



InsSciDE Work Package 4:

Heritage: The Past as a Challenge to Build Up a Future?

Case Study n°4.1	A legacy of shared responsibility
Author	Alexander Pruss, Pascal Butterlin
Consortium Partner n°1	Johannes-Gutenberg-Universität Mainz/Germany (JGU Mainz)
Additional author affiliation	Pruss: Institute for Ancient Studies (Institut für Altertumswissenschaft) Butterlin: Université Paris 1, UMR 7041 ARSCAN

Abstract

The history of archaeology in the Near East is an obvious example of changing paradigms in the relation between Western (mostly European) scientists and the societies of Near Eastern states. Formerly, archaeology conducted by Europeans in the Near East was an expression of a colonial attitude towards “the Orient”, and often an uneasy cooperation between European powers and the Ottoman Empire and the young nation-states built on its ruins. Today, the knowledge created by archaeological research in the region is considered part of universal heritage; it leads to the construction of new communities and identities, but also new economic opportunities. Even if most archaeologists probably do not consider their actions as science diplomacy, and developed their networks and approaches outside of established professional diplomacy, they indeed did and still do act as science diplomats in context. Our InsSciDE case study will investigate the attitudes and practices of archaeologists seen in three historic and contemporary cases, focusing on how they have addressed the need for responsibility for heritage conservation shared across political and cultural borders.

Introduction

Three case studies will produce a critical analysis of the ongoing challenges of sharing the responsibility for heritage conservation across political and cultural lines. The first case study will be colonial archaeology, studied by the example of the early British excavations at Karkemish at the Turkish-Syrian border (1913–1921). The second case will be the Mari excavations (1933–2010) in eastern Syria, tracing an evolution from imperial designs to a model European cooperation. A third case will deal with the 1992–2010 excavation project conducted jointly by Syrian and European archaeologists at Tell Beydar in the north of Syria.

All three case studies will concentrate on the attitude of archaeological researchers active in the Near East towards the political and societal environment in which their research took place, and towards the local communities and authorities.

Until today, the knowledge on the Near East’s past was unevenly distributed between Europe (and more generally the West) and the Near East. University libraries and museums in the West are better equipped and better connected to the international scientific community than most universities and antiquity services in Near Eastern countries. Science diplomacy can open new ways to share knowledge and to strengthen the feeling of responsibility for a common heritage of global importance.

Actors

Actors in our study narrative are (co-)directors of archaeological missions in Near Eastern countries and European foreign diplomats working in these countries (their presence varies considerably according to different national traditions). Actors on the Near Eastern side include representatives on different levels from



the antiquities departments of the states (ranging from the ministers of culture and the directors of antiquities departments to local representatives and museum staff) as well as representatives of the local authorities and populations (provincial governors, mayors, or police officers and secret service agents).

Fields and disciplines, interfaces with technology

Many mission directors have acted within the field of science diplomacy, even if most were probably not aware of the term. The actual role of professional diplomats was – in many cases – only marginal since heritage was rarely considered as a relevant diplomatic field.

Networks and communication

Most mission directors developed an extended and robust network with leading representatives of the antiquities services of their host states. In many cases, these networks did not include the professional diplomats. On the other hand, many leading figures of the antiquities services of the Near Eastern states started their career with study at a European (or North American) university.

Politics and policies

Due to the roots of Near Eastern archaeology in European colonialism in the region, archaeological research in the region was traditionally conceived of as a competition between European states. This attitude has become weaker in the last decades and has largely faded with the creation of large multi-national research teams, such as those at Mari, or even a European archaeological mission, such as at Tell Beydar.

Disciplinary/methodological approach

Archival records, contemporary interviews and informal questionnaire surveys will be employed. Interviewees will be mainly directors and other leading individuals of archaeological missions in Near Eastern states.