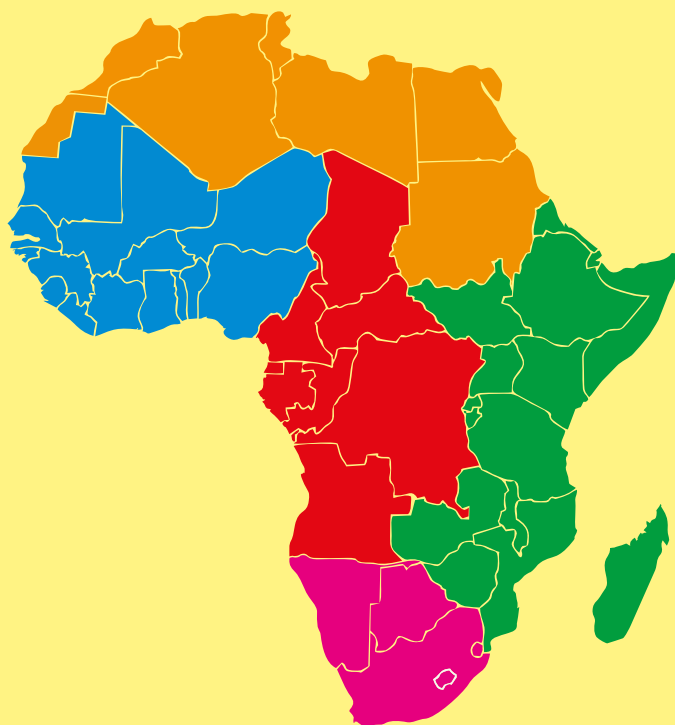


# **Destruction of Cultural Heritage and Armed Conflicts**

Focus on Africa

**Laura M. Herța**  
(Editor)



**Presa Universitară Clujeană**

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and Armed Conflicts**  
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*Publicarea acestui volum a fost finanțată  
prin Fondul de Dezvoltare UBB 2024.*

*The publication of this volume was supported  
by the 2024 Development Fund of the UBB.*

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**PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ**  
**2024**

*Referenți științifici:*

**Prof. univ. dr. Sergiu Mișcoiu**

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ISBN 978-606-37-2457-2

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<http://www.editura.ubbcluj.ro/>  
<https://biblioteca.ubbcluj.ro/>

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## **Armed Conflicts and Destruction of Cultural Heritage**

### *Introductory Notes*

A great deal of literature focused on the transformation of warfare, the changing nature of belligerence, as spurred by globalization and by the ending of the Cold War bipolar order. Scholars<sup>1</sup> theorized and analysed the so-called “new wars” and concentrated on the characteristics of intra-state armed violence occurring at the beginning of the post-Cold War era. Others emphasized the prevalence of civil wars.<sup>2</sup> Many such approaches identified a changing strategy in internal armed conflicts, by focusing on ethnic cleansing, on systematic attacks carried out against unarmed civilians, on forced recruitment of children, on sexual violence carried out against women, on forced displacement of populations, on deliberate attacks on cemeteries, cultural heritage, historic buildings, archives, places of worship, and on historical sites, in general. Therefore, the main arguments presented in this book revolve around a changing dynamic and strategy in recent and contemporary armed conflicts, which are internal (not international) and which feature attacks on civilians, on communities, on the links of ethnic,

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001; Mary Kaldor; Basker Vashee (eds. on behalf of UNU World Institute for Development Economic Research), *Restructuring the Global Military Sector, Volume I: New Wars*, London, Washington: Pinter, 2001; Mary Kaldor, “In Defence of New Wars”, *Stability*, 2(1): 4, 2013, pp. 1-16; Herfried Muenkler, *New Wars*, Blackwell Publishers, 2004; Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars. The Merging of Development and Security*, London, New York: Zed Books, 2001; Dietrich Jung; Klaus Schlichte, “From Inter-State War to Warlordism: Changing Forms of Collective Violence in the International System”, in Håkan Wiberg; Christian P. Scherrer (eds.), *Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflict*, Brookfield USA: Ashgate, 1999, pp. 35-51; Bjørn Møller, “The Faces of War”, in Håkan Wiberg; Christian P. Scherrer (eds.), *Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflict*, Brookfield USA: Ashgate, 1999, pp. 15-34.

<sup>2</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, *Securing the peace: the durable settlement of civil wars*, Princeton University Press, 2009.

religious, identity groups (in general) to certain geographic areas or the social and historical developments in some territories.

In Africa, there are at least two key elements which facilitated armed conflicts (internal and asymmetric): the legacy of colonialism (and the derivative deep societal divisions, arbitrary borders, slow economic development) and inter-state rivalry (support from African governments for rebels fighting in neighbouring countries, irredentist claims etc.). This book will investigate the links between armed conflict, post-colonialism and destruction of cultural heritage in some African countries, like Algeria, Burundi, Ethiopia, Egypt, Mali, and Zimbabwe.

According to the 1954, UNESCO Convention (The Hague)<sup>3</sup>, the term “cultural property” includes:

- “Movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or of reproductions of the property defined above;
- buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property defined in sub-paragraph (a) such as museums, large libraries and depositories of archives, and refuges intended to shelter, in the event of armed conflict, the movable cultural property defined in subparagraph (a);
- centres containing a large amount of cultural property as defined in subparagraphs (a) and (b), to be known as ‘centres containing monuments’.”

