.

Today, the two floors of the museum are entirely restored but the reconstruction work has not yet been completed. The renovation of the basement is scheduled, as mentioned earlier, for the year 2004. The space surrounding the museum should be extended and educational and cultural activities, as well as activities for younger audiences, should be made available. The mission is

not finished. An enormous step forward has been taken but the road is a long one and the dearth of means has slowed down operations.

Visit the Beirut Museum on the web at:  
[www.beirutnationalmuseum.com](http://www.beirutnationalmuseum.com)

## | NOTES

1 Byblos or Jbeil is the Phoenician archaeological site *par excellence*. Located about 30 kilometres north of Beirut, this city, accidentally discovered during the 1920s, has yielded numerous royal, funerary, and ritual treasures and made possible the study of Phoenician civilization on its native soil.



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7. This figurine in gilded bronze is from a group of offerings found under the Obelisk Temple in Byblos.

# | The Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention and Progress in International Humanitarian Law<sup>1</sup>

*by Jan Hladik*

*Jan Hladik is programme specialist at the International Standards Section in UNESCO's Division of Cultural Heritage (Paris). A jurist, he is in charge of the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two 1954 and 1999 Protocols. He has published several articles on the Hague Convention and other related issues in professional journals.*

The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of bipolarity have resulted in a recrudescence of a number of armed conflicts in the world. Such conflicts have demonstrated a blatant disregard for the law of armed conflict and a loss of respect for human life and cultural heritage. They have also demonstrated deficiencies in the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Already, in 1991 the UNESCO Secretariat initiated, together with a number of States Parties to the Hague Convention, the review of this agreement. This initiative was principally aimed at: adapting the Hague Convention to the reality of contemporary armed conflicts including non-international armed conflicts; harmonizing the 1954 agreements (the Hague Convention and the 'First' Protocol) with other instruments of international humanitarian law adopted since 1954, such as the two 1977 Additional Protocols to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions or the 1998 Statute of the International Criminal Court; and improving

certain aspects of the Hague Convention such as the regime of special protection, the control system of the Hague Convention or penal provisions for the repression of its violations.<sup>2</sup>

The eight-year review of the Hague Convention resulted in the adoption of a Second Protocol<sup>3</sup> to the Hague Convention by a Diplomatic Conference, convened jointly by the Netherlands Government and UNESCO, at The Hague from 15 to 26 March 1999.

In comparison with the original Hague Convention, the Second Protocol is a considerable advance on the level of protection in the Convention as it provides for the following improvements.

### **Peacetime preparatory measures**

According to the Hague Convention, the protection of cultural property in wartime does not start when actual hostilities break out. It starts well before in peacetime by the adoption and proper implementation of preparatory measures against the foreseeable effects of an armed conflict. However, the Hague Convention does not define such measures in Article 3; it leaves their determination and subsequent implementation to the discretion of States Parties. The Second Protocol remedies this omission in Article 5 by requesting the adoption of the following measures: the preparation of inventories, the planning of emergency measures for protection against fire or structural collapse, preparation for the removal of movable cultural property or provision for adequate *in situ* protection of such property, and the designation of competent authorities responsible for its safeguarding. The

concrete implementation of preparatory measures will depend on each State Party's administrative structures, financial and other resources, cultural policy and, last but not least, the doctrine of national defence. Those measures may not only prove in case of armed conflict but also in the event of natural disaster such as floods or earthquakes as a highly effective weapon against art theft. For instance, the experience of floods in Germany and the Czech Republic in the summer of 2002 showed, among other things, that their consequences for cultural property would have been more drastic if no safeguarding measures had been implemented.

### **Enhanced protection**

The Second Protocol introduces a new category of enhanced protection for cultural heritage of the greatest importance for humanity. The reasons therefore are easier to understand by referring briefly to the regime of special protection under the Hague Convention and its drawbacks.

When elaborating the Hague Convention in 1954, its drafters worked on a premise that in addition to generally protected cultural property, there should be another, narrowly restricted category of cultural property to be protected under any circumstances. For this reason, they introduced the regime of special protection.

The Hague Convention foresees the granting of special protection to three categories of property (cf. Article 8(1)): refuges intended to shelter movable cultural property in the event of armed conflict; centres containing monuments; and other immovable cultural property of very great

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importance. The granting of special protection is essentially subject to the following conditions: a specific request for the granting of such protection must be addressed to the Director-General of UNESCO by the territorial State Party; the property in question must be situated at an adequate distance from a *de facto* military objective; it may not be used for military purposes; and all other States Parties must agree to it. Particular attention must be drawn to the last requirement because it implies that such granting of special protection is not a right of the State Party left to its sole discretion. Quite to the contrary, the lack of unanimity based on the non-recognition by four States Parties of the then Government of Cambodia prevented the granting of special protection for several Cambodian sites in 1972.

Once cultural property is placed under special protection, it is listed in the *International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection* maintained by the Director-General of UNESCO. To date, cultural property in 3 High Contracting Parties (Germany, the Holy See and the Netherlands) has been entered in the Register at the request of those States (a total number of four refuges as well as the whole of the Vatican City State). Two States (Austria and the Netherlands) have withdrawn registrations.

When evaluating the regime of special protection, it should be stressed that it has so far never fully developed its potential, given that only three States Parties have placed five sites under special protection, and the last entry in the Register took place in 1978. In addition to the strict requirement of unanimity, there may be other reasons motivating States to abstain from

submitting cultural property for special protection such as the impossibility of complying with the condition of adequate distance from a military objective for densely-populated countries, technical difficulties in submitting nominations or the fear of providing potential terrorists with targets.

The March 1999 Diplomatic Conference added to the regime of special protection in the Hague Convention a principally new regime of enhanced protection in Chapter III of the Second Protocol. Cultural property submitted for enhanced protection must be (i) of the greatest importance for humanity; (ii) protected by adequate domestic legal and administrative measures; and (iii) not used for military purposes or to shield military sites. With regard to the last requirement, a declaration to this end must be provided. Enhanced protection is granted by the inclusion of the cultural property in question on the *List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection*.

What are the most substantial differences between the 1954 ('special protection') and 1999 ('enhanced protection') regimes? They may be summarized as follows: conditions for obtaining enhanced protection are easier to comply with those required for granting special protection; enhanced protection is granted by the *Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* ('the Committee'), a new supervisory body for the implementation of Second Protocol and, *de facto*, for the original Hague Convention; the requirement of unanimity is no longer retained, as enhanced protection may be granted by a majority of four-fifths of the members of the Committee, which will facilitate the granting of such protection.

### Protection of cultural property in non-international armed conflicts

The Second Protocol also aims at substantially improving the protection of cultural property in the growing cases of non-international armed conflicts: it provides in Article 22(1) for its applicability in an armed conflict not of an international character occurring within the territory of one of the Parties. This is an improvement on the provision of Article 19(1) of the original Hague Convention on the same subject which only requires parties to the non-international armed conflict to ‘apply, as a minimum, the provisions of the present Convention which relate to respect for cultural property’.

A legitimate question may be asked – what is the scope of Article 19(1) of the Hague Convention? Does it only concern the provisions of Article 4 of the Hague Convention such as those prohibiting theft, pillage, vandalism, misappropriation of, requisition of cultural property or, more generally, reprisals against cultural property? Professor Toman in his authoritative article-by-article commentary on the Convention favours more extensive interpretation of Article 19(1) of the Hague Convention reaching beyond the scope of the above Article 4 and extending to other issues such as dissemination of the provisions of the Hague Convention or penal sanctions for breaches against cultural property.<sup>4</sup>

The intention of the drafters of the Second Protocol to apply entirely this agreement to non-international armed conflicts refers, in terms of obligations, only to States Parties, as such able and obliged to apply provisions such as the submission of nominations of cultural property for enhanced

protection, jurisdictional or institutional issues thereby leaving aside other non-state actors which are not bound by such an application.

### Sanctions for crimes against cultural property

To sanction crimes against cultural property, Article 28 of the Hague Convention entails the obligation for States Parties ‘to take, within the framework of their ordinary criminal jurisdiction, all necessary steps to prosecute and impose penal or disciplinary sanctions upon those persons, of whatever nationality, who commit or order to be committed a breach of the present Convention’. This provision, however, is of a very general character; does not provide an example of such breaches; and does not deal with procedural issues such as mutual legal assistance. For this reason, the Second Protocol develops the penal aspects of the protection of cultural property in Chapter IV by setting forth a new category of particularly dangerous offences called serious violations, defining other offences, and developing procedural issues such as extradition or mutual legal assistance.

### New supervisory body

One of the most important contributions of the Second Protocol to ensure better protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict consists in the establishment of the twelve-member Intergovernmental *Committee for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*.<sup>5</sup> The essential functions of the Committee may be summarized as follows: granting, suspension or cancellation of enhanced protection; assistance in the identification of cultural property under enhanced protection; supervision of the

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implementation of the Second Protocol;<sup>6</sup> and consideration and distribution of international assistance and the use of the Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

The Committee will cooperate with international and national, governmental and non-governmental, organizations having objectives similar to those of the Hague Convention and its two Protocols such as the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS),<sup>7</sup> the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).

### The Second Protocol and the progress in international humanitarian law

The most important contribution of the Second

Protocol to the gradual development of international humanitarian law essentially comprises, in my view, two aspects: further development of penal provisions sanctioning breaches against cultural property by setting forth new categories of offences against cultural property and creating a legal base for interstate cooperation in the reinforcement of sanctions against perpetrators of such acts; and establishment of an institutional framework to monitor the implementation of the Second Protocol and, *de facto*, the original Hague Convention.

### Conclusion

To conclude on the Second Protocol, it should be noted that this agreement is supplementary to, and in no way replaces, the Hague Convention and the First Protocol. The original Hague Convention and the First Protocol are still open for ratification,



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8. The Mostar Bridge, Bosnia, which was destroyed during the conflict, was restored by UNESCO and the World Bank, becoming a factor for national reconciliation.

accession and succession, and will continue to provide a valuable first-level protection for countries not willing or unable to become parties to the Second Protocol. The entry into force of the Second Protocol<sup>8</sup> will provide for a more sophisticated level of protection for those Parties wishing it. Finally, it is necessary to point out that only States parties to the Hague Convention may become parties to the Second Protocol.

The elaboration and adoption of the Second Protocol reflects the determination of the international community to prevent new sad events, i.e. the Sarajevo and Mostar bridges, by providing new legal rules for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict. For this reason, it is necessary to promote awareness of this agreement and to encourage its wide ratification, acceptance, approval or accession in order to accelerate its entry into force. While it would be fallacious to think that this agreement would per se be able to guarantee 'zero-destruction' of cultural property in future armed conflicts, the Second Protocol will undoubtedly reinforce the protection of such property.

## | NOTES

1 The present article is based on my article on the Diplomatic Conference on the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague, Netherlands (March 15–26, 1999), *International Journal of Cultural Property*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1999, pp. 526–529.

2 Being written mainly for cultural heritage professionals, this article intentionally omits the highly technical and legal issues of the Second Protocol.

3 All information related to UNESCO's activities on the implementation of Hague Convention and its two Protocols is available online at

[http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/hague/html\\_eng/page1.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/hague/html_eng/page1.shtml).

4 Jiří Toman, *The Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Commentary on the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Protocol, signed on 14 May 1954 in The Hague, and on other instruments of international law concerning such protection*, Dartmouth Publishing Company/UNESCO, 1996, pp. 213–215.

5 The original Hague Convention did not foresee the creation of a specific supervisory body. The control system of the Hague Convention is based on three elements: representatives of the States Parties engaged in a conflict, Protecting Powers, and Commissioners-General for Cultural Property appointed to Parties to the conflict by the Party to which he/she will be accredited and the Protecting Powers acting on behalf of the opposing Parties. They are assisted by the UNESCO Secretariat. As the system of the Protecting Powers, the system of Commissioners-General has been applied only once since the adoption of the Convention in the follow-up of the 1967 Middle East conflict. The lack of a supervisory body was one of the main reasons for the review of the Hague Convention.

6 The practice of the Committee is very likely to extend to the supervision of certain aspects of the implementation of the Hague Convention such as technical assistance provided by the Secretariat.

7 The International Committee of the Blue Shield is an umbrella organization created in 1996 by representatives of the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Its main purpose is to coordinate expert activities and to disseminate knowledge on the Hague Convention, the First Protocol and the Second Protocol. The term 'Blue Shield' in the name of this new organization signifies the emblem of the Hague Convention which is used to mark cultural property. For more information about the ICBS role in the protection of cultural heritage during hostilities, see J. Hladik, Protection of cultural heritage during hostilities, *Museum International*, No. 3, July–September 2001, pp. 65–66.

8 For the entry into force of the Second Protocol, the deposition with the Director-General of UNESCO of twenty instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession is required. As at 31 July 2003, the Second Protocol has been ratified or acceded to by sixteen States. Thus, the deposition of four additional instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with the Director-General of UNESCO is required for its entry into force in order to make the Committee operational and to activate the system of enhanced protection.





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9. Fragment of the Ghurid ruin in Chist-I Sharif located half way between Jam and Herat.

# | Images and Heritage in Afghanistan

by Reza

*Born in Tabriz (Iran) in 1952, Reza, who studied to be an architect, is today a world-renowned photojournalist. He has worked regularly for National Geographic since 1990 and in this capacity has travelled around the world, from the Bosphorus to the Great Wall of China, from the Philippines to Central Asia, from Lebanon to Afghanistan, from Rwanda to Sarajevo.*

*Beyond his commitment as human being and journalist, Reza offers us a poetic vision of the world. His recent publications include *Destins Croisés* (2003), *Eternités Afghanes* (Editions du Chêne and UNESCO) and *Le Pinceau de Bouddha* (2002). At the invitation of the Senate, his most recent exhibition 'Destins Croisés', was shown on the gates of the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, from May to September 2003.*

The full moon illuminates the cliff with a beige light, like a large projector on a film set.

On the rough surface of the cliff wall, this natural lighting reveals, through a subtle play of light and shadow, hundreds of grottoes. Some of them are inhabited and lit from within.

The eye is arrested by the gaping hole that seems to slice through the cliff: an immense empty shape, resembling a giant's towering shadow in the Earth's light.

The giant remains hopelessly invisible except for its shadow. One is reminded of the Myth of the Cavern.

It is 12 September in Bamiyan in front of the statues of the Buddha.

Another historic event is about to take place. Hundreds of Afghans, from Bamiyan and neighbouring villages, as well as others that have travelled further, are gathered before a giant screen measuring 3 by 5 metres, that is positioned just in front of the cliff.

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A projector and four powerful speakers allow the spectators to witness a great moment of their history.

A film is going to be shown on the cultural heritage and historic monuments of Afghanistan: Mazar, Herat, Ghazni ... These are monuments that many of the spectators know only by name.

In a short time, these traces of history will take shape and become realities for those Afghans that are present.

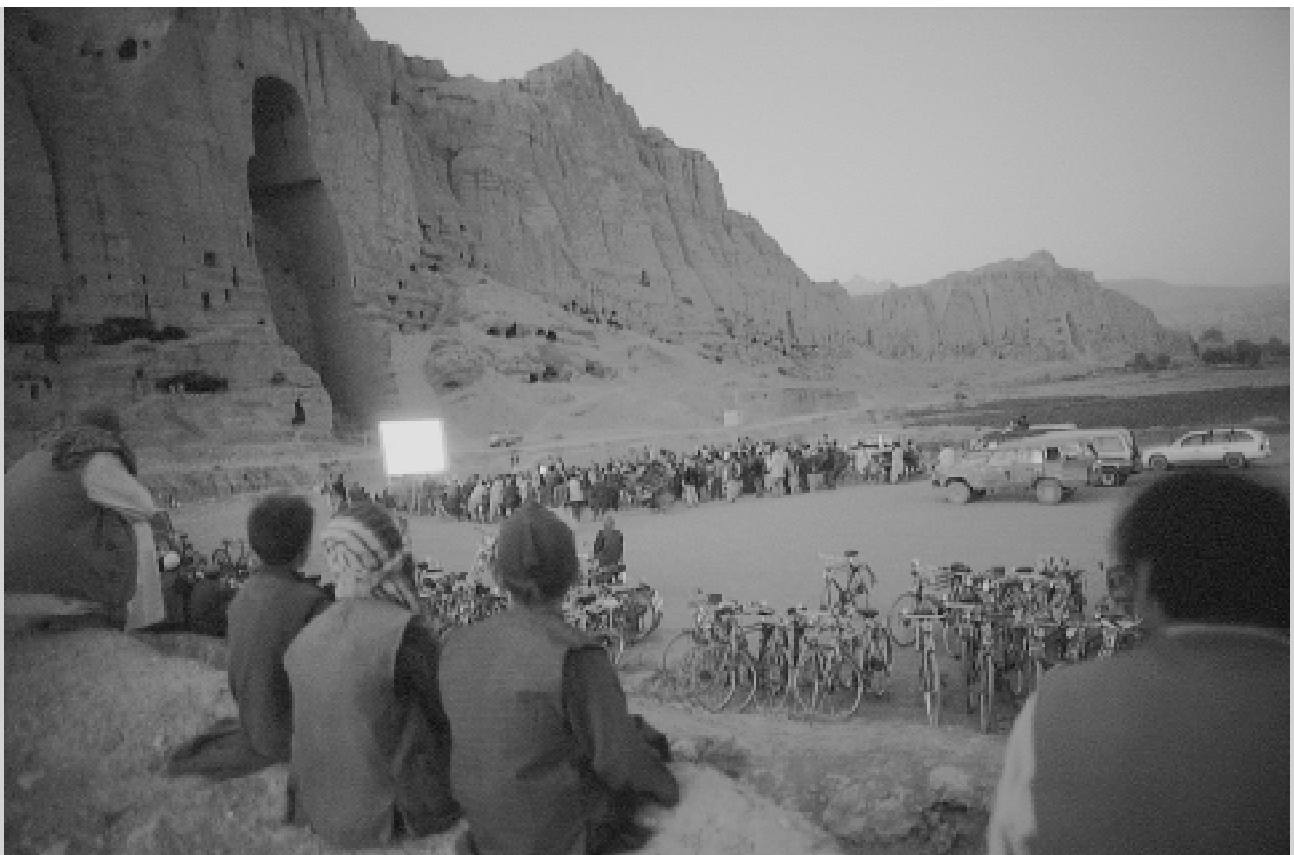
In a short time, names that are famous but abstract are going to emerge from a small magical box as beams of spinning light that cross the dusty air before reaching the screen. Many of the spectators are seeing this image event for the first time.

As for me, I study their faces and their eyes. I watch closely as the children in the front row who are going to finally discover their country, become absorbed by these images that will be engraved in their memory forever.

Suddenly, silence invades the plain and the cliff. Spectators, children and adults, Afghans and foreigners, become still as if they are frozen.

As this magical visit through an Afghanistan rich in history unwinds, the Bamiyan of long ago appears, as shown by films from archives. The statues that have disappeared today, reappear on the screen and time seems to be suspended and magical.

The atmosphere is full of emotion. A breath of air appears, like a murmur passing through the moved



10. Film screening in the Bamiyan Valley.

crowd, and the cliff rising up seems to echo a lament expressing the wounds, regrets and nostalgia of the past.

This echo, like a response, was addressed to us. It was a shared, universal cry, while we had been imagining an invisible man hidden in its shadow.

This work is part of the project, 'Campaign for Educational Itinerant Cinema', one of the projects directed by the NGO Aina.<sup>1</sup> Eight units travel up and down the country, from the most isolated villages to the largest towns, carrying in their baggage, educational films of fiction, all written, acted and directed by Afghans.

The knowledge transmitted through these films, and visual education, signal the beginning of a new era and foresee building a future that is based on respect for the past. Given the current situation, the use of images is the most effective form of education and communication in Afghanistan.

Kabul, September 2003.

## | NOTE

**1** The non-governmental organization Aina encourages the promotion and support of democracy in Afghanistan through the development of media and cultural expression. For more information visit the site [www.ainaworld.org](http://www.ainaworld.org) and the information that is available concerning image and sound projects.

# | The Role of the Guimet Museum in the Study and the Preservation of Afghan Heritage

by *Pierre Cambon*

*Pierre Cambon has been Chief Curator, in charge of the Afghan Collection and the Korean Section, at the Guimet Museum since 1982. He was the co-ordinator of the exhibition held at the Idemitsu Museum, Les Collections du Musée Guimet à Paris, Chefs-d'oeuvres de la sculpture bouddhique sur la 'Route de la Soie', Tokyo, 1996 and the exhibit curator of the exhibition Afghanistan a Timeless History, held in Barcelona, La Caixa Foundation, and Paris, Musée Guimet, 2001 / 2002. As a UNESCO consultant, he undertook a mission to Kabul in 1995 and to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1999/2000.*

As a result of agreements between Afghanistan and France in 1922, at the request of King Amanullah, the national Guimet Museum of Asian Art was made the sister museum of the national Kabul Museum, because of its Afghan collections from the pre-Islamic era. The agreement between the two countries established the *Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan* (DAFA), making archaeology in Afghanistan a joint operation that was strictly Franco-Afghan, and this for a period of 30 years. It thus made provision for the division of discoveries between the two countries, the Guimet Museum in Paris and the Kabul Museum – with, however, the stipulation that unique discoveries would remain Afghan property. The renegotiated agreement in the early 1950s eliminated the clause of exclusivity, but nonetheless reconfirmed the clause concerning the division of discoveries (as evidenced during the excavation of the Surkh Kotal site; it would not, however, be applied, by the French party during the excavation of Ai Khanum).

The Afghan collections in the Guimet Museum in Paris thus complete those of the Kabul

Museum, and correspond to the excavation programme which was initiated in large part by Alfred Foucher, who founded the DAFA, in close collaboration with its Afghan partners. Furthermore, the archives of photographs preserved in Paris, directly trace this history and evoke pieces from the Kabul Museum, as well as those from the Guimet Museum; during the 1930s, Joseph Hackin directed both the Guimet Museum and the French delegation in the field. The major archaeological discoveries in Afghanistan during the 1920s, 1930s or 1950s were thus de facto shared between the two museums: the Graeco-Afghan school stuccoes from Hadda, the Begram Treasure and its Indian ivories, the dynastic acropolis from Surkh Kotal, a site dating back to the epoch of the Grand Kushans (first to third century), or, from the Bronze Age, the discoveries from the site of Mundigak, not far from Kandahar, which illustrates the originality of Afghanistan at the very dawn of history.

The renovation of the Guimet Museum in Paris in January 2001, provided the opportunity to restructure the exhibition halls dedicated to Afghanistan, by reconstituting the various monumental or architectural ensembles that are presented. Unable to intervene directly in the field, this project endeavoured to preserve the memory of an adventure that was shared by the Kabul Museum and the Guimet Museum. At the same time a programme of systematic restoration was begun, concerning both the ivories and the glass from Begram, which had remained, more often than not, in its original state since its discovery at the end of the 1930s – without ignoring the bronzes – it also included the stuccoes and additionally, the limestones from the sites of Hadda and even Surkh Kotal. This project was completed, ironically, just several months

before the Kabul Museum was taken hostage, in March 2001. While the Parisian collections were successfully restored, those in Kabul seemed, at the time, to be definitively lost. After a history shared in common and with the hope of later re-examining the excavations of the DAFA, in collaboration with the two museums, the two institutions seemed to go in opposite directions. The situation seemed all the more ironic due to the fact that the previous efforts appeared to have been in vain.

However, the 1990s found Afghanistan in civil war, and with the extensive looting of the collections in the national museum, the Guimet Museum reacted.

As a result of the special ties that it had maintained with the Kabul Museum, from its experience acquired during its renovation, the World Heritage Centre sent me to Kabul in June 1995, under the responsibility of Minja Yang. The purpose of the mission was to take stock of the situation in the Kabul Museum, which had greatly suffered from the fighting during the previous winter. A section of the city had been totally devastated as opposing factions of the former Mujahedin attempted to seize power. The objective was to distinguish fact from rumour and obtain as accurate an idea as possible, of the local context in order to decide, as quickly as possible, on concrete measures to be taken, and to proceed, in agreement with the authorities in Kabul, in rescuing what remained of the national museum. This mission, which took advantage of a cease-fire, was conducted as a matter of great urgency. It was meant to precede a second mission in September that planned to take the numerical inventory of the remaining collections, within the space of one

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month, and with the help of teams from the Museum and Afghanistan's Institute of Archaeology. Assisted by a photographer, Marco Iavelli, and Zemaryalai Tarzi, former Director of Afghanistan's Institute of Archaeology, this second mission would find itself brutally brought to a halt in Islamabad, on the eve of its departure for Kabul ... the Taliban had just taken over Herat...

