

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AT RISK

Introduction

The ICOMOS International Committee for Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) reports that much of the world's archaeological heritage is at risk. This is reinforced in the first *Heritage at Risk* report, with two-thirds of the accounts recording threats to archaeological heritage.

Many of these reported threats occur because of the special nature of archaeological heritage. This is not because archaeological heritage consists only of sites found below today's ground surface, and only retrievable by excavation – it does not. Archaeological heritage also includes monumental structures and extensive cultural landscapes, as well as discrete small surface sites. It is special because it constitutes a basic record of human activities, and provides an understanding of past societies and our cultural and social roots that can be interrogated by archaeological techniques.

In recognition of its special needs, ICOMOS established an international scientific committee, ICAHM, as well as setting standards for the protection and management of archaeological heritage, which built on earlier international standards:

1. *1956 UNESCO Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations*, accepted in New Delhi (UNESCO, Delhi 1956). This recommendation acknowledges the international significance of much archaeological heritage, urging international co-operation for its protection and establishing general principles for archaeological heritage, particularly in regard to archaeological excavations.
2. *1990 ICOMOS Charter for Archaeological Heritage Management*, adopted at the 9th General Assembly in Lausanne (ICAHM Charter 1990). This Charter establishes principles relating to different aspects of archaeological heritage management, recognising the broad range of archaeological heritage and that its protection requires co-operation between government, academics, private and public enterprise and the general public. The participation of Indigenous and local cultural groups is seen as essential for the protection of elements of archaeological heritage that are a part of living traditions.

Many countries have enacted legislation, procedures and national standards to protect their archaeological heritage. There are also regional agreements on the protection of archaeological heritage, for example the American nations' *Convention of San Salvador 1976*, and Europe's *Malta Convention 1992*, discussed at length in the US/ICOMOS Newsletter 2001-3 special issue on archaeological heritage management. Codes of ethics and standards have also been set by international and national archaeological organisations (see references). A large body of published literature provides case studies and debates about archaeological heritage management issues, such as the Getty Conservation Institute, the series of books *One World Archaeology* and the international journal *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* begun in 1996 (see references).

Yet despite this progress in archaeological heritage management practice around the world, risks are still prevalent. ICAHM is not able to comprehensively report on every country's risks to archaeological heritage, so the following report is partially based on concerns expressed in *Heritage at Risk 2000*. Most national committees, 42 of 60 countries, as well as many scientific or regional accounts, reported many of the same kind of risks in dif-

ferent regions in the world. ICAHM considers it likely that these key risks to archaeological heritage also occur in several member countries that did not mention these threats, or who did not report in 2000.

Risks to Archaeological Heritage

There are certain widespread threats to archaeological heritage. Archaeological heritage not only suffers from many of the same risks that impact other forms of heritage places, but also particular risks special to archaeological heritage. These threats to its survival occur in all aspects of its management: identification, significance assessment, protection and conservation – either in ignorance or contravention of the above international principles for the protection of archaeological heritage. The prevalent risks are discussed below.

Loss of in situ excavated archaeological heritage

The most widely reported risk to archaeological heritage is the lack of maintenance and conservation of *in situ* excavated remains. Damage to archaeological heritage is almost certain when excavated cultural features are left exposed without any management plan or resources for their protection, conservation or management. Sub-surface structures and artefacts generally deteriorate very rapidly when exposed to new environmental conditions above ground. The impacts range from physical deterioration – such as the cracking and spalling of monumental stone structures, and the weathering and crumbling of mudbrick features – to the erosion and slumping of unexcavated cultural layers, as well as vandalism and looting. The consequences include the destruction of the features that are excavated, together with damage to unexcavated evidence.

Countries that reported this threat include Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cambodia, the Czech Republic, Guatemala, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Pakistan, Thailand and Yugoslavia.

This practice may be prevalent because of the belief that archaeological heritage should be made accessible to the public. However, the funds for the necessary protection and conservation of excavated sites is often not easy to obtain, especially when it is difficult to predict prior to excavation what discoveries might be made, and what their heritage and tourism value might be. This makes it difficult to plan ahead for a site's potential for cultural tourism.

Israel reported a trend and pressure towards 'tourism-oriented archaeological development', which can skew priorities of national financing for cultural heritage. Some countries propose to finance the necessary conservation from tourism income; this, however, is rarely sufficient for a site's maintenance.

