



Information Centers and Libraries Caught in Conflict: The Case of Kuwait and Iraq

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Abstract:

The world's cultural heritage is vulnerable to natural as well as manmade disasters. Fire, water damage, heat, and dust, let alone the suffering of different forms of cultural representations, such as books, museums, and artifacts at the hands of ideology always committed in the guise of reason. Consequently, the world's cultural collections and heritages need to be protected from the threats posed by natural disasters and by deliberate and accidental destruction. This paper documents the pillaging of cultural heritage in Kuwait in the late 20th century and in Iraq in the early 21st century. In both cases, Iraq is involved, one time as an invader and another as the invaded. The paper tries to examine and explain the reasons that caused the pillaging in both cases and investigates international legislations intended to prevent similar situations of destruction, damage and loss. The paper touches on managing collections and minimizing losses, as a goal for professionals in the hope of preserving the worlds cultural heritage. It sheds light on what professionals can do to ward off and prevent similar losses and points to the illegality of destroying, trading, or targeting cultural heritage artifacts and ways to prevent losses to cultures and to humanity. Even though the paper focuses on museum collections, almost all aspects of destruction and counter destruction measures are applicable to libraries and information centers.

Greed has been- -to use a word I dont like-“globalised”, pillage has been industrialized. Bulldozers rather than spades are used to erase the walls and civilization of our ancestors, steel containers prepared for the stolen heritage beneath the land. It is now we who are being pillaged-and we are-in a sense doing this to ourselves.

(Fisk, as cited in Stone, 2008, p. XIII)

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Introduction

The paper at hand is a descriptive analysis that attempts to document and analyze reasons behind two recent pillaging cases of information centers and cultural heritage; both narratives involved Iraq, first as an invader and then as the invaded. The paper brings together important documentation, studies, and accounts and touches on the international context that led to legislations intended to prevent future pillaging the world over. It highlights how professionals can manage their collections in similar crises to prevent and minimize the losses. Finally, the paper sheds light on the ramifications of such destructive practices, their illegality, and ways to avert losses to individual cultures and humanity. Even though the paper concentrates on museum collections, almost all aspects of destruction and the preventive measures discussed are applicable to libraries and information centers.

Books and cultures have suffered at the hands of many enemies: the forces of nature, ignorance, war, in addition to different ideologies such as nationalism, militarism, imperialism, racism, and totalitarianism. Efforts to salvage the world's human collections and cultural heritages must respond to all of these various enemies and more.

Civilizations have risen and fallen, and the practice of burning books has continued to accompany human history. In conflict, all material and media is destroyed and burned usually “ceremonially” to signify and announce the murder of the defeated “other” and assert the power of the new authority. This practice has always been done, justified and accompanied by self-righteousness, and utter rejection of the material, in all its representations, belonging to the “other.”

Theoretical Context of the Study

In his foreword to Stone's book on the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage during and after the 2003 US-led war against the Iraqi regime (Stone and Bajjaly, 2008), Fisk comments on the act of ravaging the defeated party's cultural representations and manifestations: “We are destroying art because we do not want others to possess it, or we steal history because we wish to possess it so others cannot

take it from us. Or we liquidate history because we despise who created it.” Fisk seems to truly capture the motives behind the pillaging that happened in Iraq in 2003 that the whole world watched. This fact raises an important question about the element of intent in what happened in Iraq in 2003 and in Kuwait in 1990 too.

Rebecca (2003) who coined the term “libricide” (the killing of books) to describe the deliberate destruction of books seems to agree with Fisk’s view. She asserts that when regimes commit “libricide”, they sometimes do it as an extension of genocide—that is, they also destroy the material cultural representations of the “other”, the victims, such as books and libraries. Her book *Libricide* defines the term as “the regime-sponsored destruction of books and libraries” (p. 6). The destruction of centers of culture signifies the loss of order and peace, a situation that has, repeatedly, led to the burning of libraries and other cultural institutions during times of conflict. Knuth notes, “Regimes seize books as loot and dismantle information infrastructure as a way of neutralizing their enemies and preparing for long-term occupation or outright annexation” (Knuth, 2003, p. 51). To occupying forces, the destruction of books and cultural symbols is not only a consequence of conflict, but also a function of it. Knuth states, “[T]he destruction of information is in effect the removal of access to ideas and ideological extremism is the kidnapping of these avenues by those whose desire for power is so great that they admit of no other fixed principle” (p.61).

In the paper at hand the author extends Knuth’s definition of “libricide” to encompass all representations of the “other” or the “enemy.” It examines the plunder of libraries and museums in Iraq during the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and the seven-month occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in 1990.