In spite of repeated requests from the World Heritage Centre to obtain the necessary authorizations in the ensuing months, this second mission would never take place... The priority was humanitarian and all cultural operations were suspended by order of the United Nations ... In September 1996, the Taliban entered the city of Kabul and it seemed necessary to write a new chapter, since, from then on, the power occupying the Afghan capital was not recognized by the international community and thus not by the United Nations ...

During these grey years, the Guimet Museum, once again, did not hesitate to act whenever the opportunity arose. As a result of its history and its ties with the Kabul Museum, it immediately agreed to receive as a temporary deposit (with the permission of the regulatory authorities, the Minister of Culture and the Directorate of Museums in France, and while keeping UNESCO informed), several pieces from the Kabul Museum which had been recuperated by the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH), in Peshawar in 1997 and then in London in 1999, and that were returned to Pierre Lafrance, former French ambassador. These included, in the first instance, two plaster emblemata and two ivories, which were

part of the Begram Treasure, (the emblemata arrived damaged but none the less in one piece); and in the second instance, approximately one hundred fragments or pieces of ivory debris, also originally from the Begram Treasure. The position of the Guimet Museum had been the same during the war in Cambodia, when it was a question of protecting several items from the Phnom Penh Museum while waiting for the situation to stabilize.

The other initiative of the museum was to react immediately during the crisis of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in March 2001. It launched, at the apex of the crisis, an exhibition on the heritage of Afghanistan, in partnership with the Catalan *La Caixa* Foundation, whose director at the time, Luis Monreal, had suggested the idea despite the risk of upsetting its programming. The objective was to present the issues of this crisis which was taking place in front of incredulous journalists and media from around the entire planet. In the context of war, manipulation and general confusion (rumours concerning the fate of the Kabul Museum contributed to the confusion), the aim of this exhibition, which I organized for the *La Caixa* Foundation, was to step back, gain perspective, and show that an Afghan heritage exists, or more precisely, that in following the boundaries of this territory that was established as a kingdom in 1747, a distinctive identity emerges that dates back to ancient times (to the Bronze Age) and continues through more recent (Buddhist or Islamic) periods – a world which exists between India and Iran, belonging to neither, and opens onto the steppe. The exhibition also provided the occasion to present several items which had been recovered from the Kabul Museum either by Paris or by Tokyo (the Hirayama Foundation).



During the exhibition in Paris (February 2002), six months after the first stop in Barcelona (October 2001), the authorities of the interim government in Afghanistan and notably President Hamid Karzai who inaugurated the exhibition, accompanied by Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic, expressed their appreciation of this approach. For the first time, Afghanistan was not considered simply in terms of war, humanitarian dramas or terrorism; its cultural dimension and its identity were also taken into account. The matter was finally addressed in terms of culture, civilization, and even identity, which seemed to be the central issue of the successive disturbances, which had taken place in Afghanistan since the 1980s.

The exhibition was shown for six months in Barcelona, for another six months in Paris, then presented six months later in Tokyo, at the National University of Fine Arts and Music (it would continue on to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston barely six months later). Despite its strict schedule, the challenge was met, because the Guimet Museum shared its collections, from the excavations of the DAFA from the 1920s up to the 1950s, with the Kabul Museum. The exhibition was also made possible through the immediate collaboration of the Museum of Indian Art in Berlin, the Harvard University Museum (Sackler collection) and even the Hermitage, as well as in Paris with the assistance of the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, the Museum of Natural History and the *Musée de l'Homme*. The collaboration was also supported by private collections such as the Ortiz collection, the Malraux collection and others that requested to remain anonymous.

Tribute was paid to the Kabul Museum, thus transformed into a virtual museum, an imaginary museum, reconstituted for the duration of a single exhibition. The cultural, political and human significance of this event, a new kind of reactive exhibition, despite its deliberate display of classicism, thus found its justification, whether in Barcelona with the threat of imminent war in Afghanistan, or again in Paris when reconstruction was getting under way – proof of involvement in ongoing history in which the Kabul Museum would participate during the stop over in Tokyo by contributing some items.

Before drawing the attention of experts or specialists, cultural heritage was initially an Afghan concern. King Amanullah himself had turned to France, with the deliberate intention of modernizing the kingdom and celebrating its identity, caught up, as Foucher so aptly remarked, by the “infection of goodwill” regarding the French undertakings in the Near East or even in Persia. As a result of political and diplomatic coincidences, archaeological prospecting had become, for a time, a Franco-Afghan venture, before becoming an international affair in the 1960s. Today, as part of a multilateral framework in which UNESCO plays an essential role, the duty of the Guimet Museum, in these times of crisis, is to raise the whole question of heritage again in all its dimensions, by defining not only the framework but also the meaning of such a venture, in short, to renew the bilateral contacts that had set this process in motion.

The year 2002 witnessed two missions to Afghanistan with Jean-François Jarrige, Director of the Museum. The first, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was to re-establish contact with the

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Afghan authorities and reinstate cooperation between the two countries in the fields of archaeology and museums. The second, on behalf of UNESCO, was to participate in a seminar on the rehabilitation of Afghan heritage, and organized jointly with the Ministry of Culture of the provisional government of Afghanistan, so that the French plan of action could be coordinated within the context of international aid.

These missions thus enabled me to visit the Kabul Museum once again, as well as Bamiyan and even Balkh. They also facilitated meeting up again with Omar Khan Masudi and A. Wasey Feroozi, respectively Director of the National Museum and Director of the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, whom I had met in 1995, when over the period of a summer, all seemed about to begin again. The first mission was also the occasion to provide the museum with a generating unit, because, ever since my very first mission, it was still lacking. This dual operation was to yield practical results, thanks to the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the foundation of a new DAFA located in Kabul, whose new Director, Roland Besenval, was appointed the following autumn. It also led to a programme of cooperation in the field of restoration, with funds granted exceptionally by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A mission composed of two restorers on site would help bring the workshop in the Kabul Museum up to date. This project was implemented under my supervision in May 2003.

The previous year, during the seminar in May 2002, a display was organized of the collections which had been saved from the Kabul Museum, thanks to the team from the national museum. This showed that a substantial part of the

collections had survived despite the events (paintings from Kakrak, pieces of sculpture and pottery from Fondukistan and Tapa Sardar); the works that had been deliberately destroyed in March 2001 were also presented: the two sculptures from Surkh Kotal that had flanked either side of the stairway in the hall of the museum, the Kushan Prince and the statue of Kanishka, smashed with sledgehammers – the fragments of each statue had been preserved in two metal trunks; another trunk contained smaller fragments, in the form of rubble, apparently a mixture of what remained of the two statues. The Bodhisattva from Tapa Marandjan, which had stood in the hall, had also been subjected to deliberate acts of violence. Unrecognizable blocks, corresponding to what was left, were stored in a crate.

The choice of the intervention in May 2003 was thus focused, in agreement with the Director, on these battered remains, evidence of gratuitous vandalism, having once been the pride of the museum. The statue of Kanishka had, in fact, been symbolic of the Kushan Empire (first to third century), with Afghanistan at its centre; a nomadic empire that had dealt as easily with China under the Han Dynasty as with the Rome of Augustus. As for the Bodhisattva from Tapa Marandjan, it illustrated Buddhism from the Graeco-Afghan period, at the time when the site of Hadda flourished. In both cases, the pieces came from excavations undertaken by the DAFA. One sculpture was in limestone, the other in unfired clay; in both cases, their condition was deplorable.

In order to initiate a truly practical programme of cooperation, the idea was to start with the worst situation, demonstrating that when



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11. Statue of Kanishka. 2nd century AD, from the Sukh Kotal archaeological site, Baghlan, under restoration in May 2003.



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12. Bodhisattva of Tapa Marandjan from the Kabul Museum  
June 1995.

armed with patience, and drawing on experience gained during the renovation of the Guimet Museum in Paris, and by reassembling the available archives, it was none the less possible to reverse the course of events, or at least in part. In order to do this, two restorers who had both worked on the programme of the Afghan exhibition halls in Paris, were called upon: Béatrice Beillard, who specializes in ceramics and glass, as well as stucco or even unfired clay, and Daniel Ibled, who specializes in stone. The goal was to share knowledge which the Afghan restorers could hardly have had access to,

following ten years of war and the sealing off of the country; it was also to show them that it was possible for them to take over and continue the work. The project's final objective was to enable the Kabul workshop to get started again, on a sound, autonomous basis, and by re-using materials which had been saved regardless the most elementary safety rules.

Logistically, the resources were meagre. The room which had been restored thanks to the British Museum did not have running water. However, the restorers adapted to the local context, and with the help of their Afghan colleagues, succeeded within three weeks, in reassembling what had seemed to be an impossible puzzle. If an extra week seemed necessary in order to finish the details (filling holes, and remodelling work when the volume had been

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lost because of blows from sledgehammers), this first mission showed the value of combining training and cooperation, starting from a concrete example – even more so given that the Bodhisattva from Tapa Marandjan posed additional problems, that of restorations that it had undergone during the Soviet era (resin blown into the core of the statue, replacing the clay in order to maintain its overall coherence). The programme in progress is meant to continue into the autumn with a second mission, with the DAFA ensuring the on-site logistics. Thus, a coherent process has been organized within an overall framework. An Italian mission had already intervened during the previous winter on the pieces from Tapa Sardar.

In the future, the digitization of the Parisian collections and their publication should be made available to researchers, and particularly the authorities of the Kabul Museum, in order to ensure a programme of closer collaboration in the field of research, exchanges and exhibitions – even if today, the most urgent problem remains that of illegal excavations and trafficking of fake artefacts.



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13. Tapa-Kalan Monastery on the site of Hadda, 1923.

# | Beyond Afghanistan and the Present: an historical overview of the Islamic heritage of the region

by *Flemming Aalund*

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## Crossroad of cultures

Intentional destruction of cultural heritage has a long precedence in history, but new technology and globalization have led to unforeseen consequences and infamous deeds in the wake of international conflicts. More than 50 countries have experienced significant periods of conflict since 1980, often resulting in a complete breakdown of the state.

Of all places, Afghanistan has been a focus of conflicts, whether imposed by imperialistic powers or by rivalries between local ethnic or religious groups. The historian Arnold Toynbee used the phrase ‘crossroad of cultures’ to describe the diverse cultural identity of Afghanistan, influenced by Persian, Greek, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim cultures, thereby creating an extraordinary architectural heritage. Most unfortunately, the material heritage has survived only in fragmented condition, but there is an all the more urgent need to preserve what has survived all these misfortunes. The blowing up of the Great Buddhas in the Bamiyan Valley and the deliberate destruction of

pre-Islamic art objects have defied all the basic principles of respect for and tolerance of cultural diversity and therefore also represent a direct violation of international standards of ethics.

When Robert Byron travelled to Afghanistan in 1933, he wrote the vivid and learned literary travel book, *The Road to Oxania*, permeated with a romantic view on the lost cultures of Central Asia and spoke in praise of the magnificent ruins which had survived in spite of ignorance and destruction. During the subsequent decades a widely accepted view on preservation and restoration of cultural heritage evolved on the basis of the Venice Charter of 1964 and a succession of international charters, conventions and international declarations.

After 30 years of operation the World Heritage Convention has become an important instrument for international cooperation in the field of cultural and natural heritage preservation. Judging from the number of signatories totalling 175, the World Heritage Convention is the most successful intergovernmental UNESCO agreement ever achieved. More importantly, the agreement was reached on a definition that the cultural heritage belongs to all people and that nations have a responsibility to protect and care for the natural and cultural heritage on their territory. Special efforts have been invested in the protection of the outstanding monuments and sites inscribed on the World Heritage List as testimonies of major cultural achievements in the history of mankind. Less consideration is being paid to the stipulation that each State Party has the duty to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of heritage properties

within its own territory (Art. 5). These ideal stipulations have only limited relevance in conflict and post-conflict areas, where civil order is disrupted and economic resources are limited. In this chaotic situation the basic needs of the population are the first priority, but the re-establishment of civil society and national unity also requires regaining the confidence and mutual trust of the ethnic and religious groups. Much post-conflict reconstruction has been in rebuilding infrastructure, but there is also a need to address social needs and intangible cultural values in society, which have been appreciated by the local communities within civil society.

Formally Afghanistan ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1979 with only limited consequences during a period of occupation and civil war. The new Afghanistan Interim Authority, which was established as a transitional government following the disintegration of the Taliban regime, has received international recognition prompting UNESCO to resume activities in Afghanistan. As an immediate initiative the Minaret and the archaeological remains of Jam as well as the cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2002 and 2003 respectively. The timely inclusion of these sites is also a symbolic act appealing for international solidarity for the preservation of Afghanistan's heritage. By being simultaneously declared as sites at risk and being put on the List of World Heritage in Danger, they qualify for emergency action and possible economic support from the World Heritage Fund. Otherwise, the World Heritage Convention provides no particular protection apart from raising awareness of the importance of these sites and establishing a



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plan for their management as part of the nomination procedures.

The Hague Convention of 1954 related to UNESCO's fields of competence aims to establish rules for the protection of cultural heritage during war and armed conflicts. Protection of cultural heritage is also integrated in international humanitarian law, e.g. the Geneva Conventions and the protocols added to these in 1977 and in particular as stated in Article 22 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The report of the World Commission on Culture and Development from 1995, *Our Creative Diversity*, further elucidates the interdependence between culture and sustainable development being fostered through cultural freedom and tolerance, including a gender perspective. With this new insight and understanding it may be expected that cultural heritage preservation is placed high on the agenda for the post-conflict reconstruction of civil society during a period of transition. The situation is a critical one, demanding international solidarity and assistance.

### A long history of conflicts

Despotic rulers have repeatedly demonstrated their overwhelming ambition through the construction of new buildings and monuments, which could testify to a new epoch in history and to glorifying themselves for posterity. Such vanity creates great monuments, which may eventually be included on the World Heritage List, but the ambition often resulted in wanton destruction of previous achievements, which could possibly overshadow the lustre of the new. We have had ample experience of how cultural heritage has been

deliberately destroyed in order to crush pride and self-esteem and enslave populations to achieve absolute supremacy. The cynical reasoning seems to be that a population despoiled of its cultural heritage is deprived of identity and therefore without a claim to the future. Examples are plentiful.

The current tragic situation in Afghanistan follows on from more than a thousand years of imperialism and civil strife in Central Asia. The most devastating destruction appeared as a result of the violent attack on all the land between China and the Black Sea conducted by the notorious Genghis Khan and his hordes in 1221 and the subsequent years. The effect was devastating beyond imagination as it destroyed the finest civilizations of the thirteenth century and left deserted cities and silted wells and channels – Shah Khoshak, Shah-i Zohak and Shah-i Gholghola, only to mention a few localities that never recovered. Over time, erosion washed away the walls and fortified towers of the former great cities, turning the sun-dried brick walls into the same soil from which they originated and leaving only the ruined contours of the mighty walls as a testimony of ancient civilizations and human aspirations. Likewise, ancient cities and buildings have vanished and only a few historic buildings constructed in baked bricks have survived.

The monumental tomb of the Samanids in Bukhara dating from the ninth century has survived as a memorial to the first Muslim dynasty due to its solid construction in baked brick. The intricate ornamental pattern on the façades imitating flat woven carpets provides evidence of a new architectural style, which differs from the

polychrome stucco decorations generally used during the first Islamic expansion into Central Asia with inspiration originating from the royal Abbasid palaces of Samarra.

This rich ornamental brick architecture evolved from the homelands of the Seljuks in Khorasan and Transoxania in the following centuries. The Ghurids and Ghaznavids were among the local dynasties, who refined and disseminated this highly sophisticated architecture in the neighbouring areas from their respective homelands at Ghor in the Central Hindu Kush mountain range and Ghazni to the south-east of present Afghanistan. From there they embarked on empire building, which led to a great renaissance of the Early Islamic period and the few surviving buildings are among the most valuable treasures in Afghanistan.

The Ghaznavids had seized control of the Khorasan south of the Oxus River in the year 994. This empire expanded its power to include Iran, Afghanistan and India. A great general, Sultan Mahmud, conducted at least seventeen successful campaigns against India. He added northwest India and the Punjab to his empire, and enriched his treasures by looting wealthy Hindu temples. The archaeological remains at Lashkari Bazaar give but a glimpse of the grandiose and luxurious summer palaces where ceremonial events took place, attended by four thousand men. At the royal city of Ghazni, the capital of the empire, thousands of objects have been excavated, including marble statues of Hindu gods used as stepping stones under the thresholds in the principal mosque. What was probably more problematic is the fact that many Hindus were converted to Islam,



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14. One of the *Towers of Victory* representing ornamental Ghaznavide architecture that emerged during the 11th century in Khorasan.

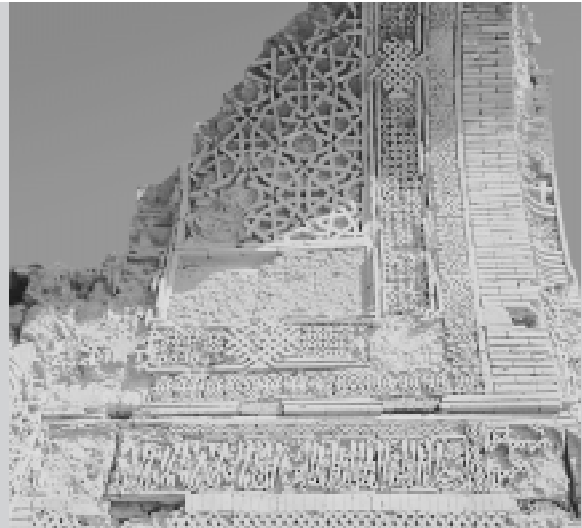
starting a process which still plagues the subcontinent.<sup>1</sup>

The Ghurids themselves were not less destructive towards other cultures. The most remarkable monument, now inscribed on the World Heritage List, stands on the banks of the Hari Rud in the central part of the Hindu Kush mountains. The original purpose of this enigmatic minaret is obscure, but the tower probably commemorates the ultimate victory over the Ghaznavides. The future excavations in the surrounding valley may eventually reveal traces of the Ghurid capital. Half a century later in 1199, the Quth Minar in Delhi (India) was erected by another Ghurid sultan from the spoils of some



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15–16. Sah-i Mashad Madrassa ruins in Badghiz and details of the bas-relief terracotta decoration of its façade.

twenty-seven Indian temples as symbolic evidence of the triumph of the Islamization of northern India. Only the minaret in Jam has survived, together with a few other contemporary monuments, due to its isolated location. Now inscribed on the World Heritage List of monuments in danger, UNESCO has launched an emergency rescue operation in order to consolidate its foundations and prevent further deterioration from flooding.<sup>2</sup>

Another remarkable Ghurid building was identified as late as 1970 on the banks of the Murgab River in a remote area of northern Afghanistan. The ruined structure is one of the earliest *madrassas* still existing within the Islamic world. The commemorative inscription gives 571/1175–6 as the year of construction and praises the founding patron ... ‘in the name of God the clement and merciful, she has commanded to build this *madrassa*, the blessed, exalted, fortunate, wise

... [name missing]’.<sup>3</sup> From the reading it is evident that all the adjectives are written in the feminine. However, the name of the founder has been erased, as is the case with so many founding inscriptions in historic buildings. The cynical motives have often been to emphasize individual power at the expense of previous achievements, and in this case perhaps to conceal the fact that a woman of high rank had endowed this very fine building.

Only a handful of structures remain from the Ghurids, all of them situated in isolated mountainous surroundings and only accessible with great difficulty. Other buildings from this era were altered beyond recognition in later times, as in the case of the *Masjid-i Jami* in Herat, which have luckily survived further damage during the recent conflicts.

### Herat, the Timurid capital of Khorasan

The Mongols brought to an end both the Ghurid and the Ghaznavide dynasties, but unlike Tamerlane, the subsequent reign of Timur Lenk and his descendants created an extraordinary

renaissance of Islamic art and culture in Central Asia during the fifteenth century. Artisans and master masons from all over the extended empire were called to Samarkand, Bukhara, Herat and the other bustling cities of Central Asia taking advantage of free trade and cultural exchange along the caravan routes. Tamerlane died in 1405 as he prepared to march on China and his empire was partly breaking up, but his successors became patrons of the arts par excellence and commissioned remarkable edifices, which became models for the subsequent Safavid architecture in Persia and the Mongul architecture in India.

Herat was made the new capital during the reign of Shah Rukh, son of Tamerlane, and his renowned queen, Gowhar Shar. Not only did they launch a vast building scheme, the rich cultural climate also fostered a large number of famous artists with the miniaturist Bihzad as the most prominent representative.

During succeeding periods of decline and poverty, these glorious structures could no longer be maintained, but half a century later the ruins of the Sultan Hussain Baiqara Madrassa in Herat were still renowned by travellers as some of the most imposing ruins in the whole of Central Asia. In 1885 the remaining parts were partly blown up by the British colonial army in an attempt to clear fields of fire because of the threatening Russian invasion of Herat. Only the Mausoleum of Gowhar Shah and nine of the ten minarets remained standing. Two of the remaining minarets fell during earthquakes in 1931 and 1951, one toppled in the 1980s and the structural stability of yet another is critical due to a large hole in the shaft caused by shelling. The surviving five minarets are now in a



17. Citadel of Ikhtyarrudin, restored by UNESCO from 1974 to 1980 revitalizing traditional skills and the use of traditional materials.

precarious condition and pieces of fifteenth century glazed tiles are scattered all over the site.

The Soviet army subsequently arrived in 1979 and continued the degradation of the former magnificent Timurid capital ranking in reputation with Bukhara and Samarkand and rightly famed all along the Silk Road throughout Central Asia as the most important cultural centre during the fifteenth century.

Despite the many changes wrought to the form of the historic city, Herat is one of the very few Islamic cities that retains its original square form as defined by the remaining parts of the city walls. A security zone was established in the 1980s to the western and southern fringes of the city by razing all structures along a peripheral security

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zone about 500 metres wide. Since then the old city was virtually the front line between government forces in the town and the opposition groups based in the surrounding villages. As a result it is estimated that more than 1,000 homes in the historic city alone have suffered extensive damage or deterioration after they were abandoned.<sup>4</sup>

### The Great Mosque of Herat

Luckily, the *Masjid-i-jami* and the Gazergah shrine complex immediately to the north of Herat has been spared destruction. As it appears today, the Great Mosque is a result of three different construction periods. The mosque was under continuous restoration from the 1940s up to the 1970s, when most of the external façade was renewed with polychrome mosaics of glazed tiles of an exquisite ornamental design that was produced by the local workshop as a free interpretation of the original Timurid models. The entire mosque appears visually complete, totally remodelled in a fashion, which can be compared with the best of tradition practised in Europe during the nineteenth century, when reconstruction was favoured with a preference for architectural unity. This approach is not generally considered to be in compliance with the recommendations of the Venice Charter. However, executed in traditional techniques by local craftsmen according to original methods of construction, the work can hardly be criticized, though the patina and subtle qualities of weathered surfaces would have lent more architectural richness and material authenticity to the building. Still in use as the main congregational mosque, the long history of Afghanistan and the Islamic identity combine to represent a living heritage.

The original building is only revealed in the restored entrance porch at the rear of the building presenting the authentic Ghurid decoration of terracotta bricks in deep relief to the one side of the *iwan*, and the preserved, overlying flat Timurid facing of polychrome faience mosaics to the opposite side and the inner vault. In this way, the original Ghurid entrance portal was brought to light and partly preserved in a happy symbiosis with parts of the overlying Timurid facing. With the unearthing of the original Ghurid brickwork in deep relief, bright colours in vermilion and verdigris green were revealed, contrasting with the natural brown colours of the terracotta bricks. This modest restoration was carried out in the 1960s with the assistance of UNESCO as on-site training for Afghan architects, who learned to appreciate the traditional crafts and acquired basic knowledge of architectural restoration.<sup>5</sup> The hidden-away entrance porch to the Great Mosque may be a *memento mori* of all the absurd destruction, which has occurred to the cultural heritage of Afghanistan. From a more positive viewpoint, this porch may also be considered a symbol of the creative diversity of Afghan history and an emblem of an ethical approach by which religious, ethnic and cultural differences are being respected.

### Principles of inclusive conservation

The disintegration of social and political stability in the wake of the Soviet occupation and the subsequent civil war of some 20 years have put cultural heritage preservation far down the list of priorities. Without cultural and political consensus on basic issues in a society, any effort to safeguard the remaining part of the cultural heritage becomes meaningless to the local communities. The obvious

question is – in the words of the World Commission on Culture and Development – ‘how hatred can be replaced by respect and cultural freedom be implemented’.<sup>6</sup> In a destabilized country with limited domestic security and little respect for basic human rights, it is difficult to imagine exactly how the concept of cultural policy can expand beyond a totalitarian and fundamentalist interpretation of the Quran.

