Narrowed minds and destroyed communities: Anglo-American perceptions of Jewish cultural heritage in Thessaloniki, 1943–46

Roderick Bailey

Introduction

In the summer of 1946, Cecil Roth, historian and Reader in Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford, arrived in Greece to give lectures to British troops. These forces had been stationed there since arriving on the heels of the German withdrawal in late 1944, by which time the country had endured three-and-a-half years of Axis occupation. During that period, more than four-fifths of Greece's Jewish population had been exterminated in Nazi concentration camps, and Roth wrote later of his searing experience of visiting Thessaloniki, or Salonica as it was often called then, from where 95 per cent of the city's 50,000 Jews had been deported to their deaths. 'Everywhere one could see traces of loot,' Roth wrote of 'this charnel house of historic memories': 'I found a child in the street sitting on a synagogue chair carved with a Hebrew inscription; I was given a fragment of a Sefer Torah which had been cut up as soles for a pair of shoes; I saw carts in the cemetery removing Hebrew tombstones, on the instructions of the Director of Antiquities for the province, for the repair of one of the local ancient churches.' (Roth 1950: 55)

Conflict can endanger humanity and its heritage in multiple ways (Stone 2016). Destruction can occur in battle, for example, including collateral damage inflicted by

combatants unaware of its significance (Cunliffe et al 2014). Cultural sites far away from the frontlines may be harmed, knowingly or otherwise, by the construction of trench systems, encampments, airstrips, firebases and the like (Pinckney 2010). Cultural property and identities may be deliberately targeted (Walasek 2015; Brosché et al 2017). War can displace populations and shatter group cohesion, eroding languages, memories and customs, robbing communities of stakeholders able to speak for their interests and defend diversity and accomplishment, and leaving tangible culture prey to neglect, looting and vandalism: the genocide of the Yazidi being one modern example (UNHRC 2016). This chapter is about the fate of another persecuted community, Thessaloniki's Jewish population, and the heritage lost during the Second World War through its forced movement and murder. The destruction of that community and of its property and past has increasingly drawn the attention of modern scholarship (Vassilikou 2000; Saltiel 2014, Hesse and Laquer 2018) with particular interest shown in recent years in the obliteration of the city's Jewish cemetery, 'probably the largest Jewish necropolis in Europe' (Saltiel 2014: 18). Adopting a fresh lens, what follows seeks to show how the rich culture of Thessaloniki's Jews fell outside official Anglo-American assessments of what forms of heritage in wartime Greece should be prioritised for preservation.

The Second World War saw some of the earliest international efforts to protect, evaluate and classify the importance of cultural heritage on a global scale (Nicholas 1994; Allais 2018). But those were indeed early days. Today, concepts of what counts as heritage and cultural assets, as well as principles upon which cultural resources should be managed and conserved and the historical, ethical and other criteria by which they are defined, are broader than those formulated in the 1940s (UNESCO

2010). Drawing on contemporary records, the chapter begins with a short description of the fate of Thessaloniki's Jewish community, then illuminates the limited focus of academics in the United States tasked with assessing the qualities of different forms of culture in Greece and assigning them degrees of comparative importance, and the similarly constricted views of British army officers of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives (MFAA) sub-commission who arrived there once the occupation was over. Illustrating some of the implications of considering the value of cultural heritage as something to be measured and ranked, as well as how perceptions of value depend on the observer, it seeks also to draw attention to the importance of early action with a view to effective protection: by the spring of 1943, when American academics first turned their attention to the potential fate of Thessaloniki's treasures, the displacement and destruction of its Jews was fully underway.

The destruction of Jews and Jewish heritage in Thessaloniki, 1941–46

Jews may have been present in Thessaloniki for at least two thousand years: the Apostle Paul noted a synagogue there. But on the eve of the German invasion of Greece in April 1941, most of the city's Jews were descendants of a resettled Sephardic community expelled from Spain at the end of the fifteenth century. Their numbers had declined in recent years – 80,000 Jews had lived in Thessaloniki in the early 1900s – but the city remained, to quote Cecil Roth, 'the greatest center of Sephardic Jewry, with its synagogues and academies, its rabbis and its teachers, its newspapers and its printing presses, and some scholars of distinction among the sixty rabbis and communal functionaries'. In addition, Thessaloniki 'was still a happy

hunting ground for Spanish philologists and scholars, anxious to trace, in the speech of the descendants of the exiles of 1492, the authentic accent and folklore of 15th-century Castile; and the old folk still paraded along the quayside on a Sabbath afternoon in medieval Spanish costume'. There was also the vast Jewish cemetery, 'containing nearly half a million graves and dating back certainly to the 15th-century' (Roth 1950: 49, 51).

