

## The World's Heritage, our collective memory, is in danger

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The site where once stood the Bamiyan Buddha, Afghanistan

LONDON - We are dedicating this issue of *News in Conservation* to the theme of world heritage in times of war and conflict. It's our first time, we never produced a thematic issue before, but we felt it was the right time to highlight the danger our collective memory is facing, focus on the people that are involved in the battles to save our heritage and express our clear condemnation of any act that endangers our shared memory.

### **NiC's interview with Syria's DGAM Director General -**

Read the exclusive interview with Prof Dr Maamoun Abdulkarim from page 9

### **Assessing and protecting Egyptian's treasures -**

Read the full article from page 14

### **Efficient or Deficient? -**

Rim Lababidi argues about the efficacy of international measures for protecting cultural heritage. Page 18

### **Reconstructing the Ancient City of Aleppo -**

Diana Miznazi on post-conflict challenges. Full feature on page 22

### **Fostering Values to Protect Cultural Heritage -**

Read Hiba Qassar's opinion piece on page 25

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To provide some context to this issue we will start with an overview of the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger; the list only includes sites that were previously inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List so it should be no surprise the omission of certain sites that are currently under threat or have already been attacked.

The list is designed to inform the international community of conditions which threaten the very characteristics for which a site was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and to encourage corrective action.

Sites on the list include those under threat from armed conflict and war, as well as natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanisation and unchecked tourist development.

Following is the current List of sites that are at risk from armed conflicts and general unrest.

<i>Sites inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage in Danger List:</i>	<b>46</b>
<i>Sites in danger due to conflict:</i>	<b>15</b>
<i>Percentage of sites at risk from conflict:</i>	<b>32%</b>

#### List of cultural sites in danger from armed conflicts

**Ancient city of Aleppo, Syria** – First inscribed in 2013 due to the Syrian Civil War, currently held partly by rebels and by Government. The site is threatened by incessant bombing, mortar and gunfire. See News in Conservation Issue 33 December 2012 p.4.

**Ancient city of Bosra, Syria** - First inscribed in 2013 due to the Syrian Civil War, currently held partly by rebels and Government. The site is threatened by incessant bombing, mortar and gunfire.

**Ancient city of Damascus, Syria** - First inscribed in 2013 due to the Syrian Civil War, currently held partly by rebels and Government. The site is threatened by incessant bombing, mortar and gunfire.

**Ancient villages of Northern Syria, Syria** – On the List since 2013 due to the Syrian Civil War, some villages are held by rebels. There have been repeated reports of looting and demolitions by Islamist groups.

**Crac de Chivaliers, Homs, Syria** – On the List since 2013 due to the Syrian Civil War, once held by Al-Nusra Front and other Islamist groups; it was reclaimed by SAA and Hezbollah fighters. Reports of damages and looting caused by Islamist groups were released by the Syrian government. See News in Conservation Issue 41, April 2014 p.4

**Qal'at Salah El-Din, Syria** - On the List since 2013 due to the Syrian Civil War, once held by Al-Nusra Front and other Islamist groups, it was reclaimed by SAA and Hezbollah fighters. Reports of damages and looting caused by Islamist groups were released by the Syrian government.

**Palmyra, Syria** – Inscribed on the List in 2013 due to the Syrian Civil War, the site is currently held by the Syrian Government.

**Ashur, Iraq** – On the list since 2003 due to the Iraq War, a planned reservoir that would have partially flooded the site was suspended in the wake of the Iraq War by the new administration; lack of adequate protection.

**Samarra Archaeological City, Iraq** – the site was inscribed in 2007 due to lack of security following the Iraq War and lack of state control for protection or management of the site.

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# Editorial

Welcome to the February Special Edition of *News in Conservation*, the first to be entirely dedicated to a specific theme – Heritage in Conflict Zones.

I am very grateful to the authors who accepted the invitation to contribute with inspiring and thought-provoking articles, often coming from first-hand experiences.

A special thank you goes to the Syrian Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums in the person of its Director General Prof. Dr. Maamoun Abdulkarim who graciously agreed to be interviewed for this issue. Given the circumstances of the conflict still raging in Syria we particularly appreciated the opportunity we were afforded with this interview.

As *NiC* was getting ready for publication, news kept coming in – the destruction of part of the Nineveh fortress in Iraq by Isis extremists for example – and I found it hard to decide where to draw the line. You'll agree that this is a theme that will need further attention in the future. As noted by some of the authors, the more the international community is involved in raising awareness of issues surrounding the protection of cultural heritage the easier it is for the affected communities to safeguard their history.

In this issue we also bring you the latest news from the IIC AGM that took place last January in London so in case you couldn't attend, read the reports in the IIC News section.

**Barbara Borghese**  
Editor

**Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan** – On the List since 2003 the site is in a fragile conservation state due to abandonment, military action and dynamite explosions; there is danger from risk of collapse of Buddha niches, further deterioration of cave murals, looting and illicit excavations. The Buddha's were destroyed during the rule of the Taliban as the statues were considered offensive to their teachings of Islam. See *News in Conservation*, Issue 40, February 2014 p.24

**Minaret and Archaeological remains of Jam, Afghanistan** - The site was inscribed in 2002 due to the lack of a legal protection framework, lack of protection measures or a management plan, and poor condition of the site.

**Historic Town of Zabid, Yemen** – On the list since 2000, the site is in a deteriorating state especially with regards to the historic buildings.

**Medieval Monuments of Kosovo, Serbia** – On the list since 2006, there is a lack of legal protection and management; political instability and security of the region pose grave threats to the monuments. See *News in Conservation* Issue 43, August 2014 p.8

**Timbuktu, Mali** – Inscribed on the List in 2012, the site is at risk from the threat of destruction by Islamist groups like Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram. Some monuments are now pillaged and destroyed. See *News in Conservation* Issue 34, February 2013 and Issue 36, June 2013.

**Tomb of Askia, Mali** – Inscribed in 2012, damaged by Islamist groups like Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb and Ansar Dine. The site was reported destroyed by Ansar Dine when they captured Timbuktu.

Inscribing a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger allows the World Heritage Committee to allocate immediate assistance from the World Heritage Fund to the endangered property. It also alerts the international community to these situations in the hope that it can join efforts to save these endangered sites.

Inscription of a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger requires the World Heritage Committee to develop and adopt, in consultation with the State Party concerned, a programme for corrective measures, and subsequently to monitor the situation of the site. All efforts must be made to restore the site's values in order to enable its removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger as soon as possible.

If a site loses the characteristics which determined its inscription on the World Heritage List, the World Heritage Committee may decide to delete the property from both the List of World Heritage in Danger and the World Heritage List.

For more information about UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger visit:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>





## News in Brief...

### Getty mosaic programme teaches conservation in conflict zones

LOS ANGELES - *Mosaikon*, a programme supported by the Getty Foundation, is helping train conservators to care for priceless artefacts such as ancient Greek and Roman mosaics that can be found all over the Mediterranean, including political hot spots such as Libya and Syria.

The conservation programme was launched in 2009 when the Getty Foundation and the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) joined forces with two external partners—the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in Rome and the International Committee for the Conservation of Mosaics (ICCM). The initiative to improve the care and presentation of mosaics of classical antiquity in museums and in situ in the Middle East and North Africa is helping Middle Eastern countries to protect their precious treasures.

Looting, poor conservation practice and regional conflicts, including the current Syrian civil war, have taken a toll on many ancient mosaics. These regions have also traditionally lacked the expertise as the few trained conservators in the field often reside elsewhere.

Joan Weinstein, deputy director at the Getty Foundation said: "There had been some efforts to teach people in the region to care for mosaics -- but they had been unco-ordinated". She added that "one of the challenges of earlier years was that individual countries were always importing experts who could provide a short-term fix for a problem. But this didn't lead to sustainable solutions."

So far the project has gathered teams of conservators from countries such as Syria, Libya and Jordan and trained them in the latest mosaic-conservation techniques. Conservators trained in the *Mosaikon* programme have helped, among other projects, to repair damage to the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, Syria, one of the oldest and largest mosques in the world.

So far, the Getty Foundation has committed US\$6 million to the effort.

The next step for *Mosaikon* is to train local teachers who will be able to take over the task of training the future generation of conservators.

To learn more about *Mosaikon* visit: [http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our\\_projects/education/mosaikon/](http://www.getty.edu/conservation/our_projects/education/mosaikon/)



Mosaic of a deer in the Apamea Museum, Syria

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### First mission to northern Mali to assess damage to the region's cultural heritage

BAMAKO - Following the occupation by armed groups of parts of northern Mali, UNESCO, Malian and international experts have completed the first assessment of damage to cultural heritage in Gao. Their work addressed both heritage sites and the cultural practices of local people.

Lazare Eloundou Assomo, Director of UNESCO's Office in Bamako, who took part in the mission said: "Urgent measures are required to safeguard the Tomb of Askia, a World Heritage Site, before the next rainy season. Concerning Gao's heritage, we must address the trauma experienced by the local population following violent attempts by the armed extremists to destroy their cultural identity and practices, including traditional music. We must heal these wounds to pave the way for reconciliation and lasting peace in the region".

During the visit, experts found that the local community had carried out work to repair the Tomb of Askia, to avoid further deterioration of the 15th century earthen monument. Young people of the town of Gao also took the risk of defending the site during the occupation, preventing the extremists from damaging it in the ways they damaged World Heritage sites in Timbuktu.

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Despite community efforts, the experts found that the mosque's prayer rooms require major conservation work before the next rainy season, to prevent further deterioration.

More damage was found to have been suffered by ninety percent of the archaeological site of Gao Saneye. The site which dates back to the 11th century had been pillaged by the extremists that took over the area.