The ultimate destruction by the Taliban in March 2001 of the Great Buddhas in the Bamiyan Valley, ranging among the greatest manmade sculptures in the world, was carried out despite repeated entreaties from UNESCO and governments around the world. Not since the iconoclasm against religious images appeared in Europe during the Middle Ages had a similar outrageous act of vandalism been witnessed, clearly demonstrating the reactionary absurdity of the Taliban regime, completely counteracting their own interests.

Policies on preservation of cultural heritage were first formulated in Europe at the beginning of the last century and then mainly restricted to concern for individual monuments, mainly manor houses, castles and cathedrals. Integrated preservation of historic districts and urban areas became part of European policy in the 1970s and formulated in the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe from 1985, which was adopted by the member states of the Council of Europe. This treaty acknowledged the preservation of cultural heritage as an essential town and country planning objective, and emphasized that the architectural heritage constitutes a major feature of cultural,

environmental and planning policies contributing to enhancing the quality of life. The Convention further recalls the importance of handing down to future generations a system of cultural references, improving the urban and rural environment and thereby fostering economic, social and cultural development’.<sup>7</sup>

During the intermediate time, globalization became one of the most dominant features of development in the last decades of the twentieth century. Technological advancements have made it possible to travel all over the world and news of current events can instantly be exchanged worldwide. These profound changes, initiated in the twentieth century, brought to light by the same token the fragile condition of life and the common aspect of our identities.

Seen in this perspective the threats against the environment are no longer a local or regional issue as, indeed, living conditions are challenged on a global scale. This goes for our physical environment, but it also relates to our cultural one. As a result, cultural heritage is now being considered a non-renewable resource, which is endangered in line with genetic heritage as expressed through the principle of diversity in nature. This understanding has influenced the concept of the conservation and restoration of monuments and sites as expressed in the World Heritage Convention. This convention extends to a common understanding that cultural and natural heritage belongs to all people and stipulates the joint responsibility to preserve this heritage as a universal asset of humanity. The practical implementation of the convention is further described in the Operational Guidelines and more



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emphasis is now being put on what may be termed 'inclusive conservation'. In post- conflict areas like Afghanistan, there is a real need for employment among all those who have been displaced and a food-for-work programme may be but one measure to help. Fired bricks can be salvaged, while soil material can be reused for the manufacture of mud bricks for reconstruction work. Immediate concern is centred on the reconstruction of damaged settlements, thereby helping people to return to their homes, but sustainable development is nurtured by cultural identity, which is rooted in traditional building methods, the revival of ancestral skills and the restoration of historic buildings and monuments.

### | NOTES

1 L. Dupree. *Afghanistan*. Princeton University Press, 1973.

2 The recent mission was undertaken by the Italian architect Andrea Bruno in continuation of the efforts for consolidation of the foundation started by UNESCO in the 1970s.

3 M. Casimir and B. Glatzer. Sah-i Mashad, a Recently Discovered *Madrasa* of the Ghurid Period in Gargistan , *East and West*, 1971, pp. 53-67.

4 Mission report on war damage in Afghanistan by Jolyon Leslie, UNCHS-Habitat, 1990.

5 Restoration of the Ghurid entrance porch at the *Masjid-i jami* in Herat was directed by the Danish architect Erik Hensen in cooperation with young Afghan trainees.

6 The World Commission on Culture and Development, *Our Creative Diversity*, UNESCO 1995, p. 25.

7 The Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Granada 1985, Article 10.



# | The Inventory of the Kabul Museum: attempts at restoring order

*by Carla Grissmann*

*Carla Grissmann worked at the Kabul Museum from 1972–1980 on contract to the Asia Foundation. Since 1994 she has returned to Kabul for several months each year to assist in the inventory process. She was Chargée de mission for the Kabul Museum at the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH) which was founded in Islamabad in 1994.*

Twenty-three years of war have ravaged Afghanistan's cultural heritage. Archaeological sites have been systematically plundered, the Kabul Museum has been destroyed and its collections looted. A rudimentary inventory to ascertain what remained in the museum was begun in 1996. To understand the problems this entailed, it is necessary to understand the circumstances under which the inventory in question was undertaken. A brief chronological outline of recent events is given here.

## **The Kabul Museum during the past years**

In April 1979, a year after the communist Saur Revolution, the Kabul Museum was abruptly ordered to move the contents of the museum from Darulaman on the outskirts of the city into the large and by-then-deserted house of Mohammed Naim, next to the French Embassy in Kabul. The museum building was turned into an annex of the Ministry of Defence in the Darulaman Palace, as the whole area became a military zone. The contents of the ground and first floor were packed up and carted away and all underground stores were sealed off. At Mohammed Naim's house objects were piled

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up to the ceiling in every room, in hallways, in the basements; the garden was strewn with broken showcases, shelves, pedestals, office furniture, metal coin cases. The staff moved into the servants' quarters, the library into one of the garages.

The contents of the museum were moved back to Darulaman in October 1980. The building itself was in better condition than it had ever been; the rooms had been painted, proper toilets installed, the grounds cared for. The collections were reinstalled in their original rooms, having miraculously suffered very little damage. All the exhibits were intact, even enhanced by new pieces, namely the Delbarjin and Dashli Tepe frescoes, objects from Ai Khanum and a white marble Hindu Shahi Surya recently uncovered in Khair Khan by Soviet soldiers.

In 1989, while Afghanistan was being relentlessly destroyed during the early years of the  *jihad* , Kabul, as well as the Kabul Museum, remained relatively intact. However, because of increasing fears for the museum, vulnerable as it was on the front line, the Najibullah government officially closed the museum and ordered all objects on exhibit (numbering around 600) to be brought down to the storerooms and prepared to be moved. Yet again the collections were packed up. To minimize the risk of concentrating the objects in one place, some trunks were moved to the Central Bank Treasury vault in the Presidential Palace, others to the Ministry of Information and Culture, while the rest remained in the various depots of the Kabul Museum itself. The heavy schist and limestone sculptures and inscriptions were left in situ. All gold and silver coins and gold objects from Tapa Fullol were stored at the Presidential Palace,

along with the spectacular Telyan Tapa gold hoard from Bactria.

The tragic years of 1992–1995 saw the destruction of Kabul, as well as the Kabul Museum. Looting began in 1993, and continued each time the area of Darulaman changed hands. In May 1993 the museum building was shelled, the roof and top floor destroyed and left open to the elements. In early 1994, UNCHS (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) weatherproofed the top floor, installed steel doors on the lower storerooms and bricked up all windows. Fire had destroyed office records, including inventories, the photographic room, the Delbarjin and Dashli Tapa frescoes, most of the Islamic glass and metal objects; storerooms were pillaged, including the entire numismatic collection of 35,000 coins. The Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH) was founded in Islamabad in 1994. Through a UNESCO grant, a member of the Guimet Museum came to Kabul for two weeks in the summer of 1995,<sup>1</sup> to assist the museum staff to clean up various storerooms and to prepare a plan for taking an inventory of what remained. Also in 1995 a liaison officer for the Society for the Preservation of the Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH) began going to Kabul every summer for four or five months to facilitate the inventory process.

Because of the lack of security at Darulaman, the Ministry of Information and Culture of President Rabbani's government was anxious to safeguard what remained in the museum. After months of searching for suitable premises, the centrally located Kabul Hotel was chosen in early 1996 to house the artefacts, as well

as the 71 museum staff members. Since the previous year, the storerooms had been pilfered yet again and the floors were once more ankle-deep in rubble. There was neither electricity nor water. Work was carried out by the light of kerosene lamps, as the generator donated by UNCHS had been stolen by the security guards a few weeks earlier. Salaries, largely unpaid, ranged from \$6 a month for the top cadre post of Director of Museums of Afghanistan to \$2 a month for chowkidars. Kabul, as well as the museum, was under almost daily attack. The massive schist Gandharan bas-reliefs of the Kasyapa Brothers and the Dipankara Jataka had been wrenched off their iron hooks and carried away during the night curfew. Nuristani sculptured wooden columns, lintels and door panels had been cut up for firewood. In the no-man's-land behind the museum, stood one rusting carcass of a locomotive from King Amanullah's railway, the second one stripped down for scrap metal. None of the collection of the King's cars remained. Manuscripts and miniatures had been transferred several years earlier to the National Archives and are presumed safe. The museum staff worked heroically for almost six months on this first and most difficult phase of inventory taking. For the inventory process, space was made wherever possible in the wreckage of the basement storerooms, with museum staff and two members from the Afghan Institute of Archaeology handling object by object picked out of the debris around them. Each object, mostly fragments from the depots, was measured and briefly described in Farsi (Accession Number, Type of Object, Original Inventory Number, Provenance, Material, Measurements, Description, Current Location, ie Box #2, etc.), some 15 items to a page, then put into folders according to site.

These entries were then translated into English and entered by hand onto individual inventory fiches. Copies in English were made also by hand, there being no electricity or photocopy facilities available in Kabul. Photographs were taken under extremely difficult conditions, an average of one for every five objects. A small 5cm × 5cm photo was affixed to the English fiches, with duplicate copies put in labeled envelopes for eventual cataloguing in albums to accompany the Farsi inventories. During the anxious days awaiting the approach of the Taliban, the generator donated by SPACH was stolen. Two weeks before the arrival of the Taliban, over 500 crates, trunks, and boxes were shifted from Darulaman to the Kabul Hotel. A total of 3,439 artefacts (711 photographs) were registered.

### **Under the Taliban regime**

The Kabul Hotel premises had been locked on 28 September 1996 by the Taliban government and no museum staff was allowed to go to Darulaman. In 1998, the SPACH liaison officer made contact with the new Taliban Deputy Minister of Cultural Affairs, a mullah from Kabul, who was cordial and pragmatic. Preparatory work to continue the inventory which had stopped in 1996, began in mid-July 1998. The Ministry of Information and Culture also planned to begin restoration of the ground floor of the museum (using a \$14,000 grant from UNESCO from 1996). Earlier in the year, all trunks and boxes stored at the Kabul Hotel had, once again, been shifted, this time to the ground floor of the Ministry, as the Kabul Hotel was taken over for use as a Taliban guesthouse. Metal grills and partitions were installed at the Ministry. At the museum, the staff went back to sifting through the rubble which still littered the storeroom floors.

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After the American bombing of Afghanistan, work stopped on 20 August and all remaining expatriates were evacuated from Kabul. A total of 215 artefacts (49 photographs) were registered and moved to the Ministry.

The museum staff had more or less dispersed over the last two years (1997-1998), coming to sign the register at the Ministry and going about their hapless attempts to find odd jobs in the bazaars of Kabul. A senior staff member sold potatoes in the main market; the accountant ran a horse and gaudhi. Work started again in late May of the year 1999. Unexpected objects were found in abandoned corners of the museum: 350 fragments from the Begram collection; 8 objects from Gul Darra, never seen before. Still intact was the large DAFA (*Delégation Archeologique Française en Afghanistan*) ceramics storeroom in the basement of the right wing, the wooden drawers still bearing their original identification labels. A total of 1,747 (462 photographs) artefacts were registered and moved to the Ministry.

In 2000, the museum staff, now numbering only 20, worked through the spring, with 1,045 objects (63 photographs) registered. On 1 October, the final inventory total since 1996 showed 6,446 objects (1,285 photographs) from 49 different sites registered and packed. (Large numbers of similar objects such as pebbles, flints, arrowheads, etc., from prehistoric sites were packed under one registration number. The museum thus estimated an overall total of 35,000 objects, not including the DAFA ceramics collection.) A Ministry commission unofficially confirmed in July 2000 that the seals on the Telya Tapa gold hoard and the numerous trunks in the Presidential Palace and the Ministry were still

intact. Mullah Omar issued an edict protecting all cultural and historic relics of Afghanistan and making illegal excavation and smuggling of artefacts out of Afghanistan punishable by law. Left intact in the central hall of the museum were the headless standing figures of Kanishka and a Kushan noble, the Surkh Kotal inscription and fire altar, several schist Buddha figures, the baked clay seated Bodhisattva from Tapa Marandjan, the black marble basin from Kandahar, and other pieces.

In March 2001, the world watched in impotent shock as the Taliban dynamited the Bamiyan Buddhas, destroyed major pieces in the Kabul Museum and vandalized the Ministry and museums storerooms. Trunks were forced open, wrappings torn off, and objects smashed and left in chaotic disorder. Museum staff valiantly swept up the debris and repacked as much as possible with a view to possible restoration at a later date.

### After the war

Since the end of the war, the focus has been on centralizing inventories and photographs. At the request of UNESCO, the SPACH liaison officer assembled duplicate copies of all Farsi and English inventories made between 1996–2000 at the Kabul Museum, as well as over one thousand DAFA fiches (some with photographs only, others with photographs and descriptions in French) from the 1970s, that had been partially burned during the destruction of the museum in 1993. Duplicate copies of the Farsi and English inventories were packed in separate trunks, one to go to the Ministry for safekeeping, including the single-copy DAFA fiches, the second to stay at the museum for eventual reference purposes. The thousands of large



18. Kabul Museum staff packing registered objects after looting.



19. Looted coin cases from the Kabul Museum's storerooms.

and small photographs taken during the inventory process were sorted and separated into two sets: again, one to go to the Ministry for safekeeping, the second to stay at the museum.

Already in 2002, the museum director requested that all inventories be put on a database. Although computers, printers, digital cameras and scanners have been donated for this purpose, this will take time because of lack of language and computer skills among the museum staff.

The havoc caused by the Taliban destruction at the Ministry and the museum made many of the rudimentary inventories at hand no longer valid. Thousands of artefacts had been separated from their identifying wrappings and packing cases and shattered into unrecognizable fragments. Others had been repacked in a different storekeeper's holdings or swept altogether and put in boxes. Ideally a second general inventory should be made of what remains at this point, but since so

many objects were fragments to begin with, with few pieces from the exhibits themselves, and since time, space, and personnel are lacking, this is possibly not a pressing priority at this time.

But more important would be an inventory of objects recently seized from illegal excavations and from newly uncovered sites, as well as objects confiscated by customs, together with the contents of the trunks stored in the Presidential Palace and in the Ministry since 1989, which have not yet been opened. Although opening these trunks has been discussed for years, not surprisingly there is a strong feeling among museum colleagues that it is safer to be overly cautious and that the moment to publicize any new finds or the contents of the unopened trunks has not yet come. Other factors exist: a staff that had been cut off from the world for 23 years, the future location of the museum, an administrative infrastructure not yet in place, a lack of a suitably secure place to unpack, register, photograph, store or exhibit individual objects, and most importantly, local and international expertise to examine, analyze and describe these objects, some from totally new sites as yet unknown to archaeologists familiar with Afghanistan.

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### Current progress

Electricity and water have been restored to the museum; plans and funding for rehabilitating the top floor and roof are coming together; a conservation laboratory is becoming functional; the library is being reassembled; young Afghan staff members, who never knew the museum before its destruction, are being sent abroad for training. A momentum has begun and, with time and patience, Afghan and international efforts will see the Kabul Museum once again take its rightful place in the cultural heritage of the world.

### | NOTE

<sup>1</sup> See the article by Pierre Cambon in this issue.

# | UNESCO's Mandate and Activities for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage

by Christian Manhart

*Christian Manhart, art historian and archaeologist, joined UNESCO in 1987 where he worked as programme specialist in the Sector of Culture and the Executive Office of the Director General. He is in charge of the Europe/Asia region at the Division of Cultural Heritage including Afghanistan. His tasks consist of direct assistance to these countries in the development of policies and strategies for the preservation of their cultural heritage, in particular through fund-raising, preparation, implementation and evaluation of extra-budgetary projects.*

UNESCO has responded firmly to the challenge of rehabilitating Afghanistan's endangered cultural heritage, which has suffered irreversible damage and loss during the past two decades of war and civil unrest. This applies notably in the fields of the safeguarding of archaeological sites and the prevention of illicit traffic of cultural property.

The safeguarding of all aspects of cultural heritage in this country, both tangible and intangible (museums, monuments, archaeological sites, music, art and traditional crafts) is of particular significance in terms of strengthening cultural identity and a sense of national integrity. Cultural heritage can become a subject of mutual interest for former adversaries, enabling them to rebuild ties, to engage in dialogue and to work together in shaping a common future. UNESCO's strategy is to assist in the re-establishment of links between the populations concerned and their cultural history, helping them to develop a sense of common ownership of monuments that represent the cultural heritage of different segments of



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society. This strategy is directly linked to the nation-building process within the framework of the United Nations mandate and concerted international efforts for rehabilitating Afghanistan.

As the UN Programme Secretariat for Culture, Youth and Sports, UNESCO is supporting the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture and related government agencies in the field of culture. In this context, and being entrusted by the Afghan Government, UNESCO coordinates all international efforts aiming at safeguarding and enhancing Afghanistan's cultural heritage.

With reference to the UN Secretary-General's dictum, 'Our challenge is to help the Afghans help themselves', policies and activities for the safeguarding of Afghanistan's cultural heritage focus on training and capacity-building activities.

In May 2002, UNESCO organized in Kabul, in cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture, the first *International Seminar on the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage*, which gathered a hundred and seven specialists in Afghan cultural heritage, as well as representatives of donor countries and institutions. The participants gave presentations on the state of conservation of cultural sites across the country and discussed programmes and coordination for the first conservation activities to be undertaken. This Seminar resulted in more than US \$7 million being pledged for priority projects, which are allocated through bilateral agreements and UNESCO Funds-in-Trust projects.

To this end UNESCO has established an International Coordination Committee, whose



20. The 65m-tall Minaret of Jam, dating back to the 12th century, covered in elaborate brickwork, is situated in a deep river valley paying tribute to the Ghurid civilization.

statutes were approved by the 165th session of the Organization's Executive Board in October 2002. The Committee will consist of representatives of the Afghan Government and international specialists from important donor countries, and professional organizations providing funds or scientific assistance for the safeguarding actions. It will meet on a regular basis to review on-going and future projects and initiatives.

In June 2003, the first Plenary Session of the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, was organized by the Division of Cultural Heritage at UNESCO headquarters.

The meeting resulted in concrete recommendations, which should ensure a high

standard in conservation actions. Recommendations concern areas, such as the development of a long-term strategy for the safeguarding of heritage, the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, national inventories and documentation. The meeting also recommended immediate safeguarding actions on the sites of Jam, Herat and Bamiyan and the rehabilitation of the Kabul Museum.

### **Project implementation: Bamiyan**

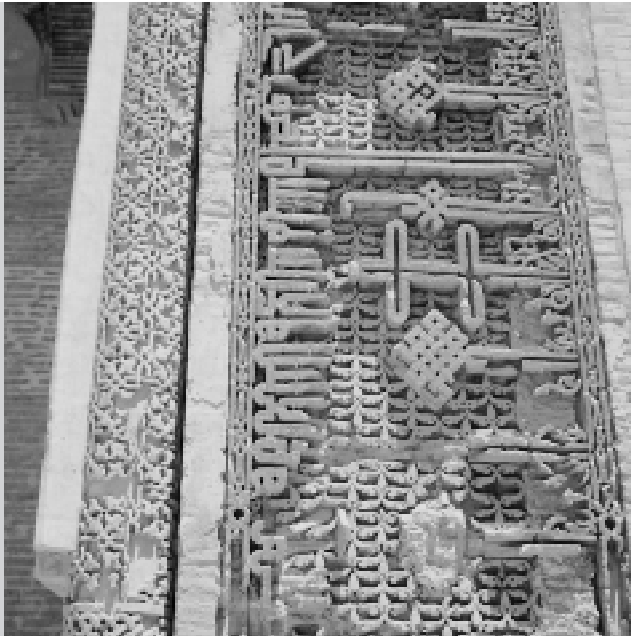
Immediately after the collapse of the Taliban regime in December 2001, UNESCO sent a mission to Bamiyan to assess the condition of the site and to cover the remaining large stone blocks with fibreglass sheets protecting them from harsh climatic conditions during winter. In July 2002, a second UNESCO mission jointly organized with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and directed by its president, Professor Michael Petzet, was undertaken in order to prepare conservation measures at the Bamiyan site. A third mission, aimed at project preparation and composed of German, Italian and Japanese experts was then undertaken from 27 September to 6 October 2002. It was noted that over 70% of the mural paintings dating from the 6th to the 9th century AD in the Buddhist caves have disappeared, resulting from neglect or looting. In one cave, experts even found tools of the thieves and the remains of freshly removed paintings. In response to this situation, a contract was concluded through the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture with the local commander, General Jawad, who immediately provided ten armed guards to be

responsible for the permanent surveillance of the site. It was also noted that large cracks have appeared in and around the niches where the Buddha statues had previously been situated, which could lead to their partial collapse as well as the inner staircases within some caves. In response to this situation, the experts carried out complementary measurements and advised on appropriate actions to consolidate the cliffs and the niches. ICOMOS also financed the restoration of a Sunni mosque and another building, both of which are located in close proximity to where stood the large Buddha. The fore-mentioned building will be used for accommodation for the guards, as well as by UNESCO to store equipment. As a result of this mission, the Japanese Foreign Ministry provided to the UNESCO Funds-in-Trust a budget of \$1,815,967 for the safeguarding of the Bamiyan site.

An Expert Working Group on the preservation of the Bamiyan site was jointly organized by UNESCO and ICOMOS and held in Munich (Germany) from 21 to 22 November 2002. Experts evaluated the present state of conservation of the site on the basis of the results of the two above-mentioned missions. They also discussed and compared different conservation methods and issued recommendations for conservation actions.

The first activities under this project started in June 2003 with a three-week mission by the architect Mario Santana from Leuven University (Belgium), aiming at acquiring scientific documentation on the back of the niches and on the remaining pieces of the Buddhas.

Later on, during the First Plenary Session



21. The entrance of the *Masjid al-Jami*, modified by the Timurids, discloses the original Ghurid decoration of the vault and façade.



22. Skyline view of the city of Herat with its *Masjid Jum'a* (Friday Mosque).

of the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (ICC), a number of resolutions were adopted among which the drawing up of an integrated master plan for the site and urgent measures for the protection and preservation of mural paintings in the caves.

Regarding the safeguarding of the mural paintings, eight specialists from the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties of Japan went to Bamiyan in July 2003 to prepare a master plan for the long-term preservation of the site. Contractual arrangements with a Japanese

enterprise were made for the preparation of a topographic map of the valley and a 3-D model of the niches and the cliffs. The German Archaeological Institute has been charged with the archaeological research on the fragments from the Buddha statues and ICOMOS with the conservation of these pieces.

In addition, consolidation measures concerning the Bamiyan cliffs and niches are being initiated, in order to prevent their collapse. To that aim, a large scaffolding has been given free of charge by the German Messerschmidt Foundation and was transported by the German Army to Afghanistan in August 2003. It was installed in September 2003. The experienced and internationally renowned Italian firm RODIO has been contracted to ensure the follow-up of this mission and start the stabilization of the site before winter.

## Jam and Herat

In March 2002, UNESCO sent two consultants to Jam and Herat. Professor Andrea Bruno, architect and Professor Marco Menegotto, structural engineer, assessed the state of conservation of the Minaret of Jam, as well as the Fifth Minaret, the Gowhar Shad, the Citadel, the Friday Mosque and other monuments in Herat, before drafting project documents for their conservation.

Two months later, Professor Bruno and Andrea Borgia, a hydrologist, carried out a UNESCO mission to advise on the consolidation of the Jam Minaret's foundations, the stabilization of its overall structure and the water flow of the two rivers nearby, as well as to recommend protective measures for the surrounding archaeological zone which is threatened by illicit excavations. This mission revealed that while the dramatic high floods of April 2002 damaged the gabions which had been installed by UNESCO in 2000, they remained efficient in protecting the monument, which has perhaps only survived as a result of this measure. The Minaret of Jam was inscribed as the first Afghan property on the UNESCO World Heritage List in June 2002.

In autumn of the same year, architects Tarcis Stevens and Mario Santana from Leuven University carried out detailed metric documentation of the five minarets of the Gowhar Shad Musalla in Herat, as well as of the Jam Minaret. They combined this documentation with a preliminary training session on the use of a Total Station for Afghan experts. The Total Station was donated by UNESCO to the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture. This training session

continued in August 2003 headed by four specialists from the universities of Leuven and Berkeley (USA), and produced detailed documentation of the Herat monuments and the Jam Minaret with a laser scanner.

