Chapter 5

Negligent Mnemocide and the Shattering of Iraqi Collective Memory[1]

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George Orwell: "Those who control the present, control the past. Those who control the past, control the future."

Heinrich Heine: "Where one burns books, one will soon burn people."[2]

Years ago, while roaming the stacks of one of the world's truly great research libraries, an epiphany bubbled to the surface of my substance-enlivened consciousness. Instead of seeing the usual information-packed inanimate objects lying on shelves, I suddenly envisioned a cacophony of passionate debates, insults, romances, genocide defenses, patriarchy justifications, and all the other phenomena one might find in such a vessel filled with millions of texts in hundreds of languages. As they were organized both topically and regionally, that night the books on my floor of specialization harangued me in shelving blocs – fiery Albanian nationalists here, pious Hanafi jurisprudents two rows across, followed by stern Ottoman apologists and whispering Sufi sensualists. I pondered what the complete absence of such books would mean. At least the cacophony would end, I figured – but what then?

While this personal anecdote might resemble a form of insanity meriting a call to burly men in white coats, I introduce it to illustrate the role of written knowledge to

humankind. Without such texts, there are no recorded debates. Without such records, one must re-invent every argument– and loud new texts may successfully come to dominate that recently silenced conversation.

This chapter addresses a limited form of such an outcome – the cultural patrimony lost since the 2003 Anglo-American attempt to remake Iraq. One scholar, Keith Watenpaugh, has categorized such losses as 'mnemocide,' defined as the murder of cultural memory.[3] Nada Shabout and others have spoken about a "systematic campaign to erase Iraq's collective memory."[4] Official pronouncements were opaque in terms of intent regarding the protection of cultural property. However, the Bush administration's policies clearly resulted in mnemocide, whatever the intent. If such policies have not constituted active murder of cultural memory, at the very least they must be categorized as passive and negligent mnemocide.

Invasion Policies

When addressing the looting of April 2003, it is widely stated that US military planners either planned poorly for the post-invasion occupation, committed insufficient troops to secure vital facilities, or both. While these points have been effectively confirmed by a series of internal and external reviews,[5] such a limited explanation ignores the knowledge made publicly available prior to the invasion concerning the value of cultural facilities; downplays the selection process for deeming certain strategic and economic sites worthy of protection in spite of limited military resources; fails to mention several active seizures of Iraqi collective assets; largely shifts blame away from Pentagon planners and towards

commanders in the field; and shields the Bush administration from all intentionality vis-à-vis the protection of Iraqi cultural facilities. Although many excuses have been provided, the fact remains that throughout several days of widespread looting the US chain of command continued to operate without interruption. Civilian officials based in Washington clearly had charge of operational priorities.

Prior to the invasion, a vibrant and public discussion of the necessity to protect Iraq's rich cultural patrimony culminated in a document submitted to the US Department of State by a number of regional experts, listing and ranking facilities requiring protection in case of invasion.[6] Pentagon officials were briefed by several Iraq experts about the potential for looting of cultural treasures, the location and significance of specific facilities, and the legal imperatives concerning protection of cultural patrimony.[7] Although the experts' list of significant cultural facilities was publicly recognized and discussed – and the facilities in question never targeted by the US military during the invasion – it was completely discounted by Pentagon planners once the looting began. Instead, such planners opted to protect certain Iraqi facilities chosen according to American perceptions of their economic or military value.

Specifically, Iraq experts prioritized protection of the National Museum and several other facilities of cultural, historical, or national value. However, throughout the first week of the occupation in Baghdad, planners instead chose to station troops for protection of sites considered important *for U.S. strategic interests*.[8] Such sites suffered minimal looting damage at most, and in some cases no damage whatsoever. Strikingly,

the only one of over twenty ministry headquarters judged worthy of protection was the Ministry of Oil, which held the records most useful for US economic engagement – or exploitation – in Iraq. All other ministries, vital for maintenance of Iraqi state cohesion, bureaucratic management, or the rule of law, were left completely unprotected. Their functions and assets were not considered vital for US interests. The same criterion was applied to all cultural facilities.

Matthew Bogdanos, a colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve who served during the 2003 invasion and led the US military investigation into the Iraqi National Museum looting, provided several military explanations suggesting that in most aspects US actions were correct, legal, and defensible. Since the museum facility had been used as a defensive position during the hostilities and chaos between 8 and 11 April 2003, it forfeited its protected status. If troops had attacked the looters with sufficient firepower to secure the facility, little would have remained of the complex. Sending only a few troops or a single tank to prevent the looting would have risked unacceptable American casualties. Troops were under orders not to fire 'warning shots' under any circumstances, apparently in a bid to reduce the possibility of violent escalation and subsequent civilian deaths. While Bogdanos has conceded that the absence of a US troop presence at the museum after the looting had subsided by 12 April was 'inexcusable,' this should be characterized as a military planning mistake reflecting American lack of urgency, insufficient troop strength, and the dangers of 'catastrophic success.'[9]

