

CULTURAL HERITAGE, SOCIETY & ECONOMY

The promotion, management and regulation of cultural heritage is a complex process involving many different agents and stakeholders on local, national and international levels. It is a critical element of public policy involving a diverse range of actors such as international organisations, governmental ministries and agencies, political parties, private organisations, museums and local communities. How cultural heritage is produced and consumed, interpreted and understood can have profound impacts on structuring social and economic interaction and decision-making. Likewise, it influences the formation of social values and ideas as well as notions of common identity and history. It also affects economic and infrastructural development across a range of different levels. Cultural heritage management and its importance has only become an issue recently in Turkey and is now rapidly developing. As a result, a whole range of new issues and problems for which solutions have to be found within Turkey, but also on a much wider scale, has risen. It is these inter-relationships that are contained within the field of cultural heritage that this Strategic Research Initiative sets out to examine in the Turkish context.

Cultural heritage management: the 2013 fieldwork season at Aspendos

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Cultural heritage management has established itself as a distinct academic field in the last couple of decades, with scholars mainly coming from the UK, USA and Australia. It is defined as the process of identification, assessment, management and interpretation of cultural heritage items, objects and places. Cultural heritage can range from prehistoric objects to contemporary art. When it comes to Turkey, archaeological heritage dominates the scene; thus it should come as no surprise that archaeological institutions have been the pioneers of heritage management projects in Turkey. Such projects have also become one of the priorities of the British Institute at Ankara (Vandeput, Köse 2012). The archaeological excavations that are being carried out with the BIAA's support are already investing heavily in cultural heritage management (see *Heritage Turkey* 2012). For instance, the Çatalhöyük project has been very successful in creating a site management plan and finding innovative ways to engage with the public.

Turkey is blessed with rich traces of many past civilisations. However, this material is a limited resource and unfortunately the country has suffered many losses due to illicit digging – a problem that police forces and legal sanctions alone cannot possibly conquer. One of the most effective ways to fight against illicit excavation is to create community awareness and to encourage local populations to generate internal control systems for the protection of their heritage. The potential for income generation from tourism and related activities is another important element in the current scenario.

As noted by Williems (2011), broad trends in cultural heritage management have in recent years shown changes in the definition and role of heritage in society. Heritage has become increasingly defined as relating to entire landscapes and urban areas rather than to single monuments or buildings. The role of heritage in society has also shifted, from the generation of revenue from visitors to respect for cultural diversity and the potential for wider economic and social benefits. These redefinitions were fundamental to the drafting of the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, known as the Faro Convention, signed by the Council of Europe in 2005. This recognises the need to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage; it shifted the emphasis to the democratisation of the identification of cultural heritage values.

Acknowledging the Faro Convention and the importance of these matters in the Turkish context, the British Institute at Ankara has decided to contribute to the theoretical and practical construction of a cultural heritage management project in southern Turkey. Inspired by models in the UK and the requirements of the region in question, the overall aim of the Institute's project is to promote an understanding and knowledge about the value of cultural heritage among local populations and to increase their involvement and engagement.

Thus, a joint initiative of the BIAA and Hacettepe University, building on the Aspendos Archaeological Project and the Pisidia Survey Project, was initiated in January 2013. The project is largely funded by the Headley Trust. It is currently ongoing and is realised on a step-by-step basis; preparations for a public archaeology workshop in 2014 are

under way. Academic connections in the field of cultural heritage management are ensured through contact with the Public Archaeology Programme at UCL, the Ironbridge International Institute for Culture Heritage at the University of Birmingham and the Research Center for Anatolian Archaeology at Koç University in Istanbul, the leading Turkish higher education institution in this field.

In 2013 the project has concentrated on the ancient city of Aspendos and in 2014 more emphasis will be placed on the region of Pisidia. During the Aspendos field season between July and late September 2013, a lot of thought and energy was poured into activities related to the cultural heritage management of the site. These included the improvement of the presentation of the site, an analysis of visitors' preferences, an analysis of local attitudes and meetings with the main stakeholders. With the ultimate aim of creating a model management plan for the other ancient Pamphylian cities in southern Turkey, our work at Aspendos will result in the composition of a sustainable development plan for the cultural and natural heritage of Aspendos and its surroundings.

The site-presentation measures that have been identified within the Aspendos development plan and accomplished during the 2013 season can be summarised as follows.

