

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN ARCHAEOLOGY

# U.S. Cultural Diplomacy and Archaeology

Soft Power, Hard Heritage

Christina Luke and Morag M. Kersel



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**Christina Luke  
and Morag M. Kersel**



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# **U.S. Cultural Diplomacy and Archaeology**

Archaeology's links to international relations are well known, yet often unacknowledged as vital ambassadors of America's unofficial cultural policy abroad. U.S. foreign policy benefits from the successful and honed diplomatic skills of archaeologists to foster mutual understanding and to build cultural bridges that promote long-term, sustained relationships. This book explores the multifaceted contribution of archaeology and archaeologists to U.S. cultural diplomacy abroad.

Many current U.S.-sponsored and directed archaeological projects operate within U.S. diplomatic agendas and employ policies aimed at cultural heritage preservation. *U.S. Cultural Diplomacy and Archaeology* is the first book to evaluate a growing emphasis on international cultural policy as it is purposely promoted by the U.S. Department of State. Drawing from analyses and discussion of several U.S. governmental agencies' funding and framing of cultural heritage during periods of crisis, the history of diplomacy-entangled American overseas research centers, and the necessity of the archaeologists' involvement in diplomatic processes, this decisive work has implication for the fields of cultural heritage, anthropology, archaeology, museum studies, international relation, law, and policy studies.

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*Christina Luke and Morag M.  
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# Preface and Acknowledgements

We met on September 10, 2001, the first day of employment for Luke with the Cultural Heritage Center in the Office of Policy and Evaluation, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, United States Department of State. Kersel was a contractor in the same office. Maria Papageorge Kouroupas was (and remains) the executive director of the Cultural Heritage Center. We, thus, must first thank Maria Papageorge Kouroupas for the opportunity to work closely with her and perhaps most importantly, for hiring both of us—without Maria we might have never met. Senior cultural property analyst Bonnie Magness-Gardiner (now program manager of the Art Theft Program at the FBI) was also part of this team of four women (ably assisted by Janet Bishop) who were charged, at the time, with executing the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA) and overseeing the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Over the next 18 months—the period of time that we worked together at the Department of State—we confronted a number of unprecedented situations, including the buildup to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq as well as the massive plundering and destruction of Iraqi cultural institutions and landscapes during the early weeks of April 2003 (the only week of the entire period of our tenure at the U.S. Department of State that Kouroupas and Magness-Gardiner were out of the office). We also had the opportunity to meet and learn from U.S. embassy staff from all over the world both in Washington, D.C., and in-country. We witnessed the transition of an office that had been working diligently behind the scenes with little recognition or support from the U.S. Department of State to an entity that has become, by cultural heritage standards, a major funding source, an intellectual resource, and a prominent player in establishing U.S. approaches to cultural policy and programs on the international level.

Our collective training and experiences as field archaeologists, historic preservationists, museum assistants, and interns for various cultural organizations provided the backdrop for our work at the U.S. Department of State. It was not uncommon for our colleagues (within the broad umbrella of the U.S. Department of State, not necessarily the Cultural Heritage Center) to refer to our workplace style as “too academic,” and we were often

told to leave, to go home, to stop working—the work would be there tomorrow. Ultimately we realized that our efforts and commitments were better suited to fieldwork and academia: we did not want to *settle* nor were we interested in *being cultivated*, terms used often in the corridors of the U.S. Department of State.

Our experience at the U.S. Department of State played a dramatic role in shifting our approaches to fieldwork. We are now acutely aware of what it means to be “the American(s)” abroad, and we find ourselves continually struck by the relative lack of understanding of the historical connections as well as the potential for future success between the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. embassies, and the U.S. archaeological community working abroad. We continue to grapple with how to understand these very different spheres. Our work with the U.S. Department of State has pushed us to think broadly about fieldwork, archaeology, and the role of diplomacy and governments. As a result we are both working on incorporating ethnographic and what others might call self-reflective approaches into our current studies—thinking comprehensively about archaeology and landscapes in the context of diplomacy, heritage, local communities, and governments. In so doing, we believe that our work has benefited immeasurably.

Over the last decade there has been a solidifying of U.S. cultural policy from the U.S. Department of State; yet policy makers continue to struggle with understanding the reality on the ground and the effects of policy and funding on the average archaeologist. We envision this book as the opening salvo in this dialogue. Here we focus on some of the existing cultural policies, however, we could not cover everything, and rather than do an injustice to some aspects of government funding and archaeology, we chose to focus on programs, offices, and grants with which we are most familiar. There is further research and work to be done on the field archaeologist and government interaction; this area alone will fill the pages of many different books.