The wartime looting of the vanquished party has been practiced throughout history. It still continues today. It is a practice that, intentionally, leaves behind physical, emotional, and economic devastation afflicted on the defeated party and all that represents it. In *Rituals of War*, (Bahrani, 2009) builds on the idea of punishing the enemy and describes the practices inflicted on the defeated as the “magical technologies of war.”

Furthermore, the looting and dismantling of all cultural representations and manifestations of the defeated party is usually paraded publicly announcing defeat and loss of a party and wining and gaining of another. (Goldfarb, 2009) describes the occupation of Kuwait and the pillaging of cultural centers "Just as the Emperor Titus, Napoleon, and so many other conquerors had paraded the cultural heritage of defeated nations into their cities as symbols of victory, Saddam Hussein embraced the stolen art as trophies of war". The looting in the two cases to be investigated was brought to people to watch in their living rooms aided by modern technology.

Materials and Method

The paper brings together narratives, studies and accounts of the pillaging, dismantling and destructions of cultural infrastructure of Kuwait in 1990 and Iraq in 2003. It starts with the US-led invasion to Iraq in 2003 then goes back to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and its subsequent seven month occupation. Reports and documents are examined, and attempts to analyze what really happened in relation to ideology and its motivational forces are explained. Professionals stand to make a difference in effecting some disaster management measures that could avail the loss and damage to cultural heritage and centers. The relevant literature is examined and incorporated into the final analysis.

1. The American-led Invasion of Iraq, 2003

Over the centuries, Mesopotamia produced the thriving civilizations of Assyria, Babylon, Sumer, and Ur. The people of Mesopotamia created the first villages and towns and developed the first documented written language. But in 2003, in Iraq-modern-day Mesopotamia, the military forces led by the United States and its allies overthrew the dictatorial government led by Saddam Hussein, sparking looting and the destruction of Iraqs national symbols and heritage. Almost nothing was spared; looters left behind only what they could not carry or detach or find. (Mulligan, 2003) who maintains an online list of world cultural losses, lamenting what happened in 2003 in modern Mesopotamia, Iraq, wrote,

On a Black Tuesday of April 15, 2003, Iraq's National Library, its National Museum, and its Islamic Library were looted, ruined, and burned by unchecked rioters and expert grave robbers. Once again, for the ten thousandth time, the world suffered a terrible lobotomy. Tell me, is this really the 21st Century I'm serving time in, or is the Monster Hulagu still in charge? (n.d)

Excavations have started in Iraq in the mid 18th century but it was not until the 1920s that Iraq's Department of Antiquities was established. The British Orientalist Gertrude Bell, founder of the Iraq Museum directed it from 1923 until her death in 1926. The Iraqi law of 1936, updated in 1974, has "consistently vested ownership of archeological sites and artifacts in the nation. This law regulated construction projects around archeological sites and monuments, and provided for the licensing of the excavation" (Gerstenblith, 2006). The investment in antiquities was one of Iraq's fame and source of pride. It was the sense of being the cradle of civilization that propelled Iraq's interest in Iraqi antiquities.

Up to the beginning of the war of 2003, Iraq had managed its cultural heritage collections and its historically rich archeological sites independently. It invested in human resources heavily. By the 1980s, Iraq had more than 25 holders of doctoral degrees involved in cultural and historical collection management. It employed highly specialized personnel in different areas of library, and information science, documentation, archiving, and other relevant specialties to deal with forms of cultural representations, in addition to an army of information professionals and university professors working in institutions serving antiquities collections, museums, and archeological sites.

During the first Gulf War of 1991, Iraqi archeological sites were not targeted. The situation during the second Gulf War of 2003 was different. Archeological sites were not targeted; however, the allied lead army turned a blind eye to the looting and pillaging that occurred. (Spuss, 2007, p. 5) describes what really occurred saying "this negligence seems almost willful." The George W. Bush administrations failure to care for peacekeeping and nation building in Iraq caused chaos, damage, and an unexpected, a worldwide outcry. The protec-

tion of Iraqi cultural heritage was not a priority for the Bush administration; its overriding priority was to overthrow Saddam Husseins regime. In addition, a lack of coordination between the State Department and the Department of Defense made the continuous pillaging and looting of Iraq's cultural heritage more feasible in the first few days of the war.

Warnings by scholars and professionals, lists of sites and objects, and names and addresses of museums and libraries were all provided to the American administration prior to the invasion, but nonetheless, they were all ignored. Instead, looted archeological artifacts flooded the international market. A brain drain of Iraqi specialists and professionals who left or fled the country made matters even worse. Those specialists could have averted the thefts or minimized the damage and loss.

The priorities of the politicians and those of the military troops collaborated to aggravate the loss. Furthermore, the training of the troops included no prior introduction or sensitizing to what existed in modern Mesopotamia, nor to its value. As a result, antiquities traders fell on a fortune, taking advantage of the chaos and the invading army's lack of interest in protecting any of the existing antiquities.

