

**S P K**  
**M A G A Z I N E**

ENGLISH

## DEAR READERS,

It was this brick tile fragment that the Vorderasiatisches Museum received in the post last spring. A private individual had decided on this unusual form of contact in order to make a gift to the museum. The tile, so we were told, came from South Iraq and had been taken from there in the 1980s 'as a souvenir'. The museum's scientific analyses concluded that the gift was a fragment of a tablet dating from the third millennium B.C. – with a dedication inscription of the ancient Mesopotamian ruler Amar-Suena, who speaks of having built a temple to the god Enki. We immediately contacted the Iraqi Ambassador in order to return the object to its place of origin.

This story illustrates what this issue will address: the protection of cultural property. While this concept is seemingly accepted worldwide as a matter of course, in these days of shocking news from the Near East it is in fact sorely neglected. Illegal excavations and trade have been a matter of concern for cultural institutions worldwide for years. For this reason, late last year the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK) (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) in association with the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (German Archaeological Institute) coordinated a benchmark-setting conference. Now that the inconceivable destruction wrought by the terrorist militia Islamic State has become woefully topical, the global community must address the question of what it is actually doing in order to protect cultural property, and do so before everything is destroyed. Thus the production of this issue of SPK Magazine is coloured by the events that have taken place in Mosul, Nineveh, Nimrud, Hatra and elsewhere. Thanks to the good relationships maintained by the Vorderasiatisches Museum (Museum of the Ancient Near East) and the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Iraq (Museum of Islamic Art) and with Syria, we can not only report on what the IS has done there, but also on what is now expected from museums worldwide – for instance with regard to saving Babylon.

Further, our magazine leads you on the trail of ruthless antiquities dealers and shows how Germany deals with illegal treasure hunters. Because the protection of cultural property is not just a matter for others, we show you how we put it into practice – from the digitalisation of Islamic scripts to the 'back-up' filming of files from the Geheimes Staatsarchiv (Secret State Archives).

We naturally have much to report from our institutions, which you can once again learn about in this issue. We solve a

picture puzzle with Adolph Menzel, reconstruct Berlin's concert scene over recent decades and take a look at how work is progressing on our major construction projects – the Museum Island Berlin, the Humboldt-Forum and soon also the Kulturforum.

As you can see, SPK Magazine appears in a new guise. This face-lift enables us to bring you our reports on the foundation's activities in a way that is not only more concise and telling with a scientific approach, but also more entertaining. Moreover, because the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz has such a wealth of stories to tell, SPK Magazine will now be published twice a year.

I hope our magazine makes enjoyable and informative reading!



**Hermann Parzinger**  
President of  
the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz



Isin, southern Iraq:  
holes left behind after  
illegal excavations

## THE OBLITERATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Destruction, illegal excavations and illicit trade: The IS terrorist attacks on world cultural heritage sites have put the protection of cultural heritage on the political agenda. But the problems are not restricted to the Near East. Insight into a global phenomenon

By Hermann Parzinger  
p. 22

Mosul, Nimrud, Nineveh – these places have by now come to symbolise the destruction of cultural heritage. Earlier this year in Mosul and Nineveh, henchmen for the Islamic State (IS) used hammer and drill to destroy objects dating back thousands of years. Then in April, a video emerged showing the demolition of an Assyrian royal palace in the ancient city of Nimrud: a powder keg is rolled into a room decorated with illustrations of deities; a massive explosion follows – and the viewer surmises that little remains of the erstwhile capital of the Assyrian Empire. The IS claim that they are thereby destroying images and symbols of idolatry. At the same time, the publicly staged iconoclasm also sends a provocative message to the Western world and its cultural identity.

Reports regularly state that the IS is funded for the most part by the illegal trade in the antiquities that it takes from conquered sites. This allegation above all others has meant that the cultural destruction in the Near East has become a mainstay of journalistic reports. But illegal excavations and illicit trade

are not only rife in Syria and Iraq; they are a global problem. Whether in Mexico, Greece, Columbia, Mozambique, Peru, Italy or even Germany – archaeological objects are consistently being illegally stripped from the ground all over the world. The contexts of the finds are irretrievably lost in the process and,



Apamea, Syria: traces of  
illegal excavations

moreover, these finds are no longer available for scientific research. The networks for the illegal trade in cultural artefacts encompass the globe. This is not a recent development. For decades, illegal excavations and illicit trade have

Krak des Chevaliers, Syria:  
damage caused by looting  
and wilful destruction





Aleppo, Syria:  
Al Zirb Souq, burned  
and destroyed as  
a result of fighting

been part of everyday life in many countries, on countless archaeological sites.

The underlying reasons for this development are complex and occur on many levels: In many regions civil wars or the collapse of old nation states in regions dominated by ethnic groups have resulted in political instability. The effective protection of archaeological sites in these places is nigh impossible due to the security situation, at least in the short term. Moreover, cultural heritage is becoming increasingly ideologically and politically charged. In those places where societies attempt to find their cultural identity by way of a new nationalism or by rewriting the past, the remnants of the past are often instrumentalised in order to strengthen social and ethnic ties. The objects themselves, as well as research into and around them, therefore also invariably have a political dimension. On the other hand, there is a large and still growing demand for antiquities in the West. Museums build on their collections and among collectors, antiquities are still seen as prestige objects. What both seller and buyer lack is the awareness that for a trade to be legal, there must be proof of provenance.

The trade in archaeological artefacts from crisis regions and the difficulty of proving provenance is also finally being discussed in Germany. In December 2014 the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, the German Archaeological Institute and the German Association of Archeology organised the two-day international conference 'Cultural heritage in danger: Illicit excavations and trade'. Here, archaeologist, lawyers, cultural policymakers, investigators and art dealers discussed in depth the causes of this problem – one that also affects Germany, in as much as it is one of the main hubs for the illegal trade in antiquities. Germany's new legislation for the repatriation of cultural assets is intended as a first step towards solving the problem. This will entail the obligation to furnish proof of origin for each individual object, the



Basra, Iraq: burned books in the university library

presentation of the required export licences and evidence that the seller has researched all the available registers of stolen cultural artefacts. The new legislation might best be summarised as 'no trade without duty of care'.

Our magazine is also an outcome of this conference. We have noted the discussions, the reports from the crisis regions and the latest developments and integrated them in our core theme.

## OUR UNITY LIES IN OUR PAST

The cultural destruction wrought by the IS in North Iraq has plunged a whole country into mourning. A conversation about lost identity, inter-denominational collaboration and what is required of Germany

Edited by Kristina Heizmann

■ p. 30

**MARKUS HILGERT: Mr. Musawy, you were in Babylon and Tikrit – what impressions did you bring back with you?**

**AMIR MUSAWY:** The people in Iraq are still interested in their archaeological

heritage. I was in Mosul shortly after the terrible events [ed: the destruction of the archaeological museum in Mosul documented in an IS propaganda video of February 2015]. I met people there who – although they have little to do with archaeology – wept, actually wept, after they had seen the effects of this barbaric act. It was not something I really expected, given the problematic security situation and the shortage of

every-day basic necessities. Evidently, the interest in culture remains intact. The people want to protect their cultural heritage – the heritage of all mankind. **Meaning that the destructive acts in Mosul and Nineveh are also an attack on the cultural identity of Iraq, on a heritage that could be a unifying force for the whole country because it recognises no religious or ethnic boundaries?**

Indeed. Politicians in Iraq have now recognised this opportunity: Attempts are being made to put this into practice in every-day life in order to generate a new, different agenda for national unity, which rises above religious influences. Mosul is a predominantly Sunni city with few Shiites, but despite this, the grief, the anger about what transpired in Mosul is also felt in Shiite-dominated areas like Babylon and Najaf. I believe that this cultural property is meaningful in a way that transcends religion.

**The Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) and especially the Vorderasiatisches Museum (Museum of the Ancient Near East) have a long history of dealings with Babylon. The museum has excavated there with the support of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (German Oriental Society) since the late 19th century – which means that we still have a special responsibility today. What do you think we can do in order to develop the ancient ruins, both in academic studies and for tourism?**

There is a great deal to do there. The Germans especially are very welcome in Iraq – the people there were impressed that I, with my German background, travelled to Iraq, that the German media is keen to report on Babylon. There is a whole raft of measures that Germany can implement there. On the one hand, there is the protection of the archaeological sites and excavations. Take for example the North Palace: This was excavated by Robert Koldewey and the structure that he excavated is

still visible. But today it is a ruin, where children play. There would also be plenty to do at Ishtar Gate, where for instance the already excavated foundations of the gate must be secured. Moreover, the whole site should also be made acces-

## Iraq lacks a solid education system for archaeologists

sible to visitors. A huge amount can be done in this respect and Iraq urgently needs and wants support.

