

Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs

Protecting Cultural Property during Conflict

Edited by

Joris D. Kila
James A. Zeidler



BRILL

LEIDEN · BOSTON
2013

© 2013 Koninklijke Brill NV ISBN 9789004247819

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	IX
Glossary	XIII
Introduction	1
<i>Karl von Habsburg</i>	

PART ONE

APPROACHES TO CULTURAL PROPERTY PROTECTION IN THE MILITARY

Military Involvement in Cultural Property Protection as Part of Preventive Conservation	9
<i>Joris D. Kila</i>	
Respecting and Protecting Cultural Heritage in Peace Support Operations—A Pragmatic Approach	51
<i>Michael Pesendorfer</i>	

PART TWO

CULTURAL PROPERTY PROTECTION TRAINING

Cultural Property Protection and the Training Continuum in the U.S. Department of Defense	69
<i>James A. Zeidler</i>	
Developing a Cultural Property Protection Training Program for ROTC: Methodology, Content, and Structure	93
<i>John Valainis</i>	
Conflicting Memory: The Use of Conflict Archaeology Sites as Training for Operational Troops	113
<i>Richard Osgood</i>	
Developing a NATO Cultural Property Protection Capability	133
<i>Michael Hallett</i>	

PART THREE

CPP AND MILITARY PLANNING

- Aiming to Miss: Engaging with the Targeting Process as a Means of
Cultural Property Protection 151
Michael Hallett

PART FOUR

CASE STUDIES ON CPP AND MILITARY OPERATIONS

- A Case Study in Cultural Heritage Protection in a Time of War 169
Benjamin A. Roberts and Gary B. Roberts
- Preserving Cultural Heritage in Time of Conflict: A Tool for
Counterinsurgency 195
Cheryl White and Thomas Livoti
- Heritage Destruction and Spikes in Violence: The Case of Iraq 219
Benjamin Isakhan
- A Report on Archaeological Site Stability and Security in
Afghanistan: The Lashkari Bazar Survey 249
Matthieu Murdock and Carrie Hritz

PART FIVE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CPP

- Holy Places—Contested Heritage: Dealing with Cultural Heritage in
the Region of Palestine from the Ottoman Period until Today 263
Friedrich Schipper
- Urban Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflict: The Case of Beirut
Central District 287
Caroline A. Sandes
- Antiquity & Conflict: Some Historical Remarks on a Matter of
Selection 315
Mirjam Hoijtink

Plundering Boys: A Cultural Criminology Assessment on the Power of Cultural Heritage as a Cause for Plunder in Armed Conflicts along History	329
<i>Marc Balcells</i>	
Conclusion	351
<i>Joris D. Kila and James A. Zeidler</i>	
Index	355

HERITAGE DESTRUCTION AND SPIKES IN VIOLENCE:
THE CASE OF IRAQ

Benjamin Isakhan

Introduction

*Dort, wo man bücher verbrennt, verbrennt
man am ende auch menschen.*

Where men burn books, they will burn
people also in the end.

Heine, 1982 [1821]: 187

Since the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces in 2003, the Iraqi people have endured an extraordinary period of both heritage destruction and devastating violence. This began during the battle phase of the war which brought with it 'collateral damage' in the form of an escalating death toll and severe damage to sensitive cultural and historical sites across the nation. However, this cannot compare to the almost nine subsequent years of military occupation. In terms of cultural heritage, the very earliest days of the occupation saw an unprecedented degree of looting and arson in which important state institutions were the main target, including the Iraq National Museum (INM), the Iraq National Library and Archive (INLA), and the Museum of Modern Art. Since then a number of sensitive historic locations have suffered irrevocable damage like Mesopotamian archaeological sites, an Abbasid-era palace and mosque, an Ottoman-era mosque and the Hashemite Parliament House. Paralleling these events, the coalition forces and the Iraqi government orchestrated an extensive project to De-Baathify Iraq, which included the tearing down of statues or motifs dedicated to the former regime and the transformation of various state buildings and monuments into military bases. In addition, many Iraqi civilians have become involved in black market operations that systematically excavate and smuggle out artefacts from historic sites, while ethno-religious sectarianism has escalated to the point where feuding factions have targeted monuments of religious and historic significance to enact their revenge. More recently, the

Shia and Kurdish dominated Iraqi Government have organised the 'Committee for Removing Symbols of the Saddam Era' and drew up plans to purge the state of its Sunni dominated past.

Given the unprecedented degree of cultural and historical devastation that Iraq has suffered since 2003, it is hardly surprising that a whole host of scholarly studies have attempted to document and analyse this destruction (Bogdanos, 2005; Rothfield, 2009). Foremost among these are a series of edited collections that bring together accounts by leading Iraqi and international archaeologists, historians, cultural and heritage workers, diplomats, government officials and military officers. These include *The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia* which not only includes descriptions of the attack on the IMN but also includes a detailed catalogue of the rich history of Iraq and the ways in which this history was brought to life in the museum (Polk & Schuster, 2005). Along similar lines *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* resulted from an exhibition of the same name hosted by the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago and includes contributions from their staff as well as from those who witnessed the cultural and historical destruction first hand such as the IMN's (former) Director of Antiquities and Research, Dr Donny George (Emberling & Hanson, 2008). Both broader in focus and richer in detail are the contributions found in *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* which includes detailed analyses of the looting of various archaeological sites across Iraq, as well as discussions of the efforts of the Italian and Polish forces to protect such sites (Stone & Bajjaly, 2008b). This is taken a step further in *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection After the Iraq War* with essays ranging in their focus from the international black market in antiquities, the role of legislative bodies such as the Hague Convention in protecting cultural property, and several papers which suggest strategies for the implementation of more effective policy and strategy moving forward (Rothfield, 2008c).

What is curiously absent from the existing literature however, is a sustained discussion of the implications that the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage has had on the erosion of Iraqi identity politics, and on the rise of ethno-religious sectarianism and violence. This paper therefore addresses this lacuna by using Iraq as a case study via which to begin to investigate the complex inter-relationships between cultural and historical destruction on the one hand and identity politics and sectarian violence on the other. This paper argues that the unprecedented scale and magnitude of the destruction of Iraq's cultural history has played a part in eroding the various intersecting and overlapping versions of identity politics in Iraq. In turn, this has

provided fertile ground for sectarians to plant the seeds of their own narrow and deadly ideologies. This has brought about the rise of ethno-religious based violence and seen a series of bloody and protracted conflicts emerge between previously peaceful and compatible factions. What is of particular interest here is that much of the cultural and historical landscape that has been destroyed since 2003 had come to play an important role in developing the notion of a collective Iraqi identity as promulgated by the Baathist regime. For example, under the rule of Saddam Hussein, Iraq underwent an extensive nation building campaign consisting of projects as diverse as the reconstruction of key archaeological sites, a reinvigoration of traditional Iraqi folklore and festivals, and the extension of state libraries and museums. While identity politics was and remains a complex and contested field in Iraq, the nation's cultural history was central to the formation of a variety of different identities in Iraq and garnered at least some degree of social cohesion and inclusion. The chapter begins by briefly detailing the role that Iraq's cultural heritage has played in building national identity and social cohesion since 1968. It then catalogues some of the more significant cultural and historical destruction that has occurred in Iraq since 2003. Finally, this paper tentatively examines the extent to which this destruction has had implications for the rise of ethno-religious sectarianism and violence.

Cultural Heritage and Identity Politics in Iraq, 1968–2003

When the Ba'ath Party ascended to power in 1968¹ they began an extensive and sustained cultural campaign in which the successes of the nation's past became a symbol of Iraq's potential as a united and prosperous state. Based on their curious ideological mix of secular nationalism,² anti-imperialism

¹ As far back as 1951 the fledgling Arab Baath Socialist Party (Hizb Al-Baath Al-Arabi Al-Ishtiraki; Baath translates to mean 'Awakening', 'Renaissance' or 'Renewal' and the party will henceforth be termed the Baath) had been gathering momentum in the Iraqi armed forces. Although it originally developed in Damascus around 1940 and emigrated to Iraq in 1949, the Baathist ideology developed a loyal following in Iraq under the leadership of Faud Al-Rikabi, a young Iraqi engineer from Nasiriyya (Baram, 1991: 9–13). Baathism was to go on to play a crucial part in the 1958 Revolution and held power briefly in 1963.

