

PROTECTING ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE  
DURING CONFLICTS.  
SYRIA'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE DURING  
THE CONFLICT AND THE LOCAL EFFORTS TO  
PROTECT IT

**Isber Sabrine**

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Programa de Doctorat de Ciències Humanes, del Patrimoni i de la Cultura

Thesis Doctoral

Title

Protecting archaeological heritage during conflicts

Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict and the local efforts to protect it

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2020

## **Acknowledgement**

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr Juan José Ibáñez for the continuous support of my Ph.D study and related research, for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my Ph.D study.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Prof. Luca Zan Dr. David Vivo Codina for their insightful comments and encouragement, but also for the hard question which incited me to widen my research from various perspectives.

My sincere thanks also goes to Dr Gabriel Alcalde Gurt who I started with him this research at the University of Girona and he passed the way before finishing this thesis .I am very grateful to him and to his great support and I will always remember him . In this research I am very gratefull to Dr.Emma Cunliffe whos gave me a lot of support and who I had the pleasure to work with here in two publications. I thank Dr.Neil Brodie from Oxford University who gave me a lot of support during this reseach

I thank my friends in the institution of Mila i Fontanals from Spanish National Research Council (IMF-CSIC) . In particular, I am grateful to Dr .Xavier Terradas and Dr.Nacho Climente

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my family: my parents and to my brothers and sister for supporting me spiritually throughout writing this thesis

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## Introduction

After graduating from the department of archaeology at Damascus University I started to work as a National tourist guide in Syria, working as a tourist guide gave me the opportunity to discover and learn more about Syria's rich archaeological heritage, between 2007 and 2011 I was able to guide hundreds of touristic tours through the country, this work permitted me to learn about the management of Syria's archaeological heritage, despite the wealth and diversity of this archaeological heritage but it was suffering of the lack of management, many sites lacked plans of management, the touristic tours focused just only in few sites such Palmyra, Crac du Chavalies, Bosra, Damascus and Aleppo, on the other hand many important archaeological sites were upset from the touristic plans, all of this gave me the motivation to continue my master study on the management of cultural heritage therefore in 2009

I decided to start my master *La gestió del patrimoni cultural en l'àmbit local* at the University of Girona. My master study helped me to learn about management of cultural heritage institutions, museums management, heritage laws, conservation strategies for archaeological sites and historic monuments. I was privileged to visit many archaeological sites, historic monuments and heritage institutions around Catalonia, the good heritage management in Catalonia gave me the hope that Syria's archaeological heritage could arrive to be in the same level in the future. My first step was my master's thesis with the title "***Analysis of current heritage uses of Crac de Chevaliers***" In this thesis I worked to analysis the problems of management which were facing Crac de Chevaliers (World Heritage site since 2006) another important part in my master thesis was to make recommendations for better management for the site. After finishing my master thesis and with the support of my tutors Dr. Juan Jose Ibanez from Spanish National Research Council (IMF-CSIC) and Gabriel Alcalde Gurt from Girona University and with the financial support of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation for Development, we started a heritage management project called "*Heritage Management in Syria: cataloging-conservation –musealization and sustainable exploitation*" this project was very connected to my master thesis and aimed to establish models of heritage management in Crac de Chevaliers and west of Homs, the project was in collaboration between IMF-CSIC and the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums in Syria.

This project was great start for me to start doing management heritage work in Syria and also a first step to continue my PhD thesis with the aim to do a thesis which focus on analyzing the heritage management in Syria and to establish a new ideas for better strategies for the management of archaeological heritage but unfortunately the Syrian conflict started in 2011, we were not more able to continue our heritage management project in Crac de Chevaliers and all my future plans for my PhD were not visible because of the conflict. Since the start of the Syrian conflict Syria's archaeological heritage was a victim, the role of the international heritage organization was very modest and limited, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) have worked valiantly to safeguard monuments, museums, and sites, but the challenges of operating during wartime require special expertise, and heritage professionals cannot operate in many parts of the country. There are no disaster plans for museums and sites, and Syrian heritage professionals lack crisis training.

The World Archaeological Congress WAC7 in Jordan, gave me the opportunity to approach experts in the field with similar feelings then with my friend Rene Teijgeler, we decided to create the NGO *Heritage for Peace*. Within six weeks we already registered our NGO. We just did it without any support. The need to act at that time was great. Our mission is to support all Syrians, irrespective of religious background or ethnicity during the armed conflict. As I

worked for many years as a national tourist guide, establishing contacts with the relevant people was not a difficult, but an essential, task. Building the NGO *Heritage for Peace* with others gave me the satisfaction that I could do something from outside the country to help on the protection of the cultural heritage of my country .

After the registration of our NGO we started to do different projects relating to the protection of Syria's cultural heritage , no there is no place here to talk about the project done by the NGO . My work for the NGO inspired me to start doing this thesis, after several years of working closely to different institutions and professionals from inside the country and outside the country . Working with the NGO gave me more practical understanding of the situation of Syrian archaeological heritage during the conflict . Therefore the plan that I followed on doing this research was concentrated on analyzing the situation of Syrian archaeological heritage and also analyzing the efforts to protect it . the structure of this thesis is with collection of six different articles which they deal with the situation of Syrian archaeological heritage . The research started with the first publication which is the management of Syrian archaeological heritage before and during the Syrian conflict: Comparison Study, then to analyze how the conflict effected on Syrian archaeological heritage, the second article "The Illegal Excavation and Trade of Syrian Cultural Objects: A View from the Ground" tries to analyze who the illegal excavation and the illegal trade of Syrian antiquities is one of the main reasons to destroy Syrian archaeological sites . the rest of the four publications "Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict", "The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria's Heritage Protectors", "Protecting heritage during conflict: the Work of Heritage for Peace" and "The Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin's museums" , these four articles try to show the role of Syrian civil society on the protection of Syrian archaeological heritage. Then after presenting the contribution by these articles , then the thesis will include a discussion of the main findings and the results of this research , it will finish by giving a recommendation for future research on this subject.

## **1- Syrian Archaeological Heritage**

### **1.1 An overview of Syrian Archaeological Heritage**

The cultural heritage of Syria is amongst the most significant in the world , containing monuments which mark milestones in the development of great civilisations and world religions. There is evidence of human evolution, early farming, and settlements which developed into some of the earliest cities in the world, with great architecture and temples for religion, art and sculpture, writing and even law. World religions, too, have left their mark. Syria has some of the oldest and more important religious sites in the world. In Syria, Man discovered the secrets of Agriculture and Metallurgy, and invented the very first alphabet. Religions, Philosophies, language of trade, systems of urban development, of diplomatic and cultural exchange; all these germinated in geographical Syria.

#### **1.2.1 World heritage sites**

Syria has six World Heritage sites, considered to be of outstanding universal significance to the whole of mankind. These sites demonstrate the many achievements of successive diverse cultures, each of whom left their mark on the sites, and on society. What is particularly important is that much of Syria's heritage is still a vital part of modern life. Several World Heritage sites are still partly or completely occupied - the Ancient Cities of Damascus and

Aleppo, for example, are said to date back more than 7,000 years, but remain living cities. These are not just ancient ruins from a fading past, but a part of Syria today.

### *Syria's world Heritage sites*

#### *Ancient City of Aleppo*

It inscribed as World Heritage site in 1986, according to World Heritage Center brief description<sup>1</sup>, the outstanding universal value of Aleppo is that the history of the city includes many periods which have left their influence in the architectural fabric of the city. Aleppo was one of the richest cities of all the humanity he .The most important monuments of the old city are the citadel ,city walls and gateways, the Great Mosque, Al-Madina souq,17<sup>th</sup> century madrasas and caravanserais.

#### *Ancient city of Bosra*

It inscribed as World Heritage site in 1980.according to the World Heritage center brief description<sup>2</sup>, the outstanding universal value of Bosra is that the archaeological site, has ruins from Roman ,Byzantine and Muslim times , many monuments belonging to these different periods are present within the city which are Roman monuments, churches , mosques and Madrasas . The Roman Theater is considered one of the most preserved roman theaters in the world. Al-Omari Mosque is one of the oldest surviving mosques in Islam and the Madrasah Mabrak al-Naqua is considered one of the oldest Madrasah in Islam.

#### *Ancient City of Damascus*

It inscribed as World Heritage site in 1977, according to World Heritage Center brief description<sup>3</sup>, the outstanding universal value of Damascus is the consideration to be the oldest continually inhabited city in the world .The city has evidence of the civilizations which created it – Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic. In particular when it became the Umayyad capital .Damascus is considered the first Islamic caliphate, the Great Mosque in the city considered a masterpiece of Umayyad architecture. The most important monuments of the old city are the citadel, city walls and gateways, Tomb of Saladihn,Azem palace ,Maistan Nureddin , Suq al-Hamiddiya and and Khan As'ad Pasha (Caravanserai). Another important value of Damascus is that the city linked with important traditions and events.

