



# Perspectives on Cultural Heritage: Research, Practice, Policy

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Accounting for the Intangible in the Tangible:  
Implications for Cultural Heritage Protection in Conflict Zones

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Cultural Heritage: Conflict & Reconciliation

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CULTURAL POLICY CENTER

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

CHICAGO HARRIS | NORC

# Accounting for the Intangible in the Tangible: *Implications for Cultural Heritage Protection in Conflict Zones*

A Report of the Program Co-Sponsored by the University of Chicago's  
Cultural Policy Center and the Smithsonian Institution

April 17, 2015 | Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

## Introduction

In recent years, cultural heritage has become an increasingly frequent feature—and source—of global friction. An integral dimension of living cultural traditions and a resource for collective memory and community identity, heritage has become a key component of international affairs, as the subject of stewardship, safeguarding, conservation and repatriation. Heritage is at the center of an array of legal, economic, political, military and humanitarian efforts to manage conflict, often involving contested tangible or intangible property, globally circulating goods and services, or digital content. In the context of its enhanced international profile, more effective collaboration among key stakeholders regularly engaged with cultural heritage conservation is of particular importance.

With the ongoing destruction of cultural heritage sites in Syria and Iraq regularly in the news, along with associated illegal trading in antiquities, the question of how to respond has become increasingly urgent. But the work of cultural heritage protection, particularly in conflict zones, is a challenging undertaking. In large part this is because it involves the coordination of a broad range of humanitarian responders who do not often collaborate, including militaries and other security forces or government agencies, UN and UNESCO personnel, as well as a wide array of non-governmental organizations, academic archaeologists, and diverse museum professionals. The need to improve the terms of such cooperation, going forward, remains among the most urgent challenges for international efforts dedicated to addressing heritage at risk due to conflicts or humanitarian disasters.

To this end, in April of 2015, the Smithsonian Institution hosted a day-long workshop and public forum titled “Cultural Heritage: Conflict and Reconciliation.” Co-sponsored by the University of Chicago’s Cultural Policy Center, this program

convened key stakeholders inside and outside of government currently engaged with the question of cultural heritage as a subject of both policy and practice. Although international attention to heritage destruction and antiquities looting is not new, in recent months it has been increasingly publicized. The immediate rationale for this meeting was the widely reported targeting of cultural heritage sites for destruction across the Middle East over the past year, particularly in Syria and Iraq.

This day-long workshop and public forum focused on the identification of potentially promising collaborative approaches to the increased geopolitical volatility of heritage, as a dimension of conflict in international affairs, but also as a source of reconciliation. One goal of this convening was to identify priorities and needs among the range of governmental and non-governmental organizations engaged in international heritage-related work. Discussion was organized into three primary, interrelated, topics: 1) cultural heritage management, preservation and conservation in conflict zones, during times of war, and as a dimension of post-conflict humanitarian response and renewal; 2) the relationship of looting and the illegal trade in antiquities to conflict, and cooperation in efforts of recovery and repatriation; 3) and the role of intangible heritage as an aspect of international conflict but also as a basis for inter-cultural engagement.

A variety of themes emerged, as cultural professionals reflected on their experiences with different dimensions of complex international efforts to conserve or protect cultural heritage. An overarching concern, pointed to by multiple participants, was the consistent lack of effective coordination among counterparts and stakeholders. The challenges of effective collaboration are many. Paramount among these, according to participants, are: a lack of information sharing (e.g., between government and non-governmental actors); the potential consequences of sharing sensitive information not meant for public circulation (e.g., the GIS location of a particular heritage site, a copy of a no-strike list, or information that might be part of an ongoing federal investigation); the damage incurred by reporting incorrect information to the media in ways that undermine the authority of the expert community and inhibit the development of better public policy in response to the crisis of heritage destruction; the need to move beyond creating simple lists of heritage sites and the desire to correlate and process a more comprehensive landscape of data on heritage crises in real time (e.g., satellite imaging but also social media data); the problem of silos between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers in government, and the difficulty of building bridges across these silos; and finally, the problem of redundant duplication of effort despite a scarcity of resources.

Each of these concerns deserves sustained attention in its own right. But in this report we have chosen to highlight some of the ways we believe that academic centers dedicated to cultural research are well positioned to contribute to the work of cultural heritage conservation and protection. Recently the challenges

of inter-organizational cooperation include academia, where, for example, the relationship between social scientists and the US military has been fraught. In large part, controversy has focused on the military's efforts to bring cultural knowledge more effectively to bear in conflict zones, thereby having social scientists work directly with combat units in the field. The question of cultural heritage in conflict zones has been largely peripheral to such debates. But, in light of this controversy, we suggest that academic contributions can best be made outside of zones of active conflict, and often well before and after active conflict.

