

Relations between Archaeologists and the Military in the Case of Iraq: Foreword

IAIN SHEARER

Forum Editor

The complex and emotive issues surrounding ‘engagement’ by archaeologists with the military have been recently and vocally aired in a number of different professional forums and media. The *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology (PIA)* forum editor felt that this topic deserved greater illustration – for and by some of the archaeologists involved – as a series of strongly voiced opinions, some informed and some less so, has been expressed on the open weblist of the World Archaeological Congress (WAC).

Dr John Curtis, Keeper of the Department of the Middle East at the British Museum, was approached and kindly agreed to be the *PIA* Forum Primary Correspondent, as, despite both public and vocal opposition to military action in Iraq prior to the recent invasion, he found himself and his institution playing an active role in attempting to ameliorate the situation regarding further destruction of Iraq’s cultural heritage and heritage institutions and working with and alongside the British military in his efforts to do so. Three of the forum correspondents were approached and agreed to discuss the issues raised by Dr Curtis on the basis of their own recent experiences in working with either the UK or US militaries, both inside and outside Iraq. The final correspondent was approached and agreed to respond to Dr Curtis’ lead article both as a non-archaeologist and a representative voice for those many academics without direct personal experience of working with the military in any professional capacity, but whom nonetheless have very strongly held and voiced opinions on the subject.

The forum editor would like to reiterate that there is still no consensus by archaeologists and heritage professionals on this complex topic and although a number of the most vocal opponents of any engagement by archaeologists with the military from the WAC weblist were approached to be correspondents, all, unfortunately, refused to be directly engaged by Dr John Curtis. The following articles are the respective authors’ personal opinions and do not necessarily represent their respective institutions’ views on the recent invasion of and subsequent conflict within Iraq.

The *PIA* forum editor deeply thanks the correspondents for their time and hopes that the following articles stimulate further constructive discussion on this contentious subject and that *PIA*’s readership finds them informative.

Relations between Archaeologists and the Military in the Case of Iraq

JOHN CURTIS

Keeper, Department of the Middle East, British Museum

In this short paper I want to consider the controversial question of whether archaeologists should work with the military, principally in Iraq. During the course of 2008, the British Museum and the British Army collaborated in a project to inspect archaeological sites in the south of Iraq and to develop plans for a new museum in Basra. I shall describe the background to this collaboration, and consider the ethical questions arising from this arrangement.

Firstly, the engagement with the British Army needs to be put into its proper context. Since the invasion of Iraq by Coalition forces in Spring 2003, and the looting of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad on 10–11 April 2003, the British Museum has been working alongside other organisations to help our Iraqi colleagues in their attempts to protect and save Iraqi cultural heritage (Curtis 2008a and 2008b; http://www.britishmuseum.org/the_museum/museum_in_the_world/middle_east_programme/iraq_project.aspx). A large part of this work has consisted of providing condition reports and listing damage. I shall describe these attempts in chronological order because they are germane to the question of why we eventually sought the assistance of the British Army.

Following the looting of the Iraq Museum, a press conference that had been arranged at the British Museum on 15 April to promote its 250th anniversary was dominated by this shocking news. Through the good offices of Channel 4 News, a link-up by satellite telephone was established with Dr Donny George, then Director of the Iraq Museum, in the Iraq Museum. He reported that the museum was still unguarded, and urged me to come out to Baghdad as soon as possible to witness the situation at first hand. When it became known that we were planning a visit to Baghdad, a number of journalists and film crews offered to join forces with us. We decided to link up with a BBC team which wanted to produce a programme to be presented by Dan Cruickshank. We needed each other. I would be able to get the BBC team into the Iraq Museum (they would not have got access otherwise), and they would be able to get me into Iraq, with protection from the security firm Pilgrim Elite.

It was not a bad arrangement. The advantages were that I was able to spend 25–26 April 2003 in the Iraq Museum (with the BBC team) photographing and recording the damage, and Donny George came back with me to London to appear at a press conference in the British Museum on 29 April at which he was able to tell the world's media exactly what had happened in the museum. Also at this time we made a list of the 40 or so most important objects stolen from the galleries. The disadvantages of this collaboration with the BBC were that they produced a film of which I strongly

disapproved in which it was suggested that the Iraqi curators were somehow complicit in the looting of the museum. I was, and still remain, firmly convinced that the curators were entirely blameless. As an American colleague has remarked: they may have been Baathists, but they weren't criminals.

The next opportunity to visit Iraq came in June 2003. At the press conference on 29 April Donny George had said that he wanted the British Museum to coordinate efforts to provide assistance to the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (ISBAH), particularly in the field of conservation.¹ Accordingly, a small British Museum group, which included two conservators, spent the period 11–26 June in Iraq. The visit was funded by the Packard Foundation and security was again provided by Pilgrim Elite. The early summer of 2003 was actually the only time since the war in Iraq began when it has been possible to travel around the country relatively safely, and we were able to make full use of this window of opportunity. In Baghdad we made further observations in the Iraq Museum and the conservators drew up a detailed conservation plan, which was in fact not possible to put into effect because of the rapidly deteriorating security situation thereafter. We also inspected the material in the Rafidain Bank that had been recently unpacked – chiefly goldwork and ivories – and we made a visit to the north. During this tour we visited Nimrud, Nineveh, and Balawat, and were the first Western archaeologists to visit the Mosul Museum, which was looted at exactly the same time as the Iraq Museum in Baghdad. Lastly, we went to Babylon, which at that time was guarded by a very small detachment of Coalition troops. Throughout this visit, we were accompanied by two filmmakers from Cicada Films, but sadly no film has ever appeared. At the time, it appeared to be difficult to reconcile the agendas of the filmmakers on the one hand and we archaeologists on the other.

As I have said, the military detachment at Babylon in June 2003 was small. However, the camp continued to grow through the second half of 2003 and the first part of 2004 so that, by the summer of 2004, it occupied an area of 150 hectares and housed 2000 soldiers. Following a storm of protest in the international press and on the internet, the Coalition took a decision to vacate the camp. A handover ceremony was arranged by the Polish ambassador – Polish troops being at that time the last residents of the camp – and, in preparation for the handover, a lengthy report on the overall condition of Babylon was prepared by Polish archaeologists embedded in the Polish army. At the same time, I was invited by Dr Mufid al-Jazairi, then Iraqi minister of culture, to visit Babylon and prepare an independent report focusing on the damage that had been caused during the time that Babylon was a military camp. With the assistance of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the British Embassy in Baghdad, and with the help of American forces in Iraq, I was able to join the inspection team at Babylon for the period 11–13 December 2004. Security cover was provided by Control Risks Group. In due course I prepared a report (Curtis 2005) which attracted considerable publicity (*The Guardian* 2005). This report highlighted