#### *Ancient Villages of Northern Syria*

It inscribed as a World Heritage site in 2011, they are 40 villages grouped in eight parks, according to World Heritage Center brief description<sup>4</sup>, the outstanding universal value of the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria because they provide an important testimony to the lifestyles and cultural traditions of rural civilization that developed in Middle East also they provide an important testimony to the architecture of the rural house and civilian and religious community buildings in the Byzantine Period also these villages present a good example of a sustainable rural settlement from 1<sup>st</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> . Those villages have a great value because they illustrate the development of the Christianity in the East.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/21>

<sup>2</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/22>

<sup>3</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/20>

<sup>4</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1348>



### *Crac de Chevaliers and Qalat Salah El-Din*

The castles are inscribed as World Heritage site in 2006, according to the World Heritage Center brief description<sup>5</sup>, the castles considered one of the most significant examples to illustrate the exchange of influence which had an impact both in the East and the West, in addition the castles represent an important development in the fortification system. Crac des Chevaliers is considered one of the best preserved example of the castles of the Crusader period, the Qalat Salah El-Din represents a very important example of the type of fortification in terms of quality of construction and the survival of its historical stratigraphy

### *Site of Palmyra*

It inscribed as World Heritage site in 1980, according to the World Heritage Center brief description<sup>6</sup>, it is a testimony of the unique aesthetic achievement of the wealthy caravan oasis from the Roman period, the grand colonnade is an example of a type of structure which represents a major artistic development, the recognition of Palmyra by travellers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries played a huge role to the subsequent revival of classical architectural styles and urban design in the West, another important value of Palmyra is that the grand monumental colonnaded street illustrate an important example of architecture and urban layout at the peak of Rome's expansion in and engagement with the East. The great temple of Ba'al is considered one of the most important religious buildings of the 1st century AD in the East and of unique design. The funerary monuments which located in the Valley of the Tombs represent distinctive decoration and construction methods

### ***Tentative World Heritage Site***

There are eleven sites on the list for future consideration, containing evidence of more than 5000 years of human culture, religion and civilisation, the sites were proposed in the tentative list in 1999<sup>7</sup>.

### *Norias of Hama*

These Norias are a collection of historic waterwheels, by the modern day there were 17 Norias which they still standing across the city of Hama, the nories were originally constructed on the Orontes River to move water and they played an important role to supply water for drinking and irrigation, the norias became a symbol of the city

### *Ugarit*

The site of Ugarit is considered an important sea port in the Northern Levant during the first and second millennium before Christ. It was considered an important centre which connected Egypt, Cyprus and Mesopotamia. The discovered alphabet in Ugarit is the most important discovery in the site which represents the earliest evidence of the alphabet

### *Ebla*

The archaeological site of Ebla considered one of the earliest kingdoms in Syria. Ebla was an important center during the third millennium BC and the first half of the second millennium BC. The discovered tablets in Ebla provide important information on Syria and confirm that Ebla was an important trade center. The Eblaite language considered the earliest attested Semitic language after Akkadian.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1229>

<sup>6</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

<sup>7</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/sy/>

### *Mari*

The archaeological site of Mari provided an important understanding of the geopolitical map of ancient Mesopotamia. The huge collection of the discovered tablets in Mari contained important information about the administration during the second millennium BC these tablets confirm the important role of Mari in Mesopotamia. The Zimri –Lim Palace is the most important building in the site, it consists of more than 300 rooms

### *Dura Europos*

It is fascinating crossroads of ancient cultures Hellenistic, Parthian, Roman , the discoveries in the site included a shrine to the god Mithras , a synagogue with painted biblical . Dura Europos was cosmopolitan society , the discovered text in Dura Europos were written in Greek ,Latin , Palmyrene , Hebrew and Hatrian

### *Apamea*

It is considered one of the most important cities of the Seleucid Empire. It has one of the longest widest monumental colonnades from the Roman World which ran for nearly 2 km the Roman Theatre is considered one of the largest surviving theaters of the Roman Empire

### *Qasr al-Hayr al –Sharqi*

It is a palace located in the middle of the Syrian Desert .It was built during the Umayyad period by Umayyad caliph Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik. The palace consists of remains of rooms, arches, courtyard and columns

### *Maaloula*

Maaloula with two other nearby towns Bakhah and Jubbadin which are considered the only place where Aramaic language is still spoken . Maaloula has two important monasteries the Eastren Catholic Mar Sarkis which is one of the oldest surviving monasteries in Syria , the second monastery is the Greek Orthodox Mar Thecla

### *Tartus*

The city of Tartus foundes as a Phoenician city in the second millennium BC .The city became very important during the crusaders period. The crusaders build the Cathedral of Our Lady of Tortosa which is now the city museum. The original crusaders fortification consisted of the city and walls and the citadel

### *Arwad*

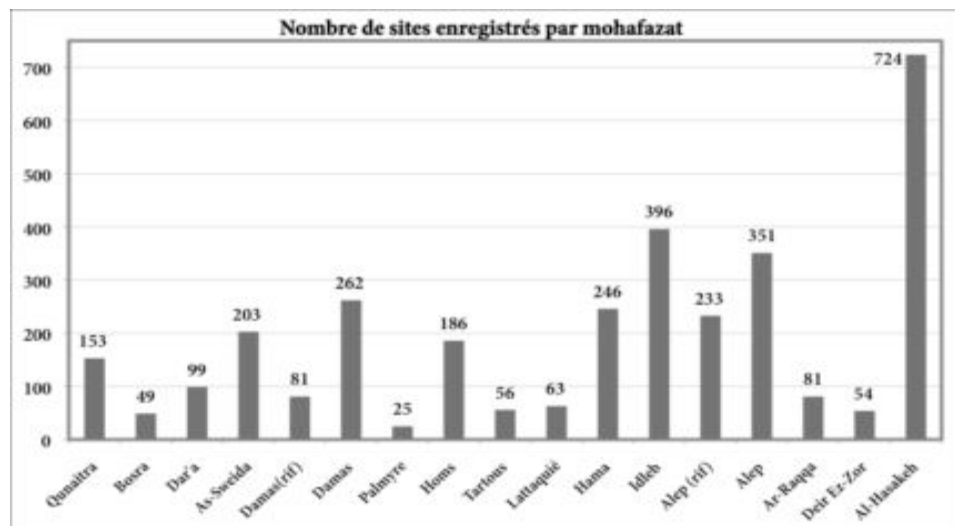
The Island of arwad was settled in the early second millennium BC. It is the only Island in Syria, during the time of the Crusaders, was used a staging area. The island considered the last piece of land that the crusaders maintained in the holy land

### *Raqqa*

The city has discoveries from Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods. It was re-founded by the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid, the city consists of many monuments such Bagdad Gate which is one of the important monuments of early Islamic architecture, Qasr al-Banat (the caliph's palace)

### 1.2.2- Syria's National archaeological sites

The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) still does not have a complete official list of Syria's archaeological sites<sup>8</sup>. Prior 2011, there were 138 national and foreign archaeological missions excavating on Syrian sites, while there are more than 10,000 tells in the country, and more than 5,000 of those archaeological mounds are scattered in the region of Jazira in northeast Syria<sup>9</sup>. The DGAM started since the beginning of the conflict to build up an inventory of the Syria's archeological sites<sup>10</sup>. DGAM in cooperation with European institutions such Durham, Lyon and Nice University are working on compiling an electronic list of country's archaeological sites<sup>11</sup>. In addition the German archaeological institute in cooperation with Museum of Islamic Art at Pergamon Museum, they are working on a project since 2013 which is Syrian Heritage Archive project, this project is a cooperation with DGAM which aims to contribute to Syrian cultural heritage register, it is based on data from all over the world, the detailed documentation of Syria's archaeological sites will facilitate the documentation of the destruction and will create the basis for possible prospective reconstruction<sup>12</sup>.



### 1.2 .3 Importance of Syria's archaeological heritage

Syria is home of the first societies where the first crops and cattle were domesticated, many archaeological sites in Syria played a crucial role through the transition from wild harvesting to first cultivation and from hunting to domestication, archaeological sites such Abu Hureyra, Jerf Alahmar, Tell Halula, Mureybet and Tell Aswad are considered the first palaces on this

<sup>8</sup> Guidetti & Perini 2015, p5

<sup>9</sup> Ali, C. "Syrian Heritage under Threat". *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies* 1/4 (2013): 351-366

<sup>10</sup> Syria DGAM, <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=1594>

<sup>11</sup> [http://shirin-international.org/?page\\_id=1369](http://shirin-international.org/?page_id=1369)

<sup>12</sup> <https://syrian-heritage.org/en>

transition. Archeologists in Abu Hureyra discovered evidence of conscious cultivation<sup>13</sup>. In Syria man began domesticating animals more than 11,000 years ago, goats and sheep were the first animals to be domesticated.

Archaeologists in Syria discovered important archaeological sites in early Bronze Age; this period in Syria is characterized as the first great period of urbanism, for the first time cities consisted from temples in palaces, walls and houses. The most important cities are Mari<sup>14</sup> and Ebla<sup>15</sup>, In both of these urban centers, collections of cuneiform tablets were founded which were written in Akkadian and Sumerian, these tablets recorded the history, daily life and business transaction, these tablets helped to provide archaeologists with complete understanding of life in Mesopotamia in the third millennium BC, they were important centers of trade and culture. Damascus is considered the oldest inhabited city in the world, Tell Ramad on the outskirts of Damascus, it has been occupied since the second half of the seven millennium BC<sup>16</sup>, Aleppo also is considered one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, the city have been inhabited since the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, the excavations in the old city demonstrate that the city was occupied by Amorites since the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC<sup>17</sup>.the city was a part of the Amorite state of Yamhad and played a crucial role on the trading between Mediterranean sea and the Mesopotamia

Before the invention of the alphabet, writing system was complex and very limited to small group of trained scribes. This system based on cuneiform wedges, produced by pressing a stylus into clay but in the fifteenth century BC the situation changed with the arriving of the new alphabet from Ugarit, this alphabet provided the earliest evidence of first alphabet in the world, it abbreviated hundreds of cuneiform syllables into the 29 letters, it the history of writing was transformed, it was discovered in the royal palace of the city, Charles Viroilleaud (French archaeologist, one of the excavators of Ugarit) said "*There is no doubt that we will not know the name of the alphabet creator, but we know that he is Phoenician or in general Syrian, and we can say that the people, who achieved this miracle, deserve our gratitude, and it has the right to have a special dignity in the history of the world.*"<sup>18</sup>

The major civilizations left their influences in Syria, discoveries, knowledge, innovations, and religions emerged in this land. Since the third millennium BC Syria played a crucial role to link cultures from Mesopotamia to Nile valley then from the Mediterranean to Europe. The unique location of Syria, gave it a strategic position, it is a meeting point between the three continents, Syria was an important part of the Silk Road which came from China and passed through it to Europe.