While Bogdanos' explanations are persuasive in isolation, certain points prove problematic if one steps back and examines the hostilities as a whole. The lack of 'boots on the ground' obliged military planners considering the 'economy of risk' to transfer such risk from US troops to Iraqi civilians while rendering cultural facility protection impossible during the first week of the occupation.[10] While planners were unwilling to risk troop casualties for the protection of the Iraqi National Museum – let alone the less famous cultural facilities discussed further below – no such hesitation was evident for the protection of the facilities deemed of military or economic value. Meanwhile, the orders troops were given not to fire warning shots apparently limited their response options to either lethal fire or non-response. On the one hand, such orders prevented soldiers from firing in the air to restore order during the looting. At the same time, these orders appear to have encouraged other troops in a similar situation later in the same month to open up with lethal fire on a protesting crowd in Fallujah, causing 17 deaths. In yet another case, during the same week that massed crowds were engaging in widespread looting throughout Baghdad, American troops reportedly killed an armed guard at the Qadiriyyah manuscript collection on the assumption that all *armed* Iraqis were hostile. Such calculations intended to externalize casualties in the name of force protection and minimizing military casualties, contributed to the vulnerability of Iraqi cultural facilities in the midst of chaos. They also demonstrated the relative valuation of American military planners.

The occupying powers, primarily the government of the United States, argued that the cultural destruction experienced was not intentional. Yet, it is nevertheless true that it

transpired with the direct acquiescence of civilian war planners who had been quick to trumpet their strategic genius and operational efficiency in the days and weeks of 'shock and awe' prior to the mass looting of April 2003. For this reasons, US government liability for losses sustained by Iraqi cultural facilities in the wake of the 2003 invasion remains an issue open for future pursuit.[11]

Several hours of looting can be considered a failure of policy, but several days of looting can only be seen as a policy of failure. In addition, several facilities continued to suffer damage long after the first week of occupation. All but a handful have received absolutely nothing in the form of American assistance. Most of the initial traumas suffered by these collections began two or more days after the 8 April 2003 entry of US troops into Baghdad and continued for several days. International media attention appears to have forced a policy change on or around 14 April 2003.[12] Several of the more important facilities were concentrated in two small areas which had a sufficient US troop presence (2-3 tank crews) in the area to prevent the events described below. However, when Iraqi staff members asked US soldiers to protect the facilities in question, the invariable response was either that "we are soldiers not policemen," or that "our orders do not extend to protecting this facility."[13] It later emerged that such responses were offered only after checking with superiors up the chain of command.[14]

Why might US officials allow such destruction to visit Iraq's national patrimony? When considered against extensive the background of efforts to protect equivalent facilities of cultural patrimony in Europe during World War II, coupled with the general

lack of equivalent efforts in Asian arenas during that same conflict, it seems reasonable to suggest that a lack of common cultural sympathy was at play.[15] American sympathy toward Iraqi cultural losses at times seemed to resemble that of an individual who sympathizes with his neighbors who have lost their photographs and heirlooms in a fire. However, he feels no sense of personal loss at his neighbor's losses and is not adverse to retaining his neighbor's property title, seized after the fire.

At the time, political leaders of the invading powers promised to provide a fresh start for Iraqi society. Prior to the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in March 2003, several Bush administration officials promised a complete remaking of Iraqi society in the interests of spreading democracy, freedoms, liberty, and a 'new Middle East.' Not surprisingly, the creation of something new necessarily entails the destruction of what preceded it. The more ambitious the creation, the more extreme the destruction. Certain American officials hoped that such looting would clean the slate and smooth the way for their reconstruction of Iraqi society in an image more amenable to their tastes. John Agresto, in charge of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in 2003-2004, initially believed that the looting of Iraq's universities was a positive act in that it would allow such institutions to begin again with a clean slate, with the newest equipment as well as a brand new curriculum.[16]

In an effort to 'blame the victim,' apologists for US occupation policy have whenever possible assigned blame for the cultural destruction to Iraqi actors. While most of the looting of government facilities appears to have been carried out by indigent locals,

attacks on several cultural sites were carried out by organized provocateurs whose identity remains a mystery years after the event. Some commentators have accused certain Iraqi staff members of being Ba'athist operatives who looted their own facilities.[17] Outside of credible claims concerning such insider vandalism at the National Library and Archives, no collection appears to have been intentionally damaged by staff. Indeed, most staff members continued to work in trying circumstances, initially without pay or assurance of future job security.[18]

Baghdad Archives and Manuscript Collections

While international attention has focused primarily on the immense destruction done to the country's pre-Islamic archaeological assets, domestic Iraqi and regional attention has focused equally on the losses suffered by the country's Islamic and modern cultural patrimony, including certain key manuscript collections, archives, art museums, monuments, and artifact collections.[19] Although several reports have addressed the state of some or all of these collections, much of the information concerning these collections remains inconclusive due to a continuing lack of transparency in the Iraqi domestic sphere. There, reports are therefore open to correction and clarification in the future.[20] To be fully certain of the post-invasion status of these collections, a national survey remains necessary. Until such time, the account that follows provides a summary of what is now known of the current conditions of several key facilities and collections.