This rich heritage had been under threat for some time. By the 1930s, political tensions and racial prejudice had all played parts in marginalising Jews and compelling some to leave: state legislation increasingly favoured its growing majority of Christian Greeks, for example (Plaut 1996). A catastrophic fire that devastated the city in 1917 and destroyed many Jewish homes and workplaces also contributed, while demographic changes and socio-economic pressures among the non-Jewish population encouraged hungry glances at the cemetery: over 35 hectares in a prime location (Hesse and Laquer 2018). But the accelerant to destruction was the German occupation. First came abuse, forced labour, and the seizure of Jewish businesses and property; next came the raiding and looting of synagogues and libraries, and, during the winter of 1942–43, the appropriation of the cemetery (Mazower, 2004; Saltiel 2014; Hesse and Laquer 2018). Soon, those graves became, as described by Roth, who saw the evidence, 'a quarry for the entire city: tombstones of inestimable historic value, as well as those erected by persons still alive, were removed regardless of age or associations, and can still be seen all over the city used as paving stones, or even to line latrines' (Roth 1950: 51). Postwar photographs in the archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum confirm such uses, including the cladding of a swimming pool (Anon 1946a, 1946b, 1946c, 1946d).

The first weeks of 1943 saw every Jew aged 5 and over forced to wear a yellow star. Curfews were introduced. Goods were confiscated. Shops were closed. A ghetto was created. Jews were banned from trams and forbidden to use radios and telephones. In March they were instructed to convert their remaining property into cash and bank the sum collectively; hostages were taken to ensure that this was done. The same month saw the first deportations. These continued at intervals for the next five months, with thousands of men, women and children put aboard wagons at Thessaloniki's main railway station and transported north for systematic extermination; the final destination for most of them was Auschwitz (Roth 1950: 52–55; Mazower 2004). By August 1943 it was over. Estimates vary, but Ann Mohlo, a member of the Jewish Relief Unit that worked in the city immediately after the war, would record that approximately 50,000 Jews were deported from Thessaloniki to their deaths (Mohlo 1946). Figures compiled by the Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Greece point to a reduction in the city's Jewish population of 96 per cent (Central Board c.1946).

The destruction of Thessaloniki's Jewish heritage did not end with the Germans' departure. Survivors returning from the camps found Greeks unwilling to hand back homes and businesses taken from them, state support was not easily forthcoming, and the Jewish cemetery continued to be harvested for building materials. Some of that harvesting was done under the direct supervision of Stylianos Pelekanidis, director of the Greek Archaeological Service for northern Greece. Protests, from a party that included Cecil Roth, against the ongoing use of Jewish gravestones in repairs to St Demetrius, a church dedicated to the city's patron saint and ruined by the 1917 fire,

were apparently dismissed by Pelekanidis on the following grounds: the Jewish community had neglected to follow the Service's advice, on the eve of the deportations, to indicate headstones of historic value; reusing Jewish gravestones for reconstructing 'such a holy piece of work' as St Demetrius was at least better than using them for paving; Jews, centuries before, had reused stones from former Christian graves; there was a shortage of marble, since local quarries, disrupted by the war, were not working; and finally, under an old Turkish law that apparently still applied, Jews no longer had a claim to the cemetery anyway, since they were no long using it (Anon 1946e).