In order to undertake the study we turned to many colleagues, friends, and informants who assisted us greatly in our endeavors. The scholarship and active engagement in training programs, teaching, and mentoring on the part of Patty Gerstenblith and Bonnie Magness-Gardiner provided invaluable background for this book. Grachel J. Humphries, who administered the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation during 2003–2008, offered key insights and perspectives. Conversations with Richard Leventhal and Brian Daniels of the Penn Museum Cultural Heritage Center on the importance of the future of cultural policy as an active discipline have been extremely helpful. We would especially like to thank Brian Daniels for his thorough reading and invaluable comments on an earlier version of this manuscript.

The overseas research centers, even though over the years we had used their facilities and stayed at these institutions, had not previously been objects of study. Mary Ellen Lane, director of the CAORC, Nancy Leinwand, executive director of ARIT (Turkey) in the United States, Thomas W. Davis,

former director of CAARI (Cyprus), and Barbara Porter, the current director of ACOR (Jordan), all provided guidance and critical feedback. In addition, archives at the American Research Institute of Turkey, the Archaeological Institute of America, and Harvard University all proved to be invaluable in conducting the historical background research presented in this study. We wish to thank the various stakeholders and interested individuals that have been and continue to be part of our respective research projects in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. From the halls of the U.S. embassies and foreign ministries of culture to the teahouses of small, rural villages, we have learned and continue to learn.

Over the course of any research project there are bumps in the road. In approaching the nontraditional topic of archaeology as an element of cultural diplomacy we encountered some resistance and some who questioned the relevance of this work. It was the continued encouragement and guidance of Lynn Meskell that propelled us forward. Professor Meskell has been both a friend and a mentor to us, and we appreciate her faith in our research. In addition, we would like to thank both Yorke Rowan and Christopher Roosevelt for their unfailing support.

Research for this book was made possible by grants from the Council for American Overseas Research Centers (through the American Center for Oriental Research in Jordan—Kersel), the National Endowment for the Humanities (through the American Research Institute in Turkey—Luke), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada—Postdoctoral Research Award held in the Department of Anthropology, the University of Toronto (Kersel), and the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology in the Ancient World at Brown University—Postdoctoral Fellowship (Kersel).

The day after we met, September 11, 2001, the world changed. In response the U.S. Department of State redirected efforts in cultural diplomacy. This volume is a reflection of changing times. We hope that this is just the beginning of many conversations and debates regarding the relationship between archaeology and cultural diplomacy. Responsibility for the views presented and any errors of fact or omissions are, of course, our own.



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# 1 Introduction

## U.S. Cultural Diplomacy and Archaeology

“Democracy is messy.” Truer words were never spoken than those uttered by then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces in April 2003. Secretary Rumsfeld made these comments in response to a reporter’s question regarding the ransacking of Iraqi cultural institutions and, more specifically, the failure of coalition forces to protect the past. On the same day that the plundering of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad was carried out, President George W. Bush went on television (with Arabic subtitles) to proclaim to the Iraqi people that they are “the heirs of a great civilization that contributes to *all humanity*” (emphasis added). This pronouncement of the universality of heritage—a shared cultural past—echoed current global efforts of international agencies like UNESCO and presaged the next decade of U.S. governmental efforts aimed at reshaping U.S. cultural diplomacy abroad. “Let it never be said that our government doesn’t care about culture,” wrote (tongue in cheek) Frank Rich (2003) in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece critiquing the U.S. response to the looting of the Iraqi National Museum, National Archives, and Libraries. On April 10, people around the globe awoke to provocative headlines and political cartoons regarding cultural heritage in Iraq: “Babylon Wrecked by War. US-Led Forces Leave a Trail of Destruction and Contamination”; “U.S. Blamed for Failure to Stop Sacking of Museum”; and “The Greatest Cultural Disaster of the Last 500 years.” Such banners fueled the negative perceptions of the United States as a country that lacked empathy for the cultural heritage of mankind, despite George W. Bush’s assertions to the contrary. The global populace became acutely aware of the devastating effects of humans on the collective world history.