The *Iraqi National Library and Archives* (INLA), the country's primary research facility and publication deposit library, featured particularly strong collections of Arabic

periodicals, government documents dating back to Ottoman rule, and over a million books. Located directly across from the Ministry of Defense, it was burned and looted on two occasions, 10 April and 12-13 April 2003.[21] The fires at the National Library were set professionally, with accelerants. Although the burn damage seemed complete from outside the building, it later emerged that the main reading room and lobby suffered most of the damage. An iron door leading to the stacks had been sealed.[22] According to Saad Eskander, the INLA Director-General since December 2003, three days prior to the invasion staff members were instructed to destroy all archival material related to Ba'athist rule. In the event, Eskander stated that the burning and looting was carried out by a mix of poor people looking for quick profit and regime loyalists intent on destroying evidence of atrocities. Altogether, an estimated 25% of the library's book holdings were destroyed. The newspaper and periodical collection, said to be one of the largest in the Arab world, appears to have emerged largely without damage.[23]

As frustrating as the lack of protection for the INLA in April 2003 has been the overall lack of assistance of the international community to help rebuild and reconstitute the facility. Italian and Czech institutions have been the notable exceptions. Over five years have passed since the initial destruction, and the US government has to date provided a modest set of vacuum cleaners and funded staff training initiatives through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Harvard University's Committee on Iraqi Libraries found itself unable to provide advanced preservation training to INLA staff in the US when these Iraqi librarians were refused visas. The committee was able, however, to provide preservation workshops to Iraqi staff in Sulaymania and Amman.[24]

While such absence of assistance and presence of impediments can be blamed on poor coordination and a lack of domestic attention, from an Iraqi perspective it appears to be at least a case of misplaced priorities and at most an intentional policy of passive neglect.

Perhaps the most valuable collection held by the INLA included the *Ottoman / Hashemite Archives*, which boasted government documents dating from the Hashemite (pre-1958) and Ottoman (pre-1917) eras. Prior to the invasion, this collection was removed from INLA and placed in the basement of the General Board of Tourism. Although this collection escaped the initial round of burning and looting in August 2003, the basement was flooded in unknown circumstances. In October 2003, the cache was discovered and transferred to the warehouse of an Iraqi businessman associated with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Following a visit by a US Library of Congress delegation, the documents were transferred in December 2003 to cool storage in the former Iraqi Officer's Club complex. Since these documents were stored for a period in cool rather than frozen storage – with inconsistent electricity at the cooling facility – they continued to deteriorate, albeit at a slower rate than when first discovered in the flooded basement in 2003. Saad Eskander has estimated that 60% of these Ottoman and Hashemite documents have been irretrievably lost. This collection, which represents the highest priority for textual preservation in all of Iraq, has in recent years been undergoing steady preservation efforts by the reconstituted INLA staff.

Established in 1920, the *Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs Central Library* [Awqaf Library] is the oldest public manuscript collection in Iraq. A modern two

story facility located near the Ministry of Health, the library held *waqfiyya* religious endowment documents and approximately 7,000 manuscripts, mostly concentrated in religious fields. The library also held over 45,000 printed books, including some 6,000 rare Ottoman Turkish published works. The facility was completely destroyed by fire on 13 or 14 April 2003, more than four days after looting had started elsewhere in the city. According to staff members, the library suffered a well-organized and intentional looting and burning by foreign provocateurs.[25] These Arabic-speaking teams carted away some 22 trunks of manuscripts and used accelerants to burn the entire facility within fifteen minutes. They filmed their actions the entire time. Ten trunks were burned in the fire, destroying approximately 600-700 manuscripts. Most of the burned and stolen manuscripts came from three prominent family collections temporarily stored at the Awqaf Library for their protection.[26] Since staff members had taken steps to protect the collection, approximately 5,250 out of the facility's total 7,000 manuscripts were moved to an off site storage space prior to the burning and looting. These manuscripts were then placed under armed protection in what remains an undisclosed location. As this location remains unknown to the general public five years after these events, only time will tell whether these manuscripts will one day be returned to a reconstituted Awqaf Library. There has never been an official investigation of this case of organized destruction. To date, this facility has received no meaningful international assistance.[27] Any future reconstitution of this collection and reconstruction of this facility will inherently be complicated by the post-2003 splitting up of the Ministry of Endowments into three directorates, one each serving Shi'a Muslims, Sunni Muslims, and all religious minorities including Christians.

The *Iraqi House of Manuscripts* [Dar al-Makhtutat al-'Iraqiyya], with approximately 47,000 manuscripts, was by far the largest such collection in Iraq.[28] Prior to the invasion, all manuscripts were moved to a bomb shelter, while microfilms and were moved to two other undisclosed locations. As far as is known, this bomb shelter housed nearly 800 steel trunks, containing nearly 50,000 manuscripts and several thousand rare books.[29] Considering that the bomb shelter where the manuscripts were stored was not included on the US military's 'no target' list, it is indeed fortunate that it was never bombed. On three occasions in April 2003 looters tried and failed to force the doors and loot the shelter, but on each occasion locals reportedly chased the looters away and burned their vehicles. In late April 2003 US forces attempted to remove trunks and transport them to the National Museum, which was by then under US protection. Due to growing mistrust of American intentions following the looting earlier that month, neighborhood locals protested and successfully prevented this attempted move.

