

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, businesses, museums and local communities. How cultural heritage is produced, interpreted and understood can have a profound impact 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. The importance of cultural heritage management is increasingly recognised and acknowledged in Turkey, and the field is developing rapidly. New issues and problems have emerged, for which solutions that comply with and enhance the highest international standards have to be found within Turkey. This strategic research initiative sets out to examine the relationships between the many agents and actors in the field of cultural heritage in the Turkish context.

Safeguarding the archaeological assets of Turkey

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As reported in last year's *Heritage Turkey*, the British Institute at Ankara received a large award from the Cultural Protection Fund in support of the Safeguarding Archaeological Assets of Turkey Project (SARAT). The funding, from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, is administered and managed by the British Council. The BIAA is the lead institution and partners with the Research Center for Ancient Civilizations of Koç University in Istanbul (ANAMED) and the International Council of Museums (ICOM) UK. The SARAT project intends to build capacity and raise awareness concerning the safeguarding of archaeological assets in Turkey. This will be realised through three central aims: to provide emergency training for the protection of archaeological assets; to map public perceptions of heritage and the value it holds in Turkey; to raise awareness through activities with journalists and private collectors of the damage that the looting of archaeological sites causes. Since last year's magazine went to press, the project has developed rapidly and there are significant results to report.

In September 2018, the project's website was launched in Turkish and English. Please take the time to visit it at <http://www.saratprojesi.com/tr>. In addition to information on the project itself, the website also hosts pieces by the

project's media specialist, Nur Banu Kocaaslan, on heritage-related issues, under the heading 'SARAT's features' (<http://www.saratprojesi.com/en/resources/sarats-features>). Topics range from 'ICOM red lists: what are they and what are they good for' and 'How did the Perge Hercules sarcophagus find its way back to Turkey?' to 'UN Security Council's first cultural heritage resolution: "War crimes are being committed in Iraq and Syria"'. Already, the topics covered demonstrate that both current issues and general questions are being tackled. In the near future, content will be added to another section, entitled 'An artefact and its story', where world-famous archaeological artefacts and their stories will be presented in order to illustrate the importance of archaeological context for understanding history through objects. The website is part of the capacity and awareness-building activities of SARAT. Whilst the development of activities with journalists and collectors is scheduled for 2019, this year's work has otherwise concentrated largely on the emergency training component of the project and a national survey of public perceptions of heritage.

Since last year's *Heritage Turkey* article, the model for emergency training for the protection of archaeological assets has changed completely. Rather than providing actual training in eight museums in Turkey, the project is now developing an



Interview with Aparna Tandon.

online course. In collaboration with Koç University, SARAT is currently working on a course entitled ‘Safeguarding and rescue of archaeological assets’. The course will not only be accessible to museum staff, archaeologists and heritage professionals, but also to students and anyone else who is interested. The course will provide information on a wide range of issues and training for a number of scenarios. Topics include why safeguarding archaeological assets is important, which international agencies are concerned with cultural heritage and how museums should deal with emergency situations, as well as components on the UNESCO World Heritage List and on ‘Turkey on the World Heritage List’. Finally, course elements in which ‘crash-introductions’ are provided on photography and conservation are being prepared. The course content will be enriched by interviews with national and international specialists who are familiar with specific topics of the course, such as, for instance, Aparna Tandon from the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). Whereas the language of the ‘lessons’ themselves will be Turkish, the interviews with international specialists will mostly be subtitled. An interactive element will be incorporated, so that students can ask questions and receive feedback on assessments. Courses will be provided without charge and those who successfully complete the course will be awarded a certificate by Koç University.

Plans to translate the course into other languages in the future exist, but their execution will depend on the time frame and availability of funding. Interest for translations into Arabic and English has already been signalled from a variety of sources.

In addition to solid progress on the development of the online course, another milestone for SARAT this year has been the implementation of a nationwide survey on the public perception of the archaeological assets of Turkey. The questions were based on three main strands: understanding of archaeology, engagement with archaeological assets and the past, and general approaches towards archaeological assets.

The actual survey was executed by a professional polling company, KONDA Research and Consultancy, in May 2018. The questionnaires were developed by means of stakeholder meetings (of academics, heritage workers, social scientists and public servants) in Ankara, Istanbul and Mardin. Once the questionnaire was finalised, 3,601 people were interviewed in 29 different provinces across Turkey. This is a representative sample size for Turkey. By interviewing larger numbers of people in Istanbul, Antalya and southeastern Turkey, it is now possible to discern regional variation in the collected data. Following the survey, KONDA prepared an extensive report; whilst this is currently being assessed in detail, some results really stand out.

For instance, 36% of the respondents indicated that when they hear the word archaeology, ‘excavation/science of excavation’ comes to mind, while 17% did not give an answer. Just over half the interviewed people could name a civilisation that had existed in Turkey in the past and almost 85% said that archaeological objects are under state ownership; 60% think that archaeological assets have an intangible value. When asked ‘which civilisations shaped today’s Turkey?’ the most common answer was ‘civilisations of thousands of years’ (46%). The results overall indicate a high interest in, but a rather low level of knowledge of, the archaeological assets of Turkey. They also give us many insights into how people learn about archaeology, what is needed to foster this interest and which institutions stand out in people’s minds regarding the protection of archaeological assets.

The data are undoubtedly very rich and the plan is to use these results to organise incentive workshops with museum, heritage and tourism professionals, academics and authorities who can use them to develop strategies for the protection of archaeological heritage on a regional basis. In addition, the available data can help in the development of ideas to increase social and economic benefits for local communities.



A stakeholders’ meeting in Mardin.