To undertake the excavation of archaeological heritage, without providing for maintenance or conservation, flouts the standards of protection proposed in the international principles:

ICAHM 1990 Charter. Article 6: ...asserts the principle that archaeological heritage should not be exposed by excavation or left exposed by excavation if provision for its proper maintenance and conservation after excavation cannot be guaranteed.
UNESCO Recommendation 1956. Principle 6 (b): steps should

be taken to ensure in particular the regular provision of funds... (iv) to provide for the upkeep of excavation sites and monuments; and Principle 21: ...The deed of concession [for excavation] should define the obligations of the excavator...provide for...maintenance and restoration of the site together with the conservation, during and on completion of his work, of objects and monuments uncovered...

This risk is controlled in several countries where backfilling of excavated sites is a condition of excavation permits. Such re-covering of excavated remains can be permanent or temporary, and provides physical protection pending management decisions about the future use of the site. However, backfilling is not always enforced, although it presents an ethical solution for the protection of excavated archaeological heritage. Case Study 1 (First Government House site, Sydney, Australia) provides an example of how backfilling can be incorporated in the management planning of an excavated site.

Loss of unidentified archaeological heritage

Several national committees reported the widespread risk to archaeological heritage from development projects, such as earthwork constructions. Examples reported include: urbanisation (New Zealand, Turkey, Yugoslavia); road widening (Denmark, Germany, Slovakia, Turkey); railway building (Germany); dam constructions (China, India, Turkey); underground parking in historic cities (Switzerland); and modern agricultural deep ploughing (Norway, Denmark), which can be a special risk to earthwork sites. Much that is lost is either entirely sub-surface or unrecognised on the ground surface.

The archaeological heritage is impacted in a number of ways:

- destruction of entire or particular elements of past cultures or phases of human activity, particularly the earliest or less monumental manifestations;
- damage to the integrity of cultural landscapes by removing cultural features that are important archaeological evidence of the relationship between sites;
- potential damage to sub-surface remains by changes to the surrounding environment as a result of development constructions – the effects from changes to groundwater and to compression are not yet fully understood.

This destruction of archaeological heritage is most likely to occur in the absence of prior recording of this heritage and ICAHM recognises this threat:

ICAHM Charter 1990. Article 4: ...A duty for developers to ensure that archaeological heritage impact studies are carried out before development schemes are implemented, should therefore be embodied in appropriate legislation, with a stipulation that the costs of such studies are to be included in project costs. The principles should be established in legislation that development schemes should be designed in such a way as to minimise their impact upon archaeological heritage.

However, ICAHM is aware that this standard is not always met. Despite many countries having requirements to record archaeological heritage, others report a lack of:

- regional surveys of archaeological heritage (Austria, Norway Sami sites, Panama);
- environmental impact studies, including archaeological heritage, as part of approval requirements for development pro-

jects (the Czech Republic noted some developers are prepared to destroy a site and pay the fine, rather than undertake archaeological investigation);

- geographic information systems and inventories that record archaeological potential and sensitivity (Lebanon).

Case Study 2 (Development Approvals – Motorways in Hungary) illustrates how an Eastern European country is balancing development pressures with archaeological heritage protection.

Loss of archaeological potential

Rescue archaeology is of real and special concern. In many development projects, such as outlined above, and despite community or international protest, construction proceeds with archaeological sites and objects that are in the way being 'salvaged'. It is likely that such 'rescue' archaeology will destroy most heritage values, despite artefacts and other features being salvaged.

Salvage archaeology is particularly destructive of future archaeological potential. The reasons for the loss are twofold: often insufficient time is allocated to such salvage and/or the total site is excavated. Too little time means that it is not possible to properly record information according to best archaeological excavation practice, so data is lost forever. In many cases, the entire site is either totally excavated or the remainder destroyed by the development. This does not leave any parts of the site for later investigation. All archaeological excavation is destructive, but such losses during salvage are irretrievable, as recognised by ICAHM:

ICAHM 1990 Charter. Article 5: ...overriding principle that the gathering of information about archaeological heritage should not destroy any more archaeological evidence than is necessary for the protection or scientific objectives of the investigation.

Loss of diversity of archaeological heritage

Country reports mention that certain types of archaeological heritage are at risk because they are not valued as much as other heritage. Likely threats range from indifference to deliberate damage that results in the entire loss of certain archaeological heritage places or values.