American lists of 'monuments' in Thessaloniki, 1943

Noting that Jewish gravestones continued to be used as paving for paths and roads despite the protests of Roth's horrified party, the Greek historian Maria Vassilokou has suggested that 'the indifferent attitude of Pelekanides represented broader trends of cultural narrow-mindedness, which occasionally led to intolerant behaviour' (Vassilokou 2000: 128). Motives for the ongoing destruction of Thessaloniki's Jewish past were certainly complex. The poverty of the population and the paucity of other resources after four years of war may have played a role, while anti-Semitic prejudice cannot be ruled out: as they confronted Pelekanides inside St Demetrius, Roth's party noted that 'masons and workers' cutting up Jewish tombstones in the courtyard 'interrupted their work and through the open door were following the discussion with interest. We thus heard one of them remark quite distinctly to the others that Hitler was quite right when he decided to exterminate the Jews' (Anon 1946e). But

narrowed considerations of what counted as important culture certainly help to explain how some observers, during the war, defined Thessaloniki's heritage. One illustration of this are typed lists of notable locations in Greece compiled, in the United States in 1943, to meet growing concerns about the fate of cultural sites seemingly threatened by the European war.

These lists were among several on different countries produced with the aim of arming Allied forces with a means of reducing the risks of inflicting unnecessary harm. Responsible for drawing them up was the American Defense-Harvard Group, a body established by Harvard University staff and others who wished to contribute to the defence of the United States: reporting to the Group's new Committee on Protection of Monuments, teams of academics considered to be experts on the history and culture of particular countries were assigned to producing each list (Nicholas 1994; Allais 2018). At the outset, compilers were required to include only 'churches, shrines and pilgrimage sites'. By July 1943, instructions were to classify 'monuments' – the umbrella term at the time – under multiple categories, ranging from collections of art and archaeological and scientific material to 'Sites of archaeological, historical, or religious importance,' 'Churches and other religious buildings,' and 'Shrines, places of pilgrimage, and other places of special local importance' (Allais 2018: 94–95). The production of a list compatible with military needs was always the priority, however. This meant it needed to be relatively short. Too long, and it might hamper commanders' ability to make war-winning moves on the battlefield. A system of asterisks was also introduced, as a way of establishing a hierarchy, discernible at a glance, of what mattered most. A similar feature was the production of 'long' and 'short' lists. Both forms carried a brief Introduction designed to highlight for

observers not only the scholarly importance of the locations selected but also their value to local populations (Allais 2018).

In the case of Greece, the principal list-maker was Charles A. Robinson, Jr., a classics professor at Brown University. In a preface to his long and short lists, both of which were signed off on 17 July 1943, he acknowledged the additional assistance of other scholars who had advised on specific areas. In his Introduction, again to both lists, he then attempted to explain the chosen focus:

> The material of artistic and cultural importance in Greece falls into two main groups. Since the Greek Orthodox faith – its churches and monasteries, priests and monks – is the most vital force in the life of the people, the ecclesiastical monuments doubtless excite the popular imagination. Temporal, as well as religious, considerations contribute to this.
>
> For the Greeks know that their Church, more than any other institution, brought them through 370 years of Turkish rule, just as it has been the rallying point for the survival of the Greek language and culture for more than three decades of Italian oppression in Rhodes and the Dodecanese...
>
> The other main category of monuments consists of the remains of antiquity. The Greeks love the ruins for their own sake, and also because they serve as reminders of their own racial past. They take great pride in the visual evidence that their ancestors created one of the most brilliant episodes in history and that they laid the common foundations of modern society. (Robinson 1943a)

Robinson added that ‘economic reasons’ gave ‘cultural material’ further significance. ‘In peace-time the treasures of Greece draw a large number of tourists annually, and the tourist industry is normally a major factor in Greek economy.’ Such treasures, Robinson noted, were everywhere. ‘Ruins of all kinds and periods literally cover Greece’: ‘from neolithic (Stone Age) days through the great prehistoric Bronze Age and on to the famous classical Greek and Roman periods; [and] the Middle Ages are represented by Byzantine, Frankish, Venetian and Turkish remains’. Consequently, ‘temples and statues, ancient cities, fortification walls and sanctuaries, castles, palaces, churches, monasteries and civic structures of every sort, paintings and mosaics, tombs, vases, coins and manuscripts – in short, the vast accumulation of many civilisations – are met at every hand’ (Robinson 1943a).

Robinson took care to point out, too, that not everything worthy of protection might be ‘obviously important... For example, an inconspicuous house may well be important evidence for the origin and development of European architecture, and merely stepping on it may destroy it.’ He also made clear that his lists covered ‘only a few representative monuments... by no means all that require protection’. This was accurate. His short list for Thessaloniki, seemingly compiled with the assistance of a classical archaeologist at Johns Hopkins, Professor David M. Robinson, confined itself to the following:

> Roman arch of Galerius, faced with marble and decorated with sculptures, on main street, Via Egnatia.