**In recent months the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz has repeatedly emphasised the necessity of capacity building vis-à-vis the research and protection of archaeological cultural assets, and noted its own competencies and possibilities in this area. In which fields do you see the greatest demand?**

Very clear priorities have to be set. In my opinion Iraq notably lacks a good education system for classics scholars, especially archaeologists. We know that there are many undiscovered sites in Iraq, that there are areas that still have to be excavated and investigated, even in Babylon and Uruk.

### AMIR MUSAWY

has lived and worked in Germany for 15 years. For four years he was head of the cultural department of the Iraqi Embassy in Berlin. He has also worked as a journalist for Associated Press and Deutsche Welle and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Iraq) in Baghdad. He is currently head of the Berlin office of Iraq TV. He is passionate about archaeology and antiquities and is active in their protection.

### MARKUS HILGERT

is an Assyriologist and director of the Vorderasiatisches Museum of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Museum of the Ancient Near East of the National Museums of Berlin – Cultural Heritage Foundation). From 2007 to 2014 Hilgert was Professor of Assyriology at the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg. There in 2013 he founded the Heidelberg Zentrum Kulturelles Erbe (Heidelberg Centre for Cultural Heritage). Hilgert is member of the team of experts of the UNESCO project Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage.



At the Deutsches Archäologisches Zentrum: Iraqi journalist Amir Musawy in conversation with Markus Hilgert, director of the Museum of the Ancient Near East

## Babylon is now a ruin, where children play

Support is definitely needed – also in order to secure sites that have already been documented. In the Iraq Museum in Baghdad there are also countless objects that still await accurate classification. Here, too, we need people that have the necessary knowledge. The motivation to do so is there, but the know-how required is lacking, also with regard to management. There are demands in the field of exhibition design and technology that must also be met – how can a history be presented to the visitor in an attractive way?

### Where would one start?

The know-how must be developed in Iraq itself, with external support. This means that courses at universities must be consolidated or reorganised so that these competencies are taught, and that funding schemes and places have to be created for students. This would increase the appeal of going into archaeology and taking it up as a profession.

**After the archaeological sites have been excavated they have to be secured, as you have already mentioned. Throughout the Near East, museums, but also archaeological sites, are at great risk due to the political situation. How can reasonable preventative measures be taken in this context?**

The greatest threat for the archaeological cultural heritage is the illegal trade in cultural artefacts. Archaeological sites and museums are being looted mainly in order to sell objects. There are three ways to combat this: Firstly, the buyers in Europe must be made aware that it is a crime to acquire an object, the origins of which are neither transparent nor authorised. Those who buy at auctions are not necessarily acquiring something legal. Provenance must be proven in black and white. This calls for

action by German politicians, by the police authorities. Secondly, the religious leaders, tribal elders and politicians in Iraq itself should be made aware that this is not about their country and their history, but about the history of mankind. They need to understand how essential it is that they protect their cultural property. Thirdly, the interdisciplinary collaboration between the respective institutions in Iraq, Germany

and elsewhere needs to be revived. The communication between the institutions should be made easier so that information may be exchanged in an efficient and non-bureaucratic way, preferably by means of shared platforms and networks. This is of critical importance and an absolute necessity. We will not completely resolve the problems by these means, but we can at least combat them effectively.

## CITY UNDER SIEGE

The ancient city of Palmyra is under control of ISIS troops. Syrians as well as the international community fear for the World Heritage Site

By Maamoun Abdulkarim

■ p. 34

**T**he ancient city of Palmyra is located in the heart of the Syrian Desert, in a fertile oasis that made the city thrive and prosper for ages. A spring named Efqa which gave birth to the oasis played a major role in the growth of this city as evidenced by some inscriptions discovered, indicating its sacredness.

The ancient Palmyrenes made profits from international trade as they were not a party in the wars taking place between the Roman leaders themselves and those between the Romans and the Parthian Empire. All those factors took part in the architectural development the city witnessed in the early first century AD, which was mirrored in its religious buildings. For example, the construction of the Temple of Bel started in 32 AD and was not completed until the second century AD. The Temple of Nabu was built in the late



Fate unknown: The ancient city of Palmyra is a symbol of Syria's rich, diverse and unique cultural heritage

first and the first half of the second century AD and the Temple of Baalshamin was constructed in the late second and early third century AD. As a result of the flourishing international trade in the city the Temple of Al-lāt, the main street and the public market were built as well.

Palmyra flourished and was declared a kingdom during the reign of Odaenathus' dynasty between 235 and 273 as a result of its economic growth and military force. The city played a key role in the relations between the Roman Empire in the west and the Parthian Empire and, later, the Sassanid Empire in the east. After the death of King Odaenathus his wife Zenobia succeeded to his position. The kingdom of Palmyra expanded to include vast areas in the Levant, north of the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Anatolia and Armenia. Zenobia's massive expansion in power threatened the Roman influence in this area. Finally, Emperor Aurelian marched against Palmyra and razed it to the ground in the third century after demolishing its walls. However, between 285 and 305, Emperor Diocletian restored the walls of the city so as to protect the Legio I Illyricorum through separating it from the residential buildings.

That much on the history. Now, with the painful events in Syria escalating at an unprecedented pace and leaving their tragic impact on the Syrian scene, our cultural heritage has been battling for almost five consecutive years to survive. Buildings and souks in a number of cities were wrecked, including first and foremost the city of Aleppo, which calls to mind the horrors of World War II: 140 historical buildings, thousands of shops in the old souks and hundreds of houses were destroyed and damaged in the old city. Homs, Daraa and Bosra are also witnesses to the destruction of Syria's rich, diverse and unique cultural heritage.

Following the fall of the city of Palmyra under ISIS (or the Islamic State) control, the fate of this historic city, a World Heritage Site, has become unknown, which will result in a real tragedy befalling a great monument of civilization worthy of protection by all means. As we recall the practices of those extremist groups, including



Not eternal after all: images of ruins from Babylon

destruction and pillaging, in a number of other historical cities – for instance, in northern Iraq – we do believe that ISIS militants' full control of the ancient city of Palmyra poses a great

threat to world heritage as a whole and not just to Syria. It is a battle in which barbarism defeated humanity, civilization, openness and liberation. We are deeply saddened and frustrated by our inability to prevent ISIS hordes, coming from areas under their control, from entering the city. Nonetheless, as we have seen before in other areas going through a time of trials, such as Idlib and Bosra, we have always put our faith in the local community. The local community, we hope, will manage to protect and defend the archaeological sites in the face of all the difficulties posed by these groups, who have mastered the professions of killing, destruction and theft. Thus, we hope that Palmyra together with its monuments will not be subjected to grave damage, and we pray for the workers of the Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums to be safe from harm as they have spared no effort to defend their heritage in the past four years. We also call on all Syrians to come together and unite with the intention of defending our heritage, identity and shared memory. Besides, we would like to emphasize that hundreds of important statues and artifacts were transported from Palmyra to safe places outside the city a long time ago thanks to the efforts exerted by the Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums's staff.

Finally, we believe that we are bound to make mention of Resolution 2199 adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 12 February 2015, which reaffirms its decision on preventing and suppressing the financing of terrorist acts as well as protecting the endangered cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq. We also hope that this resolution will be followed by executive actions embodying the international will in preserving Syria's cultural heritage which is subjected to unprecedented dangers and challenges. This could include measures by which the neighboring countries are obligated to control their borders and fight organised smuggling operations that remove our

cultural heritage across those borders. Syria and its neighbouring countries must prevent the systematic damage carried out by extremist and terrorist groups. For this they need the support of the international community.

**MAAMOUN ABDULKARIM**  
is Director-General of Antiquities  
and Museums in Syria

## ARCHIVE OF DESTRUCTION

The Syrian Heritage Archive Project of the Museum für Islamische Kunst der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin documents the cultural heritage of the oppressed country – as a basis for reconstruction

By Marna Schneider  
p. 36

**I**ssam Ballouz looks at blurred images taken on a mobile phone. The irreversible destruction of a Syrian minaret flickers across the screen of his laptop. Ballouz is half Syrian and had to return to Germany when civil war broke out in 2012. At the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum of Islamic Art) in Berlin he works for the administration of the Syrian Heritage Archive

Project, which aims to gather information on Syria's vulnerable cultural heritage. Later, Ballouz and his colleagues will compare the latest information from the war zone with data from recent archaeological and art-historical projects and process it for inclusion in a database.

During the years of war, the destruction in Syria has assumed grave dimensions. The cultural heritage of a region in which the alphabet evolves, mankind's oldest, continuously occupied cities are found, and different ethnicities and religions have co-existed for centuries, is

threatened with extinction. Save what can be saved in this case means to document the cases of destruction and to have all the relevant information ready for the eventual reconstruction. Academics internationally and people in Syria have joined forces to realise precisely this objective.

