

## 2025 Annual Report – Cultural Heritage Committee

This has been a year of transition but also an active one for the Cultural Heritage Committee.

1. Leadership: Committee service is limited to two three-year terms, and a number of members reached that threshold at the beginning of the calendar year. Among committee members who remained, there were none available to assume the committee chairmanship, and to give the new members time to fully integrate with the committee's programs and practices one of the term-limited members, Fred Winter, was asked to continue with the committee as chair. He agreed and is the author of this report.

2. Annual program: The committee will once again be sponsoring a workshop at this year's annual meeting. In 2024, the workshop theme was repatriation. This year's theme is community archaeology and presentations in the session will range from the Balkans to the Sudan and through the Near East, reflecting ASOR's expanded geographical remit. For the past two years the committee chair has co-organized the workshop. The committee plans to submit a proposal for 2026 for a workshop focused on intangible heritage, a topic that has increasingly appeared as an area of interest for committee (see below). Two committee members, Jessica Robkin and Yaroub al-Obaidi, have agreed to serve as workshop organizers.

The committee appreciates that the program committee has accepted its proposals for the current and past workshops, but our committee wonders whether as one of ASOR's standing committees it should be allowed an automatic slot in the program. Our committee's status as a standing committee would seem to offer special status in its access to the annual meeting program.

3. Liaison with the CHI: The committee appreciates its close working relationship with Darren Ashby, ASOR's Cultural Heritage Programs Manager, who has not only served as liaison between the CHI and the CHC but also has provided logistical assistance to the committee. Ashby has reported at each meeting of the committee on the extensive range of CHI programs and ASOR's grants work to support these programs. The CHC has discussed the relationship between the CHI and the committee, generally with the CHI conducting programs and the CHC to review and propose policy.

4. Response to federal, CPAC actions: A CPAC meeting in February at the beginning of the Trump administration was postponed, and the committee was relieved when that meeting was eventually rescheduled, indicating that CPAC was not a candidate for the sort of reduction or discontinuation that has marked other federal agencies. Of the countries under consideration for MOUs and related actions through the CPAC, the CHC has particularly focused on agreements with Afghanistan, Italy, Morocco, and Turkiye, all of which are within ASOR's sphere of interest. Letters from committee members have supported efforts to limit the importation of cultural property and align the U.S. with preservation efforts in those countries. This advocacy is consistent with the CHC's actions in the past.

5. ASOR-Affiliated Civil Society Organizations and Conservation Projects: A subcommittee of the CHC has taken on the task of reviewing applications for affiliation under this new umbrella. The subcommittee members are Andrew Cohen, Brian Facmire, Edward Luby, and Elizabeth Molacek. The CHC chair also serves as a reviewer for these applications. To date, only one proposal has been received and the subcommittee, recognizing that the applicant had a track record of substantial and worthwhile programming, voted unanimously to endorse the application.

The application, which was from the Youth Save Organization in Iraq, raised an interesting question for the subcommittee. The applicant organization was focused on cultural preservation but had only a minimal engagement with historical or archaeological programs. Some reviewers noted that there could be questions about the appropriateness of an affiliation with an organization with that focus. We recognized that ASOR's strategic plan directs us to preserve and protect "all aspects of the cultural heritage of Western Asia and the Greater Mediterranean Basin," which would not appear to limit ASOR to programs with a historical or archaeological focus. Nevertheless, engagement with contemporary culture has not traditionally been part of ASOR's program. The committee, which will probably be incorporating such programs into its 2026 annual meeting workshop on intangible heritage, wonders if this would not benefit from further discussion.

The review subcommittee will hold a special meeting during the annual meeting to discuss this and other relevant topics.

6. Last year, our committee discussed the question of ASOR's geographical remit, and it indicated its favor for a broadened approach to ASOR's territorial interests. It was preparing a recommendation along those lines for the CCC and executive committee but then noted that the expanded range of territorial interests was independently included in ASOR's pending strategic plan. At that point our committee's recommendation became moot.

Respectfully submitted,  
Fred Winter, Chair