1 This request caused some resentment among a small minority of the audience who felt that a museum with large collections of Iraqi material was not an appropriate body to lead efforts to help the Iraq Museum, and they questioned whether an institution with close ties to the British government should be involved, given that the British government had sanctioned the invasion. However, none of the doubters had themselves previous experience of working in Iraq.

problems such as the digging of long trenches through previously undisturbed archaeological deposits, the removal of large amounts of surface deposit, the flattening of areas which were then covered with compacted gravel, the filling of sandbags and HESCO containers with earth from outside Babylon (thereby contaminating the record at Babylon itself), the driving of heavy military vehicles along the ancient Processional Way, and the damaging of dragon (*mushbushu*) figures in the Ishtar Gate. At the time of writing a final assessment of damages has still not been officially agreed, but a UNESCO report incorporating my findings together with those of Iraqi colleagues and others will be released shortly. The work I was able to undertake at Babylon is an example of how such visits can be facilitated if the invitation has been extended at a senior level – in this case by the Iraqi Minister of Culture.

In the course of 2005–6, as a result of the worsening security situation, I was not able to visit Iraq at all to continue the task of monitoring damage to cultural heritage. This was in spite of the fact that, in March 2006, reports began to circulate that inscribed stones had been taken without the permission of the Iraqi antiquities authorities from the famous site of Ur of the Chaldees to Nasiriya Museum by Italian archaeologists working with Coalition troops. Dr George sent his staff to investigate and received reassuring reports from them, but he was still anxious to visit Ur himself and invited me to join him there for a tour of inspection. I was keen to do this, as it would provide an opportunity to see if Coalition troops from the adjoining Tallil Airbase had caused any damage at Ur, a site of special interest to the British Museum because of the excavations there by Sir Leonard Woolley between 1922 and 1934. However, the visit took so long to organise that by the time it came about Dr George had left Iraq for the US and had been replaced as Chairman of the State Board by Dr Abbas al-Husseini.

I was eventually able to go out to Ur in February 2007. The trip was facilitated by the FCO and security was again provided by Control Risks Group. The plan was that I should meet up with Dr al-Husseini at Ur, but it went horribly wrong. The site is incorporated within the perimeter fence surrounding Tallil Airbase, so all access to the site is controlled by US forces. When Dr al-Husseini arrived at the main gate, after having driven down especially from Baghdad, he refused to be searched and was therefore denied access. His entirely reasonable argument was that, as Director of Antiquities, he had responsibility for all archaeological sites in Iraq and should have unrestricted access to them. The stand-off lasted several hours, but Dr al-Husseini's protests were to no avail and he was unable to enter the site. In these circumstances my own inspection had to be aborted, but I was able to ascertain before leaving that shrapnel damage to the façade of the ziggurat had been caused during the First Gulf War (1990–91), and bomb craters to the north-east of the site also dated to that time (Curtis 2007). More worrying was the realisation that the new Visitor Control Centre at the main gate complex had been built on top of the ancient suburb of Ur known as Diqiqqa. The construction of the Centre will inevitably have caused some damage to the archaeological deposits in this area which could have been avoided if archaeologists or experts in cultural heritage had been consulted beforehand.

The fiasco at Ur was not only deeply embarrassing but also very frustrating. We were keen to do more to record and rebuild Iraqi cultural heritage, but it was proving

very difficult to go to Iraq and engage with Iraqi colleagues. Therefore, it was a welcome breath of fresh air when Major General Barney White-Spunner, the British commanding officer, came to the British Museum in September 2007, in advance of the deployment of the Third Division to Basra, and asked what he could do to help protect cultural heritage. By now the advantages of working with the Army were obvious, as we shall see, but I recognise that our ready agreement to do so requires some explanation. This is particularly so in view of the heated debates on this subject, such as at the recent World Archaeological Congress in Dublin.

Before the war started I had been unwilling to provide a list of sites for the military.² In fact, the British MoD never asked me or the British Museum for any information, but I *was* approached (in a private capacity) by a person collecting information for the US DoD. I declined to give any information for the following reasons:

- (i) Iraq is a vast archaeological site: providing a list of selected sites would give the army *carte blanche* to do whatever they wanted elsewhere.
- (ii) Providing information would somehow be collusion, assisting in the preparations for the war.
- (iii) Providing information was, I thought, a political rather than a military gesture – in fact dancing to a political agenda.

For the same reasons, I had not been willing to contribute a chapter to Larry Rothfield's book *Antiquities under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (2008), even though I had participated in the original conference organised by the Cultural Policy Center of the University of Chicago in August 2006. My reluctance was based on the fact that I was unhappy to write about what should be done to protect cultural heritage in the event of an invasion when, to my mind, an invasion could hardly ever be justified. Also, to put this decision into context, it was at this moment that an invasion of Iran was being widely spoken of.³ As regards the question of working with the army, I draw a sharp distinction between providing advice pre-conflict and post-conflict. The pre-conflict situation is, in fact, governed by political considerations over which the army has no more control than archaeologists, but in the post-conflict situation, when the damage has occurred, both the army and archaeologists have an obligation to rebuild the infrastructure, including cultural heritage. Working with the army post-conflict is, therefore, a pragmatic solution. It is only they who have the resources to facilitate visits and provide protection. They also have a great deal of expertise that can be harnessed for archaeological work. For these

² In fact, supplying lists of sites does not seem to have been a very useful exercise – witness the lack of care taken at Babylon, Hatra, Kish, Samarra, and Ur, and of course the gross neglect of the Iraq Museum and provincial museums.

³ It was suggested at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities conference in Cambridge on 12 December 2008 that I had provided a list of sites in Iran to the press to be avoided in case of conflict, but I did nothing of the sort. The article in *The Guardian* on 5th March 2007 (Kennedy, M, 'Iran's rich architecture and rare treasures threatened by possible US strikes') sought to point out that an aerial bombardment of nuclear facilities in Iran would have disastrous consequences for nearby sites of cultural heritage interest.

reasons I have come to the conclusion that cooperation between the military and archaeologists post-conflict is very useful and desirable, and, indeed, if there had been closer collaboration, disasters such as the building of a military camp at Babylon or the building of a gate complex on an ancient suburb of Ur could have been avoided.

In the initial discussion with Major General White-Spunner, we indicated that the greatest need was to undertake condition assessments at sites in the south of Iraq which had not been reported on and where looting was believed to be ongoing, and also to refurbish some of the provincial museums in Southern Iraq. Major Hugo Clarke was shortly thereafter appointed the project manager, a post which he still holds, and we have been working with him throughout. To test the feasibility of the project I stayed with the British Army at Basra Airbase between 12 and 16 April 2008 and during this time visited Eridu, Warka, and Ur by helicopter, landing at two of the sites. It was clear from this brief reconnaissance trip that it would indeed be possible to survey a number of sites, and this was reported at a meeting at the British Museum on 29 April. At the same time, Major Rupert BurrIDGE described how the Lakeside Palace of Saddam Hussein at Basra could be adapted for use as a new museum for Basra, if this suggestion was approved and taken forward by the Iraqis. By this stage, it was clear that there would be resources to concentrate on only one museum, and Basra was the obvious choice.

