

# **"Teaching Respect for Physical Expression of Cultural Values at the Trans-National Level; a New Paradigm for Peace Keeping and Conflict Resolution"**

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## **Abstract**

All too often, through ignorance, loss, theft, and deliberate destruction, generations of the present fail to preserve, protect, and hand on the physical expressions of culture to the generations of the future. Driven by the belief that preservation of cultural property can provide shared goals and an opportunity for cross cultural and trans-national dialogue, a small group of archaeologists and museum professionals have begun to work together at the international level to develop educational materials specifically designed to teach respect for cultural materials to members of military forces. Like it or not, members of fighting forces are often the very people humanity must rely on to save sacred places, historic structures, collections of cultural property like museums and libraries, and even archaeological sites from the ravages of disaster both natural and man-made. From heritage mapping to archaeology awareness playing cards; this paper describes teaching methods, preservation accomplishments in conflict and disaster areas, plans for future effort and international cooperation, and the implications of these efforts for peace keeping, peace-making, and conflict resolution.

## **Introduction**

### **Archaeologists, the Military, and Protection of Heritage**

In the United States, all lands that are owned by the federal government must follow the United States National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). These rules include military land. As a result, every military base in the US is required to have a cultural resources management program that is responsible for the protection of any cultural property that could be eligible for

the US Register of Historic Places. These properties can and do include historic structures as well as archaeological sites. Quite often, the US military cultural resource programs are run by archaeologists who have advanced degrees in anthropology and/or archaeology. In addition, the US Department of Defense Native American Consultation policy makes it very clear that each base will also have a Native American Affairs Coordinator who is responsible for handling diplomatic relations between the military leaders of the installation and Native American Heads of State whose ancestors have ties to the military lands. Quite often, the Cultural Resources Manager also serves as the Native American Affairs Coordinator and works as an advocate for partnership between descendent populations and the military so that ancestral sites are preserved and are available for worship and ceremonial activity when appropriate.<sup>1</sup> Qualified archaeologists who work in the US military cultural resources management program number in the hundreds. They have surveyed millions of acres, have discovered hundreds of thousands of archaeological sites, and they work to understand and preserve tens of thousands of these important places. The US military archaeology program does not receive much publicity, and its existence often comes as a surprise to citizens of the United States as well as to members of the international community.

When the United States entered Iraq in 2003, it very quickly became clear that in spite of a robust cultural heritage protection program at home, military archaeologists had a lot of work to do to help prepare personnel deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan to understand the nature and importance of the archaeology and cultural heritage that they were going to encounter abroad.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the references to US Defense Consultation Policy prompted by Federal Legislation and Executive Orders that are all listed in the References Cited.

The results of these efforts have become known as the “In Theater Heritage Training Program for Deploying Personnel.” With support from the Office of the Secretary of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program and Defense Environmental International Cooperation Program, military archaeologists and preservation professionals from all over the United States began to work together to develop reference materials for teaching military personnel about heritage, archaeology, historic structures, and sacred places. These materials even included archaeology awareness playing cards.<sup>2</sup> As the team began to work more on issues of cultural properties and their protection, to collaborate with international colleagues, and to encounter increasingly thoughtful questions from military personnel, it became clear that the challenges posed by the need to “respect physical expression of cultural values at the trans-national level” are more complex and sophisticated than originally thought.

### **Physical Expression of Cultural Values**

It is not unusual for material culture to be forgotten when people think about the areas that Culture Studies may encompass. It is even more common for scholars and scientists to fail to recognize and identify features in the landscape that have tremendous cultural significance. While comprehensive scholarship is important, when military personnel operating in an unfamiliar place fail to recognize and therefore fail to respect an important landscape feature, perhaps the grave of a child marked by a pile of stones, the omission can result in violent retribution. Therefore, it is important to consider what the nature of these features might be.

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<sup>2</sup> An example of the reference materials developed can be found at <http://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/cptraining.html>.

One way to begin is to consider geographic features in the landscape to which people assign cultural attributes. Examples include the Monteluco Sacred Forest in Umbria, Italy; the Creation Place of the Wanapum People in central Washington State; and the Devil's Tower National Monument, in the State of Wyoming. Inscriptions and markers tell us that some forests in Italy have been considered sacred places at least since ancient Roman times,<sup>3</sup> and the Monteluco Forest today is still used as a place for religious practitioners to retreat and pray. During World War II, British Forces failed to recognize the spiritual significance of this forest and began to cut down the trees in order to rebuild bridges across the Po River that the Germans had destroyed.<sup>4</sup> Forest damage was causing great distress to the Italians, and the British were helped by the Monuments Officers to find bridge building alternatives.