² It is important to clarify that the Iraqi Baath party fluctuated between two overlapping visions of nationalism: Arab nationalism (and even pan-Arabism) and Iraqi nationalism. As part of the former, the Baath frequently asserted that they wanted to lead the Arab world into a new era of economic and militaristic success, hence the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s. However, such visions of Arab nationalism were generally premised on one key condition, that the Baath party would be the leaders of this new Arab world and Iraq would be its epicentre. At the same time however, and in order to maintain domestic stability, the Baath also underwent

and socialism, the Baath used the nation's considerable oil wealth to revive Iraqi folklore and utilise the political power of popular culture to carry out a very symbolic nation-building exercise (Davis, 2005: 149). When Saddam Hussein seized power in 1979, he hijacked Baathist ideology in order to develop his own personal dictatorship built on terror, coercion and violence. While it is by now well known that he purged the state of any opposition, that he routinely committed grievous crimes against Iraq's many religious and ethnic minorities, and that he was one of the cruellest despots of modern times, it is perhaps less well known that Hussein was also a powerful and charismatic politician, a master of a rhetoric that appealed directly to the 'everyday' Iraqi and an expert at image management (Bengio, 1998; Mansfield, 1982). He began by building and refining a particular cult of personality, developing a reputation as a political revolutionary, a brilliant strategist, a paternal figure who cared deeply about his nation and a visionary who could lead Iraq—and indeed the entire Arab world—into a modern and prosperous future. Eventually, Hussein took this cult of personality to new, almost surreal levels. His image became ubiquitous across Iraq. His larger than life image was unfolded across city avenues, his voice echoed out across the airwaves, his portrait appeared on the daily newspapers, his story became the plot of epic novels, his speeches were shown in full on state television and giant statues of him looked out over his new Iraq (Isakhan, 2012a: 97–118).

However, to reduce Hussein's cult of personality and the dexterity with which the Baath handled state propaganda to Hussein's vanity, his megalomania or his penchant for gaudy imagery, is to severely underestimate the ability of the Iraqi dictatorship to utilise political symbology to create a collective historical memory and degrees of national identity and social inclusion. Their project was so much more than the banality of tyrannical imagery that leered and watched as you went about your day. It was a concerted effort to unite the Iraqi people behind the Baathist vision of an Iraqi state that was to be a major player in the post-colonial Arab world built atop a platform of social inclusion, national unity, civic strength and military power.

an extensive program towards Iraqi nationalism. These two visions of nationalism were intimately intertwined and often indistinguishable throughout Baathist Iraq. In other words, the vision of Iraq as the head of a new Arab world could only be achieved if Iraqi nationalism was strong and, at the same time, the vision of a strong and united Iraq was connected to its aspirations as the leading Arab state. Although connected in this way, this article will focus mostly on the promulgation of Iraqi nationalism under the Baath.

To achieve such lofty goals, Hussein set about a very specifically designed politico-discursive campaign spearheaded by the unashamedly and blatantly titled 'The Project for the Re-Writing of History'. Here, Iraqi authors and scholars were commandeered by the state in their attempt to reduce Iraq's past down to an overly simplistic narrative. 'More than simple political indoctrination' as Eric Davis notes, 'the project represented an attempt to construct a new public sphere, including the reconstitution of political identity, the relationship of the citizen to the state, and public understandings of national heritage' (Davis, 2005: 148). In this project, nothing was sacred. Every epoch of Iraq's long and complex history was re-interpreted, re-written or simply fabricated in order to align the past with contemporary Baathist ideology. According to Saddam Hussein himself, the 'writing of Arab history' must 'be from our [Baathist] point of view with an emphasis on analysis [i.e. form] and not realistic storytelling [i.e. content]' (Hussein, 1977, as cited in: Al-Khalil, 1991: 36).

Two particular historical epochs on which the Baath focused much of their attention were ancient Mesopotamia and classical Islam. In the case of the former, the Baath simply ignored the historical inaccuracy of relating the ancient Mesopotamians to the contemporary Arabs, and radically shifted the period from that of *Al-Jahiliya* ('ignorance') to that of the 'Arabs before Islam' (Davis & Gavrielides, 1991: 134–135). To do this, the Ba'ath reinvigorated Mesopotamian folklore, funded extensive archaeological excavations as well as grandiose reconstructions and ordered the annual re-enactment of ancient Mesopotamian spring festivals across the nation. Similarly, although Iraq under the Baath was an ostensibly secular state, they frequently held literary festivals and published magazines dedicated to the poetry and literature of the Islamic period, such as *The Thousand and One Nights*. They also erected several statues and monuments dedicated to figures from Iraq's Islamic past including classical Islamic poets, philosophers, artists and figures from Islamic folklore (Baram, 1991: 77). Each of these celebrations of the past carried with them strong Baathist undertones and was specifically engineered to encourage loyalty. This is especially true of the Iraqi Armed Forces where entire divisions or specific weapons were named after key historical figures from both Iraq's Mesopotamian and Islamic past (Al-Marashi & Salama, 2008: 171–180).

To reinforce his particular cult of personality, Hussein also frequently invoked figures from both ancient Mesopotamian folklore and Islamic history. His favourite from the ancient world was King Nebuchadnezzar who is credited for having built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and for conquering Jerusalem and sending the Jews into exile. As just one example, when

Hussein ordered the reconstruction of Babylon in the 1980s he insisted that every brick be emblazoned with the inscription 'To King Nebuchadnezzar in the reign of Saddam Hussein'. From Iraq's Islamic past, Hussein likened himself to a handful of key figures. He routinely celebrated the achievements of the Abbasid caliph Al-Mansour, who had built the original round city of Baghdad during the 8th century, with the Baathist propaganda machine frequently asserting *Al-Mansour Mansuran* ('there are two Al-Mansours', literally, 'There are two victors') (Lassner, 2000: 94). Another example can be found in Hussein's 'official' genealogy which 'proves' he was a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's nephew, Ali, who is revered by the Sunni as one of the first four caliphs and especially by the Shia who continue to emphasise the legitimacy of Ali's line (Bengio, 1998: 80). Hussein also frequently invoked the famous military general, Saladin, who was conveniently born in Hussein's hometown of Tikrit and most famous for defeating the Christian crusaders and restoring Muslim dominion over Jerusalem. The creation of a connection between these historical figures and Hussein was very carefully harvested in order to cross ethno-religious sectarian divides; Al-Mansour was a Sunni Arab, Ali a Shia Arab and Saladin a Kurd. In addition, the emphasis on Iraq's Mesopotamian heritage sought to forego such contemporary schisms in order to emphasise a common Iraqi heritage. In his studies of Baathist uses and abuses of Iraq's past Amatzia Baram argues that it demonstrates the degree to which the Ba'ath sought to manipulate cultural and social artefacts to gain the consent of the people and maintain power (Baram, 1983, 1991, 1994).

Perhaps even more fascinating are those moments in Baathist Iraq when all of these elements of the propaganda campaign converged to create a curious pastiche of evocative and deeply nationalistic imagery. For example, in perhaps the only study of the political significance of Iraq's national stamps Donald Reid discusses the ways in which various symbols and motifs were invoked by the Baath in the ongoing project to construct and reconstruct modern Iraqi national identity. In just one stamp, the Baath effectively encapsulate 'five millennia of [Iraqi] history, it shows a Sumerian prince and other Mesopotamian antiquities (including an Assyrian lion), the spiral minaret of the Malwiyya mosque of Samarra, and concludes with symbols of the oil industry and a pair of arms reaching skyward from a pool of oil' (Reid, 1993: 85).

The symbolic cultivation of Iraqi nationalism became especially important during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s in which the ostensibly secular and increasingly 'Arabized' Iraq confronted the Persian fundamentalist Shia Islamic regime of the Ayatollahs of Iran. To maintain the support of

Iraq's majority Shia population, the Baath set out to emphasise the ethnic rather than religious dimension of the war, positing the battle as one between Arabs and Persians, not secular state and Shia regime. To do this, they recalled the battle in which the expanding Arab Muslim army had successfully defeated the moribund Persian Sassanid Empire in 637, the Battle of Qadisiyyah, dubbing the Iran-Iraq War 'Saddam's Qadisiyyah'. To further emphasise the significance of the Iran-Iraq War, the Baath also erected several grandiose monuments to celebrate the alleged 'victory' of Iraq over Iran. Interestingly, each of these monuments were commissioned, designed and erected prior to the end of the war itself, indicating that the Baath were just as adept at symbolically manipulating the present and even the future of Iraq as they were with its past. In Baghdad alone, this 'victory' is celebrated by three seminal monuments: the 40 metre high split turquoise dome and magnificent fountain of the Martyr's Memorial, the Unknown Soldiers Monument which represents a giant shield that had fallen from the hand of a great Iraqi warrior, and the Victory Arches which is comprised of two sets of giant bronze forearms (allegedly cast from Hussein's own arms) holding aloft swords that intersect 40 metres above a major Baghdad highway. In his extended essay on these monuments, Samir Al-Khalil (a pseudonym for Iraqi scholar Kanan Makiya³) argues that, all vulgarity aside, they do represent a common Iraqi memory about the tragedies and suffering endured by the people over the long years of the Iran-Iraq War. They also constitute a conscious effort by the regime to embed official state narratives of victory and power into the lived environment of the Iraqi people, 'to translate the collective force of the Iraqi people ... into symbols' (Al-Khalil, 1991: 20–21).