During the first few days of chaos, looters grabbed replicas from shelves without examination. Museum files were deliberately burned to destroy records of the stolen objects. It is estimated that more than 13,500 objects were taken from the National Museum alone; the true extent of the losses may never be realized due to the many conflicting reports that came out of Iraq. Shortly after the National Museum was looted, the National Library and Archives and the Library of Korans of the Ministry of Religious Endowment were ransacked and set afire. The entire collection of some 12 million volumes at the National Library and Archives was destroyed within days. The Museum of Mosul was looted following the fall of the Iraqi government. Before the start of the war, its staff had taken the precaution of shipping more than 5,000 of its most valuable objects to the National Museum in Baghdad for their protection. The city of Nimrud, site of the ancient city of Kalhu, which had been the capital of Assyria for 150 years

starting in the seventh century BCE, was looted twice, once in 1991, then again in 2003 (Deeb, Albin, & Haley, 2007).

To make matters worse, the UN embargo on Iraq in the aftermath of the first Gulf war of 1991 and the oil-for-food program left the Iraqi population devastated by poverty and hunger. Consequently organized bands and desperate people looted and ravaged, and in some cases, officials of the ousted regime burned documents that could incriminate them in the future (Johnson, 2005). Does Knuth's argument of the invading army's intent to destroy Iraqi heritage symbolizing its power stand here? If it does, how can we overlook that Iraq's heritage is humanity's heritage.

International outcry to humanity's losses in Iraq caused Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos, (2006) to be commissioned by the State Department to investigate the looting of the National Museum. By October 2003, eleven of forty-two artifacts stolen from the public galleries had been recovered, as were most of the items taken from the storage rooms. A UNESCO-conducted inventory of the museum found that the majority of the objects that had been returned "were forgeries and reproductions" (Russell, 2003). In September 2003, U.S. military police and Iraqi police retrieved the Warka Mask, a Sumerian mask and one of the most significant objects (LaFranchi, 2004). Two months later, the Bassetki statue and the Nimrud brazier were found. The investigation to locate the remaining missing objects continues; however, interest in the issue will wane as time passes and the loss becomes more permanent.

The crisis in Iraq in the aftermath of the American-led invasion continues, fueled by lack of stability and security. The Iraq Museum, the Mosul Museum of Antiquities and the Museum of Modern Art, several regional museums, important libraries and manuscript collections, and 10,000 archeological sites in various locations throughout Iraq were plundered (Bahrani, 2009).

Several scholars and teams have tried to inventory the losses. Ian M Johnson's 2005 article in the *International Information and Library Review* tried to list all damaged losses to libraries, museums, and

cultural heritage collections. It also listed international recovery efforts (Johnson, 2005). The most important collections were:

- 1 - The National archive with its valuable collection of Ottoman archives, stolen then flooded to damage any remaining documents. According to Teiggeler (2006), the Ottoman collection was later rescued (Johnson, p.11).
- 2 - The House of Manuscripts, including Saddam Husseins Manuscript Centre.
- 3 - The Awqaf Library, the oldest and most important public manuscript collection of charitable endowments.
- 4 - The Iraqi Jewish Archives transfer to the US National Archive's and Records Management NARA that was found flooded in the Iraqi Intelligence centre; it was rescued and transferred to the US. This raises questions of why only that collection was rescued, was the looting or the rescue or both pre- contemplated and whether Israel was involved in the matter or not. (Johnson, p.12)
- 5 - The State Board of Antiquities and Heritage SBAH made agreements with nearby countries of Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia to keep all items that were confiscated at their borders for protection (Johnson, p. 13). Jordan has already confiscated 1400 objects.

(Al-Tikriti, 2007) compiled a list of lost collections in an article that was published in Library Trends and is based on a previous situation report that he published in 2003. In the 2007 he edited and updated the information as developments called for. As this pillage continues and the prolonging of instability, the exact extent of the damage done to libraries, manuscript collections, and archeological sites cannot be fully known, nor can be curtailed. Al-Tikriti's list and Johnson's both confirm the irreparable loss suffered as a result of the "willful negligence" seen in Iraq. The list contains:

- 1 - The National Library and Archives is Iraq's depository. It lost 25% of its book collection. It also houses the Ottoman document collection and a pre-1958 Hashemite collection, a collection that

survived the initial round of damage, but later on, 60% of that valuable collection was lost.