This land faced the rise of great empires from Ur, Bablyon, Assur, Akkad and Smer, hundreds of archaeological sites in Syria still have evidences of these empires. Syria was an important center in Greek, Roman and Byzantine eras, many Roman emperors were Syrians<sup>19</sup> During the first century the Byzantine Syrian city of Antioch became an important city of the empire, this city became one of the first Christian cities in the world.

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<sup>13</sup> Hillman G, Hedges R, Moore A, Colledge S, Pettitt P; Hedges; Moore; Colledge; Pettitt (2001). "New evidence of Lateglacial cereal cultivation at Abu Hureyra on the Euphrates". *Holocene*. 11 (4): 383–393.

<sup>14</sup> Margueron, Jean-Claude (2013). "The Kingdom of Mari". In Crawford, Harriet. *The Sumerian World*. Translated by Crawford, Harriet. Routledge. ISBN 978-1-136-21912-2.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ebla.it/eindex.html>

<sup>16</sup> Moore, A.M.T. *The Neolithic of the Levant*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University, 1978. 192–198

<sup>17</sup> *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (1997)

<sup>18</sup> [http://data.bnf.fr/12210565/charles\\_viroilleaud/](http://data.bnf.fr/12210565/charles_viroilleaud/)

<sup>19</sup> <http://historum.com/ancient-history/19034-national-ethnic-origins-roman-emperors.html>

During Islamic and Arabic era, Syria became a crucial land, starting from the Umayyad Caliphate then Abbasid Caliphate to Ayyubid dynasty and Hamdanid dynasty. Damascus became the first capital the Caliphate. Syria was ultimately under Ottoman Empire, and became an important province during 4 centuries

Religions left their marks in Syria; this country is the land where the Judaism, Christianity and Islam started. Jewish connections with Syria during the history are very remarkable; Aleppo and Damascus were home to vibrant Jewish communities. Jews were present in Syria since the time of King David who conquered Damascus and briefly appointed governors over the city (II Samuel 8:5-6)<sup>20</sup>. The Dura –Europos is considered one of the oldest synagogues in the world. Its discovery in 1932 radically changed the art historical approach towards both synagogue architecture and the faith of Judaism itself<sup>21</sup>. Syria also considered an important land for the Christianity, which started with Saint Paul who is converted to Christianity in Damascus in the House of Saint Ananias where Ananias baptized Saul who became Paul<sup>22</sup>. The Great Umayyad mosque in Damascus has the shrine of John the Baptist who is honored as a prophet by Christians and Muslims. The village of Maloula is considered one of the last places where Aramaic, the language spoken at the time of Jesus, is still used. In Syria there are remains of numerous monasteries, convents, churches, shrines, sanctuaries which are very old and continue to stand till now days.

Syria is also an important place for the Muslims. The Umayyad Mosque is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the world. It is considered one of the first monumental works of architecture in Islam history. Homs has the mosque of Khalid –bin –Waleed, the companion of Mohamad (Rasulullah), is buried along with his son in a corner of this mosque.

### **1-3 the role of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict**

Syria's archaeological heritage played an important role on the developing of the Syrian economy. According to the Syrian Ministry of Tourism about 8.5 million foreign tourists visited Syria in January 2011. Tourism revenue in 2010 was \$ 8.4 billion which represents 14 percent of the country's economy and 11 percent of the national employment<sup>23</sup>. The Syria's archaeological heritage was a great capital for the tourism. In addition to the attraction of the archaeological sites the hospitality of the Syrian people also played an important role to promote the Syrian tourism. The tourism played an important role to increase the local employment. Moreover tourism and archaeology helped to spread a better image of Syria and make the country on the international scene<sup>24</sup>.

Prior to the conflicts there were 120 archaeological missions in Syria. These included French, English, German, Spanish, Italian, and American, Polish, and Japanese missions<sup>25</sup>. The archaeological work in Syria helped to create work for the local communities, archaeological sites were characterized by interactions between archaeologists and local people<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+8%3A5-6>

<sup>21</sup> Jacob Neusner, "Judaism at Dura-Europos" *History of Religions* 4(1964): 81.

<sup>22</sup> Rainer Riesner (1998). *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. pp. 86–87

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.thenational.ae/business/travel-and-tourism/syria-sees-tourist-numbers-leap-40-1.583832>

<sup>24</sup> Gillot 2008, p 304

<sup>25</sup> Gillot 2010, p14

<sup>26</sup> Gillot 2008, 299

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in March 2011 the country's travel and tourism industry has been major causality of the conflict, according to official reports in 2013, Syrian tourism revenue has declined by 94 percent<sup>27</sup>. The direct contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in 2014 was 193.8 bn SYR (4.6% GDP). In 2015 it became 186.6 bn (3.7%), the movement of tourists had declined by more than 98%<sup>28</sup>. In addition since the beginning of the conflict all the foreign archaeological missions stopped doing excavations, thousands of local Syrians who worked with these missions lost their work.

Before the conflict Syria's archaeological heritage was a main element for the Syrian tourism, it had an important participation on the attractiveness of the country.

## **2- Syrian Archaeological heritage during the conflict**

### **2.1 Overview of the Syrian Conflict**

The Syrian conflict started in 2011, it was a part of Arab Spring uprisings, and few months later the uprisings became an armed conflict between the Syrian regime and different rebel groups. The fighting became more sectarian with the presence of extremists fighting. In June 2012 started the first peace talk in Geneva between regime and Syrian rebels, this meeting resulted in the, "Geneva communiqué," (UN 2012). Despite all the attempts by the United Nations to resolve the conflict and to get a ceasefire but Geneva Peace talk failed. In March 2013 the rebel forces were able to capture the city of Raqqa which was the first major population center controlled by the rebels (Aljazeera 2013). The 21 August 2013 was a remarkable day during the Syrian conflict because of a chemical attack; this attack took place in Ghouta region of Damascus countryside, this attack led to thousands of casualties and several hundred dead in the opposition area (Dagher and Fassihi 2013).

In early 2014 two rounds of peace talks led by UN mediator Lakhdar Brahimi in Geneva which ended without any progress (The Guardian 2014). The opposition delegation asked the UN to negotiate the status of President Assad but the Syrian government rejected any political discussion and the talks quickly collapsed. In 2014 the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq had entered eastern Syria; later in June of the same year ISIS gave the name (Islamic State) which erases all state borders, In July 2014 IS takes control of largest area of eastern Syria and it conquered a 90 mile of Syrian towns (CNN 2015).

In early 2015 the Kurds and rebel coalition Jaish al-Fatah raised the power and both Assad and IS lost ground (Beauchamp 2015). During summer 2015 Syrian refugees crossed the number of 4 million. 2015 was characterized as the year of Europe's refugee crisis, hundreds of thousands of Syrians fled across the Mediterranean to reach Europe (Spindler 2015). In 2015; the al-Nusra Front took most of the province of Idleb (Joscelyn 2015). In September 2015 Russia intervened in the Syrian conflict, with the Russian support the Assad regime was able to gain against the opposition forces in northern Syria. The Russian intervention consisted of air strikes at targets militant groups opposed to the Syrian regime which include Syrian National Coalition, IS, al-Nusra Front (Dearden 2015). The Geneva peace talks restarted again in February 2016 between the Syrian government and opposition under the auspice of the UN but they were formally suspended after 2 days (Miles et al 2016).

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<sup>27</sup> <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/business/economy/2013/09/30/Minister-Syria-war-costs-tourism-industry-1-5-BN.html>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic%20impact%20research/countries%202015/syria2015.pdf>

In December 2016, Aleppo has recaptured from the rebel militants, the Syrian army claimed victory after more than four years of fighting (ABC 2016)

In April 2017 US fired several missiles at the military base of Shairat closed to Homos,

In May 2017 Russia, Iran and Turkey signed the agreement in Astana which aimed to create four de-escalation zones in Syria (Bernard and Galdstone 2017).

An important ceasefire was agreed between Russia, Jordan and US in July 2017 in the southwestern Syria (Harris 2017). In September the Syrian army was able to break IS three year siege of Deir Ezzor (Mckernan 2017). Later the Syrian army with the allied militia established a full control of the city of Deir Ezzor. In October 2017 the city of Raqqa which was the capital of IS became under a full control by the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (Sabbagh 2017). Russian government declared Syria was completely liberated from IS in December 2017 (Lowe 2017) Despite all the negotiations and the fail of IS, the Syrian conflict continued to take place in early 2018, in east Damascus and in Idleb.

The Turkish army began to attack the Kurdish military groups in January 2018 and it crossed the Syrian border, the Turkish army called this intervention in the Syrian territories the Operation Olive Branch, with the support of the different rebel groups, the Turkish army was able to capture Afrin from the Kurdish armed groups (Aljazeera 2018). Another important action happened during this period was the operation to capture Ghouta by the Syrian army which was controlled by the rebels ( Nehme and Barrington 2018) . In April 2018, a chemical attack was reported in Douma and led to the death of 70 people and almost 500 injured as a reaction of this attack on 14 April the US,U.K and France launched different missile attack on different sites in Syria as a responses to the chemical attack in Douma the 2018 .

The most important events during 2019 were the military operation by the Syrian army and Russian Aerospace Forces which was launched by against Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and National Front for Liberation (the Associated press 2019) . In August 2019 the US and Turkey agreed to establish a demilitarized buffer zone in North Syria .In October U.S announce to withdraw from buffer zone and as a fast reaction after this announcement the Turkish President Erdogan announced the offensive into north –eastern Syria had begun ,they gave this operation the name of Peace Spring operation (AA 2019).Later in 17 October there was a deal between US and Turkey to stop the Turkish invasion to North Syria ( The Guardian 2019) . Another important action in 2019 was the starting of the negotiation of the new Syrian Constitutional Committee which held its first inaugural meetings in Geneva in November 2019 (Nebehay 2019) . Now after almost eight years of the conflict, the Syrian regime seems that has won in the Syrian conflict .The cost of this conflict is huge. There are more than 5 million Syrian refugees outside the country .The Syrian economy is destroyed, the Syrian pound down to a tenth of its value since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011 (Bulos 2019) .After eight years, it is very clear now the division of the country between three political zones, the first under the government control with the support from Iran and Russia. The second in the northeast under the Kurdish control with the support of the USA. The third in Idleb province is under the control of opposition Islamic extremists forces with the support of the Turkish army.