The next phase of the project was planned for the period 1–10 June 2008. It was conceived of and still remains as a joint project with the ISBAH, and their full involvement in it is seen as crucial. I was joined by three Iraqi colleagues (Qais Hussein Raheed, Mehsin Ali, and Abdulamir al-Hamdani) and three foreign colleagues (Elizabeth Stone, Margarete Van Ess, and Paul Collins). We were based at Basra and Tallil, and managed to inspect eight different archaeological sites: Ur, Eridu, Ubaid, Warka (Uruk), Larsa, Tell el-'Oueili, Lagash (Tell al-Hiba), and Tell al-Lahm. We visited the sites by Merlin helicopter and, apart from the archaeological team and Majors Clarke and BurrIDGE, there was a seven-man protection force, a signaller, a medic, a two-person combat camera team, and five crew. The results were both informative and unexpected. We found the following:

- (i) Damage from neglect. For nearly 30 years (since the beginning of the Iraq–Iran War, 1980–88), little attention has been paid to sites and monuments. At Ur, reconstructed buildings are now in poor condition and there is damage from erosion at a number of sites, particularly Eridu and Tell al-Lahm.
- (ii) Damage resulting from the conversion of sites into military defensive positions apparently by the Iraqi army in the period leading up to the Coalition invasion of 2003. This situation was evident at Ubaid and Tell al-Lahm.
- (iii) Damage resulting from Coalition activities. This applies mainly to Ur, where, as noted above, a new Visitor Control Centre was built on the site of Diqdiqqa. In addition, some accidental damage may have been caused to the site by the uncontrolled visits of large numbers of Coalition troops stationed at Tallil. Discarded food wrappers were noted at Tell al-Lahm, testifying to the erstwhile presence there of US troops, but there was no damage that could be definitely associated with them.
- (iv) Damage from looting. There was clear evidence of looting holes at Larsa, Tell el-

'Oueili, Tell al-Lahm and Lagash. At Eridu, inscribed bricks had been looted from the collapsed dig-house. However, as far as we could see this looting had mainly occurred in 2003–4, and there did not seem to be evidence of very recent looting.

It is undeniable that this work could only have been carried out under the auspices and with the assistance of the army. Important results were obtained, but they have not been entirely uncontroversial. We made it very clear in our full report on the internet⁴ that our conclusions about the probable cessation of looting since 2004 applied only to the eight sites visited and not necessarily to sites in other parts of the country or indeed to sites in the north part of Dhi Qar Province where looting was known to have been very bad in 2003–4. However, the findings have been contested by a small number of people.⁵ Some hostile critics, apparently motivated by political considerations, have even suggested that we were taken by the army to sites that they knew were in good condition. Needless to say, such claims are entirely baseless and, indeed, the selection of sites was made entirely by the archaeological team in consultation with the Iraqis. Nevertheless, we recognise the importance of undertaking further site visits and we hope to do this, as part of the ongoing collaboration with the army, in the early part of 2009.

In conclusion, working with the army has enabled archaeologists to engage with these sites in a way that, because of the security situation, would otherwise have been completely impossible. The benefits of this cooperation are, I think, self-evident. Above all, I very much hope that one of the fruits of this relationship will be a new museum for Basra, which would be a small compensation for some of the damage that has been caused to Iraqi cultural heritage because of the war.

4 'Overview of site visits 2008' is an assessment of archaeological sites in June 2008: an Iraqi-British project. This report will also be published in full in the next volume of *Iraq* (vol LXX for 2008): http://www.britishmuseum.org/the_museum/museum_in_the_world/middle_east_programme/iraq_project/overview_of_site_surveys.aspx [accessed 20 November 2010].

5 In its issue for July–August 2008 (no 193), *The Art Newspaper* reported that 'Archaeological sites in south Iraq have not been looted, say experts'. It is true that this was a misleading headline, but the body of the text reported our findings fairly, namely emphasising that the absence of recent looting applied only to the eight sites that were visited. Nevertheless, the validity of our findings was questioned on various websites, which led *Art Newspaper* reporter Martin Bailey to interview Dr Abbas al-Hussaini, recently retired as Director of Antiquities. The next number of *The Art Newspaper* (no 194 for September 2008) carried the headline 'Iraq's top archaeologist says looting is over', which resulted in Dr Abbas being unfairly criticised by archaeologists who insist that the looting is ongoing (Bailey 2008a; Bailey 2008b).

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Response to ‘Relations between Archaeologists and the Military in the Case of Iraq’

JON PRICE

Northumbria University
No Man’s Land
WAC Council and Executive

My response to this paper is informed by my knowledge and the context to that knowledge. It is not intended as an *ad hominem* response, but statements in John’s paper are instead taken to stand for and represent similar statements by other commentators made elsewhere.

I am an archaeologist. A long time ago I studied the Sassanian dynasty of Persia (modern Iran) under Dr Bivar at the School of Oriental and African Studies. The opportunity for fieldwork never arose for socio-political reasons. For a number of years I have worked closely with serving military personnel dealing with military archaeology (the archaeology of military sites and personnel) in Britain, Belgium, and France, and with MoD archaeologists who work with the military on training ranges in Britain. I was actively involved in political debate prior to the invasion of Iraq, being at the time a Labour Party officer in the constituency of a cabinet minister. I was then, and remain now, opposed to the invasion of Iraq, in itself and as part of the ‘War on Terror’. I organised a session at the 2008 World Archaeological Congress (WAC) in Dublin entitled ‘Working with the Military: Not Evil, Just Necessary’ which contained papers by US and Dutch military archaeologists, UK MoD personnel, a lawyer, and myself. This session ran despite massive opposition from those elements within WAC who refuse any dialogue with the military. It also had the dubious privilege of close police protection after the police received ‘credible threats of disruption’ (C Smith, *pers comm*).

The British military is a legitimate arm of this Western capitalist state. If we are to take a moral stance on working with the military we must also do the same in relation to the police (forensic work), the education system, and ultimately any source of funding derived from capitalist organisations rather than from open public collection. The fact that we do not is an indication of pragmatism. There are archaeologists who refuse/oppose all these things, though largely they remain employed by and within the education system.

