

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. This is a critical area of public policy involving a range of actors that includes international organisations, government ministries and agencies, political parties, business organisations, museums and local communities. How cultural heritage is produced, interpreted and understood can have profound impacts on social and economic activity and decision-making. It influences the formation of social values and ideas as well as notions of common identity and history, and also affects economic and infrastructure management. Cultural heritage management has only recently become an issue in Turkey, but is now developing rapidly. In this process, new issues and problems have emerged, for which solutions have to be found within Turkey, but also on a much wider scale. This strategic research initiative sets out to examine the inter-relationships in the field of cultural heritage in the Turkish context.

Protection of cultural heritage in emergency situations

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This year, the British Institute at Ankara, the American Research Institute in Turkey – Ankara (ARIT) and the US Embassy in Ankara collaborated on a workshop entitled ‘Acil durumlarda kültür varlıklarının korunması/Protection of cultural heritage in emergency situations’. The event took place at the Erimtan Museum in Ankara on 15–16 June 2017. The workshop addressed strategies for protecting museums and heritage sites in disaster situations. It aimed to bring together international experts with specialists from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and Turkish museums, institutes and universities. As such, the Ministry, particularly the Department for Combatting Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property in the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Museums, was consulted during the preparation of the workshop and Melik Ayaz, Deputy Director General of the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Museums of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism gave the opening speech at the event. The workshop addressed a wide range of situations that can damage and even obliterate cultural and historical heritage. The increased human-induced threats as well as potential natural hazards were primary points of focus, with several examples from different parts of the world. The primary aim of the workshop was to raise awareness of the problems that museums may face in emergency situations as well as to offer potential solutions.

Two of the lectures concentrated on the importance of heritage-related education for the military. In the first lecture, Peter Stone, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection

and Peace at Newcastle University, related his own experiences as a government consultant during the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and put the present-day efforts of organisations like Blue Shield in historical perspective. The Blue Shield organisation was created with the aim of raising the profile of cultural-property protection during armed conflict, an issue that had lost the attention of the military and the heritage community since the Second World War. Peter noted that this changed only after the disastrous experiences of recent wars, such as that in Iraq. The lecture illustrated the importance of collaboration between military forces and the heritage community, and the need for organisations like Blue Shield, through which significant progress has been made in recent years.

Brian Rose of the University of Pennsylvania took up the same theme with his lecture entitled ‘Cultural heritage protection training for soldiers’. The talk focused on the Archaeological Institute of America’s programme to provide cultural-heritage protection training to US soldiers active in conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The programme trains the soldiers to recognise cultural heritage in its many aspects through a varied approach, ranging from visits to the University of Pennsylvania’s Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, where material culture of the region is on display, to lectures on the appearance of archaeological sites in Afghanistan and Iraq. Brian also discussed archaeological site visits and on-site training of the military undertaken by himself and his team of experts as part of the programme.

Moving on from a focus on military conflicts, representatives of ICCROM and ICOM, two world-wide organisations focused on heritage management and museums, discussed policies and options. Aparna Tandon

highlighted the work and policies of ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property). She is based at the ICCROM headquarters in Rome, where she coordinates ICCROM's disaster risk-management programme and leads its flagship training on first aid to cultural heritage in times of crisis. Her lecture reflected ICCROM's experiences gathered during the course of ten years of emergency responses – to both natural disasters and armed conflicts – and on-site training. Aparna pleaded the case for the integration of first aid for cultural heritage within overall emergency response and humanitarian programmes.

As Director of Programmes and Partnerships of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), France Desmarais offered a picture of the current state of the fight against the destruction of cultural heritage. She works on emergency preparedness and responses for museums as well as the development of training programmes for museum professionals, ICOM's ethical standards and the international fight against the illicit traffic in cultural goods. In her lecture, she asked what the heritage community and civil society can do to prevent the destruction of heritage by looting and armed conflicts. ICOM collaborates with Blue Shield and founded the first Disaster Relief Task Force for museums, to protect museums and their collections. Important assets in the fight against the illicit trade of cultural heritage are the Red Lists of Cultural Objects at Risk. In addition, ICOM has founded an International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods.

The focus then shifted to particular case studies of museums and two lectures documented the devastation caused by the armed conflicts in Iraq and Syria. The title of Lamia Al-Gailani Werr's lecture says it all: 'Four wars and the museums in Iraq'. Lamia is based in London, but is originally from Iraq and actually worked in the Baghdad Museum. She returned to Baghdad as a consultant for the Iraqi Ministry of Culture after the looting of 2003–2004. Her lecture showed the total and deliberate destruction of a once magnificent museum as well as the randomness with which the destruction and looting took place. Lamia demonstrated to the audience how even protective vaults proved ultimately to offer no real protection. Sadly, many of the artefacts stolen have not surfaced in the known art markets.

Shaker Al Shbib provided an overview of the equally disastrous situation in Syria with his lecture 'Emergency measures taken to protect museums in Syria during the conflict: Aleppo, Idlib and Maarat Al-Nu'man museums'. As a Syrian archaeologist, he worked for the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums until 2011. Since January 2014 he has been working with the Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq Project on emergency conservation measures at key Syrian heritage sites at risk. Shaker showed the audience how, since 2011, many of the museums of Syria have been affected by the war through destruction, theft and/or vandalism. He also related how, as a

result, the efforts to protect and save these museums have recently intensified and emphasised the need for museums to be prepared for emergencies through, for example, the development of emergency plans and the education of staff. Finally, ways to protect and secure endangered museums were discussed.

Although museums in Turkey do not face the immediate threat of armed conflict, the lecture by Önder İpek, Director of the Archaeology and Ethnography Museum at Çorum – 'Emergency action plans and education programmes for the protection of cultural heritage at Çorum Museums (Çorum – Alacahöyük – Boğazköy)' – offered a wonderful overview of the programmes in preparation to counter emergency situations at the cultural facilities under his directorship in the Çorum province. The museums here house objects unearthed during numerous excavations over the course of more than a hundred years and the archaeological sites include the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Boğazköy/Hattusa, the capital of the Hittites. The plans take into account the threats of fire, earthquake, sabotage and human conflict, and are supported by other public services and central authorities. As such, lasting and effective precautions, in particular to protect objects held in depot and display contexts, are being introduced. In addition, the museum has set up programmes designed to bring the general public to the museums and educate them about the importance of museums and the heritage they protect.

Last but not least, Zeynep Boz from the Ministry's Department for Combatting Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property considered 'Recent developments and discussions on prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural property'. Zeynep is currently working on the implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention in addition to organising training and awareness-raising programmes. This work contributes to the planning of Turkey's policies on the prevention of illicit trafficking at an international level as well as restitution cases. Zeynep's lecture brought the focus back to the problem of illicit trafficking and looting. She focused on the fact that cultural property and its protection are high-profile topics today, more so than ever before, and are on the agendas of international policy-making bodies. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten, she stressed, that the socio-political situation at a given place is perhaps as important a 'reason' for looting and illicit trafficking as armed conflict. The present-day world is volatile in terms of its socio-political and economic development, and this translates to increased looting and trafficking. The lecture offered a *status quaestionis* of existing tools used against looting/trafficking in Turkey and in an international context, and examined their appropriateness and effectiveness.

The workshop closed with a panel discussion, during which all speakers discussed options for the future with the audience, with particularly strong participation from museum directors and staff.