The Creation Place of the Wanapum people consists of a semi-circular rock formation with caves that overlooks the Columbia River. From their Creation Place, the Wanapum can survey the portion of the River that has been their traditional access for water and fish resources. Because the United States Army is now responsible for the care of this place, the Wanapum people now have the access that they need to come and worship there.

Spiritual or cultural value can also be ascribed to individual or types of plants and animals. The Okinawan dugong, a Pacific Ocean marine mammal, is considered to be a cultural icon by the Okinawan people and appears on the Okinawan equivalent of the United States National Register of Historic Places. US courts have supported the Okinawan's request that

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<sup>3</sup> Spellani, F. *Pro Trevi*. Associazione Pro Trevi. 22 June 2011. Web. <[www.protrevi.com](http://www.protrevi.com)> .

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Hartt, *Florentine Art Under Fire*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949) 93-94.

concerns for the dugong be taken into consideration during the course of planning for Naval Base expansion in the area.<sup>5</sup>

Once a place or geographic feature takes on sacred or cultural attributes, it is not unusual for people to begin to add architectural features or objects of symbolic or sacred significance. Throughout the world, we find temple podia on the summits of hills and mountains. It is also not unusual for religious features to become contested spaces or for religious structures to change in nature and type over time in the same location. People also leave clues in the environment that indicate tremendous value or the sacred nature of a place, plant, or geographic feature. For example, it is very common to symbolize prayers by tying a ribbon or an offering like herbs or tobacco to a fence or plant. Sacred features may be obvious like shrines to the Madonna in Europe or they may be more subtle, like sacred stones. However, the presence of offerings, like flowers or candles, is often a clue that an object or feature is important and highly valued. Carvings or inscriptions on rocks are also excellent indicators of cultural value as are images painted, etched or pecked into rock faces.

Interments of human remains are also marked in a wide variety of ways when considered from a cross-cultural perspective. Tombs and burials can range from extraordinary structures like the rock tombs of Petra Jordan, Pyramids of Egypt, and Mounds of Bin Tepe Turkey, to more humble markers like piles of stones, wooden sculptures and even a simple circular marking made with bits of building debris as noted at Tell Arba'ah Kabiir, Iraq.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that

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<sup>5</sup> See also *Dugong vs Gates*, a court case heard before the Ninth District Court of California. *Dugong v. Gates*, 453 F.Supp.2d 1082 (N.D. Cal. 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Information gained from personal communication with Dianne Siebrandt, heritage liaison for the State Department in Bagdad.

sometimes people request to be buried in archaeological sites as a way of creating a physical connection to an ancient and glorious past.

There are also much more formal methods for designating material expressions of cultural value in the landscape. Many communities and nations have designated their most valuable cultural properties by putting them on national lists. If you visit Austria, for example, you will see buildings with red flags designating their importance. There is a United Nations agreement called the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in Times of Armed Conflict that also offers a “blue shield” sign as a way of designating cultural property of value. The Blue Shield is intended to work like the Red Cross or Red Crescent as these symbols are recognized to designate protection for medical facilities. In addition, there are lists of world heritage sites where committees associated with the United Nations review applications from local communities and nations to determine if an archaeological site or structure may be of historic value to all the people of the world.

### **Risks to Cultural Property**

So at this point, it is reasonable and useful to ask, “What puts cultural property at risk?” If these features are valuable and sacred, and they are clearly marked, why is there concern about their protection and preservation? There is a range of answers to these questions. First of all, natural disasters often claim cultural property. Earthquakes, tsunamis, fires, floods, and severe storms all take their toll, not just on human life but also on the material expressions of cultural value. Once the human toll has been taken, community members look for their own possessions of greatest value, and the community as a whole looks to elements of the places and objects that mattered most to them as they begin to consider how they will rebuild as a corporate and connected group of people. Unfortunately, human conflict also creates disasters for people and

property. In situations of ethnic and genocidal conflict, cultural property may be targeted specifically with a goal of demoralizing a community and of physically removing the features and structures that connect a group of people with their territory and connections to the land.

### **Role of the Military for Prevention and Preservation**

In an ideal world, we would not need military forces. In our world, military forces should protect the populations that support them and should be providing power that leads to peace and stability. When the US military archaeologists began to teach deploying personnel about the archaeological properties, historic structures, collections of cultural objects, and sacred places in the foreign landscapes where they were headed, these preservation professionals realized that there really needed to be three approaches in order to address the issue in a comprehensive way. The three approaches are: Military Education and Training; Mapping and Planning; and Setting up Rules, Regulations, and Processes for situations where military personnel encounter cultural property.