An Expert Working Group on the Preservation of Jam and the Monuments in Herat was held at UNESCO headquarters on 30 January 2003. Among the twenty-three participants were Dr Sayed Makdoom Raheen, the Afghan Minister of Information and Culture, Mr Zahir Aziz, Ambassador of Afghanistan to UNESCO, Mr Omar Khan Massoudi, Director of the Kabul Museum and Mr Abdul Wasey Feroozi, Head of the Afghan Institute of Archaeology. The experts evaluated the state of conservation of the site of Jam, as well as of the Fifth Minaret, the Gawhar Shad, the Citadel, the Friday Mosque and other monuments in Herat on the basis of the results of the previous UNESCO missions. They also addressed the problem of illicit excavations, compared different conservation methods and made emergency and long-term conservation and coordination proposals with reference to identified priorities. Emergency activities have started in June 2003.

The financing of missions and activities for the reconstruction of Jam and Herat cultural heritage has been ensured by two funds-in-trust. The Swiss authorities announced in November 2002 the approval of a UNESCO Funds-in-Trust project for emergency consolidation and restoration of the site of Jam, with a total budget of US \$124,300 and the Italian authorities gave \$499,460 to the same fund for emergency consolidation and restoration of monuments in Herat and Jam.

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The first activities under these projects began in April 2003 with the construction of a project house in Jam, the clearing of the Jam riverbed, as well as the repairing and the strengthening of the gabions.

In July and August 2003, Prof. Andrea Bruno, Prof. Giorgio Macchi and Mariachristina Pepe initiated a detailed geological soil investigation at the Jam and Herat minarets for the definition of their consolidation. Temporary emergency stabilization has been done on the Fifth Minaret in Herat threatened with collapse. The work on the two Minarets has continued in September 2003.

At the same time, three archaeologists from ISMEO (*Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente*) have carried out safeguarding excavations on the site.

### Kabul Museum

UNESCO sent a mission in December 2001 to identify and gather the remains of various damaged statues and objects in the Kabul Museum aiming at the preparation of a restoration plan.

In order to prevent further deterioration due to severe winter climatic conditions emergency action included the installation of new windows in several rooms on the ground and first floor. A deep water well with a pressure tank and adequate plumbing have been installed to ensure a water connection for the conservation laboratory. In addition, a large electric generator was donated.

Several countries and cultural institutions took important and crucial measures to protect

and reconstruct the infrastructures. In January 2003, the Greek Government commenced the restoration of the Kabul Museum building as part of a commitment it made during the Kabul Seminar (May 2002) to contribute an amount of approximately US\$750,000. The British International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has installed a new restoration laboratory composed of two rooms, one wet-room and one-dry room, both of which were funded by the British Museum. The French CEREDAF (*Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Documentaires sur l'Afghanistan*) donated conservation equipment and DAFA (*Délégation d'Archéologie Française en Afghanistan*), together with the Guimet Museum in Paris carried out a training course for the Kabul Museum's curators.<sup>1</sup>

The French NGO *Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement* (ACTED) has also helped for emergency repairs to the protecting roof of the nine domes of the Hadji Pyada mosque in Balkh – the oldest mosque in Afghanistan – in order to preserve it from the harsh climatic conditions during winter. Further to the Funds-in-Trust donations mentioned above in the course of the presented restoration activities, bilateral contributions include US\$5 million from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture for the restoration of the Babur Gardens and the Timur Shas Mausoleum in Kabul and the rehabilitation of traditional housing in Kabul, Herat and other cities. The US Government contributed US\$ 100,000 to the restoration of the Kabul Museum building. UNESCO has provided \$400,000 under its Regular Budget for the biennium 2002/03 for cultural activities in Afghanistan.

Traditional skills are essential in restoration activities and UNESCO has undertaken since 2002 the revival of the historic tile-making workshop of Herat with SPACH. This workshop is presently attended by Afghan trainees learning the production of traditional tiles which will be used in the restoration of the monuments.

In complement to operational activities, UNESCO is promoting existing and developing new normative instruments for the legal protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Given that the prevention of illicit excavations and illicit traffic is a major challenge in Afghanistan, UNESCO strongly supports the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to ban illicit excavations and to control borders to prevent smuggling of illicitly acquired movable cultural objects.

By way of conclusion, it can be stated that to date, funding and other forms of assistance well exceeding the \$7 million pledged during the May 2002 Kabul Seminar have been given for cultural projects in Afghanistan.

UNESCO would like to take this opportunity to thank all of these generous donors for their indispensable contributions which complement humanitarian funds provided in the framework of the UN ...

monuments of Herat and Jam; \$124,000 from the Swiss Government for Jam, and \$850,000 from the Government of Germany in 2002, through ICOMOS Germany and the German Archaeological Institute, for the restoration of the Babur Gardens and for the training of Afghan archaeologists.

## | NOTE

1 To summarize, the UNESCO Funds-in-Trust programme has been entrusted with the following amounts from donor countries: \$1,815,967 from the Government of Japan for the conservation of Bamiyan; US\$769,000 from the Government of Italy for three projects for the

# | International Cooperation in Afghanistan: strategies, funding and modalities of action

*by Louise Haxthausen and Jim Williams*

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## Introduction

Rehabilitating the cultural heritage of Afghanistan is a central element in giving a sense of historical continuity and national unity to Afghans, in the current reconstruction period. The transitional Afghan authorities have acknowledged this fact by committing themselves ‘...to create an environment where the cultural heritage is preserved, protected and handed on to young generations of Afghans as a record of the rich experience and aspirations in their country, so as to foster cultural creativity in all its diversity...’.<sup>1</sup>

The question is how Afghanistan will translate this commitment into reality. After twenty-three years of war, the state of Afghanistan’s cultural heritage has been described as a ‘cultural disaster’. Historical monuments were heavily damaged, as they were exposed to deliberate destruction or to gradual degradation. The Kabul Museum and archaeological sites were massively looted. Cultural professions were isolated from international



cooperation and exchanges and consequently from training and research opportunities to upgrade skills.

In the current situation, in-country resources to address these needs are practically non-existent. As stated by H.E. Hamid Karzai at the Tokyo Conference (January 2002) ‘...it is an almost unprecedented situation where an Administration has no immediate source of revenue. We will rapidly lose credibility, if we cannot pay our staff or deliver services to the people (...) we see it as essential that the pledges are promptly materialized’. Since then, international aid has been channelled to Afghanistan. However, pledges made at the Tokyo Conference and subsequent donor meetings for the reconstruction of Afghanistan are considered as insufficient to address existing needs and painfully slow in coming into the country. This is equally true when it comes to funding to preserve and promote Afghanistan’s cultural heritage.

From 1979 on, as the security situation in the country progressively deteriorated, international cooperation in the area of culture became more and more limited and, eventually, practically stopped during the Taliban regime. Today, the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Transitional State of Afghanistan is thus facing the overwhelming challenge of reviving and renewing a tradition of international cultural cooperation established in the early 20th century. This cooperation took the form of numerous partnerships with key scientific institutions from around the world. Notable results of this cooperation included interventions to protect Afghanistan’s major cultural monuments and sites, such as the Bamiyan site, as well as a series of

outstanding archaeological discoveries which have been fundamental in deepening the knowledge and understanding of Afghanistan’s history and culture.

### **Current priorities and modalities of action**

The slow pace of tangibly improving the overall situation of Afghanistan’s cultural heritage makes it easy to lose sight of the substantial progress that has been made. Since the collapse of the Taliban regime, strategies have been devised, coordination mechanisms have been put in place, and funding has begun to reach the country allowing programmes to move step by step from assessment to genuine implementation.

In May 2002, UNESCO initiated a dialogue between the Afghan authorities, experts and donors on priorities for the safeguarding of the country’s cultural heritage. The ‘International Seminar on the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage’ (Kabul, Afghanistan, 27–29 May 2002) produced the first comprehensive plan of action for a national cultural heritage strategy. The plan focused on a limited number of emergency interventions aimed at the rehabilitation of the Kabul Museum and of major historical monuments and sites throughout the country. The plan also suggested an international coordination body to be put in place.

Thus, during autumn 2002, the dialogue initiated during the International Seminar was institutionalized with the establishment of an ‘International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage’<sup>2</sup> (ICC), following a request by the Afghan authorities that UNESCO would play a coordinating role in all

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future international activities aimed at safeguarding the country's cultural heritage.

The International Coordination Committee serves as a forum to attract the permanent attention of the international community to the importance of rehabilitating Afghanistan's cultural heritage and to mobilize funding. As an international coordination body, it also provides policy recommendations to the Afghan authorities on priority issues to be addressed. At the same time, it reviews and validates technical options for specific interventions to preserve and rehabilitate sites and monuments.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the International Coordination Committee has a critical role to play in providing strategic inputs to the programme on culture, media and sport contained in the overall framework for development aid in Afghanistan, that is the annual National Development Budget (NDB).

The National Development Budget outlines the Government's top priorities for national reconstruction, devised into 12 development programmes. In other words, the National Development Budget is an overall investment programme for the rehabilitation of the country's public services, that brings together planned development activities in the country, be they implemented directly by the Government, by United Nations agencies, by multi- or bilateral aid agencies or by NGOs. It serves as a platform for aid coordination in Afghanistan.

In the area of culture, the National Development Budget is focused on the preservation and protection of cultural and historical monuments and sites, the rehabilitation and modernization of public cultural institutions, and

the establishment of an environment conducive to creativity and civil society participation in cultural activities. The overall objective is to ensure that Afghans will enjoy improved access to culture. For fiscal year 1382 (March 2003–March 2004), the following six priority projects were identified:

1. The rehabilitation of the Kabul Museum
2. The rehabilitation of the National Archives
3. The rehabilitation of the Kabul Theatre
4. Emergency Consolidation and Conservation of Cultural Monuments and Sites
5. Preventing Illicit Excavations and Traffic of Cultural Property
6. The rehabilitation of the Public Library
7. Revival of Traditional Afghan Music

The projects were identified and are monitored through a series of Government led consultations, which involve donors and other relevant development partners. International cooperation is thus taking shape along a process which seeks to balance stakeholder participation and a strong national ownership, with the Government in the 'driving seat' of the reform.

In this framework, the UNESCO Kabul office plays a facilitating role. When the Ministry of Finance established Consultative Groups as forums for a Government-donor dialogue on National Development Budget formulation and monitoring, the UNESCO Kabul office was requested to act as focal point to the Consultative Group on Culture, Media and Sports. This role is fundamentally one of institutional capacity-building of the Ministry of Information and Culture in strategic programming and monitoring, as individual Ministries have been given the responsibility by the Government to

deliver their respective National Development Budget programmes. This also means that the Ministry of Information and Culture has ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the above-mentioned National Development Budget projects, whoever is the implementing agency and/or donor.

### What has or has not been achieved?

One year and a half after the Tokyo Conference, international cooperation in the field of culture is gradually reviving. Given the scale of the needs, a widespread feeling among Afghan authorities, however, is one of frustration. Firstly, the strong mobilization of the international community to safeguard the Bamiyan Buddhas against destruction had raised hopes of massive help once the Taliban regime fell. Secondly, much of the initial funding received has not yet generated visible changes, as much preparatory work – in particular updated scientific documentation of monuments and sites – was needed, before practical rehabilitation activities could start.

As of August 2003, more than US \$4 million have been made effectively available by various donors to the National Development Budget culture projects.<sup>4</sup> The rehabilitation of historical and cultural monuments is the area which has been prioritized so far. UNESCO, thanks to funding from Italy, Japan and Switzerland, and the Aga Khan Trust Foundation for Culture (AKTC) have initiated rehabilitation projects aimed at various monuments and sites in Kabul, at the Bamiyan site, at monuments in Herat, as well as at the Minaret of Jam, which, in 2002, became the first historical monument in Afghanistan to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.



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23. One of the Bamiyan Buddhas (55m-tall) in 1978 when the statue was under restoration with the assistance of the Archaeological Survey of India. The Bamiyan Buddhas were deliberately destroyed in 2001.

The rehabilitation of the Kabul Museum is another urgent priority. Thanks to funding from Greece, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, UNESCO and SPACH, the physical rehabilitation of the building is expected to be completed by the end of the year. At the same time, various museums, including the Guimet Museum and the British Museum, have offered *in situ* training for the museum staff in conservation techniques, management, etc. Several of the statues from the Kushan period, which were smashed to pieces by the Taliban, have now been put together and are on display in the entrance hall of the museum.

However, as a general trend, support for cultural institutions remains limited. The most striking example is that of the Kabul Theatre. The

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theatre is in the same state of desolation as it was when the Taliban regime fell almost two years ago. More positive is the situation of Afghan Films, of the Public Library and of the National Archives, where rehabilitation work is in progress.

Positive signs of more vigorous international cooperation face one major challenge in reversing the tragic process of impoverishment of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, namely the continuous looting of archaeological sites and illicit traffic of cultural property outside of the country. The Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan estimates that ongoing looting and illicit traffic are of an amplitude comparable to that endured during the Taliban regime. Means available to counter looting remain limited, especially in provincial areas where the security situation is still volatile. Earlier this year, the Ministry of Information and Culture requested the deployment of five hundred armed guards at the most exposed archaeological sites in the country. So far, resources available to restore law and order throughout the country have been insufficient to meet this demand. Another strategy to counter looting adopted by the Ministry of Information and Culture with the support of international cooperation, in particular Italy and France, is the launching of scientific excavations in Afghanistan. Here again, the lack of security on most archaeological sites limits opportunities for such interventions.

Meanwhile, the Afghan authorities are taking steps to ratify the two international instruments protecting cultural property against illicit traffic, namely the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of

Ownership of Cultural Property and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. With assistance from UNESCO, the Afghan 1980 Law on Cultural Heritage is currently being reviewed and harmonized with the international standards stipulated in the two conventions. The ratification of these 2 international instruments will give the Afghan authorities legal means to claim the restitution or return of cultural property from abroad.

The genuine commitment of the Afghan authorities to safeguard their cultural heritage as part of the reconstruction process has catalysed an immediate revival of international cooperation in the field of culture. However, whether Afghanistan will recover from the 'cultural disaster' it has experienced is still uncertain. This will highly



24. The Bamiyan Valley bears an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition in the Central Asian region which has disappeared.

depend on the willingness of the international community to engage in long-term partnerships and capacity-building efforts.

## | NOTES

1 National Development Budget, Programme 1.5: Culture, Media and Sports. Full text available on [www.af](http://www.af), the website of the Islamic Transitional State of Afghanistan.

2 The statutes were approved by the UNESCO Executive Board at its 165th session (October 2002).

3 So far, expert working groups of the International Coordination Committee have met to discuss the preservation of the Bamiyan site (May 2002), as well as the rehabilitation of the sites of Jam and Herat (November 2002). The first plenary session of the International Coordination Committee was held in June 2003. It allowed a thorough review of the overall situation of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.

4 Updated figures on National Development Budget funding can be found on [www.af](http://www.af), donor database.



© Guimet Museum

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25. Ivories from Begram, on the Silk Road, in Afghanistan, carved in classic Indian style, looted from the Kabul Museum.



# | Some Examples of Solidarity in International Research

by Annie Caubet

*Annie Caubet, a field archaeologist, has excavated sites in many countries such as Syria, Cyprus, Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan etc ... Her special field of interest is the production of luxury goods (faience, ivory, jewellery) in the eastern Mediterranean. She is chief curator of the collection of near eastern antiquities in the Louvre Museum. She curated in particular the new galleries of Assyrian, Phoenician and Persian art, opened in 1993 and 1997 in the 'Grand Louvre'.*

Great moments of crisis, as shown by the events in Iraq, provide an opportunity for scientists to recover their sense of solidarity: under normal circumstances, rivalries and jealousies mask the genuine feeling of belonging to a community that shares the same ethics, a feeling that tends to fade unless a serious crisis revives it. Responding to the recent appeal to support Iraqi heritage, archaeologists, historians, restorers and museum curators, who all share Mesopotamia as their main subject of study, met at UNESCO headquarters and took part in panels that were urgently organized around the world, to express their solidarity and their willingness to work together.

The family feeling shared by orientalists is an old phenomenon: regularly revived by the annual event of the *Rencontres Assyriologiques*, by various other more recently established international conferences, and by numerous scientific journals accessible to a wide public. The sense of belonging to the same community is particularly strong in museum circles where the tradition dates back to the rediscovery of the Mesopotamian past in the mid-nineteenth century. The history of this rediscovery is in fact inseparable from the birth and development of the major



## HERITAGE IN TURMOIL: IRAQ

Mesopotamian museum collections and it was within these same museums that research initiatives were taken. The link between the excavation site and the museum is much closer in the field of the Near East than that of Egyptology or classical archaeology, for example, and the cooperation between museums or departments of oriental archaeology is all the more active.

There has been very close collaboration between the curators of Berlin, London and Paris, in particular. The three collections have several features in common, namely their age, to start with. The Louvre was founded in 1793, the first Assyrian museum was inaugurated in 1847; the British Museum is celebrating its bicentennial in 2003, and the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin was founded in 1899. The initial impetus was given in France by the State which emerged from the Revolution, in England through a private body, and in Germany through cities and the Länder. The three collections were gradually built up from regular excavations, the fruit of which were shared with Istanbul. Each collection has its highlights represented by major sites such as Babylon and the Hittite capital of Hattusha in Berlin, Susa, Tello and Khorsabad in Paris and Nineveh, Nimrud and Ur in London. These are the only three museums, along with Istanbul, that are capable of providing a comprehensive overview of the various civilizations that thrived in the Orient of antiquity, leaving the national museums built during the twentieth century in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan the privilege of illustrating in more detail the cultures that developed on their soil.

The main focus of collaboration between museums has been on research, training and the

exchange of personnel, the circulation of works of art, restoration projects, exhibitions, museographic displays, publication enterprises, and joint endeavours concerning excavation sites and their development. We shall refer here to several examples chosen from collaborative experience within the Department of Oriental Antiquities of the Louvre Museum.

### Research

The rediscovery of the ancient Orient and the history of deciphering cuneiform writings were initiatives conducted on a European scale in which museums played a significant role. It is worth noting that from the beginning, researchers attributed great importance to the circulation and dissemination of information which took place through a network of learned societies, like the Asiatic Society. Researchers corresponded with each other assiduously, readily conveying news of how their work was progressing in the form of short notes published in specialized journals such as the *Journal des Savants*. In 1843, when Paul-Emile Botta, then French Consul in Mosul, began excavating the tell of Khorsabad, believing he would find the antique Assyrian capital of Nineveh, he immediately sent letters telling of his discoveries not only to the Academy of Turin, his native city, but also to Jules Mohl who read them to the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, before publishing them in the *Journal Asiatique*, on 5 April 1843. The 'Letters of Mr. Botta concerning his discoveries of Nineveh' announced the rediscovery of the Assyrians to the world. Better still, Botta showed the reports that he was sending to France regarding his discoveries to the Briton, Austen H. Layard, with whom he had established a friendship

in Mosul. Subsequently, the fame of Layard, the future discoverer of Nineveh and Nimrod, would greatly surpass that of Botta who had introduced him to the Assyrian excavations.

The pioneers of archaeology, then quite a small scientific community, were quick and effective in circulating information: new discoveries were made known to the scholarly public through, notably, the use of casting and engraving, methods which have been replaced today with photographs sent via electronic mail. It was by happenstance that at the same time that Botta was updating the first Assyrian reliefs from the palace of Sargon II at the site of Khorsabad, the Stela of Victory, belonging to the same ruler, was discovered on Cyprus, in Larnaca. The reliefs from Khorsabad found their way to the Louvre, where the first Assyrian museum opened in 1847, while the stela from Larnaca was acquired by the Berlin Museum: the two museums immediately proceeded to exchange castings, the Berlin stela having been announced in a note on Assyrian monuments written by the curator of antiquities, Adrien de Longpérier, in 1849, for the benefit of visitors to the Louvre. Today research is more international than ever, associating museums, universities and departments of antiquities, particularly between the countries of Europe and the Near East.

### **The training and exchange of personnel**

Ideally speaking, museums are in favour of exchanging researchers. Practically speaking, the shortage of staff and the pressure of routine work make it difficult for curators to leave for extended periods. However, several members of the Louvre Museum benefited from a welcome at the

Metropolitan Museum of New York. In 2002, *l'Ecole du patrimoine*, which trains future French curators, was able to send one of its students to Berlin, an initiative that we hope to see repeated. What occurs more frequently is the reception of personnel from the museums of the various countries in the Near East by museums in Europe and America. For example, the department of Oriental Antiquities in the Louvre, hosts each year, on average four or five members from the departments of Syria or Iran and hopes soon to receive young Iraqi researchers.

### **The exchange of works of art**

Many examples of this type of exchange exist, with several possible scenarios. Often, a 'great museum' possesses copies that it can dispose of, in exchange for a representative example that it lacks. This is the case at the Louvre with numerous random bricks from the décor of the Persian palace of Darius and collected on the tell of Susa. The fragments, in good condition, were reassembled in 1912 to constitute the 'Frieze of archers'; isolated archers were stored in New York, at the British Museum and in Berlin where an archer was exchanged for a lion from the Sacred Way in Babylon. In recent years, all of the fragmented bricks preserved at the Louvre have been restored and reassembled in a less illusory manner as compared to the past. These 'new' panels are presented during temporary exhibitions. We can also cite the example of the Louvre's deposit of antique duplicates of the Code of Hammurabi, which were exchanged with Baghdad for some neolithic figurines.

The other scenario is that of fragments which belong to the same ensemble, but were dispersed in the past: museums then agree to

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deposit items. Thus the Sumerian site of Girsou, present day Tello, which was explored by French expeditions at the end of the nineteenth century, was looted after the First World War and the material was scattered around the world: a central fragment from the Stela of Victory from the prince Eannatum (the so-called Stele of Vultures, c. 2450 BC) and the hands from a statue of the prince Goudea (c. 2120 BC), which reached the British Museum, were deposited in France in order to be reintegrated with the works already in the Louvre.

### Joint restoration projects

The restoration of works of art is one of the cooperation projects that is the most valuable for sharing knowledge, allowing the exchange of specialists and contributing to safeguarding world heritage. For example, the British Museum collaborated with Aïn Ghazal (Jordan) in the reassembly of neolithic statues. As for the Louvre, it has decided to restore the altar of Zeus in Jerash with its decor of painted stuccoes, in collaboration with Jordan, and is also undertaking, with Syria, the restoration of the ivories from the royal palace of Ougarit in the Damascus National Museum. In what we hope is the near future, the restoration of works of art from the Iraq National Museum is going to be the subject of an international project under the aegis of UNESCO, a project that the Louvre Museum naturally hopes to participate in.

### Museography

This term describes the efforts devoted to permanent displays as opposed to temporary exhibitions. The operation 'Grand Louvre', that led to profound changes in the relationship of the museum with its

public and economic contingencies, provided the staff of the Louvre with an assessment of the museographic field. Consequently, other national museums, in Beirut, Damascus, Amman, and Tehran, have consulted the Louvre when they launched similar transformations. In Jordan, the collaboration was also focused on the museographic presentation of the Hellenistic altar in a Roman cryptoportico from the temple of Zeus that was adapted for that purpose.

### Exhibitions

The organization of exhibitions is the vital aspect of museums, which most requires professional solidarity, and there are many number of examples. Let us refer first to a recent example which was particularly remarkable for the scientific concern that transcended the political situation and a second example that has yet to come. In the upheaval caused by the Second Gulf War, the Metropolitan Museum in New York inaugurated the exhibition on the 'Art of the First Cities: The third millennium BC from the Mediterranean region to the Indus' assembling works of art that are preserved in England, France, Germany, Greece, Turkey, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan ... Syria, despite great difficulties, was able to contribute to this magnificent display. In the autumn of 2004, the Museum of Fine Arts in Lyon will inaugurate an exhibition dedicated to the royal city of Ougarit, the capital of a Levantine kingdom from the second millennium with works of art from the Louvre, Damascus, Aleppo and Lattakia: it is the result of a joint scientific venture bringing together the efforts of an international team.



© Annie Caubet/Louvre Museum

26. The impressive remains of the palace built by King Sargon II at Khorsabad inaugurated in 706 BC, are shown in their original position in one of the Louvre's showrooms, Paris.

### Conferences and colloquia

Museums equipped with an auditorium take the initiative to organize conferences and colloquia that are more specifically linked to museum professions, in addition to those that they organize in collaboration with the academic world. On the occasion of an exhibition, specialists are invited to develop the basic content of the catalogue, or certain seminars are held on 'current events in museums': curators, directors and architects from

around the world are invited to explain the principles that guided them in their choices. Or, lastly, as was the case during the tragic circumstances of the war in Iraq, when London, Paris and Berlin set up an emergency information panel. No doubt others will follow.