## The Relation of the Tangible to the Intangible: Potential Contributions of Academic Research

Among the more provocative, but fundamental, questions posed during the workshop was: “for whom is cultural heritage being protected?” Another way of asking this question is “why is cultural heritage *meaningful*, to what communities, in what ways, and how might we best include these communities in the protection, preservation and conservation of heritage?” A designated site on an international cultural heritage list might mean different things to different groups, or might not be what is considered most important to a given local population. For example, as a significant site of pre-Columbian Mayan heritage, Chichén Itzá in Mexico's Yucatán peninsula attracts well over a million tourists annually, many of whom come from North America and elsewhere to practice rites of new age spiritualism in this ancient Mayan city. For nearby Yucatec Mayan communities, however, Chichén Itzá is less a sacred site and more the basis for artisanal craft markets on which they depend. This underscores the point that asking for whom heritage is meaningful, and in what ways, helps to avoid the common tendency to attribute intrinsic value to heritage sites, physical artifacts, and archaeological remains, without at the same time also considering the communities who produced them or others for whom these sites are important in various ways.

This suggests that we need to prioritize effective engagement with critical local stakeholders and to seek to understand their several attachments to heritage. One

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way in which academic research can collaboratively support international efforts of cultural heritage protection, preservation and conservation in conflict zones is to work closely with responders on the ground to promote the widest appreciation for the cultural significance of heritage among key stakeholders. Such cooperative efforts should promote awareness of the meaningful contexts of heritage and seek to keep

these contexts at the center of heritage protection efforts. Doing so would also help build more effective bridges with local heritage experts and communities.

Drawing the many connections between intangible and tangible cultural heritage can help reveal underlying causes of conflict, as well as point to potential building blocks for reconciliation. Archaeological sites and comparable locations of tangible culture, built or natural, are valuable as cultural sites in large part because they are fundamental resources for narratives of local or national identity, ethnic or religious expression, and of collective cultural memory. This includes the many public spaces that also serve as sites of meaningful cultural performance or of the collective expression of cultural heritage. A first step, then, is to recognize that the protection of public spaces is essential to the continuity, performance, or vitality of particular cultural traditions that make up intangible heritage. Antiquities looting in Syria and Iraq, for example, is not only the theft of valuable objects, but also the irretrievable loss of cultural knowledge that results when objects are removed from their original contexts.

Heritage sites are largely important as spaces where intangible social bonds have formed the basis of community. Any attack upon a cultural heritage site, as with the continuing destruction by Islamic State militants (hereafter, ISIS) of the ancient city of Palmyra, a designated UNESCO world heritage site, is also an intentional attack upon a specific cultural history or tradition. In this instance, what ISIS views as “idolatrous” is the pluricultural mix of Greek, Roman and Near Eastern influences evident in the architecture of this city, celebrated not only by archaeologists, historians, and journalists, but also by the Syrian state and ordinary Syrians. It is this pluricultural history that is disappearing under ISIS occupation of the city.

Efforts to protect cultural heritage sites, therefore, are also efforts to prevent the loss of context-dependent cultural knowledge and key locations of cultural

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expression, meaning, and memory. In the case of sustained attacks on the tangible representations of specific cultural histories or traditions, this loss can potentially rise to the level of cultural genocide. Academics and practitioners can collaborate on the documentation of heritage at risk, including through the improved application of digital documentation and satellite photography in ways more attentive to cultural contexts. In this way conservation efforts can focus on the fullest range of cultural significance of heritage sites, including their intangible dimensions at different scales of community.

## Five Dimensions for Future Research

What follows in this report synthesizes some of the concerns raised during the workshop and the public forum held at the Smithsonian on April 17, 2015 that highlight the relationship of intangible to tangible cultural heritage. This discussion suggests the possible role that academic research can play in bringing this relationship more fully into the work of cultural heritage preservation, conservation and recovery. The following sub-sections address the relationship of culture to context as a matter of scale; the normative challenges embedded in the international conventions designed to protect cultural heritage; the role and interests of the nation-state; the connections between heritage and symbolic struggle, including the ways that heritage destruction has become a strategic and ideological public expression of conflict among combatants; and the potential of the applied arts for cultural bridge-building or diplomacy through recovery and reconciliation. In each of these areas, we believe that academic research is particularly well-positioned to play a constructive role.

