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2011

Editorial Introduction: Cultural Diplomacy in Action: U.S. Foreign Schools and Centers and the International Exchange of Ideas

Morag Kersel, *DePaul University*
Christina Luke, *Boston University*



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/morag_kersel/27/

Editorial Introduction

Christina Luke and Morag M. Kersel

Editors for Archaeological Heritage and Ethics

Cultural Diplomacy in Action: U.S. Foreign Schools and Centers and the International Exchange of Ideas

Once again we welcome Patty Gerstenblith's summary of legal events in cultural heritage. In this editorial introduction, we move away from heritage security and diplomacy, the topic of our 2009 introduction, to a subtler aspect of archaeology and cultural diplomacy—the role of the U.S. foreign schools and centers in fostering the international exchange of knowledge. Our discussion begins with the recent request from the Hellenic Republic (Greece) to the United States for a bilateral agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) under the *Cultural Property Implementation Act* (CPIA), which Gerstenblith mentions in her essay.

In the summary of its request for a bilateral agreement for import restrictions on archaeological and ethnological material under threat from pillage and posted by the Cultural Heritage Center of the United States Department of State (2010), Greece highlights the benefits of such an agreement to the international community, addressing the fourth determination of the CPIA (i.e., proof of efforts in the international exchange of materials and ideas). Countries making bilateral requests often cite ongoing international archaeological projects and international museum exhibitions as evidence for exchange. In the final paragraph of the summary, Greece offers additional evidence:

Foreign archaeological institutions as well as a considerable number of Greek institutions have assisted in research excavations for the enhancement of extensive archaeological sites. Today, 23 Greek institutions (universities and institutes) and 17 foreign ones (archaeological institutes and schools) participate in research of archaeological character, carrying out excavations in the Greek territory.

This statement stresses the importance of foreign archaeological institutes and schools in the exchange of knowledge in Greece. A dynamic atmosphere of educational exchange pervades the American School of Classical Studies in Athens as well as the many other foreign schools and study centers in Athens and in other areas of Greece.

U.S. foreign schools and centers foster dialogue, build relationships within the academic community, and assist in navigating local, state, and national heritage policies and laws. Oglesby's (2009: 97–98) recent analysis of the new “public diplomacy” calls for “hard slogging grassroots” initiatives and “authentic dialogue.” Archaeological projects are most often long-term endeavors that offer the nitty-gritty, on-the-ground, people-to-people relationships that cultural diplomacy seeks to promote. Foreign schools and centers offer an additional venue for sharing experiences in host countries, an aspect that builds social cohesion and promotes global conversations. We see future opportunities for innovative efforts to advance the place of cultural heritage in a global society not only through a potential Memorandum of Understanding between the Hellenic Republic and the United States, but also between Greece and its neighbors especially reaching out to institutions such as the American Academy in Rome, Italy; American Research Center in Sofia, Bulgaria; the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute in Nicosia, Cyprus; the American Research Institute branches in Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey; American Center of Oriental Research based in Amman, Jordan; the W. F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, Israel; and the American Research Center in Cairo, Egypt. The recent “Director's Exchange” sponsored by the American Schools of Oriental Research is an excellent example of diplomacy in action as the directors of the foreign schools in Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Turkey visited and lectured in the various institutions. This marked one of the first academic exchanges between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey, a milestone in diplomacy and archaeology.

Since their establishment in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, the U.S. foreign schools have become prominent features of the cultural landscapes of the countries in which they are located. The longevity of the schools ensures continued dialogue between U.S. academics and their host country colleagues. Reaching beyond national borders through cooperative programming enhances collaboration among faculty, students, and members of the

public and the respective governments. The centers and institutes support archaeological research, often facilitating the acquisition of permits. In addition they also support other types of scholarship and programming that explores contemporary culture and politics.

Recent events in Egypt make clear that host country assistance and support is critical during unexpected events. In turn, the foreign schools and institutes often are part of on-the-ground support, as is evident from this recent posting:

The American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) expresses its sincere support for the well-being and safety of all Egyptians during this time of transition. ARCE supports the efforts of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) to secure sites of cultural heritage. ARCE deeply appreciates the actions of our Egyptian colleagues, SCA inspectors, and local communities to protect Egypt's monuments and museums. ARCE stands ready to participate in the preservation of Egypt's cultural patrimony.

This statement emphasizes the key role that the foreign schools and centers can and do play in

supporting their host nations' efforts to protect cultural resources during times of upheaval. In the following essay, Gerstenblith highlights the legal efforts and initiatives that are also aimed at protecting the archaeological landscape during times of both calm and unrest. The U.S. foreign schools and centers are often instrumental in assisting with international, national and local protective measures. As political turmoil in the Middle East and beyond continues, the role of foreign archaeological institutions (U.S. and others) will become increasingly important in assisting with the protection of host country natural and cultural heritage resources.

References

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- United States Department of State, Cultural Heritage Center. 2010. Request by the Government of the Hellenic Republic to the United States of America for Imposing Import Restrictions to Protect its Cultural Patrimony Under Article 9 of the UNESCO Convention (1970). (<http://exchanges.state.gov/heritage/whatsnew.html>).