

<b>Institution:</b> University of Reading		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 15 Archaeology		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Protecting and enhancing heritage and cultural rights in Iraq		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2011-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Roger Matthews	Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology	01/01/11-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b>          Since the 2003 US-UK invasion of Iraq, collaborative interventions have been crucial to protect and enhance Iraq's globally significant cultural heritage for future generations. Roger Matthews is leading a sustained effort to mitigate the catastrophic impacts of war, deliberate destruction, looting, and neglect of antiquities in Iraq, building on decades of collaborative research. Matthews translates archaeological and heritage management research into socio-political action, dramatically improving and enhancing protection of the cultural heritage of Iraq at local, national, and international levels. Matthews influences international policy on "cultural rights as human rights" with the United Nations; enhances national protections through engagement with the Iraq government and UNESCO; improves documentation and security measures for museum collections; and builds capacity through training Iraqi colleagues.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b>          Archaeological and cultural heritage projects directed by Matthews, in collaboration with colleagues from Iraq, the University of Reading and worldwide, have transformed our understanding of Iraqi cultural heritage and its place in human history. For more than 35 years, Matthews has articulated an increasingly detailed perspective on Middle Eastern prehistory from the Palaeolithic to proto-history, drawing on his extensive fieldwork and archival research and by applying innovative science, often in extremely challenging circumstances and environments. Matthews has also led research on the challenges facing policy makers in the region, working to preserve regional heritage and employ heritage as a powerful force for good in a society suffering through decades of conflict.</p> <p><b>Research on the archaeology of Iraq</b>          In collaboration with Iraqis in the Kurdistan region, Matthews co-directs with Wendy Matthews the <a href="#">Central Zagros Archaeological Project</a> (CZAP). Funded by the AHRC (£840k; AH/H034315/2). The project has shed new light on the prehistory of Iraq. The project's findings are published in output 1 and 2 and the data archive is accessible through the <a href="#">Archaeology Data Service</a>. The importance of the Matthews' investigations at Bestansur, a previously unidentified Early Neolithic site and the earliest Neolithic settlement in the region, is recognised by the Iraqi Government and international community, with the site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List, one of only 12 nominated sites in Iraq, and the only prehistoric site. Research now continues with a five-year project with Matthews as PI, MENTICA: Middle East Neolithic Transition – Integrated Community Approaches 2018-2023, funded by a European Research Council Advanced Grant (€2.5m; ERC AdG 787264).</p> <p>Matthews' CZAP and MENTICA research unites an international group of more than 50 specialists in archaeology, heritage, and conservation, providing training for over 100 Iraqi, Kurdish, Iranian, and UK students and heritage professionals. It builds on Matthews' Erasmus+</p>		

grant (€64k, 2017-2019) for staff and PhD student mobility between Reading and four Iraqi and Iranian universities, and a British Academy International Partnership and Mobility awards (£30k, 2013), which funded programmes of intensive training for 50 young Iranian and Iraqi academics in the use of archaeological databases. Additionally, with Amy Richardson, Matthews has pioneered the application of pXRF analysis to Mesopotamian clay tablets and sealings to investigate patterns of inter-city engagement at the dawn of urban history in south Iraq (output 3).

### Research on cultural rights and advocacy

In 2014-2017, the deliberate destruction and looting of heritage sites to fund Daesh's terrorist activities formed a major crisis for Iraq. As President of RASHID International (Research Assessment and Safeguarding the Heritage of Iraq in Danger), an international network of human rights lawyers, archaeologists and heritage professionals dedicated to supporting Iraq, Matthews led vigorous efforts to enhance international protections and to safeguard and document archaeological heritage. In this capacity, Matthews led research on cultural rights as human rights, and how engagement with heritage contributes to cultural healing (output 4).

### 3. References to the research

The research resulted from competitive, peer-reviewed grants of more than £3.5m (AHRC, ERC, British Institute for the Study of Iraq, British Academy, National Geographic, Wainwright Foundation); it is published with Iraqi colleagues in peer-reviewed journals and monograph series by reputable publishers. Outputs 1-4 meet the 2\* quality criteria as they provide and apply important knowledge; contribute to advances in knowledge; apply a thorough and appropriate research design, techniques of investigation and analysis.