Following the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the Baath undertook several new construction and reconstruction projects. They decided to reconstruct Basra which had been largely devastated by the war, in order to celebrate the 'heroic stand' their citizens had made against Iranian incursions. Typically this reconstruction, as Sultan Barakat has put it, was largely 'top down, concerned with visible and highly symbolic physical reconstruction rather than social and economic regeneration and involved no local

³ It should be noted here that Al-Khalil (Makiya) at times seems to be full of undeserved praise for Saddam, the 'artist-President' as he puts it. Makiya is also controversial due to his support of the 2003 invasion of Iraq on the grounds that it would free the Iraqi people from the tyranny of the Baath as outlined in his earlier *Republic of Fear* (Al-Khalil, 1991 [1989]). Such controversy aside, the point remains that the monuments referred to here, like war memorials all over the world, are both painful vigils to the fallen and symbols of a unified national identity that has fought and struggled to survive.

consultation, let alone participation' (Barakat, 2005: 575). The reconstruction involved the 'Boulevard of Martyrs' along the city's waterfront in which 80 dead Iraqi officers pointed their fingers accusingly across the waterways to Iran (Barakat, 1993). Apart from the celebration of war, the Ba'ath also underwent an extensive cultural and artistic campaign, particularly throughout the 1980s, which included the development or extension of libraries and performing arts complexes, the fostering of literary and artistic pursuits and the extension of the Iraq National Museum.

Following Iraq's humiliating defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, the international community imposed a series of strict sanctions on Iraq. As his people starved in the streets, Hussein built grandiose palaces across the country with one report by the US State Department estimating that he spent around USD\$2 billion building or extending 48 palaces between 1991 and 1999 (Saddam Hussein's Iraq, 1999). One of the more opulent was Al-Faw Palace in Baghdad which was built to commemorate Iraq's re-taking of the Al-Faw Peninsula from Iran in the late 1980s. It boasts marble and gold fittings in its 62 rooms and 29 bathrooms, an enormous artificial lake around which his sons had Roman-style villas and, not surprisingly, gold-encrusted Arabic calligraphy that praises the leadership of Hussein himself. Hussein also renovated the Republican Palace (or Presidential Palace) in Baghdad, which saw it triple in size. This palace, with its splendid turquoise dome was originally built for King Faisal II prior to the 1958 Revolution and became Hussein's preferred place to meet visiting heads of state, although he rarely stayed there himself (Fayad, 2009). Perhaps the most striking feature of this palace were the four matching giant bronze busts of Hussein—each around four meters in height—in which the dictator glared out over his capital wearing a stylized version of the helmet once worn by Saladin.

What is clear here is that all of the symbols and monuments developed during the Baathist epoch, and all of the histories that were re-engineered by the state, have at least two things in common. Firstly, they are indicative of an oppressive nation and a megalomaniacal leader who was desperately trying to manipulate the fabric of cultural history to build legitimacy and maintain hegemony beyond their coercive power. At the same time, the entire symbolic nation-building project of Baathist Iraq did have a second function: it engendered degrees of admittedly uneven and often resisted national identity and social cohesion. Together, they represent one of the twentieth century's most concerted efforts to use and abuse a nation's history in order to create an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991 [1983]) loyal to a distinct and state-sanctioned version of 'Iraqi' identity. Indeed, it is important to note that none of the different symbols or monuments that were developed

throughout the rule of the Baath was specifically designed to emphasise Sunni Arab, Kurdish or Shia identity, but to emphasise a collective 'Iraqi' identity.

However, Iraqi identity was (and is) far from monolithic and the official state narratives of Iraqi identity were widely contested. In fact, Iraq was (and remains) home to a complex array of divergent, intersecting and often competing notions of identity. Indeed, identity politics in Iraq is convoluted by the vast number of religious and ethnic divides that do not neatly dissect the nation into a series of mutually exclusive groups. There are, as is now commonly known, three large ethno-religious groups in Iraq, the Shi'a Arabs, the Kurds and the Sunni Arabs as well as a number of smaller 'racial and religious minorities ... [including] Turkomans, Persians, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Jews, Yazidihs, Sabeans, and others' (Batatu, 1982 [1978]: 13). Within each of these broad categories are more intricate differences, with each sector capable of being further broken down by religious sects, varying ethnicities and cultural groups as well as political sub-categories. Despite all of their differences, what each of these Iraqi factions hold in common is an intimate and acute relationship with the rich and diverse cultural history of Iraq. No matter what their religious or political persuasion, or their ethnic or cultural identity, for most Iraqis the past is a tangible force that informs the present. This is just as true for pious Shia Arabs who revere the holy sites found in Najaf and Kerbala, as it is for Assyrians who connect to Iraq's strong Christian heritage, or Sunni Arabs who admire the halcyon days of the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad, or Kurds who may identify strongly with the ancient Medes, or Ba'athist loyalists who lament the fall of Saddam. What is evident here is that Iraq is a complex ideological landscape in which the symbols, monuments and artefacts of the past play a central role in the highly politicized efforts of a number of competing or overlapping factions to assert notions of a historically legitimate identity.

The Destruction of Iraq's Cultural Heritage, 2003–today

In the lead up to the 2003 invasion experts in Iraq's cultural heritage, such as McGuire Gibson in the US and Peter G. Stone in the UK, worked diligently to inform their respective governments about the location and protection of key sites of archaeological, spiritual and historical significance (Gibson, 2008a, 2008b; P.G. Stone, 2008). This was followed by the efforts of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) who both lobbied

the US and UK regarding the protection of cultural property in the lead up to the war (Cole, 2008). Finally, when the bombing of Baghdad began on March 19 2003, 10 institutions and 130 scholars and heritage managers from all over the world signed the Archaeological Institute of America's 'Open Declaration on Cultural Heritage at Risk in Iraq'. Despite each of these warnings, however, the Pentagon and the US administration neglected to include cultural heritage in the list of things that would be taken into consideration in their relatively uncoordinated and ineffective post-war plans (Rothfield, 2008b). The results of such negligence by the US were to have devastating and irrevocable consequences for Iraq's cultural heritage and, as will be argued later, for the subsequent breakdown of social cohesion and the rise of ethno-sectarianism and violence. This began during the battle phase of the war (19 March–9 April 2003), the now infamous 'shock and awe' campaign, which saw not only the death of many innocent Iraqi civilians and the destruction of sites of military significance but also untold degrees of 'collateral damage' done to sensitive historic and cultural sites across the nation.

However, the damage done during the war pales when compared with that done during the almost nine year military occupation of Iraq. The first chapter in this tragic tale was not however the result of poor planning or of collateral damage but was instead a very deliberate and carefully choreographed moment co-ordinated by the US Army's Psychological Operations unit. Indeed, it is indicative of the US understanding of the power of political symbols that one of the first things that they did after the fall of Baghdad was to tear down the giant bronze statue of Hussein in Firdos Square.⁴ As the world watched, apparently jubilant Iraqis and US troops seemed to work side-by-side to climb the statue and place first a US and then an Iraqi flag over the face of Hussein. Finally, the statue was torn down and the severed head was dragged through the streets as Iraqis ostensibly continued to celebrate the fall of their former dictator. However, many scholars have since expressed their doubts about these scenes and carefully documented the fact that this was a very deliberate media stunt designed to promote the legitimacy of the war across a sceptical globe (Rampton, 2003: 1–7).