### **2.1.1 Syrian conflict actors**

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, many actors were involved in the conflict. In order to understand how the conflict affected on the Syria's archaeological heritage, we are going to

give a brief summary about the actors who are involved in the Syrian conflict; the actors could be divided to three categories, which are state actors, non-state actors and foreign actors. The country in the beginning of 2020 is still divided into three zones, every zone under the control of one group and with the support of foreign forces. The first in the northwest under Turkish control, with different Islamic oppositions groups, the second in the east and in the north east under the control of the Kurdish control, the third under the Syrian regime and with the support from Russia and Iran.

## **State actors**

### ***Syrian Armed Forces***

The Syrian Army consists of Syrian Army, Syrian Navy and Syrian Air Forces, the president of Syria is the commander in chief of all the Syrian army according to the Syrian constitution. Since 2011 the Syrian army was involved to stop the progressed uprisings, many soldiers began to defect from the Syrian army and to join to Syrian Free Army (AhramOnline, 2012). According to the Global Fire Power report in 2017 the Syrian Armed Forces were about 154,000 as regular troops and 150,000 as reservists (Global firepower, 2019). With the support of the Syrian Armed Forces, the Syrian regime was able to control the major institutions in the country. The Syrian Armed forces now is still strong in the battlefield and they control the majority of the country. With the support of the Syrian Army, the Syrian regime was able to hold on the major cities in Syria such as Damascus, Hama, Aleppo, Latakia, Homs and Daraa. During these years of conflict the Syrian Army depends on the support from its allies, the Russian and Iranian forces.

### ***National Defense Force***

These troops are a pro government militia, formed in 2012; the Syrian government provides these groups with salaries and military equipment<sup>29</sup>. The aim of the creation of these troops was to establish an effective local motivated force in order to support the Syrian Army forces. The organization of the National Defense Forces is under provisional commanders and they act with autonomy<sup>30</sup>.

## **Non state actors**

### ***Free Syrian Army and affiliate groups***

It was founded in summer 2011 by militants who defected from the Syrian Armed Forces<sup>31</sup>. The Free Syrian Army aim is to be the military wing of the Syrian opposition to the regime<sup>32</sup>. Since the creation of this army, it has adopted the strategy of guerrilla –style tactics<sup>33</sup>. The army is made up of hundreds of small units, some secular some religious and family gangs<sup>34</sup>. The armed groups of the Free Syrian Army work closely with the civilian formed local councils around cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, Daraa and Hama<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-paramilitary-insight/insight-battered-by-war-syrian-army-creates-its-own-replacement-idUSBRE93K02R20130421>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/who-are-pro-assad-militias-syria-2030619965>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204524604576610781937462842>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/8868027/15000-strong-army-gathers-to-take-on-Syria.html>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/article24726148.html>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9735988/Syrian-rebels-defy-US-and-pledge-allegiance-to-jihadi-group.html>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/154044#.T2t2MsUgFKY>



## *Islamic groups*

According to Jane's Information Group in 2013 most half of the rebels are affiliated to Islamist groups<sup>36</sup>. The most important Islamic groups are al-Nusra Front , Ahrar ash-Sham and IS

### *Al –Nusra Front*

It is the biggest Jihadist group in Syria, which is linked directly to al-Qaeda; this group demonstrated high level of effectiveness than many other rebel groups<sup>37</sup>. According to the report Jihad in Syria al-Nusra Front has demonstrated sensitivity of popular perception, the group consists mainly from Syrians Salafi-Jihadist groups<sup>38</sup>. The al-Nusra Front changed its name twice, first in 2016 to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham in 2016 and later became the leading member of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

### *Islamic State (IS)*

By summer 2014, IS controlled a third of Syria. This group has been named as a terrorist organization by the United Nations .It was widely known because of its videos beheadings soldiers and civilians and the destruction of cultural heritage sites<sup>39</sup>. IS applied Sharia law over the territory that it controls<sup>40</sup>. Between 2014 and 2017 the organization controlled many important Syria's oil and gas production, in Syria took over the whole control of the cities of Raqqa and Deir –Zour till late 2017. By December 2015, it held a large area which containing an estimated to 8 million people<sup>41</sup>.

### *North Syria Federation (Rojava)*

North Syria Federation is known as Roja which is a region in north Syria and it consists of three self-governing regions in northern Syria, which are Afrin Region, Jazira Region and Euphrates Region<sup>42</sup>. The system of governing is considered as a federalized system rather than independence<sup>43</sup>.

In early 2012, the Syrian Army left the three Kurdish regions and left control to local militias, the Peoples Protection Units (YPG) is the main militia to defend Kurdish people in northern Syria<sup>44</sup>. YPG took the control of different cities in Northern Syria such as Al-Malikiyah ,Ras al-Ayn ,al-Darbasiya , parts of Haskah and Qamishli<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10311007/Syria-nearly-half-rebel-fighters-are-jihadists-or-hardline-Islamists-says-IHS-Janes-report.html>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9716545/Inside-Jabhat-al-Nusra-the-most-extreme-wing-of-Syrias-struggle.html>

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/jihad-syria>

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/11/isis-propaganda-videos\\_n\\_6846688.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/11/isis-propaganda-videos_n_6846688.html)

<sup>40</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/05/world/europe/syria-turkey-al-qaeda/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HzMucorCwo>

<sup>42</sup> <http://cantonafarin.com/en/news/view/1658.a-delegation-from-the-democratic-administration-of-self-participate-in-the-second-conference-of-the-el--shahba-region.html>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-kurds-syria-rojava-1925945786>

<sup>44</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20120724224808/http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/syria/4984.html>

<sup>45</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20121129100410/http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/syria/4992.html>

## Foreign actors involved in the Syrian conflict

### *Hezbollah*

Hezbollah was involved on the Syrian conflict since the start of the armed conflict in 2011. It has long been an important ally of the Syrian regime. Hezbollah has several thousand of fighters in Syria<sup>46</sup>. During the conflict Hezbollah played an important role to create the Assad loyalist militia known as al-Jaysh al-Shabi, Hezbollah with Iran provide this militia money weapons and training<sup>47</sup>.

### *Iran*

Iran always was an important ally to Syria, since the start of the Syrian conflict Iran provided support to the Syrian regime; this support includes technical and financial support, also training and some combat troops. Keeping the survival of the Syrian regime is crucial to Iran interests and politics<sup>48</sup>. Iran soldiers in Syria mostly consist of auxiliaries recruited from Afghan and Pakistani soldiers which are immigrants inside Iran<sup>49</sup>. Even the Iranian presence in Syria is very expensive but Syria remains very strategic country for Iran because of religious motivations and security concerns<sup>50</sup>.

### *Russia*

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict Russia supported the Syrian regime politically and military. Since 30 September 2015 Russia involved in the conflict through direct military involvement<sup>51</sup>. Russia has in Syria two military bases, the first one is the Russian naval facility in Tartous and the second is the Kheimim Air Base. The Russian military intervention in Syria has changed the dynamics inside and outside Syria. It helped the Syrian regime to gain more territory against both rebels and the Islamic State. Politically the Russian intervention helped Bashar Assads to get international acceptance to stay in power<sup>52</sup>.

In December 2017 Russia announced that will reduce its troops on Syria and the mission of the Russian intervention which was to fight the international terrorism was accomplished<sup>53</sup>

### *U.S.-led coalition against ISIL*

This coalition consist of a number of countries which are United State, Australia , Bahrain, Canada, France, Jordan, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia ,Turkey ,the United Arab Emirates

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21661826-costly-valuable-lessons-guerrilla-army-once-fought>

<sup>47</sup> <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/11/world/meast/syria-civil-war/index.html>

<sup>48</sup> Genevieve Casagrande; Christopher Kozak; Jennifer Cafarella (24 February 2016) "Syria 90-Day Forecast: The Assad Regime and Allies in Northern Syria" (PDF). Institute for the Study of War Retrieved 1 June 2016.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/terrorism-fundamentalism/19622-senior-commander-of-iran-regime-s-afghan-mercenaries-killed-in-syria>

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/10/19/irans-involvement-in-syria-is-costly-heres-why-most-iranians-still-support-it/?utm\\_term=.8ee25d50ae08](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/10/19/irans-involvement-in-syria-is-costly-heres-why-most-iranians-still-support-it/?utm_term=.8ee25d50ae08)

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34431027>

<sup>52</sup> Lucas, S. (2015). *The effects of Russian intervention in the Syria crisis*. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42330551>