1. Matthews, R., Matthews, W., Richardson, A., Rasheed, K., Walsh, S., Raeuf, K., Bendrey, R., Whitlam, J., Charles, M., Bogaard, A., Iversen, I., Mudd, D. and Elliott, S. 2019. The early Neolithic of Iraqi Kurdistan: current research at Bestansur, Shahrizor Plain. *Paléorient* 45.2, 13-32. Centaur link: <http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/82593/>
2. Matthews, R., Matthews, W., Richardson, A. and Rasheed Raheem, K. (eds). 2020. *The Early Neolithic of the Eastern Fertile Crescent: Excavations at Bestansur and Shimshara, Iraqi Kurdistan*. CZAP Volume 2. Oxford: Oxbow Books. ISBN 978-1-78925-526-3.
3. Matthews, R. and Richardson, A. 2018. Cultic resilience and inter-city engagement at the dawn of urban history: protohistoric Mesopotamia and the 'city seals', 3200-2750 BC. *World Archaeology* 50.5, 723-747. DOI: [10.1080/00438243.2019.1592018](https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2019.1592018)
4. Matthews, R., Rashid, Q. H., Palmero Fernández, M., Fobbe, S., Nováček, K., Mohammed-Amin, R., Mühl, S. and Richardson, A. 2020. Heritage and cultural healing: Iraq in a post-Daesh era. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 26.2, 120-141, DOI: [10.1080/13527258.2019.1608585](https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2019.1608585)

### 4. Details of the impact

Matthews' research on cultural rights, combined with his academic networks and his broader research on the archaeology of the region, has led to his leadership role within RASHID and the impact described below. The specific research of CZAP/MENTICA has led directly to positive impacts on museums and heritage professionals.

#### A. Enhancing cultural rights and international protections

Through engagement with the British Council, United Nations and UNESCO, Matthews has directed projects that are enhancing cultural protection. As President of [RASHID International](#) (2016-2020) and drawing on his research on cultural heritage in Iraq, Matthews has led efforts to embed the concept of "cultural rights as human rights" within international arenas. Following meetings with the UN Special Rapporteur in cultural rights, Matthews has co-authored four collaborative reports: *The Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, *The Impact of Fundamentalism and Extremism on the Cultural Rights of Women in Iraq*, *Advancing Cultural Rights and the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, and *The Implementation of Cultural Rights in Iraq*. These reports have been cited by the UN Special Rapporteur, and directly informed recommendations put forward to the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly. The UN Special Rapporteur's report, *Cultural Rights: Tenth Anniversary Report*, to the Human Rights

Council in 2019 recognised “the considerable advocacy work done by RASHID International” under Matthews’ leadership (E1).



The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the UN Office in Geneva invited Matthews to deliver a keynote speech to the UN General Assembly event on Cultural Rights in Iraq, in March 2018. In 2019 RASHID International received Special Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council – the highest status granted by the UN to civil society organisations. In this capacity, Matthews contributed recommendations on cultural rights to the 2019 Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights in Iraq (E2). Matthews also led an initiative lobbying the Iraqi Government to accede to the Second Protocol of the 1954 Hague Convention (E3). Following the UN Security Council adoption of UNSC Resolution 2379 (2017) on Daesh accountability, Matthews brought together colleagues of RASHID International, Yazda (a global Yazidi organisation) and Durham University to publish and submit a report to the UN on the systematic destruction by Daesh of Yazidi heritage sites, *Destroying the Soul of the Yazidis*, providing evidence for persecution of Yazidi cultural heritage as a component of genocide (E4). The documented results are informing an exhibition at the Imperial War Museum on cultural heritage destroyed by conflict, supported by the British Council.

**B. Safeguarding and documenting cultural heritage**

Matthews developed a collaboration between RASHID International and the “Monuments in Mosul” Project at the Czech Academy of Sciences to identify at risk heritage buildings prior to the 2017 liberation of Mosul from Daesh. This work was instrumental in sparing historic and religious buildings from US-UK air strikes. This action has been highlighted “as a case example of the importance the NGO and academic communities play” in protecting cultural heritage during conflict (E5).

In order to deter and combat the trafficking of antiquities, Matthews led colleagues in Iraq and from the SmartWater Foundation to apply encoded isotopic signatures to artefacts in Iraqi museums, supported by the DCMS/British Council’s Cultural Protection Fund (£156k). This major intervention has trained 43 Iraqi heritage professionals in security measures to protect cultural heritage; enhanced collections records at Slemani Museum and the Iraq Museum in Baghdad; and applied security technology to 273,000 artefacts. The work now provides a best practice case study for conducting cultural protection measures in conflict regions and is cited as “the implementation of a ground-breaking initiative at a critical time in cultural protection history” (E6).