In the days immediately after the fall of Baghdad and the tearing down of the statue of Saddam, from approximately the 10–15th April, Iraq witnessed an unprecedented and devastating degree of looting and arson in

⁴ It is worth noting here that since the invasion of 2003, hundreds if not thousands of images, statues and murals of Saddam Hussein have been vandalised, torn down or destroyed by a whole host of factions (Isakhan, 2010, 2011).

which key cultural and historical sites were the main target. No doubt the most widely publicized and internationally lamented event in these early days of chaos was the attack on the INM. In the chilling firsthand accounts offered by Donny George he recalls how on the first day of looting (April 10) around '300–400 people gathered at the front of the Museum compound ... They were all armed with a variety of hammers, crow-bars, sticks, Kalashnikovs, daggers, and bayonets' (George, 2008: 101). Once it began, the looting occurred in waves over the next three days including both highly coordinated professional thieves who clearly knew where the most precious objects were stored and opportunistic bandits who stole whatever they could and smashed almost everything else. Unbelievably, when museum staff pleaded with nearby US troops to intervene, they refused.⁵ When the looting subsided and it was safe for museum staff to re-enter the complex, they found that the looters had set fires, had smashed cabinets, had stolen documents and equipment and had destroyed anything that they could not remove (Rothfield, 2009). As George writes in an earlier article,

Fifteen thousand objects were stolen from the galleries and stores of the museum, including Abbasid wooden doors; Sumerian, Akkadian, and Hatraean statues; around five thousand cylinder seals from different periods; gold and silver material, along with necklaces and pendants; and other pottery material ... what they could not take they smashed and destroyed.

(George, 2005: 1–2)

In the aftermath, George, along with U.S. Colonel Matthew Bogandos set up an amnesty program in which objects could be returned without question or reprimand (Bogdanos, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). This has seen some 4,000–6,000 objects returned to the INM and a further 17,000 objects handed in that had been looted from archaeological sites across Iraq (George, 2008: 104; George & Gibson, 2008: 26).

Contemporaneous to the destruction of the Museum, the Iraq National Library and Archive (INLA) suffered perhaps an even worse fate. Over the course of nearly one week, looters repeatedly targeted the building, carrying away material and equipment and even going as far as lighting white phosphorous in the complex to ensure maximum damage (Baez, 2008 [2004]: 269–270; Spurr, 2008: 276). The results of their rampage was devastating with one reliable estimate claiming that

⁵ However, the US did not fail to protect other Iraqi institutions that they felt were of strategic interest. For example, quite tellingly, not even as much as one pencil was removed from the Ministry of Oil.

approximately 25% of the book collections were looted or burned ... a full 60% of the archival collections were consumed by the fires, including much of the Ottoman-era documents, most of the Royal Hashemite-era documents, and all of those from the Republican period ... The INLA also lost 98% of maps and photos and all of their storage cabinets. (Spurr, 2008: 276)

To further indicate the scale of this destruction, Fernando Baez has calculated that 'almost a million' books were destroyed and that about 'ten million documents disappeared' from the INLA (Baez, 2008 [2004]: 270–272). It has also been speculated that much of this damage was deliberate and co-ordinated by Baathist loyalists who strategically burnt the classified documents of the former regime. Whatever the reason or intention of this destruction, the fact remains that much that was housed in the INLA was unknown to foreign or even Iraqi scholars and a rich catalogue of Iraq's cultural heritage has now gone up in smoke and is lost forever.

However, while the well-known stories of the INM and the INLA are undeniably tragic, it should not be forgotten that at the same time a whole host of other cultural or historical institutions and sites were being targeted across Iraq. For example, on university campuses across the country—such as the University of Baghdad, Mustansiriya University and the University of Mosul—looters destroyed degrees and registrars, burned libraries, looted offices and stole everything from air conditioners to printers (Baez, 2008 [2004]: 276; Smallman, 2003). Various other libraries were also attacked such as the one housed at the College of Physicians where classical Islamic and medieval texts on medicine were stolen; the library at the *Al-Majma Al-Ilmi Al-Iraqi* ('The Iraqi Academy of Sciences') lost manuscripts, periodicals, foreign books and scientific magazines; at the ninth century Abbasid library, the *Bayt Al-Hikma* ('House of Wisdom'), looters took off with innumerable and priceless documents and totally destroyed an exhibition of materials relating to the Ottoman Empire (Baez, 2008 [2004]: 275–276); and at the *Al-Awfaq* Library in Baghdad more than 5,000 classical Islamic manuscripts were either stolen or turned to ash in another violent rampage. Museums and Art Galleries across the country also suffered, including those in Mosul, Basra, Kufa, Najaf, Nasiriyah and Tikrit (Nisbett, 2007). Perhaps most devastating among these was Iraq's Museum of Modern Art where 'Eight thousand works of art were removed', although around 3,000 of these have since been recovered (Ghaidan, 2008: 94).

In terms of damage done to historic buildings Usam Ghaidan has reported that in the earliest days of the occupation, the 12th century Abbasid palace had been damaged, so too was the 16th century Saray Mosque built by the famed Ottoman sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, as well as the Hashemite

Parliament House. Famous Iraqi marketplaces, such as the *Suq Al-Sari*, the oldest book mart in the Islamic world and the historic *Suq Al-Shorja* in central Baghdad have been destroyed by looting and arson (Ghaidan, 2008: 93–94). As Ghaidan goes on to note, between them these buildings not only catalogue every epoch of Iraq's long cultural history, they also 'chronicle every architectural style of Iraq's heritage stock: courtyards, domes, vaults, iwans, and exposed brick walls, all of superior quality' (Ghaidan, 2008: 93)

With all this destruction going on in Iraq (former) US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld was cornered by a number of journalists at the White House and asked to respond.⁶ 'Stuff happens,' he began, 'It's untidy. And freedom's untidy. And free people are free to make mistakes and commit crimes and do bad things ... Television is merely running the same footage of the same man stealing a vase over and over,' he quipped before contradicting himself by adding that he didn't realise these were that many vases in Iraq (Rumsfeld as cited in: Smallman, 2003). These comments are telling in that they reveal the coalition's attitude towards Iraq's cultural history, as Ghaidan put it, 'Mr Rumsfeld was showing total disrespect for the history, identity and culture of the people his troops were claiming to liberate' (Ghaidan, 2008: 93). Perhaps even more disturbing than the comments made by Rumsfeld are those of renowned Orientalist and polemicist, Daniel Pipes. In an article that typically lacks all nuance and is brimming with hubris, Pipes argues that the cultural destruction of Iraq is a direct consequence of the 'possibly unique Iraqi penchant for cultural self-hatred' and is representative of the 'excesses of a country singularly prone to violence against itself' (Pipes, 2003: 20).

What is particularly grating about the comments of Rumsfeld and Pipes is that they lay blame for Iraq's cultural and historical destruction on the Iraqi people themselves and attempt to deny the responsibilities of the occupying force to protect this heritage. This becomes even more problematic when one considers the fact that during the battle phase of the war and through the many tumultuous years of the occupation, the Coalition has itself committed incalculable cultural and historical destruction. Perhaps the most glaring example is the fact that the US has set up a number of their key military bases at historically or culturally sensitive sites such as in Saddam's Palaces, Government buildings, the Nasiriyah Museum,

⁶ For a discussion of Rumsfeld and his attitude towards Iraq and its cultural heritage see Rebecca Knuth's *Burning Books and Levelling Libraries* (Knuth, 2006: 207–209).

archaeological sites, historic mosques and the Martyr's Memorial. Perhaps the most devastating example is the military base that was set up by US troops at one of the world's most significant archaeological sites, the ancient city of Babylon (Babel). Located around 90km south of Baghdad, Babylon was a US command post (known as 'Camp Alpha') from April 2003 until December 2004. The best accounts of the devastation incurred on this sensitive site are written by two Iraqi archaeologist, Mariam Umran Moussa and Zainab Bahrani, who worked together to not only document the destruction but in their joint efforts to lobby the US to end their use of the site (Bahrani, 2005, 2008; Moussa, 2008). In her account of the destruction, Moussa painstakingly details the fact that the troops dug a series of approximately 8 trenches and 14 pits in and around the site, ranging up to 600 square metres in size. The soil—much of it riddled with artefacts—was then used to construct barriers, to fill sandbags and to develop roads. They also scraped and levelled parts of the site in order to build a car park for military and other heavy equipment, to build living quarters and to build two helipads (Moussa, 2008: 145–148). The damage also includes that done to the Ishtar Gate and the Procession Street of the ancient city. For example, nine of the animal bodies which adorned the Ishtar Gate and represent the mythical dragon emblem of the ancient God Marduk, the God of Babel, went missing (Moussa, 2008: 149). Sadly, as Bahrani has pointed out, Babylon is not the only archaeological site to have been utilised by the US as a military base, with 'at least seven or eight historical sites have been used in this way' since the start of the war (Bahrani, 2008: 169). This tragedy is deepened by the fact that we know very little about the destruction that has gone on at these other sites. This was followed in 2005 when coalition forces used the 9th century Malwiyya Minaret at the Great Mosque of Samarra as the site for the construction of a barracks and training camp for 1500 members of the Iraqi National Police (Stone & Bajjaly, 2008a: 12). Together the disregard for the key archaeological sites of ancient Mesopotamia, as well as classical Islamic mosques reveal the Coalitions disregard and disdain for the entire spectrum of Iraq's cultural heritage.