Military education and training requires education and awareness for all levels of military personnel from the entering enlisted person to the highest ranking officers. Quite often, specialized personnel require specialized knowledge when it comes to cultural property. Heavy equipment operators need to know where archaeological sites are located so that they do not attempt to build new structures on top of them or excavate utilities across them. Fighter pilots need a “no strike” list, a list of buildings and sites that may not be subjected to aerial bombardment unless the opposition has used the property first for military purposes. The very recent example of reports that government forces in Libya are using the Roman site of Leptis

Magna to store weaponry would be an example here.<sup>7</sup> These same fighter pilots also need opportunities to practice avoiding special places when they are preparing for battle. Military policemen need training to identify objects of antiquity when they are searching vehicles, cargo, and even military baggage so that objects are not removed from their countries of origin. Part of effective military education also includes scenarios where military personnel can practice situations where they encounter cultural property. For example, they may need to practice or at least discuss occupation of an archaeological site so that they learn the necessary skills to minimize their damage and potential impact.

Military education also includes awareness training. Training of this type includes information about how to recognize cultural property in foreign landscapes, the importance of showing respect for property and objects of significance, how to respond appropriately when cultural property is encountered during the course of a military operation, and opportunities to practice these appropriate responses. The US heritage awareness program includes construction of replica archaeological sites for land and air practice, development of the heritage information websites mentioned above, military personnel pocket information cards, the playing cards, and lectures for military personnel. In the US, the Archaeological Institute of America and its former President, Dr. Brian Rose, have been extremely pro-active and supportive, offering lectures to military personnel about archaeology and heritage for Afghanistan and Iraq at no cost to the Department of Defense.

One of the most effective forms of archaeological awareness training has been “on site” training. The military archaeologists have found that when you have the opportunity to take military personnel to an actual archaeological site, the site does all the teaching. It is a numinous

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<sup>7</sup> CNN Wire Staff. *NATO refuses to rule out bombing Libyan Roman ruins*, June 14, 2011.



experience for the personnel and makes a significant and positive impression. Our experience has been that once we have the opportunity to take military personnel to an authentic and important archaeological site, they are extremely responsive in terms of wanting to learn more and in terms of requesting further guidance for managing a similar property during the course of a military mission. Sir Leonard Woolley had a very similar experience with British military personnel during an on-site training program at Cyrenica in Libya during World War II.<sup>8</sup> It has been our experience that when we have the opportunity to work with military personnel on a site, they indicate tremendous willingness to insure site protection if we can provide them with the necessary maps and information. These comments lead us to Part Two of the three part approach, Mapping and Planning.

During military operations, mapping often begins with a “no strike” list provided for military pilots. The purpose of the “no strike” list is to offer guidance in terms of valuable cultural property that should be protected from aerial bombardment. Given the sensitive nature of the list, since a combatant would be tempted to hide military hardware in a place where there is confidence that it will not be attacked from the air, the “no strike” list is often classified, even when its source is civilian subject matter experts. It could be noted for example, that the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad had a blue shield painted on its roof, clearly marking it as a structure that should be protected from aerial bombardment. However, as soon as ground operations begin, it is critical for the ground forces to have information, maps, and locations that identify valuable cultural property. Without this information, the ground forces cannot set priorities for site protection and other measures.

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<sup>8</sup> Leonard Woolley. *A Record of the Work Done by the Military Authorities for the Protection of the Treasures of Art and History in War Areas*. (London: Her Majesties’ Stationery Office, 1947).

It is also critical to note that military forces responding to natural disasters also require information about the location of collections of cultural objects like museums and art galleries. When a building collapses during the course of a disaster, the appropriate emergency response to a museum is much different from the response to perhaps a school with empty classrooms. In the latter case, the rubble from an empty school could be removed and the site cleared for immediate reconstruction. In the case of a museum or library, all of the rubble must be inspected so that artifacts, books, or other critical cultural materials can be salvaged prior to removing debris and clearing the site. The lesson is illustrated beautifully by the experience of Lieutenant Frederick Hartt at the Columbaria Society of Florence, Italy in World War II.<sup>9</sup> After the Germans destroyed the structure, Hartt insisted on inspection of the rubble, prior to the debris being bulldozed into the Arno River. His actions saved thousands of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, codices, and incunabulae.

There is no question that accurate maps, preparation of lists, and sources of detailed associated information are all critical for potential protection of valued cultural property. However it is critical that the lists are combined with military education and awareness. In every small village and town all over the world, there are going to be features of value in the landscape that will never appear on anyone's global list. It is vitally important that outsiders realize that these features will be present and that they too will require respect and protection.

