Lecture Summary

Four years of civil war in Syria and the seizure of much of northern Iraq by extremists last year have precipitated what is currently the world’s largest humanitarian crisis. While the international community must focus foremost on ending the conflict and meeting basic human needs, protecting the region’s irreplaceable cultural heritage forms an integral and inextricable part of humanitarian efforts. Looting, deliberate destructions of heritage places by extremists, combat damage, and illegal development occur daily in Syria and northern Iraq and are obliterating the cultural patrimony of millennia. Extremists are systematically disassembling the heritage sector in the conflict zone and seek to stamp out cultural diversity in what is nothing short of a war on culture. These crimes threaten to proliferate and spread the conflict, complicate peace efforts, and erode future stability and prosperity. Cultural identities and the futures of countless vibrant communities hang in the balance.

The American Schools of Oriental Research Cultural Heritage Initiatives seeks to preserve our shared global patrimony by documenting and reporting events in Syria and Iraq, engaging in public outreach and educational initiatives, and planning and implementing mitigation and remediation projects now and in the post-conflict period.

See http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org