Non-monumental sites

Many of these are ignored and neglected, because they do not receive the same recognition as larger or older sites. Risks include a lower level or no statutory protection, or limited resources for protection, management and conservation, because that country allocates greater status and protection to monumental archaeological heritage than less visible and less imposing archaeological features. For example, Andorra states that there is a perception of 'high' and 'low' cultures to be protected, with resources going to the 'high' cultures, such as Roman remains. National committees reporting this risk include Andorra, Burma, Lebanon, Thailand and USA.

Recent archaeological heritage

In many countries the recent past, including industrial archaeological heritage, is often similarly unrecognised as 'heritage', with little attention or resources paid to its research or protection. Archaeologists are frequently involved in researching and recording this form of cultural heritage and are keenly aware that it is rapidly disappearing, and with it evidence of industrial technologies of the past two centuries. National committees mentioning this risk

include Canada, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Finland, Guatemala, Hungary, Sweden, Venezuela and USA.

Sites of particular cultures

In some cases, sites are not given the same priority as other examples of archaeological heritage, because they are manifestations of particular historical periods or cultures. Risks include removal of archaeological layers without appropriate documentation, in order to excavate a period of culture that is more greatly respected (mentioned by Croatia), or even deliberate damage or destruction.

This arises as a potential threat when one cultural group does not recognise a segment of the archaeological heritage as relating to their current society's cultural tradition. As a result, alternative periods are given greater priority for research and conservation as they are deemed to be important to the dominant society's cultural identity. In cases of intense and competing nationalism or inter-communal conflict, such archaeological heritage may be deliberately targeted as part of the other vilified group's past or present culture.

The consequences of such disparate treatment include the potential loss of entire periods of a region's history, a distorted understanding of that past story, and a potential maintenance of past prejudice. This is recognised as one of the major risks to heritage in times of war and civil strife and is reported as having damaged archaeological heritage in Cyprus, India and in the countries of former Yugoslavia. An extreme example of this bigoted treatment of archaeological heritage was seen in 2001 with the iconoclasm at Bamiyan in Afghanistan.

Countries reported in 2000 to have variations of the above risks include Afghanistan, Andorra, Burma, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cuba, Cyprus, Egypt, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Italy, Lebanon, Pakistan, Thailand, Venezuela and Yugoslavia. Reference to these issues by ICAHM is:

ICAHM 1990 Charter. Article 6: ...active maintenance...should be applied to a sample of the diversity of sites and monuments, based upon a scientific assessment of their significance and representative character, and not confined to the more notable or visually attractive monuments.

Loss of local ownership of archaeological heritage

Another risk to archaeological heritage is its appropriation without regard to relevant local or Indigenous communities. Many of these groups have special knowledge and associations with the archaeological heritage, which is a manifestation of their past and of their living present. While not widely reported by national committees, it is ICAHM's view that this is an ongoing risk to the full identification and maintenance of the values of archaeological heritage, and to the possibility for the sustainable management of living archaeological heritage. ICOMOS has recognised this:

ICAHM 1990. Article 3: Active participation by the general public must form part of the policies for the protection of archaeological heritage. This is essential where the heritage of Indigenous peoples is involved. Participation must be based upon access to the knowledge necessary for decision-making. Article 6: Local commitment and participation should be actively sought and encouraged as a means of promoting the maintenance of archaeological heritage. This principle is especially important when dealing with the heritage of Indigenous peoples or local cultural groups. In some cases it may be appropriate to entrust responsibility for the protection and management of sites and monuments to Indigenous peoples.

In some countries there has been an increased move to consult with local communities that may represent ethnic or cultural groups not belonging to mainstream society, particularly in the case of Indigenous peoples. The local or Indigenous community maintains the intangible heritage that belongs to a place and their lack of involvement risks the loss of important aspects of heritage significance.

Many countries now include Indigenous involvement in their legislation or their heritage management practice. This is particularly an issue in 'new world' countries settled in recent centuries by people of European descent, who are today the dominant population. In the past two decades, in countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, some South American countries, and the USA, it has become standard practice to consult with and include participation of local Indigenous communities in management decisions about their cultural and archaeological heritage. The United Nations has recognised the rights of such Indigenous people to control their own culture in its draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 1994/5):

Article 12: Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature, as well as the right to the restitution of cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

Case Study 3 (Community Consultation, South Africa) illustrates the involvement of local communities in archaeological heritage management.