'When the civil war started we all fell into a state of shock, until it finally occurred to us to digitalise the existing research and make it available as documentation and support for "day X", for the reconstruction,' says Stefan Weber, director of the Museum für Islamische Kunst. The idea grew and in 2013 the museum and the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (German Archaeological Institute) jointly launched the Syrian Heritage Archive Project, financed by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. The institutions began to digitalise their archival holdings and collate the information in a database. In the museum alone, more than 50,000 slides, photos

and plans were categorised according to content, and the names of the corresponding locations and their geographical coordinates were entered in the digital locations index Gazetteer. In the

**To date, over 50,000 slides, photos and plans have been indexed in a national register for Syria**

currently ongoing second project phase, the focus is on rounding out the information and descriptive texts. Interfaces that support the export of image data to other international data platforms offer a compatibility which is essential so that the knowledge content of the globally unique database of Syrian cultural property may be used internationally.

The international collaboration does not however first begin with the exchange over databases. Central to the success of Berlin's Syrian Heritage Archive Project was its early contact with various initiatives and activists and the antiquities authorities in Syria. The activists in Syria, often employees or former employees of the governing authority there, along with archaeologists and students, document the actual cases of wartime destruction and provide important information, also about lower-profile, but equally valuable monuments. Ballouz knows how relevant this is: 'The modern media would have us believe that they have a good overview of the situation. In fact, we still know very little about the many, scattered small things.'

The international cooperation partners are by no means working solely to combat the destruction caused by direct acts of war. Aside from these, looting and the trade in antiquities are causing enormous damage.



Positive partnership:  
project leader Issam Ballouz with Stefan Weber,  
director of the Museum für Islamische Kunst

Consequently, the project has a further urgent task, which is to monitor the international art market. ‘The deliberate destruction of the cultural heritage through illegal excavations is destroying the country’s cultural memory. That is a crime against society itself,’ Weber emphasises. Preventing this would require a new mindset: an appreciation of Syrian cultural heritage, rather than the irresponsible sale of Syrian antiquities. ‘With the illegal excavations we lose the history, because the loss of the objects also means the loss of scientific content.’

The very different reasons behind the destruction and the scale of the loss of objects and knowledge show how vital it is to make a thorough assessment of the situation. The project is therefore also working on the development of a status index. For a reliable overall picture however the documentation must become more methodical, rather than case-by-case, which only the international collaboration of informants, NGOs and institutions can facilitate. Networking, most of which is being done by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (German Archeological Institute), is therefore the project’s greatest challenge: bringing diverse initiatives together and boosting the value of the data, from which the Syrians especially benefit.

This is an important step so that, in addition to documentation, remembrance work may be taken forward. In this regard Stefan Weber hopes in future to be able to initiate a cultural education project, because awareness of the relevance of cultural heritage would be its best protection. Even children can be sensitised in this way, as a subsidiary project being tested in a school by project assistants Karin Pütt and Esper Sabrine shows. Whether this initiative can be further developed is currently still uncertain, as is the future of the country.

#### PROJECT ASSISTANTS

of the Syrian Heritage Archive Project at the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum of Islamic Art): Stefan Weber, Issam Ballouz, Karin Pütt, Eva-Maria Al-Habib Nmeir, Hiba al-Basir, Sermed Alwan, Mariam Bachich, Issam Hajjar, Zoya Masoud, Diana Miznazi, Esper Sabrine, Hans-Heorg Schöner, Cornelia Weber.

## ANTIQUITIES FOR THE WAR CHEST

The trade in looted antiquities is flourishing on the Turkish-Syrian frontier – but also elsewhere

By Alexander Bühler

■ p. 38

The smuggler was sure that the valuable goods would not be discovered among the junk: He folded the ca. 2000-year-old textiles from the Peruvian Nazca culture into transparent plastic bags and stuffed them between colourful T-shirts adorned with witty slogans. When the Peruvian police struck based on an anonymous tip, the first of two consignments was already on its way: to an

office address in the USA shared by several companies. The recipient, according to Homeland Security, could not be ascertained. The second package was to be transported by DHL to the small town of Grenzach-Wyhlen on the German-Swiss border. In the language of a secret service thriller, to a ‘dead drop’. In the subsequent lawsuit, the Peruvian dealer went free: The judiciary was unable to prove that he, and no other, had dispatched the package to the USA.

UNESCO estimates that the illegal trade in antiquities is worth millions – as financially lucrative on the black market as the illegal arms trade,

surpassed only by the drug trade. And, as the example from Peru shows, just as global. In fact, this network of looters, dealers and customers has a long

**USD 75,000 for statues, mosaics for USD 175,000, price on request for particularly fine pieces**

history – but it has become faster in recent decades due to the possibilities of global transport. What is excavated today can be found on eBay or other sales platforms tomorrow.

The record of destruction reaches far and wide, from mosaics from Pompeii to Buddha statues from India through to columns from Angkor Wat. The gangs of thieves often expend a great deal of criminal energy in the process: They work with pneumatic drills and lorries. The cultural structures that the archaeologists approach with such care are utterly irrelevant to them in their pursuit of riches. In countries that do not have the funds to protect their great cultural heritage, the extent of the damage is especially hard to measure. Again, Peru provides an example: The South-American country has 14,000 excavation sites – but just a few hundred government employees protect these. The consequence: Experts predict that up to 80 per cent of Peru’s cultural assets have been shipped abroad in recent decades. As if under a magnifying glass, here we can see what drives the looters and which circumstances they exploit.

The looter Telmo lives in Jequetepeque valley, some 700 kilometres from the Peruvian capital, Lima. Earthy tones, steep hills, boulders and sandy desert ground dominate the landscape. Green oases are situated along the

river: villages and arable land. People have lived here for thousands of years; one culture took over from another and one layer of burial sites lies on top of, or next to, the others. It is a rich terrain.

The burial sites of pre-Columbian cultures lie next to a village cemetery. The ground is scarred with holes, as if it had been hit by grenades. ‘We have been digging here for years,’ says Telmo. His son squats in front of a small pile of bleached, broken bones. Other looters have carelessly thrown away these human remains after rummaging through the resting place. ‘Here,’ he says, and points to green flecks on them, ‘this shows that there was a copper object on the body.’ His father stands next to him and, with something like reverence, says that he buries the dead after he has taken something from their grave.



Outsider trading: whether the pieces are genuine, where they come from and whether they finance IS atrocities is irrelevant to the buyers

Telmo comes to a stop by a wall, looks around briefly and then points to a hole. ‘Our forefathers were very wily.’ After all, looters existed even before the Spaniards arrived. There was a trick to finding eminent figures: excavating a grave that lay deeper in the earth than those of more recent cultures. Like a trained archaeologist, Telmo explains

that the Moche culture that dominated this region from 500–800 A.D. buried their dead two metres deep. ‘But my uncle and I dug past those graves because I thought that there had to be more underneath.’

Seven metres below the earth’s surface they found the grave of a priest from the later Lambayeque culture. ‘Lying in there were two masks cov-



Confiscated artefacts smuggled from Peru, often destined for Europe or the USA

ered in gold and silver and around 300 beads for a necklace from the same material, as well as two rattles, also gold and silver.’ The looter had hit the jackpot – a moment of happiness that he was to revel in for decades. For this find he received a few hundred US dollars, the middleman in the country perhaps a few thousand. The huge profit is first made on the international market: At Sotheby’s auction house in 1996 a comparable mask went under the hammer for 19,500 US dollars.

International collectors and dealers take huge risks in order to get their hands on pieces like these – among them the Peruvian Raúl Apesteguía, for decades one of the major dealers in art objects from pre-Columbian America, whose customers also include German collectors. He became involved with gangs that, if required, used weapons to scare off archaeologists and police from important sites. When he was murdered



in January 1996, the perpetrators stole a significant share of his pre-Columbian American collection. Apparently in order to re-sell them – because some of the pieces turned up a few months later: In the airport in Lima, in the luggage of a French collector on the way to Europe.

The gangs that sell stolen objects rarely act so openly: The risk of police investigation is too great. There are too many links to this chain, from the middlemen to the forgers that produce certificates of origin, through to the dealers. The money that changes hands in the process allows them all to live a comfortable lifestyle. But there are frequently groups, for which the trade in antiquities also serves as a means to underpin their political aims. Recently it was the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; now it is the IS (Islamic State) fanatics in Iraq and Syria, who finance their war not only with oil and hostages, but also with antiquities.

