

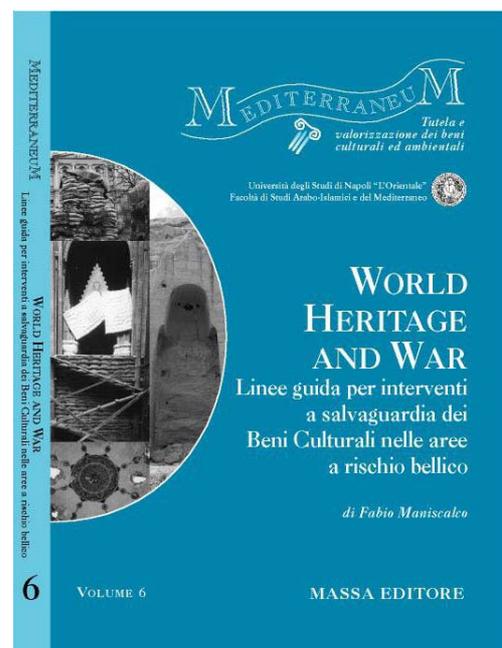


Recensioni – Book Reviews

Fabio Maniscalco, *World Heritage and War. Linee guida per interventi a salvaguardia dei Beni Culturali nelle aree a rischio bellico*, monographic series “Mediterraneum. Tutela e valorizzazione dei beni culturali ed ambientali”, vol. 6, Naples 2006. [texts in English and Italian] (208 pp., 30€, ISBN 88-89466-07-3)

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is an association of professionals working for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. It is the only global non-governmental organisation of its kind dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage. Its work is based on the principles enshrined in the Venice Charter, the 1964 International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites.

It is a well known fact that during the last fifty years armed conflicts have been the main cause for destruction and dispersion of international cultural heritage. The dissolution of international historical memory in the event of armed conflict can also be seen in connection with the lack of appropriate educational programmes all over the world, and consequently with the lack of guidelines about safeguarding and first aid for the protection of cultural property in war zones. For this reason, as President of ICOMOS I welcome Professor Maniscalco’s *World Heritage and War* book. Fabio Maniscalco is one of the most experienced scholars in this field and his enthusiasm to produce scientific materials will assure the success and the quality of this new volume that will be a very helpful tool for researchers and for the operators in the fields of protection and conservation of cultural heritage in areas of crisis.



World Heritage and War has six chapters (in Italian and English). The first one is about mechanical risks not caused by employment of weapons. Such risks can be mechanical or physical (i.e. damages produced by water and humidity, pollution and fire) and can be caused by human interventions (e.g. improper use of historical buildings or monuments, vandalism, abuse and inadequate post-war reconstruction). In the second chapter practical examples of damages produced by “indirect risks” are described: during an armed conflict there can be damages to historical buildings and monuments, to architectural decorations, to wall paintings and plasters, to mosaics on fixed support, to windows and glass doors, to libraries and to archives.

In war areas it is fundamental to organize preventive protection against the likely damages produced by weapons of different factions. Therefore, the author has dedicated the third chapter to the analysis and description of the characteristics and effects of weapons and explosives. In particular, a paragraph is dedicated to the weapons’ effects against cultural heritage (e.g. aerial bombs, missiles, rockets, special bombs, mines, circumstance bombs and small-caliber weapons against immovable cultural property). Topical is also the paragraph about terrorism and cultural property, with relevant information Professor Maniscalco has gained during his long activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Kosovo and Metohija, in Albania, in Middle East, in the Maghreb, in West Africa and in Afghanistan.

In the 4th Chapter measures to safeguard cultural properties are described that would have to be put into effect in the event of armed conflict (e.g. use of “sand bags”, activities of fire prevention and protection, activities of protection and conservation of wall paintings and mosaics, etc.). The 5th chapter is dedicated to the protection of movable cultural heritage in war areas: archaeological and historical items, books and archival documents.

Following the various armed conflicts of the last century, after a sometimes contradictory process the International Community recognized some legal instruments to safeguard cultural heritage in conflict areas. I refer in particular to the Hague Convention of 1954 and its additional Protocols. The 6th chapter of the present book is about the aforesaid treaties. In particular, the 1st paragraph is dedicated to the normative evolution with regard to the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict; the 2nd and the 3rd paragraphs are about the 1954 Hague Convention and about the 1954 and 1999 Protocols to the Hague Convention.

I am sure that this volume, which is richly illustrated and includes an updated bibliography, will offer very valid and important contributions to the global diffusion of knowledge about various aspects of conservation and cultural heritage in war areas.

Michael Petzet