If we are to single out the military for our boycott, then we should apply that boycott at all locations where archaeology and the army intersect. All army training ranges were used in the preparation for the invasion of Iraq and support the continued occupation. A refusal to work with the army in Iraq should be accompanied, *inter alia*, by a refusal to work with them on Salisbury Plain and on the Otterburn ranges in Northumberland. Both of these locations contain significant remains of human activity which are essential to an understanding of our national past.

Those archaeologists who would choose to work in Iraq without overt cooperation with the army have difficulty gaining access to sites, as John explains, and so are unable to carry out the archaeological work they set out to do. More critically, visiting archaeologists have to work in close cooperation with mercenary organisations. John specifically mentions Pilgrim Elite and Control Risks Group. Mercenaries are military organisations operating outside the checks and balances applied to the state military. They are implicated in significant contraventions of ethical, moral, and legal norms. Nevertheless this is not addressed as an issue by groups who carry out, or suggest carrying out, work without cooperating with the army. For example, on a personal, moral, and ethical level, I would rather be associated with the US Army than with Blackwater USA.

In the film *Apocalypse Now* (1979) Willard, the Special Forces officer, says, after his crew have massacred the civilian occupants of a boat: 'It was a way we had over here of living with ourselves. We'd cut them in half with a machine gun and give 'em a band aid. It was a lie.' This principle is similar to archaeologists refusing to cooperate with the military before and during the invasion on the basis of a statement of political, moral, or ethical belief, but then agreeing to go into Iraq to survey and 'rescue' archaeology. The first position claims the moral high ground by refusing to support aggression against the population of Iraq. The second position appears to support the Iraqi people, but in fact is actually driven by an attachment to the archaeology of Iraq. The archaeology is seen as detached and separate from the Iraqi people, who are implicated both in its destruction through the construction of defensive works during the war and in its neglect during the long and costly war between Iraq (as a US surrogate) and Iran.

Aside from this, the *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1954) is clear in stating that States must attempt to minimise damage to cultural heritage during armed conflict. This needs preparation, and archaeologists, as citizens of these States, are the logical personnel to engage in this process, unless we consider the Hague Convention to have no relevance.

Archaeologists are implicated in the colonisation of Iraq, as they always have been. The British Museum has national status, is part of the British establishment and is (in the eyes of the colonised) as much an arm of the state as is the army. The simple statement that the Museum has a special interest in Ur because of Woolley's excavations there from 1922 to 1934 has huge implications for colonial attitudes, responses, and relationships. The statement 'contaminating the record at Babylon' seems innocent except that it isolates the early human activity and neutralises the cultural heritage of Babylon by removing this record from association with the surrounding Iraqi population. It also implies that the activities of the invading armies of the 21st century are somehow different from the activities of invading armies from earlier centuries, and so do not constitute part of that continuum of heritage and history.

Finally, there is the question of the psychology of cooperation with the army. John says that '[the army] have a great deal of expertise that can be harnessed for archaeological work'. I'm not sure about this attribute, but they do have lots of exciting stuff, which introduces questions concerning how individuals view the military on a personal level. There are lots of images of archaeologists in Iraq taking

an obvious delight in the wearing of military dress and equipment (which they would plead is essential), behaviour which chimes intriguingly with the adoption of military gear on sites in the UK, from the entrenching tools and gas-mask bags of the 1950s and 1960s to the combat trousers and camouflage gear of the 21st century. At one point John lovingly names his transport (not just a helicopter but a *Merlin* helicopter), and lists the team (not a first aider, but a *medic*; not just a camera team, but a *combat* camera team) with a care bordering on fetishism.

Our relationship with the army is complex; however, the army is not separate from our society, but part of it. We must develop a sophisticated response to the question of how we interact with it in the same way that we do for any aspect of our complex society.

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Response to 'Relations between Archaeologists and the Military in the Case of Iraq'

MIKE ROWLANDS

UCL Department of Anthropology

In this short paper I want to consider the controversial question of whether archaeologists should work with the military, principally in Iraq.' The author obviously implies that, while this question has been raised in particular by the Iraq war, it is more generally controversial for archaeologists dealing with conflict and post-conflict situations. John Curtis sees some involvement by archaeologists with the military as inevitable and, in post-conflict situations, as desirable. Any earlier engagement with the military, he argues, should be avoided on ethical grounds – in particular, giving information or advice could appear as collusion and as taking the political stance of encouraging the war preparations. The ethical questions raised are whether to have relationships with the military (on the perhaps benign assumption that whatever their motives to destroy an enemy, somehow 'culture' will escape their attention if sufficient information or warnings are given), thus appearing to collude with the destruction of human life and property that must inevitably ensue from conflict, or not. If the latter, then it is the best of a bad job not to provide the advice and information needed to avoid accidental destruction and to focus instead on post-conflict recovery and cleaning up.

I am not sure where the ethics lie in this position. It seems to me that the real question raised here is not whether archaeologists should work with the military, but how to avoid the need to do so at all. Whether pre- or post-conflict, to work with a military organisation that is planning a campaign of destruction is surely like relying on 'poachers to conserve the game'. We can adapt the old adage that 'with war comes opportunities' to a more specific rendition that with war comes opportunities for cultural revenge and looting. In the case of the Iraq war, the idea that the American or British armies would want to participate in the destruction of the origins of 'Western civilisation' is barely conceivable (but I guess not impossible) to many archaeologists. This may, of course, be crediting the American and British armies with too much foresight and not enough recognition of their incompetence. McGuire Gibson's complaint about being involved with advising the Pentagon on the lead up to the Iraq war is precisely that, even with all the data on site itineraries and map coordinates he provided the officials preparing for war, the 'rush to Baghdad' meant that none of the relevant people were there in time and there were not enough troops on the ground to do anything much except protect the site of first priority, the Oil Ministry. As he says at one point:

Perhaps it is America's general disregard of and suspicion of 'culture', relegating it to non-governmental bodies and individuals to support (with the exception of much

debated funding for the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities and a few other programs) that caused it to be left out of the planning. Perhaps culture, as a government concern, is considered too European or too Socialist. (Gibson n.d.)

By mid-May 2003, the Pentagon had sub-contracted 'culture' to the Italians, and the Italian ambassador to Iraq was put in charge of the Iraq Ministry of Culture. Gibson's account is one of continuing American neglect and incompetence, mainly relating to the fact that the whole question of cultural preservation was never an important part of the agenda. Even with good will and enthusiasm from some 'lower ranks', the fact that orders never came down from on high meant that, usually, nothing was done.