In addition, the newly built Sahel Museum, meant to house historical collection, was used by the extremists as a residence for nearly one year, leading to the loss of equipment. This situation must be remedied before the collections can be transferred.

During extensive consultations with local community representatives, the mission heard of the difficulties endured by the inhabitants, especially cultural groups, musicians and dancers, who saw their instruments burned and their equipment and costumes destroyed. The Takamba, a popular Songhoy dance, as well as the Holey-Orey, the dance of the possessed, were prohibited. Women were forced to cut their traditional braids and stop wearing traditional ethnic costumes. The House of Artisans was vandalised, leaving artisans without sources of income.

UNESCO and the Malian authorities will now work together to produce a complete needs assessment of the cultural heritage of Gao and take measures to safeguard that heritage.



A Minaret in Mali

© UNESCO

## 2,200 pillaged artefacts seized in European crackdown

VALENCIA - Over 2,200 looted artefacts, many from ancient Egypt, were confiscated as part of a Europe-wide operation that also saw the arrest of 35 suspected traffickers.

Captain Javier Morales, an expert in historic objects with the Spanish Police Force, estimated the value of one of the most important items recovered: a majestic bust of Egyptian goddess Sekhmet, at approximately £75,000 (US\$113,000).

The Egyptian treasures were recovered as part of an operation launched in 14 countries to prevent further looting, theft and illicit trafficking of cultural artefacts. The Spanish police showed to the press 36 objects, which included a statue of the goddess Isis and a vase covered in hieroglyphics, alone worth up to £225,000 (\$340,000). The artefacts were discovered in the port city of Valencia in Spain, hidden in vessels during an inspection of a cargo coming from Alexandria, Egypt.

Some of the objects were probably looted from burial sites at Saqqara and ruins near Mit Rahina in Egypt. A number of arrests were made in conjunction with the recovery with charges including trafficking historic objects and money laundering. As part of the operation, police inspected thousands of antique and art dealers, auction houses and second-hand outlets. Checks were stepped up at airports, borders and ports.

The operation follows another effective crackdown by the Italian government which in January announced that Italian police had seized more than 5,000 ancient artefacts in a record 45-million-euro haul after dismantling a Swiss-Italian trafficking ring.



Three Graces, Tripoli Museum, Libya

## UNESCO Director-General calls on all parties to protect Libya's unique Cultural Heritage

PARIS - Amidst alarming reports of increase in acts of vandalism, illicit trafficking and attacks on Libyan cultural heritage, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova called on all parties to protect Libya's unique cultural heritage. Her call came in the context of the deterioration of the security situation in Libya and in support of efforts towards an inclusive political dialogue to put an end to the current situation.

"Libyan heritage is the expression of a shared memory of the country, and its respect represents a corner stone for long lasting national reconciliation. I therefore urge all parties, as well as the Libyan population, to commit to and act for its safeguarding. Parties should refrain from using

cultural property and its immediate surroundings for military purposes likely to expose it to destruction or damage as well as to abstain from any act of hostility directed at such property," said the Director-General

"UNESCO is working with INTERPOL, the World Custom Organisation (WCO) and specialised national police corps such as the Carabinieri (Italy), to increase vigilance on attempts of import, transit and sales of Libyan cultural property. I have also alerted Libya neighbouring countries on the threats of illicit trafficking of cultural property. UNESCO is further engaged with Libyan cultural professionals and NGOs to reinforce emergency measures for cultural heritage protection, and enable the rapid assessment, documentation and monitoring of heritage. We will spare no efforts in supporting Libyans to protect their rich cultural heritage" continued Irina Bokova

Concluding, the Director-General called for parties to bring into force the provisions of the 1954 Convention and its Second Protocol, and in particular Article 19 of the aforementioned Convention and Articles 6, 7, 8 and 22 of the Second Protocol to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1999), to ensure that all measures are taken in military operations to appropriately secure all designated historic buildings and cultural sites and to co-operate with local authorities responsible for safeguarding.

## Thirteenth Century tomb destroyed in southern Syria

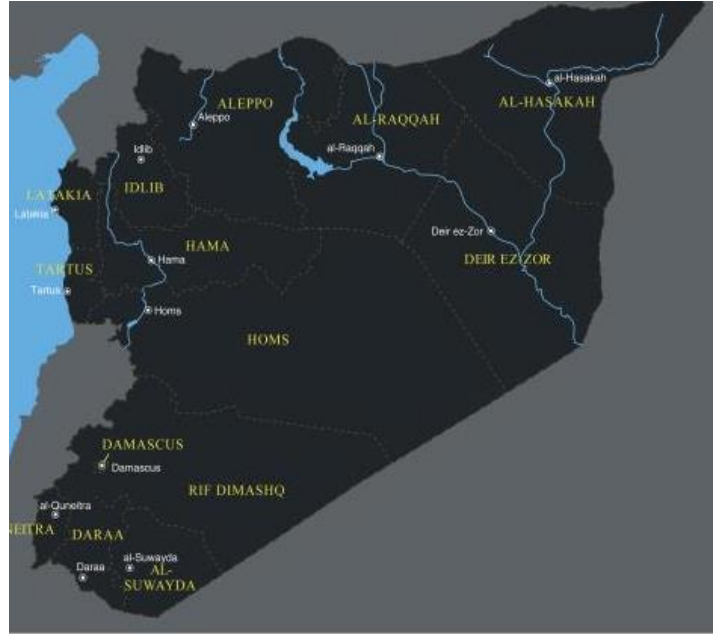
DAMASCO - The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights released a statement claiming that militants of the Jabhat al-Nusra - al Qaeda's Syrian affiliate – have destroyed the thirteenth-century tomb of Imam Nawawi, a revered Islamic scholar. The tomb, located in the southern Syrian city of Nawa near the Jordanian border, is the latest historical site to fall prey to the protracted conflict in Syria.

According to a report by television station Al Jazeera, the Syrian government condemned the destruction of the tomb as an attack on the "country's history and heritage." The city of Nawa, which lies in the southern Daraa Governorate, has been a site of frequent conflict between moderate Syrian rebels, al Qaeda-backed militants and government troops since early last year. Imam Nawawi, born in 1233 AD, is believed to have written several books on Islamic studies and Quranic verses. After his death in 1277 AD, he was buried in his home town of Nawa.





# *SHIRĪN* - Syrian Heritage in Danger: an international research initiative and network



*Shirīn* is an initiative from the global community of scholars active in the field of archaeology, art and history of the Ancient Near East. It brings together a significant proportion of those international research groups that were working in Syria prior to 2010, with the purpose of making their expertise available to wider heritage protection efforts.

Accordingly, its International Committee includes the directors of a number of long-term international research programmes, and others who share their strong commitment to the effective protection of the heritage of Syria.

This *Shirīn* committee was created in response to a request by the participants at the 9th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, in Basel, Switzerland, on June 10th, 2014. It seeks to represent the broad sweep of archaeological and historical research in Syria and is supported by the directors of research programmes active in neighbouring countries.

Representing the major institutions, universities and research centres in Europe, North America, Oceania, Eastern and Western Asia, the main purpose of *shirīn* is to support governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations in their efforts to preserve and safeguard the heritage of Syria (sites, monuments & museums). It will take account of, and respond to, the needs of Syrian colleagues and authorities regardless of their political, religious or ethnic affiliation, in particular with respect to emergency steps and measures.

Composed of scholars who have, individually, a deep knowledge of the field, and collectively cover all regions of Syria, it will activate local networks in order to support, when possible, concrete actions to ensure the payment of the official site guardians and the protection of the excavation houses and storage depots. *Shirīn* — with the help of official and non-governmental bodies — will collect information on damage resulting from the current conflict and identify those cases in which emergency repairs or protective action may be required.

*Shirīn* will also collaborate on the creation of a comprehensive database of elements of Syrian heritage. This will provide a basic core of knowledge to which evidence of damage can be added on a case-by-case basis, and will allow the evaluation of the overall pattern and scale of damage resulting from the conflict, as it presents across different regions of Syria and the various classes of monument. It will thus propose a key source of information that can be made available to those involved in heritage protection at a local level, so that they have the necessary knowledge to prioritize heritage protection efforts in a systematic manner.

*Shirīn* also includes members with long and deep experience of architectural and artefacts restoration, and specialists in all the periods of the history and prehistory of Syria. By involving the international research community now, we intend that this capability will be fully formed and thus ready to support the local authorities and communities when the emphasis shifts from safeguarding and the documentation of damage, towards restoration and reconstruction.

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Experience and expertise acquired by the members of the *S h i r ī n* Committee might as well be of some help in evaluating the provenience of illicitly excavated or purchased artefacts and artwork.

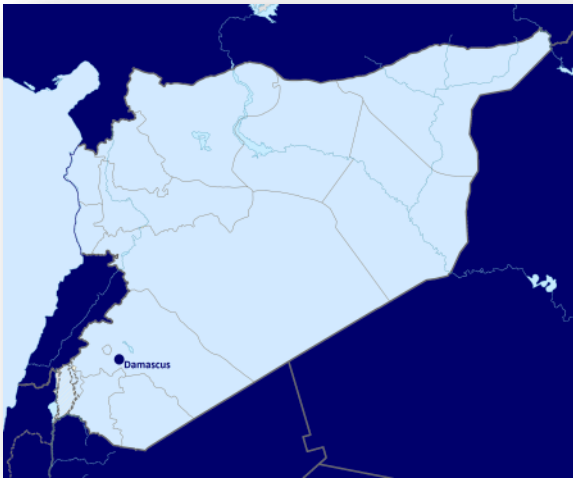
Dr Andrew Jamieson, Senior Lecturer and Curator of Classics and Archaeology at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne, commented on the initiative to which he was invited to participate with the following statement: “The unfolding conflict in Syria is a catastrophe on many levels. Inevitably, Syria’s heritage is one of many casualties resulting from the armed conflict. Reporting of the Syrian crisis, although often unverified, includes cases of both random and deliberate destruction of heritage assets. A list compiled in association with *Heritage for Peace* documents thirty-eight (38) cultural heritage organisations and the actions they are taking towards the preservation and protection of Syria’s cultural heritage. A significant number of groups were formed directly in response to the hostilities that commenced in 2010. Both local and foreign agencies are represented on the list. Not surprisingly, competing interests and opposing views hinder coordinated heritage response efforts. Lack of awareness is also contributing to problems and tensions at the local level. For many Syrians cultural heritage is seen as owned and managed by the state, and government heritage authorities have implemented strategies to reinforce this division. In many cases local communities have been reluctant to come forward to protect places of heritage significance highlighting the critical need to engage and involve these communities in cultural resource management”.