Yeni Djami, Turkish mosque, now museum. Works of art and archaeological collections from all over Macedonia. Some in garden and sheds built around garden, outside museum.

White Tower, Venetian (15th cent. A.D)...

Churches:

St. George (4th cent. A.D. mosaics), contains antiquities.

St. Demetrius – partly destroyed by great fire in last war; has 5th cent. A.D. mosaics.

St. Sophia (11th cent. A.D.)

St. David (6th cent. A.D., mosaics).

Mosque of Eski.

His long list for Thessaloniki merely attached an asterisk to each of these and added three, un-asterisked, sites: the remains of the city's 'ancient fortification walls' and two nearby 'American colleges': 'Anatolia College' and 'Farms College' (Robinson 1943a, 1943b). Possibly an additional priority of the Harvard Group had been to acknowledge local American interests, for the inclusion of the two 'colleges' over other 'monuments' seems hard to explain otherwise. Founded in 1888, Anatolia College was a private foreign school, American-run, that had moved to Greece from Turkey in 1924 (Riggs 2007). 'Farms College' was the American Farm School, set up by American missionaries in 1904 and dedicated to improving the agricultural knowledge of local farmers and, more generally, the condition of rural life in that part of Greece (Marder 2004). Both possessed, according to Robinson, 'good libraries' (Robinson 1943a). Archives and libraries had been among the categories for the Harvard Group's list-makers to consider, but highlighting the importance of these

two, which were, at best, good school libraries, jars badly for the modern reader when placed next to the fact that Jewish culture and heritage in Thessaloniki were nowhere mentioned in either of Robinson's lists.

American mapping of 'monuments' in Thessaloniki, 1943–44

That Thessaloniki contained more of note than the items on Robinson's lists is reflected, a little, in the results of a second effort in the United States to prioritise for protection cultural sites in countries affected and threatened by the war. This enterprise began in the hands of the New York-based American Council of Learned Societies, which, like the Harvard Defense Group, had interested itself in the fate of cultural heritage threatened by war. Among the principal products of the ACLS – and specifically those of its Committee on the Protection of Cultural Treasures in War Areas – were maps, with relevant sites blacked out and numbered, and accompanying lists explaining the sites to which each number referred. In time, these maps were included in supplements to handbooks for Allied civil affairs officers preparing to move into territory held previously by the enemy. Others were issued to air forces with the aim of improving awareness of what might lie beneath their bombs. As with the Harvard Lists, asterisks denoted importance: none meant 'moderate' while three meant 'highest' (Allais 2018: 103–105, 117–121).

The maps for Greece produced by the ACLS were a combination of city and regional ones. The map for Thessaloniki depicted the following locations, reproduced here as they are arranged, spelled, dated and asterisked in the accompanying explanatory list:

CHURCHES

**Holy Apostles (Soouk-Sou-Djami), end 13th century.

*St. Catherine (Yacoub-Pasha-Dhami), end 13th century.

*Prophet Elias (Eski-Serai), 13th century.

Monastery of Vlateon, or Vlatadon... c. 1400.

St. Menas.

Theotokos (Panagia Khalkeon or Kazanjilar-Djami), 1208.

***St. Demetrios, begun 5th century, partly rebuilt after 1917 fire; mosaics

**St. David or Hosios Daoud (Soulitze or Keramentin-Djami), 6th century; mosaics]

Archangels (Taxiarchon or Eski-Cherife-Djami), 12th century.

**St. Paraskevi (Eski-Djouma), 5th century; mosaics.

***St. Sophia, end 6th century; mosaics.

St. Panteleimon (Issaki-Medjid-Djami), 12th century.

***St. George, 4th-5th centuries; mosaics.

MONUMENTS

Byzantine ramparts from 6th century, gates chiefly destroyed.

Tower of Andronikos Palaiologos, gate of Anna Palaiologou, etc., on Acropolis, 12th-15th centuries, Byzantine.

**Arch of Galerius, Roman, 4th century.

White Tower, 15th century, Venetian.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

*University Library with 103,000 volumes; historical archives.