### A. Cultural Heritage and Scale

In the context of efforts to protect cultural heritage, or in scenarios where cultural heritage is a dimension of conflict, post-conflict, reconciliation, or diplomacy, part of the difficulty has been the challenge of appreciating fully the question of community scale. By invoking scale, we refer to the different ways that people might relate to cultural heritage, in some instances through highly specific contexts and profoundly local meanings and in others through links to national or more encompassing cultural identities. These different scales of meaning and relationships can both frame and complicate efforts to protect heritage or to utilize cultural resources for post-conflict reconciliation. International, national, and diverse ethnic or religious commitments to a particular heritage site or expression are often distinct and not always easily compatible.

For example, the two UNESCO world heritage sites in Afghanistan are the Buddhas of Bamiyan and the Minaret of Jam, both of which are impressive monumental sites. Not on any list is a blue mud-brick wall enclosing an orchard south of Kandahar in a small village, which contains a dagger that, according to local tradition, belonged to a companion of the Prophet Mohammed. NATO forces, assigned to provide security for villages in the area, came to recognize that the courtyard enclosed a place of significance, and thus avoided violating it. Had they damaged it, even unintentionally, it could have

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heightened tensions in the area, exacerbating the conflict. Finding effective ways to align different stakeholder interests in cultural heritage at multiple scales of engagement, and as a basis for relationship-building across fraught geopolitical boundaries, should be an important research priority in the cultural policy sphere.

International or multilateral cultural conventions, for example, typically prioritize states as the parties to the convention and as the “communities” to which heritage corresponds, even as they also stress the importance of heritage for humanity as a whole. Although states tend to emphasize the importance of heritage as a nation-building social glue, this does not exhaust its significance. States are often made up of diverse and differentiated national, ethnic, religious, and other, communities, each with competing heritage claims. The Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem has been used by at least four religions: Pagan, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. As the site where God’s presence is thought most evident and the supposed location of the temple of Solomon, it is the holiest site in Judaism. Among the oldest examples of Islamic architecture and as the location of Muhammad’s journey to Jerusalem and ascent to heaven, it is also the third most sacred Sunni Muslim shrine. These competing narratives are, to a significant extent, politically irreconcilable. Control of the Temple Mount has been historically contested and remains a point of controversy and expression of Israeli-Palestinian tensions. While recognition of the privileged relationship between particular expressions of cultural heritage and a given “community” typically accompanies cultural heritage protection or recovery efforts, it remains challenging to take on board a fuller range of investments in a specific expression of heritage, which can include nations, but also different transnational or sub-state communities and identities.

Heritage is often the subject of plural histories constructed from otherwise competing cultural traditions. During conflict, it is these very histories that are often actively contested. An ongoing challenge for heritage professionals, therefore, is the need to account for sometimes hard-to-reconcile competing claims on cultural heritage at different levels and scales. This affects both protection and reconciliation efforts. In addressing this challenge, scholars who study specific heritage sites or cases, but with attention to intra-state diversity or the relation of the local to the global, are in a strong position to contribute to understanding how best to incorporate an appreciation of the question of scale into applied cultural work.

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## B. Heritage and the Normative Challenge

Cultural heritage has increasingly been recognized as an important arena of international law: in the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (or the “Hague Convention”); the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property; the 1972 Convention Concerning the World Cultural and Natural Heritage; and the more recent 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. International concerns about the importance of cultural heritage have been expressed both in terms of “culture as property” and “culture as human rights.” These multilateral legal frameworks have been helpful at times in providing particular communities with legal tools to establish the right to control their own heritage or have it repatriated. They have also helped mobilize greater international attention to heritage at risk in conflict zones.

But ongoing research is needed to shed more light on the various ways in which the norms embedded within international cultural conventions may not protect, but instead align with or enable, tangible and intangible heritage as a dimension of conflict. When has intangible cultural heritage, in particular, been appropriated into and used as part of a symbolic contest, or as a resource for contending historical accounts in politically unstable parts of the world? Where have heritage claims helped to underwrite contentious inclusionary or exclusionary violent conflict? These are urgent research questions for academic scholars. The old city of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its signature Ottoman-era bridge, was made a UNESCO world heritage site in 2005 and is considered among the most outstanding examples of Islamic architecture in the Balkans. UNESCO cites Mostar as a “symbol of reconciliation, international co-operation and of the coexistence of diverse cultural, ethnic and religious communities.” However, during the 1992-

1993 war after the collapse of Yugoslavia, Mostar was the site of an eighteen-month-long siege pitting Bosnian Croats against Bosnian Muslims and non-Croats, including a sustained bombardment destroying the city and bridge, as part of a campaign to rid Croatia of ethnic Bosniaks and Bosnian Muslims. The bridge’s destruction later became a basis for war crimes charges against Croatian military leaders as part of the proceedings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Mostar has

been a site of notable ethnic and religious conflict since the Ottoman era, but, also quite recently, a legacy of conflict left unresolved in the UNESCO account of Mostar. By improving our understanding of the effects of international normative frames on accounts of conflict, we can also draw clearer conclusions about the relationship between cultural heritage protection or recovery as a goal, and other domestic and foreign policy priorities in such areas as politics, the economy, peace, and security.