- 2 - The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, with 7,000 manuscripts and 45,000 printed books (6,000 Ottoman books included), was set on fire in April 2003.
- 3 - Iraq's House of Manuscripts, with its core collection of 47,000 manuscripts, a collection that was housed in the National Museum until the early 1980s, in addition to several other collections from provincial museums brought after the 1990 US-supported uprising in the South and North of Iraq were all lost.
- 4 - The Iraqi Academy of Sciences suffered opportunistic theft.
- 5 - The House of Wisdom, a semi-private research center near the Ministry of Defense, housed in a thirteenth-century complex that had been Iraq's first Parliament building. The building was unharmed but an Ottoman costume exhibition was stolen. Under Iraq's Antiquities Law, the House of Wisdom was not allowed to collect manuscripts, a fact that limited its manuscript collection, yet it had a ninth-century Quran, a twelfth-century copy of Maqamat Alharriri, an Ibn Sinai philosophy text, and a nineteenth-century manuscript on Baghdad, in addition to several other research copy collections.
- 6 - The Qadiriyya Mosque, with 1883 manuscripts and some published works.
- 7 - The Iraqi Jewish Archives, founded in 706 by imperial decree, remains housed in the US.
- 8 - The fate of the Alhidaya Library of 500 rare manuscripts is unknown.

II. The 1990-1991 Occupation of Kuwait

Writing about the role of the Baathist ideology and culture in annihilating symbols of 'the other' in conflict is another clear example of the policies perpetuated by the Iraqi occupying forces of Kuwait during the seven months occupation of Kuwait. The US-led army allowed and made feasible the looting and loss of cultural representa-

tions in Iraq in 2003. Iraqi army purposefully looted and damaged cultural representations in Kuwait in 1990 too. The Iraqi regime had previously declared Kuwait its nineteenth province, and the public announcement of Kuwait's defeat took place manifested by the looting. All was made possible and feasible by the occupying forces.

(Knuth, 2003) states, "Iraq's destruction of Kuwaiti libraries is a reminder that it is neither the content, the leanings, nor the mixture of ideology that is the cause of disaster; it is the ideology carried to an extreme by those whose absolute power tolerates no alternative voices-animate or inanimate" (p. 161). She adds, "Time and again, destruction has been committed by extremists on the grounds that books and libraries are repositories of antithetical doctrines and tools of establishments that they despise" (p.201).

Several studies have documented the damage inflicted on libraries and information centers but little attention has been paid to museum collections or to non-print collections. (Abdel-Motey and Hmood, 1992) wrote about the damage sustained by libraries in Kuwait during the Iraqi occupation which destroyed the country's economic and cultural infrastructure and the Dar al-Athar Kuwaiti Museum was a prime target of Iraq's policy of destruction. According to Goldfarb,

The looting of Iraq is an eerie reminder of the state-sponsored looting of Kuwait by Iraq during its August 1990 invasion and subsequent seven-month occupation. In the wake of current cultural devastation, the systematic pillage of Kuwaiti heritage has been buried in the dust of the Gulf War, ignored, and forgotten. Yet the Iraqi looting of Kuwait, particularly of the Kuwait National Museum and Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, was one of the greatest art crimes of the twentieth century (2009).

The Kuwaiti Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya Museum housed the private collection of Sheikh Nasser and Sheikha Hussa al-Sabah, who collected objects from Islamic history. Most of their items were purchased on the open market, through the major auction houses; they bought some articles directly from their owners. The Sabahs worked with experts to assess objects as they came on to the market and often had the first option to buy. They decided early on to share their

collection with the public. A large portion was displayed in a new building designated as part of the Kuwait National Museum (Al-Radi, 2003).

This unique collection contained an early Sumerian panel and priceless Mogul emeralds. Moayyad Damirji, the director of antiquities in Iraq (and former director of the Iraq Museum), went to Kuwait in 1990 to bring the Sabah collection to Baghdad.

Damirji drove to Kuwait in his private car. After forcing the guard to let him into the museum, he videotaped every object in its setting to record what had been left. He and the staff from the Iraq Museum wrapped each object in newspaper and packed the objects in cardboard boxes in preparation for transport to Iraq. In Baghdad, the items were placed in the storerooms of the Iraq Museum for safekeeping and were never put on display.

Selma Al-Radi, an Iraqi-born archeologist and researcher at the New York Institute of Fine Arts who passed away on 14 of October 2010, went to Baghdad in March 1991 to visit family and the Iraq Museums. She was asked to compile a list of the objects that had been stolen from regional museums in Iraq during the 1991 war to liberate Kuwait so the Interpol could disseminate the information worldwide. According to Al-Radi, she spent two months going through the catalogues of museums in Amarah, Basra, Diwaniya, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Kufa, Mosul, and Suleimaniya. She recorded every item, along with its museum number, description, and dimensions; she also included photographs when available. Al-Radi found 4,000 objects to be missing. In 1992, the American Association for Research in Baghdad published the information that Al-Radi collected and documented in "Lost Heritage: Antiquities Stolen from Iraq's Regional Museums." Only forty-five of these objects have been recovered (Al-Radi, 2003).