However, the Coalition also extended this disregard to Baathist sites, a whole collection of which were utilised by the foreign occupying forces as military bases (Isakhan, 2011). For example, the Al-Faw Palace and the Republican Palace both suffered little damage during the 'shock and awe' campaign, most probably because they were thought to contain valuable documents but also perhaps because the US planned to use them as military bases. The Al-Faw Palace complex and the surrounding area have come to house the largest of Iraq's Coalition military bases, comprised of Camp

Victory, Camp Liberty, Camp Striker and Camp Slayer. The biggest of these, Camp Victory, which can handle around 14,000 troops, was the home of the Multi-National Corps—Iraq. At its peak, the complex boasted a Pizza Hut, a Subway, a Cinnabon, a Burger King, a Taco Bell, a Green Beans café and a Turkish restaurant. In terms of recreational facilities, it included a bowling centre, two basketball courts, a soccer court, table tennis, air hockey and a gymnasium. Many of the personnel slept in tents or in cramped makeshift quarters separated by plywood boards. Meanwhile, the Republican Palace was converted into the administrative capital of Iraq and the headquarters of the US occupation and the epicentre of the Green Zone.⁷ It quickly became the home of ‘Thousands of American, British, Australian and other foreign diplomats, military personnel and contractors’ (Haynes, 2008). As with the Al-Faw Palace, it housed a number of recreational and catering related outlets as well as small quarters for personnel. The use of such state buildings as military bases has also included much heritage destruction. For example, in early December 2003 the four giant bronze heads of Hussein sporting the stylised Saladin helmet that adorned the Republican Palace were removed and melted down for scrap metal. More recently, many in Iraq have discussed the future of these palaces and whether or not they should be destroyed as symbols of the former regime. In one report an anonymous Iraqi said ‘You people in Europe have kept all the castles of your bad guys, so why shouldn’t we? We should keep them as historical artefacts’ (as cited in: Freeman, 2009).

Controversy has also surrounded the use of other Baathist sites by the occupation. Two examples are worth mentioning here. The first occurred in January 2004 when the Coalition used the Baghdad Martyr’s Memorial as a military base. This site serves as a people’s shrine dedicated to the 500,000 Iraqi soldiers who died defending their country in an unpopular, lengthy and brutal war. Graffiti of US army mottos covered many of the names of the dead. Damage has also been done to the mausoleum dedicated to the ‘Father of Pan-Arabism’ and the co-founder of the Baath Party, Michel Aflaq. The site comprises a tomb and a statue built by Saddam Hussein upon Aflaq’s death in 1989. As part of their program to symbolically De-Baathify Iraq, the Mausoleum was initially slated for demolition by the CPA before the

⁷ It should be noted here that as part of the Status of Forces Agreement negotiated by the US and Iraqi governments in 2008, the Republican Palace was returned to the Iraqi Presidency by the US on 1 January 2009, although a heavy US presence remains (Fayad, 2009; Londono, 2009).

decision sparked an outcry from Iraqi and international intellectuals. Instead, from 2003–06, Aflaq's mausoleum, which falls inside the Green Zone, was reportedly turned into something of a recreation centre cum makeshift barracks for Coalition soldiers. On the ground floor, and surrounding the tomb of Aflaq, soldiers would use various exercise equipment, as well as 'foosball' tables. Directly underneath Aflaq's grave, soldiers slept in cramped plywood quarters. One cannot help but baulk at the insensitivity of turning such monuments into military bases for use by a foreign occupying power. Imagine the use of comparable historical sites in other nations—consider graffiti in a foreign language obscuring the names on the Vietnam memorial or a foosball table in the Lincoln memorial—to begin to come to terms with how such actions might offend the Iraqi people.

However, perhaps one of the most tragic and devastating elements of Iraq's cultural and historical destruction is that of the systematic looting of Iraq's sensitive archaeological sites, particularly those in the south. Many of these sites have fallen prey to bands of treasure hunters and looters who dig and smash their way through the underground catacombs in search of the highly prized artefacts of the ancient world. In fact this began the day the war started and has intensified over the ensuing years and extended to sites such as those of Umma, Hatra, Nineveh, Ur, Nippur and Ashur (Garen & Carleton, 2005; Hamdani, 2008; Lawler, 2003a, 2003b; E.C. Stone, 2008). The people enacting this depredation range from destitute farmers who have no other source of income, through to the highly co-ordinated efforts of international black market operatives. According to Melissa Nisbett, these more co-ordinated efforts involve 'around 300 armed men who are using bulldozers and taking truckloads of artefacts, whilst guarded by another 40 men with Kalashnikovs' (Nisbett, 2007). These very powerful gangs are then able to use their wealth and firearms to smuggle the antiquities out of Iraq and on to the international black market (Bajjalay, 2008a, 2008b; Brodie, 2008a, 2008b; Schuster, 2005). What is particularly devastating about this looting is that archaeological relics lose a significant proportion of their scientific value once they are removed from their context and association (Hanson, 2008; Stein, 2008). This means that even when some of these objects are recovered, the stories that they may once have revealed to the trained archaeologist have been lost forever. To give an indication of just how widespread this devastation is, Lawrence Rothfield has estimated that 'Iraq's ten thousand officially recognized sites [are] being destroyed at a rate of roughly 10 per cent per year' (Rothfield, 2008a: xv). Another problem is that the artefacts being haphazardly and inexpertly ripped from the earth are not recorded anywhere, 'we have no idea what we have lost, and are

losing on a daily basis ... we have no photographs; we have no inventories; none of the material has been seen, let alone studied' (Stone & Bajjaly, 2008a: 14).

Clearly, since the US first invaded Iraq in 2003, the nation has suffered an extraordinary period of cultural and historical depredation. While this destruction is of particular concern because it represents the loss of some of humankind's greatest achievements and most spectacular wonders, it is also disconcerting given the role that many of these sites, symbols and monuments had come to play in the complex game of Iraqi identity politics. It is important to note here that every strata of Iraqi identity, every epoch of its long and rich cultural history, has been targeted in one way or another. Given that each of the varying and intersecting identities which constitute this complex nation relied to some degree on their cultural heritage to legitimate and propagate their own brand of identity, it is little wonder that such identities have broken down in the wake of such destruction. As will be detailed in the following section, the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage has provided fertile ground for simplistic and exclusive models of identity to be promulgated, creating an absence of a collective 'Iraqi' identity and the rise of ethno-sectarian violence.

Implications for Identity and Violence

The cultural and historical destruction of Iraq raises a number of pertinent questions. Firstly, it raises issues concerning the intentions of the United States and its coalition partners, their abject failure to protect Iraq's cultural heritage and whether this represents a major contravention of international law concerning the protection of cultural heritage during times of war (Paroff, 2004; Petersen, 2007; Phuong, 2004). Secondly, one must consider whether or not such errors and omissions were in fact a deliberate attempt to undermine social cohesion within Iraq following the Ba'athist regime. This is certainly a popular sentiment within Iraq where, as John M. Russell has pointed out, there is a strong 'Iraqi conviction that the U.S. goal is to destroy Iraqi cultural identity' (Russell, 2008: 42). Another question that such destruction raises is why Iraqi civilians would destroy so much of their own heritage, especially in cases where they stood to garner no direct economic benefit from vandalism and depredation. For George, the reason for the Iraqi people's destruction of their own cultural heritage is that 'No one was educated that what the government had was, in fact, the wealth of the people, administered and protected on their behalf' (George, 2008: 105).

However, this essay is not so much concerned with intent, in causal factors, with pent up Iraqi anger at the regime or with failed US planning, most of which has been adequately addressed and fervently debated in the existing literature. What has not been discussed however are the consequences of all this destruction on Iraq's complex array of 'identities', and the intersection between the breakdown of social cohesion and the rise of violence.