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## C. Nation-States and Conflicting Interests

International cultural heritage conventions recognize several subjects for cultural heritage, including specific local communities, nation-states, and humanity as a whole. But these frameworks offer little guidance about how to resolve potential conflicting claims to heritage among these subjects. Not surprisingly, the conventions tend to defer to the sovereignty of nation-states, with the result being considerable inconsistency in the ways they are interpreted and extent to which they are implemented in particular cases or by different nation-states. International cooperation often ends at the limits of the legal exigencies of the states involved. If an antiquities-related problem does not violate US law, for example, the FBI will not investigate. As reported in the workshop, for the US case there exists as yet no coherent policy for carrying out the country's responsibilities and obligations under the 1954 Hague Convention, which the US ratified in 2009. The "Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act" (H.R. 1493) introduced by Eliot Engel (currently the Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee) and still pending in the Senate, promises at least to partially address this issue by specifying the terms of coordination among federal agencies under the Hague Convention.

A related challenge for more effective international collaboration in this area is that obligations incurred by international conventions are all too often balanced against national priorities or interests, which might not coincide. A case in point is the US military, which in recent years has been increasingly tasked with humanitarian responsibilities other than war, including in support of international efforts to protect cultural heritage in conflict zones or post-disaster settings. Understandably for the US military, in the absence of a legal "duty to protect" cultural heritage, the priority of protecting cultural heritage or property is usually subordinate or supplemental to other strategic or tactical priorities. When cultural heritage protection becomes a military goal, it is typically made so in ways that are consistent with broader mission priorities, for example, of "security," "stability," or to minimize friction with civilian populations in areas of operation in order to increase the safety of US personnel. For these reasons the case for cultural heritage protection in the military has been made by arguing for its virtues as a "force multiplier" or by emphasizing the connections between antiquities looting and the funding of insurgencies or terrorist groups. Although the US military's approach understandably tends to be consistent with its own mission priorities and with broader US policy and strategic goals in any given instance, framing goals of cultural heritage protection primarily in these ways can also deflect attention from the ways in which heritage in fact matters for key stakeholders with whom US responders need to work, a state-of-affairs that can lead to miscommunication and make cooperation and success harder to achieve.

The situation is improving, but, for these and other reasons, “boots on the ground” charged with the work of heritage protection, including US military personnel and UN peacekeepers, are typically not well-enough informed regarding the significance of cultural heritage, and cannot reasonably be expected to bring the same level of knowledge to bear as do heritage experts. They must rely, instead, on official accounts and dominant public or popular accounts, with which they are supplied or that they acquire on their own. What they do come to understand in the field is often learned while in pursuit of other mission goals, in an ad hoc manner, and applied in an improvised fashion as part of that mission. Too often a superficial appreciation prevails, limited to protection of a designated heritage site, understood as a tangible space, structure, or built environment, but detached from the supra-local, local, and often intangible relationships that make it important to people in the first place, as a source of cultural meaning and identity, and as a potential subject of conflict.

In other words, an emphasis on tangible heritage at the expense of the intangible, and the subordination of heritage protection as secondary to other priorities in conflict zones, decreases the likelihood of understanding how cultural heritage is frequently at the center of struggles over meaning that are at the heart of any given conflict (e.g., the relationship between heritage and different conceptions of the sacred connected to a particular location; or between heritage and national origins). For example, the bombing of Kosovo in 1999 was in response to fears of Serbian “ethnic cleansing” of Albanians. But it was also an intervention on behalf of one among two antagonistically competing, and significantly mythologized, national and cultural histories of Serbia and Albania. Despite having been a multi-ethnic region for centuries, both “nations” have made strong symbolic claims upon Kosovo as central to their respective homelands, and the bombing campaign only added to ongoing conflict between Albanian separatists and Serbian nationalists. Disregarding the ways heritage often sits at the crossroads of inter-ethnic and nationalist conflict can inhibit the cooperative identification of pathways to conflict resolution.

More regularized inter-agency coordination can help align an overall US response to particular heritage risks as these arise in different global hotspots, and in ways conducive

to constructive collaboration with key counterparts while remaining attuned to multiple demands “on the ground.” This collaboration can extend to the academy as well. Given their area studies expertise and typically long-term and in-depth familiarity with diverse regions and cultures, academic professionals can provide responders entering conflict zones with the critical contextual knowledge they might need to work more effectively with often conflicting sets of counterparts in the field. Such knowledge can

also identify the local stakeholders, in particular, who need to be taken into account, if a given effort of heritage conservation or protection is to be successful.