### Publications

Collaboration on publications of collections are more difficult to achieve, especially due to matters of language. In addition to the exhibition catalogues that accompany the exhibitions mentioned earlier, which are usually collective works, we can provide several examples of books which have been co-edited: a volume on the reliefs of Niniveh in the

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Louvre was co-researched with the British Museum (in preparation); and, as regards Islamic art, a catalogue of 'lustre ware' ceramics, which are preserved in Paris and Tehran, will be published by staff from the two museums.

### Projects for excavations and development of sites

From now on, excavation programmes in the various countries of the Near East will be conducted by joint missions that bring together researchers from the host country with those from foreign countries: while awaiting the hoped-for reopening of the Franco-Iraqi digs at the Mesopotamian sites, the Franco-Syrian mission in Ougarit has got under way through an agreement between the *Direction Générale de l'Administration des musées*, the Louvre, the University of Lyon II and the CNRS (*Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques*). The participation of the Louvre will focus specifically on restoration matters and on developing the site: an itinerary has been devised for the numerous Syrian and foreign tourists who visit the site and will comprise brief explanations.

The time is past when archaeological collaboration in the Near East was conceived by museums as being essentially field work and the search for quality artefacts. Henceforth, bilateral agreements provide for complex ensembles of joint projects and museums weave amongst themselves informal networks that lay the ground for the major operations of international institutions such as ICOM and UNESCO.

# | A Short History of the Iraq National Museum

*by Usam Ghaidan and Anna Paolini*

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## A long history

Professor John Russell, the recently appointed Assistant to the Senior Cultural Advisor of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), has described Iraq as a country of firsts: the earliest villages, cities, writing, poetry, epic literature, temples, codified religion, armies, warfare, world economy and empire. The Iraq Museum in Baghdad is a unique repository of millennia of history and of different cultures. It is within the territory of modern Iraq that the earliest urban culture was established and flourished. Large fortified towns, vast and complex palaces and religious structures which developed and evolved with continuity through many centuries mark the landscape of this land between rivers. Much of what we know of Mesopotamia comes from archaeological research. Virtually all of Iraq is an archaeological site. Over 10,000 sites have been identified in Iraq and many more await discovery. About 1,500 have been researched. Apart from some important objects housed in major institutions, such as the British Museum and the



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27. Entrance to the Iraq National Museum, 2003.

28. Islamic section of the Iraq National Museum before destruction.

Louvre, almost all the finds recovered from these sites are housed in the Iraq National Museum of Baghdad.

This important institution began its life in 1923 to house selected artefacts yielded by excavations being carried out at Assyrian, Babylonian and Sumerian sites. It consisted of one room situated within *al-Qushlah*, Iraq's government building in Baghdad on the east bank of the river Tigris. Due to the growing number of archaeological finds, a separate building became necessary and this was founded on the same side of the river at the foot of *al-Shuhada* Bridge and named the Iraq Museum. Gertrude Bell, the famous Arabist of British origin, explorer and amateur archaeologist, became its director and remained so until her death in 1926.

The museum continued to accommodate the steadily increasing collections until 1966 when

a larger, purpose-built structure was inaugurated on the west side of the river and renamed the Iraq National Museum. It is a two-storey brick structure with a basement. The galleries form rectangular blocks, 13–18 metres wide, arranged around a planted square courtyard, measuring 50 metres in length, surrounded by covered verandas.

The building was extended twenty years later, when another square courtyard structure of identical design was added bringing the number of public galleries to 20, covering a surface area of 11,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The galleries are arranged chronologically. Prehistory and Sumerian periods are on the first floor while the ground floor is used to display finds from the Assyrian and Islamic eras. The most inspiring gallery is that of the Assyrian antiquities. Its walls are covered with gigantic carvings some 15 metres long and about 5 metres tall depicting ceremonies in ancient Nineveh and Ashur. Giant human-headed, winged bulls that had once guarded the gates of the Assyrian capitals of Nineveh and Khorsabad stand on pedestals.



In the remaining galleries were displayed over 10,000 items, ranging from tiny cylinder seals to monumental statues. They comprised objects made of clay, pottery, metal, bone, cloth, paper, glass, wood, limestone and alabaster, spanning the 10,000 years of human civilization from prehistoric times through the Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Hatrene, Parthian, Sassanid to the Islamic eras. The items on display represented fewer than 3% of Iraq's holdings among which are more than 100,000 cuneiform tablets, which include the earliest collection of proto-cuneiform writing from Uruk (3,200 BC), mankind's oldest codes of law (eighteenth century BC) as well as the invaluable Sippar archives of some 800 clay tablets from the Neo-Babylonian period (625–539 BC). These invaluable holdings make the Iraq National Museum one of the world's greatest repositories of cultural treasures of the ancient Near East and an inescapable place for the study of its history.

During the Gulf War of 1991, the Ministry of Communications, located across the road in front of the museum, was bombed and the resulting tremors shattered a number of the Museum's showcases. The museum was closed down and, to protect objects from bombardment, the staff decided to remove the displayed artefacts to a safer place. Believing the war was not going to last more than a few months, they wrapped the precious objects of ceramics, ivory, cuneiform tablets, etc. in cotton wool and the metal ones in rubber padding. These were placed in metal trunks, locked and taken to the basement of the museum's old store building.

Unfortunately, events took a different turn. Not only did the bombs not stop, but also, because

of the irregular electricity supply, due to the destruction of generators and the sanctions that followed, the pumps that had been installed to empty ground water from the basements stopped functioning and the floor became inundated. The metal trunks corroded, allowing humidity to reach the protective cotton wool and rubber padding and turn them into nesting grounds for bacteria, moths and other harmful organisms. Hundreds of items were disintegrating under the eyes of the museum's laboratory staff who were rendered helpless for want of the necessary chemicals the import of which was not authorized by the Sanctions Committee.

When the museum opened its doors to the public nine years later, in April 2000, hundreds of objects that had managed to survive two to three thousand years were damaged, some of them irretrievably.

In February 2003, almost exactly three years later, the museum was again forced to close its doors and look for safer places for its collections. The impact this time was more devastating. The shattered public order in the aftermath of the war brought waves of theft and pillaging. In an unchecked frenzy of cultural theft, looters who pillaged government buildings and businesses after the fall of Baghdad also targeted the museum, stealing and destroying artefacts, some going back 7,000 years. Much of the looting occurred on Thursday, 10 April. The museum guards stood by as hordes broke into the museum with wheelbarrows and carts and stole priceless statues, bowls, and clay tablets, etc., leaving its galleries empty except for shattered glass display cases and cracked pottery bowls that littered the floors.

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On 3 July, the Coalition Provisional Authority organized a one-day exhibition at the National Museum. On display were gold pieces from the royal tombs of Ur as well as some recovered artefacts, such as the Warka vase. But the star of the show was the treasure of Nimrud, consisting of gold jewellery excavated by Iraqi archaeologists at Nimrud between 1988 and 1990. At this Neo-Assyrian capital, just south-east of Mosul, four tombs were discovered under a floor of the north-west Palace of King Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC). This treasure had been placed in the vaults of the Iraqi Central bank since the 1991 Gulf War. When the renowned Romisch-Germanische Museum in Mainz, Germany, attempted to set up an exhibition of this treasure some years ago, no insurance company was willing to insure the treasure. It was considered to be too valuable.

With the July exhibition, the Coalition Provisional Authority wanted to show that there was a return to normality. Sadly, only a few hours after the exhibition closed, a US soldier standing guard at the museum was killed by a sniper, and a couple of days later a British journalist was assassinated just across the street.

### **A loss for the whole of humanity**

Today, the Iraq National Museum is but the mere shadow of its former self. According to the latest inquiries, over 30 large items and 12,000 smaller ones have gone. Each is an irreplaceable masterpiece in its own right. Each is unique, with its own story to tell. The sum of those stories is a fundamental part of who we are today. Our archaeological heritage is a non-renewable resource,

and when a part of is destroyed, that part is lost forever.

It is the responsibility of the world community to work together to put this important repository of the history of humanity back on its feet. To this end, UNESCO, in its capacity as the sole international agency whose duty is to safeguard human heritage, has taken numerous actions during the period of sanctions, immediately before the recent armed conflict, and up until today. In 1999, UNESCO contributed to reinstalling the air-conditioning and security systems at the museum. UNESCO is committed to continue its action in favour of the preservation of the rich cultural heritage of Iraq.

At present, UNESCO is coordinating international actions for the restoration of the museum. All sectors of the museum are in need of intervention and consistent efforts will be needed to respond to all the needs. Besides the display areas and the offices, which have been sacked and vandalized, the conservation laboratories have suffered serious damage. The years of embargo made it very difficult for the conservators of the museum to update their knowledge of the use of new equipment and proper materials. Most of the materials required were chemical products the import of which was forbidden. The extensive pillage during and after the recent armed conflict worsened the situation of the laboratories, which now have to be fully refurbished and re-equipped. Like the other fixtures at the museum, the security system was also smashed. Damage to this essential facility is being assessed before a decision can be made on the best security system to be installed to protect the collection effectively from risks of fire,



29. The security management of the Iraq National Museum installed by UNESCO in 1999 and 2000.

enable the museum of Baghdad to take up its rightful place among the other museums of the world.

vandalism, theft, etc. The museological programme for the permanent exhibitions will probably be reviewed and the design of the galleries will have to be readapted to emphasize the historical value of this unique and exceptional collection.

In this instance, the museum's human resources were more than an important component in the way it functioned. It was thanks to their dedication that most of the collections were saved. Committed to helping to re-establish a "normal situation", the staff needs training in many fields of museum studies. The eventual modernization and modification of equipment will require appropriate action to sustain training in the longer term.

The rehabilitation of the Iraq Museum and of its invaluable collections deserves urgent attention and is the responsibility of the entire international community. The appeal has already been received positively by professional organizations and prestigious cultural institutions, and this strong international collaboration will



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30. A large fortified city under the influence of the Parthian Empire and capital of the first Arab Kingdom, Hatra includes temples where Hellenistic and Roman architecture blend with Eastern decorative features.

# | The Destruction of the Iraq National Museum

by *Selma Al-Radi*

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## Emergency measures of protection

The Iraq Museum in Baghdad houses one of the greatest collections of antiquities from Iraq – almost all of which were found during archaeological excavations. Three weeks before the latest war began in Iraq in early March 2003, the staff of the Iraq Museum closed the galleries to the public and began the task of protecting the museum and its contents. All of the moveable objects on show in the galleries were taken down and hidden in the storerooms, or in air-raid shelters around Baghdad. The larger objects and statues were left in place, and foam rubber pads were placed in the area around them – this was to protect them in case they fell off their pedestals from the impact of a direct hit. Foam rubber pads were also placed in front of the Assyrian Reliefs, and on the floors of all the storerooms. The staff hoped that these would protect the objects if a direct hit toppled the metal shelves.

The collection of manuscripts and ancient scrolls was removed and placed in an air-raid shelter in western Baghdad. Archives were packed into boxes and scattered around Shiite

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neighbourhoods where they could be guarded by clerics.

The gold jewellery from the Royal Tombs of Ur and from the Royal Tombs of the Assyrian Queens in Nimrud (totalling some 7,360 pieces) had been deposited in the vaults of the Central Bank of Iraq before the Gulf War of 1991. It was never removed from there and was found safe when a team of Iraqi officials and representatives from the US Occupation Forces opened the vaults, but these vaults had unfortunately been flooded.

Discussions were held between the officials in charge of the museum as to whether they should further protect the steel doors of the storerooms with additional cement or brick walls – this was done for the Museum Library and all the books deposited there were saved. The curator's argument was that if the museum received a direct hit from an incendiary bomb and the storerooms caught fire, the firemen would be unable to reach them in time to put out the fire – so the storerooms were given no further protection. It was a calculated choice, but it turned out to be the wrong one on this occasion.

The Iraq Museum was looted over a period of days, not by one but probably two separate groups of thieves – the first was probably professional, the second, an unruly mob. Were the 'professionals' who came in with glass-cutters and keys (which they may have picked up from the curator's room – her safe had been broken into) commissioned to do so? Were they foreigners or were they local people simply taking advantage of the chaos and the situation to help themselves to objects from the museum? The mob was most



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31. Sumerian statue dating from around 2500 BC, stolen from the storerooms of the Iraq National Museum and returned by the Iraqi opposition.

certainly local – they were largely people who lived in the immediate neighbourhood of the museum, but whether the professional team was local is not known.

The US Army officially entered Baghdad on 9 April. Information on the subsequent timing of events was collected from discussions with the museum staff, and from Colonel Matthew Bogdanos (US Central Command) whose staff are now responsible for the safety of the museum.



### Timetable of events

8 April, Tuesday: The museum staff leave, Fedayeen, or members of a militia, take over the grounds of the museum and start shooting at US troops – the external walls of the museum are pitted with the impact of bullets. The staff tried to return to the museum but were unable to because of fighting in the area. There was also a sniper shooting from a second floor room in the museum.

9 April, Wednesday: The statue of Saddam is pulled down (watched by millions of television viewers worldwide), perhaps providing a perfect cover for a *heist*. Two ‘armoured personnel carriers’ were seen in the museum grounds by the local population who all seem to agree on that fact. A number of people went into the museum and stayed there ‘for two hours’, according to the general estimate. They came out carrying many boxes and then left (there is no confirmation for this story from other sources). They apparently went in through the small side door of the museum for which they had a key (this door was still open on 10 April). The back door was also open – someone had forgotten to lock it.

10 April, Thursday: Looting by the mob begins. Some people apparently went in through a small door which was open at the back of the museum. Later, the mob opened the small door near the main entrance and broke down the main door from the inside. Muhsin, the guard, tried to convince the American tank crew positioned nearby to come and protect the museum – they came once and drove off the looters but refused to remain, saying that ‘they had no orders to do so’. Muhsin tried to chase

away the mob, was frightened, left the museum and set off home.

11 April, Friday: Local mobs continue to loot the Museum. The glass doors leading to the administrative offices are broken down by the mob, who go through and start pillaging the office furniture. Tables and chairs, computers, and other office equipment are hauled away. The curator’s safe was professionally drilled and opened, the salaries of the staff for the next two months were taken, as was her personal money – she had left it in the safe for safe-keeping. The keys of the museum were also taken from her safe.



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32. Iraq National Museum’s means of protection for Hatra statues, which date from between the first century BC and the second century AD.



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A sharpshooter who had set up in a room on the second floor, fires at the US troops below through a small window – a rocket-propelled grenade was found there, and many spent cartridges. It is a strange place for a sharp shooter, safe and secure, but the view through a very narrow slit, is limited. Colonel Bogdanos' opinion was that he could have shot towards the other side of the street, just to create general mayhem.

12 April, Saturday: Mobs hit the museum again, taking the remaining chairs and tables, and smashing every office door with axes. Showcases in the galleries are smashed. All the cameras of Donny George, Research Director of the museum – his personal collection – are taken from his steel safe. He used them for museum purposes and thought they would be safer there than in his house. Filing cabinets are smashed.

The storerooms are ransacked by the mob; a third was only entered but left undamaged. Many objects are taken from these storerooms but the tally will not be known until the museum staff complete checking every object against the inventory. That will take many months as there are more than 170,000 objects with Iraq Museum (IM) numbers, as well as an immense collection for study purposes.

13 April, Sunday: The museum personnel return to work. The Director-General of Antiquities, Dr Jabber and Donny George find the keys to the safe in the grounds of the museum. The mob is still milling around but they manage to drive them off the grounds. The museum restorer again asks the US troops stationed nearby to protect the Museum – to no avail.

16 April, Wednesday: American tanks finally take up position in museum grounds. A few days later, two men come into the museum and return the Statue of the Assyrian King, Shalmaneser the Third, in three pieces, one of the Ubaid Reliefs and a few other items.

Local mobs looted the museum between 10 and 13 April – the guard Muhsin left on 10 April when the situation became too dangerous. During those three days, somewhere between 6,000–10,000 objects went missing from the museum. Among them are some of the most famous objects in the collection – including the Warka head and the Ba Sidqi statue. It was discovered afterwards that the whole collection of seals had been taken too – that meant another 4,800 objects were missing. A lot more had been broken in the general mayhem of the looting.

A steady trickle of returning objects has been taking place since Colonel Matthew Bogdanos declared a general amnesty for anyone who brings back an object. Therefore, at the time of publication, more than 2,500 objects have been returned, largely by people who live in the immediate neighbourhood. They come to the museum and say, 'I went in with the mob, and I took this to save it and here it is'. The Warka Vase was returned, cracked but virtually intact. It is possible that some of the other important objects may resurface someday.

### After the storm

The ensuing international outrage and press coverage over the lack of interest on the part of the US Forces to protect the cultural heritage of Iraq

has produced a black mark for the Occupation. The media-services of the U.S. Occupation Authorities have been understating the losses, while some US based journalists have gone as far as to say that there was some collusion between the thieves and the staff and/or even that the staff stole the objects. At the very least, they write that the losses have been overstated, and they all report that most of the stolen objects have been returned. One possible explanation for this is that when the vaults in the Central Bank were opened, the objects stored in them were declared 'found', as if they had been discovered, even though these objects were never on the 'lost' list. All the material in the vaults was placed there during the First Gulf War. The Ur and Nimrud gold treasures, for example, were never removed from the place. Everyone knew they were there, and as soon as there was an authority that could open the vaults, they were opened. All the objects were safe, though somewhat damp, and on 3 July, all this material was put on display in the museum for one day only. The contingent of US Marines on duty in the museum slept beside the objects overnight and remained there the whole time the exhibition was on.

### **The state of the Iraq Museum**

Looking back to the recent past, the deterioration of the Iraq Museum during the 12 years of sanctions has been extraordinary. The air conditioning system barely worked with any spare parts available. The interior of the building had not been painted in years. The office furniture was at least 20 years old and literally falling apart. The same can be said about everything in Iraq – from museums to buildings, to homes and streets – everything had deteriorated and was in need of

upkeep. The museum was understaffed, and mostly with young graduates lacking experience. Resources were minimal – computers, typewriters and office equipment were archaic when they existed. The entire museum was being run on a shoestring budget. The staff did the best they could with such limited means.

Knowing the task ahead, the staff of the Iraq Museum need to be better trained and current needs are huge in all fields, from strictly curatorial and research tasks to technical and maintenance activities. Once basic equipment requirements have been met, scholarships abroad and training programmes should be the next priority. Above all else, and to prevent any further damage, a new security system for the protection of the museum has to be installed.

# | From the Prevention Measures to the Fact-finding Mission

by McGuire Gibson

*McGuire Gibson is an archeologist and professor of Mesopotamia Archaeology at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. He was a member of the UNESCO team which visited Baghdad in May 2003 after the looting of the National Museum of Baghdad.*

The waging of a modern war in the birthplace of civilization should be unthinkable, but ancient Mesopotamia has been the scene of two major conflicts in 13 years, and in both there was significant damage to cultural heritage of primary importance. With its millennia of Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Islamic civilizations, Iraq ranks at the forefront of cultural tradition, affecting both Western and Eastern civilizations. Until the past year, however, most people probably did not realize that Iraq is Mesopotamia.

## Prevention measures

Media reports presented vividly the looting of the Iraq Museum in April 2003. The reaction to the images was an outpouring of concern and anger that the looting was allowed to take place, followed by many calls for remedial action. Equally disturbing, but not given as much media attention was the looting of the Mosul Museum, the looting and burning of the Iraq National Library and Archives and the Koran Library of the Awqaf, the looting of the Gallery of Fine Arts in Baghdad, and the destruction of libraries in universities around the country. Initial reports of the loss of the holdings of the Saddam Centre for Manuscripts, a

division of the State Organization of Antiquities and Heritage, brought great dismay to those who knew of its holdings. During the weeks following the end of the fighting, cultural institutions such as the Bait al-Hikma, the Iraqi Academy of Science, the Academy of Music, the Abbasid Palace, and the Ottoman Administrative centre (Sarai, Qushla) which had escaped the initial wave of looting, were also seriously vandalized.

Individual scholars, scholarly organizations, and UNESCO had foreseen problems for Iraqi cultural heritage in the event of war. Major scholarly organizations, such as the Archaeological Institute of America, the College Art Association and the American Schools of Oriental Research issued declarations on the importance of Iraqi heritage, as did scholarly bodies in Europe. As a result of a call by the Archaeological Institute of America to all archaeologists to collect and provide to the US military as many locations of ancient sites and monuments, I gave to the Pentagon in late January a list of 4,000 sites compiled at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Subsequently I sent coordinates of another thousand sites. The list of more than 100 standing monuments was compiled from various published sources as well as from notes sent to me by Dr Zainab Bahrani of Columbia University (New York). The archaeological sites had been located in surveys conducted by archaeologists, mainly from Chicago, since the 1930s. It was hoped that these sites, at least, would not be targeted. As far as I can determine, there was a good faith attempt by the military to avoid damaging sites and historic buildings. It should be stressed, however, that those 5,000 sites were only a small part of the hundreds of thousands of sites in Iraq, and that the coverage

of the surveys accounted for only about 15% of the entire country. The delivery of the locations of sites was done on a trip to Washington in which I was included in a delegation that spoke to the Pentagon and the State Department about the importance of Iraq as Mesopotamia and the potential dangers to museums, monuments, and sites.

On 21 March, I published an article in *Science*<sup>1</sup> detailing the damage that already had been done to Iraq's heritage in looting of nine of the regional museums in the uprisings at the end of the Gulf War of 1991. I also emphasized the even more drastic effect of the economic embargo, during which looting of sites had burgeoned to an industrial scale. I made specific reference to the imminent danger to the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad if there were a period of chaos during the hostilities that were breaking out at the time of publication. I also pointed out the vulnerability of the thousands of archaeological sites in the path of war. A proposed set of actions that should ideally take place after the war included the retention of the strong Antiquities Law that had prevented the growth of illegal antiquities trade up to the Gulf War, an assessment of damage to cultural property, and a long-term international programme of archaeological salvage under the direction of the State Organization of Antiquities.

### Assessing the war damage

Before the war began, numerous other scholars in the US and elsewhere warned of the danger to the museums and sites in Iraq. The international concern had been sharpened considerably by the catastrophe at the Iraq National Museum and the National Library and Archives. Initial media

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reports, as early as 10 April, showed looters in the museum's public galleries and indicated that they had not yet reached the second floor. On 12 April, junior antiquities personnel living in the vicinity of the museum were shown in the foreground while looters were still in the background within the museum's public halls. One woman was shown wailing that everything had gone. As it happened, this particular woman, who was identified in media reports as the museum curator, had in fact been assigned to another museum in the city for many months, and she did not know that over 8,000 items that had been on public display had been removed by a special group of antiquities employees in the weeks just before the war. The empty cases, some broken, appeared to her to have been emptied by looters. When pressed by reporters on how many objects were in the museum, one of the staff said 170,000. This number was widely reported as representing the artefacts stolen. Most scholars, including myself, refrained from giving a figure for losses since we could see in media reports some objects still on display in the public galleries and even in the storerooms. It was clear that no one could say what was missing without a detailed inventory of the collections. But given the fact that thieves were in the museum from 10 to 12 April, with unhindered access most of the time, a figure of 170,000 items was potentially realistic. Those who know the museum well realize that there are far more than 170,000 items in its storerooms. That figure was derived from the number of IM (Iraq Museum) numbers that have been assigned in the inventories up to 2003. Many IM numbers, however, include not just one artefact but several or even dozens of objects, with sub-numbers such as a, b, c, etc. There are also many artefacts in the 'Study

Collection' from archaeological excavations that are stored by site and by year under the field numbers assigned by the excavators, rather than being given IM numbers.

A first meeting was organized by UNESCO in Paris on 17 April to start the international cooperation. The second meeting, held at the British Museum on 29 April, included Dr Donny George, Director of Research of the museum and Dr John Curtis, Curator at the British Museum, who gave at this occasion first-hand accounts of the looting of the museum and the current situation in Baghdad. Here, we learned for certain of the number of storerooms that had been entered and began to have real information on major pieces that had been lost. On the good side, we also learned that the collection of the Saddam Centre for Manuscripts had been put in a bunker and was safe. But we also heard the first reports of the looting of archaeological sites that had begun with increased fervour on the day the war started.