Archaeologists from the University of Melbourne have a long established tradition of working in Syria, and through these research projects they have made important contributions to our understanding of the archaeology of the ancient Near East. The University of Melbourne endorses the invitation for Dr Andrew Jamieson from the Classics and Archaeology programme to *S h i r ī n* resulting from the recent workshop organised on Syrian Heritage, funded by the Swiss SGOA (Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Orientalische Alterumswissenschaft), as part of the 9th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (9ICAANE) convened at the University of Basel in June 2014, and supports the initiative of the *S h i r ī n* committee.

To learn more about *S h i r ī n* visit: <http://epicentrecreatives.com/shirin/?p=1>







# Spotlights on Syria - NiC's interview with Dr Prof Maamoun Abdulkarim

by Barbara Borghese

*News in Conservation was granted an exclusive interview with Prof. Dr. Maamoun Abdulkarim, Director General, Directorate General of Antiquities & Museums (DGAM), Syria. Together with the questions that NiC wanted to ask, Prof Maamoun Abdulkarim also answered questions from a panel composed of three authors who contributed to this issue of News in Conservation.*

With a capital city among the oldest continuously-inhabited cities in the world, Syria has been home to some of the most ancient civilisations in history. Four years ago, in the early spring of 2011, civil unrest began within the context of the Arab Spring, with nationwide protests against President Bashar al-Assad's government, whose forces responded with violent crackdowns. The conflict gradually grew from popular protests to an armed rebellion after months of military sieges. The civil war has caused a humanitarian disaster of epic proportions as outlined by the UN and many international organisations. Statistics cite more than 6.5 million Syrians as having been displaced, more than 3 million have fled the country to neighboring states such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq. Others have been left in poor living conditions with shortages of food and drinking water.

Inevitably within such a context, Syria's rich cultural and artistic heritage spanning millennia, has suffered irreparable damage. As a direct impact of war, some archaeological sites have been transformed into battlefields whereas other are witnessing increases of illegal excavation carried out by armed gangs of looters with the cooperation of people hired within Syria and from neighboring countries.

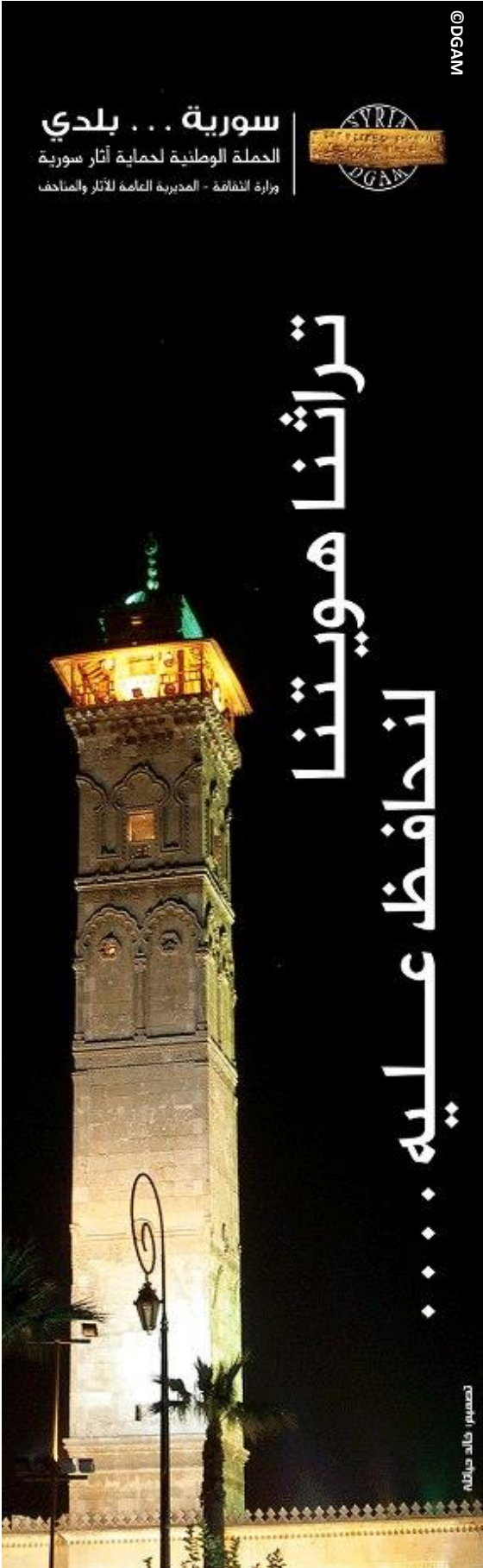
The country's six World Heritage sites were officially listed as being in danger of damage or destruction in June 2013 although a clear assessment of damage is still unclear because of limited access to these sites which are all located in the conflict areas.

Museums have also suffered greatly, particularly those in Deir Atieh and Raqqa; looting has been reported in the Maarat al-Numan Museum and the Folk Museum at Aleppo, as well as the museums in Hama. The Apamia Museum witnessed the theft of only one object.

**NiC:** Can you tell us more about the *National Campaign to Rescue Syrian Antiquities* and is there a specific strategy to achieve this locally?

**M. A.:** A series of steps has been taken to involve all Syrians in defending the archaeological heritage representing their history, the common memory that was brought them together throughout history.

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The poster used for the National Campaign to Rescue Syrian Antiquities

In the summer of 2012, the staff of the Directorate General of Antiquities & Museums (DGAM) started a tremendous effort of cooperation with members of local communities, social, religious and intellectual leaders, to protect hundreds of archaeological sites and safeguard them from the repercussions of the current events. Success rates varied from one place to another based on people's support, which makes hope the dominant factor more often than not!

A *National Campaign to Rescue Syrian Antiquities* is held frequently in safe cities and takes a variety of forms as, for example, a *Heritage Day* highlighting the diversity and richness in the field of art, music and folklore. Accompanying the campaign is a photo gallery containing images documenting damage to Syrian cultural and archaeological heritage. Exhibitions and poster campaigns have been held in major cities; lectures on cultural heritage were presented to local communities; the efforts of non-governmental organisations have been encouraged in the cultural heritage field.

Cultural Heritage is the shared memory of the Syrian people. We have appealed more than once to keep cultural heritage out of any dispute because it belongs to the Syrian. Hopefully once the war ends, heritage can represent a common focus of peace for all Syrians.

We are always reminded of the importance of the defense of the rich and extraordinary heritage that belongs to the people. Political crises end and everything can be repaired in spite of the losses, but the destruction of cultural heritage will be irreplaceable.

From this point, we call on the Syrian people to protect their heritage, so as not to regret that our generation will be accused of failing to protect its heritage, which belongs to all Syrians, without exception.

#### **NiC: In terms of damage prevention and control, what measures are currently in place to protect sites and museums?**

When the crisis intensified during the summer of 2012, all museums were emptied of their holdings, and all archaeological artifacts were stored in safe and secure places. In addition, burglar alarms were installed in some museums and fortresses, and the number of guards and patrols was increased.

The Museum in Raqqa and the Folk Museum in Deir Atieh have suffered greatly from looting; a few objects were stolen from the Maarat al-Numan Museum and the Folk Museum at Aleppo. Otherwise, 99% of museum collections have been brought to safety before any damage could be done to them.

In contrast, the massive looting that has happened to the archaeological sites has been difficult to prevent because of the absence of authorities and the increasing of the violence in the area. Wherever possible, we have intervened to mitigate damage once it has occurred. In this case, local communities play a fundamental positive role in protecting archaeological sites through mediators within the social, religious, and intellectual

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parties. But this strategy did not always succeed. Archaeological sites are often located in remote areas, away from residential areas and armed gangs have threatened the locals with violence and other repercussions. Moreover, locals have sometimes cooperated in looting due to the difficult economic situation. Examples of this can be found at Dura Europos, Mari, Wadi Yarmuk, Apamia, Tell Ajajah etc.

Measures to electronically document the holdings of all Syrian museums have been gradually put in place. An IT team is digitally archiving the DGAM's information on the status of the archaeological sites prior to the crisis and updating their current situation and the damage affecting them. The team is using, among other resources, images and videos available on the Internet, provided by the regional departments of antiquities in the governorates or sent by members of the local community from the affected areas.

As calm returned to several sites and cities previously affected by clashes, in particular, Homs, Crac des chevaliers and Palmyra, the staff began a field damage assessments and is in the process of defining a recovery action plans.

#### **NiC: Are funds available for the scope?**

The Syrian Government budget provides the core funding for all the DGAM needs according to priorities of conservation and intervention established by the Department.

Throughout the time of the crisis all employees' salaries have been paid in all the Syrian cities including the ones that have experienced the worst clashes. Part of the funding still pays for excavation works in safe cities such as Damascus, Tartus and Sweida.

DGAM succeeded in providing extra budget support to help our most exposed personnel living in dangerous areas; we have provided support including new personal accommodation, new means of transport, including new offices in safer areas.