As the Iraqi House of Manuscripts facility is based in a set of houses appropriated by the state in 1983. It is unclear whether the collection will ultimately be returned to that same location. Since 2003 at least three different directors have been appointed to manage the collection, which remained until recently locked away in the bomb shelter. Although the shelter was said to be climate-controlled, it is unclear whether long-term storage in this location might have damaged the collection. The former director, Osama Naqshbandi, has claimed in recent years that some manuscripts were removed by US forces in 2003. Since this statement somewhat contradicts what he said in May 2003,

some observers worry that the collection may have been disturbed over the years. The collection has reportedly been recently moved to another site, and rumors have surfaced that the Kashif al-Ghita Foundation has been exerting pressure to be allowed access to the collection in order to carry out microfilming. There is concern that some of the collection may have been sold off in the past five years, and that Kashif al-Ghita's desire for access may not be entirely innocent.

The *Iraqi Academy of Sciences* is a fully independent research facility dating back to the Hashemite period. Considered an 'Iraqi Académie Française,' the Academy held collections of manuscripts, periodicals, foreign language books, and unpublished theses.[30] According to staff members, the pillage started after a US tank crew crashed through the facility's front gate, rolled over and crushed the facility's main sign, removed the Iraqi flag flying at the entrance, and left. Following that cue, neighborhood indigents swarmed over the facility and stripped it of all computers, air conditioners, electrical fixtures, furniture, and vehicles. The fact that the Academy was not burned and that many books were not looted suggests that its looting was not as organized as was the case with some other facilities. Although several hundred manuscripts had been transferred in recent years to the Iraqi House of Manuscripts, the Academy still held over 2,000 manuscripts and 58,000 published works in April 2003.[31] Over half of the Academy's collection of 58,000 published works was looted, and all manuscripts left on site were taken during the looting. Since a published catalogue of the Academy's manuscript collection was incomplete, and all on site catalogues were lost with the manuscripts, it is not entirely

known what has been lost.[32] Since 2003 the Academy has returned to operation, but it is still unknown at this time how much of the collection has been reconstituted.

The *House of Wisdom* [Bayt al-Hikma], a semi-private center supporting research in the arts and humanities, was completely burned and looted. Located right next to the Ministry of Defense, on the site of a 13th century madrasa complex and the first Iraqi parliament, it housed a lecture auditorium, music hall, printing press, computer lab, western publications library, and a library of Middle Eastern publications. The main building complex was extensively looted on 11-12 April 2003 and burned.[33] Staff who witnessed the looting were convinced that the looters were instigated by unknown provocateurs. As the House of Wisdom was not officially authorized to collect manuscripts, its collection only held about 100 manuscripts. Although a small collection, some of these manuscripts were of high value. The entire collection was lost.[34] Outside of limited US funding targeted for repurchasing their own holdings from the local book market in 2003, House of Wisdom has received no significant international assistance. The current status of certain other collections within Baghdad remains largely unknown.[35]

The *Iraqi Jewish Archives* was found partially flooded in a former intelligence bureau basement in May 2003. Promptly frozen and removed by CPA officials for restoration efforts by the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the cache has remained in the US since its removal. According to a 2003 NARA report, the collection included "16th-20th century Jewish rare books, correspondence and document

files, pamphlets, modern books, audio tape and parchment scrolls."[36] The NARA report estimated that $US 1.5 - 3 million would be required to fully rescue and preserve the collection. However, in May 2005 National Public Radio reported that documentation restoration efforts were stalled due to shortage of funds.[37] Some resentment has been expressed by Iraqi observers about the immense effort undertaken by occupation officials in 2003 to salvage this cache when considered against the relative lack of urgency demonstrated for the Ottoman / Hashemite Archives referred to above. At the same time, palpable tension has arisen concerning the eventual disposition of the collection. The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center has expressed interest in displaying recovered parts of the collection in its museum outside of Tel Aviv following the completion of NARA preservation efforts.[38] Former Iraqi National Museum Director Donny George has stated that CPA officials had signed a protocol allowing for a two year loan of the materials to the US for preservation, after which they were meant to be returned to Iraq. NARA officials and the Library of Congress have not yet stated their intentions concerning the return of these materials to Iraq or elsewhere. Although this cache should be considered of Iraqi collective provenance, copies should be made of the entire collection for preservation backup and research retrieval.

In 2007 it emerged that American soldiers in Mosul had taken a roughly 400 year old *Torah* out of an abandoned building and arranged for the manuscript's smuggling out of the country. A book dealer then took the Torah and sold it to a Reform Jewish congregation in suburban Maryland. Media reports stated that the Torah was 'rescued,' even though it had survived for centuries in Mosul only to be whisked from its place of

refuge and turned over to an individual who broke the manuscript into sixty pieces in order to complete the act of smuggling.[39]

As with the Mosul Torah, in certain ways US officials participated in the reordering of Iraqi informational assets after the invasion. Contrasting the *laissez-faire* attitude displayed toward the looting of manuscript collections was the active military takeover of certain contemporary Iraqi government document collections. Control over these collections would be highly beneficial for US interests. For example, in the course of the post-invasion search for Weapons of Mass Destruction, Pentagon officials centralized millions of pages of captured *Iraqi government documents* in a single collection currently held in Qatar. This collection has not yet been completely catalogued, although most of it appears to have been digitized, with the digital images held at the National Defense University. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has pledged that the original documents will ultimately be returned to Iraq once conditions allow and that the collection will be open for researchers once correct monitoring and usage systems have been established. There is a great deal of sensitivity over this collection and those like it because individuals named in documents of the former Iraqi government could be blackmailed. As the situation somewhat parallels that of the Stasi Archives of East Germany, similar precautions and protections are likely to be instituted before research access will be allowed.

