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Thematic volume planned for Summer 2017
In honor of the life of Dr. Khaled al-Asaad

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The tragically familiar spectacles of cultural heritage destruction performed by the Islamic State group (ISIS) in Syria and Iraq are frequently presented as barbaric, baffling, and far outside the bounds of what are imagined to be normative, "civilized" uses of the past. Often superficially explained as an attempt to stamp out idolatry or as a fundamentalist desire to revive and enforce a return to a purified monotheism, analysis of these spectacles of heritage violence posits two things: that there is, fact, an "Islamic" manner of imagining the past – its architectural manifestations, its traces and localities – and that actions carried out at these localities, whether constructive or destructive, have moral or ethical consequences for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In this reading, the iconoclastic actions of ISIS and similar groups, for example the Taliban or the Wahhabi monarchy in Saudi Arabia, are represented as one, albeit extreme, manifestation of an assumedly pervasive and historically ongoing Islamic antipathy toward images and pre-contemporary holy localities in particular, and, more broadly, toward the idea of heritage and the uses to which it has been put by modern nationalism.

But long before the emergence of ISIS and other so-called Islamist iconoclasts, and perhaps as early as the rise of Islam itself, Muslims imagined Islamic and pre-Islamic antiquity and its localities in myriad ways: as sites of memory, spaces of healing, or places imbued with didactic, historical, and moral power. Ancient statuary were deployed as talismans, paintings were interpreted to foretell and reify the coming of Islam, and temples of ancient gods and churches devoted to holy saints were converted into mosques in ways that preserved their original meaning and, sometimes, even their architectural ornament and fabric. Often, such localities were valued simply as places that elicited a sense of awe and wonder, or of reflection on the present relevance of history and the greatness of past empires, a theme so prevalent it created distinct genres of Arabic and Persian literature (aja'ib, fada'il). Sites like Ctesiphon, the ancient capital of the Zoroastrian Sasanians, or the Temple Mount, where the Jewish temple had stood, were embraced by early companions of the Prophet Muhammad and incorporated into Islamic notions of the self. Furthermore, various Islamic interpretive communities as well as Jews and Christians often shared holy places and had similar haptic, sensorial, and ritual connections that enabled them to imagine

place in similar ways. These engagements were often more dynamic and purposeful than conventional scholarly notions of "influence" and "transmission" can account for. And yet, Muslims also sometimes destroyed ancient places or powerfully reimagined them to serve their own purposes, as for example in the aftermath of the Crusader presence in the Holy Land or in the destruction, reuse and rebuilding of ancient Buddhist and Hindu sites in the Eastern Islamic lands and South Asia.

This special issue invites scholars from across disciplines to engage with a critical reassessment of imaginings of the past in Islamicate societies. Papers may draw on historical or contemporary examples to explore some aspect of the themes outlined here, but are not limited to them.

1. How are and were ancient place and locality used in Islamicate societies to create a sense of the past, and what are/were the routes, rituals, and performances by which the past is inscribed on the landscape?

2. How are holy sites, sites of memory, and sites of ancient heritage simultaneously construed as contemporary and situated in the present in Islamicate societies?

3. Although ISIS and other Wahhabi and Salafi groups are often said to be "medieval" in their methods and attitudes, should they in fact be envisioned as hyper-modern, both in their generation of spectacles of violence designed for viral sharing in the social media age, but also in the way they target imaginings of heritage as a cherished building block of the modern nation state and of globalized notions of "universal" values?

4. Is there a broader project of reshaping the meaning of heritage unfolding across the Islamic world? The actions of the Taliban, Wahhabi projects of destruction in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, the devastation of heritage in Syria by Assad and rebel groups, and the depredations of Islamists in Mali are recent examples. Can they be considered acts of "iconoclasm" in the traditional sense? Are such acts in fact more closely related to other modern acts of heritage destruction aimed at erasing memory, for example during the Cultural Revolution in China or the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia?

5. Analysis of ISIS' destruction frequently seems to parrot the agenda of ISIS itself in ways that amplify and reinforce their message, whether through viral sharing of their slickly produced videos on social media or credulous academic and journalistic analysis that takes ISIS at its word. How can researchers analyze these hypermodern forms without re-producing and disseminating the very vision of violence that they crafted? How can we formulate an active response that goes beyond expressions of dismay and condemnation?

6. Although Islamicate societies often found ways to revere, venerate, and coexist with the considerable traces of antiquity in their midst, Muslims were also sometimes agents of destruction. What were the contexts in which Muslims destroyed localities of antiquity in the past? What meanings were claimed for such actions and how were they justified by their agents?

7. Is there an "Islamic" notion of heritage? Can the ways Muslims imagined and continue to imagine the past enable a critical interrogation of notions of universal heritage that are predominant in the broader international community?

Essays that focus on historical and theoretical analysis (DiT papers) should be a minimum of 5,000 words but no more than 8,000 words, and essays on design (DiP papers) can range from 3,000 to 4,500 words. Contributions from practitioners are welcome and should bear in mind the critical framework of the journal. Contributions from scholars of heritage history and preservation as well as scholars and critics of heritage in the broadest sense are also particularly welcome.

Please send a 400-word abstract with essay title to the guest editor, Stephennie Mulder, The University of Texas at Austin (smulder@austin.utexas.edu), by 30 November 2015. Those whose proposals are accepted will be contacted soon thereafter and requested to submit full papers to the journal by 1 June 2016. All papers will undergo full peer review.

For author instructions regarding paper guidelines, please consult: www.intellectbooks.com/ijia

Reference:
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