

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 management of the economy and infrastructure. 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.

doi:10.18866/biaa2019.03

Safeguarding the archaeological assets of Turkey

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As reported in the previous two editions of *Heritage Turkey*, the British Institute at Ankara is the lead organisation in the ‘Safeguarding Archaeological Assets of Turkey’ (SARAT) project, which is supported by a large award from the Cultural Protection Fund. This is a collaborative project with the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, Koç University, Istanbul (ANAMED) and the International Council of Museums UK (ICOM UK).

This year, the SARAT team has been working non-stop on a variety of activities related to the different strands of the project. In April, applications opened for the online training programme in safeguarding and rescuing archaeological assets; within five days over 1,900 people had applied! This overwhelming response was unexpected and was initially a challenge for the IT team at Koç University overseeing the applications and for the SARAT team that was responsible for the selection process and administering the course. It quickly transpired that the servers and software could handle the online traffic without problems and that the SARAT team could deal with the volume of applications. Currently, Gülşah Günnata from the SARAT team is keeping a close eye on the progress of participants and is dealing with all content-related questions. Since April, four rounds of applications have taken place and a total of 8,357 people have applied to take the course. Meanwhile, approximately 5,500 have graduated or are nearing graduation. The course participants

have come from a wide range of backgrounds: university students, academics and teachers, as well as museum personnel, heritage professionals, architects and engineers, and public servants from a variety of local, regional and national authorities. They have come from all corners of Turkey and beyond: from the USA to Germany to Azerbaijan. The question that the SARAT team is asked most often when delivering a workshop or giving a lecture somewhere is, ‘When can I apply for the course?’.

Alongside organising the online course, the team has been traversing Turkey delivering workshops to different target groups. A first set of these events was the ‘Archaeology Reporting Workshops for Journalists’. News features on archaeological sites and discoveries, historical artefacts, ‘treasure hunting’, cultural heritage and environment-related issues have been drawing increasing interest from readers in recent years, and, as a result, these topics have received more attention across the media. Examination of news related to archaeological or heritage issues, however, has revealed that these stories are not always problem-free or accurate. Among the main reasons for this are the lack of specialised journalists and time pressure in newsrooms related to deadlines which may result in the publication of unchecked or insufficiently checked stories. A further reason originates from the way in which archaeology related news is often rendered sensational in order to attract more interest. Such

reporting, however, may encourage treasure hunting and smuggling, and may also cause the general public to form inaccurate conclusions about archaeology.

As a result, professionals in the media, on the one hand, and in archaeology and heritage, on the other, are drifting ever further apart, and this hampers the creation of a sound communication channel. SARAT's survey of the perception of archaeology in Turkey has revealed that the media is the main source of information on archaeology and cultural heritage for the general public. Thus the workshops, led by Gül Pulhan and Nur Banu Kocaaslan, focused on responsible journalism with the aim of promoting and safeguarding archaeological assets. A short film about them can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbV26Zj-xAA&list=PLbei-sAWFFVqiQHA-HaHDAgug2ZoC1OuU&index=10>. Shortly before the workshops started, Nur Banu penned an article titled 'Writing news stories on archaeology: what to pay attention to, where to start' for the *NewsLab Turkey* web site, which publishes professional capacity building content for journalists. The article was very well received and is still available online at <https://www.newslabturkey.org/ardeoloji-hakkinda-haber-yazmak-nelere-dikkat-etmeli-nereden-baslamali/>.

During the morning sessions of the workshops, examples of archaeological news stories were discussed and the participants collaboratively created possible alternative and improved approaches. SARAT created a small booklet for use by the journalists, containing fundamental archaeological terminology, a summary of Anatolian chronology and practical information on relevant bodies and legal procedures. The workshops took place at venues where journalists could come into contact with archaeology, such as an archaeological excavation site, an archaeopark or a museum, and included invited archaeologists who work in the area and gave presentations. These contacts sparked lively discussions and provided useful networking opportunities, especially given that the journalists felt that archaeologists and heritage professionals are often unwilling to provide opinions. The latter, however, fear being misquoted and are bound by rules set by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Overall, the workshops were very well received and requests for further training were frequently repeated. In fact, they constitute the first professional training of its kind for journalists in Turkey who report or wish to report on archaeological or heritage matters. Following the workshops, the participants were invited to write features based on the principles discussed and good examples of such features are published on the SARAT website.

A second series of workshops – 'Archaeology in a Local Context' – built on the results of SARAT's nationwide survey of the importance of archaeological heritage and peoples' perceptions and practices. These workshops took place in Burdur, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Kırklareli, Tunceli and Nevşehir, and were mainly organised and led by Işıl Gürsu



Journalists on a site visit at Diyarbakır.

and Özlem Başdoğan. Local NGOs, museums, relevant university departments and also police and gendarmes, regional cultural councils and other authorities were invited. Each workshop opened with an introduction to the SARAT project and a presentation and discussion of the results of the survey and their relevance and importance for the specific region. Afterwards, examples of how archaeological heritage could be used as hubs for sustainable social and economic development of local communities were presented. These inspiring case studies were chosen from Turkey and beyond. Throughout the workshops, the participants were actively involved in the presentations and this led to the evolution of ideas specific to the local heritage. The number of participants varied from about 20 to over 90 and all were given material to take away and study. This included a booklet compiled especially for these workshops by Işıl Gürsu and Ayşegül Yılmaz, a consultant on the project.

Another ongoing SARAT activity is a series of systematic interviews with 'registered antiquities collectors' in Turkey (i.e. the collecting practices of these individuals are approved and monitored by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism). Through these interviews, conducted by Gül Pulhan, the SARAT project is working towards building a critical awareness within this key group, particularly on the significance of context and the crucial importance of preserving the integrity of archaeological deposits. Collectors are made aware of the scale and nature of the illicit trade in antiquities and the scale of destruction caused by the looting of archaeological objects. The interviews also aim to establish the motivations that drive collectors and how they care for and protect their collections. They also explore inherent issues and problems, such as inheritance, deaccessioning of the collections and relations with the authorities. The collectors have been very cooperative and appreciate being part of a project designed to safeguard the archaeological assets of Turkey.