#### **NiC: In late September, dramatic footage from Aleppo showed the burning of parts of the city's ancient souk, considered a national treasure and defining landmark. Are there any plans in place for the reconstruction of the souk?**

As a direct impact of war, some archaeological sites have been transformed into battlefields. Aleppo's old city with its souk suffered greatly during the crises with many of its historical buildings destroyed during the clashes. What happened in Old Aleppo is nothing short of a crime against humanity and history. The targeting of the site has resulted in great damage that can be added to a long list of painful and irreplaceable losses.

In response to this cultural disaster immediate efforts were mounted to seek the establishment of supportive relationships between DGAM, UNESCO, the Arabic Regional Center for World Heritage Sites (ARC-WH) and ICOMOS. The emergency response to provide for planning the conservation and rehabilitation of the old city will include including getting professional help, assessing damage, finding funding, and salvaging collections. In cooperation with the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) issues concerning documentation and a database for the Aleppo old city built heritage were also addressed.

#### **NiC: I realise that a complete survey of the losses suffered by the country's heritage may be difficult to obtain due to the situation; am I correct in assuming that the extent of the losses is unknown?**

Estimates put the losses at roughly 700 historical buildings and archaeological sites (damaged or looted). Early reports claimed near-total destruction of 200 historical buildings in Old Aleppo; this number does not include the Souq area that consists of hundreds of shops.



Illegal excavations at Apamia



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Untill now the surveys carried out have been incomplete; the development of current events have prevented archaeological authorities from visiting all of the sites interested by attacks so a complete assessment has not yet been possible. Nevertheless, the team of experts is currently designing a digital map of the damaged sites, some well-known and others discovered along the way, based on a geographic information system. This will allow specialists to identify their priorities regarding the maintenance and restoration operations in the post-crisis period.

**NiC: On Change.org, you started a petition titled 'Help Ensure the Survival of Syria's Cultural Heritage' (<https://www.change.org/p/help-ensure-the-survival-of-syria-s-cultural-heritage>). Was the petition successful?**

This petition was used to encourage the international community to move forward on safeguarding and raise awareness about the importance of our cultural heritage. The idea for this petition came from World Monuments Fund (<http://www.wmf.org/>). This initiative offered a unique opportunity to recognise, support and preserve the work of DGAM at an international level after two years of isolation.

We need the international community to recognize the validity of our effort and to provide assistance and support for our work; indeed, the whole world should bear in mind that the Syrian archaeological heritage is part of the world's cultural heritage and that the loss of any of its components is a loss to all mankind.

**From Hiba Qassar: Is the DGAM developing any methods to reach the local communities and foster awareness (even after the conflict) based on the feedback received from last campaign promoted to raise awareness in Syria (the first ever of this kind in the country)?**

As I mentioned above, the National Campaign provided a great chance to reach the local community and work with them; we obtained very positive results from the campaign including the creation of volunteer networks. Local communities all over the country have mobilised and come together with the common objective of protecting their cultural heritage. These networks provide additional security in protecting some of the archaeological sites from illegal excavations, and safeguarding museums from looters.

Also as mentioned, success rates vary from one place to another based on people's support. For example, the joint efforts of authorities and local communities helped in the protection of the Maarrat Nu'man Museum.

I would like to highlight one particular example: the local community in the village of Brhlia in the region of Barada Valley, accidentally found a mosaic dating back to the middle of the 4th century (during the late Roman Era and the beginning of the Byzantine Period). They informed the Antiquities Authority and helped them to transfer the mosaic to the Damascus National Museum in order to restore it.

Co-operation between the residents and members of the local community in some area, has helped in reducing the extent of the damage affecting some of the archaeological sites as compared to the damage befalling other archaeological regions and sites.

We also have actively cooperated with non-governmental organisations, universities and with various private associations, such as the Engineering Union, the Heritage Commissions, the Departments of Architecture and of Archaeology in the university. In particular, we have organised training for university students on the protection of cultural heritage in critical areas.



Members of the local community helping to transfer a newly discovered mosaic



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Also, as a part of the DGAM vision to put in place more protection for Syria's cultural heritage after the crises, a request to update the antiquities law 222 of 1963, which had last been updated in 1999 has been formalised. The new amendments would govern reproduction of antiquities, impose harsher sentences on those who smuggled antiquities, implement site management plans for ancient monuments and give a greater role for the local community in conservation and management plans.

The DGAM sponsored Awareness Project will provide a broad overview of damages suffered by cultural heritage; this will include cultural as well as scientific information that could be used to study, promote and highlight the danger that Syrian cultural heritage is facing. The project has been developed in conjunction with the Archaeology Department at Damascus University and the Ministry of Information. It is a 'living document' that will be updated on an on-going basis.

**NiC: From Diana Miznazi: Media reports have talked about widespread looting in Syrian museums, can you clarify what is the situation at the National Museum of Aleppo?**

99% of the museum's artifacts were secured in safe places, including those from the Aleppo Museum. Repeated damage to the museum building was caused by clashes in the nearby areas. Unfortunately the Folk Museum in Old Aleppo suffered from looting, although the Directorate of Aleppo Antiquities was successful in removing the rest of the museum's collections to safe places.

**NiC: From Rim Labadidi: According to the first protocol of 1954 Hague Convention, which is ratified by the Syrian Government, cultural monuments must not be used as military barracks. We have heard reports from the international media that forces of the Syrian Government have been using heritage sites for this purpose. What is the position of the DGAM in relation to this?**

Syria signed the first protocol of the 1954 Hague Convention, and in all our public appeals and statements released on the subjects we appealed to all parties to protect our cultural heritage and specifically not to use heritage sites as military bases.

But what happened surpassed our predictions, the occupation of archaeological sites by gunmen during the crises as was the case in the Omayyad Mosque in old Aleppo, led government forces to take positions within Aleppo's citadel to avoid the expansion of the fighting to the whole of Aleppo city. A similar situation happened with Crac des Chevaliers although in this case, when the castle was recovered by the government, it was immediately released to DGAM and we immediately started putting in place urgent intervention measures.



*Crac de Chevaliers after the attacks*

# Risk assessment and protection of Egyptian Cultural Heritage after the 2011 revolution



by Abdelaziz Elmarazky + Sayed Hemeda + Ahmed Elsmany

*Since the revolution of the 25th of January 2011, Egyptian heritage has been exposed to unprecedented danger. Museums are being targeted for destruction and theft, archaeological sites are being looted and archaeological buildings are being demolished.*

The political unrest in Egypt has a harmful impact on Egyptian heritage because it has created a background that facilitates the proliferation of organised antiquities gangs that plundered museums such as the Egyptian Museum and the Malawi National Museum, and also smuggled ancient Egyptian and Jewish treasures.

There is an absence of cultural awareness on the part of the public as there are no socio-economic benefits to make them protect archaeological sites such as Dahshur, which was inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1979 but is now unprotected. In addition, city inhabitants are still creating illicit new cemeteries. We will now talk about the most prominent encroachments following the 2011 revolution.

## Looting of the Malawi National Museum

The Malawi National Museum is located about 300 kilometres south of Cairo and was opened in 1963 to showcase finds from excavations at nearby sites. The museum contained irreplaceable artifacts dating from ancient Egyptian times to Islamic times including animal mummies, religious offerings, painted wooden coffins, scarabs, amulets, coins, stone statues, bronze statues and funerary masks that had survived in good condition for more than 2,000 years.



Image from *Google Earth* showing the location of the Malawi Museum

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When the Egyptian armed forces ousted President Morsi, pro-Morsi protestors decided to assemble in Rab'a El Adawia Square (in Cairo) and El Nahda Square (in Giza) to support him against the Egyptian armed forces. On 14 August 2014, the Egyptian Government decided to clear the two sit-ins but deadly clashes erupted between security forces and pro-Morsi protesters across Egypt, leaving over 600 dead and thousands injured in the first days.

Meanwhile, organised antiquities gangs and vandals used the clashes and the unrest across Egypt as a cover to tear down the museum's internal gates and break in.

The ticket agent of the museum was killed during break-in, all of the archaeological objects were looted, while other objects that were too heavy to be transported were vandalised. Some areas inside the museum were also burned. The rioters broke the surveillance cameras at the museum. The looting of the Malawi National Museum took eight hours to run its course.

Even though the city police station is very close to the Malawi Museum, there were no security forces to rescue the museum from the looting and vandalism.

The Minister of State for Antiquities decided to form an archaeological committee to inspect the losses and identify the number of stolen artifacts. They set up a list of missing artifacts to send to Egyptian ports to prevent any attempts to smuggle the objects outside of the country. When the archaeological committee entered the museum, they found that the museum was full of shards of pottery, shattered glass from display cases and the charred remains of the sarcophagi and mummies. After an investigation that lasted six hours, they announced that almost all of the archaeological objects had been looted and the number of missing objects was 1040 out of 1089 artifacts.

A mission of UNESCO experts visited the site from 11 to 16 September of that same year confirmed the looting and devastation suffered by the Malawi National Museum. UNESCO reiterated that any objects originating from the museum are internationally identified and recorded, selling and purchasing these objects inside and outside Egypt is illegal.

The Minister of State for Antiquities announced that no legal proceedings would be taken against anyone who handed back any of the museum's artifacts to the curators and conservators. It was also promised that the Ministry would reward a sum of money to anyone who could retrieve two particular statuettes. As a result, five days after the looting of the Malawi National Museum, the town inhabitants managed to recover the two statuettes representing the god Osiris. The appeal resulted in ten additional objects being received back and subsequently transferred to a store house in Ashmonien.