Kanan Makiya removed the *Ba'ath Party Archives* from the Iraqi Ba'ath Party Headquarters in 2003, stored them at his family home within the Green Zone for some

years, and at some point transported the collection to California with US government logistical assistance. Since that time, Makiya's Iraq Memory Foundation (IMF) has claimed stewardship over the cache, and has turned the collection over to Stanford University's Hoover Institute. INLA Director-General Saad Eskander has forcefully contested the IMF's rights to dispose of the cache. The matter remains under dispute.[40]

Provincial Manuscript Collections

Prior to 2003 there were several provincial collections in Iraq, with most governorate seats boasting at least one modest manuscript library.[41] There were especially notable collections in Basra,[42] Mosul,[43] Najaf,[44] and Karbala.[45] The post-2003 state of these collections remains almost completely unknown in the public realm. This lack of public information encourages opaqueness in the management of such collections and the potential sale of manuscripts. It is therefore imperative that a national survey of these collections be made as soon as security conditions allow.

One of the more tragic, if somewhat tragi-comic, stories of the damages sustained in the course of the 2003 invasion concerns the events which affected the *Mosul Center for Turkish Studies* and the *Basra Center for Gulf Studies*.[46] Prior to the invasion, Mosul's collection of Ottoman documents and manuscripts was reportedly sent to Basra's Center for Gulf Studies and Basra's collection of 'Iranian documents' was sent to Mosul. Apparently the Iraqi government had decided on a provincial preservation strategy whereby if Turkish forces should enter from the north, they would only find Persian documents, and if Iranian forces should enter Basra, they would only find Ottoman

documents. Unfortunately, the Center for Gulf Studies was completely burned in the war, and Mosul's entire collection of Ottoman documents was lost. The 'Iranian documents' held in Mosul are said to be fine. An Iraqi academic, although not in a position to know all the collection's details, reported that to the best of his knowledge the Ottoman collection held somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 items, a mixture of manuscripts and documents. Mosul's former Center for Turkish Studies was renamed the *Center for Regional Studies* in 2004.

Relative Human Valuation and the Collapse of Collective Memory

Why is it that those who lose everything in a fire, flood, or some other natural disaster lament the loss of their family photographs and heirlooms more than their car, stereo, or appliances? Even though such elements of transportation, entertainment, and consumerist ease of living ensure the minimum requirements necessary for a 'bourgeois' lifestyle, they do so devoid of any material individuality. What sets us apart from others are antiques, photographs, records, heirlooms, and other artifacts, especially those that document our familial or individual pasts. By connecting us to our past, the existence of such items also promises to preserve the connection into a remembered future. Without such artifacts, there is no memory.

Are mass societies so different than the abstracted individuals and families presented here? Considering the 2003 destruction of several prominent cultural treasures of the Iraqi national patrimony, it would seem not. In Iraq's case, during a period of great

chaotic flux, one country under occupation lost a great deal of its connection to its past while certain occupying powers profited from that loss in a variety of ways.

While all humans are created equal, certain types of individuals are treated more equally than others. Some 5.4 million individuals have died from war-related causes in Congo in the past ten years,[47] yet have attracted far less attention worldwide than the several hundred thousand who have died from conflict in Iraq since 2003, the 1,191 Lebanese who died from violence in the summer of 2006,[48] or the hundreds of Palestinians and dozens of Israelis who have died from domestic attacks since sectarian conflict broke out in 2001. How does one account for this hierarchy of human valuation, whereby certain lives and deaths are valued by the international community far more than others? One can attribute such valuation to corporate pressures on media presentation (whereby human valuation follows their relevance as sources of advertising revenue), tribal and/or national solidarity (whereby all groups only value members of their own group), financial holdings (whereby only the wealthy are valued), racism, relative economic or political power, and many other factors. In addition to each of these factors, one might add relative cultural valuation, measured by the amount of material records of the past held by a society. None of these factors are constant, with all of them capable of adjusting quite quickly in times of conflict.

Why is it that societies boasting few material records of the past tend to be valued less than those in possession of them, and why is there such a desire for individuals and societies to collect artifacts demonstrating past value? The absence of such artifacts

signify a lack of connection to the past, which in turn signifies cultural poverty to those with strong roots somewhere, local or otherwise. In times of peace, families anchor their social value in such artifacts. Very little can be done to change quickly what is normally a slowly evolving collection of such connections to the past. In times of war, however, individuals and societies can quickly gain or lose such stature in a situation of great flux.