The allocation of new values to archaeological heritage by outside or 'alternative' groups is another potential risk. In particular, the populations in the West, in seeking spiritual and New Age meaning, may appropriate some archaeological heritage as a vehicle for their own meanings and associations. There are many well-known cases around the world, such as Stonehenge in England, the focus of the recreation of Druidism in the 19th century, and subsequently the focus of many New Age beliefs, such as ley lines. Increased travel by Westerners includes sacred tourism to various Inca sites in Peru, such as Machu Picchu, or the Nazca Lines, and the Earthmother Goddess tours to Çatalhöyük in Turkey. These post-modern, New-Age Western belief systems may interfere with scientific interpretations of that archaeological heritage, as well as the general management of the site. This has the potential to occur in association with other forms of heritage, but archaeological heritage that portrays earlier cultures that may seem inexplicable is particularly prone to this threat to its scientific, archaeological or traditional community values.

Externally imposed values can also disrupt the local community, their own cultural traditions and their relationship with the heritage in their locality. A New Age appropriation of heritage may occur at a place that has living spiritual connections with the local community, and may be seen by that community as another form of cultural imperialism. This is a current threat at various Indigenous peoples' significant heritage sites, such as Uluru in central Australia.

Solutions

Additional risks to archaeological heritage are similar to those impacting other forms of heritage, and include natural damage,

earthquakes and coastal erosion (all mentioned in the 2000 report). Henry Cleere, in the *Heritage at Risk 2000* report, identified cultural tourism as often presenting a major risk to archaeological sites on the World Heritage List. However, most risks ultimately result from a lack of funding, law enforcement, and sufficient training – evidence in most countries of a lack of political will or commitment. In some cases, there may be resistance to the application of guidelines and good archaeological heritage management practice because it seems difficult or expensive. These are challenges that are often relevant, but are not always the case.

It is often difficult to fully appreciate the risk to archaeological heritage because there is little in place to monitor what is happening to that heritage. These reporting mechanisms are particularly important as they can allow the development of self-correcting archaeological heritage management systems. Some countries have programmes in place to report on threats, but most do not. An example of how such monitoring can allow otherwise unseen problems to emerge is seen in the UK-ICOMOS 2000 report on risk, which describes the ICOMOS Monuments at Risk Survey 1995. Reporting on its 937,484 monuments and sites (including 300,000 archaeological sites), the survey found that, on average, one monument had been destroyed every day since 1945.

Australia's first State of the Environment report in 1996 included archaeological sites as cultural heritage. In 1998, a set of indicators was developed to monitor the protection of cultural heritage. Several indicators are applied to archaeological heritage, for example:

Impact of Development (humanly initiated actions including tourism): A2.1 Number and proportion of archaeological assessment studies initiated prior to development that include assessment of Indigenous archaeological places and values (www.ea.gov.au/soe/envindicators/heritage-ind.html)

Australia's second State of the Environment report is due to be released in late 2001 and will report on results measured against the established heritage indicators (www.ea.gov.au/soe).

Such monitoring programmes are the ideal. However, many current risks are already easily identifiable, and we can work towards raising awareness of these problems now. ICAHM proposes that ICOMOS brings its 2000 and 2001 reports on Heritage at Risk to the attention of key international bodies that fund cultural heritage management, such as ICCROM and UNESCO, to raise and reinforce awareness of the risks to archaeological heritage management. Similarly, ICAHM strongly recommends that ICOMOS makes strong representation to other international bodies involved in activities that often impact on archaeological heritage, such as aid organisations and international developers. For example, ICAHM is aware of the World Bank's current development of a draft Policy on Management of Physical Cultural Resources (www.worldbank.org/whatwedo/policies.htm). ICAHM strongly recommends collaboration between all relevant agencies, including ICOMOS, to promote consistency and united efforts to ensure the better protection of the world's archaeological heritage.

In the meantime, ICAHM's current examination of archaeological heritage management internationally may result in its developing new strategies to contain risks to archaeological heritage. We have begun a review of the awareness and use of our *Charter for Archaeological Heritage Management*, as well as identifying national mechanisms to protect and manage a country's archaeological heritage. This will allow ICAHM to understand more precisely the anecdotal evidence in the various country reports, to identify which threats to archaeological heritage are worldwide or regional, and to be able to advise ICOMOS on international

actions to deal with these risks. The report of this review is proposed for the 2002 General Assembly in southern Africa.

Case Study 1: Backfilling Excavated Archaeological Heritage – First Government House Site, Sydney, Australia

An example of using backfilling in order to conserve important excavated remains, pending decisions about a site's conservation and future use, can be seen with the First Government House site in Sydney, Australia.