The internal gate of the Malawi Museum



Wooden coffins and other objects damaged during the attack

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Four months later, the Tourism and Antiquities police recovered the statue of the daughter of Pharaoh Akhenaton. In December 2013, the Minister of State for Antiquities announced that 800 stolen objects from the Malawi Museum had been recovered. The restoration plan would be carried out by the service agency of the army under supervision of the Ministry of State for Antiquities while Al-Minya Governorate would provide a budget of approximately three millions Egyptian pounds (£260,000). It is understood that the restoration process on the museum's building will last approximately 6 to 8 months.

### The impact of the Cairo Security Directorate blast on the Museum of Islamic Art

On the 25th of January 2014 a car bomb attack targeting the Cairo Security Directorate in front of the Museum of Islamic Art, on the other side of Bab el-Khalq Square, caused serious damage to the museums. More than 160 artifacts were affected by the explosion, especially glass artifacts, many of which were completely destroyed with their fragments mixed with the glass of windows and showcases. According to the Minister, Mohamed Ibrahim, centuries-old glass and porcelain pieces were smashed, a priceless wooden prayer niche was destroyed and manuscripts were soaked with water spewing from broken pipes.

### Illicit digging and violation of human remains in Dahshur

Dahshur is a case-in-point to show what is becoming a common situation at every archaeological site in Egypt.

In November 2012, the area of the Black Pyramid of Dahshur was targeted by looters. This area had not been properly surveyed or excavated because it had served as a military site until the late 1990s and thus was protected during this time. Organised antiquities gangs roamed the area nightly with heavy machine guns and geo-sensors, under the supervision of foreign and Egyptian experts. In January 2013, the looting frenzy reached the lake of Dahshur.

The local inhabitants took the land north of the black pyramids to build a modern cemetery because the old one had reached full capacity and there was no other place to bury their families. This cemetery site was illegally sold by local contractors and in addition to its intended use, its modern walls provided a good cover for organised group's illegal digging activities.

Smaller objects were easily smuggled out of Dahshur, while bigger sarcophagi and stone objects were hidden in large trucks from the nearby sand quarry until they reached their destination. Several villagers witnessed foreign buyers coming to the sites and overseeing the excavation of the entire tombs as often the objects were bought on site and smuggled out. Looters also used bulldozers to open the tombs leading to the destruction of their

archaeological context and architecture of the heritage of Dahshur. Security forces and government officials were ineffectual because of a combination of slow response and inadequate presence on site. The Minister of State for Antiquities eventually did send a memo to the armed forces to move in and keep citizens away from the site.



The site of the Black Pyramid showing illicit activities



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In April 2013, local villagers and archaeologists who objected to the looting process organised a protest at the archaeological site in order to defend their village and their heritage. The community had gained awareness that the looting would destroy the future prospects of economic and touristic development in the area and decided to take a stand to defend their future and heritage.

In May 2013, after much public pressure, the Egyptian armed forces were deployed in Dahshur to regain control of the situation. The construction was stopped and with it looting stopped as well. However, following the events of the 30th of June 2013, several gangs returned to the site, although not in full force.

### Smuggling of Jewish artifacts

Police seized a collection of Jewish artefacts and historical objects at Damietta harbour. The collection was found inside a parcel due to be transported to Belgium. The objects reflect a period of religious tolerance in Egyptian history. They are being studied in order to identify their provenance. The objects include 11 cylindrical wooden boxes used to hold the Torah. Each is 20 cm in diameter and inlaid with silver foliage and Hebrew religious texts. Among the seized objects are a silver knife dated from 1890 and a silver crown bearing Hebrew text, silver chandeliers and a collection of bells once used in temples. The Damietta archaeological unit has asked prosecutors to use all legal measures to trace the smugglers.

### The future of the protection of Egyptian Cultural Heritage

The only solution for the protection and preservation of Egyptian cultural heritage is the participation of local communities in the management and conservation of archaeological sites. This is because most of the encroachments of cultural heritage result from lack of cultural awareness and an inability to understand the benefits of archaeological sites including poverty reduction, creation of new employment opportunities and raising standards of living.

Egyptian cultural heritage is suffering from an endemic incapacity for management, with bureaucracy and inability to see the benefits of change limiting development.

The protection of museums and archaeological sites is a national duty and is part of our identity; all stakeholders should co-ordinate and co-operate to protect our heritage in order to pass it on to future generation.

The aim of this paper is to emphasize that all types of Egyptian heritage are potentially targets for destruction, from ancient Egyptian civilization to Jewish Heritage.

To help efforts in protecting sites, the Government should establish a permanent police presence at isolated archaeological sites such as Abu Mena, Dahshur and El Hibeh.



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**Abdelaziz Elmarazky**

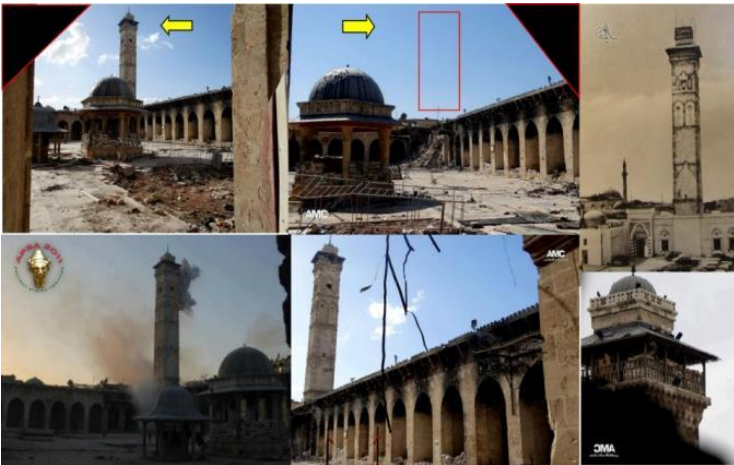
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**Ahmed Elsmany** graduated from the Faculty of Archaeology, Conservation Dept., Cairo University in 2009. He participated in many conservation projects in Egypt including working on the Mirza Mosque and developing and conserving the Police National Museum and the Kings Car's Museum. He is currently conservation specialist at the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo.

# The international protection of cultural heritage in times of conflict: efficient or deficient?

By Rim Lababidi



*Cultural heritage, in both its tangible and intangible forms, constitutes a record of the creativity of mankind, and it functions as a line of continuity for human beings as well as the representation of their past and present. As cultural heritage accompanies people throughout their life, it shares people's faith in the prosperity of peacetimes and the scourge of wars.*

Conflicts can be defined as: "situation in which actors use conflict behaviour against each other to attain incompatible goals and/or to express their hostility", and the more developed the dynamics and tools of wars are, the more destructive their impact becomes on states resources, people's lives and cultural heritage (Bartos and Wehr, *Using Conflict Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

In terms of specifically cultural properties, armed conflicts impose different types of damage, such as:

- 1- Deterioration and weathering due to lack of the needed sources and/or accessibility to maintain cultural properties
- 2- Collateral damage due to military operations, or intentional targeting once they are used as military bases. An example of this is the destruction of the minaret of the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo after it became a base for the regime's snipers.
- 3- Intentional targeting by groups intending to damage the racial, national or religious symbols of others or to impose specific ideologies. This is the case of the destruction of shrines by the Islamic fundamentalist group ISIS in both of Iraq and Syria
- 4- Illicit excavations and trade of antiquities by organised networks, which often causes irreversible damage to the material culture, as in the case of the archaeological sites of southern Iraq and Syria.
- 5- Use by people to survive the harsh conditions of war. For example, the Roman tombs of the dead cities of northern Syria are used as shelters by families who lost their houses in the conflict. Likewise, in Idlib, a governorate in Syria, 600 people are making a living by providing antiquity dealers with coins they find in their lands (Arja 2014). The unfortunate loss of cultural heritage reflects on the identity of the people, their social cohesion and their economic state, especially where heritage acts as a living hub for people, such as the historic centre of Aleppo. Therefore, protecting cultural heritage and encountering the subversive impact of conflicts has become a major concern for the international community during the last century.

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Therefore, protecting cultural heritage and counteracting the subversive impact of conflicts has become a major concern for the international community during the last century.

### The protection of cultural heritage

The acknowledgment of the significance of cultural heritage and the need to protect it started to develop as early as the 18th century and it was internationally promoted following World War I (1914-1918) through conferences, such as the Athens Conference of 1931. The later tragic destruction of the European cultural properties following the Second World War (1939-1945), triggered the efforts to regulate a systematic protection for cultural heritage worldwide.

Accordingly, the intergovernmental United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) was founded in 1945, and it became internationally acknowledged as the leading organisation to preserve and protect cultural heritage. To support UNESCO in its mission, several specialised partner-bodies were found in the following years.

During the past sixty years, UNESCO has regulated a holistic and compatible set of guidelines for the preservation and maintenance of cultural properties and it has always stressed the moral responsibility of states to comply with these measures. Among its guidelines, UNESCO has specifically addressed the protection of cultural heritage in times of conflict through legally binding conventions for their state-parties. They are explained below:

1- **The 1954 Hague Convention** on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its first (1954) and second (1999) protocols that proscribe using cultural properties for military purposes, committing reprisal or intentional targeting (UNESCO 1954, article 3, 4). The first protocol encourages its state-parties to introduce specialist personnel into their armies in order to coordinate with the civilian bodies responsible for heritage and it suggests setting military regulations that can contribute to safeguarding cultural heritage (UNESCO 1954, article 7). A voluntary-based fund was founded with the second protocol, and that can be used through UNESCO to respond to emergency situations (UNESCO 1999, article 29). And the same protocol proposes a tentative claim to isolate political decisions from decisions related to preserving heritage (UNESCO 1999, article 30).

2- **The 1972 Convention on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Sites**, for which a cultural inventory and fund were established to better protect sites of an outstanding value and to assist damaged listed sites or those in danger of being damaged (UNESCO 1972, article 11, 15).

3- **The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property**, which encourages the state-parties to undertake preventive measures against the illicit import and export of cultural properties. Also, it calls the state-parties to compel with the restitution provisions of the convention (UNESCO 1970).