One of the major effects of the 'mnemocide' suffered in Iraq is to reduce the relative human valuation of the individuals who are the bearers of that cultural memory. One example of this phenomenon is the lack of respect shown by US soldiers at Iraq's Unknown Soldier Monument in Baghdad. While quartered in the Iraqi equivalent to Washington's Vietnam Memorial in the summer of 2003, soldiers closed the facility to the general public, parked armored personnel carriers in the marble courtyard, laid cots throughout the hall of martyrs, and posted exercise notices over the names of deceased Iraqi soldiers who fell fighting in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War.[49] Soldiers normally tend not to wish the degradation of other soldiers' memories. However, in this case the general cultural alienation and lack of relative human valuation was sufficient to trump such norms of respect.

Certain neo-conservative ideologues in 2003 hoped that new texts, debates, and ideas would come to dominate Iraq's collective memory once the past had been silenced like the hypothetically silenced library that introduces this chapter. Nada Shabout has suggested that CPA Head Paul Bremer and others engaged in a "systematic campaign to erase Iraq's collective memory," by facilitating the destruction of Iraq's modern art

museum, political monuments, and other artifacts of recent Iraqi creativity.[50] Unfortunately, the push to remake Iraq has proven quite destructive of Iraq's collective memory, and by extension, its 'social capital,' defined as "a measure of how closely people in the community are interconnected." Although the process of social capital destruction in Iraq had arguably been building for several decades, the looting of April 2003 pushed Iraqi society over a psychological precipice evidenced by the complete breakdown of collective memory.[51] This social capital, once shattered, has proven exceedingly difficult to reconstruct.[52]

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[2] Heinrich Heine, 19th century German poet, in his 1821 play *Almansor*, cited in Nikola von Merveldt, "Books Cannot Be Killed by Fire: The German Freedom Library and the American Library of Nazi-Banned Books as Agents of Cultural Memory," *Library Trends* 55:3 (2007), pp. 524, 532.

[3] Eliza Woodford, "Symposium: The Destruction of Civilization and the Obligations of War," *The University Record Online*, The University of Michigan, 29 September 2003, http://www.ur.umich.edu/0304/Sept29_03/10.shtml, Accessed December 2008.

[4] Laura Wilkinson, "There is more to be mourned than Iraq's ancient treasures," *The Daily Star,* 18 April 2008, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=4&article_id=91145#, Accessed December 2008.

[5] For an example, see Nora Bensahel et. al., *After Saddam: Prewar Planning and the Occupation of Iraq*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2008: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG642.pdf, Accessed December 2008.

[6] Prof. McGuire Gibson of the University of Chicago made several appeals to US officials for Iraqi cultural protection in the weeks prior to the invasion. Bill Glauber, "Casualty Count Could Include Iraq Antiquities," *Chicago Tribune*, 10 March 2003, http://www.museum-security.org/03/032.html, Accessed December 2008. For a general discussion of US military policy concerning Iraqi cultural assets during the 2003 invasion, see Chalmers Johnson, "The Smash of Civilizations," 2005, http://www.tomdispatch.com/index.mhtml?pid=4710 and Zainab Bahrani, "Looting and Conquest," *The Nation*, 14 May 2003, http://www.thenation.com/doc/20030526/bahrani websites accessed in December 2008.

[7] Such briefings included a January 2003 meeting held at the Pentagon, attended by high ranking representatives from the Departments of Defense and State, the American Council for Cultural Policy (ACCP), the Association of Art Museum Directors, and the American Association for Research in Baghdad. In 2005, allegations – since denied – arose that representatives of the ACCP had not acted in