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## D. Heritage, Meaning, and Ideology

When we reference attacks on cultural heritage sites and efforts to protect them, we are also referring to struggles over meaning. And with the best intentions, the 1954 Hague Convention undertakes to protect cultural heritage (here identified in the terms of “property”) from the effects of conflict. The Hague Convention assumes tangible heritage sites to be vulnerable subjects of conflict. In so doing, however, it can become easy to treat heritage as if external to conflict or removed from its political, national, local, ethnic, or religious sources. International treaties often understand heritage to be the collateral damage of conflict and not necessarily part of that conflict. This tends to disregard the strategic value of heritage in political struggle and in war, as a variable that must be incorporated into conservation, protection, or reconciliation efforts.

As the destruction by ISIS of Assyrian and other monuments in Iraq and the accompanying propaganda videos make clear, however, combatants often understand all too well, and utilize, the strategic value of heritage. In the case of ISIS, heritage destruction is part of its state-building effort to “restore the caliphate” and is one way to enforce its own cultural historical narrative by aggressively erasing rival accounts of regional history. Circulated videos of heritage destruction at once serve to advertise ISIS’s particular puritanical brand of Islam and to work as a recruitment tool. For potential recruits, the international condemnation of these videos demonstrates ISIS’s ability to act unilaterally to control the narrative against the interests of powerful states such as the US and others opposed to the group’s ideology, political agenda, and actions.

In other words, too often the question of heritage protection is treated as primarily a logistical or technical management question of mobilizing resources, training, and cooperation. But, in recent conflicts in Mali, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, cultural heritage has also been a dimension of organized efforts by combatants to demonstrate their soft power, to control the information environment, and to project their political priorities in the battle of ideas. With the notable media coverage ISIS has received over the past year, attention has gradually turned to a closer examination of the political reasons for this group’s systematic destruction of cultural heritage sites. Earlier and better attention to the strategic role of heritage, both tangible

and intangible, would increase appreciation for its importance as an integral part of conflict, rather than simply as a casualty of conflict. Area studies and subject matter experts in politics and international affairs are well-equipped to provide timely analysis of the relationships between the political agendas of particular groups and the cultural resources such groups draw from and adapt for strategic

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and ideological ends. Ultimately, such an understanding would make it easier for cultural heritage professionals to advance the case both to governments and to the funder community for the resources needed to protect these cultural sites.

## E. Heritage and the Applied Arts

Beyond the struggles over meaning that often characterize the role of cultural heritage as a dimension of geopolitical conflict, we have spent less effort exploring the potential ways that cultural heritage might function as a resource for avoiding conflict or aiding in post-conflict reconciliation, by identifying commonalities and

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aligning priorities. In the US and elsewhere, in particular over the past decade, a range of arts and cultural initiatives have been contributing to the growth of what we will call the “applied arts.” Both inside and outside of government, programs such as the Smithsonian Institution-led Haiti Cultural Recovery Project share a commitment to put artistic and cultural creation, expression, and collaboration in the service of

mitigating conflict in order to promote peace and reconciliation. In comparable fashion cultural heritage can be used as a resource for resilience and revitalization as a part of post-disaster response and reconstruction. Intangible cultural heritage is a critical dimension of the applied arts, and cultural content is a key resource for the collaborative theater, storytelling, or curation at the core of many of these projects. A growing number of such initiatives are supported by universities and are beginning to function as complements to more traditional arts management programs; as such, these initiatives also represent opportunities for more direct academic participation in cultural heritage policy and practice.

Even as programs in the applied arts proliferate, such as Brandeis University’s Peacebuilding and the Arts Program or Georgetown University’s Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics, we still need to understand better the enabling

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conditions through which intangible cultural heritage is effectively put to the tasks of conflict mitigation, prevention, and resolution. This entails a more systematic appreciation of the potential ways that intangible cultural heritage contributes to cross-cultural communication and to the building of social relationships, most notably, across otherwise fractious social and cultural frontiers. Cultural

heritage, in this mode, is a potentially valuable resource of cultural diplomacy

(or “cultural relations,” in the preferred parlance of the British Council), which can function as a lever to reveal common cultural ground or shared historical experience. At present, however, we have no reliable or comparative means of evaluating the effectiveness of such programs. Regular calls to devise metrics for doing so often run up against the difficulties of assessing their so-called “soft” (or “intangible”) effects. This has been the case over the years with government-funded cultural exchanges, particularly as these effects are often expressed in the terms of changing attitudes, values and perceptions of others and might only become apparent over time. Researchers can also make an important contribution to the field of cultural heritage studies, therefore, by devising more effective metrics of impact and better evaluations of these cultural heritage-based applied programs.