Before Al-Radi left Baghdad, Damirji asked her to deliver an official letter he had written to the director of the Cultural Heritage Department at UNESCO. In the letter, he asked UNESCO to send an official delegation that would have legal authority, to Baghdad to return the objects removed from Kuwait. Meanwhile in Kuwait, the

owners of the collection had been doing all they could to regain possession of the items they lost. It took almost a year before UNESCO assembled a team to go to Baghdad. Objects were signed off and confirmed, loaded into a truck, and delivered to Kuwaiti authorities. Between 5 and 10 percent-some estimates run as high as 20 to 30 percent-of the Sabahs collection of the Kuwait National Museum went missing during the Gulf War. Among the missing items was the famous Mogul emerald. According to Al-Radi, the objects returned to Kuwait in early 1992 were more numerous than those that were listed in the Kuwaitis demands; apparently, many of those taken had not been inventoried properly. Damirji claimed that he had taken the collection to Baghdad because he did not want Iraq to be accused of pillaging a museum. "It is my job to protect museum collections and not to stand by and watch them being looted," he said (Al-Radi, 2003). Iraq eventually returned most of the Dar Alathar objects under pressure from the UN and its subsequent sanctions. Patty Gerstenblith (2006) asserts that in removing many art works from Kuwait, the Iraqis claimed to have acted, in the intention of protecting removed items, under the provisions of the first article of 1954 Hague Convention.

The Tareq Rajab private museum was a Kuwaiti collection that was fortunately spared Iraqs destructive ideological policies; the story of hiding and preserving this collection was a lesson in personal courage and commitment. Another private Kuwaiti collection, belonging to Jassim al-Humaydhi, was completely looted from his house. Many of the stolen objects later surfaced on the black market in Beirut and elsewhere (Al-Radi, 2003).

The totalitarian Iraqi regime systematically perpetrated ideological, self-rationalized acts of violence in its attempt to eliminate Kuwaiti identity and all its representations. This effort required stripping Kuwait of its cultural infrastructure. Consequently, Iraqi occupation policies caused Kuwait to lose the following:

- irreplaceable historical and research material collections, such as the law library and manuscript collection at Kuwait University;

- the collections of the Kuwait National Museum, which was emptied and set on fire;
- the holdings of the National Scientific and Cultural Center and Kuwaits central library, a depository for government and national publications;
- the contents of government and private publishing houses;
- the printing presses of Kuwaiti newspapers;
- radio and television station equipment.

Knuth repeatedly asserts that the destruction of such material representations at the hands of the invading power was intended to eliminate Kuwait's role in the IT and information sectors. Prior to the Iraqi invasion, Knuth states "Kuwait had 23 public libraries, 572 school libraries, 29 academic libraries, and 69 special libraries and information centers. All were deliberately devastated-victims of policy, not of battle" (Knuth, 2003, p. 158). All were done purposefully and meant to announce the defeat of the "other".

The Antiquities Trade and Lost Heritage

Antiquities trade has always produced worldwide looting and cultural destruction on an unimaginable scale. For archaeologists, an artifact found in context may communicate important information about life in a society but the opposite is true too. Samuel Paley of the State University of New York in Buffalo makes this very clear, he asserts, "When you see things outside their historical context, you can't do much except date them and appreciate their beauty" (Roddy, 2003). Consequently an artifact without provenance is a commodity to be traded; it is stripped of its associations and consequently its scientific and historical value. If this is a reflection of the free market philosophy of private ownership imposing on and overriding the public good, then international regulations and laws still suffer many shortcomings. They need to further account for similar incidents and try to effect proper punishments to those who commit them.

To collectors and dealers, an artifact is valuable as a commodity or investment, and for its artistic value. Interestingly, the trade in antiquities is intertwined with the drug trade; both usually witness a boom around the world and around conflict areas. Most artifacts of unknown provenance sold by dealers are stolen objects. According to Kathryn Tubb of the Institute of Archeology at the University College of London, "It's commonly accepted by those of us who work in the field that 80 to 90 percent of the material on the market is illegal" (Elich, 2004).

According to (Gerstenblith, 2006), when Iraqis moved objects from the Iraq Museum to regional ones to protect them, the damage to the moved collections was unforeseen. Even though the move had been undertaken to protect them and to create a regional museum system, the unintended negligence that caused the devastation can never be estimated. It leaves professionals at peril on what to do in similar cases. In addition, following Iraq's August 1990 invasion and the occupation of Kuwait, the Gulf War of 1991 caused a wave of damage to all that represented Saddam's regime, following the coalition's encouragement of the Kurdish and Shiite uprisings. Consequently, the Shiite south and Kurdish north both witnessed looting motivated by poverty, and in some instances, by some Baath party members hoping to contribute to the international black market of antiquities.