good faith at such meetings, using them to gain knowledge useful for illicit trade in cultural property, https://listhost.uchicago.edu/pipermail/iraqcrisis/2005-November/001396.html, accessed December 2008.
[8] These sites included the Ministry of Oil, the Saddam [Baghdad] International Airport, the Palestine Meridian and Ishtar Sheraton Hotels, the Republican Palace, and several other locations that were later included in the 'Green Zone' of international governance.
[9] Matthew Bogdanos, "Thieves of Baghdad," *in* Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly (eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraqi*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008, pp. 109-117.
[10] For a discussion of the 'economy of risk' during these hostilities, see Thomas W. Smith, "Protecting Civilians…or Soldiers? Humanitarian Law and the Economy of Risk in Iraq," *International Studies Perspectives* 9 (2008), pp. 144-164.
[11] For an excellent reference work and orientation to the relevant legal issues, see Patty Gerstenblith, "From Bamyan to Baghdad: Warfare and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, 37:2 (2006), 245-351. Prof. Gerstenblith argues that international law concerning cultural patrimony was not broken in the course of the 2003 invasion, and that international law should be revised in order to reflect a series of developments first witnessed in conflicts which occurred after the 1954 Hague convention.
[12] From 25 to 31 May 2003, I visited Baghdad and interviewed a number of officials responsible for various manuscript collections, libraries, and academic research facilities. For the original situation report based on that visit, posted on the Iraq Crisis list on 8 June 2003, see Nabil Al-Tikriti, "Iraq Manuscript Collections, Archives, and Libraries Situation Report," http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/docs/nat.html, accessed December 2008.
[13] Iraqi directors first approached US field commanders when looting broke out on 10 April. Despite reassurances to the contrary, no protection was extended until 14 April, after the looting had become an international scandal. Al-Tikriti, 2003. For an eyewitness account of the Iraqi National Museum looting, see Donny George, "The Looting of the Iraq National Museum," *in* Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly (eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraqi*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008, pp. 97-107.
[14] According to Zainab Bahrani, "by 2007, Barbara Bodine, the U.S. ambassador at the time, revealed to Charles Ferguson in his documentary film *No End in Sight* that direct orders had come from Washington stating no one was to interfere with the looting." *Guardian*, 9 April 2008, http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/zainab_bahrani/2008/04/plundering_iraq.html, accessed December 2008.
[15] For a discussion of US cultural protection policy during World War II, see Kathy Peiss, "Cultural Policy in a Time of War: The American Response to Endangered Books in World War II," *Library Trends* 55:3 (2007), pp. 370-386.
[16] Rajiv Chandrasekharan, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 187. John Agresto later revised his judgment of the looting's legacy on Iraqi higher education.
[17] On 8 June 2003, a British journalist named Dan Cruickshank – who had visited Iraq in late April 2003 – first reported this claim vis-à-vis Iraqi National Museum staff on an ITV documentary entitled "Raiders of the Lost Art." The allegation has since been repeated in some form or another by several subsequent commentators.
[18] In my own interviews and site visits, I encountered nothing to suggest that archival staff acted improperly vis-à-vis their respective collections. It seems self-evident that efforts of Iraqi staff to preserve their cultural heritage in the midst of invasion, social chaos, and occupation should be recognized and rewarded by the international community – not attacked by interested external parties.
[19] The focus here is on collections with unique holdings. Academically-affiliated research collections, which also suffered a great deal of loss, should in time and with sufficient support be able to duplicate and expand their pre-invasion holdings.
[20] The most significant reports to date concerning the post-invasion state of Iraq's manuscript collections, archives, and libraries include those by the following: Nabil Al-Tikriti (2003), Jean-Marie Arnoult (2003), Ian Johnson (2005), Edouard Méténier (2003), Zayn al-Naqshbandi (2004), Jeff Spurr (2005), Keith Watenpaugh et. al. (2003), and Library of Congress (2003). For links to each of these reports, see the Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries (MELA) website: http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.html.

[21] For further detail, see Ian M. Johnson, "The Impact on Libraries and Archives in Iraq of War and Looting in 2003 – a Preliminary Assessment of the Damage and Subsequent Reconstruction Efforts," *International Information and Library Review*, November 2005; Jeff Spurr, "Indispensable yet Vulnerable: The Library in Dangerous Times. A Report on the Status of Iraqi Academic Libraries and a Survey of Efforts to Assist Them, with Historical Introduction," *Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries*, August 2005.

[22] Immediately following the initial round of destruction, staff and volunteers associated with a cleric named 'Abd al-Mun'im welded the door shut and began to remove as many books as they could transport to the cleric's al-Haqq Mosque in Sadr (formerly Saddam) City. The percentage of books removed was initially said to number roughly 40% of total holdings, but Saad Eskander later stated that the amount was closer to 5% of the total, and that many of the books suffered in the move and the storage conditions at the mosque. For more details, see Keith Watenpaugh, Edouard Méténier, Jens Hanssen, and Hala Fattah, "Opening the Doors: Intellectual Life and Academic Conditions in Post-War Baghdad, a Report of the Iraq Observatory," July 2003; and Saad Eskander conference presentation, posted by Ian Stringer, *Iraq Crisis List*, 9 November 2004.

[23] Saad Eskander conference presentation, 2004.

[24] For further details concerning international assistance to INLA since 2003, see Jeff Spurr, "Iraqi Libraries and Archives in Peril: Survival in a Time of Invasion, Chaos, and Civil Conflict, a Report 2007," http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/update_2007.htm.

[25] Although the staff was convinced – as were most Iraqis – that Kuwaitis were behind this looting and burning, they admitted that they had no evidence to prove the assertion. Al-Tikriti, 2003.

[26] The three family collections included the Kamal al-Din al-Ta'i collection (250 MSS), Salih Salim Suhrawardi collection (350 MSS), and the Hasan al-Sadr collection (589 MSS). Al-Tikriti, 2003.

[27] The library's collection of published books appears to have been a total loss. In addition to the 6,000 Ottoman Turkish books, the flames also consumed three large collections of medical books boasting close to 4,000 volumes and 5,300 books concerning Ja'fari [Shi'i] jurisprudence. For more details concerning the Awqaf Library, see Al-Tikriti, 2003; Zayn al-Naqshbandi, "Report on the Central Awqaf Library," *Iraq Crisis List*, 28 June 2004, http://oi.chicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/zan.html.

[28] This facility was formerly known as the "Saddam House of Manuscripts" [Dar Saddam lil-Makhtutat]. As a result of damages sustained in provincial collections during the 1991 uprising, and in accordance with longstanding Ministry of Culture efforts to centralize all holdings, several manuscript collections were absorbed into this main collection in the 1990s. Al-Tikriti, 2003.