It is not easy to meet the man who can explain in detail how IS terrorists make a lot of money with Syrian antiquities. Mohamed must first sneak across the Turkish border. Coming from IS territory, he takes the same smuggling routes as the antiquities. In order to protect against Jihadists who wish to travel from Turkey into IS territory, the borders are closed. The IS rule over an area that reaches from the Turkish-Syrian border to near the Iraqi capital of Baghdad and the regional Iraqi-Kurdish metropolis Erbil. Millions of people are at their mercy, as are many sites with important archaeological remains.

In perfectly staged videos, fanatics from the IS have frequently spread fear – or provoked indignation. They show how they murder prisoners, detonate Sufi burial grounds or destroy major world cultural heritage sites. But that is far from the whole truth, says Mohamed. ‘The IS has opened an office that hands out licences to excavate on an official basis,’ he explains. ‘The functionaries there are amateurs and experts, who take back 20 per cent of the looters’ profits in taxes.’ The IS has

systemized looting – like many groups in the Syrian civil war who see cultural artefacts as an opportunity to stock up their war chests.

‘When the Islamists of the Al-Nusra Front conquered my home,’ says the Syrian refugee Sami al-Said from the region Deir er-Zor, ‘they first secured the most important positions: wheat fields, oil fields – and archaeological sites.’ For excavations in especially promising locations the Islamists recruited a special force that was escorted by armed personnel. This select group of looters was given free reign to dig around the ancient city of Dura-Europos for valuable objects. When the IS took this region after bloody battles, it used the same tactic. Only those who proved their loyalty to the Islamists were allowed to work for them.



Looters hawk their finds on the Internet. Emails with such images are sent to friends and relatives in Europe or the USA, who forward them to potential customers

Even in those parts of Aleppo that are dominated by the oppositional Free Syrian Army, looters are digging tunnels through to the archaeologically important layers. They do not hold back even from blasting their way through to the ground that they believe holds statues and ancient coins. And from time to time, from areas of the country

dominated by the official Syrian government, photos of soldiers posing with artefacts arrive in the public sphere.

But the IS in particular has perfected the trade, believes the archaeologist Amr al-Azm. He coordinates a group of experts who live in IS territory and, at risk to their lives, secretly record what the fanatics destroy and what they sell. One of the photos in his possession shows the marks of an excavator on an archaeological site. ‘My source tells me,’ says al-Azm, ‘that the IS is excavating huge amounts of earth with road diggers.’ Helpers hired by the IS would search through it for valuable artefacts that might be swiftly sold. That archaeologically significant structures are being destroyed in the process is something that the IS utterly ignores. The Islamists are only interested in the money.

‘In front of the camera, in front of us, the Syrian people,’ says Mohamed, ‘the Jihadists demonstratively destroy sacred sites and massive statues.’ They argue that these are idols. But he believes their true motivation is different. ‘They cannot transport and sell such large objects.’ He has yet to see the Islamists blindly destroy a whole archaeological site. To the contrary: ‘Sometimes they only remove Sufi burial sites in order to see whether something more valuable lies beneath,’ he says.

In order to sell these finds, the IS operates according to the principle of exclusivity with its customers. According to sources close to the archaeologist Amr al-Azm, it works with a list of trustworthy – and ruthless – dealers. These receive photos of especially good pieces or may send an emissary to the site of the find, who makes an on-the-spot decision on whether or not to buy. The experts from the IS office would, Mohamed explains, ask around US dollars 75,000 for the statues, but significantly more for mosaics: US dollars 175,000. But the prices for mosaics vary a lot, becoming significantly higher again according to subject and degree of sophistication. For particularly fine pieces, the dealers would sometimes even visit the site

of the find in person in order to take a closer look. If satisfied, the IS experts would then stick gauze to the surface of the mosaic, lift it, roll it up and then have it smuggled over the border. That would be the last step, says Mohamed. He does not know where the ancient artefacts then go, once over the border. The smugglers are the last known link, after which all traces disappear.

One thing he does know, says Mohamed, is that in the IS antiquities office, the word is that the final destinations are in Europe and Russia. There, where the buyers are found, where all the other antiquities from illicit excavations also go, whether from Peru or India. Thus, those who truly wish to stop the cultural destruction wrought by the IS must start there.

## IN THE PRESENCE OF CRIME

How the networks for the illegal trade in antiquities foster dishonesty, corrupt museums and defeat politics

By Neil Brodie

■ p. 42

When people think about organised crime, they normally think about the corrupt figure of Marlon Brando in the hit movie ‘Godfather’, sitting at the centre of a violent web of criminal intrigue. The reality is more mundane but at the same time more insidious. Small groups of otherwise unremarkable people engaging in criminal activity. In its Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states that “‘Organized criminal group” shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period

of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.’ This more restricted though more realistic idea of what might comprise organized crime alters the way we think about the antiquities trade, and about how the antiquities trade might be regulated or controlled. The antiquities trade can no longer be considered a victimless affair, standing in stark contrast to the violent Mafia-ridden world of the Godfather. It can no longer be portrayed as a harmless crime of gentleman thieves and romantic adventurers stealing buried treasures for the benefit of prestigious museums and wealthy collectors. Instead, new research has shown

it for what it is, a transnational organized crime, with a corrupting grasp on public institutions and civil society and links to violent militia groups. This paper will flesh out this new and alarming view of trade by way of a case study centered on India and will conclude with a brief word on the shortcomings of public policy as it relates to the antiquities trade.

In October 2011, the antiquities dealer Subhash Kapoor was arrested in Germany and in July 2012 extradited to India, where he faces charges relating to antiquities trafficking. Kapoor owned the gallery Art of the Past and storage facilities in New York City, subsequently raided by US Homeland Security Investigations agents in January 2013, who seized his business records and 90 antiquities. Kapoor's manager of Art of the Past, Aaron Freedman, was arrested and in December 2013 pleaded guilty to charges of criminal possession. Kapoor's sister Sushma Sareen and his girlfriend Selina Mohamed were also arrested in New York and charged. Kapoor had established his business in the 70s and dealt in material from a range of South and South-

## Statues of deities stolen from Indian temples are mixed with fakes, equipped with bogus documents and sold to museums

east Asian countries, including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand. He had trading contacts in Hong Kong, London and Dubai. His customers included major US museums the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Norton Simon Museum, the Asian Art Museum,

the Art Institute of Chicago and Toledo Museum of Art, as well as the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada, the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore and the National Gallery of Australia.

The case against Kapoor in India hinged upon the theft of 11–12th century Chola period idols from temples in the towns of Suthamalli and Sripuranthan in the state of Tamil Nadu. According to Tamil Nadu police, in September 2005 Kapoor visited the port city Chennai for a meeting with one Sanjivi Asokan. Kapoor arranged with Asokan for the theft and receipt of idols from the Sivan temple in Sripuranthan and the Varadharaja Perumal Temple in Suthamalli. Asokan hired two local thieves for the Sripuranthan thefts, who broke into the Sivan temple three times, removing three idols in January 2006, three more in May 2006, and a final two later in 2006. For the latter theft the gang was increased in size to about four or five members to cope with the removal of a large, heavy Shiva Nataraja. After each theft, Asokan mixed stolen idols in with modern reproductions, obtaining export documentation for 'artistic handicrafts'. The material was shipped from Chennai by Ever Star International directly to Kapoor's New York handling company Nimbus Import Export. In February 2008, Asokan paid thieves to steal a further group of perhaps 20 idols from the Suthamalli temple, which were shipped first from Chennai to Union Link International Movers in Hong Kong, and then on to Kapoor in New York.

The French Institute of Pondicherry maintains a photographic archive of temple idols which includes images of all eight pieces stolen from Sripuranthan and eight of the pieces stolen from Suthamalli. From these images it was possible to ascertain that one of the Sripuranthan pieces had been acquired by the Singapore Asian Civilisations Museum, another by the Toledo Museum of Art, and the large Sripuranthan Shiva Nataraja had

been acquired in 2008 by the National Gallery of Australia for USD 5 million. Other identifiable pieces from the temple thefts were seized in the New York raids by Homeland Security agents. The

## The competition for attention means that especially attractive pieces are sometimes bought without clear proof of provenance

National Gallery of Australia had purchased the Nataraja with an associated letter of provenance dated 15 January 2003 stating that it had been in the possession of a retired diplomat who had purchased it in India before 1971. Clearly, the provenance was a forgery. The National Gallery had failed in its due diligence by accepting the letter at face value and not contacting or otherwise confirming the identity of the previous owner. Seized correspondence revealed the cordial relations that had prevailed between Kapoor and the National Gallery's director Ron Radford. It seemed museum propriety had buckled under the pressure to acquire high quality antiquities. The Nataraja was returned to India in September 2014.