The conclusion of the liberation of Kuwait of 1991 unleashed a wave of looting of objects, some of which have been reported to appear on the market, yet neither the number nor the actual object descriptions can be ascertained and probably will never be. During the 1990s after the conclusion of the war, the Iraqi government started diverting all possible funds to its military apparatus. Local archeologists and professionals had to depend on themselves as they were denied all support. Foreign archeologists were seen as collaborators, and since they were blamed for the sanctions, they were not permitted to work in Iraq. The period between the two Gulf Wars 1991-2003 left Iraq isolated and deprived it of the latest technological advances and expertise in the preservation of its Mesopotamian objects (Gerstenblith, 2006).

Whether abandoned, poorly protected, and/ or attacked, Iraqi archaeological sites were ripe targets for opportunistic looting. With the invasion, looted objects and Mesopotamian artifacts flooded the market. Over 10,000 archeological sites in Iraq were destroyed and their antiquities stolen and sold on the black market - a phenomenon that, unforgivably and unfortunately, continues with the lack of instability and security in modern day Iraq and the region.

While it is always possible to rebuild a war-destroyed infrastructure, Iraq's archaeological heritage can never be restored. (Bahrani, 2006) emphasizes "ethical responsibility" of all parties involved, warring armies, professionals and the public all have a responsibility in confronting the black market that stands behind the looting and deems it an international crime. In the cases at hand, the American led armies did not move to protect any sites except after the matter became scandalous and an international outcry emerged. The Baathist regime's priorities were its own survival and the investment in its military apparatus and not the investment in modern technology that could have preserved, at least, part of the intellectual content of what was later lost. Local professionals did try their best but their best was not sufficient to avail such a big unexpected consequence of looting and destruction to the cultural heritage of Iraq and the world.

Legal and International Framework for Cultural Heritage Looting

The reaction to the Napoleonic Wars and the ensuing pillage of the European countries paved the way to the principles of artwork not belonging to victors in times of wars and conflict. In 1863, President Lincoln asked a Columbia law professor to draft a code of military conduct for the United States Army during the American Civil War. This became the first document acknowledging the responsibility and obligation of armed forces in safeguarding sites and objects during war and conflict (Gerstenblith, 2006, p. 16).

In the aftermath of World War II, UNESCO called for a "Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict at The Hague" to limit the plunder and looting the

world over. Eighty-six nations attended and all ratifying attendees agreed on Article 4, Section 3 that advocated taking any and all measures needed to protect cultural heritage pieces and places in wartime. Unfortunately, as in Kuwait and Iraq, the predictability of the event, let alone that international agreements in this regard do exist, yet this never prevented the warring parties from pillaging pieces or places of cultural significance belonging to the “other” or the defeated (Goldfarb, 2009).

The Hague Convention of 1899 and the Roerich Pact in 1935 were the first two documents to deal with protection of cultural heritage (Teijgler, 2006, p. 5). Looting during World War II at the hand of the Nazis and others led to “The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict - 1954,” which led to the adoption of the first article. In 1999, the second protocol was adopted. Article 2 builds on the 1954 Hague provision of Cultural Heritage Objects. The previous two documents represent “guidelines and necessary measures to be taken for the protection of cultural property” (p. 15). In the United States, both the National Stolen Property Act (NSPA) and the preceding Cultural Property Implementation Act CPIA were intended to prosecute trafficking of documented archeological objects (Gerstenblith, 2006, p. 16). Both provided mechanisms to the 1970 UNESCO convention on the “Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.”

In looking at the case of Iraq, it is worth mentioning that the United States was not a signatory to the Hague agreement until 2008, something that raises a question regarding the “willful negligence” and its intentionality. (Maas, 2009) puts this very eloquently, “What an invading force does or, more importantly, does not do to safeguard the objects and monuments of another culture indicates whether that force respects the very humanity of the culture it is invading. All through history, the destruction of cultural objects and monuments, whether by neglect or with purpose, presages the destruction of the peoples who created and protected those objects and monuments.”

The International Committee of the Blue Shield ICBS in 1996, based on the 1954 Hague convention, provided for the marking of important property with the Blue Shield Designation by the International Council of Museums. This practice was used in Iraq to mark important archeological objects. To make matters worse, the practice of marking was abused by the Iraqi regime during Saddam Hussein's rule, adding to an already fuzzy situation prior to the 2003 war. So the ideology of the Baathist regime and its practices played into the invading forces "willful negligence".