Three further locations featured on the list but were not marked on the map. All had an American connection that was made explicit. One was the city's Archaeological Museum, housed in the mosque of Yeni Djami: its contents were flagged as 'including antiquities from American excavations at Olynthos'. The other two were the Farm School and Anatolia College. The Museum was given three asterisks and each school received one. Nothing highlighted on the map or mentioned in the list was Jewish (ACLS c.1944).

British observations on cultural heritage in Thessaloniki, 1944–46

An absence of interest in conserving Jewish culture is also evident in the work in Greece in 1944–46 of the British Army's Department of Fine Arts and Antiquities (DFAA). A tiny team attached to the British force that entered the country as the Germans were leaving in late 1944, the DFAA was a sub-unit of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives sub-commission, an Anglo-American organisation set up in 1943 to assist in the protection of cultural property in war-affected areas. The DFAA's immediate priorities, as recorded in its files, were to gather 'reliable' information about wartime damage to 'antiquities of all classes... Churches, Museums, etc.,' and place 'special emphasis' on reports where repairs were 'urgently needed' (Cook 1944). Another of its tasks was to 'encourage and assist' the Greek authorities, whose Archaeological Service agreed to help provide details of damage and looting, in taking appropriate measures to prevent further harm (Wooley 1945). In time, the DFAA helped return to their posts several Greek officials of the Archaeological Service displaced during the war; these included Stylianos Pelekanidis, its Byzantine

specialist in Thessaloniki. The DFAA also did what it could to provide materials for repairs.

As its files record, the DFAA did receive from Greek officials some information concerning Thessaloniki, although none of it referred to Jewish property or culture. The fate of a high-quality marble statue of a robed woman, thought to date from the third century, was a particular theme in reports from Thessaloniki's Directorate of Historical Monuments and Archaeology, the DFAA's principal source of data on the city and its surrounding area. The statue, known today as the *Irakliotissa*, had been dug up by German soldiers and Russian prisoners digging trenches in the city in 1944, then spirited away, apparently to Vienna for an exhibition there, and was still to be recovered (DFAA 1945a). Other reports from the Directorate concerned the discovery, during more German digging, of two box-shaped graves in the garden of a margarine factory, and some unauthorised excavations of a Bronze Age site at Toumba, to the east of the city, the finds from which the Germans were also believed to have kept (DFAA 1945b).

That was effectively the extent of Greek reporting on cultural losses and damage in Thessaloniki, so far as it was documented by the DFAA. The only other observations found in its files come from the reports of one of its own officers who went there in April 1945. Nothing in these mentioned the Jewish community either. This officer recorded 300 holes carved into the city walls to act as air-raid shelters, as well as German modifications to the battlements to make them usable as fire positions, plus bomb-damage that had landed two direct hits on the church of St Sophia, cracked a wall of the church of the Prophet Elias, and caused some crumbling to the Arch of

Galerius. He also reported that he had helped repair the last of these by arranging for the supply of forty bags of cement (DFAA 1945c).

'The Story of Salonica: Past and Present,' a sixteen-page booklet produced for British soldiers in Thessaloniki in the summer of 1945, further illustrates this narrow perspective. Printed locally and written by a British officer in the city, Captain F J W (Frederick) Baggs, whose job was to provide education to British troops, the booklet had two stated aims. One was to provide personnel with 'reliable information about the monuments and buildings of the town, of use to those who are interested enough to go and see them'. The other was to show them the city as 'a living personality' with a long and eventful past. In a short section on its history, Baggs included a paragraph on the Jewish community and noted that many, especially from Spain, had sought refuge in Greece to escape persecution: '20,000 made their home in Salonica, being allowed to live in the quarter behind the present University, where the great Jewish cemetery is today'. Since then, he went on, 'Salonica has been one of the great Jewish cities of the world. By 1940 the number of Jews here had risen to 56,000, over three-quarters of the entire Jewish population of Greece.' It is unlikely that Baggs was unaware that they had since been deported and their homes and cemetery plundered, yet he made no reference to these events. Acknowledging that the city had been 'scarred, physically and emotionally, by four years of German occupation,' he professed himself reluctant to write more about the war, ending his history of the city with: 'From 1941 to 1944 Salonica was under German occupation. The events of this time are too recent to be dealt with here' (Baggs 1945: 3, 6, 7).