It is undeniable that since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent protracted occupation, the nation has witnessed a significant reduction in social cohesion and a corresponding upsurge in ethno-religious sectarianism and violence. This has included a series of grim and complex battles fought between the occupying forces, the Iraqi armed services, various insurgent groups and terrorist organisations, as well as those between competing ethno-religious sectarian militias (Isakhan, 2012b). This ongoing hostility has also had ruinous consequences for Iraq's cultural heritage with artefacts, symbols and monuments so often caught in the crossfire or deliberately targeted by opposing groups. Generally, this phenomena has been explained by a complex matrix of intersecting factors: that the systemic and desperate poverty of the Iraqi people has prompted them to resort to violence (Rice, Graff, & Lewis, 2006); that religious fundamentalism has grown in the absence of a secular state doctrine (Hafez, 2007); that the lack of a brutal tyrant like Saddam ruling over the recalcitrant Iraqis has given way to pre-existing sectarian tensions (Allawi, 2007; Maples, 2006); that the bungled occupation has spurred on a multi-faceted resistance, each constituent group of which is adamantly opposed to the foreign presence (Zunes, 2006); and, further still, that the violence that has ravaged Iraq was in fact a deliberate strategy of the US, a modern-day 'divide and rule' tactic which saw foreign powers fund, empower or tacitly support sectarian militias and religious fundamentalism (Ahmad, 2007; Ismael & Fuller, 2009).

While each of these factors are no doubt important and need to be considered in any balanced assessment of the complexities of post-Hussein Iraq, they each overlook the impact that the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage is having on the erosion of Iraqi national identity and the rise of violence. This is also true of the broader literature on cultural and historical destruction which does not appear to offer adequate models to help explain the role that such destruction plays in creating fertile ground for the propagation of narrow and deadly ideologies. Although there is no shortage of examples from history in which cultural and historical destruction has paralleled spikes in violence, academic studies do not firmly establish nor empirically demonstrate a correlation between the two. Indeed, while investigations into contexts as diverse as the Armenian genocide at the end of WWI (Blox-

ham, 2005), WWII and the Holocaust (Beker, 2001), Northern Ireland (Dawson, 2007) and Cambodia (Winter, 2007) routinely place mass violence in the context of cultural and historical destruction, the exact nature of this relationship is not explored. The same can be said of studies which zero in on one particular phenomenon—such as the destruction of libraries ('libricide') or the decimation of built environments ('urbicide')—where it is often implied, but never fully demonstrated, that such destruction is undertaken to eradicate collective identity, to encourage the idea of separate and antagonistic entities within the state, and thus leads to rises in mass violence (Coward, 2009; Knuth, 2003).

Investigations into such phenomena achieved perhaps their greatest urgency following the devastating events that tore apart the Balkans in the 1990s. In this context, recent work by Andrew Herscher traces, in a qualitative fashion, the intersection between violence and the destruction of architecture (Herscher, 2010). To do so, Herscher relies heavily on the earlier work of his colleague and collaborator Andreas Riedlmayer who painstakingly documented the destruction of Balkan heritage in a series of reports which were submitted to the War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague and used as evidence in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic in 2002 (Herscher & Riedlmayer, 2002; Riedlmayer, 2002). Interestingly, however, while Riedlmayer himself asserted a 'link between the systematic persecution and expulsion of ethnic and religious communities and the destruction of the cultural and religious heritage associated with the targeted community' (Riedlmayer, 2002: 3) he assumes this link exists because of the proximity or sequence of historical events rather than on the measurement and documentation of an actual correlation.

In examining the case study of Iraq, there are two very good examples where the destruction of cultural heritage resulted in a dramatic decrease in social cohesion and a spike in ethno-religious violence. The first of these is the bombing of the stunning gold-domed 17th century Al-Askari Mosque in Samarra in February of 2006. This site, revered by Shia as the mausoleum of the 10th and 11th Imams of their faith was deliberately targeted by Sunni insurgents (most likely Al-Qaeda in Iraq) as a result of the ethno-sectarian violence that was commonplace across the nation at this time. What distinguishes the bombing of the Samarra mosque from the rich array of cultural destruction that has plagued Iraq since 2003, is that it has been widely cited as a contributing factor to the sharp spike in the bloodletting that immediately erupted across Iraq and the associated reprisal attacks on other sites of cultural, historic and religious significance (Cockburn, 2006; Lischer, 2008). In other words, the bombing of the Al-Askari mosque is said to have set off a

spiral of violence and further cultural and historical destruction. The ruins of the mosque came to symbolise Iraq's alleged descent into civil war and have been repeatedly invoked as a turning point in relations between Sunni and Shia Arabs in Iraq. Indeed, a leaked chart from the US Central Command documented the descent of Iraq into chaos and marked the bombing of the mosque as a seminal moment in the worsening scenario of 2006 (Gordon, 2006).

The second example that is worth considering here is the plans of the democratically elected Iraqi government to De-Baathify Iraq. The Shia and Kurdish dominated state have appeared at times to want to completely purge Iraq of its Sunni dominated past. In early 2007 they organised the 'Committee for Removing Symbols of the Saddam Era' and drew up extensive plans to dismantle around 100 monuments of the Baathist state, including the three sites dedicated to the fallen of the Iran-Iraq War: the Martyr's Memorial, the Unknown Soldiers Monument and the Victory Arches. In fact, the Committee has already been responsible for the demolition of two key Hussein-era sites, a monument dedicated to Iraqi prisoners of the Iran-Iraq War and a bronze mural that depicted the history of the Baath (Semple, 2007). This was followed by the dismantling of the Victory Arches which began with earnest in February of 2007. Ten-foot chunks were cut out of the monument and carted away while some reports indicate that numerous US troops and Iraqi bystanders removed parts of the monument as personal souvenirs (Dehghanpisheh, 2007). Such events were widely contested within Iraq, with Mustafa Khadimi, a member of the Iraq Memory Foundation,⁸ saying of the Victory Arches 'We need to use these two swords as proof to further generations to show what happened to Iraqi people' (Khadimi as cited in: Dehghanpisheh, 2007). Another prominent Iraqi, Saad al-Basri, a Shiite and a professor of sculpture in the College of Fine Arts in Baghdad agreed, 'The monuments should be considered as part of archaeology that speak to a specific era in Iraqi history. To remove them is wrong' (Al-Basri as cited in: Semple, 2007). However, it was not until the US Ambassador

⁸ The Iraq Memory Foundation (IMF) is an extension of the Iraq Research and Documentation Project (IRDP) founded by controversial Iraqi scholar Kanan Makiya in 1992 (see note 2). It relocated to Iraq in 2003 and changed its name. The IMF has become a topic of much controversy and vitriolic debate among Iraqi and American intellectuals and officials. For example, when Makiya discovered a Baath Party archive of some 5 million pages in 2003, he assumed custody of the documents and transported them to the United States amid claims that such actions were not only opportunistic plundering but also highly illegal and insensitive (Eakin, 2008).

to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, challenged Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki on the decision that the project was promptly brought to a halt. According to media reports, the reason for Khalilzad's intervention was 'due to concerns the dismantling of the monument might further deepen the rift between Iraq's Shiite majority and its Sunni minority' (Dehghanpisheh, 2007). What is particularly interesting here is that the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage was stopped—by the Coalition of all groups—in order to prevent the further breakdown of social cohesion and national identity in Iraq and to eschew more ethno-sectarian violence.

At the very least, the examples of the bombing of the Al-Askari mosque and the cessation of the removal of the Saddam-era monuments indicate a tacit acknowledgement of the inter-dependent relationship between the destruction of cultural heritage and the potential for further ethno-religious sectarian violence. Surprisingly, the existing literature on these phenomena do not give us adequate methods to interrogate further this relationship and until this lacuna in the research is addressed debate on this issue will remain conjectural and problematic. Fortunately, preliminary work by the author has begun to develop the argument that the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage has enabled various entities to propagate their divisive rhetoric in the absence of a cohesive national identity and thereby resulted in an upsurge in horrific violence. More broadly, this work has argued that the situation in Iraq provides a rare opportunity to develop new methods for understanding the complex inter-relationship between cultural and historical destruction and mass violence (Isakhan, 2010, 2011). Building on this earlier research, the author's current research project seeks to empirically demonstrate this relationship via the development of the world's first database that documents, over a crucial almost nine-year period (2003–2011), the destruction of heritage in Iraq. This database will be constructed by following the method outlined by Riedlmayer, and will limit cultural heritage, not unproblematically, to the tangible built environment including those sites which hold religious (places of worship and religious monuments), historical (Mesopotamian, Islamic, and more recent Iraqi) and cultural (museums, libraries) significance (Riedlmayer, 2002: 3–8). The database will be populated by data gleaned from a variety of sources including: academic literature; existing reports from US, UK, AUS, Iraqi and global governmental and non-governmental organisations (such as the US State Department, Blue Shield, ICOMOS and UNESCO); and media accounts (The New York Times (US), The Guardian (UK), The Daily Star (Lebanon)). This will be complimented by data obtained in a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews in Iraq, AUS, US, and UK. The interviewees can be broken

down into five main categories: governmental and NGO personnel; academics; journalists; cultural/heritage workers; and prominent Iraqi expatriates (outside Iraq) and religious and community leaders (inside Iraq). Such a sample is specifically chosen not because they are representative of a broader population but because of their expertise on, or direct experience with, an issue or event (i.e. a particular aspect of the destruction of Iraq's heritage since 2003). Finally, this research will also include field research in Iraq including visits to some of the more significant sites of cultural and historical destruction in order to ensure that the information presented in the database is accurate and also to record if any further damage has been inflicted (Riedlmayer, 2002: 7–9).