Curtis' account of much the same period reflects a more British way of doing things. When the destruction of cultural property in Iraq first became apparent a press conference and crisis meetings held at the British Museum in London were followed by an emergency satellite phone call to Donny George, the Head of the National Museum in Baghdad, who appealed for help from the British Museum. Within a day, Curtis was on a flight to Baghdad to meet the beleaguered staff of the Iraq National Museum. As he describes it, lots of good things were done, in a rather British shutting-the-stable-door way, and no doubt the situation would have been much worse otherwise. However, it all flowed from the ethical stance taken (unlike Gibson) by Curtis and the British Museum, who presumably did not and would not have any dealings (nor were they asked) with the MoD about cultural preservation before the Iraq War began. Was it all a bit 'stand-offish'/stiff upper lip/we won't ask and they wouldn't volunteer anything and does it matter anyway? Suspicion of the MoD and its machinations is complemented by faith in the integrity of the staff of the Iraq National Museum and condemnation of the dastardly Dan Cruickshank, who turns up with a BBC film crew casting gross aspersions.

Curtis' article, from June 2004 on, is a narrative of visits and inspections of the damage to archaeological sites, of the writing of reports and the bringing of the weight of culture (and the British Museum) to bear on the British Army in Basra. Unlike the American situation, with archaeologists trying in vain to get the Pentagon to take cultural matters seriously, British Major Generals with impossible-sounding names come to visit Curtis at the British Museum, and involvement with the army in Basra is a natural follow-on from these meetings. The natural affinity between the hierarchies of the British Museum and the British Army in the field is such that you can scarcely tell the difference between them. An Army Major is put in charge of converting an old palace into a museum for Basra, and joint expeditions are made in Merlin helicopters to explore the damage to archaeological sites. Somewhere in all this are the chosen officials of the Iraq National Museum, who are drafted in to be consulted, to agree, and to join in in what is, after all, how the 'Brits' always do things.

That there is a cultural logic to cultural preservation shouldn't be a surprise. However, we have to ask: is this the best way to do things? Are there other ways for archaeologists to have an effect? I am sure there are lessons to be learnt from situations like Iraq, and they have been. One seems to be the need for training and infrastructure to be available on the ground, particularly in sensitive situations where

conflict is a high probability. After the experience of the First Gulf War, in which significant looting and damage to archaeological sites occurred, there was a widespread recognition of the likely consequences of the Iraq invasion and both UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) made presentations to the Bush administration, presumably to no avail. Institutions, however, tend to produce their own cultural ideologies in the cases revolving around the need for inventories and trained personnel to produce and implement them. We hear that the Getty Conservation Institute and the World Monuments Fund held a meeting in October 2003. By March 2004 they had signed a collaborative agreement with the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (ISBAH) to form the Iraq Cultural Heritage Conservation Initiative and to assist ISBAH in redeveloping its professional and managerial capabilities. In addition, by 2004 there was an initiative to bring in an American private consultancy firm to carry out a GIS survey of all archaeological sites affected by the war in Iraq. Big money was involved, with agreements on interregional collaboration, and the institutionalisation of cultural heritage management was rapidly established to take over responsibility from the military in Iraq.

One can imagine the last scenario being already drafted as more or less the recognised response of the institutions of cultural heritage management to conflict and post-conflict scenarios. In a crazy sort of way, heritage management transcends the reality of the conflict and the suffering of people into an abstract logic of GIS mapping and the provision of cultural security in order to preserve sites and objects from the madness of civil strife and conflict. Mullah Omar, it is claimed, said to the Director of UNESCO that he couldn't understand how the 'West' could be more concerned for the preservation of the Bamiyan statues when UN sanctions were leading to deaths of thousands of Afghani children. It would appear that 'crimes against culture' still need to be put in their proper place, which is with the people involved in the conflicts.

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Response to ‘Relations between Archaeologists and the Military in the Case of Iraq’

LAURIE W RUSH

PhD, RPA

In the United States a comedian named Stephen Colbert has a daily television programme called *The Colbert Report*. One of his regular features is called ‘Stephen Colbert’s Formidable Opponent’. In these sketches, Mr Colbert puts on a red necktie, then a blue necktie, and debates with himself. In searching for a metaphor for the agonising ethical process to which thoughtful archaeologists who work with the military subject themselves on a daily basis, the ‘Formidable Opponent’ strikes me as the most descriptive.

Dr Curtis reflects on the back and forth aspect of his own ethical journey as he discusses his decision to participate in Iraqi projects and his recognition of the fact that he has accepted protection from, and cooperated with, active duty military personnel representing a variety of countries.

For me, the internal debate pre-dates the conflict in Iraq. I began to work in a military setting during peacetime, five years prior to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. It strikes me that most of the current discussion focusing on the ethics of archaeologists working with the military fails to address the fact that the archaeologists actively working on military installations in the United States have numbered in the hundreds for over two decades. One of our primary responsibilities is to identify, evaluate, and protect Native American ancestral places (also known as prehistoric archaeological sites).

In the late 1990s, when the United States DoD adopted one of the most proactive indigenous community consultation policies in the world, many DoD archaeologists took responsibility for diplomatic relations between military installations and Native Americans. Effective consultation often put the archaeologist in a position of advocacy for access to, and preservation of, ancestral places. Ironically, these activities directly supported increasing the availability of land for military training. During this time, however, there was virtually no comment or notice from the academic community, let alone a questioning of the ethics of military archaeologists. In fact, many academic archaeologists benefitted from DoD funding for archaeological survey and investigation in these settings.

This historical perspective highlights the complexity that may not be obvious in Dr Curtis’ process of arriving at his personal resolution of the ethical challenge, in which he divides his participation into pre-conflict activities (which he views as unethical) versus post-conflict activities (in which he is participating). In following this dichotomy, land management for military training, including its indigenous advocacy component, clearly falls in the pre-conflict category and so would be considered unethical.

Dr Curtis, however, is more specifically referring to the process of mapping archaeological sites in areas where conflict may be imminent and sharing these locations with military planners. In addition, training military personnel about appropriate, respectful and cautionary behaviour when operating in the midst of valuable archaeological properties in order to prevent unnecessary damage would fall into Dr Curtis' realm of unethical behaviour. There is no question that I have chosen to work in both of these areas from before the time that the US military was globally criticised for damage at Babylon. From my perspective, the only way to avoid damage to cultural property during times of armed conflict is through planning and education. The text of the *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1954) supports this view and, in fact, requires this preparation of the signatories. I cannot think of better people to support these efforts than archaeologists.

To make matters even more complex, the preponderance of damage to archaeological properties in Iraq resulting from military activity happened during the post-conflict phase, the phase often referred to as Stability Operations. All of the damage at Babylon described in Dr Curtis' article, for example, happened during this phase. From the planning perspective, this damage might have been prevented through better military planning and training – both pre-conflict activities. In addition, the damage might never have been systematically documented in a timely way without the embedded Polish archaeologists – individuals who clearly made ethical choices to work with the military. Given the complexity of the situation, dividing the demands of cultural property preservation into pre- and post-conflict phases is, to me, an artificial construct. Where is the dividing line between the phases? Would it be fair to criticise a military that failed to plan or train for encountering heritage and archaeology because all the subject matter experts decided it was unethical to educate them about these issues?