When the outrage over the story refused to go away, even after the looting subsided, a cover-up of sorts began. “I don’t think that anyone anticipated that the riches of Iraq would be looted by the Iraqi people,” said the Centcom spokesman, Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, on April 15, days after the Museum had been despoiled and the National Library burned. But the historical record makes this assertion astonishingly naive. During the 1991 Gulf War, nine of Iraq’s 13 regional museums were looted, flooding the antiquities market with the booty for years. Why would those in charge

not have anticipated that the same would happen again? Prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq by coalition forces, the governments of both the United States and the United Kingdom met with archaeologists and cultural heritage experts to discuss the “best course of action” to avoid damage to archaeological sites and cultural institutions in Iraq (see Stone 2008), but very few of their recommendations were carried out. Rather than admitting to error or conceding to the gravity of what had happened on their watch, the U.S. government attempted to trivialize the significance of the looting. “Stuff happens!” said Donald Rumsfeld, who likened the looting to the aftermath of a soccer game, joking to the press that the scale of the crime was a *trompe l’oeil* effect cultivated by a television loop showing “over and over and over . . . the same picture of some person walking out of some building with a vase.” Jane Waldbaum (2003), then president of the Archaeological Institute of America, summed up the defense secretary’s response to the tragedy: he “basically shrugged and said, ‘Boys will be boys.’” But these comments from an official with the U.S. government did not ameliorate the situation. Rather, they fanned the flames and strengthened accusations of U.S. cultural insensitivity—foreign relations were at risk. What was a country to do?

The U.S. government turned to nongovernmental actors—archaeologists, cultural heritage practitioners, museum specialists, and others—to operate as ambassadors to mend fences and build bridges. Historically, archaeology and U.S. archaeologists have been deployed as agents of cultural diplomacy. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries archaeologists often played, officially and unofficially, the role of consul—even ambassador—while purportedly also acting on behalf of science and humanity with the ultimate goal of the production of knowledge (see Allen 2011; Bernhardtsson 2005; Dyson 1998, 2006; Foro and Rey 2008; Goode 2007). The role of the archaeologist as an agent of the state continues today, yet this modern function goes unacknowledged in many academic circles, and its influence in the spheres of public policy and international relations often goes underutilized and unappreciated. In this book we argue that U.S. archaeology abroad is an integral part of past and current U.S. foreign policy. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the War on Terror carried out in Afghanistan, the tenuous situation in Israel and Palestine, the ongoing unrest in Iraq, and the recent instability throughout the Middle East and North Africa, cultural diplomacy is back with a vengeance.<sup>1</sup> Archaeology and archaeologists play a vital role in furthering U.S. diplomatic goals and agendas in countries and areas of the world where the face of a kinder, gentler, more caring America is most needed, and where America dedicates its resources.

## CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND SMART POWER

Milton E. Cummings (2003) has defined cultural diplomacy as “the exchange of ideas, information, values, systems, traditions, beliefs, and other

aspects of culture, with the intention of fostering mutual understanding.” An exchange can take place in the arenas of art, sport, literature, music, science, economy, and archaeology. Such an exchange implies communication and respect between the cultures involved, moving toward a firmer understanding of respective values and a reduced susceptibility to stereotyping. The potential of such an improved knowledge is to foster interaction and cooperation, and to promote an ongoing conversation through open and fluid dialogue. In this way, Leonard’s (2002) analysis of cultural diplomacy as that part of public diplomacy that is concerned with the building of long-term relationships dovetails well with the overall architecture of practicing archaeology and the conduct of archaeologists working abroad. Gienow-Hecht and Donfried (2010: 5) assert that the more distance there is between the agent of the cultural diplomacy program and a political or economic agenda, the more likely the program is to succeed. It is precisely because archaeology and archaeologists have *not* been on the political radar screen that the discipline and the agents have had, and continue to embody, the strategic components of sustained cultural diplomacy.

In the larger sphere of academic research, cultural diplomacy has attracted relatively little scholarly attention, despite the practice’s intersection with a range of subjects (such as diplomacy, national identity, and the history of the Cold War). Traditionally, academic considerations of cultural diplomacy have focused on the post–World War II containment and analyses of the Soviet Union (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010; Mark 2009). This volume is an examination of archaeology as an important element of cultural diplomacy (see Scham 2009 for an initial assessment of diplomacy and archaeology). Simon Mark (2009) has argued that cultural diplomacy has been relegated to the margins of international relations for three basic reasons:

1. Politicians and diplomats regard cultural diplomacy as a lesser tool of diplomacy, which in turn is regarded by some as a lesser tool of foreign policy. For these reasons it is not considered a serious part of the diplomatic toolkit.
2. It is difficult to assess the outcomes of cultural diplomacy: it is a challenge to determine its long-term impact on the behavior of countries, and even harder to plan how to implement long-term agendas. Does supplying funds to less developed nations to protect their cultural resources result in a better relationship and greater mutual understanding among different communities, political agents, and cultural actors? How does one assess this type of immeasurability?
3. A lack of scholarly attention finds its origins in the lack of a precise definition of cultural diplomacy: what is it and how does it manifest itself in the sphere of foreign relations?