Once completed, this database will be used to examine whether or not, and to what extent, a significant relationship exists between the heritage destruction documented in this database, and spikes of violence as documented in existing and reliable measures such as the Iraq Body Count (IBC) database (<http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>). The IBC, which has been meticulously kept from the start of the war until today, is based on a continuous count of cross-checked data from Iraqi morgues, hospitals, GOV and NGOs, official figures and press reports. It is particularly useful because it can be used to generate data concerning the types of victims and perpetrators (ethnicity or religion), the location and time of the attacks, and across various time-frames (yearly, monthly, weekly or daily summaries) (Otterman & Hil, 2010). This study will therefore cross-analyse data from the IBC study with the database created here in order to determine the extent and statistical significance of the relationship between them. In doing so, the study holds up to empirical scrutiny one of the fundamental assumptions underpinning the existing literature on the destruction of cultural heritage and spikes in violence, namely that the two phenomena have a relationship. By correlating information in these two databases, the researcher will determine the precise nature and statistical significance of this relationship in the context of Iraq across time and in several key cities. This study will therefore set a significant precedent in studies of both heritage and violence by providing innovative methods that can then be applied to other contexts (past, present or future) in which the destruction of cultural heritage and violence occur simultaneously—and to thereby enable policy formation that minimises (or prevents altogether) heritage destruction and spikes in violence during times of conflict.

Conclusion

What is evident here is that the rich and complex history of Iraq has played a particularly significant role in identity politics at least as far back as the rise of the Baath in 1968. As we have seen, most Iraqis had learned about the past through a Baathist lens, a tyrannical kaleidoscope of state propaganda, a history re-written to both justify oppression and coerce people into patriotism. This was underpinned by a very complex cultural-discursive campaign in which the ideology of the Baath was embedded into festivals, monuments, history books and state buildings. Admittedly, this project was accompanied by a vast network of coercive institutions that sought to oppress other visions of Iraqi identity and force people to accept the official narratives of the state. Nonetheless, it provided Iraq with a rich and complex historical memory which went at least some way towards uniting the people behind a cohesive national identity. However, the official state sanctioned version of Iraqi identity remained widely contested throughout Iraq's modern history with varying groups using and abusing Iraq's rich cultural history to offer their own particular brand of identity politics.

With the invasion and occupation of Iraq since 2003 however, the nation has witnessed an unprecedented degree of cultural and historical destruction. The failures of the US occupation to protect key sites, their use of others as military bases and their deliberate destruction of monuments like the statues and murals of Saddam have seen the supposed liberators deliver some of the more devastating blows to Iraq's past. In addition, Iraqi civilians have ransacked and vandalised important sites, including major institutions, libraries and museums as well as their systematic and highly co-ordinated efforts to excavate places of enormous archaeological significance, often aided and abetted by foreigners keen to capitalise on the highly sought after treasure. Finally, the ongoing hostility between varying factions within Iraq has had ruinous consequences for Iraq's cultural heritage with artefacts, symbols and monuments so often caught in the cross-fire or deliberately targeted by opposing ethno-sectarian groups.

Curiously, the magnitude of this destruction and the distressing efficiency with which Iraq's past is being erased has not been adequately addressed in relation to its consequences for identity politics in Iraq, nor has it been discussed in connection with the ongoing violence and terror which plagues the nation. This chapter has therefore outlined ongoing research by the author which attempts to draw correlations between these two phenomena and to better understand the ability of heritage destruction to exacerbate tensions and lead to spikes in violence during times of conflict. The

argument here is that the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage has provided fertile ground for simplistic and exclusive models of identity to be promulgated, creating a rise in ethno-religious sectarianism and violence. These issues—that of the erasure of an Iraqi national identity and the subsequent rise in violence—are significant problems and do not bode well for the future of Iraq. It is also worth noting that this project comes at a crucial time in the history of Iraq. With the protracted impasse that followed the Iraqi elections of March 2010, the increasing dissatisfaction with the Maliki government and the final withdrawal of all coalition troops completed at the end of 2011, the Iraqi people have perhaps never been in greater need of a detailed understanding of the ongoing challenges and intractable problems they face.

References

- Ahmad, M. (2007). Divide and Rule: The Hidden Conflict in Iraq. *The Dialogue*, 2(4), 106–131.
- Al-Khalil, S. (1991). *The Monument: Art, Vulgarity and Responsibility in Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . (1991 [1989]). *Republic of Fear: Saddam's Iraq*. London: Hutchinson Radius.
- Al-Marashi, I., & Salama, S. (2008). *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History*. London: Routledge.
- Allawi, A.A. (2007). *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Anderson, B. (1991 [1983]). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Baez, F. (2008 [2004]). *A Universal History of the Destruction of Books: From Ancient Sumer to Modern Iraq* (A. MacAdam, Trans.). New York: Atlas.
- Bahrani, Z. (2005). The Fall of Babylon. In M. Polk & A.M.H. Schuster (Eds.), *The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia* (pp. 214–216). New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- . (2008). The Battle for Babylon. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjalay (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 165–171). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Bajjalay, J.F. (2008a). Who are the Looters at Archaeological Sites in Iraq? In L. Rothfield (Ed.), *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (pp. 49–56). Lanham: Alta Mira.
- . (2008b). Will Mesopotamia Survive the War? The Continuous Destruction of Iraq's Archaeological Sites In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjalay (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 135–141). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Barakat, S. (1993). *Post-War Reconstruction in Iraq: The Case Study of Basrah and Fao*. University of York: Institute for Advanced Architectural Studies, Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit.
- . (2005). Post-Saddam Iraq: Deconstructing a Regime, Reconstructing a Nation. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(4), 571–591.

- Baram, A. (1983). Mesopotamian Identity in Ba'ṯhi Iraq. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 19, 426–455.
- . (1991). *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'ṯhist Iraq, 1968–1989*. London: Macmillan.
- . (1994). A Case of Imported Identity: The Modernizing Secular Ruling Elites of Iraq and the Concept of Mesopotamian-Inspired Territorial Nationalism, 1922–1992. *Poetics Today*, 15(2), 279–319.
- Batatu, H. (1982 [1978]). *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'ṯhists, and Free Officers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Beker, A. (Ed.). (2001). *The Plunder of Jewish Property During the Holocaust: Confronting European History*. London: Palgrave.
- Bengio, O. (1998). *Saddam's Word: Political Discourse in Iraq*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bloxham, D. (2005). *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bogdanos, M. (2005). *Thieves of Baghdad: One Marine's Passion for Ancient Civilizations and the Journey to Recover the World's Greatest Stolen Treasures*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- . (2008a). Thieves of Baghdad. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 109–133). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- . (2008b). Thieves of Baghdad: The Looting of the Iraq Museum. In L. Rothfield (Ed.), *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (pp. 33–48). Lanham: Alta Mira.
- Brodie, N. (2008a). The Market Background to the April 2003 Plunder of the Iraq National Museum. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 41–54). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- . (2008b). The Western Market in Iraqi Antiquities. In L. Rothfield (Ed.), *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (pp. 63–73). Lanham: Alta Mira.
- Cockburn, P. (2006, 20 May). Iraq Is Disintegrating As Ethnic Cleansing Takes Hold. *Z-Net*.
- Cole, S. (2008). War, Cultural Property and the Blue Shield. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 65–71). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Coward, M. (2009). *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction*. London: Routledge.
- Davis, E. (2005). *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Davis, E., & Gavrielides, N. (1991). Statecraft, Historical Memory, and Popular Culture in Iraq and Kuwait. In E. Davis & N. Gavrielides (Eds.), *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory, and Popular Culture* (pp. 116–148). Miami: Florida International University Press.
- Dawson, G. (2007). *Making Peace With the Past?: Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Dehghanpisheh, B. (2007, 20 February). Iraqis not happy, Saddam's swords coming down. *Newsweek*.
- Eakin, H. (2008, 1 July). Iraqi Files in U.S.: Plunder or Rescue? *The New York Times*.