The arrangement of walking paths. One of the priorities of the Aspendos Project regarding site management is to organise the current visitor traffic in a better way. It was observed that many visitors left after seeing the theatre, without visiting the other parts of the site. This was partially due to the lack of walking paths and proper signage on site. Therefore, the first couple of days of the field season were dedicated to the arrangement of walking paths, which were formed by placing stones to either side. This had an immediate impact on the number of visitors who went to the ancient city centre.



Creation of pathways

Vegetation removal. Some of the preserved monuments were totally covered with dense vegetation, which totally obscured any sort of perception of the ancient city. A lot of vegetation has been removed, improving visibility and creating a much clearer idea of the nature of the ancient city for the visitor, including its size and its organisation.

Signage, routes, security cameras and risk areas. A plan has been prepared with proposed locations for information and direction signs. The suggested direction signs contain information about the time required to get from one monument to another, enabling visitors to manage their experience. Walking routes, which vary in length and difficulty, have also been formulated. For security reasons, cameras will be placed at different parts of the site; the locations of these have also been suggested. Lastly, areas which could potentially be dangerous for visitors, and which vary in terms of their risk levels, have been identified and possible solutions to these risk problems have been offered.

With regards to off-site presentation, a website dedicated to the Aspendos-Pisidia Cultural Heritage Management Project is being prepared. An exhibition dedicated to archaeology and how the archaeological work is being conducted is among the off-site presentation projects for the coming years. The exhibition is planned to be held in Antalya city centre.

Additionally, a small project – titled Narratives of Aspendos – aims to construct a multi-layered reading of the site from different sources. It includes an archival search of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism regarding correspondence relating to Aspendos in order to record those events that have been staged on-site and those that have been rejected. Other sources include guidebooks and itineraries prepared by travel agencies. The visitor survey conducted at Aspendos has demonstrated that guidebooks are very influential in the decisions made by visitors. A further step in this scheme is to investigate the ways in which tour guides convey information about the site. All these investigations will lead to an understanding of the ways in which the ancient city is being portrayed and will serve as the groundwork for an updated guidebook and extended visitor surveys. They will also form an important contribution to the site management plan regarding the current situation at Aspendos.

As the full title chosen for the Aspendos plan (Sustainable Development Plan for the Cultural and Natural Heritage of Aspendos and its Surroundings) indicates, the project is not restricted to the site alone, but adopts a broader approach which considers the wider landscape rather than a single site. Therefore, a model plan will be created that will concentrate on the use of the Köprüçay river (ancient Eurymedon) and its surroundings. The creation of walking and cycling paths along the river, in addition to the construction of environmentally-friendly and simple bungalow-type buildings to be used as food and beverage units and as bed and breakfast accommodation, will be



The Köprüçay river near Aspendos

suggested as part of this plan. The overall idea is to encourage the local population to take part in the management of these resources, subject, of course, to training in specific matters such as service management, hygiene and hospitality. The sustainability element in the proposed scenario will enable the local population to continue these activities after the initial organisational phase has been completed. It is clear that the model proposed is more complicated than a simple build-operate-transfer model, but it is believed that it will contribute most effectively to the local economy.



Existing 'facilities' along the Köprüçay river

For the analysis of local attitudes, priority has been given to Camili village which is located around the aqueducts of Aspendos. Since the villagers already sell some souvenirs and beverages to tourists, they were mostly positive about the changes that increased tourism could bring and wished to take a more active part in it. The most common complaint is that they have not, to date, benefited much from the economic advantages brought by visitors to the site. A striking memory, which dominates their relationship with the site, is a 1969 Turkish movie starring the famous actor Cüneyt Arkın. Since the movie included a number of local men as extras, it acted as a medium to build a personal connection between the villagers and the site.

For the next season, our priorities will be to expand the number of visitor surveys and organise educational facilities for the local children in order to encourage them to build a relationship with Aspendos. This is in line with the outcomes of Merriman's (1991) public attitudes survey about people's attachment to the past and heritage in the UK, according to which there is a distinction between a personal past and impersonal heritage. In Turkey, people, especially the local populations, tend to view the ancient remains as impersonal heritage, if heritage at all. Therefore, in order to foster care and awareness, it is crucial to engage the children and enable them to build a relationship with these areas of cultural heritage, so that they become part of their personal past.



Souvenirs being sold near the aqueduct

References

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