

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORIES AND CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES**

This paper's topic is a database of all archaeological sites excavated and surveyed by Israel in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since 1967. This database project, conducted by the author with Rafi Greenberg in Tel Aviv University (Greenberg and Keinan 2007, 2009; Keinan, forthcoming), was created by collating administrative data from Israeli organisations and archaeological data from publications. This inventory is comprehensive, accessible to anyone, and is the only source of information which includes all Israeli records since 1967. However, this paper focuses on its problems and limitations, especially in relation to its use for Cultural Heritage Management purposes, and also on how to try and overcome them.

One important issue regarding the data in this inventory is that it derives from Israeli sources alone. The obvious solution would be to use it in conjunction with Palestinian data - mainly the database of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage and other national and local scale datasets such as the Riwaq inventory of historical and traditional buildings. Another issue is that this database was not designed as a heritage management tool. It does not state the sites' condition, accessibility, tourism potential, populations of interest, management plans, etc. The Palestinian database, on the other hand, is aimed at scoping out archaeological sites as cultural resources, thus including relevant fields for management purposes.

When it comes to demarcating sites' boundaries, our database locates each archaeological site by one set of coordinates. The Staff Officer for Archaeology, working in the West Bank for the Israeli government, uses a GIS layer of sites demarcated by polygons, which can be used in conjunction with other datasets. In addition, the Palestinian database aims at demarcating sites using polygons rather than 'point data'. Another key issue is the units of research: this inventory includes archaeological sites only - but as archaeology is only one aspect of heritage, more data is needed for purposes of heritage management. The Palestinian inventory is planned to include also monuments, historical buildings, ethnographic data and

artefacts. Using this dataset in conjunction with other Palestinian datasets would give a much broader picture of heritage.

The Israeli database reflects a significant problem of survey methodology: the lack of prehistoric sites. Approaching this problem, the database can be queried to find out which areas were covered by a prehistoric survey; for all other areas, one can either have a focused prehistoric survey in areas that are planned to go through development or a management plan, or build a predictive model for the location of prehistoric sites using GIS. Another limitation of the database is the fact that some surveys digitised for it are by definition partial surveys, and others were never published, a fact that results in archaeological "dead zones" on maps generated from the database. This issue can again be approached by predictive modelling and by the addition of other inventories that might complement missing data.

The database records information up to 2007. While there haven't been any major Israeli surveys in the past few years, there have been a substantial number of excavations; many of them are salvage work along the route of the Separation Barrier. Any inventory used for management planning should be continually updated, as the archaeological reality keeps on changing. One more thing to be aware of is the quality of information in the database. The database is a synthesis of many surveys conducted by different surveyors with different interests and qualifications. This is also an issue with administrative lists used by the Israeli archaeological organisations. Inaccuracies, contradictory information, missing data and errors had to be dealt with during the database construction. It's thus important to be aware of the context in which data was created and the ever existing possibility of human error.

All these issues that were raised relate specifically to the database created by Greenberg and myself. Some of the problems are unique for this dataset, others are shared by any inventory listing archaeological sites or monuments. The importance of providing accurate information about the archaeological inventories being used needs to be stressed out: it's important to understand the context, background and methodology in which an inventory has been created. Promoting the idea of a shared heritage in Israel/Palestine, a holistic approach for dealing with heritage in the Palestinian territories should consider this area as one unified archaeological landscape. One major challenge is that, generally speaking, there is no cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian archaeologists, which makes the idea of data sharing

a lot more complex. Cooperation, trust, and good communication between the two sides should be aspired for.

#### References

- A. Keinan, The Archaeological Site Database for the West Bank, in: T.E. Levy, S.H. Savage, C. Baru and O. LaBianca (eds.), Portal Science and Archaeology - Views from the Mediterranean Lands. Equinox Handbooks in Anthropological Archaeology, London forthcoming.
- R. Greenberg, A. Keinan, Israeli Archaeological Activity in the West Bank 1967-2007: A Sourcebook: The West Bank and East Jerusalem Archaeological Database Project, Jerusalem 2009.
- R. Greenberg, A. Keinan, The Present Past of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Israeli Archaeology in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since 1967. The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Research Papers: No. 1, Tel Aviv 2007.

© Adi Keinan

e-mail: [adi.keinan.09@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:adi.keinan.09@ucl.ac.uk)

This article should be cited like this: A. Keinan, Archaeological Inventories and Cultural Heritage Management in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Forum Archaeologiae 55/VI/2010 (<http://farch.net>).