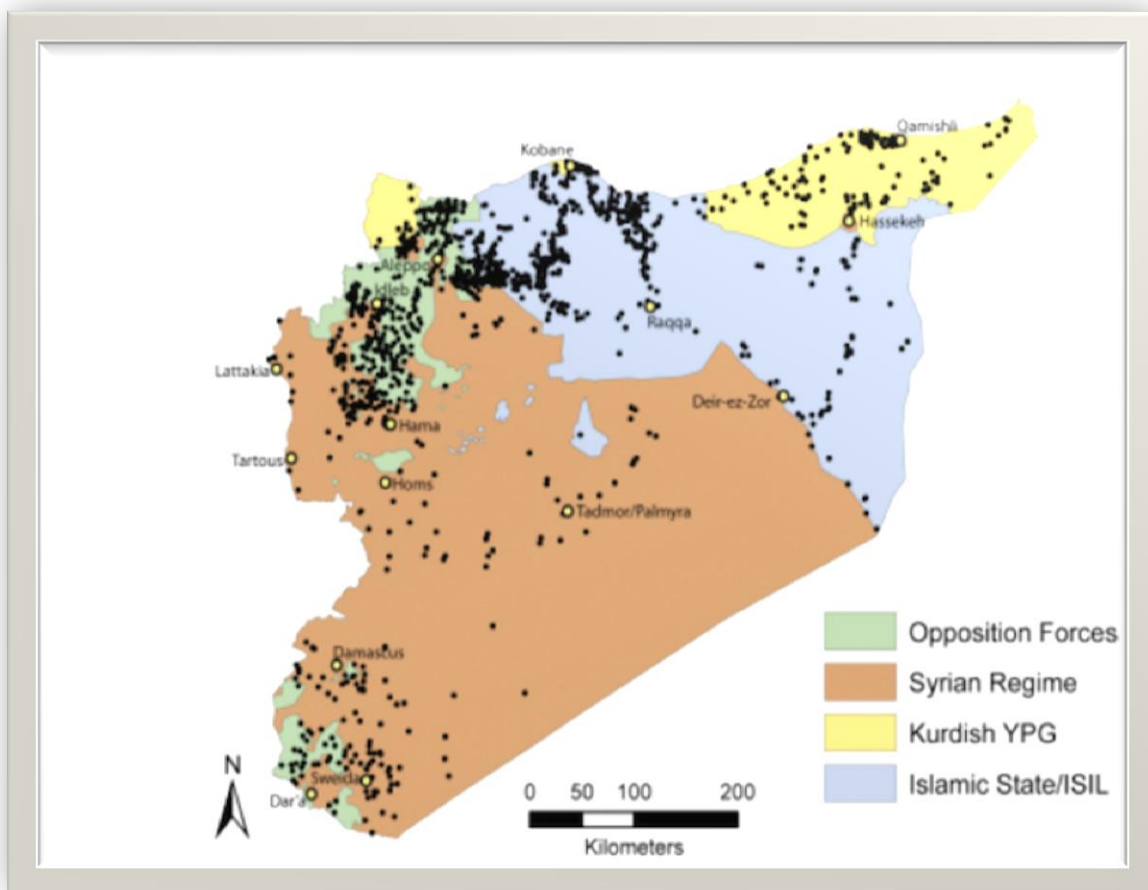
,and the UK , this collation is a Combined Joint Task Force which was set up in September 2014 to coordinate military actions against IS<sup>54</sup>

### 2.1.2 Syria's conflict actors in the Syrian archaeological map

The map of the Syrian conflict always has been changed over the time during the Syrian conflict, in order to see the changes and how the different conflict actors controlled the Syrian territory, the map done by the Carter Center by the project Syria conflict mapping project, is a map which uses an open source data and it shows how the conflict in Syria has evolved over time<sup>55</sup>.

During the conflict also the Syria's archaeological sites were under the control of the different Syrian conflict actors and this always changed according to the gains of the territories by the different actors.

In order to have a better understanding of the location of the archaeological sites according to the conflict actors we chosen two maps , the first one from September 2015 and the second one is from November 2017



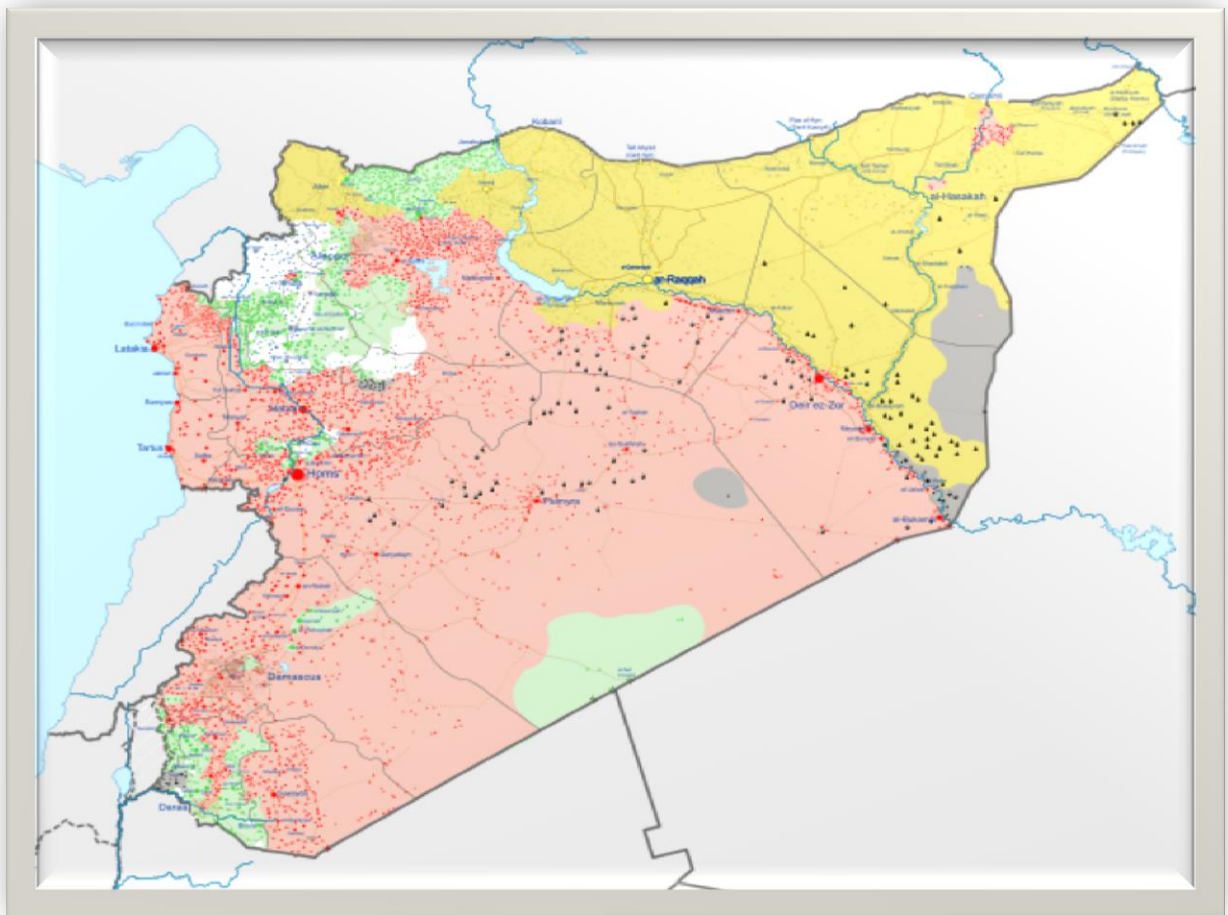
A map of Syria showing the main archaeological sites and where looting has occurred (image courtesy Jesse Casana September 2015)

<sup>54</sup><https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/12/234627.htm>

<sup>55</sup><https://d3svb6mundity5.cloudfront.net/dashboard/index.html>

In the first map we can see that there are so much archaeological sites are located in the different territories hold by the different Syrian conflict actors , IS in 2015 gained almost one third of Syrian territory and it was controlling the most important archaeological sites in the Euphrates region

In the second map from November 2017 we see that IS lost the majority of its territories and the Kurdish YGP and the Syrian regime took over the control of IS territory, The Kurdish YGP in coordination with The Authority of Tourism and Protection of Antiquities in Al Jazira Canton carry upon efforts to safeguard the archaeological sites from violations through observation, documentation and communication with the population where the Kurdish forces are controlling<sup>56</sup> .



**Military situation in November 2017**

Source: From Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository

<sup>56</sup> <http://desteya-shunwaran.com/ar/%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%86/>

## 2.1 An overview of cultural heritage during recent conflicts

Cultural heritage and especially archaeological heritage provides important evidences of the past, these evidences are considered an important elements for the construction of the identities. Without the tangible evidence of the past – the relationship between past, present, and future become increasingly difficult to sustain, when cultural heritage is lost, it is impossible to replace, a society without memory – its cultural heritage – can become dysfunctional ( Stone 2015). The history is full of examples of the destruction of cultural heritage during conflicts. These examples confirm that cultural heritage destruction, used as an attempt to obliterate evidence of the enemy having ever inhabited a particular place (Stone 2013: 321). Also the destruction of cultural heritage can be used as a weapon of psychological warfare, the looting of (and the illicit trade in) cultural property can feed informal economies and fund insurgents (Van de Auwera 2012:50).

During armed conflicts, cultural heritage is under many serious threats. It can be destroyed through intentional devastation, looting, collateral damage, or neglect. (Van de Auwera 2012:49). There is no space to discuss the destruction of cultural heritage in the history; our discussion will focus on the recent conflicts after the second world war

The Balkans wars were a series of ethnically –based wars and insurgencies fought from 1991 to 1999/2001 (Transitional Justice in the Former Yugoslavia 2009). These wars led to the breakup of the Yugoslav state, these wars were military conflicts which affected in most of the former Yugoslav republics.