[29] These trunks reportedly included ca. 500 trunks of Iraqi House of Manuscripts manuscripts, c. 200 trunks from other collections, and 83 trunks of rare published books. Some 3,000 manuscripts (MSS) from the following collections were housed in the shelter along with the main collection: Iraqi Academy of Sciences (667 MSS), Mosul Central Library (301 MSS), University of Mosul Library (122 MSS), University of Tikrit Library (40 MSS), Kirkuk Central Library (40 MSS), University of Mustansiriyya Library, and the University of Basra Library. Al-Tikriti, 2003.

[30] It also boasted an internet computer lab, printing press, lecture rooms, and offices for affiliated researchers. For more information, see Al-Tikriti, 2003; Watenpaugh et al, 2003.

[31] These manuscripts included 93 unpublished works by the Iraqi historian 'Abbas al-'Azawi and a Selçuk-era work by the medieval Sufi figure, 'Umar al-Suhrawardi. Roughly half of the al-'Azawi collection had been returned by May 2003.

[32] A hand-written catalogue of Academy manuscript holdings disappeared along with all of the manuscripts. In addition, although the entire collection had been copied, the copies were looted along with the originals.

[33] For further information, see Al-Tikriti, 2003; Watenpaugh et al, 2003.

[34] The manuscripts included a 9th century Qur'an, a 12th century copy of *Maqamat al-Hariri*, an Ibn Sina philosophy text, and a 19th century al-'Alusi manuscript concerning Baghdad. There were no microfilms or microfiche taken of this collection. The facility also held several research collections relevant to Iraqi history, including several thousand copies of Ottoman, British, French, and US documents. As many of the Ottoman originals were held by INLA, it is possible that their information is now lost.

[35] Such collections include the Qadiriyya Mosque (1,833 MSS), the Deir al-Aba al-Krimliyin collection (120 MSS), and the al-Hidaya Library (500 MSS).

[36] "The Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Report," 2 October 2003, posted in January 2004,

http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/IraqiJewishArchiveReport.htm.
[37] http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.phpstoryId=4645146.
[38] Judy Lash Balint, "Back to Babylon," *Jerusalem Post*, 12 August 2005, http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/jpost/index.html?ts=1137441164.
[39] The Mosul Torah set off a heated discussion on the Iraq Crisis List in June 2008. One example includes the following posting: https://listhost.uchicago.edu/pipermail/iraqcrisis/2008-June/002037.html
[40] The saga of this archives has also attracted a great deal of attention: http://chronicle.com/free/2008/01/1335n.htm, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/01/books/01hoov.html?pagewanted=print.
[41] Such collections included the al-Mufti (120 MSS) and Salah al-Din University (402 MSS) libraries in Arbil, the al-Awqaf (6,000 MSS) and al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Khal (350 MSS) libraries in Sulaymaniya, the Al-Jamal al-Din library (180 MSS) in Suq al-Shuyukh, and an unknown cleric's private collection (300 MSS) in Diwaniyya. Al-Tikriti, 2003.
[42] Such collections included the Basra Center for Gulf Studies and the Bash A'yan al-'Abbasiyya Collection (1200 MSS).
[43] Such collections included the Mosul Center for Turkish Studies, the Ninewa Governorate Artifacts Inspectorate Library (Maktabat Mufatashiyya Athar Ninawah), the Ninawah Governorate Awqaf Library, Deir Mar Behnam Collection, Deir Mar Matti Collection, Karakosh Library Collection, al-Jalili Madrasa Collection (400 MSS), and the Dr. Mahmud al-Jalili Collection (60 MSS). The two Christian collections were moved to Baghdad prior to the invasion, and their status is unknown, as with most of the other collections.
[44] Such collections included the Amir al-Mu'minin (3,000 MSS), al-Hakim (1,600 MSS), and Kashif al-Ghita libraries (3,000 MSS).
[45] The most prominent collection is the Hussein Mosque's Dar al-Makhtutat (1,200 MSS).
[46] The information for these two facilities was reported to me in a 2004 conference by an Iraqi academic who may not wish to be named publicly. This same informant reported that all Dohuk, Erbil, and Sulaymania collections were in fine condition as of June 2004.
[47] http://www.theirc.org/news/irc-study-shows-congos0122.html.
[48] Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lebanon Pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution, S-2/1, p. 26: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/specialsession/A.HRC.3.2.pdf.
[49] For photographs, see Sinan Antoon, "Monumental Disrespect," *Middle East Report* 228 (2003).
[50] Nada Shabout, "There is more to be mourned than Iraq's ancient treasures," *Daily Star*, 18 April, 2008, accessed at: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=10&categ_id=4&article_id=91145#.
[51] For a textured discussion of this phenomenon in Iraq, see Bernadette Buckley, "Mohamed is Absent. I am Performing: Contemporary Iraqi Art and the Destruction of Heritage," *in* Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly (eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraqi*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008, pp. 283-306.
[52] Shankar Vedantam, "One Thing We Can't Build Alone in Iraq," *Washington Post*, 29 October 2007, p. A03: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/28/AR2007102801477.html. Vedantam applied the work of sociologist Peter Bearman and political scientist Anirudh Krishna to the case of Iraq, arguing that social capital cannot be inculcated by externally driven reconstruction efforts alone.