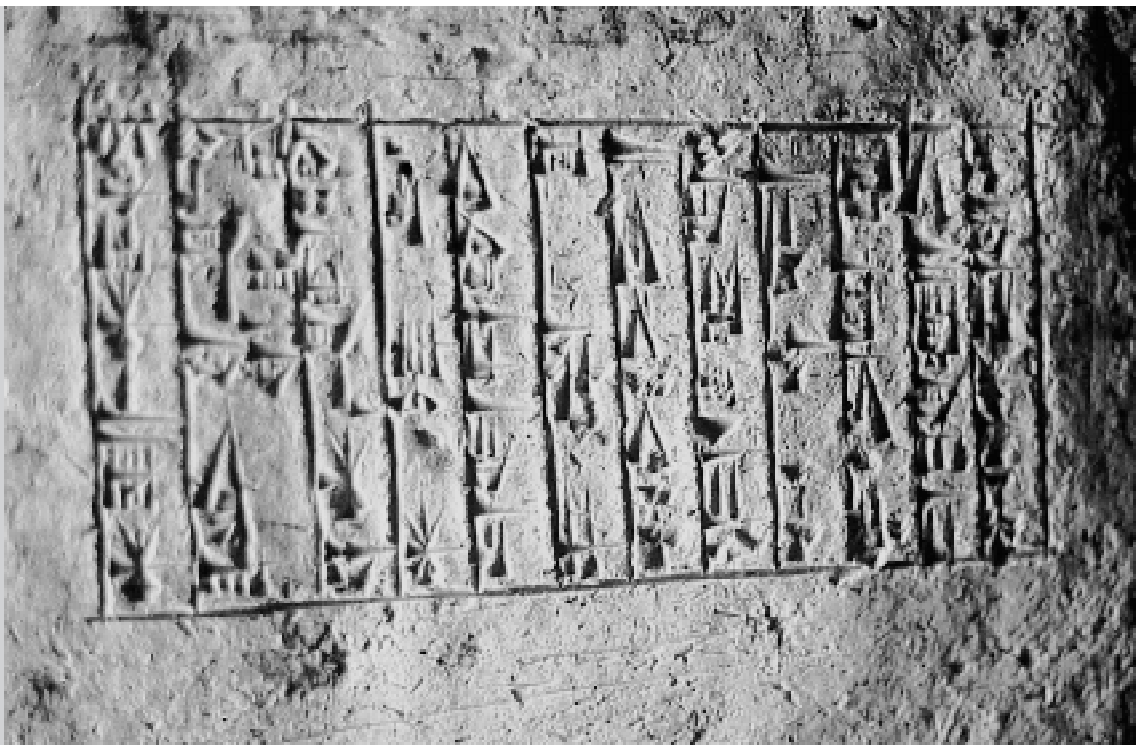
The first UNESCO fact-finding mission, led by the Assistant Director-General for Culture, Mounir Bouchenaki, arrived in Baghdad on 14 May and remained until 17 May. In the portion of the building complex devoted to the offices of the State Board of Antiquities, the looting and vandalism were extremely severe, with every door damaged and records strewn in the offices and hallways. The task of re-organizing the records of the organization will take years.

The team inspected in detail the museum's public galleries, conservation laboratories, and administrative offices. The visit to the storerooms that had been broken into by the looters showed

selectivity involved in the thefts in one room, while the general disorganization, smashing of pottery, and indiscriminate taking of objects from shelves in the other rooms pointed to less targeted, more casual looting. By this time, it was known that both sets of looters had missed the storeroom with the cuneiform tablet collection, which had been moved there a few years ago. They had also missed a

current administrators of the museum had no role in the looting, and that any inside information must have been several years out of date.

It was confirmed in the London meeting that the Nimrud treasures from the Assyrian queens' tombs and the Ur cemetery gold, as well as the Naram Sin copper head and other important

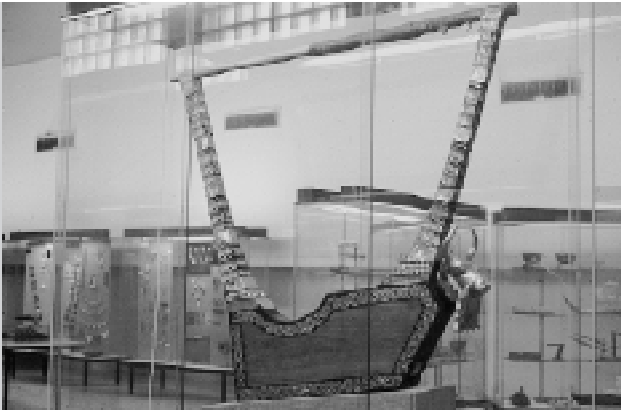


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33. Cuneiform tablets from the Sumerian period – object category which might have been stolen from the Iraq National Museum.

special secret storage facility which contained most of the artefacts that had been removed from the museum's public exhibitions during the month of March. The fact that the thieves seemed not to know about these special storerooms, as well as the bunker with the manuscripts, argues that the

items that were sometimes mentioned as lost in early media reports had not been in the Museum at all. They had been in the vaults of the Central Bank since just before the Gulf War of 1991. The problem with the items in the Central Bank, however, was that television reports showed mobs looting the bank. It was not known if anyone had succeeded in opening the vaults. By the time the UNESCO team arrived in Baghdad, American tanks were guarding the bank, but they had not taken up



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**34–35. Gold bull-headed Sumerian lyre from the royal cemetery of Ur, dating from 2450 BC, damaged during looting in the Iraq National Museum.**

position until several days after 16 April, the time when another unit had arrived finally to secure the museum. More than 15 metres of water stood in the vault area of the Central Bank, and until that was pumped out, no one would know for sure about the fate of the museum's artefacts. As it happened, after the water was removed and the vaults entered, the boxes were found intact and the objects were then removed to the museum for conservation and a one-day display on 3 July. They were then taken back to the bank vault.

### **The state of the archaeological sites**

Prior to and after the UNESCO fact-finding mission which I joined in Baghdad, I was in Iraq as part of a National Geographic group which was focusing on the damage to archaeological sites both north and south. In general, although the public display areas and storerooms of the Mosul Museum were looted, and parts of copper bands from Balawat were lost, the northern sites were far less endangered than those in the south. Widely



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reported damage and theft of relief slabs in the palace at Nimrud resulted in the stationing of a US military unit there. Nineveh, which experienced major damage to the Sennacherib palace, was not as closely guarded, although military patrols did visit the site by day.

In the south, the National Geographic group anticipated more damage, since antiquities guards from Umma had already come to Baghdad to report that on the day the war began, dozens of men arrived at the site, drove off the 13 guards, and began to loot the site. The National Geographic team visited Babylon, Nippur, Ur, Eridu, Larsa, Girsu, and several other sites. Babylon and Ur, although damaged in minor ways, are now completely occupied by US troops. The greatest damage noted was at Larsa, but there was also some new illegal digging at Girsu. Nippur had four new holes, but nothing major at that time. I paid the guards at Nippur and talked to the local sheikh, so I thought that we had secured the site from further damage. The essential findings of this National Geographic group were provided to UNESCO.

On 21 May, I was able to join Ambassador Piero Cordone, who is responsible for the Ministry



of Culture and thus of Antiquities, on a helicopter tour of a group of sites in the south of Iraq. I had furnished to his office coordinates of a group of 13 sites for which there were reports of looting, as well as sites that I assumed would be looted. On that helicopter flight, we touched down at Nippur to find signs of a few recently dug holes. Hovering over Umm al-Hafriyat, a site I excavated in 1977, we could see hundreds of holes but no one was digging at the time. Passing over Adab and Tell Schmid, we could see up to two hundred diggers in action. Upon landing at Umma, a major focus of recent work by the State Board of Antiquities, the soldiers drove away between 200 and 300 men, who returned as we left. In the distance, we could see men on Zabalam, and as we passed over Umm al-Aqarib, also excavated recently by the State Board of Antiquities, we saw men destroying various parts of the site. Over Girsu, we could see evidence of recent digging, but no one at work that day. Lagash, to the south, seemed untouched. To the southwest, Bad Tibira showed recent digging. Landing at Ur, we were met by US troops. Hovering over Larsa, we could confirm the findings of the National Geographic group which saw massive damage but no active digging. Over Uruk, we saw no sign of illegal digging. But when we arrived at Isin, we encountered between 200 and 300 men working. They came up smiling, thinking that no one cared that they were looting. They were told to leave, that digging was forbidden. I know from a newspaper account that they were back the next day. Of all the sites inspected, Adab, Umma, and Isin are the worst damaged, perhaps irreparably. Today these sites look like Swiss cheese. In addition to the more famous sites mentioned, I also saw four other smaller sites with damage from looters' holes. It must be anticipated that hundreds of sites,

especially in southern Iraq, have been recently looted or are in process of being dug illegally. But as the looting continues without effective measures to stop it, it will undoubtedly spread to other sites and other areas.

The second fact-finding mission of UNESCO visited Iraq in late June and early July, focusing on cultural property other than the Museum, including archaeological sites in the north and south, libraries, archives, art museums, and other cultural and educational institutions. At that time they reported that Nippur was not being looted on a large scale, with more than a hundred holes. The guards are unable to stop the thieves because they are outgunned and outnumbered.

### **The role of academic institutions**

This added dimension of threat to the cultural heritage of Iraq has met with a response by countries that have a long history of research in Iraq. Thus, American academics met in New York on 5 May to form the *American Academic Coordinating Committee for Iraqi Cultural Heritage*. A conference for a similar purpose was held in Bonn in late May and it was followed by one in Vienna in June.

Because of the international outcry over the looting of the Iraq National Museum, the US government in early May sent in a task force, composed of representatives from US Customs and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to investigate the looting of the Iraq Museum. On 11 July, Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, the head of the group, reported to the *Rencontres Assyriologiques Internationales* in London, that as of that date the

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number of items definitely known to have been stolen from the National Museum amounted to approximately 12,000. Included in that figure were the 40 items taken from the public galleries, ten of which have been recovered, notably the Warka Vase. Most important as a group of lost items were more than 4,800 cylinder seals, stolen from the underground storage vaults. Seals are among the most coveted of Mesopotamian artefacts. They can be exquisite, are small, can be easily hidden and smuggled, and fetch high prices. Approximately 3,000 objects had been recovered through voluntary return, through a 'no-questions-asked' amnesty, and through seizures in Iraq and elsewhere. Colonel Bogdanos also stated that the number of lost items will go up, since the inventory of the storerooms was not complete. But he also expected to recover more items.

In June, four archaeologists from the United Kingdom and the United States arrived in Baghdad to work with the personnel of the Iraq National Museum and the State Board of Antiquities to assist in the restoration of the museum. Their tasks were to assess the conservation needs and plan for the eventual arrival of curators, and to assist in the reconstruction of the institution itself. One of the British archaeologists was assigned to assess damage to archaeological sites in the south. The looting of the museum had become a political issue for some commentators in the United States and abroad, and in mid-June, there was a concerted campaign to minimize the losses, especially in the US and British media. Most damaging, but also most inaccurate, was a presentation by Edward Cruikshank on the BBC, who showed his level of expertise by handling a series of forgeries that had been returned to the

museum and declaring them high quality display items. Most of the media pieces cited the number of items taken from the public galleries (at that time said to be 33) and claimed that both foreign scholars and Iraqis had exaggerated the importance of the losses. These media figures ignored completely the losses from the storerooms that were already known at the time to be in the thousands. But even if the number of objects lost from the museum had been the only ones, these would still amount to a major cultural tragedy. No museum in the world would minimize the loss of even one major piece from public displays. The commentators who tried to sweep away the 'Museum Story' also failed to mention the tremendous disruption caused by the ransacking of the administrative offices and conservation laboratories of the museum and the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. Because of the disorganization of the records, research on the holdings of that museum will be crippled for years to come.

The general situation in Iraq is still uncertain, and the continuing and increasing destruction of archaeological sites is a symptom of the lack of control in the country. We hear of some efforts being made to protect 40 or so sites, but every day that passes means that hundreds of objects are ripped from their context and begin their journey onto the international market in illegal antiquities. Although they certainly have a monetary value on that market, the loss of context reduces greatly the value of an object as an artefact. The destruction of sites by illegal diggers will make it much more difficult for archaeologists to carry out research on them. Some sites, such as Isin and Adab, which are riddled, if subject to future

investigation, will entail laborious work to link islands of intact stratigraphy among the many holes. In some cases, archaeologists may decide that it is impossible to dig these sites at all.

### **Stop the traffic**

The loss for world heritage and for scholarship that results from the continuing looting far outstrips the losses from the Iraq National Museum. It is a catastrophe of enormous proportions. We are losing the 'Heartland of Cities,' the core sites of ancient Sumer. I fear that as people see that looting is not stopped, the practice will spread to other parts of the country, and even the north will be subjected to the same degree of destruction. The key to saving the sites of Iraq is the same as the reconstitution of the museums, namely the return of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage to at least its pre-embargo levels of professionalism and staffing. The administration of the State Board must be stabilized and given the authority to manage its personnel, plan programmes, and determine the priorities of funding. Guards must be re-hired or replaced and allowed to carry arms, which are sometimes denied them under the Occupation. The local representatives of the State Board, resident in cities and towns throughout the country, need to be backed up by the occupying authority until a government emerges. Crucial to the functioning of the local representatives is the supply of transport to make it possible for them to inspect the sites in their areas and report on looting.

There must then be immediate action taken to stop the illegal digging. Iraq has many thousands of sites, and it will be a very difficult task to safeguard them. But a start must be made, at least

in the area where the looting has been the worst. If one central site can be occupied by its Antiquities guards, and the guards are able to call upon the occupying authority for support, they should be able to monitor a number of other sites in the vicinity.

Another aspect of control is the halting of the newly created markets for antiquities in the small towns of Rifai, Fajr, Afak, and elsewhere in the countryside, as well as those in the cities. Recently, foreign journalists have reported to me that antiquities are freely available in shops in Baghdad, Nejef, Diwaniyah and Basra. A few arrests of such dealers by a reconstituted police force may have an effect here, but again the occupying authority must be willing to back up such actions.

The borders of Iraq are still essentially open, with searches only at one or two of the official crossings. Until recently, there was no search on the Iraqi side of the border, although American troops would inspect passports. The borders, however, are long and porous and during the embargo, one of the routes of the smugglers in pickup trucks was across the desert to Saudi Arabia. But there are verified reports of Kurdish buyers in the south of Iraq, whose own smuggling routes are of long standing. UNESCO has called upon Iraq's neighbouring countries to help halt the flow of antiquities, and some items have been confiscated in Jordan. Col. Bagdonos has reported the seizure of hundreds of Iraqi antiquities in countries outside the Near East, and this 'end consumer' part of the smuggling trade may be a more effective focus for police activity. The recovery of the Warka Vase, turned in to the US Customs officers in the Iraq Museum, may well have resulted



36. *Warka Vase* as recovered after looting.

from the fact that the piece was just too well known, too hot to handle and almost impossible to sell.

The numerous calls for the banning of trade in Iraqi antiquities are crucial. Recent decisive action by the British government has put a chill on the trade in that country. Switzerland, long a haven for trade in illegally exported antiquities, appears to be joining the United Kingdom. Japan is actively studying the kind of action it should take. Seizures of Iraqi artefacts in France and the close working relationship between Interpol and French and other

European authorities may be having an impact. But must be anticipated that the halting of trade in some countries will merely result in the shifting of the illegal trade elsewhere.

In the United States, which is probably the major consumer of illegal antiquities, including those from Iraq, there is legislation before both Houses of Congress. The bill in the House of Representatives (HR 2009) is superior to the one in the Senate.<sup>2</sup> Near Eastern specialists, some museums, and organizations like the Archaeological Institute of America, the Society for American Archaeology, the American Association for Research in Baghdad, Iraqi-American groups, and members of the general public, are working to see the adoption of the House of Representatives' version.

It is too late to save some of Iraq's cultural treasures and archaeological sites, but it is to be hoped that the example of Iraq will induce countries around the world to adopt and enforce the various conventions on cultural property.<sup>3</sup>

In the shorter term, numerous national groups have offered help to restore the museums in Iraq. In fact, the most urgent need where the museums are concerned is to coordinate effectively the multiple efforts. The National Museum alone needs numerous conservators, records managers, data-base experts, etc. for a project that will take years to complete. Some groups concerned with libraries and archives have sent fact-finding groups and have begun to plan joint action to aid such institutions. Universities and scholarly organizations are offering to replace books at universities, or to give access through microfilm, internet, etc. in future. There is a major effort sponsored by USAID

(The United States Agency for International Development) to reorganize and restructure the universities, including the archaeology departments, but there is room for other international programmes of cooperation, training, exchange, etc.

Other cultural entities in Iraq deserve attention. There are vigorous Iraqi communities in fine arts, traditional and Western music, drama, dance, design, folklore, crafts, and so on. Like most other sectors of Iraqi society, institutions and individuals in these fields were supported by the state. In the new Iraq, will there be state support for culture? If not, how will they be maintained? What entity or organization will keep these people and organizations alive until those questions are answered? These are issues that UNESCO can and should address.

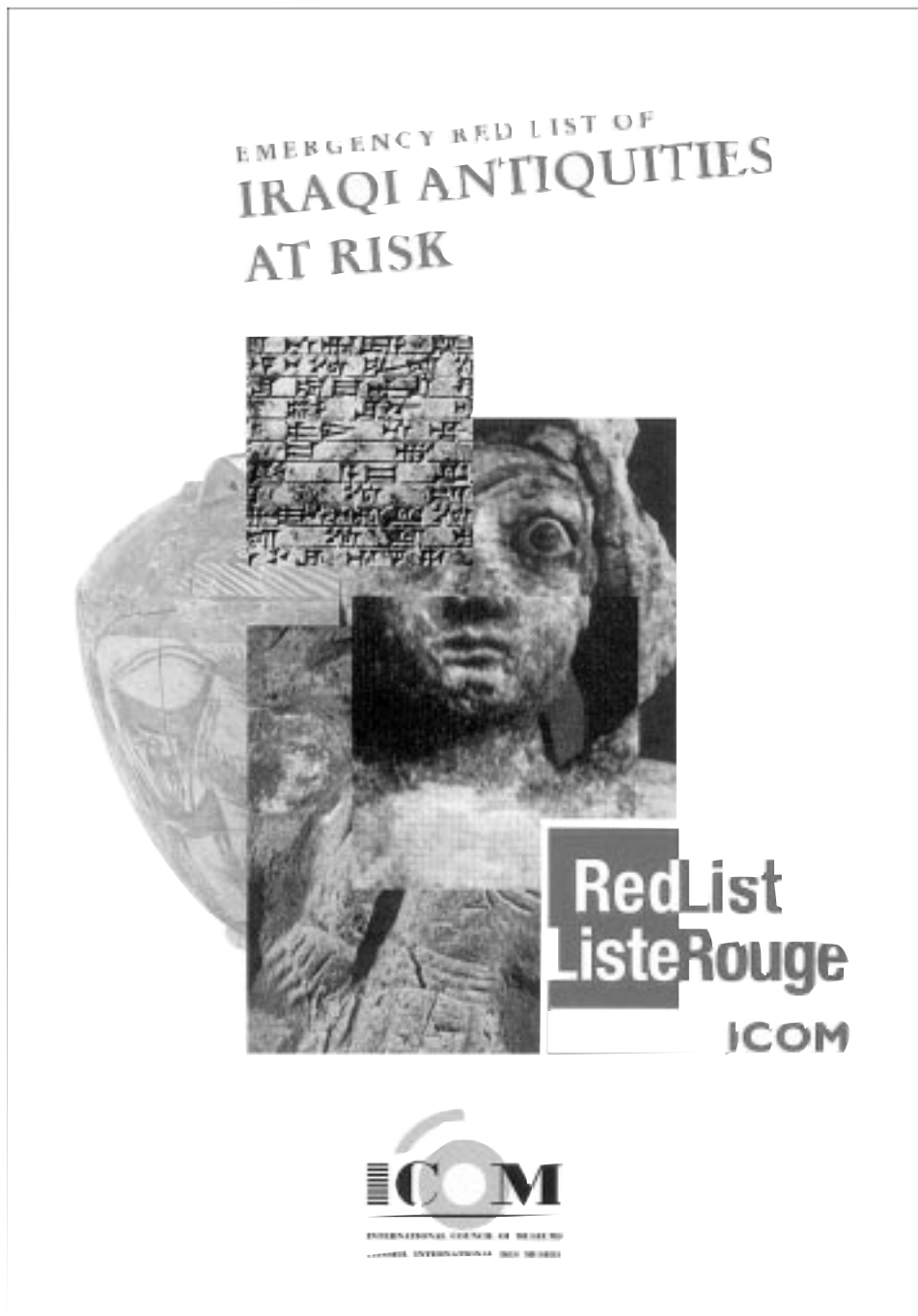
A third UNESCO meeting organized in Tokyo on 1 August took concrete steps to form an international committee to coordinate the flow of aid to the Iraq Museum and the State Board of Antiquities, in order to avoid duplication of effort and the wasting of resources. But that meeting also called for a increased focus on other cultural bodies, including libraries, archives, and organizations of intangible heritage, such as dance, music, and theatre. The international community, through the UN and particularly through UNESCO, clearly has a major role to play in the rescue and revitalization of the cultural heritage and cultural life of Iraq.

## | NOTES

1 Fate of Iraqi Archaeology. Policy Forum. *Science* 299: 1848–1849.

2 For further information on the U.S. response to International Cultural Property Protection, see <http://exchanges.state.gov/cultprop/>

3 The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict adopted at The Hague (Netherlands) in 1954, the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995).



37. The Red List describes the types of objects from Iraq which are particularly at risk and are likely to have been stolen and which are most favoured by the illegal antiquities market. The Red List is available on the Internet, see: <http://icom.museum/redlist/irak/en/index.html>

# |The Role of Non-governmental Organizations in International Emergency Action

by *Michaël Petzet and Jacques Perot*

*Dr Michaël Petzet is president of the German National Committee and since 1999, President of ICOMOS. From 1972 to 1974, he was director of the Lenbachhaus, the Art Museum of the City of Munich. For 25 years (1974–1999), in his position as Conservator General, Professor Petzet directed the Bavarian State Conservation Office. He is the author of numerous books and articles on French architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, art and monuments and sites in Bavaria and on general problems concerning monument conservation, and editor of several series of publications on conservation issues.*

*Jacques Perot is Curator General for heritage, palaeographer, archivist and alumnus at the Ecole nationale des Chartes (France). He has been president of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) since 1998, after having been successively appointed president of the French National Committee and the Consultative Committee. From 1992 to 1998, Jacques Perot was Director of the Army Museum in the Hotel National des Invalides. He is Director of the National Museums and Domains of the Châteaux of Compiègne and Blérancourt (since 1994).*

Sarajevo, Kabul, and Baghdad are three places, unfortunately among others, that have suffered serious damage to their heritage and museums as a result of war. Confronted with these catastrophes (which beg the question of whether or not they could have been avoided, and if so, how) international opinion has been mobilized for several weeks now thanks to the press, though information is often incomplete, and occasionally inaccurate. The international museum community has been profoundly moved by these disasters and is ready to demonstrate its solidarity actively. But what role can a non-governmental organization have in this effort, by comparison with intergovernmental organizations or individual



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governments? Solidarity appears as an obvious obligation to everyone, but how to demonstrate it effectively and meet the expectations of colleagues undergoing such hardship?

As regards Iraq, we must consider the consequences of a war that was led by a coalition of countries, some of which, and notably the most important, have not ratified *The Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict*, nor *a fortiori* its Second Protocol. We can but conclude that during and after the conflict the belligerents did not respect *volens nolens* the text or the nature of the convention. The most obvious result is the absence of security, and the looting of museums, that has fortunately been less serious than announced initially, thanks to the safeguarding measures taken by some Iraqi colleagues. A plague of illegal excavations has spread quickly with the obvious ensuing illicit trade in cultural property. What lessons can be learnt from these observations?

The first lesson concerns the Hague Convention of 1954, as well as its Second Protocol of 1999. It is in fact most unfortunate and difficult to accept that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are still countries that have not yet ratified either the convention or the Second Protocol that completes it. Among others, NGOs concerned with heritage should make concerted efforts, through their professional networks, to put pressure on governments that have not ratified the international conventions for the protection of cultural heritage. This also holds true for the conventions relating to the illicit trafficking of cultural material (UNESCO Convention of 1970 and UNIDROIT).

Providing for the security and protection of cultural sites is, in fact, an essential obligation for all of the belligerents. This should be the general rule and should be publicly acknowledged by all countries worldwide. Its non-observance in Iraq, as in ex-Yugoslavia, whatever the motive, led to major damage to humanity's heritage, some of which is irreparable.

