Preface and Acknowledgements

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In December 2016, with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the J. Paul Getty Trust convened a meeting at the British Academy, London, to discuss an international framework for the protection of cultural heritage in zones of armed conflict. Our timing was compelled by the purposeful destruction of cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq, and by the recent conviction of Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi by the International Criminal Court for the war crime of attacking historic and religious buildings in Timbuktu.

Three months later, in March 2017, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 2347, which condemned the “unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, and the looting of cultural property in the event of armed conflicts, notably by terrorist groups and the attempt to deny historical roots and cultural diversity in this context can fuel and exacerbate conflict and hamper post-conflict national reconciliation.” The resolution gave formal, international attention to the protection of cultural heritage and its links to cultural cleansing.

In October 2017, as co-chairs of this project, we spoke at a meeting at UN headquarters in New York on the issue of “Protecting Cultural Heritage from Terrorism and Mass Atrocities: Links and Common Responsibilities.” The meeting was hosted by, among others, Angelino Alfano, minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, Italy; Frederica Mogherini, high representative from the European Union; Irina Bokova, director-general of UNESCO; and Simon Adams, executive director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect The consensus of the meeting was that cultural heritage is worthy of protection, not only because it represents the rich and diverse legacy of human artistic and engineering ingenuity, but also because it is intertwined with the very survival of a people as a source of collective identity and the revitalization of civil society and economic vitality after armed conflict.

Over three days at the Getty Center in May 2019, as volume editors, we convened nineteen scholars and practitioners of different specialties and experience to discuss the topic “Cultural Heritage under Siege.” In one way or another, we had been discussing this topic for three years. The purpose of the convening was to begin to finalize the shape and substance of the book we decided needed to be written, the book that has become this volume: *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities*. Although many of the participants in the convening have contributed essays in the pages that follow, all of the participants contributed to its shape and substance in one important way or another. We remain deeply grateful to everyone who attended that meeting. The presentations, discussions, and debates were inspiring, and the warmth of friendship was gratifying. Before the event's opening dinner, Irina Bokova, who had recently stepped down as UNESCO director-general, set the stage of our convening with poignant and illuminating remarks. We are delighted that she has done the same here by contributing the insightful and thought-provoking Foreword to this volume.

The final steps in the development of this volume occurred via Zoom in June 2020 and February 2021, when abstracts and then final drafts were discussed by the authors and by other contributors. Due to the international COVID-19 pandemic, we missed the camaraderie and intellectual spark that would have animated our discussions but the commitment of our team of authors was still very much in evidence and contributed to the quality of the final drafts that now comprise the body of this text.

The design of this collection of essays reflects our own interpretations of the most pressing issues and necessary perspectives required to frame changes in policy- and decision-making about the protection of cultural heritage amid atrocities. In putting together this collection, we sought to better understand the origins, history, contributions, problems, and prospects of international efforts to protect the world’s immovable cultural heritage. This endeavor, we hope, will result in improved strategies and tactics in the coming decades. A better comprehension of the deficiencies of existing laws, norms, and organizations should lead to the identification of appropriate remedies.

At the outset, readers will find a lengthy list of abbreviations. Contemporary international problem-solving and conversations are bedeviled with acronyms and abbreviations. Institutions and parts of them, along with individual operations, treaties, and conferences, are almost always referred to by their initials. This may be off-putting to some readers, but it is a contemporary reality. To save space, contributors as well as public documents and media treatments use these short-cuts extensively, and so readers may need to consult the list with some frequency.

At the end of the volume are two appendices. The first contains “Suggested Reading” for each chapter, which contain recommendations by our contributors about the most authoritative, recent published sources for the subject matter of their essays. The second appendix reproduces key documents and treaties that are repeatedly referenced in many chapters.

A pleasant assignment after putting a book into production is to acknowledge significant contributions from many individuals. Kara Kirk and Karen Levine, respectively Getty Publications publisher and editor in chief, never once doubted the importance of our project and fully supported it from the beginning. Our editor at Getty Publications, Laura diZerega, worked most closely with us, our authors, the copyeditor, and designers to make this handsome and user-friendly text available to readers. Additional thanks are due to Greg Albers and Erin Dunigan for their expert management of our digital publication, Victoria Gallina, our production coordinator, and Jeffrey Cohen, our designer. But it is to Lizzie Udwin, executive assistant to the Getty President, and Morgan Conger, senior special projects manager, Getty Trust, that we owe our greatest debt. For over the years we worked on this project, they dealt tirelessly with the incorrigible habits and quirkiness of its co-editors, planning numerous meetings and making sure all of our Zoom trains ran on time. It is no exaggeration to say that we could not have successfully completed a complex project of this type without their able helping hands.

This “Cultural Heritage at Risk” project is one of several related efforts by the J. Paul Getty Trust to address threats to the world’s cultural heritage. The Getty Conservation Institute’s work on the wall paintings at the Mogao Grottos, Dunhuang China, for example, dates back to 1997. This was followed by the GCI’s Iraq Cultural Heritage Conservation Initiative, 2004–2011, and, in partnership with the Getty Foundation, the scientific analysis and conservation treatment of Roman-era mosaics in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2012. Most recently, the Getty Conservation Institute has developed an open-source software platform for cultural heritage management and in 2017 the Getty Trust began publishing an ongoing series of occasional papers in cultural heritage policy, which has formed the foundation of this book.

When we set out to edit this volume, our initial task was to find a diverse group of authors to write about the vast range of topics, cases, and perspectives in the thirty-two chapters that come between this “Preface” and our “Introduction” and precede our “Conclusion.” Brief biographies are found in the list of contributors at the beginning of this book. Every author has researched and written extensively about the subject of their chapters or worked in a related field; many have done both. All are acknowledged experts working on the problems and prospects of protecting human beings and their cultural heritage. We will not be bashful: these pages reflect the distinctive products of a world-class team with expertise on the historical, legal, and humanitarian consequences of cultural heritage at risk from Asia to Central, West and South America, and the Mediterranean basin. For this we are grateful to all of our colleagues.

Sadly, there is one voice missing. Edward C. Luck, who had provided both of us with clear-headed guidance and advice from the outset, was working on his chapter about major powers in February 2021 when he died after a brave battle with lung cancer. Ed’s premature death deprives our intellectual and policy communities, and especially his family and friends, of his warmth. insights, and humor.

J.C. and T.G.W.

Los Angeles and Chicago

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