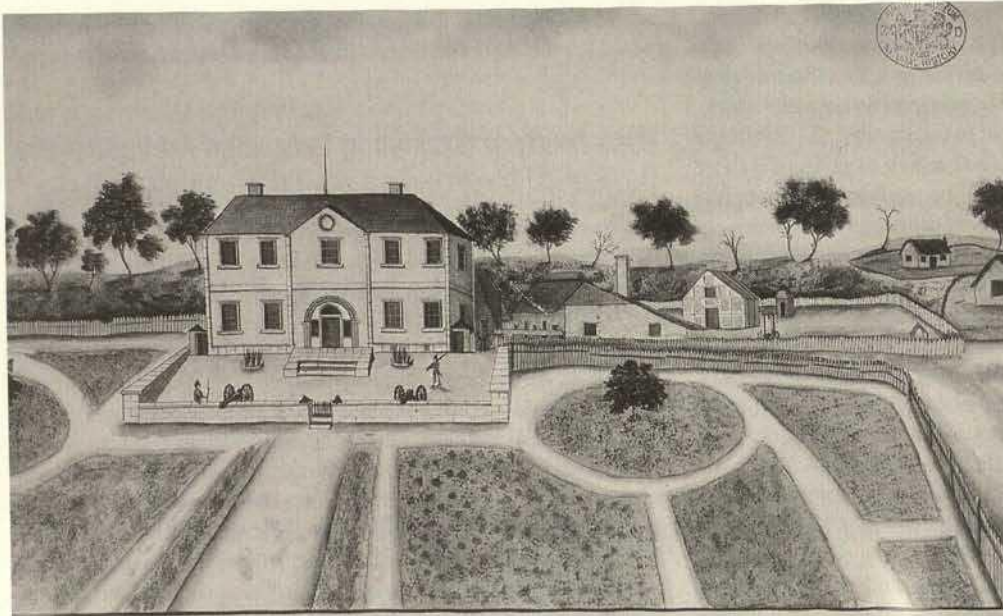
The First Government House was built in Sydney in 1788, the year of British colonisation of Australia. It was the social and administrative centre of the colony, with successive governors living and working there. Over the years the building has undergone many changes and extensions. The Government House residence was demolished in 1846, and the land subsequently used for many purposes, finally as a car park. Today, the site is in the central business district of Sydney.

In early 1982, the New South Wales (NSW) State government called for a high-rise development proposal for the site, a condition being that 'the ground level of the tower will contain an area for displays to mark the site as Governor Phillip's residence'. (Phillip was the first governor of the colony). Excavations commenced in 1983 and revealed extensive traces of the First Government House, with footings and remnant walls, as well as thousands of artefacts, showing the history of the site during its phase as Government House and over the subsequent years.

Considerable public and expert concern was aroused, and Australia ICOMOS was one of the many community groups lobbying extensively to retain the archaeological remains. One significant result was the nomination of the site to community, State and national heritage registers. The publicity was followed by the Sydney City Council refusal of the development application; subsequently the NSW Government released the developer from its contractual obligations in order to retain the site for future generations – and excavations continued. In early 1985, the NSW Premier announced that the site would be conserved and that a Conservation Analysis and Plan would be prepared prior to a national architectural competition for a 'development design' that ensured protection of the site.