The *International Committee of the Blue Shield* (ICBS) was created in 1996, at the initiative of the four non-governmental organizations that represent the principal fields of heritage (the International Council on Archives, International Council of Museums, International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions). It aims to provide an effective response to emergency situations and was created for obvious reasons. In the case of a natural catastrophe or armed conflict it makes no sense to be only concerned with a single field of heritage. The most urgent cases must be attended to first and it seemed essential to the four NGOs, soon joined by the intergovernmental organization, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), to be able to take emergency measures together. The mission of the ICBS is to gather and disseminate information and co-ordinate action in emergency situations, and to protect and safeguard cultural heritage, in compliance, notably, with The Hague Convention of 1954. This committee adopted as its emblem the Blue Shield envisaged by The Hague Convention, an emblem too seldom used but that can be seen on monuments or cultural sites in need of protection in a number of countries. Conceived by the NGOs, this committee should enable joint

emergency measures to be taken. It must be able to evaluate damage and contribute to the initial essential measures in favour of heritage at risk. With the long-term objective of serving as the *Red Cross* for heritage, the ICBS must have the ability to constitute, almost immediately, teams that are capable of emergency intervention with the necessary human and financial resources. For organizations that function solely with voluntary service, the task is not easy, but our duty is to go ahead and define the status of this new committee more clearly. At the same time, its links with the founding NGOs should not be overlooked. A financial framework must also be set up to ensure its capacity to intervene. It is particularly reassuring to note that a Dutch foundation, the *Prince Klaus Fund*, has already agreed to assist the Committee of the Blue Shield by setting up a fund for emergency operations.

Working in cooperation with NGOs, where the ICBS must find its vitality and expertise, the role of the Committee is nonetheless essential in the field of prevention. Little by little, following Belgium's example, national committees of Blue Shields are forming (up until now, in addition to Belgium, in the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Benin, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Great Britain) bringing together not only heritage professionals but also other professions involved in the preservation of heritage in emergency situations (firemen, police, etc.). It is obvious that, within this framework, each NGO that pursues its policy of preparation for risk, has a major role to play. In the long term, it should also be capable of acting individually according to its specific field of expertise. The creation of the ICBS does not, in

fact, bring to a halt each organization's duty of solidarity.

The disaster of the past months in Iraq, watched closely by a worldwide public, is just one of a succession of catastrophes in recent years. The deliberate destruction of heritage, for whatever reason, (political, religious or ethnic) must be formally banned. Moreover, in view of the collapse of all governmental institutions, the devastating consequences can in many cases at least be mitigated by the active help of non-governmental organizations. Besides intervening in conflict and war situations, NGOs intervene in a wide array of situations.

### **A wide range of threats and needs on heritage**

ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Site,<sup>1</sup> is not only an advisory body to UNESCO on issues related to the world cultural heritage, but in general it is committed to the preservation of our heritage worldwide, wherever monuments, sites or cultural landscapes are affected: "People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity" (Venice Charter, 1964). ICOMOS has a special committee on Risk Preparedness which is concerned with questions of how to prevent risks and how to limit the damage in case of accident.

For the conservation and preservation of individual monuments and sites ICOMOS works together with all kinds of initiatives and support,

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sometimes by adopting a positive critical stance towards the work of State Monument Services, which unfortunately do not exist in all countries. As a non-governmental organization, many members of which belong to the relevant state organizations, ICOMOS is aware that the responsibility of each state goes beyond its obligations in regard to cultural property listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, and of course comprises the whole range of cultural heritage, from individual monuments to entire cultural landscapes. Therefore, two years ago, ICOMOS launched an annual World Report on Monuments and Sites in Danger (Heritage at Risk) as a kind of Amnesty International for monuments and sites, aimed at highlighting the dangers facing heritage in various countries of the world and at promoting practical measures to avert or at least allay them.

The Report<sup>2</sup> is not only meant to be an appeal to the public, but ICOMOS hopes instead that, on the basis of this report and together with its National Committees, it will be possible to implement an increasing number of pilot projects managed by its experts. These projects should set standards for a professional approach and solution to technical problems, an example being the programme for the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Afghanistan under the guidance of UNESCO. In Kabul, ICOMOS worked in close cooperation with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture to restore the Babur Park and to preserve a historic quarter. Furthermore, ICOMOS prepared a conceptual framework to preserve the remains of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. In view of the disastrous situation in Iraq, ICOMOS is also hoping to be able to help thanks to various proposals made by its committees. In this context, the third UNESCO

Expert Meeting on the Safeguarding of the Iraqi Cultural Heritage (Tokyo, 1 August 2003) opened up new perspectives for possible action.<sup>3</sup> ICOMOS assistance in conservation activities in Iraq depends of course on the political situation and the general state of law and order. In any case it is vital that for possible initiatives in Iraq, ICOMOS should closely cooperate with its Iraqi colleagues from the antiquities department and the museums from the outset and adapt its endeavours to their needs. This will mean that it concentrates on technical problems and emergency measures, such as human resources specialized in restoration of archaeological objects, in stone conservation, in emergency excavations and the documentation of archaeological sites. Finally, the involvement of ICOMOS specialized staff, namely architects and engineers, could help to preserve seriously threatened historic buildings of any kind, including mud-brick architecture.

As a non-governmental organization, ICOMOS can identify monuments in danger from a strictly preservation-based perspective regardless of political considerations and can address the absolutely desperate situation facing the historic heritage in many countries of the world. The types of threat nowadays are very diverse. On the one hand, humanity's built historic heritage has always been threatened by natural disasters: by the consequences of earthquakes, typhoons, hurricanes, floods and fires, as well as by the effects of natural weathering and attack by insects or plants. On the other hand, wars and ethnic confrontations are still the cause of enormous losses. However, man-made disasters also include the consequences of worldwide pollution of the air, water and land such as the pollution-linked destruction of monuments

of metal and stone, which in some cases have deteriorated faster in recent decades than they had in previous centuries. Indeed, current threats to our cultural heritage are in many ways incomparable to those of earlier times now that we live in a world that has been undergoing faster and faster change since the last decades of the twentieth century. This rapid development, taking place under the pressures of world population growth and gradual industrialization, leads to ever-greater consumption of land – destroying not only archaeological evidence under the earth but entire historic cultural landscapes – and to faster and faster cycles of demolition and new construction with their concomitant burden on the environment. Finally, in the development of an increasingly globalized world that is dominated by the strongest economic forces, the tendency to make all aspects of life uniform represents an obvious risk factor for the historic heritage.

ICOMOS is concerned with monuments and sites in the broadest sense: not only individual monuments but also different types of immovable cultural property such as archaeological sites, historic areas and ensembles, cultural landscapes and various types of historic evidence from prehistory up to the modern movement of the twentieth century, as well as monument-related collections and archives. The threats and dangerous trends outlined above naturally have different effects in the various regions of the world and in some circumstances endanger only specific groups of monuments. For example, rock art and archaeological sites, evidence of the earliest human presence, are threatened worldwide by the construction of roads and dams and other unscrupulous plans. In many countries

archaeological sites continue to be plundered by illegal excavations, and the illicit trafficking of works of art represents a continuous loss of cultural heritage that from a conservation perspective should be preserved on its original site. Not only paintings, sculptures and the artefacts of spiritual sites are being decimated in many countries through theft, but monuments are actually being destroyed in order to obtain fragments for sale on the art market: temple complexes are being looted, sculptures decapitated, frescoes cut up. The wave of destruction is also affecting historic town centres as well as villages. Innumerable historic urban districts suffer from a careless, often totally unplanned renewal process and uncontrolled urban sprawl in their environs. In the face of the industrialization of agriculture, vernacular architecture is particularly endangered in many countries, disappearing altogether or sometimes “surviving” only in a few open-air museums. Construction methods using clay, wood and stone – materials that are obtainable locally (a very important factor in terms of future sustainable development) and which once defined entire cultural landscapes but now represent a mostly unprotected historic heritage that is not recorded in any monument list – are being lost forever. But also the built evidence of our industrial history, structures erected with erstwhile modern techniques and now themselves worthy of preservation, raises complex problems for the conservationist when the original use is no longer possible. Moreover, even architectural masterpieces of the modern movement of the twentieth century are threatened with demolition or disfigurement.

In view of the briefly mentioned abundance of possible emergency cases in all regions of the world, ICOMOS, as an advocate of the conservation

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of monuments and sites, will continue to draw attention to the impending dangers. In order to reach a wider public it should have a stronger presence in the media and not merely concentrate on publications and conferences. Furthermore, since its foundation in connection with the Venice Charter in 1964, ICOMOS has played a particular role in establishing international principles for the conservation and the restoration of monuments and sites. It has developed a number of universally acknowledged charters and guidelines for preservation, principles whose application can help to ward off dangers and avert mistakes in maintenance and rehabilitation. ICOMOS is also working towards continuously improved standards both for the training of conservationists and for use in daily conservation practice, and through its scientific committees it lends its support to the occasionally astonishing advances in certain fields such as archaeological prospection, historic building research, or the safeguarding of historic structures.

### Specific responses to specific threats

The International Council of Museums has long been concerned with major attacks on heritage. Beyond the destruction, regrettably definitive, of heritage artefacts and museum collections in the wake of armed conflicts, illicit trafficking of cultural material has developed, increased by individual looting or criminal operations by organized groups that take advantage of the turmoil. Objects that are stolen from public collections, and those that are removed from clandestine excavation sites, losing much of their significance and identity, fuel an unscrupulous market and impoverish a country's heritage, and thus humanity. In strict accordance

with its *Code of Professional Ethics*, ICOM has actively engaged itself in this battle.

Every continent has organized workshops, in association with UNESCO, on the illicit trafficking of cultural property, working jointly with museum and heritage professionals, as well as representatives from police and customs, ... improving training and creating essential networks of collaboration with other professions involved in this combat. On the international level, ICOM has signed two agreements on these matters, one with INTERPOL, the other with the World Customs Organization.

The publication of the *One Hundred Missing Objects* series reminds a wider audience, such as actors in the art market, of the nature of this affliction. The examples listed for Angkor, Africa, Latin America and Europe<sup>4</sup> led to the retrieval of works of art, and made museums, collectors and art dealers aware of the scope of this formidable problem, while at the same time reminding the public of legislation currently in force. On the other hand, in Afghanistan, where ICOM has re-established a national committee, it had to renounce publishing a '*One Hundred Missing Objects*' because of differences of opinion between experts. It is, however, planning to shoot a short film for the general public on the illicit trafficking of Afghan artefacts to neighbouring countries such as Pakistan.

For regions where certain heritage artefacts are at risk of disappearing completely from their country of origin, ICOM, in conjunction with the professionals concerned, has established *Red Lists*, which register the categories of objects that are in

danger of disappearing and which it is vital to abstain from acquiring. These *Red Lists* aim at inciting museums, art dealers and collectors to cease purchasing the artefacts which are the most affected by theft and looting. The list concerning the African continent was drawn up in Amsterdam in 1997, by African professionals as well as professionals from other regions of the world that conserve African collections (North America, Europe). Its effectiveness has already been proven. A list will soon be published on Latin American and pre-Colombian heritage.

Regarding Iraq, ICOM was able to establish a *Red list* within a matter of weeks, thanks to the organization, as from 7 May 2003, of a meeting of international experts as well as funding from the US Department of State's, *Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs*. This document, published in English, French, and Arabic, and available on the Net,<sup>5</sup> describes artefacts most favoured by the illegal antiquities market, so that these may be identified and detained. It warns that these objects are protected by legislation, banned from export and may under no circumstances be imported or put on sale. Contrary to the '*One Hundred Missing Objects*', the *Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk*, like the other *Red Lists*, does not provide a list of specific objects but it establishes a list of general categories. In the case of Iraq, without attempting to be exhaustive, it describes eleven categories of objects which are particularly at risk and susceptible of being stolen in Iraq.

Cooperation between various NGOs, which is explicitly supported by UNESCO, is not limited to the partners of the Blue Shield, ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA and ICA. It extends to the preservation of

monuments, sites and cultural landscapes, such as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the International Union for the Conservation of nature and natural resources (IUCN), the DOcumentation and COnservation of building sites and neighbourhoods of the MOdern MOvement (DOCOMOMO) and the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH). With the support of partners, some ongoing operations would be more effective and would encourage adaptability and pragmatism in the approaches of NGOs, particularly in emergency situations. Besides, the disaster in Iraq, which has affected the museums just as much as the closely linked archaeological sites and historic buildings, has shown the value of the already proven collaboration between ICOMOS and its partner organization, ICOM, closely linked with UNESCO's action, its network and coordination capabilities.

## | NOTES

1 ICOMOS has some 7000 members organized in 118 National Committees and 21 International Scientific Committees.

2 The report can be found on the Internet at:  
<http://www.international.icomos.org/risk/2002/working.htm>

3 See the article by Mounir Bouchenaki in this issue.

4 The ICOM series *One Hundred Missing Objects / Cent Objets Disparus* is bilingual in English and French. The following titles are available: *Looting in Angkor* (1993 and 1997), *Looting in Africa* (1997) and *Looting in Europe* (2002).

5 <http://icom.museum/redlist/irak/en/index.html>



# | Setting up the International Collaboration Framework

by Mounir Bouchenaki

*Mounir Bouchenaki obtained his doctorate in archaeology and ancient history at the University of Aix-en-Provence (France). He was director of fine arts, monuments and sites at the Algerian Ministry of Information and Culture before he joined UNESCO in 1982. He was director of the Division for Cultural Heritage and of the World Heritage Centre before being appointed Assistant Director-General for Culture in 2000. The same year, he received the ICCROM prize in recognition of his work in the field of cultural heritage. His knowledge of the field, and his experience and widely recognized expertise in conducting cultural heritage safeguarding programmes in conflict situations have been key factors in the organization of UNESCO's prompt response to the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq.*

In the last months, and since the first converging reports of damage to cultural heritage, UNESCO has focused its work on the coordination of international efforts to safeguard Iraq's cultural heritage and on the assessment and reporting by experts of the current state of Iraqi cultural heritage.

All wars, with their turmoil, maiming and killing, wantonly destroy the soul and disfigure the memory of what constitutes a people's very identity, in other words its culture. In Iraq, as a result of 13 years of sanctions and the chaos that followed the recent armed conflict, 8,000 years of human history now hang in the balance. Arsonists have burnt libraries and archives, looters have plundered historic buildings and cultural institutions and items of unique value have disappeared from museums and archaeological sites. UNESCO, with the help of the international community, intends to restore the Iraqi heritage as much in its physical as in its symbolic dimension.



Well before the war broke out, UNESCO already took a number of steps to ensure that the various parties involved were aware of the terms of the 1954 Hague Convention and its two additional protocols relating to the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict. The Director-General of UNESCO accordingly alerted the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the US Department of State and made available a detailed map of the positions of Iraqi archaeological sites and museums. UNESCO also invited INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization and the International Confederation of Art Dealers to ensure compliance with the 1970 Convention relating to the illicit transfer of ownership of cultural property.

UNESCO's response to the looting committed in the National Archaeological Museum of Baghdad, was prompt. The Director-General, Koichiro Matsuura, contacted the American and British authorities and asked them to take immediate measures of protection and surveillance of Iraqi archaeological sites and cultural institutions. In his letter of 11 April 2003 addressed to the American authorities, the Director-General emphasized the urgent need to preserve collections and a heritage considered to be one of the richest in the world. He particularly insisted on the need to provide military protection for the Archaeological Museum of Baghdad and the Mosul Museum. The same request was conveyed to the British authorities concerning in particular the Basra region. In order to prevent the illicit export of Iraqi cultural goods, the Director-General also entered into contact with the authorities of the countries bordering Iraq and international police and customs officials to ensure compliance with the

1970 UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*. He again requested INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization, the International Confederation of Art and Antiquities Dealer Associations (CINOA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the principal actors of the art market to join forces with UNESCO in a 'comprehensive mobilization so that stolen objects should not find their way to acquirers'.

Then, the first task was to ascertain the extent of the damage. To this effect three meetings that brought together international experts on the cultural heritage of Iraq were organized on 17 April 2003 in Paris, 29 April 2003 in London, and 1 August 2003 in Tokyo. Based on the findings of the above meetings and two missions in Iraq on 15 to 20 May 2003 and 27 June to 6 July 2003, restoration projects were formulated. Two of these projects are currently being implemented – one of them aims to ensure the reopening of the Iraq National Museum in the best conditions possible – and contacts with potential donors for the other projects are in progress.

#### **Assessment and reporting for emergency measures recommendations and action plan**

The first expert meeting was organized on 17 April 2003 at UNESCO headquarters. It had the following 3 objectives: (i) to coordinate the international scientific network of experts on Iraqi cultural heritage; (ii) to formulate guidelines for a consolidated strategy in the field of post-conflict intervention and rehabilitation of the cultural



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38. Exterior view of Bayt al-Hikma, founded during the Abbasid period and former site of the Iraqi parliament, damaged by fire in 2003.

heritage of Iraq; (iii) to devise an emergency safeguarding plan. Some 30 experts issued emergency recommendations that have since then guided the international action: 1) that all museums, libraries, archives, monuments and sites in Iraq be guarded and secured immediately by the forces in place; 2) that an immediate prohibition be placed on the export of all antiques, antiquities, works of art, books and archives from Iraq; 3) that an immediate ban be placed on the international trade in objects of Iraqi cultural heritage; 4) that a call be made for the voluntary and immediate return of cultural objects stolen or illicitly exported from Iraq; 5) that there be an immediate fact-finding mission under UNESCO coordination to assess the extent of damage and loss to cultural property in Iraq; 6) that there be the facilitation of international efforts in assisting cultural institutions in Iraq. At the same time, the matter of a fact-finding mission to Iraq was also discussed by UNESCO with the US Envoy, Ms Bonnie Magnus-Gardiner, while the objectives of such a mission were addressed at the expert meeting.

A second expert meeting was held at the British Museum in London jointly with UNESCO on 29 April 2003. It followed up *inter alia* the discussion on items 2 and 3 of the experts' recommendations made at the Paris meeting. The directors of the world's major museums who had been invited to attend placed the topic of emergency measures for the Baghdad Museum at the top of the agenda. Moreover, the experts convened at the meetings recommended the urgent dispatching of an assessment mission to Baghdad, under UNESCO's coordination.

UNESCO also made contact with INTERPOL Headquarters in Lyon (France). A meeting, held on 5 and 6 May 2003 and attended by about 70 participants from among experts, dealers, representatives of museums and customs agents, focused on Iraqi stolen property and ways to recover it. It emphasized the need for worldwide cooperation in tracking down stolen cultural property and the importance to have synchronized and interlinked databases related to stolen objects. It made plain the urgent need to set-up a database of Iraqi stolen cultural property to be developed in cooperation with INTERPOL.

At the end of April, contact was made with the *Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance* (ORHA) in Iraq in order to work out the details of the proposed mission which should be multidisciplinary, composed of archaeologists and specialists in historic buildings and monuments, museum collections and archives. The first expert mission took place in mid-May 2003 with a group of international experts designated by the Director-General of UNESCO: Niel MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, Ken Matsumoto, Professor at

the Kokushikan University of Tokyo and Chief of the Japanese archaeological mission to Kish, M. John Russel, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Arts (Boston) and chief of the former archaeological mission to Nineveh and Roberto Parapetti, Director of the Italo-Iraqi Centre for the conservation of historical monuments. Two experts subsequently contributed to UNESCO's assessment report: Selma Al Radi, Professor at New York University and former head of the Iraqi Museum and MacGuire Gibson, Professor at the University of Chicago and President of the American Association of Archaeology in Iraq.

The mission carried out a preliminary assessment of the extent of damage and loss to cultural property in Iraq and, in particular, the Iraqi Museum, the Baghdad National Library, Bayt al Hikma and the Abbasid Palace, and drafted a preliminary report on the state of Iraqi cultural heritage in Baghdad. The mission focused on questions related to the theft of cultural objects, the preparation of an inventory for the Iraqi Museum and the fine-tuning of an action plan aimed at restoring the principal cultural institutions of the city. The immediate measures identified aimed in particular at enabling the employees of the museums to resume their activities.

In the Iraqi National Museum, the mission had the opportunity to assess extensively the damage and establish a list of priority actions in coordination with the Director of the Museum, Ms Nawala Mutawalli, the Director of Research, Mr Donny George and the Director-General of the Iraqi Antiquities Department, Mr Jaber Khalil and under the supervision of Ambassador Piero Cordone, Advisor for Culture appointed by the Coalition

Provisional Authority. The experts visited Bayt al Hikma, a cultural institution founded during the Abbasid period which hosted the first Parliament. All equipment had disappeared and the main room of the Parliament had been damaged by fire. Close to Bayt al Hikma, the Abbasid Palace, one of the unique buildings of the city with some parts dating back to the ninth century, had been damaged by looters. The mission also visited the buildings of the Regional Centre for Conservation of Cultural Heritage, the Museum of Fine Arts – which had been entirely looted – and the Museum of Musical Instruments.

A second UNESCO expert mission visited Iraq from 28 June to 6 July 2003. As far as the conditions of security would allow, the mission subsequently visited historic buildings, archives, libraries and archaeological sites in the North (Mossul, Nineveh, Erbil, Hatra and Ashur) and South of the country (Babylon, Kish, Isin, Nippur, Ur, Uruk and Basra). A larger number of experts took part in the mission and ensured high-profile international representation: Prof. Shigeo Aoki, Director, Environmental Scientist, Tokyo National Research Institute of Cultural Property (Japan), Dr. J-M. Arnoult, Director, Bibliothèques Nationales de France (France); Prof. Ken Matsumoto, Director, Archaeological mission to Kish, Kokushikan University (Japan); Prof. I. Thuesen, Archaeologist, Director, Carsten Niebuhr Institute for Near Eastern Studies (Denmark), Dr. M. van Ess, Archaeologist, Director, Archaeological Mission to Uruk, German Archaeological Institute (Germany), Prof. Roberta Venco, Archaeologist, Director, Archaeological mission to Hatra, University of Turin (Italy), Mr. Karl-Heinz Kind, Representative of INTERPOL and Arch. Usam Ghaidan, Architect, UNESCO Focal

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Point for Culture (Holland/Iraq). During the mission the Iraqi authorities were represented by Dr Muyad S. Damereji for the archaeology domain, and by Wishyar Muhammad for libraries and early archives.

The mission aimed mainly at completing the global assessment of the state of conservation of major archaeological sites in the country and the state of conservation of museums and cultural institutions outside Baghdad, and accordingly prepared a prioritized plan of action including proposals for rescue interventions.

The team has made a detailed assessment of the state of the Iraqi Museum Laboratories, its equipment and storage with Ms Buthaind Musalim Abdul Hassain, Head of the Restoration Section at the Iraqi Museum. All fields of analysis were covered: chemistry, physics and geology laboratories, fumigation room, clay tablet treatment and replica manufacturing rooms, metal and ceramics restoration laboratory, chemicals store room, organic objects restoration laboratory and photography room.

### Archaeological sites

Despite serious security problems the team of UNESCO experts visited some of the best-known archaeological areas, driving more than 3,800 km from Baghdad to Basra to Erbil and Mosul. The assessment pointed to four types of 'violations' of archaeological sites in Iraq as a result of the events of wars, decades of sanctions and the collapse of infrastructures: looting and illicit digging, military bases, accelerated decay and questionable reconstruction work.

Looting in particular has been taking place in the central Southern region of Iraq, from Hilla in the North to Nasiriyah in the South. Around 20 important or named sites are documented to have been or are in the process of being looted. As observed at Nippur, looting may soon develop on a day-to-day basis. There are reports of hundreds more looters at sites such as Isin. The same site may be considered 50% lost and the same situation is reported in Adab (modern Bismaya). Medium to large sites and cemeteries seem to be targeted for looting, and the looting technique appears similar. No assessment has been provided yet for the thousand smaller tells existing in Iraq. Most digging is done with shovels and the team of UNESCO experts did not observe any use of heavy machinery such as bulldozers.

Several sites have been used before and after the war for military bases and posts (i.e. Ur, Babylon and Kish). On the one hand, it can be said that the presence of military bases may have protected the site against looting, but army related activities may have caused damage as well (i.e. digging for the set up of a position; traffic with heavy armoured vehicles, helicopters causing vibrations, etc.). Another cause of damage is the lack of briefing to soldiers on Iraqi cultural heritage identification and urgent conservation issues.

Ur for instance, the modern Tell Muqayyar located in the Governorate of Dhi Qar, is situated in the middle of a large military camp and airfield. The mission was not able to assess its state of preservation, but was worried about the potential risks affecting the site within the military camp. Ur is famous for its best-preserved ziqqurrat, which needed some maintenance even before the recent

armed conflict. The area of private houses on the other hand, at first preserved up to a height of two metres, was in a very bad state and urgently needed consolidation work.