Clearly, given my connection with the DoD In Theater Heritage Training Program for Deploying Personnel, the results of my personal ethical deliberations show that I have chosen to work in both the pre- and post-conflict phases of military activity. What, then, were the considerations on both sides of my personal version of 'Formidable Opponent'? Back in 1998, the first choice that I made was to take a job working for an institution that trains people to use whatever means necessary to defend the United States. I recognise the fact that many of these means are violent and that innocent people are killed and injured in the course of such conflicts. Those would be reasons not to participate. During peacetime, those concerns have a way of fading into the background. If we think about ethics as working toward an outcome that benefits the greater good, in 1998 the opportunity to develop an archaeological stewardship programme at Fort Drum and to become an advocate for the Haudenosaunee people, whose ancestors lived on our installation, outweighed the military training aspect. In fact, the potential for Fort Drum soldiers going directly into combat seemed almost hypothetical. It may be hard to believe, but the main sign welcoming people to Fort Drum at that time read, 'Fort Drum, Dedicated to Preserving the Environment'.

At that time, two additional considerations fell into the negative category. One

consideration for me was that I was uncomfortable with military culture, and the second was that I mistakenly assumed that the Fort Drum leadership would be opposed to setting aside training land in order to preserve archaeological sites. However, during the five years between 1998 and 2003, my anthropological training helped me understand and appreciate military culture. There are few organisations that embody heritage preservation in their daily activities as effectively as the US military. I also discovered enthusiasm and support for sound land management and archaeological preservation among members of the 10th Mountain Division Command Group and the Fort Drum Garrison Leadership. During the demanding days of preparing to deploy overseas from Fort Drum, one of the Division Commanders graciously allocated an entire afternoon and two Black Hawk helicopters to help Native American elders to visit ancestral places. On a personal level, I look up to and respect individuals who offer these kinds of examples in their own behaviour and deportment, whether they are wearing a military uniform or not.

Dr Curtis doesn't discuss his considerations with respect to the privileges of living in England and working for an institution like the British Museum, an institution, I would add, that has ethical challenges of its own. From my perspective, it is a privilege to be a citizen of the United States. I live in a peaceful place with a more than reasonable social order. I am very aware of the fact that, every day, hundreds of people view the United States as a good enough place to risk their lives to attempt to enter. I was privileged to vote recently in a very historic election. For people who believe that this conflict is about oil, I am also using my share of petroleum products. I now work on a daily basis with people who are willing to risk their lives to defend this way of life.

Military leaders who care about the preservation of archaeology in Iraq and Afghanistan now see value in my archaeological knowledge and expertise and are requesting my help as well as the help of my colleagues. At this point in time I feel it would be unethical for me to withhold this expertise from them. As one Colonel told me, you will never find a more committed pacifist than a combat veteran. I have attended events where a Commanding General led a prayer for peace. Here is the critical point – conspicuously absent from the military and archaeological ethics debate in both the US and the UK: Dr Curtis and I both live in countries where civilian politicians made the decision to engage the military in the current overseas conflicts. Our ethical arguments are with these leaders, not with the honourable men and women who are serving what is supposed to be the will of the people.

In summary, ethics boils down to how individuals decide to behave in any given situation. These decisions are best made independently, with as many facts and as much first-hand information as possible. Many of the most severe critics of archaeologists who work with the military have had the least first-hand experience with military activity. Many of them have never met a military officer. Many of them have no idea that the United States has a robust domestic cultural property protection (CPP) programme providing millions of dollars for archaeological investigation. Even fewer of them know how many of their colleagues have been funded for years by these programmes. Many of these critics also appear to be unaware of well-established

cultural property programmes in a wide range of ministries of defence with qualified archaeologists serving as reserve officers. Many of these heroic individuals have saved artefacts, archaeological sites, historic buildings, and valued cultural properties.

Dr Curtis and I have made different determinations. That does not mean that either of us agonised less. I am sure that we have comparable internal 'Formidable Opponents'. I admire Dr Curtis for giving these issues such careful consideration and for coming to a decision that has enabled him to make such significant and valued contributions to cultural preservation in Iraq. I offer him my deepest respect.

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Response to ‘Relations between Archaeologists and the Military in the Case of Iraq’

RENÉ TEIJGELER

Former Senior Adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of Culture

Utrecht, 8 January 2009

Dear Dr John Curtis,

I read your Forum Paper with great interest and I thank the Institute of Archaeology for giving me the opportunity to write this response. The issue of whether archaeologists should work with the military or not indeed needs much debate. My main point is that we are in great need of guidelines. Such guidelines would make things clear for all parties involved: the archaeologists, the military, and quasi-governmental and international heritage non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Allow me to make a few remarks at the start:

- The present discussion involves only those who work with the military and not for them. In the latter case, the ethical considerations are partly different and perhaps even more subtle.
- Dr Curtis distinguishes two phases in an armed conflict: Pre-Conflict and Post-Conflict. His decision to cooperate with the military depends on the phase of the conflict. I would like to add another phase to that model: Peri-Conflict, defined as during the period of fighting or conflict. Today, conflicts have become increasingly interrelated. Modern wars have no limits; attacks on civilians and relief workers and other abuses of international humanitarian law have become deliberate strategies. Many conflicts are ‘frozen’ and the status of many countries is often described as ‘a stable situation of instability’ (quoted in Volberg Ruhr 2006). Under these altering circumstances, the phases of conflict are easily shifting from peri-conflict to post-conflict and back again. This situation makes it much more difficult for archaeologists to decide what position to adopt, as they have no way of predicting the extent of the violence and thus the necessity of working directly with the military.
- The first and most crucial question in this discussion is whether a mission is sanctioned by international law. It should be crystal clear that archaeologists can only cooperate with the military if a peace mission is approved by the UN Security Council, the European Union, NATO, the African Union or any other generally accepted international body.
- Humanitarian principles, ie the moral responsibility to address human suffering wherever it is found, can be translated to our profession. For archaeologists, it should read that we have the moral obligation to assist in the protection of cultural heritage of any origin all over the globe. This principle should be accepted by all who partake in this discussion.

Having said this, let me address some of the arguments Dr Curtis puts forward. In the case of Iraq, I agree with Dr Curtis' refusal to supply a list of sites to the military. However, I am in agreement for a different reason. When the 'Coalition of the Willing', including the UK, invaded Iraq on 20 March 2003, they did so without approval from the international community. Two months later, on 22 May 2003, UN Security Council Resolution 1483 was passed (UN Security Council 2003), recognising the USA and the UK as occupying forces.⁶ Thus, before 22 May 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom was illegal according to international law. Ergo, I could not and will never support such a mission.