Another reason that cultural diplomacy is under examined may be the negative associations with manipulation, coercion, and subordination relegating

its study to the “backseat of diplomatic interaction” (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010: 3). In considering the intersection of archaeology and cultural diplomacy, we demonstrate the mutually beneficial relationships that arise as a result of this coming together of seemingly disparate spheres of interest. It is this “exchange” of ideas and people that we find intriguing and compelling in the case of archaeologists as agents of cultural diplomacy and archaeology as the agent of cultural policy.

In her confirmation hearing, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton (2009) used the phrase “smart power” four times in her opening statement and nine times during her testimony. According to Harvard University Academic Joseph Nye (2004a, 2004b, 2008, 2009), smart power is the ability to combine hard and soft power into a winning strategy. Fundamentally, smart power is the ability to influence the behavior of others to achieve a desired outcome. While not a new concept, Secretary Clinton’s use of the term smart power signaled a paradigm shift in U.S. State Department policies—public diplomacy would be taking center stage alongside defense and development in winning hearts and minds. In one of her first appearances as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton (2009) stated: “We view defense, diplomacy, and development as the three pillars of American foreign policy. That’s not rhetoric. That is our commitment. That’s how we are proceeding.” In the same week as the hearings for Secretary Clinton, Defense Secretary Robert Gates “called for the U.S. government to commit more money and effort to soft power tools including diplomacy, economic assistance and communications because the military alone cannot defend America’s interests around the world” (Etheridge 2009). Gates compared military spending with that of the Department of State: nearly half a trillion U.S. dollars annually compared with the meager \$36 billion USD (Etheridge 2009).

Hard power is somewhat self-evident—military, economic, and legal might.<sup>2</sup> Archaeology is very much part of the hard power programming used by the Departments of State, Defense, and most recently Homeland Security. Overt initiatives and legislative efforts like the 1983 Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (U.S. implementation of legislation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property in the U.S.), the more recent application of the National Stolen Property Act (NSPA), Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), and other smuggling statutes applied at the U.S. border combat the illicit trade in archaeological materials and constitute the hard power policies that purport to improve U.S. foreign relations. In the following chapters we will investigate some of these hard power initiatives in the current cultural diplomatic toolkit.

Soft power is less distinguishable. It is the ability for the state to achieve its aims through attraction or endearment (see Gallarotti 2011) rather than coercion. Perceived legitimacy is the key to realizing this objective. States must believe that their aims and objectives are reasonable. Here the United

States must demonstrate through actions that it does care about the cultural heritage of other nations. The practice of soft power focuses on shaping and cultivating the preferences of others, often among the official tasks of the cultural affairs officer (CAO), the U.S. State Department representative who acts as liaison for aspects of culture and education at the respective U.S. embassy (see Arndt 2005 and Mulcahy 1999b for suggestions on a deeper relationship between the diplomatic corps and the academic community). Academic and scientific exchanges can and do play a significant role in enhancing this type of cultural power because they are multipronged: they engage contemporary actors in dialogue and projects associated with archaeology, and they often become the foundations for future programs (academic conferences, excavations, etc.) as well as venues for economic development through tourism. As a constituent of soft power, archaeologists play a crucial role in augmenting community values. A commitment to understanding the past through the practice of archaeology establishes that the United States does care about heritage. Financial, logistical, and intellectual support demonstrates overall esteem for a global archaeological heritage by the U.S. government.

Nestled in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs are key examples of soft power initiatives: the Fulbright Commission, programs of the Office of Citizen Exchanges, and special project funding through the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation and the Iraq Cultural Heritage Project (ICHP). Additionally, under Title VI, the U.S. Department of Education supports the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), a series of institutions whose mandates provide duality of purpose for scholars: to increase U.S. understanding of foreign cultures while simultaneously acting as unofficial U.S. ambassadors abroad. Other initiatives in the U.S. government support archaeological research, including the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The programs and research supported through the soft side of diplomatic policy, the "invisible side," are usually carried out by academics or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and may or may not be attached to the official U.S. embassy cultural affairs section. Funding for such initiatives went hand-in-hand with the post-World War II emphasis on reaching hearts and minds (see Arndt 2005). After World War II, cultural programming became an integral part of the campaign of truth to counter Soviet propaganda. In 1948 the Smith-Mundt Act stated that the aim of educational and cultural programming was to "increase mutual understanding." In order to foster deeper understanding, the U.S. government funded a number of programs that supported creative expression, particularly efforts emphasizing jazz, a typically "American" music, as an ambassador (see Eschen 2004). Sponsoring events that prompted engagement of citizens in nonpolitical settings represented a cornerstone of soft diplomacy (for further discussion see Mulcahy 1999b; Snow and Taylor 2010).