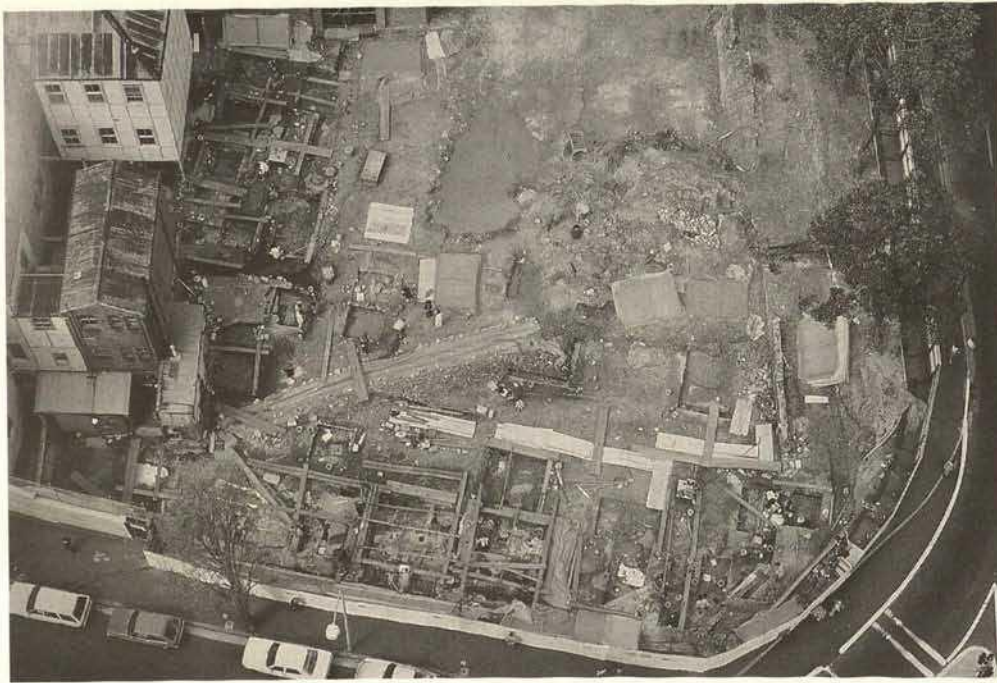
At that time, the excavated areas were carefully backfilled in order to protect the fragile structural remains. Areas that were particularly fragile or might introduce water into the trenches, such as the baulks, were covered in a non-porous protective gauze; other areas, including parts of the foundations, were covered in a porous geotextile, held in place by sand-filled bags. Clean, washed river-sand filled the remaining area; the entire surface was then sealed with a thin layer of bitumen. This method of backfilling was based on extensive analysis of the physical condition and conservation risks to the exposed archaeological remains.

In 1988 the award-winning design was selected. It includes two commercial high-rise buildings – Governor Phillip and Governor Macquarie towers – and allocated extra height to allow much of the area of the First Government House site to be left as a civic place. The development also includes the Museum of Sydney, in front of the towers. Opened in 1995, the museum commemorates the history of the site and the story of Sydney, as well as the story of Sydney's Aboriginal population. It is partially built over the remains of the First Government House site. Segments of the footings were re-exposed and are on display under glass panels in the museum's floor. Other areas are similarly displayed outside, in the



A View of Governor Phillip's House Sydney Cove Port Jackson taken from the N.W.

First Government House in Sydney, watercolour, early 19th century (British Museum)



Aerial view of the excavations



Excavation of the First Government House, backfilling trenches against water damage

open area in front of the museum, where an outline of the First Government House is traced on the paving.

This use of backfilling pending development and site presentation decisions has been successful. There has, however, been continued controversy over the presentation and interpretation of the First Government House site. Many archaeologists and heritage experts do not consider that it fully presents the site's historical and archaeological values (see US/ICOMOS newsletter 1997/2 at www.icomos.org/usicomos/new/marapa97.htm for a summary of this latter issue).

Case Study 2: Archaeological Heritage and Development Approvals – Motorways in Hungary

Hungary has an estimated 100,000 archaeological sites, based on the 'Hungarian Archaeological Topography', a large-scale project of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hungarian Academy of Science. The project commenced in the 1960s, and by 1998 some 10% of the country had been intensively surveyed with 9952 sites recorded.

This archaeological heritage is at risk. There has been a falling-off of planned scientific excavations, especially in the bigger cities, where the prevailing practice is to undertake rescue archaeology ahead of development. Greater numbers of green-field investments (such as shopping malls), big infrastructure developments (motorway construction for example), linear developments (including communication cables and pipelines) are all posing a threat to archaeological sites. The problems are compounded by modern agricultural deep-ploughing, and looters with metal detectors.

The investment boom has meant a great challenge to Hungarian archaeology. Without this development, many sites would not have been identified and large surface areas would not have been explored, and certain research questions regarding settlement structures could not have been answered. On the other hand, the small group of Hungarian archaeologists is facing increasing numbers of excavations and the associated problems: on-the-spot documentation and inventory of millions of excavated finds, the demand for their temporary and final storage, and last but not least, the preliminary and final scientific evaluation.

Hungarian 1997 legislation that protects archaeological heritage, as well as other forms of heritage, maintains several features of the ICAHM Charter and of the Malta Convention. This includes requirements that archaeological heritage be left *in situ* and in context. The Hungarian legislation also demands that, where this cannot take place, the cost of 'pre-excavation excavation', i.e. salvage archaeology, is to be borne by the developer as part of planning and environment impact studies.

Serious problems for archaeological heritage emerge when the investors, especially foreign companies, do not abide by existing regulations and do not involve the responsible authorities – such as museums, local government, and conservation bodies – and begin earthworks without valid permits. This happened on the site of Budaörs, near Budapest. In this example, the shopping centre development, funded by French interests, was stopped by local museum archaeologists. Part of the site was destroyed without any prior project planning, including a failure to undertake data audits, field surveys or investigation. In the end, losses were incurred by the investor, the museum, and the archaeological heritage.