The Indian investigation of Kapoor also revealed something of the financial structure of the trade. The gang of thieves that committed the final theft of the Nataraja and one other piece from the Sripuranthan temple, numbering perhaps four people, were paid together Rs 3 lakhs (the equivalent of USD 6,696) to be split between them. The Nataraja alone was sold by Kapoor for USD 5 million – a price increase of nearly 800 per cent. Large increases of this magnitude between prices paid to

looters and thieves and those achieved on the international market are a common feature of the antiquities trade all over the world.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this and other examples. First, the antiquities trade is an organized crime, as it meets the UNODC definition contained in its Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. Small, well-organized groups of criminals operate over decades to steal and smuggle large quantities of antiquities from countries all around the world. One of the major social harms of organized crime is that it fosters corruption and undermines the integrity of civil society. That much is obvious from this and other case studies, with major museums led into unethical and illegal acquisition practices. Although it is conventional to consider the antiquities trade in terms of looters, dealers and collectors, the case study also highlights the roles of other actors – the shipping companies transporting material and the university academics and museum curators actively and profitably engaging with dealers and auction houses. It is only a small number of steps from the actual theft or looting of an antiquity to its purchase by a museum or collector. Between two to four intermediate transactions are common.

International public policy as regards the antiquities trade derives from the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. It emphasizes protection at source, broadly conceived to include infrastructure support and development as well as physical protection of cultural and archaeological sites, and the recovery of stolen objects. This policy has failed. Protection at source is not effective because there are too many sites in what are often remote and poorly-accessible locations. Seizures and returns of stolen objects offers no real deterrence for organised criminal groups as they simply impose a cost of doing business

that can be factored into pricing. Policy should aim instead to develop appropriate law enforcement responses which are able to identify and eradicate the small but organised criminal groups that comprise the antiquities trade.

### NEIL BRODIE

is doing research on the criminology and economics of the antiquities market as part of the ERC-funded 'Trafficking Culture' project. The printed case study is an excerpt from his lecture held at the international conference 'Cultural Heritage in Danger: Illicit excavations and trade'

hosted by the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation), the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (German Archeological Institute) and the Deutscher Verband für Archäologie (German Association for Archeology) on the 11th and 12th of December 2014.

## DARK FIELD INVESTIGATION

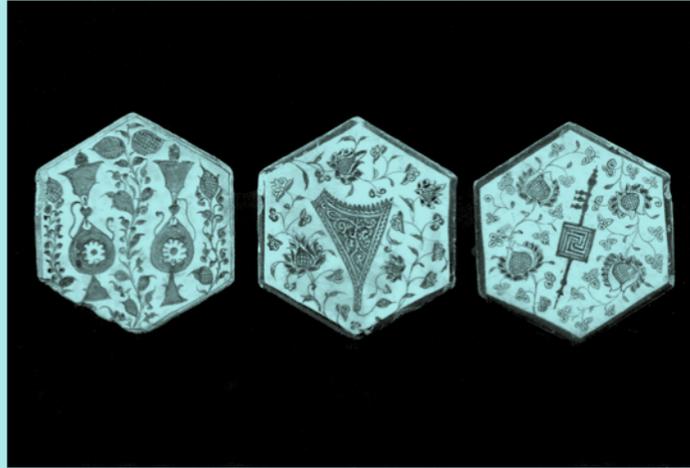
The project ILLICID aims to expose the methods and dimensions of illegal trade

By Michael Zajonz

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**D**ark field research and crime prevention are not everyday topics for museum professionals. Headed by project coordinator Markus Hilgert, director of the

Vorderasiatisches Museum der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (Museum of the Ancient Near East of the National Museums of Berlin), the joint project 'Illicit trade in cultural property in Germany' (ILLICID) addresses this very issue. Financed by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research), the subheading of the three-year



Multicoloured glaze, often with a floral design: examples of illegally traded objects are shown on 'Red Lists' in order to raise awareness of smuggled antiquities

research project elucidates its trans-disciplinary character: 'Procedures for the investigation of the "dark field" (i.e. number of unreported cases) as a basis for combatting and preventing crime as exemplified by the illicit trade ancient cultural property'.

Hilgert previously worked as an expert for the Federal Criminal Police Office during his tenure as Professor of Assyriology at Heidelberg University.



There in 2013 he was asked whether he wished to develop the methodologically demanding project. Because the scope of the trade in archaeological objects is so broad, Hilgert and his project partners focus on objects from the Eastern

Mediterranean region, where it is relatively easy to define the line between illegal and legal trade. The export of archaeological objects from Iraq (since 2003) and from Syria (since 2013) has been condemned internationally and objects of doubtful 'Near Eastern' or 'Mesopotamian' provenance are near impossible to sell on the serious antiquities market. 'I would be very keen to cooperate with representatives of sectors of the art market,' states Hilgert. 'There is nothing to be gained from placing antiquities dealers under general suspicion.'

While the associated project partners of the ILLICID project include investigating authorities, the main project partners are academic institutions: the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz with its archaeological and classical studies expertise, the GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Mannheim, which will coordinate a survey of 3,600 individuals and institutions, and the Fraunhofer Institute for Secure Information Technology (SIT) in Darmstadt.

As a developer of customised IT solutions, SIT is tasked with scouring the Internet for illegal offers. To this end, tried and tested processes of image recognition and text extraction will be refined and the websites thus investigated stored in a database so that they remain fully accessible even when they are no longer online. The aim of the research, built on expert archaeological knowledge but automated in a subsequent work phase, is 'a kind of meta description of illegal websites,' explains Martin Steinebach of Media Security and IT Forensics at SIT.

The objective of the overall project is to gain not only insight into the illicitly traded artefacts and entry routes, but also 'information on the patterns of behaviour, routines and networks' of the dark field of illegal trade. This will be achieved by means of a pilot study on the illicit trade in archaeological objects from the Eastern Mediterranean region where due to the current

political situation in those countries massive illegal excavations have been observed in Iraq, Syria and Iran. 'Our project is a wonderful example of the social relevance of the so-called small academic disciplines, states Hilgert. 'It couldn't be done without Assyriology, Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology and Egyptology.'

The Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences will design a questionnaire, which will facilitate a systematic survey of up to 3,600 actors and informants in government agencies, museums and trusts and in the art and auction trades – online and, in sensitive cases, also in personal interviews. Methods developed specifically for this pilot project are to be tried and tested in respect of their practical relevance. Besides the scientific acquisition of knowledge, the project's findings should also percolate into practical guidance, e.g., information and training modules not only for customs officials, investigating authorities and museum curators, but also art dealers and auction houses, also always with a focus on raising awareness.

Archaeological exhibits of dubious provenance or even illegal origins are frequently found also in Western museum collections. What brings a by no means underemployed museum director like Markus Hilgert to address this controversial issue? 'I cannot want to work with my colleagues in Iraq, but answer their question of how our museum collections have come together with: I don't know,' explains Hilgert. 'The countries of origin expect us to be fully aware of how our collections came about.'

## METHADONE FOR DETECTORISTS

Buried evidence of the Migration Period is still found in the cremation cemetery in Tötensen by Hamburg.

It is the perfect place to make archaeological assistants of illegal treasure hunters

By Ingolf Kern

■ p. 48

Mario Krause started off much like the detectorists who wield their metal detectors at night on Mediterranean beaches to look for a few lost euros. Only for him it was the Salzgittersee (Lake Salzgitter in Lower Saxony) and the spoils, fashionable chains, rings and bracelets. He shows photos on his iPhone and it's easy to imagine the tears in the teenager's room. As if by magnetism, he has been drawn outdoors by his metal detector for the past two years: 'I had no idea that excavating could be illegal. I was just fascinated with what has been buried for 1000 years.' When he and a friend found a Bronze Age wheel-headed pin they got a rap on the knuckles and stepped out of the shadows of illegality. Mario Krause wants to legally do what he loves: to search for the buried past.

He wears his bright green cap pulled low over his pallid face and stands on in a field in Tötensen by Hamburg this Saturday morning in mid-March. Just like fifteen other men, their hands dug deep in their working clothes. From afar they look like a group of bikers who have lost their way. They stand in a semicircle around local archaeologist Jochen Brandt from

the Archäologisches Museum Hamburg (Archaeological Museum of Hamburg), who digs small white boxes from his car to show what might lie here, under their feet: ceramics, fragments of glass vessels, ribbed beakers, pincers, bone combs, the bracket of a brooch – all survivors of the funeral pyre. From the fourth to the sixth century A.D. this was the site of a Migration Period cre-



Ancient or modern? The archaeologist explains what should go in the buckets

mation cemetery. Over 2,000 people must be buried here. Thirty years ago, archaeologists digging here excavated 1,200 urns. Now, the ancient site is a kind of training place for archaeological assistants or, rather, for detectorists. The aim is to bring willing illegal excavators out of the grey zone, to legitimise them so that they can work with state sanctioned archaeologists. Being certified by the regional office results

in a good reputation. There is no legal entitlement. Each case is individually assessed, but the municipal archaeologists have in principle agreed to allocate a search area when training is

## Thousands of illegal treasure hunters are out and about at night in Germany

complete. ‘The process is advantageous for both parties. We get new finds and information relevant to our research. Moreover, the illegal detectorists have proven to be devoted to their search areas and more or less guard them on behalf of the understaffed authorities, keeping looters away or even tracking them down,’ says Jochen Brandt.