Possibly, for Baggs, the losses suffered by the Jewish community seemed culturally insignificant, at least so far as the purpose of his little booklet was concerned. His list of 'antiquities and sights' worth visiting consisted chiefly of churches and monasteries, plus a few 'other sights of interest' like the White Tower and the Arch of Galerius. No mention was made of anything Jewish (Baggs 1945: 8–11). That Baggs was less impressed by certain forms of local culture is suggested by his description of the Roman hippodrome as being excavated in an area 'that in the days of Galerius... must have been filled with fine Roman buildings, palaces, and monuments,' thus presenting 'an appearance vastly different from that of the old decaying tumbledown Turkish cottages that fill the sordid space today'. The potential of local sentiment to shape his views might be noted, too. Aged thirty-four, Frederick Baggs had been a music teacher in England before the war and was no expert on Thessaloniki, explaining in the brief introduction to his booklet that, while compiling it, he had relied on the assistance of 'Dr Theodorides' and 'some notes from Prof. Papastavrou, and from Mr Pelikanides, Curator of Byzantine Art, Salonica' (Baggs 1945: ii). The last named was Stylianos Pelekanidis, whose continued use of Jewish gravestones for repairs would outrage Cecil Roth a year later.

Interestingly, these limited interpretations of what counted as conservation-worthy culture seem to run counter to reactions among the first British soldiers to reach Thessaloniki, on the heels of the retreating Germans, in late 1944. These included an official army photographer of No.2 Army Film and Photographic Unit. One of his images, dated 18 November 1944 and circulated among press agencies by the Psychological Warfare Bureau, a propaganda unit, shows a British officer studying a German-constructed ditch obviously lined with Jewish gravestones. The ditch leads to

the entrance of a concrete bunker, and the caption explains: 'German concrete strongpoint at Salonika [sic], with the communication trench lined with tombstones taken from Jewish graves' (AFPU 1946). In early 1945, the British Army also instructed its troops to recover and gather together, in the grounds of a hospital commandeered by British soldiers, any Jewish tombstones encountered, although the order seems to have had little effect (Anon. 1946e).

Conclusion

'The serious damage in Greece, either to ancient or medieval monuments, is nil,' noted the editorial of the *Burlington Magazine*, a London journal devoted to the fine arts, from its reading of a 1946 report, *Works of Art in Greece, the Greek Islands and the Dodecanese: Losses and Survivals in the War*. This was one of an official British series of publications on monuments, art and architecture of European countries affected by the war, and it reproduced the findings of the DFAA as its mission to Greece neared completion. 'All the major ancient sites, Delphi, Olympia, Mycenae, Epidaurus and Delos, are untouched,' the *Burlington* continued.

> [T]hings have been made a little more complicated for the archaeologists at Samos, Elefsis and Sunium [and]... there was a little dirty work at Knossos and among the almost indestructible remains of Tiryns. The only two sites which have come off badly are Nikopolis and Philippi, injudiciously near the modern harbours of Preveza and Kavalla, which have been victimised for the preparation of gun-positions. Otherwise there has only been some looting of

> archaeological bric-à-brac from provincial museums... Medieval Greece has also escaped lightly, with little more than the loss of some picturesque outbuildings... and the nett [sic] total of damage reported is so slight that this slim volume can descend to details as minute as the knob on a pot-lid. (Editorial 1946: 237)

That summary underplayed the picture depicted in *Works of Art in Greece*. The report had also documented, for example, serious looting of the Meteora monasteries, severe damage to Venetian architecture on Crete, deliberate vandalism on Samothrace, and the shattering effects of Allied bombing on the old Crusader city of Rhodes (MFAA 1946: 29–30, 17–21, 34–35, 15–16, 35–38). But it remains the case that it recorded few instances of damage or destruction of greater significance than these.

