



Russian Aggression against Ukraine and Relevant Challenges for Archaeology

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Introduction

As it is well-known, interstate conflict between Russia and Ukraine started in 2014 with occupation of Crimea and since February, 2022 Russia committed broad military aggression to all Ukraine's territory, that created various challenges for cultural heritage, including archeological monuments, also as for the relevant scientific activities and institutions in conflict zone and at the occupied territories [1,2].

Dr. Andrii Chvaliuk stressed on that issue that Russians structures used since March, 2022 the occupied Crimea to accumulate exhibits stolen from mainland Ukraine, as well as the Crimean part of the cultural and historical heritage of Ukraine. He added that such illegal transfer of historical and cultural values from the newly occupied territories has become a separate direction of the ideological and cultural expansion, which is coordinated by the Russian authorities at the highest level. Expert stressed that the scale of the problem is quite threatening, since there is a problem of both documenting the facts of the theft of cultural property and creating mechanisms for their subsequent return after the end of conflict [3].

Well known Ukrainian archaeologist Evelina Kravchenko adds that the Russian Ukrainian war opened up, in addition to the problems of the global security system, another global challenge – the low effectiveness of the system for protecting cultural property during an armed conflict.

She stressed that since 2014, Russia has been criminally “alienating” movable and immovable cultural heritage objects

of Ukraine in several ways. The occupiers unlawfully “issue” fake “orders and regulations”, according to which Ukrainian museums, reserves, archives and libraries are criminally declared as allegedly “state institutions of Russia” with the corresponding illegal “financing, management and subordination”.

She reminded that since 2014, Russian structures has been carrying out an illegal “passportization” of archeological monuments in the occupied Crimea in accordance with the “laws of Russia”. Ukrainian monuments that have the status of national importance are criminally “determined” and “taken into account” as allegedly “federal significance”. In the same criminal “procedure”, collections of moving objects of cultural heritage, which were stored in museums as of 2014, are “taken into account” [4].

Therefore, it is important now not even to amend the existing international treaties developed for the post-war world of the mid-twentieth century, but to develop a mechanism for the international search and exchange of information, and possibly the creation of a new international body that would deal specifically with the search for and return of stolen cultural heritage as a consequence of international crimes and activities of transnational organized crime, Dr. Kravchenko added [4].

Those issues were discussed on International Conference “Protection of Cultural Heritage and Countering Cultural Erasure in Armed Conflict: New Challenges and Experience of Ukraine”, was held in Kyiv on July 4-5, 2024 [5]. On that event Dr. Chiara D. Bardeschi, head of the UNESCO Bureau in Ukraine, while answering

questions about the “Crimean case”, spoke about the systematic work of this international structure to observe and constantly monitor the situation on the occupied peninsula.

Dr. Erik Kleijn, working as a focal point for Ukraine and as a specialist in cultural heritage and armed conflicts at the Netherlands Agency for Cultural Heritage, added that “to end this war as soon as possible and to get justice done, including repayment by the Russian Federation of all damages”. He especially noted that European countries, finally, obtained a realistic view on Russia’s war against Ukraine’s culture and heritage, and will continue to follow and analyses its development, thereby fully supporting the government in Kyiv [5].

So, current scientific research must pay additional attention to described challenges for cultural heritage, including the archeological monuments, also as the challenges for relevant scientific activities and institutions in conflict zones. Also, the usage of archeological monuments, relevant activities and institutions for disinformation, misinformation, hate speech, war and genocidal propaganda must be in focus of attention of international institutions with mandate in areas of archaeology and cultural

heritage.

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None

Conflict of Interest

No Conflict of Interest

References

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