## Conclusion

Reconnecting the intangible to the tangible is a crucial if neglected dimension of efforts of cultural heritage conservation and protection. Incorporating more attention to the intangible as part of such efforts will enhance understanding of the particular ways in which heritage can be both a source of conflict and potential resource for reconciliation among key stakeholders, and as a result, increase the likelihood of success of preservation and conservation efforts. Greater appreciation for the meaningful contexts of cultural heritage must account for the relationship of the intangible to the tangible along multiple dimensions, which include scale, normativity, symbolic contestation, strategic or ideological uses of heritage, and heritage as a resource for cultural reconciliation or diplomacy. A better understanding of each dimension is an identified need for improving applied cultural heritage work in conflict and post-conflict zones. Academics in cultural fields are in a strong position to advance this goal through: documenting heritage at risk, case-based research attentive to the multiple contexts of meaning of heritage, analyses of the effects of normative frameworks on heritage protection efforts, highlighting otherwise hard-to-identify local investments in heritage, demonstrating how parties to conflict utilize heritage for strategic political ends, and working with applied practitioners to devise better ways to evaluate cultural heritage-based interventions. A first step in addressing these needs would be the development of a more effective framework for the timely sharing of academic knowledge and expertise with first responders and applied practitioners working to protect heritage under threat in theaters of conflict.

### I. Meeting Agenda—Cultural Heritage: Conflict and Reconciliation

#### Morning Workshop

The Commons, Smithsonian Castle  
1000 Jefferson Drive SW  
Washington, D.C. 20560

8:30am–9:00am	Arrival, check-in, coffee and pastries
9:00am–12:00pm	Workshop discussion
9:00–9:10	Welcome  <b>Betty Farrell</b> , Executive Director, Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago, and <b>Richard Kurin</b> , Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture at the Smithsonian Institution
9:10–9:15	Overview  <b>Rob Albro</b> , Associate Research Professor in the Center for Latin American & Latino Studies at American University
9:15–10:10	Topic 1: Cultural heritage management and conservation in conflict zones and times of war, and post-conflict humanitarian response and recovery  Presenter, <b>Laurie Rush</b> , Army Archaeologist at Fort Drum, NY, and Board Member of the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield  Moderator, <b>Gil Stein</b> , Director of the Oriental Institute and Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Chicago
10:10–10:20	Break
10:20–11:10	Topic 2: The problems of heritage looting, the antiquities trade, establishing provenance, and repatriation efforts, in global conflict  Presenter, <b>Patty Gerstenblith</b> , Distinguished Research Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Art, Museum and Cultural Heritage Law at DePaul University  Moderator, <b>Larry Rothfield</b> , Associate Professor of English and Faculty Director, Past for Sale Project, University of Chicago

11:10–12:00	<p>Topic 3: The relation of intangible to tangible heritage in international conflict, with particular attention to ethnicity, nationalism, and religion</p> <p>Presenter, <b>Michael Mason</b>, Director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage</p> <p>Moderator, <b>Rob Albro</b>, Associate Research Professor in the Center for Latin American &amp; Latino Studies at American University</p>
12:00–1:00pm	Lunch
1:00–1:30pm	Wrap-up discussion, Next steps

**Guiding question:** How to move from knowledge to practice in identifying existing challenges and effective cooperation among governmental, non-governmental, and academic contributions in addressing cultural heritage, conflict and reconciliation.

## Afternoon Public Event

Meyer Auditorium, Freer Gallery of Art

1050 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20560

2:00pm–3:00pm	<p>Leadership Panel</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p><b>Mounir Bouchenaki</b>, Director of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage</p> <p><b>Richard Kurin</b>, Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture at the Smithsonian Institution</p> <p><b>George Papagiannis</b>, External Relations and Information Officer for UNESCO</p> <p><b>Emily Rafferty</b>, President of the Metropolitan Museum of Art</p> <p>Interviewed by <b>David Rubenstein</b>, Smithsonian Regent and University of Chicago Trustee, and co-founder of The Carlyle Group</p>
3:00pm–4:00pm	<p>Discussion Panel</p> <p>Introduced by <b>Betty Farrell</b>, Executive Director of the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <p><b>Patty Gerstenblith</b>, Distinguished Research Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Art, Museum and Cultural Heritage Law at DePaul University</p> <p><b>Bill Ivey</b>, China Liaison for the American Folklore Society  <b>Maria Kouroupas</b>, Director of the Cultural Heritage Center, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State</p> <p><b>Deborah Lehr</b>, Chairman and Co-Founder, Antiquities Coalition  <b>Gil Stein</b>, Director of the Oriental Institute and Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology at the University of Chicago</p> <p>Moderated by <b>Rob Albro</b>, Associate Research Professor in the Center for Latin American &amp; Latino Studies at American University</p>
4:00pm–5:00pm	<p>Reception in the Freer Gallery Courtyard</p>