The examples that follow highlight how these issues are managed by the Hungarian regional/county museums that administer the protection of archaeological heritage.

The construction of the second stretch of motorway M1 from the capital Budapest to Vienna, Austria, took place in the early 1990s. The project had successes and failures for the regional museum responsible, providing an example that was educational for all regional museums. A success story followed a few years later, with the 1993–1996 archaeological research program for the construction of a 175-kilometre length of the M3 motorway. Collaboration between the four relevant county/regional museums included thorough preparation, during which different types of archaeological and natural scientific examinations were carried out. These included an interdisciplinary focus with data collection, and ground, aerial and archaeomagnetic surveys, identifying 150 sites that were subsequently all partially excavated. The available development funds covered the costs of the excavations, documentation and initial restoration, as well as providing facilities for a temporary exhibition of the excavated finds.

However, in the case of another motorway (M5), the same arrangements did not function, bad contracts were made, archaeological sites were damaged, and both parties turned to the courts. If Hungarian archaeological heritage management is to avoid such disasters, current government plans to fast-track a 600-kilometre long motorway mean that exact timing and logistical planning of this enormous project is essential from an archaeological perspective.

In order to assist developers' compliance with statutory requirements, the Hungarian Cultural Heritage Directorate is currently preparing databases and a GIS system, so that they can be accessed for archaeological heritage information as part of development planning processes.

Case Study 3: Local Community Consultation – Kruger National Park, South Africa

The case of the Thulamela graves, where excavated human remains raised the very contentious issue of who owns the archaeological past – academics or local communities? – broke new ground regarding the excavation of, and research on, human remains in South Africa. The issue involved communities neighbouring Kruger National Park.

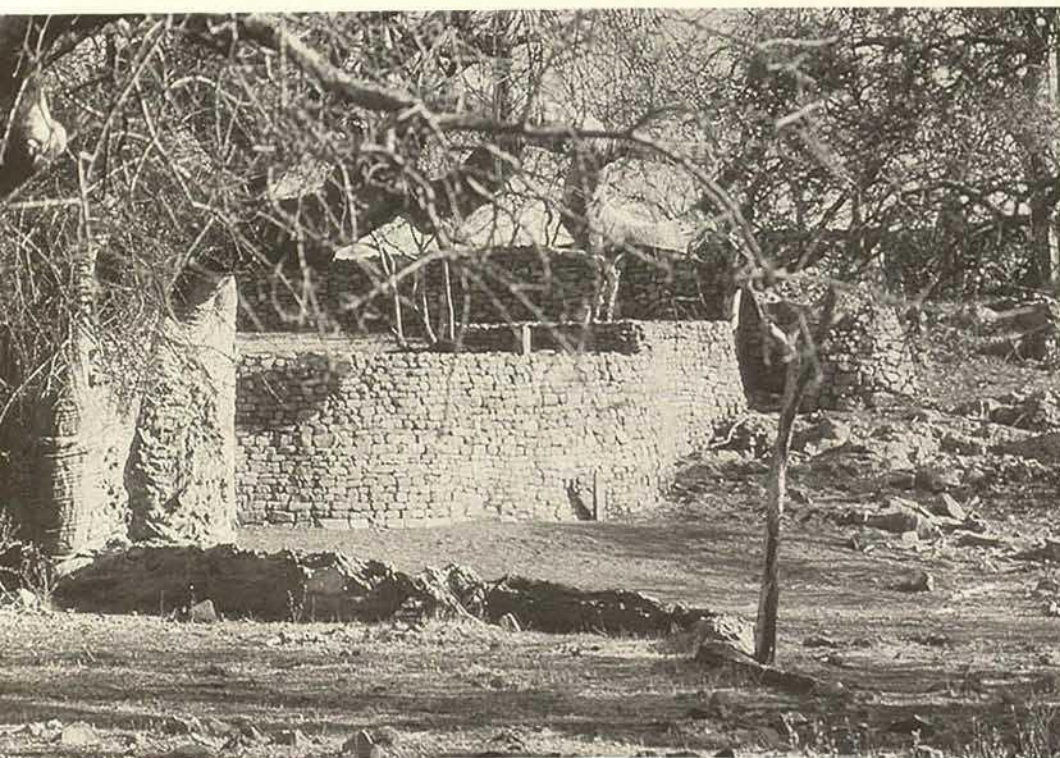
The two graves were found towards the end of a larger archaeological project that included excavations on Thulamela Hill at Pafuri, in Kruger, during rebuilding of walls to prepare the site for visitation. The significance of the site, including the evidence of metalworking and trade during the post-Greater Zimbabwean culture in southern Africa, had already been confirmed and communicated in terms of inter-disciplinary scientific value, historical importance, tourism potential, and neighbouring community involvement.