4- **The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage UNESCO 2001** that calls for the restitution of illicitly recovered underwater cultural heritage in addition to cooperating with other state-parties and settling the disputes between them (UNESCO 2001).

Furthermore, in 1970, an attempt to create an association between cultural heritage and human rights started when UNESCO held a conference titled "Cultural Rights as Human Rights" (UNESCO 1970). This notion was further emphasised when the international community adopted the term "cultural heritage" instead of "cultural properties" in the 1972 Convention on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Sites (UNESCO 1972) in order to stress the humanitarian significance of cultural heritage. Furthermore, in 1998, following the cultural genocides that were committed in the Balkans during the ethnical war that ravaged the region (1991-1995), the international and national efforts were intertwined to enhance the protection of cultural property by listing belligerent acts against cultural properties as war crimes in the International Criminal Court and to ensure that perpetrators were to be prosecuted by the competent international bodies (ICC 1998, article 8(2) (a) (iv)). Indeed this resolution was applied later in Cambodia and the Balkans through competent tribunals.



A Syrian family in a Roman tomb in Northern Syria

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### A Problematic implementation

Tragic events in areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali and currently Syria have proved the poor results of the tremendous efforts paid by the international community, especially UNESCO, to apply protective measures that would save cultural heritage from the horrific violations of war.

These conflicts have revealed that the previously mentioned conventions lack an adequate sanction system to compel their state-parties to better implement the provisions. For example, the last two years have witnessed an extensive shelling of the World Heritage Site of Old Aleppo by the regime forces, despite the fact that the Syrian government ratified the first protocol of the 1954 Hague Convention in 1954.

Another factor contributing to the deficiency of the protection of cultural heritage is the politicising of heritage. Cultural heritage has been recruited to play a major role in conflicting political agendas in order to make political, ethnical or religious gains.

Another problem is the “risk-avoiding” attitude adopted by UNESCO and its partners in their response to the critical condition of cultural heritage during armed conflicts, an issue that was extensively discussed by Kila in his 2013 paper from the *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*: “Reactive , or Pro-active? Cultural Property Crimes in the Context of Contemporary Armed Conflicts”. A policy that refrains from sending military-based commissions to the damaged sites to assess and document the condition of damaged cultural assets. The International Council of the Blue Shield that is considered as the “cultural equivalent to the red cross” for instance, has not been able to interfere neither in Iraq nor currently in Syria.

### Conclusion

A debate about the protection of cultural heritage in times of armed conflict has been triggered among heritage specialists during the last two decades and calls for enforcing the protection of cultural heritage are increasing. However, these calls cannot be met unless UNESCO and its partners step up to meet their responsibilities as the umbrella under which the protection of cultural heritage is regulated. Such a step demands making decisions regardless of any political influence in addition to undertaking a rigorous analysis of the previous incidents where international treaties failed and still are failing to protect our cultural heritage, and cultural genocides are being reported repeatedly. This analysis can facilitate identifying the weaknesses and gaps within the frameworks of the protective measures, and hopefully, surmounting them.

Moreover, the “risk-avoiding” attitude ought to be dropped specifically by reinforcing the Blue Shield. This reinforcement can be achieved through establishing fully equipped regional centres for the Blue Shield that are supported by trained teams. This is perfectly feasible, as several cultural experts have expressed their readiness to participate in militarized missions that can intervene to protect cultural heritage in conflict zones.

Finally and most importantly, state-parties to the conventions should take a step back to reconsider their politics and set new frameworks that insure an efficient protection of cultural heritage. After all, sharing responsibilities cannot be achieved solely by formulating protective measures, but also by bearing responsibility for the negative outcome of these plans.

**Rim Lababidi** was born and grew up in Aleppo, Syria where she graduated from the Faculty of Architecture in 2010. In August 2014, she completed an MA degree in the Archaeology of the Arab and Islamic World at University College London, UK. She completed a dissertation discussing a post-conflict plan to save the old city of Aleppo. Rim is interested in the protection of cultural heritage in conflicts and its post-conflict rehabilitation.

*The image on page 18 is The Umayyad Mosque Aleppo ©Rim Lababidi*





# Post-conflict reconstruction Old Aleppo

By Diana Miznazi

*Aleppo, one of the oldest cities in the world, is often described as the most dangerous city in the world. The destruction is considered parallel to that of Hiroshima after World War II. This industrial capital of Syria is lacking all essential every day supplies of water, electricity, gas and at times even fresh food. The situation of this previously wealthy city is described by the locals as 'unliveable'.*

*This paper discusses the effect of the Syrian conflict on the cultural heritage found in the Old Aleppo. It examines the nature and complexity of the conflict. It also addresses social and economic factors that could affect the reconstruction and recovery phase, once the conflict is over.*



The amount of destruction in the heart of the Ancient City of Aleppo, taken on August 7th 2014 from al-Asileh Square.

## Introduction and historical background of Aleppo

Aleppo, the largest of Syrian cities, lies in the north-western side of Syria. It was the economic and industrial capital of the country with a population of 3.8 million. The majority of the population were Sunni-Muslims with significant numbers of Christians and Shi'as. The major ethnic group was Arab, with minorities of Kurd, Turkman and Armenian.

Aleppo is known to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. The earliest mention of Aleppo was in the archives of Ebla, Mari, and Alalakh in the third millennium BC. Its location in the centre of the *Silk Road* made it a target of many kingdoms and the city witnessed the rise and fall of several empires along its history including the

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kingdom of Yamkhad, the Neo-Hittites, the Assyrians, Achaemenids, and the Byzantines. This also included several Islamic empires ending with the Ottomans. Finally, the city was occupied by the French before the independence and declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The city went through phases of wealth, poverty, disasters, and prosperity.

The heart of Aleppo -known as *the Ancient/Old City* - is defined by the Greek and Roman period walls. The buildings in this area show the many layers of the city's history. It is also believed that the old city sits on extensive archaeological deposits.

Before the current conflict, the majority of the surviving architecture was Ottoman and the city was distinguished by its mosques, bazaars, caravansaries, and churches. The Ottomans used the location of the city to launch the trade zone in northern Syria to accommodate increased access to goods from Iran, Hijāz and Western Europe. Due to trade, Aleppo thrived and its Souq/al-Mdine was established. This Souq is believed to be the longest covered market in the world. While most of the city is from this period, the most distinguished part of Aleppo, the Citadel, sits on a hill in the middle of the ancient city. Initially built during the rule of Alexander the Great, it was fortified, and further developed during the Zinged reign.

The *Ancient City* was awarded the status of a world heritage site (WHS) in 1986. In 2006, Aleppo won the title of *the Capital of Islamic Culture* (cometosyria.com). A lot of organisations and NGOs took interest in old Aleppo including GTZ (German Association of Technical Cooperation), the Agha Khan Foundation, WMF (World Monument Fund), all of which carried out restoration and documentation on the site of old Aleppo.

### The conflict and its impact on cultural heritage in Aleppo

The civil movement inspired by the Arab Spring erupted in Syria in March 2011. Even though the situation was as tense as in any other Syrian city, Aleppo as an urban area did not become a part of the armed conflict until February 2012. The key players in this conflict are the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, opposition civil and armed groups (the main armed group in this category is the FSA), foreign fighters groups, Al-Qaida linked groups and fundamentalists.

The opposition's armed groups entered the city to 'liberate' the 'occupied' city by the regime. A few months later, they gained control of the old city. In June 2012, the United Nations declared the situation in Syria as a 'Civil War'.

Wide-spread violence led to sectarian polarisation, which in turn led to the formation of several armed groups with different ideologies and agendas within the city. The complexity of the situation increased significantly after *Al-Qaida*-linked groups joined the conflict such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

When the Free Syrian Army (FSA) first came to the ancient city, they considered the urban fabric (buildings connected through a series of narrow alleys) an "ideal" place for *land battles*. The regime responded by shelling and bombarding the old city to fight the terrorists hiding within. The Citadel is currently under the regime's control.

None of the conflicting parties are trained to protect cultural heritage. While some of the damage is caused unintentionally by certain groups, others have a more aggressive approach that targets heritage deliberately for ideological reasons. A recent example is the destruction of Sheikh Mohamad al-Nabhan's tomb (a famous figure of Islamic Sufism) in *al-Kiltawiyeh madrasa* by extremists.



Historic building used by the FSA fighters as a rest stop, taken on May 30th 2014



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It is worth mentioning that one of the major threats Aleppo is currently facing is from fundamentalist groups such as ISIS who have a specific ideology targeting cultural heritage of previous civilisations that are in contradiction to their beliefs.

A number of measures were taken by the main players to protect the surviving heritage at risk in response to the public reactions from both the local and international communities. The Directorate-General of Antiquities & Museums (DGAM) covered part of the National Museum of Aleppo to protect the statues, locked part of the collection in the basement and transported the most valuable part of the collection to Damascus.

The DGAM is unable to act in the areas occupied by the opposition. Nonetheless, the Syrian Association for Preserving Archaeology and Heritage also took some measures to protect heritage, including dismantling the Minbar in the Great Umayyad mosque.

### Post conflict reconstruction, difficulties and future prospects

The recovery process is not entirely a technical process of reconstructing the physical and economic environment. It also involves helping the people to recover from war effects socially, politically, and psychologically. Therefore, priorities should be established according to the vision of the whole society.

The first priority is to build the capacity to protect cultural heritage of both individuals and institutions in all sectors and levels of the society affected. However, historically significant ruins may be mistaken for rubble and much would be lost if removed without consideration. To avoid removing original elements, knowledge of the area and its historic buildings would be imperative to prevent further destruction. Local knowledge and skills could be employed during the recovery process. International bodies can be of immense help if they work in collaboration with the local community to help it develop frameworks during the recovery process.