***Implications for Information Professionals and the Profession:
Preservation of World Culture***

Several studies, reports, and articles tried to describe, list, and analyze what exactly happened in the aftermath of the 2003 war to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein. Neglect, arrogance, poor planning, and disregard for Iraqi cultural heritage all contributed to the failure of attempts to prevent the loss and damage to cultural representations at the hand of forces of neglect and intent. (Rothfield, 2009), states very clearly that unfortunately, prior knowledge of what was going to happen in Iraq did not prevent it from happening. This fact makes understanding and averting destruction and looting more of a challenge to professionals especially that the anticipation of it did not help to avert it.

In the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the American Library Association, the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA), and its European counterpart, the European Middle East Librarian (MELCOM), issued statements on lost representations, and sent fact-finding missions to Iraq (Johnson, 2005). However, the world's cultural heritage remains at risk. Wars and conflict are enemies but ignorance, neglect, and lack of ethical conduct are others. The commitment of information specialists to protect the heritage of the world can be optimized if other international agencies participate to effect international laws. UNESCO and Blue Shield should push for more international laws that would prevent the destruction of cultural

artifacts, but when the killing of humans continues, the destruction of their invaluable historical artifacts is likely to continue as well.

Technological advancements offer choices for destruction on a larger scale, they also offer ways to preserve material. For example, in a relatively short time, research has taken repositories from storing information on microfilm to digitized images, allowing access in a variety of ways, such as online databases, CDs, and DVDs. One of the aims of UNESCO is to preserve the worlds cultural and intellectual heritage. Preservation of unique material is only one-way to protect cultural heritage; restoration and replacement (when possible) offer other alternative means of ensuring its survival. Survival of material needs to take into consideration both form and content when possible. Photo and video imaging are other advances that offer options for preservation as well. Efforts to protect and preserve multicultural manifestations, when accomplished, are professional, ethical and admirable.

Planning for Crisis and Management: An exercise in ethical conduct

The ramifications of the loss of cultural representations shed light on two important areas: disaster & crisis management and the ethical responsibility to guard the world's cultural heritage. It is, of course, impossible to be fully prepared for disaster, yet information professionals cannot shirk their ethical responsibilities as the guardians of cultural collections and heritage. Information professionals must realistically assess vulnerabilities and become familiar with all the steps necessary to respond to emergency scenarios. Every irreplaceable artifact stolen, damaged, or looted belongs to all of humanity, yet unscrupulous collectors and conscienceless dealers have never been prevented from looting humanity's shared cultural heritage. They stand to exploit every disaster, be it man made or nature made. Even though losses continue to occur, the fact of the matter is that we all become poorer whenever an object of cultural value is lost. Humanity suffers and in many times an irreparable one as we saw in the cases at hand.

Information specialists should see disaster planning and the pursuit of world peace as an extension to the democratic nature of their profession. Morally, ethically, and professionally, information specialists should strive to save human cultural representations in all their forms. The ethical deliberations in the making of the professional in education, training and on the job, should emphasize, among other important principles, information professional's responsibilities and roles. Preventing destruction is not easy, but preliminary action toward that end starts, before the disaster hits with some possible actions:

- Alerting and sensitizing the public as well as professional communities, local and national authorities to disappearances of archival and library treasures;
- drawing attention to the urgent need to safeguard endangered documents and other resources and items;
- reading of the events around and being aware of risks laying ahead in an attempt to curtail their effects as much as possible;
- anticipating and preventing potential damage to library and archival holdings by developing awareness and knowledge of disaster planning among professionals in libraries, archives, and other information centers.

Disaster planning is becoming an essential component of the management of information repositories. Institutions strongly committed to preparing staff to prevent damage to their collections from unforeseen events incorporate such planning into their day-to-day management. Planning for disaster can be time-consuming and sometimes tedious, and many libraries forego it because it is expensive and seems to offer few immediate benefits. Nonetheless, when disaster hits, previous planning for it aids libraries in several ways. The immediate benefits become clear and can aid in the following:

- anticipate an event and attempt to limit damage when disaster strikes;
- provide training and instructions that reduce stress and confusion in crisis situations so decisions taken on the spot carry minimum losses possible;
- prioritize parts of a collection for protection or rescue starting with

the rarest, most valuable and in ways to guarantee maximum protection possible;

- speed the recovery of library materials and services after a disaster and capitalize on international professional and interested parties;
- reduce recovery costs so it paves the way for maximum recovery;
- hold parties responsible for the protection of cultural artifacts accountable to what happens under their eyes and effect international regulations that force them to compensate or repair for what was damaged or stolen under their jurisdiction.

Disaster planning takes into consideration risk management and preparedness and includes two stages. The first is disaster prevention. The second is the mobilization of resources in the face of disaster. This includes personnel, equipment, information, and other resources to combat the effects of disaster when it occurs. Charged situations can lead to important elements being overlooked or personal preferences becoming deciding factors. Budgeting for both prevention and recovery is an essential element of any disaster plan. Without disaster planning, recovery may be slow and compromised. Furthermore, a review of the institution's insurance policy, when it exists, and the state of its collection is an important ongoing aspect of disaster planning.