Lower Saxony’s archaeological commission has invited the detectorists here for a hands-on course. Hauke Jöns from the Lower Saxony Institute for Historical Coastal Research, who co-ordinates the courses once or twice a year, explains that more and more



Order also prevails among the detectorists: each digs his own patch

federal states are approaching technology-obsessed adventurers in order to sensitise them to the ‘search for sites of archaeological interest’. Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in particular are leaders in the field. Jochen Brandt adds that in the north of Lower Saxony, there has been a rapid rise in looting over the last one and a half years. ‘The detectors are getting better and cheaper. Many illegal detectorists are just looking for militaria.’ Thousands of illegal treasure hunters are out and about in Germany, mainly at night. There are plenty of prominent finds from these ‘violations of public property,’ complete with suspended prison sentences for theft and

## On site, the excitement is palpable. As with fishing – you never know what you’ll get

receiving stolen goods. The Nebra sky disk in Saxony-Anhalt and the barbarian hoard in Rheinland-Palatinate are just two examples. Gold fever is rampant in the relevant forums, especially in South Germany where the spoils are richer. For Jochen Brandt, the intangible damage caused by such excavations is huge, because ‘if we don’t know the context of the find, it can lose much of its historical validity’.

On the field, people spring into action. Here we go! The field has been divided with light blue string into squares of interest. Small bags that look like evidence bags from a TV crime scene are handed out, along with pencils, finds labels and plastic cutlery. The finds must be ‘calibrated’ with GPS equipment, i.e., the precise co-ordinates must be logged. ‘Gauß-Krüger, do you understand?’ asks Hauke Jöns. Perhaps not. Somewhat sullenly, the men start to walk with small colourful buckets across the field, where a cold Siberian wind

blows across land shadowed by windmills. There are a few braggarts among the men, who boast of the collections of



What the amateur archaeologist needs: probe, pointer and patience

stone axes that they hoard at home and are not quite sure what they are doing here. Masterfully, they bend down to kneel, examine every shard, every stone. When one of them calls: ‘Is this an urn, or is it from the OBI DIY shop?’, Jochen Brandt arrives to examine it. Not to immediately dishearten the finder, he says things like: ‘Well, identifying ceramics is an art in itself.’ From the DIY shop then, after all. If the find is modern, it lands in the box marked ‘Junk’; if it is older, a plastic fork is rammed into the ground as a marker. After the first round, there are more plastic forks than junk in the box. Of course, for the detectorist the first adrenaline rush comes when he can switch on his metal detector and put on the headphones. When that time arrives, the men rush to their cars. Now they show each other their equipment, grin at the shoptalk (‘I’ve got a G2, and you?’) like the boy you see on the wrapping of Kinderschokolade, a well-known chocolate bar for children. When they get going, it is easy to believe that it is the ground, rather than the detector, that lets loose a tortured yelp when it surrenders its hidden treasures. With a pointer that looks like a torch, the clump of earth dug out by hand is examined. Two copper coins, one belt buckle and pincers are unearthed – not a bad haul.

Lunch hour at Böttchers Gasthaus. Almost all the men have ordered a small

Schnitzel with creamed mushroom and French fries, apparently the traditional detectorists’ fare. The finds bags are shown around. Mario Krause sits at the table with Hans-Erich Hergt and reads aloud from his GPS the co-ordinates of his find, which he has entered on his finds label. Hergt is a lean, older man from Neustadt am Rübenberge, his face etched with thoughtful lines. He is interested in Prussian history. The Seven Years’ War is his subject, Scharnhorst, especially the line between Göttingen und Bremen and ultimately the battle of Stöckendrebber of 1758, in which more than seventy Frenchmen lost their lives. ‘I would just like to know where the battlefield was. Perhaps I can find uniform buttons or parts of weapons,’ he says, then immediately tries to

dispel the impression that he is captivated by militaria: No, he wants to buy a detector in order to find out about this campaign for the museums. That is why he attended the course.

A light rain begins to fall when they all return to the field. They will find only evidence dating from the late modern age and shrapnel, but will be united in the certainty that they will spend the odd weekend in fields, with spade in one hand and detector in the other – and now also bags, labels and, at best, the telephone number of the office for the protection of historical monuments. Mario Krause now also hopes to get his official permit, because: ‘You get a thrill from it. It never goes away. It’s like fishing: You never know what you’ll get.’

## DIGITALISATION, RESEARCH, CONSERVATION: PROTECTION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY AT THE SPK

By Markus Hilgert, Kristina Heizmann

■ p. 54

On the previous pages there was a lot of discussion on how severe the cultural heritage of mankind is threatened. But what is actually done beyond all war zones to protect the treasures in archives, libraries and museums? And which role does

the protection of cultural property play for the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) itself?

The protection of cultural property is a question not just of will, but also of knowledge. Research into cultural artefacts harnesses scientific knowledge from a wide variety of disciplines and uses this to develop new methods and tools. It is therefore a transdisciplinary field of research, albeit one that is also



Basket bowl of the Ye'kuana people of Venezuela in the Ethnological Museum: objects are digitalised in order to share what is known about them with the communities of origin

inevitably dependent on individuals and institutions active in non-scientific sectors, e.g., investigative authorities, law enforcement agencies, NGOs and governments.

The Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Cultural Heritage Foundation, SPK) carries out research into cultural property across the board, because it has the necessary knowledge in the diverse disciplines to do so – from ancient studies, art and cultural studies to the natural, conservation and information sciences, the social sciences and law. Numerous projects address the questions and methods of research into cultural property. These embrace the fields of object-based basic research (conservational protection and care, documentation and analysis), provenance research, research geared to combating and preventing illegal excavations, looting and the illegal trade in cultural artefacts and, moreover, legal research geared to establishing an appropriate regulatory framework.

Research into cultural artefacts in our collections aims not only to conserve our holdings; it is also about communicating to society the value of cultural heritage. In the following pages, we will present some of our projects.

## Ethnologisches Museum

### Sharing knowledge

By Andrea Scholz

The Humboldt-Forum, scheduled to open in 2019, intends to reinvent the museum institution. It will take a new approach to collections and objects: The objects will not be interpreted and presented solely by the curator, but also by representatives of the societies from which the objects originated. The Humboldt-Lab project 'Sharing knowledge' aims to transform the museum from a representative exhibition space into a place of collaboration. In cooperation with the Universidad Nacional Experimental Indígena de Tauca, a recently founded institution in which young indigenous people amongst other things engage with the knowledge and traditions of their forefathers, the collection from Guyana in north-eastern Amazonia



The museum as contact zone: students from Tauca (Venezuela) visiting the Depot in Berlin

will be revealed in a new light. Associates of the university visit the museum, learn about the historic objects, draw from them inspiration for further studies in their own communities and share their knowledge about the objects with the project partners in Berlin. In May 2015, the collaboration took on a digital dimension: An online platform was developed in the scope of the project, by means of which both indigenous and museum-sourced ethnological knowledge about the objects can be collated, shared and discussed. The platform will also become a part of the Amazonia exhibition in the Humboldt-Forum, so that in future the public can experience the exchange of information live. In doing so, the museum will become a contact zone in which different cultures come together and innovative forms of knowledge and representation are put to the test.

## Museum Europäischer Kulturen

### Queering the museum

By Elisabeth Tietmeyer

Most of the objects in the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (Museum of European Cultures) originate from Germany and were collected in order to show the lived-in worlds of the middle and lower classes in the 19th century. The museum believes that such an approach is no longer appropriate for this day and age – and presents objects in a new context. Together with students in the museum studies programme of the University of



Scarf of remembrance: 'Aids Memorial Quilt No. 22'

Würzburg, fixed means of identification pertaining to sexuality, gender and cultural origins are questioned in the light of queer and gender theory. Specific objects, for example a football shirt, a knitted blanket or a memorial quilt, are reassessed from this perspective. In the process, the ways in which people develop social and cultural identities and how such constructs affect politics and society are called into question.

## Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut

### The journey of the chants

By Barbara Göbel

It is the early 20th century and Konrad Theodor Preuss (1869–1938), an ethnologist from Berlin, travels through the Sierra Madre in Mexico. He carries in his luggage the latest technology – a 'phonograph'. He records the ritual chants of two indigenous groups, the Cora and the Huichol, on wax cylinders – an open-air sound

studio. The wax cylinders cross the seas from Mexico to Germany. Moved around during the turmoil of war, they find their way first to Leningrad, then back to Berlin. Today they are unique, of inestimable cultural and scientific value, because only very few historic recordings of both ethnic groups exist worldwide. In order to make them accessible to the public, institutional and spatial limits have to be overcome, and experts at the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (Ibero-American Institute) and the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) are working with mediating institutions and scientists internationally to this end. One result is the German-Spanish edition of the CD 'Konrad Theodor Preuss: Wax cylinder recordings of the Cora and Huichol from Mexico 1905–1907', which was issued in 2013 in the series Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv/Historische Klangdokumente/Historical Sound Documents. In addition to the scientific



Return of the ritual chants to the Sierra Madre Occidental

analysis of the ritual chants and their place in society, one important aspect for Barbara Göbel, director of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut and Margarita Valdovinos of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, who historically and ethnologically contextualised the recordings, was to bring the recordings back to their place of origin. They travelled to the Sierra Madre Occidental with the digitalised recordings in their luggage. Today, the Cora and Huichol still sing the songs recorded by Preuss over a century ago.

However the CD also features some ritual chants that the people still remembered, but to which they had forgotten the words. The response from the indigenous population of Tepic in the state of Nayarit and the ritual masters of the Cora and Huichol was overwhelming. This breeds confidence for further projects of this nature, which call for patience and constructive collaboration between numerous individuals and institutions.

#### Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin

## Islamic book art at the click of a mouse

By Christoph Rauch

The collection of oriental manuscripts of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (Berlin State Library) – or at

least parts of it – has been online since 2013. With more than 2,500 digitalised texts, it is one of the most comprehensive collections worldwide. Nonetheless, the digitalisation and electronic analysis of the documents is a long-term process: in total, there are 43,000 manuscripts and book prints to record.

Now, another step in the process has been completed: The stock of over 200 Islamic illustrated manuscripts, including some 8,000 miniatures, has been digitalised. Magnificent, richly illuminated and illustrated Islamic manuscripts originate mainly from the Persian world, where book illustration underwent a renaissance from the 13th/14th century. Literary works were often illustrated, religious texts less frequently. Among them are, e.g., the Iranian heroic epic ‘Shahnameh’ by Ferdowsi, or the Khamsa anthology of the poet Nizami. Ottoman pilgrims’ guides or Arabic prayer books were likewise illustrated. Book art also flourished in Mughal India.

Among the outstanding works in the collection are albums in which calligraphy, miniatures, drawings and on occasion even copperplate prints were collated. In recent years, the five so-called Diez albums have taken centre stage. These were acquired by the

Prussian consul Heinrich Friedrich von Diez in Constantinople 1784–1791 and, together with his collection of books and manuscripts, found their way to the Königliche Bibliothek in 1871. These contain illustrations that originated mainly in the Iranian region from 1400 to 1450. The albums preserve a wide variety of works that chart the development of Islamic book illustration.

These books, along with all 8,000 of the other miniatures, have now been digitalised and may be accessed through the digital library.

#### Alte Nationalgalerie

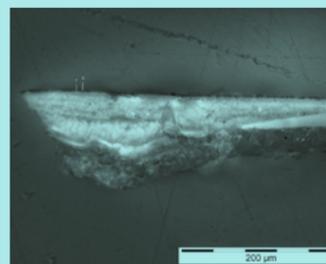
## Total Recall with Caspar David Friedrich

By Kristina Mösl

They are perhaps the two most famous paintings from the period of German Romanticism and are among the main attractions on Berlin’s Museuminsel: ‘Monk by the Sea’ and ‘The Abbey in the Oakwood’ by Caspar David Friedrich. Painted between 1808 and 1810, over time the original substance of the inspiring masterpieces at the Alte Nationalgalerie has been starkly compromised. Extensive, discoloured retouching and overpainting and up to seven yellowed layers of craquelure significantly diminish the overall impression. Two years ago, the long-held desire to conserve and restore both works was finally met with the generous assistance of the philanthropic foundation Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung.

The paintings were scientifically analysed by art technologists and restorers in the conservation department of the Alte Nationalgalerie, assisted by several natural science labs and the museum’s own Rathgen Research Laboratory, the Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing and the Archeometry Laboratory of the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden (Academy of Fine Arts Dresden). The comprehensive restoration project thereby delivered new insights into not only Caspar David Friedrich’s painting technique, but also the materials he used and how they have changed, providing a basis for rethinking the colour compositions.

Based on the findings of the research, a conservation and restoration concept was devised. In doing so, the conservation measures secured the original substance and the restoration work ensured the closest possible likeness to the paintings’ original state. Certainly, ‘Monk by the Sea’ and ‘The Abbey in the Oakwood’ will be easier to interpret in future; the truth of the matter will be revealed when both paintings are presented to the public once again at the Alte Nationalgalerie at the turn of the year 2015/2016.



Vibrant Romanticism: Micrograph of ‘Monk by the Sea’, 200 x enlargement with UV excitation

#### Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin

## Thermal images

By Christoph Mälck, Martina Rebmann

In the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (State Library of Berlin) you will find not only printed books, but also manuscripts. Musicologists will also find what they are looking for – the largest collection of Bach autographs is stored alongside those of Mozart and Beethoven. The project KoFIM (Music Research and Information Competence Centre) sponsored by the German Research Foundation is conducting research into a significant proportion of the collec-

tion of handwritten scores, and making these accessible. Part of the work involves the documentation of watermarks: A thermal imaging camera generates thermal images of the watermarks, producing copies in a process that safeguards the originals. Sheets of paper inscribed with different inks can therefore be reliably examined. State-of-the-art methods yield new knowledge, which benefits scientists in Berlin and beyond.



Autographs are photographed with a thermal imaging camera so that watermarks can be seen



Isfandiyār kills two lions, from ‘Shahnameh’ (Persian Book of Kings) by the Iranian poet Ferdowsi (11th century)

Staatliches Institut für  
Musikforschung

## The secret life of instruments

By Conny Restle



Inner workings (still) unknown:  
alto-tenor rickett, ca. 1700

3-D computed tomography is ideally suited for the analysis and documentation of musical instruments, although it presents specific technical challenges to its standard application. Criteria for the high-resolution 3-D imaging of instruments are being developed by the project MUSICES, sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation). Berlin's Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung (State Museum for Musicology) and the Ethnologisches Museum (Ethnological Museum) and additional partners are establishing policies and working on the development of data for international open-access data banks, e.g. Europeana and MIMO.

Geheimes Staatsarchiv

## A softer wash

By Sven Kriese

The files of the Geheimes Staatsarchiv (Prussian Secret State Archives), which are today still cloaked in a layer of soot, water from fire extinguishers and construction debris due to the bombing of the archive on 28/29 April 1945, or objects damaged by the catastrophe at the Historical Archive of the City of Cologne – both exemplify the immense clean-up challenge that archives must meet. But what might allow the cleaning of large quantities of paper to proceed more quickly? The Geheimes Staatsarchiv and the Rathgen Research Laboratory are seeking the answer to this question in a joint project with additional partners. The idea is to develop a semi-automatic soft particle beam cleaning process, utilising blasting abrasives that are safe in conservation terms. With the further

development of existing technologies and the design of special workstations, the process should be able to cope with the scale of the undertaking. To this end, various parameters must be tried and tested: direction and angle of the blasting jet, appropriate flow of compressed air (preventing too much abrasion), disposal of blasting abrasive, testing of other blasting abrasives, applicability for other cultural heritage materials and instituting and verifying quality standards. The soft particle beam process could present an alternative to manual methods of cleaning the surfaces of objects that lend themselves to being treated en masse, and complement the work of restorers on individual files, where the contamination extends deep into the folds.



Jets or compressed air? In future, papers will be cleaned in a more conservation-friendly way

Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut

## Latin America's visual memory salvaged

By Gregor Wolff

The Glass Plate Collection of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin) Ibero-American Institute of the National Museums of Berlin) is an important source for research into Latin America. The collection contains over 10,000 rare, for the most part unpublished images on glass negative plates, glass slides and large format sheet film negatives. These valuable documents offer insight into Latin America's archaeology, ethnography, history and geography and also shed light on the activities of the pioneers of Latin American Studies. The collection includes images of the expeditions and research topics of the leading German-speaking researchers in the fields of American anthropology (Walter Lehmann, Teobert Maler, Eduard Seler, Max Uhle), ethnology (Paul Ehrenreich, Wilhelm Kissenberth, Robert Lehmann-Nitsche) and geography (Hans Steffen) as well as regional and propagandistic depictions of Brazil (Guilherme Gaelzer-Neto). Glass breakage, the separation of the image layer from the base and fungal infestation pose a threat to the fragile originals. The images are also vulnerable to fading and darkening. Although appropriate archiving can lengthen the lifespan of the glass negatives and large format sheet films, the loss of the images is unavoidable in the long term. Germany's Commissioner for Culture and the Media has now financed a project, in the



The Glass Plate Collection of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut documents the nearly forgotten history

scope of which the images hitherto stored in their original packaging will be transferred to a more suitable archival storage system and, moreover, digitalised. In this way, the 'collective visual memory of Latin America' can be safeguarded, counteracting the progress of a 'visual dementia'.