In Uruk, the modern Warka, which is one of the largest tells in the region located in the Governorate of Muthanna, the excavations have only exposed approximate 4% of the whole area while the rest is untouched. The site is well protected by a guard paid by the German expedition working on the site and the tribe of the at-Tobi living on it next to the expedition house. No looting was visible or reported. Part of the excavated structures however suffer severely from erosion and should be consolidated as soon as possible. The White Temple and the Platform it rests on is in at an advanced stage of decay due to long exposure to extreme weather conditions.

Babylon is the best-known and most famous ancient city of Iraq. The central part of the site has been turned into a military camp. The expert team could not detect any damage to the site that could be considered war-related. However, the use of the area for a military base might have caused some problems in areas that the team did not visit. The indirect war-related problem is the controversial reconstruction of the Neo-Babylonian palace on top of the ruins/foundations of the real buildings. For this reason the site has not been accepted for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Across the river on a huge artificial mound, Saddam Hussein built a monumental palace overlooking the site, but still within the city walls. The looting of the house and administrative units of the Department of Antiquities seems to be the most pressing problem in Babylon. All

inventories, archives and electrical installations have gone. The museum had also been looted except for a large model of the site, but as the stolen objects were casts, the damage could not be considered serious. The CPA had already contracted a local constructor in order to have the damage in the small museum repaired. The site has been opened for tourism for 'foreign' soldiers in Iraq. It was unclear whether or not the site was accessible to ordinary Iraqi people.



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39. This sculpted head from Khorsabad, fortunately recovered by the Iraqi authorities, had been looted from a site and cut into pieces for its illicit export.

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Hatra, the first Iraqi site inscribed on the UNESCO World heritage List (1985) did not show any sign of looting. A sculptured head fallen from a wall had apparently been stolen, but this event could not immediately be related to any war event. The site has a problem similar to the Babylon situation, as it has been heavily restored with dressed stones bearing the monogram of Saddam Hussein. A small team of five US soldiers is currently patrolling the site and is based in the Shahiru Temple causing damage to the area. Only authorized vehicles are allowed to accede to the *themenos*: a gate with a lock blocks the entrance and the post is guarded. Within the buildings in the *themenos*, a female stone head from the decoration of the Small Iwan in the Great Iwan Complex has disappeared, and a part of the right side of the bas-relief in the Allat Temple has been broken. Other damage could have been caused during the period of the embargo when the entrances to some rooms of the Complex of great Iwans were blocked up by stone walls. Surface degradation has been observed on the bas-relief of the Southern Iwan of the Allat Temple. There is an urgent need for conservation.

### Historic buildings

The historic buildings of Iraq belong to two periods, late Abbasid and Ottoman. The former includes mosques, palaces, madrasahs (educational institutes), khans (caravanserais) and mausoleums. The team visited a number of historic buildings in Baghdad, Basra, Mossul and Erbil.

In Basra, the town was subjected to repeated bombardments during the Iraq-Iran war. Damage after the recent war was also extensive. The main libraries were completely burnt down. A fine

building from the 'British Raj' period, built along the river-bank during the 1930s and belonging to Basra University has been totally plundered and reduced to ruins. Several multi-storey residential buildings situated along the Ashar creek are in a poor state of repair due to neglect and lack of maintenance. These are brick buildings with covered internal courtyards and projecting wooden balconies clad with delicate wooden lace-work (*shanasheel*).

In the north, the team visited Mosul among other cities. The most important development of the city took place in the first half of the thirteenth century. Its leaning minaret belonging to al-Nuri mosque that was built in 1172, is of special interest. The School of Traditional Music, an important institute, has been totally plundered and the teaching programmes have come to a complete standstill. The National Heritage Centre provided training in traditional crafts for 120 boys and girls, but fortunately damage caused to it by looters is relatively minor. UNESCO has allocated the sum of \$25,000 to be used as seed money for a revitalization project. This initiative received the support of the Coalition Provisional Authority.

### Archives and libraries

Regarding Archives and libraries, the state of the following institutions has been assessed: in Baghdad, the National Library, National Archives, Iraqi Centre for manuscripts, Awqaf Library and Mustansiriya University Library; in Basra: the Central Public Library, Central University Library and Islamic Library; and in Mosul: the Public Central Library, Central University Library and Library of the Museum.



The Centre for Manuscripts in Baghdad, which has gathered a main part of Iraqi patrimony, is safe: the building is in a good state and has not been looted. In recent years, the collection has been increased with a great number of small collections coming from different parts of the country; it now has about 47,000 volumes. During the months before the conflict, the collection was transferred into a safe place in a secret shelter. The return and reinstallation of the collection in the previous premises is planned as soon as security has been restored in Baghdad. The laboratory and restoration unit (situated in a small house close to the Centre) have been completely looted: there are only empty rooms left.

The National Library in Baghdad has been severely damaged: the building (built in 1977) was burnt and looted twice, on 14 April and one week later. The ground floor with the main reading room has been sacked: catalogue cards scattered on the floor and traces of attempts to set fire to open access books in several places. The binding unit no longer exists. The first, visual evidence is that the fire was well organized: books were gathered in some places and set alight with combustible agent so that they were entirely consumed together with the metallic shelves; this meant that temperatures were high enough to destroy the books and the structure of the building itself. The building was not guarded by the CPA. Before the war, it was already difficult to know the exact number of volumes, the total varying according to the method used to describe periodicals (number of titles or number of issues). Nevertheless, it seems that, due to the potential length of the shelves in metres, the number of volumes usually lying on the floor of the stores, the saturation of the stores and the negligent management of the library, a figure of 1,200,000

volumes destroyed is a credible figure. Between the first and second fires (about one week), employees from the library and volunteers moved part of the collections to a Shiite Mosque in the former Saddam City and into a Tourist Board building. At present, the collections are stored on three different sites: about 700,000 volumes (rough estimation; the number of linear metres is not known) are still in the National Library; about 300,000 volumes are stored in the Tawra Mosque and about 200,000 volumes seem to have been stored in a Tourist Board building, in Baghdad. Due to the embargo, only a small number of titles were recorded. No national bibliography was published. All the inventories are said to have been destroyed by fire or vandalism. Some of the catalogue cards are still in the drawers but many of the cards are lying scattered on the floor. These cards should be gathered together, along with documents dispersed in the building, cleaned cautiously and placed in baskets pending more favourable circumstances.

In Mosul, the Central University Library, well located on the campus, was vandalized and looted (furniture, equipment and books), but not set alight. The building did not suffer in its structures as in Baghdad and in Basra. Thanks to appeals from the religious authorities to return the stolen books, only 30% of the books may have been lost. The library has been restored and it is now open again thanks to help and funds from the US forces.

### **Report and recommendations of the expert mission**

At the end of the mission, the UNESCO expert team reported on the results of the mission to



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Ambassador Piero Cordone, Coalition Provisional Authority Coordinator for Cultural Heritage, and other representatives of the CPA. It was mentioned that military presence on sites was a serious problem since the army units had not been informed of the nature and complexity of the cultural landscape they were working in. Ambassador Cordone gave a list of sites to be protected/guarded. The list mentioned more than 100 important sites to be protected, some 20 of which were a priority since looting had already occurred.

Academic institutions also played an important role in the assessment of the situation. Dr Helen McDonald from the University of Cambridge was sent by the British Museum as coordinator of archaeological activities. She was posted in Babylon two weeks before the UNESCO visit to the site in order to assist in the rehabilitation of this site and also in the protection of archaeological sites in the South by the British authorities. During a meeting with the UNESCO expert team, she expressed very deep concern for the situation. She was almost prevented from travelling in the countryside due to security problems and a lack of military presence. She also found her tasks almost impossible to achieve alone and without means, and asked for strong international and coordinated action in this regard. At the same time, Professor Gibson of the University of Chicago was trying to locate the looting by satellite images.

The list of recommendations devised by the expert team is long and according to an order of priorities, will concentrate, for the Iraqi Museum, on establishing of a rehabilitation plan and on

identifying proper environmental conditions in the display areas and equipment required to rehabilitate the laboratories. Training the personnel is also a priority. Short-term action for the archaeological sites will address, as top priorities, the halting of the looting of sites in Southern Iraq and the Diyala with the help of the CPA, and the establishment of a salvage excavation campaign to rescue the remains of the sites that have been severely damaged by looting. Medium- and long-term measures will aim at (a) facilitating and encouraging archaeological expeditions as soon as the infrastructure of the Department of Antiquities has been re-established, (b) preparing and coordinating an archaeological salvage project for the valley to be flooded in the region around Assur, and (c) starting conservation work on some major sites with excavated mud brick architecture, i.e. the White Temple at Uruk.

As far as the libraries and archives are concerned, the preliminary general recommendations were (a) to find safe and secure buildings to gather and host the dispersed collections, (b) to prepare conservation programmes, (c) to improve environmental conditions of temporary storage and (d) encourage personnel to resume work.

However, success in the implementation of such recommendations can only be ensured by the development of long-term internationally coordinated projects for research and protection, and even tourism, for most of the archaeological sites and monuments of Iraq. This is the reason why UNESCO has worked in parallel on the coordination of international efforts.

### Coordination of international efforts

Besides the sending of expert missions, and due to its role of international coordinator of activities for the rehabilitation of the Iraqi heritage, UNESCO organized on 16 July in Paris a coordination meeting of all its member states aiming at channelling the offers of assistance towards the priority needs and scheduling them within a feasible timeframe. The Director-General consequently proposed the opening of a UNESCO Office in Iraq to ensure coordination between UNESCO, the Coalition Provisional Authority, and the authorities in charge of Iraqi cultural heritage, Arch. Usam Ghaidan has been appointed as liaison expert.

In mid-August, a third UNESCO Experts' Meeting on the Safeguarding of Iraqi Cultural Heritage took place in Tokyo (31 July–2 August 2003), jointly organized by UNESCO and the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, to discuss the results of the two UNESCO assessment missions to Iraq, international aid and an international coordination mechanism to implement the overall strategy for rehabilitating the cultural heritage in the country, and, lastly, to discuss issues related to the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad. Among the measures to be taken, the experts requested the Director-General of UNESCO to establish an International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Iraq under the auspices of the future Government of Iraq and UNESCO. This was based on experience acquired by UNESCO in Cambodia, Bosnia and, most recently, Afghanistan. It was also proposed to hold the first ICC Meeting on Iraq in the first week of December at Headquarters in Paris.

Key issues discussed during the meeting on the Iraqi National Museum focused on short and long-term action, on equipping and opening laboratories in the museum, starting restoration of seriously damaged artefacts and launching training programmes for the museum employees. A major step was achieved in avoiding the overlap between Japan/Italy and UK aid, both of which aimed at providing equipment to the National Museum.

In the meantime, UNESCO launched two fund-raising campaigns: one addressed to the private industries, foundations and institutions around the world and one specifically targeting private donors in Switzerland.

### Coordination with other UN agencies

On 23 May 2003, the Security Council voted unanimously in favour of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483 regarding the vital role that the United Nations should play in humanitarian relief, the reconstruction of Iraq and the restoration and establishment of national and local institutions for representative governance. The Director General of UNESCO welcomed the adoption of the Resolution and in particular its paragraph 7 which relates to the specific question of illicit trafficking in cultural property stolen in Iraq and calls for UNESCO's action in this field.<sup>1</sup> The Director-General stressed that this paragraph 'constitutes a significant advance, in so far as it makes it incumbent on all Member States to take all possible measures to facilitate the safe return of stolen cultural property and prohibits trade in or transfer of such property. This paragraph, by extending to all Member States of the United Nations the obligations contained in the 1970

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Convention, to which they are not all parties, and by entrusting the implementation of this decision to UNESCO, facilitates our Organization's action in this field. I also see this as an acknowledgement of our efforts'. He further declared 'Within the United Nations system, UNESCO stands ready to assume fully the special responsibilities assigned to it by its mandate, particularly in the fields of education and culture'.

As an illustration of that early commitment to play an active role in the reconstruction, UNESCO is closely involved in the inter-agency evaluation process, led by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and established in order to meet sectoral reconstruction needs in Iraq. UNESCO participated in the working meeting of the UNDG/World Bank drafting group for the

finalization of the *Iraq Needs Assessment*, which was held in Dubai in 21–24 September 2003 with a view to preparing the agenda of the UNDG/WB donors' meeting (Madrid, 23–24 October 2003). The World Bank, in charge of coordinating the report for the education sector, has entrusted UNESCO with the evaluation of needs in secondary, technical, vocational and higher education. In order to devise a coordinated strategy of assistance to the media, UNESCO, at the request of UNDG, has also undertaken an evaluation of Iraq's needs for the development of media and freedom of the press. But, for Koichiro Matsuura, the Director-General of UNESCO, culture is an essential underpinning of democracy and national identity, and should be taken into account in the elaboration of emergency humanitarian assistance policies set up by the international community for countries in post-conflict situations, in the same way as security, education or health measures. Culture, and cultural heritage – one of its most powerful expressions – is an essential factor in the reconstruction of a country. If there might be one lesson at least that

40–41. Looting in the Iraq National Museum, the head of the guardian lion (60cm-tall) of the main temple at Tell Harmal (Old Babylonian, 1800 BC) was broken and its body smashed.



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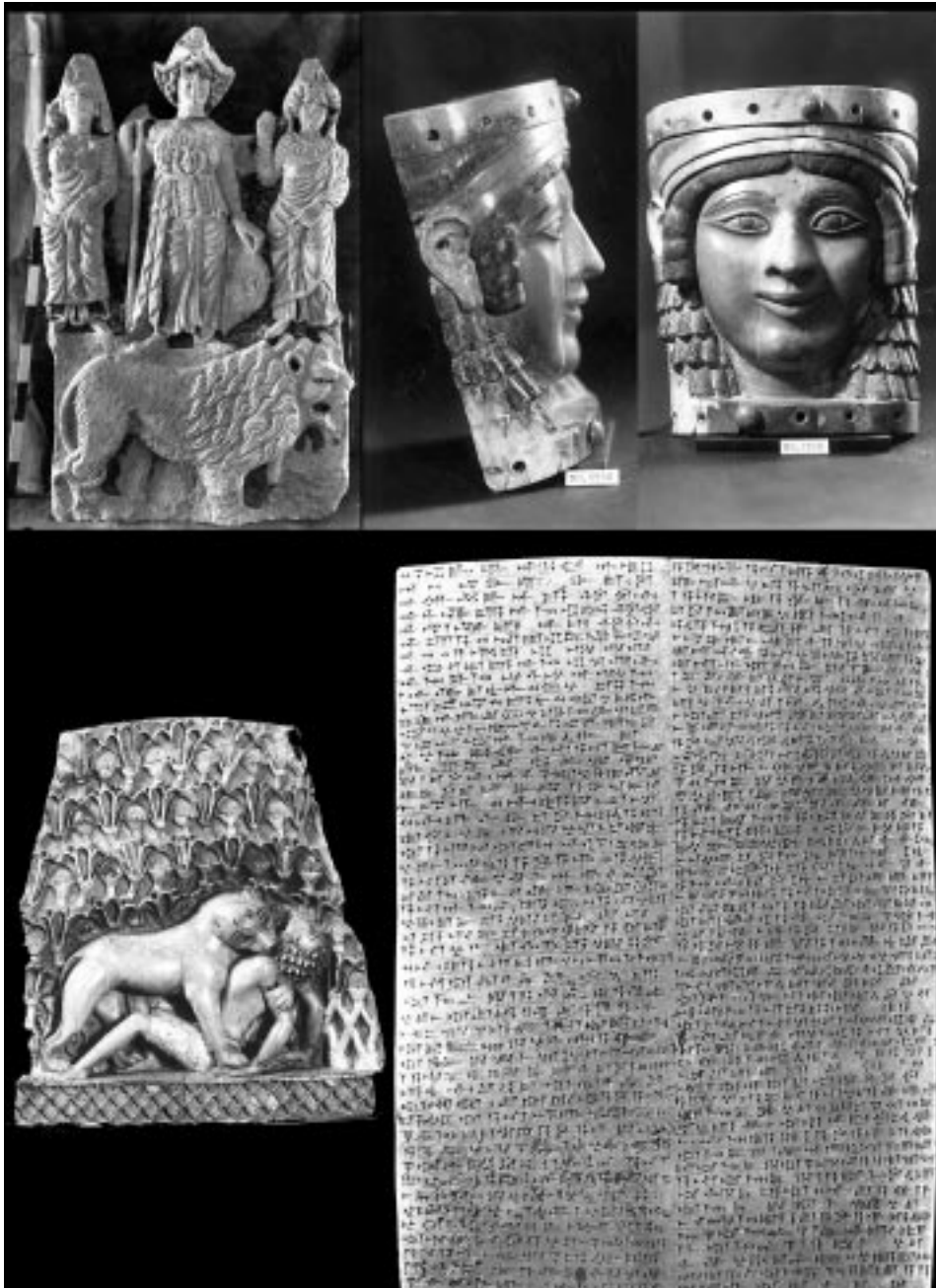
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we should gain from the repeated attacks on cultural heritage that the international community has witnessed in the last decade, it should be this one.

## | NOTE

1 Paragraph 7 of the Resolution 1483 reads as follows: The Security Council (...) *decides* that all Member States shall take appropriate steps to facilitate the safe return to Iraqi institutions of Iraqi cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific and religious importance illegally removed from the Iraq National Museum, the National Library, and other locations in Iraq since the adoption of 661 (1990) of 6 August 1990, including by establishing a prohibition on trade in or transfer of such items and items with respect to which reasonable suspicion exists that they have been illegally removed, and *calls upon* the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Interpol, and other international organizations, as appropriate, to assist in the implementation of this paragraph.

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42–45. The following images come from *MUSEUM International's* archives (access all issues of *MUSEUM International* since 1948 on [www.unesco.org/culture/museumjournal](http://www.unesco.org/culture/museumjournal)), which in 1954 dedicated an article to the Iraq National Museum. It is established that two of the following works of art have been stolen.

42. Archaeological finds of Hatra: Relief representing the goddess Allat in the form of Athena, with two other figures probably representing the goddesses al-Uzza and Manat.

43. Excavations at Nimrud: Ivory head of a woman, approximately 720 BC. Stolen from the Iraq National Museum.

44. Inlaid plaque in ivory and gold of a lioness attacking a Nubian, 720 BC, Nimrud. Stolen from the Iraq National Museum.

45. Cuneiform tablet.

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## | Links to Web Resources

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- Pillage of Kabul Museum. On the site of the Revolutionary Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) page, links to photos and documents on the destruction of Afghan cultural heritage.  
<http://rawa.org/museum.html>
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## FURTHER READING

**found.php?page=/online/features/afghan/index.html**

- The article describes and illustrates over 300 endangered artworks from Baghdad in the most comprehensive list of masterworks and minor works of ancient art from the museum's collection currently available.

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# | Book Reviews

by *Atieh Asgharzadeh*

**Elisabeth Mansfield (ed.), *Art History and its Institutions*, London & New York: Routledge, 2002.**

Art history as a discipline covers a variety of widely diverse areas of study which themselves reflect the diverse nature of its origins. It is a discipline which through the nature of its discourse has always aimed to define its own boundaries and set its own references. Commercial considerations often become involved in determining what is and what is not to be taken into scholarly consideration. One art historian has suggested that art history was 'created' by the need to simultaneously reveal and disguise 'the commodification of culture'. In *Art History and its Institutions*, specialists in the field study how discourses of this discipline have been formed by examining the professional and institutional formation of the discipline from its earliest history. The authors start by exploring the sites where art history as a discipline is practised, such as museums and recent critiques of museums. Further on they study changing styles of argumentation within art history with the aim of explaining how institutions intervene to transform and reorient the discipline's 'professional assumptions and standards' and play an important role in the establishment of art historical method. Institutions as varied as museums, universities and

photography studios are examined in order to reveal the ways in which they influence art history and the complexity of their interactions.

**Helen J. Wechsler, Terri Coate-Saal and John Lukavic (compiled), *Museum Policy and Procedures for Nazi-era Issues*, Washington: American Association of Museums, 2001.**

Over a period of eight years, from 1933 until the end of the Second World War, millions of objects and works of art were forcibly taken from their owners by the Nazi regime. Many of these objects eventually found their way back to their original owners or legal successors. Some of them, however, were never to be located, and many former owners proved difficult, if not impossible, to find, as so many families had perished during the Holocaust.

This last decade has seen a growing awareness of the extent of Nazi looting of cultural property. Museums, too, are increasingly becoming aware of the problems of original ownership and the possible implications for their collections. *Museum Policy and Procedures for Nazi-era Issues* presents a series of guidelines as suggested by the AAM (American Association of Museums) to deal with the problem of identifying and classifying

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objects unlawfully appropriated during the Nazi era. The AAM formally considered the issue late in 1998 when it formed a joint working group which was assigned the task of preparing draft guidelines to assist museums in addressing the problems of appropriated objects. This book addresses various issues such as acquisitions, loans, existing collections, claims of ownership, and fiduciary obligations. Although these guidelines were prepared for museums in the United States, *Museum Policy and Procedures for Nazi-era Issues* is a very valuable and helpful tool for museums throughout the world in achieving excellence in ethical collection stewardship practices. It also indicates the factors which should be taken into consideration by museums in the research of possible Nazi-era provenance in their collections.

**Miriam Clavir, *Preserving What is Valued (Museums, Conservation, and First Nations)*, Vancouver, Toronto: UBC Press, 2002.**

Cultural heritage can and should be preserved, yet beyond this simple statement many questions remain. How should this be accomplished, and who is best qualified to play a role in preservation? *Preserving What is Valued* presents two diverging perspectives to the problem of heritage preservation, where the issue of cultural property and scientific authority proves more often than not a source of misunderstanding and conflict. Professional conservators lay importance on the physical integrity of cultural objects, once 'removed' from their original contexts, and thus preserved or 'saved' from further use or abuse. Members of First Nations, on the other hand, those societies laying claim to cultural and historical rights over these

same objects, can better appreciate the value and meaning of these objects, provided they remain part of their cultural element. The problem lies in the difference in priority placed upon physical integrity, on the one hand, and conceptual integrity, on the other. One group claims authority based upon academic, and therefore primarily non-indigenous sources, while members of First Nations insist on challenging this self-qualification, preferring to reserve the right to represent themselves in a larger social and historical context. This conflict stems from a central problem: who should retain the power to interpret, in other words, to control, the identity of an individual or a society?

***terrain*, Revue semestrielle, Publiée par la Mission du Patrimoine ethnologique, Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, France.**

*terrain* is a high-quality biannual review published by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and its Mission for Ethnological Heritage since 1983, focused on encouraging the development of ethnological research on France and Europe. Each issue is composed of well-documented essays and explores one specific theme from various viewpoints. Contributing specialists represent diverse fields such as ethnology, sociology, history and anthropology. Also noteworthy is the rich and varied iconography which accompanies the texts. A section entitled *Repères* takes additional topics into consideration and a column *infos* provides information on current events related to ethnology in Europe. Essays are based on scientific field research and develop each theme from different angles. Some of the themes studied from

an ethnological point of view include the relationship of human beings with the environment, representations of nature in culture and the meaning of various practices within societies. In addition, *terrain* provides ethnologists with a forum for discussion, as well as a means of exchange with other social sciences such as anthropology, sociology and history.

The most recent issue of *terrain* published in March 2003, is dedicated to the child and learning, the process by which the child understands the world as well as the way in which it appropriates the world. As Goethe is known to have said, 'the child in fact educates its father', so the child is the key to a better understanding of human nature.

***The Future of the Past (Acts of Symposium),  
Nuremberg: Museen der Stadt Nürnberg,  
2000.***

The period of German National Socialism is gradually passing into the realm of 'history' like any other historical period. It remains nevertheless increasingly problematic to deal with the events of a not-so-distant past, particularly when times of such vital and lasting importance are involved. Despite longstanding analysis and a considerable raising of social awareness, the entire history of National Socialism has yet to be adequately understood, much less for the historians who are still engaged in its study than for the larger public which to this day continues to live in its terrifying shadow. Those who survived the horrors of the Nazi regime are now slowly disappearing : within a few years those remaining eye-witnesses will no longer be able to

pass on their experience. It will soon be primarily the responsibility of museums and historians to give present and future generations an educated view of the history of National Socialism.

On the occasion of the re-opening of the Nazi party rally grounds in 2001, the 'Museen der Stadt Nürnberg' has invited contributors from an international context to contribute to a wider assessment of the problems faced by museums which must handle the issues of the Nazi period and of the Holocaust.