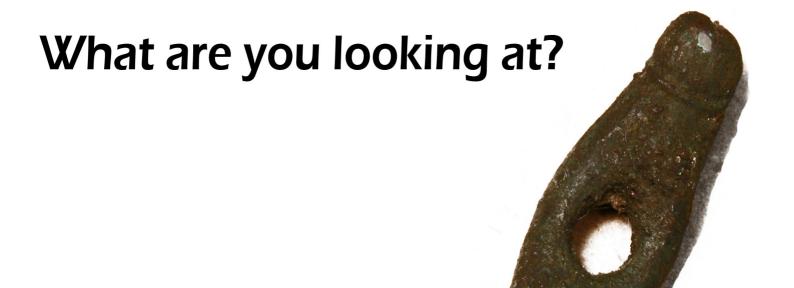
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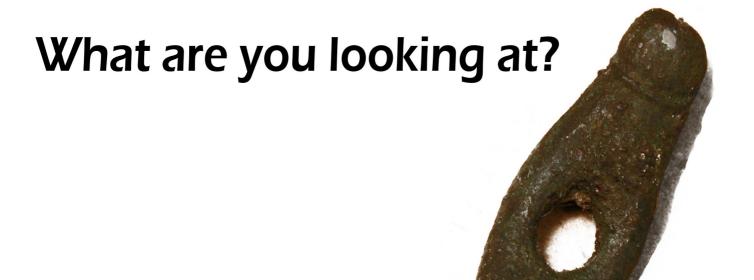
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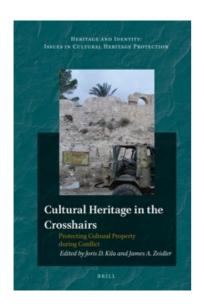
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## **REVIEWS**



Ignacio RODRÍGUEZ TEMIÑO

# Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs Protecting Cultural Property during Conflict

[Joris D. Kila and James A. Zeidler (Eds.)]

Brill

ISBN: 9789004251427

2013

Think what's happened in our cities when we've had riots, and problems, and looting. *Stuff happens!* But in terms of what's going on in that country, it is a fundamental misunderstanding to see those images over, and over, and over again of some boy walking out with a vase and say, 'Oh, my goodness, you didn't have a plan.' That's nonsense. They know what they're doing, and they're doing a terrific job. And it's untidy, and freedom's untidy, and free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things. They're also free to live their lives and do wonderful things, and that's what's going to happen here (DoD briefing release, 4/11/03, emphasis added). (Kila and Zeidler, pp. 360)

After reading a quite complacent press release, U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld had to face some questions about the looting of the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad that televisions were broadcasting worldwide in April 2003. Although he tried to downplay the seriousness of the facts, he could not put out the fire caused by the lack of interest in avoiding the damage of cultural institutions, after the capture of Baghdad by U.S. troops. The image of the U.S. around the world was mortally wounded and no laughing or dismissive remark by Rumsfeld or any other representative of the Department of Defense in the press room would restore it.

These actions and events triggered a negative reaction all over the world, not only in those countries deemed responsible for allowing such looting to happen, but in the cultural preservation community (composed of archaeologists and other cultural heritage specialists). One of the main outcomes from this process has been the publication of dozens of books and papers discussing issues about protecting cultural property in conflicts.

The book edited by Joris D. Kila and James A. Zeidler follows this track. Both Kila and Zeidler have an outstanding background in Cultural Property Protection (CPP) in armed conflicts issues. The former has undertaken several assessments on cultural heritage missions under different international organizations' umbrellas in countries such as Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and Mali; and the latter has a long history of training U.S. troops in CPP.

Having overcome debates focused primarily on discussing ethical issues related to whether archaeologists were right to collaborate with the military, CPP practitioners have put their all into developing the military's capabilities in dealing with cultural properties. CPP has a predominantly case study-based methodology, as is common in recent research fields, and this volume is an example of that methodology. In its first chapter, the book is devoted to discussing the different approaches to CPP in the military, and the rest of the chapters show cases of CPP training, CPP military planning, and historical perspectives on CPP.

I believe that there is an underlying debate about CPP that is not explained in the book, but this is worth pointing out because it can explain some of the underpinning topics surrounding CPP. CPP practices are based on the ius in bello, especially with the rule that has to do with discrimination between combatants and non-combatants. This is one of the Just War Theory principles; those precepts demand that wars are fought according to the moral standards usually accepted by the international community, even if the enemies do not share these values. But international law depends on wide acceptance and adherence by members of the global community for it to be efficient and effective. That is one point, while some national military forces already strive to prevent damage to cultural property during armed conflicts, not all actors show the same restrictions. Indeed, as Kila exposes in his chapter, cultural resources have come to constitute a target for belligerents. The case pointed out by Kila about Mali and the 'Ansār ad-Dīn group represents an outstanding example.