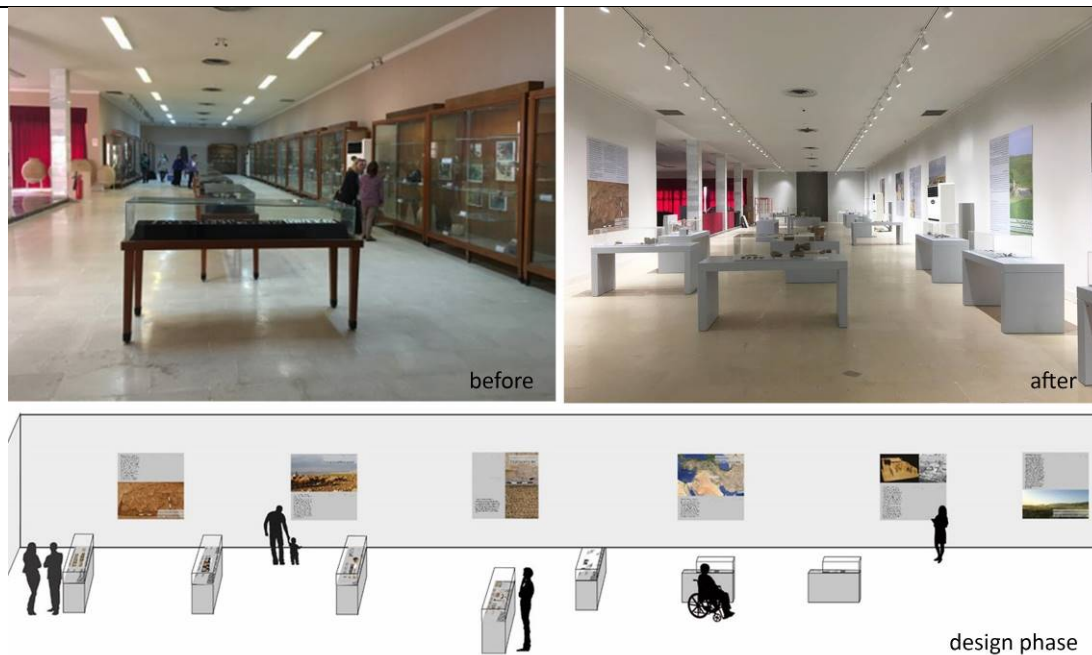
New methodologies have arisen from Matthews and Richardson’s research using scientific techniques for sourcing clay artefacts that are being used in repatriation efforts of trafficked artefacts. In September 2019, at the invitation of the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute, Washington, and as a result of high-profile antiquities trafficking cases in the USA, Matthews and Richardson shared the methodologies with members of the FBI and the US State Department at a collaborative workshop.

**C. Enhancing capacity in the cultural heritage sector**

1. Matthews’ excavations at Bestansur in partnership with Iraqi colleagues have revealed the earliest evidence for sedentarising communities in Iraqi Kurdistan (outputs 1 and 2). Subsequently Matthews advised and supported the Iraqi government to ensure the accession of Bestansur to the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List (E7).

2. At Slemani Museum in Sulaimani funded by \$60k from the US State Department, Wendy Matthews, Amy Richardson and Roger Matthews have collaborated with Iraqi colleagues to develop a new prehistory gallery and educational materials incorporating material from their research sites and inspired by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to encourage museum patrons and especially children to engage with heritage sites across the region (E8).





3. Investigations taking place at Bestansur, Shimshara and Zarzi as part of the CZAP/MENTICA projects included training more than 100 professionals from the Directorate for Antiquities and Heritage, local excavators, and students from across Iraq and Iran in excavation, recording, analysis, and conservation techniques on-site. In collaboration with Rozhen Mohammed-Amin (Sulaimani Polytechnic University), Matthews co-led an initiative to develop a Cultural Heritage Network in Iraqi Kurdistan (£93k, AHRC GCRF Network+), through stakeholder workshops and cultural events. Within the network, Matthews has led workshops with more than 100 heritage professionals from across Iraq and chaired a focus group on “Cultural Heritage Management During Peace and Conflict” with the regional antiquities directors and high-level policy makers from across the Kurdistan Regional Government (E9).

This combination of approaches, all arising from Matthews extensive research in the region, have been fundamental in embedding cultural rights and heritage protections at all levels in Iraq. They have enhanced capacity in Iraq’s heritage sector and are empowering communities to protect and develop these globally significant cultural heritage resources for future generations.

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [E1] RASHID International reports and UN reports
- [E2] RASHID report for Iraq’s Universal Periodic Review & UN response
- [E3] RASHID statement on the 2<sup>nd</sup> protocol & UNESCO announcement
- [E4] Yazidi report for UNITAD
- [E5] Mosul site protections
- [E6] British Council SmartWater Project evaluation report
- [E7] UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List
- [E8] Museum redevelopment
- [E9] Cultural Heritage Network outcomes