Moreover, “cultural heritage may be defined as the entire corpus of material signs – either artistic or symbolic – handed on by the past to each

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<sup>3</sup> Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague Convention, adopted by UNESCO at The Hague, 14 May 1954, <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-protection-cultural-property-event-armed-conflict-regulations-execution-convention>, accessed in November 2024.

culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind.”<sup>4</sup> The importance of certain sites, historic monuments, and the intertwining social, political, historical developments between people, communities, and the monuments is also shown in the 1964 *Venice Charter*: “imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses to their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage.”<sup>5</sup> The 1975 *European Charter of the Architectural Heritage*, adopted by the Council of Europe in Amsterdam, in 1975, emphasizes as follows:

“Recognizing that the architectural heritage, an irreplaceable expression of the wealth and diversity of European culture, is shared by all people and that all the European States must show real solidarity in preserving that heritage; Considering that the future of the architectural heritage depends largely upon its integration into the context of people's lives and upon the weight given to it in regional and town planning and development schemes. [...]

The past as embodied in the architectural heritage provides the sort of environment indispensable to a balanced and complete life. In the face of a rapidly changing civilization, in which brilliant successes are accompanied by grave perils, people today have an instinctive feeling for the value of this heritage. This heritage should be passed on to future generations in its authentic state and in all its variety as an essential part of the memory of the human race. Otherwise, part of man's awareness of his own continuity will be destroyed.”<sup>6</sup>

Building on the definitions above, we can see cultural heritage as being “constructed through discourses where values are projected on to tangible

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<sup>4</sup> UNESCO has defined 'cultural heritage' in its Draft Medium Term Plan 1990-1995 (UNESCO, 25 C/4, 1989), quoted in J. Jokilehto, *Definition of Cultural Heritage*, ICCROM Working Group Heritage and Society, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964), [https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/venice\\_e.pdf](https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/venice_e.pdf), accessed in November 2024.

<sup>6</sup> European Charter of the Architectural Heritage – 1975, <https://www.icomos.org/en/resources/charters-and-texts/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/170-european-charter-of-the-architectural-heritage>, accessed in November 2024.

objects.”<sup>7</sup> Meanings are assigned to material or tangible objects or sites. The protection of items pertaining to cultural heritage is crucial since “cultural property constitutes the memory of a community and the group may become dysfunctional if it is lost.”<sup>8</sup> According to Helen Walasek, the destruction of cultural heritage as a deliberate and systematic attack on the link between peoples and the territory where they lived aims at eliminating the tangible artefacts that were both part of their everyday place-making in the present and physical proof of their presence in the past.<sup>9</sup> Tunbridge and Ashworth tackled cases of conflicted heritage as dissonant heritage, which is the kind of heritage that is contested between groups, “where different groups place contradicting meanings in the heritage.”<sup>10</sup>

This kind of heritage can ultimately (though not necessarily always) lead to violent conflict. Usually, cultural property is destroyed during war either by accident or as a result of indiscriminate attacks, namely “some fighting groups use parts of their resources to deliberately carry out attacks against cultural property.”<sup>11</sup> Destruction of cultural heritage is unintentional or intentional, in the sense that it could be a form of “specific targeting.”<sup>12</sup>

Johan Brosché, Mattias Legnér, Joakim Kreutz and Akram Ijla argue that “by combining insights from peace and conflict research with findings from heritage studies”, they are able to present a typology of motivations for attacking cultural property. The scholars identified four, not mutually exclusive, broad groups of motives: conflict goals (targeting the religious buildings if religious belief or cultural identity are among the contested issues in the conflict); Seeking military-strategic benefits; Signalling strength

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<sup>7</sup> Johan Brosché; Mattias Legnér; Joakim Kreutz; Akram Ijla, “Heritage under attack: motives for targeting cultural property during armed conflict”, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2016.1261918>, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Peter G. Stone, “A Four-tier Approach to the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict”, *Antiquity*, 2013, 87 (335), p. 168.

<sup>9</sup> Helen Walasek et al., *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*, Ashgate, 2015. See also Catherine Baker, *Book Review: Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage by Helen Walasek et al.*, London School of Economics, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> John E. Tunbridge; Gregory Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*, John Wiley, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Brosché; Legnér; Kreutz; Ijla, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Peter G. Stone, “The Challenge of Protecting Heritage in Times of Armed Conflict”, *Museum International*, 2016, 67, pp. 40–54.

and determination against the opponent; Pursuing economic gains (looting, illegal trade).<sup>13</sup>

This book brings together studies which feature some of these elements. The volume represents the scientific end results of some Master students, enrolled in one of the following programmes: *Dynamics of Cultural Landscapes Heritage Memory and Conflictualities* (DYCLAM, Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree), *International Communication*, and *Cultural Diplomacy and International Relations*. The authors have been master students in one of the three programmes during the period 2020-2023 and their chapters were initially submitted as academic papers for the exam pertaining to the discipline *Typology of International Crises*. As a holder of this course, I decided to group together some of the best papers, to closely work with the authors regarding updating and revising the texts, and then compile a series centred on the issue of armed conflict and destruction of cultural heritage or cultural property. This volume is the second book of this series and it focuses on case studies from Africa.

Our volume comprises three case studies on Mali, written by Juliana Freitas Moreira, Rezuș Ioana-Rebeca, and Ngouala Ndiangou Creshmie Gaël together with Kounga Boris, respectively, two on Algeria, submitted by Rim Menia and by Yacine Dia, one chapter on Burundi, written by Călin Elena Cătălina, one on the war in Tigray, prepared by Bianca Prichici, one on the water conflicts in the Nile River basin, submitted by Antonia Burlacu, one on British Colonialism in Southern Africa and the case of Cecil John Rhodes and Zimbabwe, written by Oana Gergely, and one on cultural heritage repatriation in post-colonial Africa, prepared by Diana Moisa.

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<sup>13</sup> Brosché; Legné; Kreutz; Ijla, *op. cit.*, p. 1 and pp. 4-8.

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Laura M. Herța: *Armed Conflicts and Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. Introductory Notes

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ISBN: 978-606-37-2457-2