Unfortunately, the conflict in Syria has yet to end, and we have no means of predicting the outcome of the conflict. Therefore, recovery will depend on the both the political situation and the extent of destruction. Post-conflict reconstruction of significant historic landmarks can have a healing effect, helping conciliation and the restoration of social and cultural integrity. It might provide a chance to correct past erroneous approaches to restoration of cultural heritage.

For the people who suffered war, thinking of post-conflict reconstruction starts during the conflict, unlike 'outsiders' who come into play once the conflict is over. It could help with negotiations during the conflict. People need to change their memories of violence and brutality. 'Outsiders' tend to impose fast physical reconstruction, which cannot be absorbed in the early stages of recovery. Reconstruction should be understood in a political manner for it can be more corrupting as the war itself.

For a post-conflict recovery phase to be successful, a clear vision is needed. However, can all the actors involved from local and international organisations share the same vision and more importantly, could they do so in collaboration with the society?

In Aleppo, the damage to cultural heritage is massive and the continuation of fighting will surely result in even more losses. Aleppo is known for its cultural diversity but the cruelty and length of this war has resulted in the loss of its identity and cultural integrity. Once the conflict is over, a full assessment of damage will take several years to complete and some of the lost heritage will probably be irreplaceable.

The whole "healing process can be supported but cannot be imposed. The war-wounded have to learn to walk again by walking". Aleppo has gone through difficult times and was the subject of many historic disasters. Yet, it was able to recover and flourish and it will manage to recover again once the conflict is over.

### Acknowledgment

*The photos are by Sultan Kitaz, a young photographer from Aleppo. The works are unpublished and belong to his personal collection. I would like to thank him for giving me the opportunity to include them in this article.*





## Views + opinions

# Fostering Values to Protect Cultural Heritage in Syria

By Hiba Qassar

*Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Syria, cultural heritage has been one of the victims of this conflict. A cultural patrimony that covers thousands of years was and still is suffering looting and destruction. Many national and international organisations such as UNESCO expressed their concerns at the level of destruction that has become catastrophic and “irreversible”. While the current direct causes of the destruction of cultural heritage in Syria are shelling, bombing and looting, this paper will discuss a lack of knowledge about the cultural heritage which is leading to the lack of value. This article argues that a public deficiency of knowledge is an “indirect motive” of the destruction and the constant danger of the cultural heritage, even after the end of the armed conflict.*

### Establishing significance and fostering value

Many discussions in the archaeological community are about the value in protecting cultural heritage. However, this usually refers to the role of conservation (special treatment for what is more valuable) or in heritage management. The need to protect a site, monument or object is based on a shared perception of their value which we label “cultural heritage”.

What happens when people don't know the value of archaeological sites or ancient monuments? These things are no longer understood as cultural heritage and as being in need of protection.

Cultural values are subjective, and rely on people's perceptions which are built through their understanding of the role of heritage in society. Therefore the international community and specialists seeking the protection of the cultural heritage in Syria should first understand the local people's perception of their own cultural heritage.

Many recent studies have shown that the low level of development in many poor countries inhibits culture and historical knowledge which blocks the development of cultural based development strategies. In many developing countries, like Syria, locals' connection with their own culturally heritage is through tourism which is unaffordable for most of them. Visiting museums or famous sites is often seen as a touristic or elite activity. Average people are not interested in these activities since they can't afford them and don't understand its value. Unless a place is visually attractive (a beautiful landscape for instance) the majority of the people wouldn't visit it even if it was of a great



**Syrian Children Back to School Programme, sponsored by Tauheedul Charity, a global education non-profit organisation**

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historical value and easily accessible to them. Museums are a good example of this. The entrance fee to Syrian museums is cheap for Syrians and many museums are easily accessible for people living nearby. However if you visit most Syrian museums you would find them almost empty of Syrian visitors. Museums or archaeological sites are not a source of information and history for the local population.

The only source for historical and cultural information for most Syrians comes from school text books. However, these text books teach very little about the pre-Islamic civilization of Syrian, much of which constitutes the cultural heritage of the country. Moreover, when ancient archaeological sites are mentioned they try to connect them to Arab ethnic identity.

The history curriculum, taught to students from age ten to eighteen, mentions the ancient civilizations in Syria briefly only twice, and instead focuses on Arabic Islamic history and the political history of the Arab world in order to support the government-backed narrative of the Syrian Arab identity.

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***Syrians lack of knowledge about their pre-Arab and pre-Islamic history means that they don't feel a sense of ownership to this past. As a result they do not appreciate the value of much of their own cultural heritage and when cultural heritage is not valued it is not protected.***

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Since the beginning of the current conflict many organisations have expressed their concerns about the destruction of Syrian cultural heritage and called on the international community to help stop the destruction not only for Syrians but for all of humanity. As for now, there is no plan to stop the destruction of cultural sites unless the armed conflict stopped. However, even if the conflict Syria would be over tomorrow, the cultural heritage will not be safe. In fact, the lack of order that follows, will probably cause more damaged to the archaeological sites and monuments, as seen in Iraq.

In this case what should the people working in heritage do? One idea might come from Iraq. Military operations in Iraq allowed the looting of many cultural institutions, the destruction and vandalising of countless sites. The only cultural objects which were protected by the population were Islamic manuscripts. This is because these manuscripts were considered by the local population as their own heritage. This inspiring example from Iraq shows that when the locals connect to their heritage they can act to protect it.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees the number of Syrian refugees has reached 3,807,435. Distributed between Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraqi Kurdistan, they are waiting for the conflict to stop to return to their homes. Obviously access to conflict zones in Syria to protect cultural heritage is impossible under current circumstances. However, Syrian refugees represent an opportunity to protect this heritage when they finally return. This can be achieved by teaching them about the value of the cultural heritage of their own country and how important it is for their future prosperity to protect it.

Unfortunately refugees are supposed to learn the same curriculum as the one in the host countries. As a result, it is the ethical duty of cultural organisation to put the needed pressure on the decision makers to allow Syrian refugees to learn about cultural heritage of their home country. By doing this they will learn to own their past and understand how protecting their cultural heritage is necessary for their future.



**Hiba Qassar** is a PhD candidate in Museum Studies at the University of Florence, Italy. In 2013/14 she won a fellowship from UCL Qatar. In September 2014 she presented the paper "Politics, Identity and the Role of Museums in the Middle East" at the ICOM conference "Museum and Politics" in S. Petersburg, Russia. In December 2014 she presented the paper "National Museums and National Identity in the Middle East: Inclusive or Exclusive spaces?" at the Conference "The Unpredicted Past-National Museums: Peace Brokers or Peace Breakers" organised by New York University, Abu Dhabi and the Center for International Education (CIE).



## Reviews

# *The Destruction of Memory*, a documentary exploring the global issue of cultural destruction **‘The war against culture and the battle to save it.’** by Tim Slade

*The following article is not strictly speaking a ‘review’ as the documentary film that Tim Slade talks about is about to start filming shortly. Nevertheless NiC is pleased to be able to offer this foretaste of a film whose principal theme is very fitting with this issue dedicated to heritage in time of conflict.*

Vast Productions is producing a documentary film titled ‘The Destruction of Memory’, based on English writer and journalist Robert Bevan’s critically acclaimed book of the same name.

Over the past century, cultural destruction – the purposeful destruction of buildings, books and art in order to erase collective memory and identity - has wrought catastrophic results on every continent. But the war is by no means over. If anything, this kind of cultural warfare has been steadily increasing.

The film examines cultural destruction and efforts to stem it. It looks back over the past century at how legislation, policy and awareness have followed the path of destruction, and focuses its lens in particular on Bosnia, recent narratives in Mali and Egypt, and ongoing narratives in Syria and Iraq. At risk in these places is 6,000 years of continuous human history.

Key interviews have been filmed, with location filming to commence in March 2015.

Interviewees include architect Daniel Libeskind, the International Criminal Court’s Prosecutor Bensouda, Harvard University’s András Riedlmayer, and modern day ‘Monuments Men and Women’ team member Corine Wegener, of the Smithsonian Institution.

The film comes at a time of significant movements in legislation, policy and awareness. The intentional shelling of the old city of Dubrovnik in 1991 led to convictions. The 1954 Hague Convention has been almost universally ratified by its signatory nation states. The International Criminal Court has a case open to investigate charges against those who damaged UNESCO World Heritage listed sites in Mali in 2012. It would be the first time the Rome Statute has been used for the destruction of culture. In November 2014, the ‘Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Bill’ was introduced into the US House of Representatives.

The film, though about books and buildings, has human beings at its core. People willingly risk their lives to protect not just other human beings, but also their culture - to safeguard the record of who they are. People who never thought of themselves as heroes have fought back, and it's these people and their resistance that is at the heart of the story, and gives the film a tone of great hope.

Heroic acts are needed more than ever. In Syria and Iraq, the ‘cradle of civilization’, millennia of culture have been destroyed. Cities like Homs and Aleppo have been devastated. Heritage experts from the US and Europe are working with networks in Syria and Iraq trying to stem not just widespread destruction, but to provide training and resources to heritage workers desperately trying to protect sites inside the country, and to push against industrial scale looting by ISIS.



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Susan Wolfinbarger, Project Director of the Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project at the American Association for the Advancement of Science, is using comparative satellite imaging to track and monitor destruction and looting. The AAAS recently authored and released a report, which was incredibly sobering.

Susan said: "As we continue to study the conditions at Syria's important cultural sites, we have observed significant destruction that is largely the result of conflict. However, unlike our previous analysis of Syria's World Heritage Sites, we're seeing a lot of damage that appears to be the result of widespread looting."

The film will compel and engage people, but the issue is crucial. This is not a 'conceptual' issue. People's identity is vital to their wellbeing. Protecting culture needs to complement humanitarian efforts.