At the discovery of each burial, excavation work was stopped and the project committee convened, and then the local communities were called in to inspect the site. Because of the age of the burials, no direct descendants could claim the remains; consequently, it was agreed that the project committee should take ownership of the remains, and that more information was needed to provide answers: in other words, permission was given to excavate further. Scientific analysis by the Department of Anatomy, Pretoria University, was permitted, but the remains had to be brought back for re-burial at a time convenient to the community and according to their custom. (This procedure was later taken-up in the new South African heritage legislation.)

Who should decide and what kind of burial – traditional or modern/Christian? – were also issues, with the community divided on the matter; in the end it was a combination that included plac-



Aerial photograph, Royal Enclosure:
Thulamela Heritage site, Kruger
National Park, South Africa



Thulamela: main wall, western or
public entrance

ing Christian crosses on the re-burials. The process culminated in a major ceremony and was a huge success, and what could have potentially been a conflict between archaeologists, park officials, museum people and communities, turned out to be a wonderfully positive contribution to archaeology in practice and to park management.

The crosses stood for a time, but were eventually removed after consultation with the project committee because they were found to be inappropriate and not authentic. The bones are at rest as they were before.

This best-practice resolution in archaeological heritage management was possible because cross-cultural communication and involvement of neighbouring communities was implemented prior to the official launching for the Goldfields Thulamela Archaeological Project in 1993, long before the sensitive issue of human burials came up. A set of basic principles and objectives was debated and negotiated by the different stakeholders in the project; these formed the common ground, as well as steering guidelines for the proposed investigation and development of the site. Stakeholders included the South African National Parks Board, the sponsors (Gold Fields and Transvaal Employment Bureau), the South African Nature Foundation, neighbouring communities, regional political interests, the academic fraternity, and the archaeological research team. The Principles and Objectives accepted by the group included:

- Community involvement and participation during all phases, i.e. research, conservation, and environmental education programme development and implementation.
- Scientific investigation by means of archaeological excavation – including conservation, preservation, scientific interpretation – which will underpin the development of the resource.
- The broader scientific investigation and contextualisation of related sites in the region – including Mozambique and Zimbabwe – for further enhancement of historical perspective and history reconstruction.

A decision-making structure was also agreed-on that enabled the full representation and participation by the communities; it assured involvement and co-responsibility, with a Project Committee, aided by a Technical Working Group plus an Educational Working Group.

The main aim of the project was the recognition of the cultural assets and the extension of the Park's curatorship to cultural heritage, leading to better and harmonious regional co-operation, as well as enhanced self-esteem and pride among the people whose roots lie in Thulamela. These aims are being achieved, with the bonds between park and neighbouring communities strengthening and surviving unscathed throughout the political changes in South Africa since 1993. In addition, South Africa National Parks, as a nature conservation body, has taken great strides to establish Cultural Resource Management as a responsibility.

Community leaders visit Grave I, Thulamela, during consultations to decide on further excavations and ownership

ICAHM thanks Johan Verhoef, Cultural Resources Manager, South African National Parks, and former Thulamela Project Manager, for his assistance with this case study.

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Malta Convention 1992. European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised), Valetta. Signatory states being member States of the Council of Europe and the other States party to the European Cultural Convention. Council of Europe Website (<http://culture.coe.fr/infocentre/txt/eng/econ143.html>)

International archaeological association codes/standards

European Archaeological Association – Code of Practice

(www.e-a-a.org/Codeprac.htm)

World Archaeological Congress – Code of Ethics - concerning Indigenous peoples

(www.wac.uct.ac.za/archive/content/ethics.html)

Archaeological heritage conservation publications

Bell Guide to International Conservation Charters, Edinburgh 1997 (Historic Scotland Technical Advice Notes 8)

Getty Conservation Institute publications on conservation including archaeological sites

(www.getty.edu/bookstore/indexes/subs_conservation.html)

One World Archaeology Series, published by Routledge

(www.routledge.com)

ICOMOS Committee on Archaeological Heritage Management