Details of the selected 'losses and survivals' were listed in the report's sixty-four pages topographically and by period: classical, Byzantine and medieval. Nowhere was reference made to anything Jewish. Thus Greece's Jewish community and its past and fate went unacknowledged in the principal British publication devoted to documenting the war's impact on Greek culture. The report's two brief passages on Thessaloniki recorded little more than the saga of the statue dug up in 1944, the two 'box-shaped' graves discovered in the grounds of the margarine factory, and the soon-repaired damage to St Sophia. 'One bomb destroyed the stoa at the west end, and another fell on the northern arm of the church near the dome,' the report took care to record about that. 'As a result of this, the northern arm was cracked in three places and a large piece of plaster containing mosaics fell from the edge of the dome...' (MFAA 1946: 15, 33) A single sentence referencing the fate of the cemetery can be

found in a separate publication by one of the DFAA officers responsible for the report: an article written at about the same time that described finds unearthed in Greece during the course of the war. 'Many sculptured fragments from Roman sarcophagi, and inscriptions, came to light in the destruction of the Jewish cemetery of Salonica,' the author, a prewar archaeologist, noted simply; 'they had been re-used in the late Middle Ages as Jewish tombstones.' (Dunbabin 1945: 92)

The 'fetishisation of a narrowly defined archaeological record' has been highlighted by the archaeologist Yannis Hamilakis as a fundamental flaw of the response of US and UK heritage professionals to the 2003 invasion of Iraq: 'All material culture is the concern of archaeology. All types of human-scapes and landscapes are socially important for the present as well as the future, and different groups are attached to different kinds of material culture.' (Hamilakis 2009) For Cecil Roth, sixty years earlier, what had been lost in Thessaloniki through the displacement and destruction of its Jews was both a community – 'that strange island of 15th century Spain in a setting of 20th century Greece' – and, 'unnoticed and unlamented, the cultural environment which made the city for so long a center of interest for philologists, historians, folklorists, and lovers of the picturesque. It was not only a community that has been annihilated, but also a way of life.' (Roth 1950: 55) The readiness of Greek officials to facilitate, justify and continue the obliteration of hundreds of thousands of Jewish graves, some of which were centuries old, was in keeping with prewar racial prejudice and friction over the cemetery's fate. These had been among the preconditions for the site's subsequent destruction, although the catalyst was the Nazi occupation, which robbed the city's Jews of their power to protest and ensured their permanent acquiescence by exterminating almost all of them. Yet the absence of

Jewish culture in American assessments of Greek heritage speaks of another narrative: of onlookers more responsive to the art and architecture of ancient Greece and Byzantium than to the history and culture of the country's Jewish community. Such preferences seem to have extended to British army officers sent subsequently to Greece, including those tasked with safeguarding sites and assisting local stakeholders – or at least those stakeholders still able to promote their interests.

Bibliography

Allais, L. 2018. *Designs of Destruction: The Making of Monuments in the Twentieth Century*. London: The University of Chicago Press.

American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). c.1944. Map: 'Salonica (Saloniki, Thessaloniki), Greece'. National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA) RG 239, M1944, Roll 156.

Anon. 1946a. 'View of a swimming pool in Salonika [sic] built from desecrated Jewish tombstones'. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, photographs 00756 and 00788 (courtesy of American Jewish University).

Anon. 1946b. 'View of a desecrated Jewish grave'. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, photograph 00783 (courtesy of American Jewish University).

Anon. 1946c. ‘View of a sidewalk built from desecrated Jewish tombstones’. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, photograph 00787 (courtesy of American Jewish University).

Anon. 1946d. ‘Postwar view of a church in Salonika [sic] constructed in part from Jewish tombstones’. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, photograph 00832 (courtesy of American Jewish University).

Anon. 1946e. ‘Jewish Cemetery of Salonika.’ University of Leeds, MS Roth (Pers) 8/5.

Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU). 1946. ‘German concrete strongpoint at Salonika [sic], with the communication trench lined with tombstones taken from Jewish graves’. Author’s archive.

Baggs, F. 1945. ‘The story of Salonica: past and present’. Author’s archive.

Brosché et al. 2017. ‘Heritage under attack: Motives for targeting cultural property during armed conflict’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23/3: 248-260.

Central Board of the Jewish Communities in Greece. c.1946. ‘List showing the losses of the Jewish population of Greece from the German persecutions of the years 1943 and 1944.’ University of Leeds, MS Roth (Pers) 8/2.

Cook, J. December 1944. ‘Preliminary Report of the Dept of Fine Arts & Antiquities, ML (Greece)’. The National Archives (hereafter TNA), WO 204/8777.

Cunliffe, E. et al. 2014. *Satellite-Based Damage Assessment to Cultural Heritage Sites in Syria*. Geneva: UNOSAT-UNITAR.