It seems that a revolutionary transformation of warfare has taken place in some countries. And now there is a division between

international law abiding and non-international-law-abiding countries. If we accept this, it not only could explain why all the cases recorded in CPP publications are presented by more or less the same countries, but it would put the geopolitical limits of the reach of the requirements for protecting cultural heritage in conflict too. Going beyond this limit seems to be almost impossible.

However, despite the supposed revolution of moral concern, in the reality of war such proper conduct seems to be lacking. Even liberal and developed states are more focused on war damages committed against their own cultural property than those committed by them.

Modern wars, characterized by being *dés-étatisée* and *dé-militarisée*, are so different from principles of wars in the past. Yet one of the past principles remains inalterable: that war is fueled by emotion, which always becomes a hatred for the foe (as described by Carl von Clausewitz, 1780-1831). Hate produces atrocities from both sides in a reciprocal upward spiral. This means that wars are *dé-civilisée* and, by their basic nature, drive onwards to extremes. So, once *the dogs of war* have been released, doubts concerning the effectiveness of the training received by the military in CPP can arise, as countries involved in armed conflicts are resistant to moral evaluations.

But there is a growing optimism among cosmopolitan people toward the transformations of international relations based on human rights, so that meeting moral standards is a demand for developed countries in armed conflicts. It embraces CPP as well. From the maelstrom of images generated by the invasion of Iraq, among the most disturbing were those of the damage to archaeological sites and cultural institutions. Probably more so than those scenes of coalition forces vainly searching for weapons of mass destruction. Why? Perhaps not only because we are more familiar with human suffering than cultural looting, but because the U.S. troops were the forces responsible for creating a situation in Iraq that allowed for easier access of looting and impacting cultural material. The army, being responsible for such damages, is an important issue in the public response. For example, what is happening to great monuments in Syria, reported daily from the ground by journalists and cultural heritage specialists, does not have the same effect on the audience as it does in Iraq. I think that the main reason for the difference in the real political impact of those sets of images lies in a subconscious perception: people expect armies of developed and liberal countries to behave according to the internationally accepted outstanding code of conduct. Although the U.S. Government tried to justify their failure to react to stopping the looting of Iraq's

cultural institutions, they noticed the disastrous damage caused and did what could be done to correct the negative image they were projecting.

Thus, due to the importance of public opinion in forcing states to follow moral codes, a chapter devoted to this topic in the book edited by Kila and Zeidler would be a welcome addition. By the same token, it must be stressed that military training in CPP should not only be focused on giving abilities to the troops to deal with cultural property, but on moral behaviour and ethics as well, as many of the chapters are about experiences on how to integrate CPP training packages into pre-existing elements of cultural awareness when training military personnel.

It is difficult to make successful appeals to the military to start implementing the Hague 1954 Convention, but there is probably a better chance of it when armies are deployed in peace support operations than when they are involved in combat. The creation of international cultural emergency assessment teams (not necessarily military or militarized, I think), as claimed by Kila, should be seriously undertaken by international agencies. They could be an important tool to inform the public opinion on what is happening to the cultural property during conflicts, and force the parties to agree on some restrictions. To do so, those teams should be regarded as impartial, and that is why I disagree with the proposed militarized character.

The book is full of goodwill suggestions and valuable experiences but it shows the present gap existing between goodwill and the real world, and that there is no quick answer to match all the challenges and threats that CPP in armed conflicts must face in the next few years.

## **BLOG REVIEWS UNTIL VOL 4**

- Almansa-Sánchez, J. Audiences... A review of the CASPAR session at TAG-on-Sea 2013 (Bournemouth University) 11 February
- Papagiannopoulou, E. Multivocality and Technology: Review of a lecture at the Irish Institute of Hellenic Studies at Athens (IIHSA) 14 February
- Touloupa, S. A 30-year retrospect of the Greek Ministry of Culture educational programmes: an insider's insight 25 April
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Book

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Section in book

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We will be publishing one volume per year (first trimester) and although we are willing to receive papers the whole year, full articles for next-year's volume should be sent before October in order to complete the process with time.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the editor at: jasarqueologia@gmail.com

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