- Emberling, G., & Hanson, K. (Eds.). (2008). *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past*. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Fayad, M. (2009, 4 January). The Story of Iraq's Republican Palace. *Asharq Al-Awsat*.
- Freeman, C. (2009, 16 July). Saddam Hussein's palaces. *Telegraph*.
- Garen, M., & Carleton, M.-H. (2005). Erasing the Past: Looting of Archaeological Sites in Southern Iraq. In M. Polk & A.M.H. Schuster (Eds.), *The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia* (pp. 15–19). New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- George, D. (2005). Foreword. In M. Polk & A.M.H. Schuster (Eds.), *The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia* (pp. 1–3). New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- . (2008). The Looting of the Iraq National Museum. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 97–107). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- George, D., & Gibson, M. (2008). The Looting of the Iraq Museum Complex. In G. Emberling & K. Hanson (Eds.), *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* (pp. 19–27). Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Ghaidan, U. (2008). Damage to Iraq's Wider Heritage. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 85–96). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Gibson, M. (2008a). The Acquisition of Antiquities in Iraq, 19th Century to 2003, Legal and Illegal. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 31–40). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- . (2008b). The Looting of the Iraq Museum in Context. In G. Emberling & K. Hanson (Eds.), *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* (pp. 13–18). Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Gordon, M.R. (2006, 1 November). U.S. Central Command Charts Sharp Movement of the Civil Conflict in Iraq Toward Chaos. *The New York Times*.
- Hafez, M.M. (2007). *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Hamdani, A. (2008). The Damage Sustained to the Ancient City of Ur. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 151–156). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Hanson, K. (2008). Why Does Archaeological Context Matter? In G. Emberling & K. Hanson (Eds.), *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* (pp. 45–49). Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Haynes, D. (2008, 7 October). US hands over Saddam Hussein palace after staff move to new embassy. *The Times*.
- Heine, H. (1982 [1821]). Almansor: A Tragedy. In H. Draper (Ed.), *The Complete Poems of Heinrich Heine: A Modern English Version* (pp. 179–237). Boston: Suhrkamp.
- Herscher, A. (2010). *Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Herscher, A., & Riedlmayer, A.J. (2002). *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Kosovo, 1998–1999: A Post-war Survey* (No. P486): International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

- Isakhan, B. (2010). Destroying the Symbols of Baathist Iraq. *The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII) Newsletter*, 5(2), 1–5.
- . (2011). Targeting the Symbolic Dimension of Baathist Iraq: Cultural Destruction, Historical Memory and National Identity. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 4(2), 257–281.
- . (2012a). *Democracy in Iraq: History, Politics, Discourse*. London: Ashgate.
- . (2012b). Iraq. In B. Isakhan & S. Stockwell (Eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to the History of Democracy* (pp. 407–417). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ismael, T.Y., & Fuller, M. (2009). The Disintegration of Iraq: The Manufacturing and Politicization of Sectarianism. *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 2(3), 443–473.
- Knuth, R. (2003). *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century*. Westport: Praeger.
- . (2006). *Burning Books and Levelling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction*. Westport: Praeger.
- Lassner, J. (2000). *The Middle East Remembered: Forged Identities, Competing Narratives, Contested Spaces*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Lawler, A. (2003a). Assyrian Gold Safe as Looters Threaten Southern Sites. *Science*, 300, 1488.
- . (2003b). Mayhem in Mesopotamia, News Focus Special Report: A Museum Looted. *Science*, 101, 582–588.
- Lischer, S.K. (2008). Security and Displacement in Iraq: Responding to the Forced Migration Crisis. *International Security*, 33(2), 95–119.
- Londono, E. (2009, 1 January). As Clock Strikes 12, U.S. Hands Iraq Control of Green Zone. *Washington Post*.
- Mansfield, P. (1982). Saddam Husain's Political Thinking: The Comparison with Nasser. In T. Niblock (Ed.), *Iraq: The Contemporary State* (pp. 62–73). London: Croom Helm.
- Maples, G.M.D. (2006). *The Current Situation in Iraq and Afghanistan*.
- Moussa, M.U. (2008). The Damages Sustained to the Ancient City of Babel as a Consequence of the Military Presence of Coalition Forces in 2003. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 143–150). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Nisbett, M. (2007). The End of History? The Impact of the Gulf Wars (1990–1991 and 2003–present) on Iraq's Cultural Heritage. [Electronic]. *Cultural Policy, Criticism and Management Research*, 2.
- Otterman, M., & Hil, R. (2010). *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage*. London: Pluto.
- Paroff, S.P. (2004). Another Victim of the War in Iraq: The Looting of the National Museum in Baghdad and the Inadequacies of International Protection of Cultural Property. *Emory Law Journal*, 53(4), 2021–2054.
- Petersen, K.E. (2007). Cultural Apocalypse Now: The Loss of the Iraq Museum and a New Proposal for the Wartime Protection of Museums. *Minnesota Journal of International Law*, 16(1), 163–190.
- Phuong, C. (2004). The Protection of Iraqi Cultural Property. *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 53, 985–998.
- Pipes, D. (2003). Blame Iraqis for the Pillage. *Human Events*, 59(14), 20.

- Polk, M., & Schuster, A.M.H. (Eds.). (2005). *The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Rampton, S. (2003). *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq*. New York: Penguin.
- Reid, D.M. (1993). The Postage Stamp: A Window on Saddam Hussein's Iraq. *The Middle East Journal*, 47(1), 77–89.
- Rice, S., Graff, C., & Lewis, J. (2006). *Poverty and Civil War: What Policymakers Need to Know*. Working Paper No. 2: Brookings Global Economy and Development.
- Riedlmayer, A.J. (2002). *Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992–1996: A Post-war Survey of Selected Municipalities* (No. P486): International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.
- Rothfield, L. (2008a). Introduction. In L. Rothfield (Ed.), *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (pp. xv–xx). Lanham: Alta Mira.
- . (2008b). Preserving Iraq's Heritage from Looting: What Went Wrong (Within the United States). In L. Rothfield (Ed.), *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (pp. 5–25). Lanham: Alta Mira.
- . (2009). *The Rape of Mesopotamia: Behind the Looting of the Iraq Museum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rothfield, L. (Ed.). (2008c). *Antiquities Under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War*. Lanham: Alta Mira.
- Russell, J.M. (2008). Efforts to Protect Archaeological Sites and Monuments in Iraq, 2003–2004. In G. Emberling & K. Hanson (Eds.), *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* (pp. 29–43). Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Saddam Hussein's Iraq*. (1999). US Department of State.
- Schuster, A.M.H. (2005). Theft of Time. In M. Polk & A.M.H. Schuster (Eds.), *The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia* (pp. 10–13). New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Sample, K. (2007, 7 April). Iraq Confronts Hussein Legacy Cast in Bronze. *New York Times*.
- Smallman, L. (2003, 14 April). Rumsfeld cracks jokes, but Iraqis aren't laughing. *Asian Tribune*.
- Spurr, J. (2008). Iraqi Libraries and Archives in Peril. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 273–281). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Stein, G.J. (2008). Foreword. In G. Emberling & K. Hanson (Eds.), *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* (pp. 5–6). Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Stone, E.C. (2008). Archaeological Site Looting: The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Southern Iraq. In G. Emberling & K. Hanson (Eds.), *Catastrophe! The Looting and Destruction of Iraq's Past* (pp. 65–80). Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- Stone, P.G. (2008). The Identification and Protection of Cultural Heritage during the Iraq Conflict: A Peculiarly English Tale. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 73–84). Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Stone, P.G., & Bajjaly, J.F. (2008a). Introduction. In P.G. Stone & J.F. Bajjaly (Eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (pp. 1–17). Woodbridge: Boydell.

- Stone, P.G., & Bajjal, J.F. (Eds.). (2008b). *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*. Woodbridge: Boydell.
- Winter, T. (2007). *Post-Conflict Heritage, Postcolonial Tourism: Culture, Politics and Development at Angkor*. London: Routledge.
- Zunes, S. (2006). The United States in Iraq: The Consequences of Occupation. *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 1 (1), 57–75.