The project thereby contributes to the preservation of the cultural heritage of Latin America and the work of the trans- and internationally operating German scientists in the region. It also opens up access to further research. The initial outcomes will be presented in the exhibition 'Visual memory of Latin America. An expedition into the digital Glass Plate Collection of the Ibero-American Institute.'

## CONTAINERS OF THE PAST

Even in the digital age, the cultural memory of the German people is stored in a disused adit. A visit to a classified location

By Birgit Jöbstl

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In the Black Forest there is a mountain with a name that could only have been thought up by a storyteller: 'Schauinsland'. This translates literally as 'look into the land' – perhaps

an apt description for our journey, which leads us into the chilly gloom of a mining world that is hardly the stuff of fairytales. Silver, lead and zinc have been mined here for centuries. The Barbarastollen mining tunnel still bears testimony to that. While the mountain pastures are bathed in a summer-like 25 degrees, inside the mountain



the humidity lies at a constant 70 per cent and the temperature at around 10 degrees Celsius. From Oberried by Freiburg we have travelled along narrow winding roads past farms set in a lush green landscape to finish the last leg on a gravel track. A nondescript iron-barred gate marks the entrance to the adit. Set into the ground in front of it are three blue and white symbols arranged in a triangle, an emblem that indicates that this place, as the only one in Germany, is under special protection by UNESCO. There are only around ten such locations worldwide. But what links this hidden place in the Black Forest with, for example, the Vatican City State? It is its content: Microfilms ('back-up films') of nearly a billion pages of archive materials from all over Germany are stored here in airtight stainless steel containers. The Barbarastollen is the central storage site of the Federal Republic of Germany – a seemingly anachronistic place in the digital age, but more secure than all Clouds in the world.

Since the adoption of the Hague Convention of 1954, designed to protect cultural property in the event of armed conflict, Germany too has had to consider how this could be done, says Bernhard Preuss, director of the department for the protection of cultural property of the Federal Office of Civil Protection

and Disaster Assistance, and is therefore responsible for the underground archive. As a 'preventative measure in times of peace' archive materials have been filmed and stored since 1961, because valuable documents, of which there is always only a single specimen, are irreplaceable historical sources for the grand narrative of the past.

But how does the information get into the containers? We retrace its journey and arrive at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Secret State Archives), which has been microfilming for years, and that with a minimum of fuss. Chief archivist Paul Marcus comes straight to the point: 'Just black writing on a white background, nothing else!' It is not about the beauty of a document, but about its content. Marcus lays a small, orange-coloured paper box on the ta-

### Impossible for a server: microfilms last over 500 years

ble: 'The first microfilm made in the Secret State Archives!' Microfilmed in 1961, stamped GStA PK, XIV. German Army Office West Prussia, Unit 180, Government of Gdansk, no. 75. 'That was still a thick film stock, 30 metres long, 35 millimetres wide. Today we use a thin film stock, 65 metres long. There's room for around 2,800 photos on it and because the film isn't perforated like the standard film stock, we can use the space right up to the edges.'

The workrooms for the microfilming are located in the Secret State Archives, right under the roof. In this dimly lit space three employees operate automatic book cradles, which with a soft whirring sound press the books from underneath onto a glass sheet, and routinely release the shutters on the large cameras fixed above. Each of

them takes around 1,900 recordings every day.

One can only guess how long it would take them to record the vast archive holdings. And again this begs the question of whether, in the age of Google and digital libraries, there are no other methods of preserving knowledge. Of course, the files could also be digitalised. But ultimately, for storage, a permanent and easy-to-use medium is required and therefore the image must be developed on microfilm, regardless of whether a digital or analogue recording technique is used. This is the standard approach, not only in Germany: Archives and libraries worldwide use microfilming in order to safeguard their holdings over the long term. Paul Marcus does not tire of emphasising the advantages of analogue records: 'Under optimal storage conditions, polyester films last around 500 years! Electronic data has to migrate to new techniques and formats all the time and its half-life is significantly shorter. What's more, with microfilms you don't need technical resources in order to read the content; light and some kind of enlarger are enough.' Bernhard Preuss notes another advantage: 'You could never store digital records so cheaply. Just the storage capacity that you would need would cost

much more per year than the Barbarastollen, for which our spend is only around 20–30,000 euros per year.'

The journey the microfilms take to Freiburg then continues from the cli-



70 per cent humidity, 10 degrees Celsius: microfilms ('back-up films') of nearly a billion pages of archive materials are stored here in airtight stainless steel containers

mate-controlled basement of the Secret State Archives to Munich. Here, the company MFM Hofmaier splices ten of them at a time onto a large reel. It has done this since the 70s – the company's senior director Dietrich Hofmaier quasi holds the patent for it: 'In the beginning the microfilms were stored in the federal archive, but in the mid-60s the idea of using an adit came up. In a report in 1972 I recommended splicing the microfilms onto reels and stacking these on top of one another like coins.' The proposal was taken up by the then Office for Civil Protection, which however decided not to air-condition the entire storage space as the Swiss were doing, but the stainless steel containers themselves, which must be maintained at 10 degrees Celsius and 35 per cent humidity.

Dietrich Hofmaier actually wheeled the first containers into the Barbarastollen in a handcart in 1975. The underground tunnel was set up in 1905 as a transport tunnel for the mine above it, but it was shut down just a few years later because the mine no longer produced enough ore. Although it now has a shotcrete lining, we can feel and smell



the damp just a few feet into the mountain. Three iron-barred gates, each of which must be unlocked with a different key, must be passed before we reach a pressurised door set into the tunnel wall 330 metres further on. 'Only the

## If the originals are lost, a container is simply opened

security company's man knows the 13-digit combination for that,' explains Lothar Porwich. Employed by the BBK, Porwich's enthusiasm for this hidden world in the mountain is evident on the rare occasion he brings visitors here. Moving through a small antechamber, we finally arrive in the storage rooms, set out over a length of 100 metres parallel to the mining tunnel, under about 200 metres of stable gneiss.

The containers lie in rows of three on two stacked racks. A good two-thirds of the underground tunnel is filled in this way. Despite the cramped space, the microfilms are relatively easy to find: Before it is spliced, each film is given a registration number; 320 registration numbers are listed under one container code. Thus the first film to enter the Secret State Archives has the registration no. 156634 and is stored in container no. 474. In order to reach this, Porwich has to climb onto one container and push another out of the way. But he would never open a container in the tunnel. 'That would never happen. If we were to open a container, it would be done in Hofmeier's rooms in Munich under the supervision of an archivist.' Spot checks are made on ten containers every year. So far, there have been no complaints. Even when mould had formed on some of the containers due to the high humidity level, everything inside was intact.

The importance of the adit, indeed quite what a blessing it is, was

confirmed a few years ago. A significant number of containers had to be opened in an emergency. The historic archive of the City of Cologne had collapsed and over a million pages on back-up film were now needed in order to build up a new, digital archive. The importance of the back-up filming can hardly have been more clear-cut.

On the way to the exit we ask who actually decides what is stored here, and whether priorities are set. The answers are found in the official regulations for the microfilming of archive materials issued by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Storage is decided by priority. Level 1 ranges from official documents and hand-drawn maps and plans to 30 per cent of the archive holdings pre-1800 and 15 per cent of the archive holdings post-1800. The responsible archivist in each case decides exactly what is included in this. It is however important that not only individual items of significance, but entire collections, are microfilmed in order to preserve the historic context. In addition to government records, in special cases private archive holdings

are also recorded, provided they are of national significance. For example, the documents of the Aufbau-Verlag (the biggest publisher in the former GDR) stored in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin were classed as historical and therefore of academic interest and brought to the Black Forest in 2006.

The holdings of the Prussian Ministry of Justice were all filmed at the Secret State Archives, along with 60 per cent of the finding guides. Work will soon begin on the Treasury files, which means some 1,887 linear metres of archival materials and work for what seems like an eternity – well over ten years, according to the people in charge. Will there still be room in the tunnel by then? 'Not to worry, we'll take care of that,' says Lothar Porwich with a laugh. When we are finally outside again in the warm spring sun, he hands us brochures about the work of the Federal Office of Civil Protection. Along with a spectacle cloth with the UNESCO special protection emblem: 'The protection of cultural property is everyone's business! There is no future without a past!' How true.