I can understand the reasons Dr Curtis lists for his rejection of pre-conflict cooperation, but for me his points are open to discussion – providing the mission is sanctioned. As to his assertion that Iraq should be considered one huge archaeological site, and that making a selection of sites would give the military *carte blanche* over the rest, I would argue that heritage professionals always have to establish priorities. For example, when organising a disaster preparedness plan (required from every modern heritage institution), the curators have to make a priority list. This way there is a good chance that the best of the collection, according to the institution's own criteria, will be saved in the event of an emergency.

For reasons of planning operations, the military can ask that information provided to them is not disclosed to anyone else. After all, you don't tell your opponent what object you will spare because of the risk of the enemy using that information to their advantage. Yet it is often possible to cut a deal with the military (as is not uncommon with journalists): for example, to keep the information to yourself for a limited time.

For reasons criticised above, Dr Curtis was unwilling to contribute to Lawrence Rothfield's book *Antiquities under Siege: Cultural Heritage Protection after the Iraq War* (2008). I dismiss Dr Curtis' argument that 'an invasion could hardly ever be justified' and remind him that we can only work with the military when a mission is sanctioned. I repeat that such was not the case during the invasion in Iraq, or with respect to the suggested invasion of Iran. In both cases, I find it justified to speak of an invasion instead of a peace mission.

However, there are many international missions sanctioned by international law and therefore justified. Nobody in their right mind likes to wage war. Yet, in my opinion, there are exceptional circumstances in which the international community should acknowledge their moral obligation and defend the weak. The fact that the world stood by and did not act, at least not until much too late, while the Tutsis and Hutus slaughtered each other in Rwanda in 1994 (with the end result of at least one million dead), was a horror scenario, leading directly to a crisis within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The same goes for the protection of cultural heritage in times of war: do we stand by and watch, or do we act?

Dr Curtis continues his argument in favour of withholding his contribution to

⁶ This resolution includes this paragraph: 'Noting the letter of 8 May 2003 from the Permanent Representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/538) and recognizing the specific authorities, responsibilities, and obligations under applicable international law of these states as occupying powers under unified command (the 'Authority')'. For the complete text, see http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions03.html [accessed 20 November 2010] and select Resolution 1483.

Rothfield's book by explaining that he would never work together with the military in the pre-conflict phase. I strongly disagree with him on this point. In general, I consider training and educating military personnel in CPP during peacetime to be a duty for most archaeologists (see also Emberling 2008). How can we criticise the military for damaging heritage in times of disaster and, at the same time, withhold from them adequate information on what should be protected? I don't think that is fair. This attitude could be based on a preconceived image: the soldier as a tough, brainless person who can only follow orders; but, in most armies, officers need at least a college degree and, before deployment, all soldiers receive intense training in civil skills – including cultural awareness training. Moreover, most Western armies accept the notion of the '3D policy', which means that a conflict cannot be solved by military means only (Defence), but that Diplomacy and Development are valued equally.

Dr Curtis gives a splendid example of peri-conflict cooperation when he recounts the approach he received from the future UK commander of Basra in 2007. The Iraq mission was well underway, and sanctioned by the UN. This cooperation between the military and archaeologists is a clear case of how two parties can have common goals. I am, however, curious as to why Major General Barney White-Spunner contacted the British Museum before his deployment. If archaeologists would put more effort into the training of army personnel in CPP before deployment, such contacts might become a normal course of events.

My last point of criticism relates to the use of private security companies. Directly or indirectly, Dr Curtis' travels to Iraq were made possible because his party was protected by security firms. After reading Scahill's book on Blackwater (2007), I now know what damage a private mercenary army can cause. In some instances it is worse to cooperate with these security firms than with a regular army. The tendency in the world of developmental aid to make increasing use of these companies in conflict situations greatly worries me, the more so when these NGOs are very critical of regular armies, which operate under an international mandate. I am sure that not all security companies are the same, but nonetheless we should be aware of the fact that mercenaries might be in charge of our protection.

In preparation for the 6th World Archaeological Congress in Dublin in 2008, I searched for professionals who might be experiencing similar problems in their relationships with the military. It soon became clear that emergency workers of humanitarian organisations are facing the same ethical and moral problems in their relationship with the military. However, these workers still cooperate with the military, but only under strict conditions. Emergency workers apply several UN guidelines from which I would like to summarise the most crucial principles and concepts below:⁷

- UN core principles:
 - no direct assistance
 - adherence to the Red Cross Code of Conduct: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence
 - no aid from belligerent forces

⁷ The most important guidelines are: Oslo Guidelines 2006; UN/MCDA 2003; UN/IASC 2008. For more specific guidelines see: <http://ochaonline.un.org/> [accessed 20 November 2010].

- UN key concepts:
 - on request of assistance from host state or recognised governments
 - appointed Emergency Relief Coordinator for all bodies involved in crisis
 - provider of help at last resort
 - at no cost
 - maintain civilian character of assistance mission; not to be used for military advantage by any participant
 - UN mission under civilian not military control
 - limited assistance
 - avoid reliance on assistance by host state
 - complemented by political efforts to relieve crisis
 - identification markings that are culturally acceptable to host states' population
 - unarmed missions of assistance

There is no room to explain all the above points, although some of them speak for themselves. It just shows you, Dr Curtis, that we are not the only ones struggling with our ponderous relationship with the armed forces. Possibly archaeologists could learn from emergency aid workers; in our next discussion, we could exchange our views on this matter.

For now it does not come as a surprise to you that I fully agree with your end conclusion: 'working with the army has enabled archaeologists to engage in a way that because of the security situation would otherwise have been completely impossible'. However, I might add, only under certain conditions.

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Relations between Archaeologists and the Military in the Case of Iraq – Reply to Price, Rowlands, Rush and Teijgeler

JOHN CURTIS

Keeper, Department of the Middle East, British Museum

All aspects of the war in Iraq excite strong emotions and argument, and this is particularly true of the role that archaeologists should play in the protection of Iraqi cultural heritage. There has been much debate about whether archaeologists should engage with the military, and if so under what terms, and there is no doubt that such debates will continue in the future. Jon Price reminds us that a session on this subject at the World Archaeology Conference in Dublin in summer 2008 was so controversial that police protection was necessary. Opinion on this and related matters is sharply divided, and it is no surprise that this is reflected in the comments of the four respondents.