## II. Morning Workshop Participants

**Lisa Ackerman**, Executive Vice President, World Monuments Fund

**Rob Albro**, Associate Research Professor, Center for Latin American & Latino Studies at American University, and Cultural Policy Center Advisory Council member, University of Chicago

**Erik Blome**, Claudia Figueroa, Kerri Malone, Graduate Students, University of Chicago

**LeShawn Burrell-Jones**, Special Assistant, Office of the Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, Smithsonian Institution

**Eva Caldera**, Assistant Chair for Partnerships, National Endowment for the Humanities

**Johnnetta Cole**, Director, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution

**Paula DePriest**, Deputy Director, Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution

**Jamie Evans-Butler**, Foreign Service Officer, United States Agency for International Development

**Molly Fannon**, Director, Office of International Relations, Smithsonian Institution

**Erica Farmer**, James Smithson Fellow, Smithsonian Institution

**Betty Farrell**, Executive Director, Cultural Policy Center, University of Chicago

**David Ferriero**, Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration

**Karen Gahl-Mills**, Executive Director, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and Cultural Policy Center Advisory Council, University of Chicago

**Patty Gerstenblith**, Distinguished Research Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Art, Museum and Cultural Heritage Law, DePaul University

**Fiona Greenland**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Associate Research Director, Past for Sale Project, University of Chicago

**David Guldenzopf**, Director for Environmental Quality, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations, Energy and Environment

**Bill Ivey**, China Liaison, American Folklore Society

**Jessica Johnson**, Head of Conservation, Material Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution

**Maria Kouroupas**, Director, Cultural Heritage Center, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

**Richard Kurin**, Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture, Smithsonian Institution

**Deborah Lehr**, Chairman and Co-Founder, Antiquities Coalition; Chairman, Capitol Archaeological Institute, George Washington University; Senior Fellow, Paulson Institute, University of Chicago

**Nika Levando**, Assistant Director of Neighborhood Initiatives, Office of Civic Engagement, University of Chicago

**Maura Marx**, Acting Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services

**Michael Mason**, Director, Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution

**Jane Milosch**, Director, Provenance Research Initiative, Smithsonian Institution

**Stephen Morris**, Chief, Office of International Relations, United States Park Service

**Jennifer Novak-Leonard**, Research Manager, Cultural Policy Center, University of Chicago

**Michelle Olson**, Consultant, Cultural Policy Center, University of Chicago

**Geof Oppenheimer**, Associate Professor of Practice in the Arts, University of Chicago

**Michael Orlove**, Director of Multidisciplinary Arts, National Endowment for the Arts

**George Papagiannis**, External Relations and Information Officer, UNESCO

**Elizabeth Peterson**, Director, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

**Julian Raby**, Director, Freer and Sackler Galleries of Art, Smithsonian Institution

**Aviva Rosenthal**, Senior Advisor, Office of International Relations, Smithsonian Institution

**Lawrence Rothfield**, Associate Professor of English and Faculty Director, Past for Sale Project, University of Chicago

**Gwendolyn Rugg**, Program Coordinator, Cultural Policy Center, University of Chicago

**Laurie Rush**, Army Archeologist, U.S. Army and Board Member, U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield

**Gil Stein**, Director, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

**Laura Tedesco**, Cultural Heritage Program Manager, U.S. Department of State

**Michelle Volkema**, Acting Deputy Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. Department of Defense

# III. Infographic Summary of Morning Workshop



## IV. Press Coverage

[<http://news.uchicago.edu/article/2015/05/08/cultural-policy-center-smithsonian-co-host-workshop-cultural-heritage-protection>]

### Cultural Policy Center, Smithsonian co-host workshop on cultural heritage protection

### Experts discuss measures that may preserve threatened antiquities

By Rebecca A. Clay

May 8, 2015

Last month, researchers, policymakers and practitioners gathered in Washington, D.C. to explore how to preserve culture in the age of ISIS and other threats. The University of Chicago's Cultural Policy Center and the Smithsonian Institution convened the group of experts on cultural heritage protection.

Speaking at the workshop, U.S. Army archaeologist Laurie Rush said, for U.S. soldiers, protecting cultural heritage isn't only focused on official repositories for artifacts, such as a museum. Sometimes their assignments take them to places far from city centers.