The third component of the US three part approach is Management and Response. The United States has powerful historic preservation legislation. As described above, not only do these laws help to protect cultural property within the fifty United States, they also obligate US forces to follow their own laws when they are in positions of responsibility overseas. In addition,

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<sup>9</sup> Hartt, 52-53.

when working with the military, archaeologists and preservation professionals have found that the addition of specific military regulations that govern behavior toward cultural property can be an immensely powerful tool when it comes to effective cultural property protection and stewardship. The signature of the Chief of Staff for the Central Command Environmental Regulation 200-2 in 2008 put in place powerful guidance for US forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, when a young Soldier, at Forward Operating Base Hammer just east of Baghdad, Iraq noticed a military contractor beginning to excavate archaeological material, he was able to use the new Central Command regulation for authorization to not only stop the behavior but to also put up protective signs around the site. Members of the Command Group at Forward Operating Base Hammer quickly discovered that preservation issues gave them common ground for shared goals and interaction with the local Iraqi community government. Experiences of this nature are beginning to drive the paradigm shift from cultural property protection as a “force multiplier” and as a tool for mission support to an actual potential component of conflict resolution and making peace.

### **The Paradigm Shift; Peace Making as Opposed to Peace Keeping**

The good news is that there are excellent examples of cultural property protection projects and activities that can lead toward stability at the community level and making peace. There are a series of positive examples from US efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. During the phase of active looting of Mesopotamian City sites in the south of Iraq, US forces expanded the perimeter of Talil Air Base to incorporate the ancient City of Ur. By 2009, when the situation had calmed in the region, the Iraqis expressed interest in resuming responsibility for stewardship of the ancient city. As a result, the US rebuilt the protective fence, dividing the base from the site, and there was a celebration of the return of Ur from US to Iraqi stewardship in May of 2009

with over 300 Iraqi people in attendance. Another example is the Ziggurat at Aqar Quf. A young Lieutenant, Ben Roberts, whose education was in preservation, was on the scene when local officials were showing damage to the tourist amenities. Lt. Roberts suggested to his commanding officer that a small amount of funds could be used to rebuild the café at the site, enabling it to re-open for tourists once more. Access to the site then offered the first step toward rebuilding a portion of the local economy.<sup>10</sup>

In Afghanistan, US military archaeologists in combination with academic subject matter expert colleagues and partners from the Afghan ministry of culture have developed a series of projects to help preserve and protect Afghan culture. Dr. Rush, in 2010, helped to initiate a project where the United States Army Corps of Engineers is supporting construction of an artifact conservation facility where objects being salvaged from the ancient Buddhist City of Mes Aynek Afghanistan can be stabilized and preserved. Dr. Rush's team in partnership Dr. James Zeidler and GIS analysts from Colorado State University are also geo-rectifying an atlas of Afghan archaeological sites provided by Dr. Fred Hebert, the NGA, and graduate students from around the world. Even though this map was created as a military planning document, the current plan is for this map to become the basis for developing an Afghan list of National Heritage sites.

### **Turkey and Stewardship for the Future**

It is extremely rewarding to have experienced examples in Turkey where partnerships for cultural stewardship are leading the way in terms of long term preservation and our ability to offer heritage to our children and succeeding generations. Catal Hoyuk is an excellent example

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<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Roberts. "A Case Study in Cultural Heritage Protection in Time of War." Paper Presented at the World Archaeological Inter-Congress, Archaeology and Conflict, Vienna, 2010.

of a place where members of the local community are partnering with professional archaeologists. Not only are they working together to protect this site, which is part of the heritage of the entire world, but also members of the local community are providing expertise and perspectives for explaining and interpretation of features within the site.

Turkey is also very fortunate in that the wisdom of Attaturk resulted in cases where religious and potentially contentious spaces became museums. Hagia Sophia is now a beacon to the world where members of various faiths may gather to appreciate the art, brilliance, genius, and faith of their forbears in an extra-ordinary structure.

One of the most exciting examples currently being offered by Turkey to the world is the de-mining of the ancient site of Carcamesh.<sup>11</sup> How appropriate that members of an international team are removing weapons from the ancient place where the world's first peace treaty was found. It is hoped that by making the site safe for visitors, it can also contribute to the future of the local community.

## **Conclusion**

We live in a world where one country's military planning map can become the basis for another country's new national register of archaeological sites and where removing land mines from an ancient city can open an area for guests from around the world. These are opportunities and examples for paradigm shifts - opportunities for members of local communities, archaeologists, and even members of foreign armies to work together to learn the lessons of the past and work together for a better future, for all of us.

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<sup>11</sup> Hurriyet Daily News. "Ancient City Cleared of Mines Digging to Start." (Gazientep, Anatolian News Agency, April 1, 2011), 1.

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