The four respondents all have some connection with cultural heritage: Jon Price is a senior lecturer in the Cultural Management Unit at Northumbria University, and has, by his own account, worked closely with serving military personnel for a number of years; Laurie Rush is Cultural Resources Program Manager at Fort Drum, New York; Mike Rowlands is Professor of Material Culture in the Department of Anthropology at UCL with a particular interest in cultural heritage; and René Teijgeler served as senior adviser of the US Embassy to the Iraqi Ministry of Culture from July 2004 to March 2005. Of the four respondents, one (Teijgeler) has had extensive experience of working with the military in Iraq, one (Rush) has worked with the military and has limited experience of Iraq, one (Price) has had experience of working with the military but not in Iraq, and one (Rowlands) has had no experience of either, and these varying degrees of exposure are closely reflected in the value of the responses.

The issues which have attracted most attention are clearly whether archaeologists should provide information and advice pre-conflict and whether they should work with the military post-conflict. Both Rush and Price believe that archaeologists should work with the military pre- and post-conflict, Teijgeler believes archaeologists should work with the military in certain circumstances, and Rowlands seems to say that archaeologists should never work with the military (although the thrust of his argument is not entirely clear).

Let me clarify my own position. I certainly was not attempting to claim the moral high ground (*pace* Price), or suggest that there are never circumstances in which archaeologists should provide advice and information pre-conflict. The point I was making was that in the case of Iraq I was strongly opposed to the war and I was reluctant to supply any information that might have been used to support, justify or excuse the invasion. I should stress that this is very much a personal view and not

necessarily the view of the British Museum which, as has been pointed out, is a government-sponsored (although independent) institution.

I would have found it very uncomfortable trying to maintain good relations with Iraqi colleagues who were all fervently hoping there would not be a war while at the same time supplying information about which targets to avoid. The same applies to Iran, and I wonder if those archaeologists who argue that archaeologists should always collaborate pre-conflict are now ready to hold up their hands and offer to supply information that would effectively underwrite a battle plan for a possible attack on Iran. In this respect, I would like to reiterate what I said before, namely that 'the pre-conflict situation is in fact governed by political considerations over which the army has no more control than archaeologists'. It is surely true that any decision whether or not to engage is political rather than military, and I actually agree with Rush when she says that 'civilian politicians made the decision to engage the military in the current overseas conflicts' and 'our ethical arguments are with these leaders'. This is one of the main reasons for not supplying information to politicians (or civil servants working for them) who are seeking assurance that war can be waged with minimum collateral damage. I actually wrote a number of letters, not to senior army figures but to senior British politicians (including the then Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon), pointing out the likelihood of damage to the Iraqi cultural heritage. Any quarrel, then, should be with politicians, and like three of your correspondents, I have a great deal of respect for the army. *Pace* Teiggeler, I certainly have no problem with archaeologists 'training and educating military personnel in cultural property protection during peacetime' – I would consider this as a very worthwhile and important activity.

As regards the choice of reviewers, I was very surprised – in fact astonished – that my piece was not sent to an Iraqi reviewer for comment. This is an insensitive omission, and it would have been particularly valuable to have had an Iraqi viewpoint on what the British Museum has done in Iraq. This oversight is particularly unfortunate as there are some ill-informed comments regarding our relations with Iraq. Thus, Rowlands implies that the involvement of Iraqi colleagues in our survey of sites was a token gesture. In fact, out of seven visits that I have made to Iraq since the invasion, three have been at the direct invitation of the Iraqis, one has been at the request of UNESCO, and two (the site visits in the south) have closely involved Iraqi colleagues. It would actually have been unthinkable to do any of the work described without the cooperation and collaboration of the Iraqis. Then, there is the question of Ur. In the context of possible damage having been caused at Ur, I said that Ur was 'a site of special interest to the British Museum because of the excavations there by Sir Leonard Woolley between 1922 and 1934'. What I meant by this was that, because of Woolley's excavations there, the British Museum now holds the site archive and is therefore in a good position to assess damage to monuments excavated by Woolley. This is hardly justification for Price to write that my statement 'has huge implications for colonial attitudes, responses, and relationships' and he might like to know that we are now in the process (in collaboration with the University of Pennsylvania) of digitising the excavation record and photographs and creating a list of objects from Ur (of which Baghdad has the lion's share) so that colleagues in Iraq can have a full

set of the records and start to create a list of missing objects. It is regrettable that three of the responses tell us more about the political views of the respondents than they do about the question in hand. Thus, Price informs us that although he was 'opposed to the invasion of Iraq in itself', he still acted as a Labour Party officer in the constituency of a cabinet minister. It would be interesting to know whether the minister in question supported the war or not, and if the former how Price was able to justify putting the interests of his party before his principles. Then, Laurie Rush seems to suggest that the Iraq war was justified in order to defend Western values and lifestyles – this hardly needs any comment. Lastly, Rowlands sarcastically asserts that 'the natural affinity between the hierarchies of the British Museum and the British army in the field is such that you can scarcely tell the difference between them', but he does not explain what he means by this. In spite of this, some interesting points emerge. For example, Price flags up the fact that it is illogical to refuse to work with the official military while at the same time working with mercenary organisations which are not subject to the same checks and balances. Teijgeler also warns against the use of private security companies, and this is clearly an area that requires careful thought, especially in view of the fact that the UK government makes extensive use of Control Risks Group. Actually I found Teijgeler's paper to be very useful and constructive and to make an interesting contribution to the debate. I thought he made two important suggestions. The first is that archaeologists should only cooperate with the military if a mission has been approved by the UN Security Council or another generally recognised body, and in the case of Iraq this did not occur until 22 May 2003 (UN Security Council Resolution 1483: UN Security Council 2003). And secondly, he suggests that archaeologists should look to emergency workers in humanitarian organisations who face the same ethical and moral problems in working with the military as do archaeologists and who have strict guidelines. At this point, it is appropriate to pay tribute to the valuable work that Teijgeler did in Iraq. Among other things, he was instrumental in salvaging many important records and archives.

Lastly, there seems to be some resentment on the part of some correspondents that the British Museum should have played any role in attempts to protect the cultural heritage of Iraq. This echoes sentiments apparently felt by some participants in the meeting at the British Museum on 29 April 2003 when Donny George called on the British Museum to lead efforts to salvage the Iraqi cultural heritage (Stone and Farchakh Bajjaly 2008, 79). In the event, because of the deteriorating security situation, the British Museum was not able to fulfil this role, but had the situation been different it is doubtful whether any other British organisation would have had the contacts in Iraq, the knowledge on the ground, the conservation capacity, and the museological expertise to provide rapid assistance. It would be nice to think that organisations such as UNESCO or Blue Shield could have taken a lead, but at that time they were not prepared.

There is no doubt that the Iraq situation will be central to debates on cultural heritage for many years to come. There are no easy answers and no facile solutions. Above all, it is very much to be hoped that some constructive recommendations will emerge from the Iraq debacle, but this will happen only if old prejudices are cast aside and the arguments are depersonalised and deinstitutionalised. Only then will we all be able to join together to provide maximum help to our Iraqi colleagues.

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