During these wars cultural heritage was a victim, cultural heritage suffered of huge destructions which they were well planned, the heritage of all major religious Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox Christians – greatly suffered during the war. In Balkans attacks against cultural heritage was a cultural cleansing (Brammertz, Hughes et al 2016). Bosnia and Herzegovina was the country which suffered the most destruction between 1992 and 1995, 1200 mosques, 159 churches, four synagogues and over 1000 other cultural institutions such as major museums, libraries, archives and manuscripts collections were systematically targeted and severely damaged or destroyed. The destruction of the medieval bridge at Mostar, is a good example to demonstrate that the destruction of archaeological heritage was used as an attempt to achieve political goals during conflict (Ibid 2016). Kosovo between 1998 and 1999 suffered of the destruction of 225 mosques and three out of four Ottoman historic centers in the Kosovo cities were damaged (Herscher and A. Riedlmayer 2000 :112). In 1991 the old town of Dubrovnik in Croatia which is a UNESCO World Heritage sites was pounded by artillery fire and more than 100 buildings were damaged or destroyed (Brammertz, Hughes et al 2016). In 1992 the Serb army shelled and destroyed the National and University Library of Sarajevo, a half million books, including 155,000 rare copies were destroyed (Ibid)

The conflict in the former Yugoslavia witnessed the overt ignoring of international treaties which specifically created to protect cultural heritage in times of conflict (Stone 2009:320)

In 1993 The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was created to deal with war crimes that took place during the conflicts in the Balkans (ICTY, n.d), ICTY identified the crime of attacks against cultural property and has also dramatically enhanced the legal framework by recognizing attacks against cultural property as crimes against humanity when committed with prosecutorial intent (Brammertz, Hughes et al 2016)

The war in Afghanistan started in 2001 following the September 11 attacks in USA with the aim to dismantle al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan. The Afghan cultural heritage suffered damages to monuments, museums, archaeological sites and intangible heritage. During the Afghan war, the looting and the smuggling of illicit antiquities from Afghanistan was huge, it is extremely difficult to give precise figures on the amounts and values of these objects (Campbell 2013). The demolition of the 6<sup>th</sup> century Bamiyan Buddhas – two of the largest standing sculptures of the Buddha known in the world -55 m and 38 m tall, is the most famous example of the destructions of monuments in the conflict (Morgan 2012). The National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul suffered of the destruction of sculptures by Taliban, the destruction included masterpieces of Gandharan art, Buddhist monastery complex of Hadda, statues of the Kushan emperor Kanishka (Gil 2015:189). Since 2001 till nowadays many attempts were done in order to safeguard the Afghan cultural heritage, the protection work included documentations, mitigation and restoration and capacitybuilding of the heritage workers (Ibid 190).

The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 caused huge dangers to Iraq's cultural heritage; it affected archaeological sites, museums, mosques, libraries, shrines and churches. Attacks on the heritage sites began soon when the regime of Saddam Hussein collapsed. Looting was a big catastrophe during the war in 2003 and 2004 especially the national museum in Baghdad. The museum lost around 14000-15000 objects of every kind, (sculpture, ceramics, pottery shards, jewelry, metalwork, architectural fragments, cuneiform tablets and a large percentage of the Museum's collection of valuable Sumerian cylindrical seals) (Gibson, 2004). In addition to the museums also many archaeological sites including Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian sites, the looting in these sites led to destroy the archaeological record (Breitkopf, 2007). During the occupation also Iraq suffered of losses to archives and libraries, the National Library in Baghdad suffered fires which led to damage almost one quart of the total book collections, in addition the National Manuscript Library, the Iraqi Academy of Sciences Library and the University of Baghdad's College of Arts Library suffered fire and looting, but local librarians and local people were able to save its collections (Eskander, 2004). The damage and looting also included different libraries in Basra and Mosul. The Coalition military in Iraq in 2003 and 2004 led operations which caused as well big damage to historic monuments and archaeological sites. Many important heritage sites suffered of confrontation of Coalition forces with local Iraqi militants such as the Mahdi Army, the Coalition Ariel attacks led to destroy monuments and religious sites in the holy city of Najaf, in Falluja, Samar and other cities in Iraq. The Coalition also caused damage to important archaeological sites especially when US military built bases on the ancient Babylon and Ur, the building of these bases led to dug trenches and move equipment in the archaeological sites of Babylon and Ur (The Guardian, 2005). During the occupation cultural heritage in Iraq lacked of protection, the Coalition in Iraq did not have any plans to protect cultural heritage in the beginning of their military operations, the public criticism led US and UK governments to take steps in order to protect heritage in Iraq. The Library of Congress, the British Museum and the British Council and The State Department, the British Museum and the British Council all launched special programs to help on the protection of Iraqis cultural heritage. During the occupation of Iraq the occupation forces failed to follow the international convention regarding to the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts such The Hague convention The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed

Conflict (1954) , they must take necessary measures to safeguard and to protect Iraqi cultural heritage

In January 2012 the conflict started in the North of Mali, this conflict is a non-international armed conflict ,it was between the government forces and different organized Islamic groups ,particularly, al –Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb , Ansar Dine and MUJO (Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa) ( Stone 2013: 167). During this conflict cultural heritage suffered of tragic destruction of the mausoleums in Timbaktu , this heritage is considered one of the Africa’s spiritual and intellectual capitals in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> , inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988(Whc -UNESCO,n.d) . The conflict in Timbaktu caused the destruction of nine mausoleums and the entrance to the Sidi Yahia mosque. As Mali ratified the Rome statues, the Malian Ministry of Justice requested that the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) Investigate violations to human rights and international law (Sebastianand Green 2015). ICC prosecutor accused Mr Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi as the main responsible of the destruction of the mausoleums in Timbaktu, Regarding to the investigation of ICC “ On 27 September 2016, Trial Chamber VIII found Mr Al Mahdi guilty, as a co-perpetrator of the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against historic monuments and buildings dedicated to religion, including nine mausoleums and one mosque in Timbuktu, Mali, in June and July 2012, he sentenced to 9 years of prison(ICC 2016) ” .

All the previous conflicts in Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and Mali happened after the Second World War in which the situation of cultural heritage protection changed due to the creation of UNESCO and the international conventions on the protection of cultural heritage, even though the destruction of cultural heritage during conflicts continued, the international challenges of the protection of heritage continued in the later conflicts such the Syrian, Libyan, Yemeni and Iraqi conflicts

### ***2.3.2 Eight years of conflict: the loss of Syria’s archaeological heritage***

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the humanitarian, political and socio-economic repercussions of the Syrian conflict continue to be catastrophic. As a result of the on-going war, more than half of a million people have been killed, and more than half of Syria’s population has been displaced<sup>57</sup>; the Syrian refugee crisis has become the biggest refugee crisis after the Second World War<sup>58</sup>. Syria’s cultural heritage is a victim of this conflict. It has led to the destruction of a significant amount of Syria’s cultural heritage. Many historical landmarks have been damaged or destroyed, while archaeological sites have been systematically plundered and looted. The destruction of this heritage is huge .thousands of monuments and archaeological sites are still under threat.

This section is going to give a general overview of the occurred damage and highlights the impact of the conflict on Syria’s archaeological heritage; it is not intent to give a detailed comprehensive geographic explanation of the damage to Syria’s archaeological heritage.

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<sup>57</sup> World Vision 2017

<sup>58</sup> UN Refugee Agency 2016

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, many initiatives worked and are still working on the documentation of the damage occurred to Syria's archaeological heritage such as Heritage for Peace, Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA) and SHIRIN<sup>59</sup>, even these initiatives played an important role on the documentation of the damage to Syria's archaeological heritage but the work done by the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) through its Cultural Heritage Initiative is the main project to understand the comprehensive geographic explanation of the damage to Syria's archaeological heritage. The work of the Cultural Heritage Initiative by the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) started in 2014. Cultural Heritage Initiative CHI has documented new incidents of looting, theft, damage and destruction (Danti et al 2017, 1), the reports done by CHI are available online<sup>60</sup>. During the last four years CHI succeeded to record damage to archaeological and religious sites, these records included military activity and human activity such as illegal excavations, agriculture and urban encroachment (Danti et al 2017, 8). According to CHI the military activity ranks as the most frequent damage source which includes explosives, artillery strikes, airstrikes and gunfire<sup>61</sup>.

The Syrian conflict presents a number of challenges and complications for monitoring the damage. During this conflict the Syria's archaeological heritage has been targeted for many purposes, for propaganda purposes, psychological purposes and strategic goals (Danti et al 2017, 17)

There is no space to include all kind of damage occurred to Syria's archaeological heritage. In the next lines we are going to brief the damage occurred to the most important sites and museums in Syria.

### **World heritage damage during the Syrian conflict**

Archaeological sites and historical monuments have suffered extensively during the Syrian conflict, every ancient site inscribed on the World Heritage List suffered during the seven years of conflict. In 2013, the World Heritage Committee decided to place the six World Heritage sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the aim of this was to give attention to the risks facing Syria's cultural heritage during the conflict<sup>62</sup>. The report realized by UNOSAT's which called Satellite-based Damage Assessment to Cultural Heritage Sites in Syria<sup>63</sup>, was the first report which provides detailed damage about the World Heritage List in Syria. In this report the world heritage sites were assessed for damage, the report showed various degrees of damage ranging from "destroyed" to "possible damage". The report provides as well a satellite-based overview map displaying the damaged location and inorganic of damage totals for the assessed area.

Aleppo is one of the most affected sites during the conflict. The destruction began when the conflict came to Aleppo in July of 2012 which continued until December of 2016. During this time almost 30 percent of the Old Town was destroyed and 60 percent was reported severely damaged according to the UNESCO mission to Aleppo in January 2017. The UNESCO team

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<sup>59</sup> Later there will be more information on the work of these initiatives

<sup>60</sup> ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives Reports. Available online: <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/reports>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid,p8

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/syrias\\_six\\_world\\_heritage\\_sites\\_placed\\_on\\_list\\_of\\_world\\_h/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/syrias_six_world_heritage_sites_placed_on_list_of_world_h/)

<sup>63</sup> The report of UNOSAT [http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/downloads/chs/FINAL\\_Syria\\_WHS.pdf](http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/downloads/chs/FINAL_Syria_WHS.pdf)



reported extensive damage at the Citadel, mosques, churches, khans, madrassas, hammams, museums, and other important buildings<sup>64</sup>.

The Great Umayyad Mosque suffered huge destruction in 2012 and 2013; it was used as a place of confrontation between Free Syrian Army and the Syrian Army forces. In 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2013 the minaret of the mosque was totally destroyed during fighting between the armed groups<sup>65</sup>. Aleppo Souq which is located at the heart of the Old City, which is considered the largest covered market in the world, the Souq is part of the Old City of Aleppo. Many parts of the Souq were destroyed, ruined or burnt as a result of fighting between the free Syrian Army and the Syrian Armed forces which began on 25 September 2012<sup>66</sup>. According to official estimates, 1500 out of 1600 shops in the Souq had been damaged or destroyed.