Department of Fine Arts and Antiquities (DFAA). April 1945. Extract from report of the Directorate of Historical Monuments and Archaeology, Thessaloniki. TNA, WO 204/8774.

Department of Fine Arts and Antiquities (DFAA). April 1945. Extract from report of the Directorate of Historical Monuments and Archaeology, Thessaloniki. TNA WO 204/8775.

Department of Fine Arts and Antiquities (DFAA). April 1945. ‘Monthly Report of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Branch, HQ LFG, for April 1945’. TNA WO 204/3142.

Dunbabin, T. 1944 [sic]. ‘Archaeology in Greece, 1939–45’, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 64: 78–97. [Dunbabin’s research dated from 1945–46: publication cannot have been earlier than that.]

Editorial. October 1946. *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 88(523): 237.

Hamilakis, Y. 2009. 'The "War on Terror" and the Military-Archaeology Complex: Iraq, Ethics, and Neo-Colonialism', *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 5: 39-65

Marder, B. 2004. *Stewards of the Land: The American Farm School and Greece in the Twentieth Century*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.

Mazower, M. 2004. *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950*. London: HarperCollins.

Mohlo, A. 4 June 1946. 'Relief & rehabilitation work for Greek Jewry.' University of Leeds, MS Roth (Pers) 8/3/1.

Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives sub-commission (MFAA). 1946. *Works of Art in Greece, the Greek Islands and the Dodecanese: Losses and Survivals in the War*. London: HMSO.

Nicholas, L. 1994. *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Pinckney, D. 2010. 'Time not on my side: Cultural resource management in Kirkuk, Iraq', in *Archaeology, Cultural Property and the Military*, L. Rush (ed.) 117–126. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer.

Plaut, J. 1996. *Greek Jewry in the Twentieth Century, 1913-1983: Patterns of Jewish Survival in the Greek Provinces before and after the Holocaust.* Cranberry, NJ: Associated University Presses.

Riggs, A. 2007. *A History of Anatolia College: 1933–1950*. Thessaloniki: Anatolia College Alumni Association.

Roth, C. 1950. 'The last days of Jewish Salonica: What happened to a 450-year-old civilization', *Commentary* 10: 49–55.

Robinson, Jr., C. 17 July 1943. 'Greece: Long List of Monuments'. NARA RG 239, M1944, Roll 98.

Robinson, Jr., C. 17 July 1943. 'Greece: Short List of Monuments'. NARA RG 239, M1944, Roll 98.

Saltiel, L. 2014. 'Dehumanizing the dead: The destruction of Thessaloniki's Jewish cemetery in the light of new sources', *Yad Vashem Studies* 42/1: 18-25.

Stone, P. 2016. 'The challenge of protecting heritage in times of armed conflict', *Museum International* 67: 40–54.

UNESCO 2010. The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols. Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187580 [accessed 24 August 2019]

UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) 15 June 2016. '"They came to destroy": ISIS crimes against the Yazidis'. Report A/HRC/32/CRP.2. Available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/57679c324.html [accessed 24 August 2019].

Vassilokou, M. 2000. 'The Jewish cemetery of Salonika in the crossroads of urban modernisation and anti-Semitism', *European Judaism* 33(1): 118–131.

Walasek, H. 2015. *Bosnia and the Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. London: Routledge.

Woolley, L. 10 May 1945. 'Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Branch: Greece'. TNA WO 204/8771.

Captions List

Figure 1 Prewar photograph of Thessaloniki's Jewish cemetery. (Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Figure 2 Disturbed Jewish grave in Thessaloniki. Photographed in 1946. (Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Figure 3 Pavement in Thessaloniki built from harvested Jewish gravestones. Photographed in 1946. (Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Figure 4 Swimming pool in Thessaloniki clad with Jewish gravestones. Photographed in 1946. (Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Figure 5 Jewish gravestones used for church repairs in Thessaloniki. Photographed in 1946. (Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

Figure 6 Concrete German emplacement at Thessaloniki with its communication trench lined with Jewish gravestones. Photographed by the British Army in 1946. (Source: Author's archive.)

Figure 7 Fragment of a Torah cut up as shoe-soles. Recovered from Thessaloniki by Cecil Roth in 1946. (Source: University of Leeds, Roth MS 517)