THE PRESERVATION OF MEMORY:
ARCHIVING AND ASSESSING THE MISSION TO PROTECT CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Terminology & Acronyms

- Cultural Heritage
- IICAH- Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage
- ICHP- Iraq Cultural Heritage Program
- DRC- Disaster Research Center
- KRG- Kurdistan Regional Government
- SBAH- State Board of Antiquities and Heritage
Introduction

Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities & Heritage

Figure 1: IICAH building in Erbil, Iraq.
Significance

- Cultural heritage as a victim of war & natural disasters
- Previous conservation outreach focused on short-term workshops
- Unique long-term, local response
- Florence Mud Angels Oral History Project

Figure 2: Painting carried to safety during Florence floods.
Historical Background

- Rule of Saddam Hussein
- Conflict with Kurdish Iraq
- The First Gulf War (1990-1991)
- The Second Gulf War
- Looting of the National Museum of Iraq
- ICHP Program
Rule of Saddam Hussein

• Comes to power in 1968
• "Saddamist State" favored patronage for state-owned museum jobs
• Cultural heritage as a political tool

Figure 3: Part of Saddam Hussein's reconstruction of Babylon.
Conflict with Kurdish Iraq

- 1980s-Al Anfal Genocide
- 1991-Safe zone established in Northern Iraq
- 1992-Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) established
- 3 Provinces: Erbil, Dohuk, Sulaimaniyah
- Impact:
  - Growth of Kurdish language & culture
  - Decline of Arabic in region

Figure 4: Map of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
Gulf Wars

- First Gulf War (1990-1991)
  - Leads to economic sanctions
  - UN Oil-for-Food Program
  - No-fly zone
  - Impact:
    - Illegal excavations increase
    - Iraqi Department of Antiquities (SBAH) loses funding
- Second Gulf War
  - March 2003-US invades Iraq
  - April 2003-Looting of National Museum in Baghdad

Figure 5: Umma archaeological site scattered with holes dug by looters.

Figure 6: Shell hole damage to museum façade.

Figure 7: Lobby outside National Museum’s administrative offices after the looting.
Iraq Cultural Heritage Program (ICHP)

- Established 2008
- $13 million grant
- Partnership between US State Department, IRD, Iraqi ministries.
- Expertise from Walters Art Museum, Winterthur Museum, University of Delaware, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, NPS, WMF
- 3 Goals:
  1. Assist with the rehabilitation of the National Museum in Baghdad.
  2. General professional development and capacity building for employees of SBAH, including those working with Iraq’s museums.
  3. Establish a conservation and historic preservation training institute in the city of Erbil.
Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities & Heritage

Figure 8: Map of Iraq. The IICAH is located in the city of Erbil.
Objectives

• To collect, archive, and assess the work of IICAH
• Record the real-time experiences of the individuals involved
• Make archived resources accessible to other professionals as a guide for protecting cultural heritage in large-scale emergencies
Methodology

• Interviews
  – 9 Interviews
  – Semi-structured format
  – Snowball Sampling
  – Interviewees: Directors at the IICAH, Advisory Council members, 1 IICAH Student/Master Trainer
  – Recorded & transcribed
Methodology

- **Archive**
  - Title: *Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH) Archive, 2008-2017*
  - Accessible via the DRC
  - Storage Method
    - Multiple CD-ROM discs
    - USB thumb drive
    - Offsite climate controlled storage facility
    - Hard-copy files
  - 4 Folders
    - Oral History Interviews
    - Years
    - Relevant Online Articles
    - IICAH Archive-Restricted Access
Key Topics & Themes

- Preparation & Operation of the IICAH
- Students
- Funding & Sustainability
- Key considerations & Advice
Preparation & Operation of the IICAH

• Long-term courses:
  – Looked to UD’s graduate and undergraduate programs
  – Topics: preventive conservation, collections care, general heritage preservation
  – Teach theory & applied techniques
  – International visiting lecturers

• Language considerations:
  – Teaching in English with Arabic and Kurdish translations
  – English language training

• Sourcing materials locally

Figure 9: A student looks for supplies in a local market.
Students

• Student Demographic:
  – Mid-career professionals already working for the Iraqi government
  – Typical age from late twenties to early thirties
  – Represented all 18 Iraqi provinces
  – Bachelor’s degree
  – Mix of genders, religions, & ethnicities

• Master Trainers:
  – Help visiting instructors
  – Next generation of teachers

Figure 10: Map of Iraq provinces and with ethnic and religious divisions from 2005.
Figure 11: IICAH students and instructors enjoy lunch together.

Figure 12: Student working at their home institution.

Figure 13: Students in the Archeological Site Preservation Course learn how to document damage at a site.

Figure 14: A Master Trainer explains different exhibition mounts.
Funding & Sustainability

- **Funding:**
  - KRG funding potential
  - Slow progress
  - Centralized government & culture of nonprofit fundraising

- **Sustainability:**
  - Long-term staff
  - Partnering with Iraqi universities

Figure 15: IICAH local staff in 2014.
Key Considerations & Advice

• Consider specific needs and current capacities:
  – Not about having a model, but about knowing what they wanted to achieve.
  – Tailoring project to local conditions, local stakeholders, and local resources.

• Be flexible and manage expectations:
  – Teaching priorities change

• Gaining locals’ trust
Conclusion

Figure 16: Students standing outside the IICAH in 2012.
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Figures:
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Figure 8: Map of Iraq. The IICAH is located in the city of Erbil. Source: “Erbil, Iraq.” Google Maps. Accessed April 1, 2018. https://www.google.com/maps/place/Iraq/@33.1401932,39.224966,6z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x1557823d54f54a11:0x6da561bba206160218m2l3d33.22319114d43.679291


Figure 13: Students in the Archeological Site Preservation Course learn how to document damage at a site. Source: IICAH’s Facebook page. Accessed April 2, 2018. https://www.facebook.com/Iraqiinst/.