The UNHCR report in 2014 found that 22 out of the 210 examined key buildings in Aleppo had been completely destroyed. 48 others had sustained severe damage, 33 moderate damage and 32 possible damage<sup>67</sup>.

The other UNESCO World Heritage Site which suffered huge destruction is Palmyra. Palmyra was controlled by ISIS from May 2015 through March 2016 and again from December 2016 until 2 March 2017 until it was retaken by the Syrian army. During the period in which ISIS occupied Palmyra, the archaeological site suffered from intentional destruction, looting and during the course of the conflict ASOR CHI worked to document the damage to Palmyra accuse to looting, deliberate destruction, execution, military occupation and collateral combat damage<sup>68</sup>.

Since May 2015 ASOR CHI analyzed the photographs and video footage and succeeded to produce first reports by using DGAM information and journalists reports who were able to have access to Palmyra. Through the using of satellite imagery ASOR CHI got images were concentrated on the most important monuments in Palmyra

The destruction by ISIS started with the Temple of Baalshamin and the temple of Bel then it became known that in 4 September 2015 ISIS had destroyed the three of the most preserved tower tombs, the destruction continued and in October 2015 news agencies reported that ISIS destroyed the Arch of Triumph. The destruction of the terapylon and part of the theater was documented on January 2017

## **2. 2 Why archaeological Heritage became a target in the Syrian conflict ?**

Syria's cultural heritage became a victim of the conflict which has led to the destruction of a significant amount of Syria's cultural heritage. Many archaeological landmarks have been damaged or destroyed; indeed archaeological sites have been systematically plundered and looted. The destruction of this heritage is huge. thousands of monuments and archaeological sites are still under threat. This destruction has been carried out for different reasons and in several ways. In the last years many studies have been analysed the motives for attacking heritage sites or objects representing cultural heritage (see Van der Auwera 2012; Frigerio, 2014; Stone 2016; Brosche et al 2016. But it still a lack of common conceptual for possible motives behind attacks on cultural heritag (Brosche et al 2016:2)

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<sup>64</sup> UNESCO mission to Aleppo <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-reports-extensive-damage-first-emergency-assessment-mission-aleppo>

<sup>65</sup> Spencer, Richard (24 April 2013). "Syria: 11th-century minaret of Great Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo destroyed". The Daily Telegraph. Retrieved 25 April 2013

<sup>66</sup> "Death of monument to human history in Syria's war-torn Aleppo". Telegraph.co.uk. Retrieved 2013-06-10.

<sup>67</sup> The report of UNOSAT [http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/downloads/chs/FINAL\\_Syria\\_WHS.pdf](http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/unitar/downloads/chs/FINAL_Syria_WHS.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Special Report by ASOR CHI, the Recapture of Palmyra <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/4290-2/>

The study “The Challenge of Protecting Heritage in Times of Armed Conflict” done by Peter Stone in 2016, it presented seven reasons to understand how cultural property is destroyed during conflict. This study gives analysis which covers causes prior during and after the conflict also it includes both intentional and unintentional attacks.

The analysis of the motivations for attacks on Syria’s archaeological heritage focuses on the intentional and unintentional reasons of attacks which fall under the categories mentioned by (Van der Auwera 2012; Frigerio, 2014; Stone 2016; Brosche et al 2016)

### **2.2.1 The unintentional damages against archaeological sites and archaeological objects**

Always war is considered a threat to cultural heritage because it inevitably entails the fulfillment of destruction nature activities ( Frigerio 2014) . During Syria’s conflict, there are different activities such as shelling, gunfights and other acts that may unintentionally causes to archaeological sites and archaeological objects

#### ***Absence of archaeological protection in pre conflict preparation***

According to the DGAM “*since the beginning of the crisis, all the museums have been emptied of their contents and the artifacts have been stored in secure locations. In addition, burglar alarms have been installed in some museums and citadels, and the number of guards and patrols has increased*” ( Abdulkarim et al 2016: 10)

However, all the packing, transport, preservation and storage of Syria’s museum collections were done very quickly, and with inexperienced staff. Lack of planning meant there were no plans to prioritise the most important objects. As a result, thousands of objects were packed and stored without rules, or associated documentation and hundreds of objects were destroyed during packing, and in transportation<sup>69</sup>.

In Syria prior the conflict the Syrian army did not get any training on cultural heritage protection and is not ready to deal with the destruction, the trained militants can play an important role on the protection of cultural during conflict, a good example of the important rule of militants on the protection of cultural heritage during conflict was the *Monument Men*

They were a team of cultural heritage experts fully integrated to the Allied forces which made enormous efforts to protect cultural heritage during WW II but unfortunately, little was done after the War to continue the work of Monuments Men, just few military forces after WWII retained on cultural heritage protection during conflicts (Stone 2016: 44), the training of Syrian army on cultural heritage could help so much on the protection of Syria’s archaeological heritage

#### ***Collateral damage***

The collateral damage is an unintended (or incidental) as a consequence of military action (Coward 2008 :159) most cultural heritage is destroyed during conflict through unintended ‘collateral damage’ (Stone 2016 :45). The collateral damages are produced by shelling of military targets which are closely located to cultural sites or caused by shootings between opposite groups( Frigerio 2014) .The collateral damage has been documented in the last

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<sup>69</sup> The damage to of museum collections during transportation and storage was confirmed by a member of DGAM staff in 2016 who was involved in the packaging of all the collections. (Many museum collections were transported to Damascus). I am unable to give his name to protect his identity.

conflicts in Iraq, Balkans, Afghanistan and Mali. In Syria the conflict has led to the destruction of significant amount of Syria's archaeological heritage by collateral damage. Many archaeological sites and religious, historic buildings have been affected by shelling and shootings such as the World Heritage Site of Bosra, Crac des Chivaliers, Aleppo and Palmyra (Cunliffe 2012 : 6-8) . In order to prevent the destruction by collateral damage, the Blue Shield has worked to provide lists of cultural property to be protected during armed conflicts ,for Libya, Mali, Syria and northern Iraq , the lists have been passed on to NATO, Department of Defense in the USA and the Ministry of Defense in the UK (Stone 2016:45) . In Syria the Blue Shield in collaboration with Heritage for Peace released list of the most important archaeological sites in Aleppo as a non-strike list, this list drawn up by Heritage for Peace in consultation with Syrian colleagues 20 sites were chosen as the most important sites in Aleppo, and represent some of the many different types of buildings throughout history; the aim of this list was to avoid any fighting near and on these sites in order to protect them of collateral damages ( Heritage for Peace 2013 ) but unfortunately this list was not respected by the fighting groups and Aleppo suffered of many collateral damages.

### **2.2.2 The intentional damages against archaeological sites and archaeological objects**

The intentional destruction of archaeological sites and historic monuments, is to attempt the obliterating built symbols of a group and their heritage . During conflicts always there are attacks that deliberately aim to damage and destroy historical buildings or archaeological sites, we are going to classify the reasons behind the international damages into military , economic , religious and political reasons .

#### ***Military reasons***

Always in interstate conflict or civil war ,the main military reason to destroy heritage sites, is because of their location on mountain sides or along main thoroughfares or their design which may offer cover for snipers and spies (Brosche et al , 2016: 6). During the Syrian conflict there are several examples of the use of several castles as a military bases, for example the Tentative World Heritage Site – Apamea and the Citadel of Qal'at al-Mudiq suffered of digging by Syrian army which used bulldozers to create better positions for the tanks, In many citadels as Homos, Hama, Palmyra and Crac des Chivalries , tanks and heavy weaponry installed in these citadels (Cunliffe 2012:8)

the Syrian conflict is characterized as a civil conflict where there are many armed rebel groups against the Syrian regime, which has superior military resources , these groups normally they use hit and run attacks after they can blend in and hide among the civilian population ( Kalyvas, 2006 ). During the Syrian conflict there are several examples where the rebel groups used the archaeological sites and the historic cities to hide among the civilian population , in late 2012 the opposition forces controlled most of the eastern and southwestern Aleppo , they targeted Syrian army centers and police stations (Sengupta 2012) . Between 2012 and 2016 the eastern part of the historical center of the old city of Aleppo was used by the opposition forces to hide among the civilians as a result many archaeological and historical buildings were damaged or destroyed in the old city of Aleppo. Another reason of the attack of heritage sites is signalling which includes military –strategic motives and is part of reaching the actors goals in the conflict, the attacks against heritage sites that primarily serve as a signal to the opponent , signalling also come from attacking symbolically targets, which may include cultural property (Brosche et al 2016: 7). The use of signaling was a strategy used by ISIS, in May 2015 ISIS seized Palmyra and few months later ISIS began to inflict massive damage, culminating the dynamiting of Palmyra's two temples of Baalshamin and Baal (Frahm 2016:

2), ISIS want to send a signal of strength and capacity to make bad to the humanity by destroying the World Heritage Site. Even though they claimed that their motivation was their opposition to idol worship

### ***Economic reasons***

In history, there are many examples demonstrated that cultural property has been destroyed as victorious armies took cultural property as 'spoils of war'. The theft of cultural property was often used to pay armies. Since the end of the Second World War, however, looting of cultural property conducted by armies winning the war has been limited (Stone 2016:44) The illegal excavation, looting and trafficking of cultural property, increase always during times of political instability and armed conflicts. Looting led to illegal removal of undocumented objects from their original sites which were not already excavated. It also could include collections from individual, museums and other institutions. The looted of the stolen cultural objects may be trafficked or illicitly traded. Economic motives and profit will play an increasingly important role during the conflict, the illicit excavation of archaeological sites can be interpreted as a shadow economy (Van der Auwera, 2012: 59). The looting and trade in antiquities is connected to underground economy and insurgency (Bogdanos, 2005: 477–529). The selling of looted antiquities is a source of funding; in the Syrian conflict numerous actors have looted archaeological sites to finance their fighting (Brosche et al, 2016:8) The types of economies which are related to looting and illicit traffic of Syrian antiquities could be divided into three categories according to (Goodhand 2003, 2005) from his study of the wartime opium economy in Afghanistan, in order to study the economic context of illegal excavation and illicit traffic during the Syrian conflict (Brodie and Sabrina 2018) followed the same typology developed by Goodhand, which describes three separate though interacting economies,

Firstly conflict economy which was supporting armed forces in the field of fighting for political objective (Brodie and Sabrina 2018:7), the most documented is the looting by ISIS which have attacked cultural property in order to steal artifacts that later have been sold on the black market to fund operations, Free Syrian army and Alnusra front have also looted cultural property to finance their activities (Brodie and Sabrina 2018:7)

Secondly criminal economy which is the work of criminal entrepreneurs who profit from opportunities created by the conflict, a good example of this, is the involvement of army officers in the theft and trafficking of cultural objects (Brodie and Sabrina 2018:7)

Finally coping economy which include poor households and communities who lost their traditional incomes by the conflict, as a consequence they were forced to adapt alternative and often illegal livelihoods to ensure their ongoing survival (Brodie and Sabrina, 2018:7). The money spent by Western antiquities collectors played an important role to fund and prolong the Syrian conflict.