See more at <http://destructionofmemoryfilm.com>



**Tim Slade** - Director/Writer/Producer, Tim's films have screened internationally and are represented by distribution companies in the US, the UK and Australia and have been sold in Europe, North America, Asia and the UK. He has directed feature and TV hour documentaries, such as *4*, which was released theatrically and won a Gold HUGO, as well as nominations at Banff, an International Documentary Association Award and two AFI awards, and *Blank Canvas* a documentary about the Sydney Dance Company. He has also directed drama, including the shorts *Every Other Weekend* and *I was Robert Mitchum*, which have screened at more than 60 international film festivals.



# IIC News

## IIC Honorary Fellow at 2015 IIC AGM

In January 2015 IIC's Annual General Meeting took place at the Council Room of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining in London. In the course of the event, the IIC Council presented an Honorary Fellowship to John Stuart Mills.

John Mills is probably best known for *The Organic Chemistry of Museum Objects*, which he wrote with Raymond White: the indispensable 'Mills and White', which first appeared in 1987, has a place on most museum laboratory bookshelves. However, this is only the culmination of a very long career and a great many publications, most, but not all, in the field of natural product chemistry, in particular steroids, resins and drying oils and their analysis.

To learn more about John's career and achievements go to:

<https://www.iiconservation.org/node/5482>



John Mills honoured at the IIC AGM

## Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between IIC and ICOM-CC signed at AGM

On the night of the AGM a memorandum of understanding was signed between IIC and ICOM-CC; the document was signed by IIC's President Sarah Staniforth, and Kristiane Strætkevorn, Chair of ICOM-CC.

Following is the complete text of the document:

"The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) is an independent international organisation supported by individual and institutional members. It serves as a forum among professionals with responsibility for the preservation of cultural heritage. It advances knowledge, practice and standards for the conservation of historic and artistic works through its publications and conferences. It promotes professional excellence and public awareness through its awards and scholarships. The Institute is a learned society, a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (No. 481522) and a registered charity (No. 209677). IIC is registered for VAT (No. GB 241 0811 10).

The International Council of Museums Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) is an International Committee of ICOM with members from every branch of the museum and conservation profession. ICOM-CC promotes the investigation, analysis and conservation of culturally and historically significant works and furthers the goals of the conservation profession. ICOM-CC conducts its work through specialty Working Groups, which provide means for communication among their members about conservation issues, and organize professional meetings, culminating in its Triennial Congress. Through the ICOM network, ICOM-CC partners with the established museum community throughout the world.

We recognize our longstanding cooperation and affirm our mutual goal of advancing the conservation field internationally through exploration of collaboration in a variety of programming efforts. The goal of this exploration will be to cooperate in ventures including, but not limited to, jointly organised seminars, training programmes, workshops, etc., as well as exploring the possibility of combining our main conferences in 2020. We will continue to work together on environmental guidelines for museums and collections, initiated with the work leading to the IIC and ICOM-CC Declaration and collaborate in other initiatives of mutual interest.

In recognition of this MoU each party will reciprocally extend an invitation to the President/Chair (or a designated officer) as an observer at their main conferences in the form of guest registration, and to IIC AGM and Council meetings and ICOM-CC Directory Board meetings upon invitation to discuss issues of common interest.

This MoU may be amended and/or further developed by the two parties. The amendment(s) shall enter into force after their approval by the two bodies.

This MoU shall enter into force immediately upon signature and will be in effect until 31 December 2017."

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## Dialogue for the New Century – The Future of Heritage Science

IIC regularly initiates presentations and dialogues that explore emerging issues in the modern world and the relationship of those issues to the preservation of cultural heritage. These events are also offered to raise awareness of heritage conservation among relevant professions and the public sector. The events are open to all but also targeted to create productive collaborations among a variety of stakeholders.

The title of the Dialogue was 'The Future of Heritage Science' and the theme was discussed at a round table during the 2015 IIC AGM. Members of the panel were:

- Nancy Bell, Co-Chair NHSF (Head of Collection Care, The National Archive)
- Alison Heritage, Convener ICCROM Forum on Conservation Science (Conservation Research Specialist, ICCROM)
- Austin Nevin, former co-ordinator ICOM-CC working group on scientific research (Researcher, National Research Council, Institute for Photonics and Nanotechnologies, Milan, Italy and IIC Council member)
- Stavroula Golfomitso, IIC Council member (Lecturer in Conservation Studies, UCL Qatar)

The panel was chaired by IIC's President Sarah Staniforth.

The complete transcript of the discussion will shortly be available on the IIC website; meanwhile you can follow the link to see past Dialogues at: <https://www.iiconservation.org/dialogues>



## Why wait? Become part of the IIC's community now!

Will you join us? In joining IIC you will become a member of the oldest and most established conservation organisations in the world.

Our support of you depends upon your support of us. Become a member, be part of the international community that is IIC - and start enjoying the benefits of membership today!

To learn about benefits, rates and types of memberships available visit:  
<https://www.iiconservation.org/about/membership>





## What's on + NiC's List

### Call for papers

#### **Effects of Playing on Early and Modern Musical Instruments**

9-10 September 2015

Royal College of Music, London, UK

Deadline for abstract submission: March 1, 2015

Deadline for extended abstract: July 31, 2015

For more information visit:

<http://woodmusick.org/call-for-papers>

#### **41st Annual CAC Conference and Workshops - "Conserving the Past, Embracing the Future"**

26-30 May, 2015

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Deadline for submission for IGNITE Session: 31

March 2015

For more information visit: <https://www.cac-accr.ca/conferences>

#### **1st International Conference on Science and Engineering in Arts, Heritage and Archaeology (SEAHA)**

14-15 July 2015

London, United Kingdom

Contact information: [events@seaha-cdt.ac.uk](mailto:events@seaha-cdt.ac.uk)

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 20 April 2015

#### **TERRA 2016 XIIe Congrès mondial sur les architectures de terre = XIIth World Congress on Earthen Architectures**

11 to 14 July 2016

Lyon, France

Deadline for submission of papers: 10 August 2015

For more information visit: <http://craterre.org/>

A comprehensive list of events taking place around the world, in and around the field of conservation. Write to [news@iiconservation.org](mailto:news@iiconservation.org) if you wish to add your event

### Conferences/Seminars

#### **Subliming Surfaces: Volatile Binding Media in Heritage Conservation**

15-16 April 2015

University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

For more information about this event:

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/>

#### **Adapt & Evolve : East Asian Materials and Techniques in Western Conservation**

08 to 10 April 2015

London, United Kingdom

For more information about this event:

<https://adaptandevolve2015.wordpress.com/>

#### **The future of the past: from Amphipolis to Mosul : new approaches to cultural heritage preservation in the Eastern Mediterranean**

10-11 April 2015

Philadelphia, PA, United States

For more information about this event:

<http://futureofthepast.wix.com/culturalheritage>

#### **Condition.2015 : Conservation and Digitalization**

19 to 22 May 2015

National Maritime Museum, Gdańsk, Poland

For more information about this event:

<https://condition2015.nmm.pl/>

#### **Digital Heritage: 3D Representation**

21-22 May 2015

Aarhus, Denmark

To register for the conference, please [click here](#)

**AIC 42nd Annual Meeting: Conscientious Conservation - Sustainable Choices for Collection Care**

27-30 May, 2014

San Francisco, California

For more information on the meeting see:

<http://www.conservation-us.org/annual-meeting#.U2JbscKKDIW>

**2015 Convention for Continuing Education in Book and Paper Conservation-Restoration**

20-25 July 2015

Krems, Austria

For more information visit:

<https://www.iiconservation.org/node/5448>

**The Social Context of Metallurgy: Material and Identity**

2- 5 September, 2015

Glasgow, UK

For more information visit:

<http://eaaglasgow2015.com/International>

**International Conference "SPark: Conservation of sculpture parks**

14-16 September 2015

Sisak, Croatia

For more information visit:

<http://www.umas.hr/novosti/spark-conference/>

**19th International Congress on Ancient Bronzes**

13 to 17 October 2015

J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, United States

For more information about this event:

[http://www.getty.edu/museum/symposia/bronze\\_congress.html](http://www.getty.edu/museum/symposia/bronze_congress.html)

**XIII IADA Congress**

12 to 16 October 2015

Berlin, Germany

For more information about this event:

<http://www.iada-home.org/en/news/xiii-iada-congress.html>

**3rd International Conference on Documentation, conservation and Restoration of the Architectural Heritage and Landscape protection**

22-24 October 2015

Valencia, Spain

For more information visit:

<http://reuso2015.blogs.upv.es/en/>

## Courses/Workshops

**Independent Paper Conservators' Group - "A new technique for washing artworks on paper"**

17th March, 2015

The Grand Robing Room at Freemasons' Hall

60 Great Queen Street

London WC2B 5AZ

To register please visit:

<https://washingartworks.eventbrite.com>

**Photographic Process Identification Workshop**

15-19 June 2015

Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, NY, United States

For more information contact: Alice Carver-Kubik at [ackpph@rit.edu](mailto:ackpph@rit.edu)

Registration / deadline: 01 March 2015

**Understanding Leather – from Tannery to Collection**

29 June to 03 July 2015

University of Northampton, United Kingdom

For more information about this event please visit:

<http://www.leatherconservation.org/>

**2015 International Summer Course in Rome**

Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome (KNIR) and Partners,

The Netherlands and Italy

For more information about this event visit:

<http://www.knir.it/en/>

**2015 Eagle Hill Natural History Science Seminars - Lichens, Biofilms, and Stone**

16-22 August 2015

Eagle Hill Institute, Steuben, ME, USA

For more information about this event visit:

<http://www.eaglehill.us>

**For more information about conferences and courses see the IIC website:**

**[www.iiconservation.org](http://www.iiconservation.org)**