To outsiders, the pomegranate orchard in a tiny village in the remotest reaches of Afghanistan's Helmand Province wouldn't look like anything special. But the U.S. soldiers approaching the orchard noticed that the walls around it were painted blue, an indication that they surrounded something sacred. It turned out that the courtyard held a shrine containing a dagger once carried by a friend of the prophet Mohammed and was a site of weekly pilgrimage for villagers from the entire region.

"Is this going to be on any list of world heritage sites? No," said Rush. But, she added, sparing cultural property from destruction goes beyond safety precautions for soldiers. "It offers a form of stability that helps communities in conflict recover in the long run."

“Cultural heritage has become very contentious in situations of conflict,” said Richard Kurin, the Smithsonian’s under secretary for history, art and culture. “But cultural heritage can also be used to help bring people together.” This was the inspiration for the daylong workshop and public event that sought to identify research needs as well as intersections for interdisciplinary collaboration in this critical cultural policy area.

Protecting cultural heritage during war is an important priority. The United States is a party to the 1954 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. That doesn’t mean a commander can protect cultural property if doing so is not a military priority, said Rush. But, she added, “the better prepared our soldiers are in terms of their ability to identify and respect cultural property, the more likely they are going to come home safe and sound.”

Fulfilling the goals of the 1954 convention requires partnership between the military and academia, said Rush, a board member of the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield, a nonprofit, non-government organization dedicated to the prevention of destruction and theft of cultural property during conflict.

She urged academics not to share privileged information, noting that comments by scholars about the use of satellite imagery to assess whether or not ISIS was destroying cultural property actually pushed the extremists to destroy what they had previously only pretended to destroy.

“And don’t perpetuate myths, Rush continued. Take the Bamiyan Buddhas, for example. Even among scholars, said Rush, there’s a common misunderstanding that the Buddhas were destroyed because they had human faces. “In actuality they were destroyed to demoralize the Hazara people of the Bamiyan valley,” she said, explaining that the Taliban paid engineers to ensure the empty niches remained standing.

Another major threat is looting of objects from archeological sites for economic gain, said Patty Gerstenblith, distinguished research professor of law who also directs the Center for Art, Museum and Cultural Heritage Law at DePaul University. “When something is undocumented and removed from that context, then knowledge, culture and history about the world and ourselves are all lost,” she said.

Unfortunately, said Gerstenblith, the U.S. government’s current approach to looting, which emphasizes identifying objects at the border and returning them to their homelands, is not enough. The government will never catch even a large

percentage of the looted objects crossing U.S. borders, said Gerstenblith. And while seizing objects at the border and returning them to their owners helps other countries, she said, these “feel-good photo opportunities” do nothing to stop the next looting. “Picking up something at the border is a failure, not a success,” she emphasized.

Instead of this “catch and release” approach, said Gerstenblith, the government should focus on criminal prosecution and the dismantling of criminal networks. She also called for greater coordination of efforts, whether it’s analyzing satellite imagery or developing “no-strike” lists for use in military conflicts.

It’s not just physical objects and sites that deserve protection, added Michael Mason, director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is also critically important, although its protection is lagging behind that of tangible cultural heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage often becomes a target in wartime. Syria is just one example, said Mason. “What we’re seeing with the absolute transformation of places like Aleppo is the erasure of a way of being that was tolerant,” he said. “That’s enormously threatening to a global community interested in sustaining difference and respecting our diverse histories.”

While intangible cultural heritage can contribute to divisiveness, it also can strengthen social bonds. For example, UNESCO has declared the *castells*, or human towers built by Catalans to celebrate their unity, one of the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity. Storytelling, whether as part of a truth and reconciliation process or after a disaster like Hurricane Katrina, also can aid recovery.

In another panel open to the public, University of Chicago Trustee David Rubenstein, a Smithsonian Regent and cofounder of the Carlyle Group, addressed the ways in which citizens can take action to protect cultural heritage. “What can a citizen do to actually have some impact on this problem?” Rubenstein asked.

UNESCO information officer George PapaGiannis replied: “It begins with making your voice heard, especially in the United States.” Citizens could raise awareness of the importance of protection of cultural heritage by writing to local newspapers or joining UNESCO’s #unite4heritage Twitter campaign. They also could push elected officials to provide adequate resources that fund preventative measures.

Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute and professor of near eastern archeology, said it's important to get beyond a reactive position by training people and developing infrastructure for protecting cultural heritage in the countries most affected by warfare.

“Education is the key to engaging citizens in protecting their own heritage,” said Stein, noting that staff at the Baghdad Museum and National Museum of Afghanistan have risked their lives to safeguard cultural treasures. “In the long run, that’s going to probably do more to protect heritage than anything else.”

See more at: <https://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/news/cpc-and-smithsonian-institution-hold-event-cultural-heritage-washington-dc>