

Cultural Heritage and International Law

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Robert Uerpmann-Witzack
Editors

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Objects, Means and Ends of International
Protection



 Springer

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Preface

Cultural heritage is part of the identities of individuals, groups, and communities and not indifferent to states and international organizations. It is also the object of numerous norms and institutions in contemporary public international law.

In armed conflicts, cultural heritage may be damaged inadvertently or even deliberately with a view to destroying cultural identities.

In times of peace, cultural heritage becomes an object of economic exchange in a globalized world. Works of famous painters attain exorbitant prices at international art auctions, and inscribing a site or a local custom on a cultural heritage list is likely to promote tourism. Even in armed conflicts, cultural heritage sites are spoiled in order to sell the objects on the international art and antiques market.

Global exchanges also put intangible cultural heritage under pressure, and local customs or regional and minority languages may disappear.

In the face of such threats, fostering the perceived cultural identity of a community corresponds to a desire for stability and security. However, culture, cultural heritage, and cultural identity are not static concepts. It is in their nature to evolve over time, since encounters between different cultures generate new forms of cultural expressions in addition to endogenous changes. Therefore, the diverse cultural heritage of the world must not be petrified but safeguarded as a unique resource for human progress.

Against this background, the present volume explores current challenges and the responses of international cultural heritage law.

This book has been realized within the long-standing cooperation of the German and the French Societies of International Law. Every 2 years, both Societies organize joint conferences.

Since 2006, the biannual joint conferences have been preceded by young scholars' workshops, which have been generously funded by the German-French University (Deutsch-Französische Hochschule/Université franco-allemande). In November 2016, members of both Societies met in Regensburg for a session on "Religion and International Law." The Regensburg workshop, open to junior researchers, which took place on November 2–3, 2016, was organized by the

University of Regensburg with the support of the Sorbonne Law School (IREDIÉS). It was dedicated to “Cultural Challenges Facing International Law,” with a clear focus on cultural heritage law. Its results are published here, in English and French for the sake of a better diffusion.

The editors owe a debt of gratitude to all those who have assiduously helped to realize this volume: the young authors and members of University staff, especially Lena Springer and Benjamin Manthey in Regensburg, Catherine Botoko and Inès El Hayek at the Sorbonne Law School (University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne – IREDIÉS).

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