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State oversees initiatives that deploy archaeology and archaeologists; both overtly, and in more circumspect ways, strengthen ties with other nations. Most of the initiatives have a research umbrella. The Fulbright Program is an excellent example of a mutually beneficial exchange program, in which ordinary people act as ambassadors of the United States. Created in the aftermath of World War II through the efforts of Senator J. William Fulbright, the Fulbright Program was established to promote peace and understanding through educational exchange. The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 (Public Law 87-256), was enacted into law in the same month as the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Peace Corps Act of 1961, all signaling U.S. commitment to cultural policy funding and study abroad programs. It is not surprising that these initiatives coincided with the heightened tensions between the United States and Russia during the Cold War. An annual appropriation from the U.S. Congress to the U.S. Department of State is the primary source of funds for the Fulbright program. Governments and host institutions in foreign nations and in the United States also contribute in-kind resources and cost-sharing initiatives such as tuition waivers, housing, and in-country travel.

While the standard Fulbright grants cover a broad range of topics and are available for almost every country in the world, there are specific programs targeted at furthering particular diplomatic goals of the U.S. Department of State. One such program is the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program: Direct Access to the Muslim World (<http://fulbright.state.gov/grants/scholar-program/non-us-citizen.html>). The Visiting Scholar Program is intended to bring Muslim scholars to the United States to “help U.S. higher education institutions and communities enrich their understanding of Islamic civilization and culture as well as social, political and economic developments in the Muslim world” (<http://fulbright.state.gov/grants/scholar-program/non-us-citizen.html>). Fulbright Visiting Scholars are matched with U.S. institutions for a period of three to six weeks, where they lecture or teach short courses, assist with program and curriculum development, interact with students, and participate in public outreach programs with community groups, local schools, and civic organizations. Through these low-level encounters of everyday life, U.S. citizens and representatives of Muslim nations participate in and contribute to conversations in nonmilitary, nongovernmental settings (Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program 1999–2000).

Like the Fulbright Commission, the Cultural Programs Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State also carries out a number of initiatives based on the goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961. The legacy of the ECA is rooted in the United States Information Agency (USIA), eliminated in 1999, but parts of which were folded into the U.S. Department of State (see Arndt 2005). One of the primary goals of ECA is to promote cross-cultural understanding through



people-to-people exchanges. Typically programs bring foreign academics and professionals to the United States with the expectation that American diversity and democratic principles will be experienced and (eventually) emulated. Another expected outcome is that once the foreigners return to their respective countries they essentially become “spokespeople and ambassadors” for the United States, conveying the softer, more caring side of America. A key component in this programming is reciprocity: U.S. and foreign participants should exchange ideas, knowledge, practical applications, and, most importantly, people.

Our cultural exchanges seek to empower, educate, and engage foreign audiences and American participants to foster a sense of common interests and common values and offer people throughout the world a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in America’s belief in freedom, justice, opportunity and respect for all. U.S. Department of State 2011c

People are used to advance the global good, constituting a vital component of a framework for international cooperation and understanding, the public diplomacy tenet of smart power as defined by Joseph Nye (see Armitage and Nye 2007). In the post-September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 world, the U.S. Department of State increased its commitment to diplomacy, channeling funding into programs that focus on and/or are located in the Muslim world (see Chapter 6 for a discussion on the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation and Muslim-focused projects) and security measures. From the perspective of the U.S. government, programs concentrated in the humanities are strategic elements in promoting democracy and cultivating relationships with local experts and general (foreign) publics, although their importance is often neglected and underutilized (see Brown 2010).

## A HERITAGE OF HUMANKIND AND THE LEGACY OF UNESCO

Archaeology as a facet of democracy building is validated by the concept of a common heritage of humankind, a concept that has been and continues to be reified and entrenched at local and global levels. The post-World War II era witnessed the establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which enshrined the importance of culture in the international sphere. While some (De Cesari 2010; Labadi 2007; Wong 2008) would criticize the Eurocentric nature of UNESCO and its programs, the institutionalization of a global heritage was shaped by increasing anxieties over the troublesome effects of globalization, modernization, and technological advancement on cultural resources; in many ways, the long-term impact of UNESCO’s programming has resulted