One important part of disaster planning is making an inventory; a second is contacting outside experts and companies that will be needed when and if a disaster takes place. Disaster planning requires educating and training a disaster response team. (Khan, 2002), who has written extensively on disaster planning, states, "The primary purpose of training is to know what to do and how to channel energies and adrenaline when disaster strikes." (p. 9). The amount of preparedness determines the success of maintaining building safety as well as protecting staff and collections. Short of putting their lives in jeopardy, staff should be willing to safeguard the "treasures" of institutions in the face of disaster. Without being professionally educated, trained, and prepared for this, their abilities at safeguarding of world heritage will always be curtailed.

Discussion and Conclusion

In developing countries, small libraries are often the sole repository of a nation's historically important documents and publications. Unfortunately, little is usually written about them and if they are lost, their history is lost forever. On the other hand, every conflict has stories of personal initiatives and courage that are told when known and lost if not known. AlSayed Abdelmunim Almusawi's removal of 40% of the book collection from the Alhaqq mosque, (Spurr, 2007, p. 12) and the Tareq Rajab museum of Kuwait in 1990 are two examples of courage, initiative and willingness to walk the extra mile. Stories of professionals and individuals willing to take extra precautionary measures to minimize losses bring to the forefront professional and ethical responsibilities of professionals in time of conflict and disaster. Yet, how far can volunteerism and good will go in preventing irreparable losses? Can we risk leaving important artifacts and centers to circumstances and the presence of good will only?

Ethical responsibility cannot be emphasized enough, nor can it be separated from the training of information professions and museum professionals (Bahrani, 2006). In wartime, lack of law enforcement, chaos, conflicting facts, and conscienceless interests on the ground make it easy for amateur and professional thieves to exploit an unclear situation. Legal protection laws must be complemented by ethical standards and responsibilities, let alone that they must be part of the training and preparation of professionals. Museums and information professions and professionals working in them are strong candidates to carry this torch and to educate and inform the military and civilian populations of the importance of protecting the world's cultural heritage when the situation requires.

The account at hand examined the plunder of libraries and museums and their collections in Iraq during the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and the seven-month occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces in 1990. The element of intent in what happened in Iraq in 2003 and in Kuwait in 1990 and the purposeful negligence permitted the looting in the two cases. The damage and dismantling were done with the consent

of the occupying forces. The victor announcing their victory as much as announcing the defeat of the “other” with all its manifestations.

Destruction intended the removal of all ideas that belong to the defeated. Items looted from Kuwait in 1990 were carried to Iraq announcing to the world who was in charge as Iraq annexed Kuwait declaring it its nineteenth province. In 2003, forces collaborated to cause an irreparable loss and damage. A hungry, angry and devastated Iraqi population that has been starved under the UN sanctions in the aftermath of the war of 1991. Organized bands and looters waiting for the opportunity to loot in anticipation of a world treasure. The ousted regimes officials destroying any documents that would imply or incriminate them in the future and finally the policies of the occupying army of carelessness to everything that the “other” stand for.

Modern technology that highlighted the looting in the two cases at hand can be utilized to rally support and alleviate losses when possible. As witnessed in Iraq, by October 2003, eleven of forty-two artifacts stolen from the public galleries had been recovered. The importance of rallying all human and material sources to minimize the loss when and if it occurs is an important solution that should not be underestimated.

An artifact without provenance is a commodity to be traded, appreciated for its beauty and value. Scientific and historical value is usually lost and when artifacts are stripped of their context, the world’s loss is something that politicians and their military apparatus have never understood. Human experience continues to show this.

To occupying forces, the destruction of books and cultural symbols is not only a consequence of conflict, but also a function of it and if professionals do not practice their skills and apply their ethics, only good will and personal courage will be left to avert losses to cultural heritage. In times of conflict and crises, this is helpful but not ample enough.

Both cases presented in this paper involve Iraq. The accounts illustrate how “libricide” can occur in a conflict and point to its possible ideological underpinnings. Intellectual life, books, and other cultural manifestations and representations are preservers of history

and history is humanity's belonging. Preserving the heritage of this world is the ethical responsibility of professionals that should surpass ideological convictions. As the American historian Barbara Tuchman (1980) asserts,

Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilization would have been impossible. They are engines of a change, windows on the world and lighthouses erected on a sea of time. They are companions, teachers, magicians, bankers of the treasures of time. Books are humanity in print (p.13).

If books are humanity in print, then cultural heritage is humanity in its diverse manifestations. In the world today, we see the potential for evil; however, in the face of cultural destruction, we cannot shy away from our responsibility to preserve humanity's heritage, because it is the property of all, and must be preserved for future generations.

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