### ***Religious reasons***

Since 2014 till 2017 the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria succeeded to control an important areas in Syria and Iraq, this armed terrorist group was continuously destroying cultural heritage sites in Syria and Iraq. In 2014 started the ISIS's campaign of cultural heritage destruction, a video emerged in late February 2015 showing ISIS militants destroying ancient artifacts in the Mosul museum. Since then the destruction targets various places of worship and ancient historical sites. In Iraq ISIS has destroyed and plundered many religious and archaeological sites, in addition to the Mosul museum, the most important sites were the World Heritage sites of Harta, ISIS broadcast the destruction in propaganda videos, which showed the destruction

of the site. ISIS also bulldozed and attacked the monuments of the archaeological sites of Nimrud and Nineveh (Buffenstein 2017). Regarding to the religious sites, the most important sites destroyed by ISIS in Iraq were the Mar Behram Monastery ( Mezzofiore 2015) , which was built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and the mosque of the prophet Yunus which was demolished with explosive (Mamoun 2014) .

In Syria as in Iraq the destruction by ISIS included many archaeological and religious sites, the massive destruction was in Palmyra, in August 2015 ISIS began to inflict massive damage to the World Heritage site, this destruction included the best preserved temples of Baalshamin and Baal also a number of tower tombs and the monumental marble arch of Palmyra's famous Great Colonnade street (ASOR 2015). The Euphrates archaeological sites of Mari and Dura Europos also suffered of huge destruction and plundering. In addition ISIS destroyed important religious sites, according to an interactive map published by the New York Times in 2015 ISIS militants destroyed different historic shrines to Islamic figures (New York Times 2015). Mar Elian Monastery which dedicated to 4<sup>th</sup> saint also was destroyed by ISIS (ASOR 2016). There are different motivations that led ISIS to destruct cultural heritages in Syria and Iraq. They want to show their ideology to the world, this ideology consider the cultures, which predate Islam to be idolatrous to its strict interpretation of the religion by invoking the sins of Shirk, or idolatry, they were to establish their legitimacy as the proper heirs to the legacy of earlier “ destroyers of idold” The Islamic State's notion of *shirk* not only applies to pre-Islamic sites but also any Islamic heritage that does not follow their strict interpretation of Islam, as well as sites belonging to the regions religious minorities ,including Yazidis, Kurds, and Christians .The destruction of archaeological sites and religious buildings for religious or political motives called iconoclasm, ISIS's iconoclasm goes hand –in –hand with its attempt to construct an Islamic state, and it represents a means of bridging the principles of the theological and political unity once ( Singer, 2015:3). It could be considered as territorialization which is one of the most important features to construct a new nation when these features are erased, it is easier to believe the reconstructed version of history, (Smith 2009) . The damage of cultural heritage by ISIS was meant to maintain a distance between the caliphate and what these areas were like before. It was an attack on memory, society and civilization all at once (Singer 2015:3).

### ***Political reasons***

Syria during the conflict became a weak state with weak institutions and little rule of law in different regions of the country. The Syrian government suffered of a lack of function state structures, the conflict led to more corruption and inefficient police system. According to Van der Auwera “ *The destruction of cultural heritage occurs more often in weak states because the lack of law and order, perpetrators are not effectively punished and the looting of cultural heritage becomes easier, illegal excavation can take place due to a lack of security. Inhumane deeds, such as the destruction of the cultural property of other parties, are tolerated more readily. Moreover, looted antiquities can cross borders more easily. Finally, cultural property preservation activities will mostly be discontinued in weak or failed states, such that cultural property is neglected.* (Van der Auwera, 2012: 59)

During the conflict, Syria host external actors which they were involved on the conflict, with or against the Syrian regime, this involvement of multiple state and non –state actors affected on Syria's cultural heritage, some of these new actors

## ***2.3 Impact of conflict on Syrian archaeological heritage***

### ***2.3.1 The documentation of the destruction of Syrias archaeological heritage:***

*Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, many initiatives worked to document the destruction of Syria's archaeological heritage. The actions efforts to document the destruction are considered one of the most three important responses for the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage beside the other two which are the effort to raise public awareness about the ongoing destruction and the implementation of emergency projects inside Syria ( Quntar et Danniles 2016 : 382). Heritage For Peace NGO between 2013 and 2017 has published 4 volume of the report "towards a protection of the Syrian cultural heritage: A summary of the international responses." (Heritage for Peace n.d) . This report documented every year all the responses to protect Syria's archaeological heritage. After the observation of this report we can divide the documentation of the destruction of Syria's archaeological sites to several categories, the first one is the main initiatives who documented all kinds of damage, the second one is the social media initiatives, the third category is the satellite imaginary documentation initiatives, the fourth one is the 3 D documentation initiatives*

### **A)Main initiatives**

#### ***General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums***

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) played a crucial role on the documentation of the damage occurred to Syrian archaeological heritage, through its website DGAM was able to document the damages and to publish the information on its website. DGAM used also to make available on its website several publications about the damage occurred to Syria's cultural heritage, the first publication was in 2013 (DGAM 2013) "Archaeological Heritage in Syria during the Crisis 2011-2013", the second one was published in 2016 "Syrian Archaeological Heritage: Five Years of Crisis 2011-2015 (DGAM 2016)"

In addition to documenting the damage to archaeological sites and publishing information on DGAM website. DGAM also published several initial damage assessment (DGAM 2015 (a)), these damage assessments include the names of the damaged sites in each province and also the type of damage. DGAM also created an interactive map of conflicted archaeological sites and monuments (DGAM 2015 (b)), this map allows to view the damage by provinces, the contents of the interactive map is updated periodically. During the conflict DGAM worked very hard to digitise archives of built heritage and Syrian museums, this digitisation permit to preserve the original archive at risk. the digitized archives have a historic value and will be the basis for the reconstruction projects in the future (DGAM 2015 (c))

#### ***Heritage For Peace***

It is a non-governmental organization founded in 2013 in Girona (Spain) from an international group of heritage workers and volunteers. It was engaged in several projects toward the safeguarding and protection of the Syrian cultural heritage. Since 2014 Heritage for Peace publishes its newsletter which is an update about the damage occurring to Syria's cultural heritage. The damage is listed in the newsletter, is taken from news reports, reports by activists, and updates from the Syrians Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) and many others sources. The newsletter also includes updates on activities taken to protect Syria's heritage. In addition to the newsletter Heritage for Peace publishes every year its report "Towards a Protection of the Syrian Cultural Heritage: A summary of the National and International Responses" which includes all the action taken by cultural heritage organizations to preserve and protect Syria's cultural heritage. This report includes all the information about the organizations who works on the documentation of damage of Syria's cultural heritage.

### ***Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA)***

This NGO is founded in 2012 in Strasburg (France), it worked to document information about damage to Syria's heritage, and to release updates about it, as well as increasing awareness promoting the safeguarding and protection of the cultural heritage. APSA always kept its website updated with important information regarding damage, the damage classified by regions, provinces, site names, monuments, etc. In addition to individual site updates, APSA realized a number of reports on their website such as a special report on Palmyra. Since 2018 APSA stopped to do documentation of the destruction and its website <http://www.apsa2011.com/> which it used for the documentation disappeared

### ***Shirin***

It is an initiative from the global community of scholars active in the field of archaeology of Syria. The main purpose of SHIRIN is to support governmental bodies and non-governmental organization in their efforts to preserve and safeguard the heritage of Syria (SHIRIN n.d (a) ) It formed in 2014 . Regarding to the efforts of SHIRIN on the documentation of the damage, SHIRIN has been preparing individual site –assessment reports for key archaeological sites and making them available on their web site ,Shirin works directly with the archaeological team directors , who are able to evaluate the damage. They developed several forms which describe an assessment of damage for the sites which were officially excavated until 2011 the start of the Syrian conflict (SHIRIN n.d(b) ) .

### ***ASOR's Cultural Heritage Initiatives***

This project started in 2014 in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State. Since the beginning the ASOR CHI have been made available since August 2014 in weekly, bi- weekly, and monthly reports (Danti et al 2017:1) has produced over 1,000 reports on the situation of cultural heritage situation in Syria and northern Iraq. The project was able to make inventories of 13, 000 sites in Syria and northern Iraq the ASOR CHI team conducted 9,000 satellite assessments, it was able to make 4150 heritage observation .The initiative works on the protection of cultural heritage in Syria through documenting the damages, promoting global awareness and planning emergency and post –war responses (ASOR CHI n.d (a))

The methodology of the documentation of damage used by ASOR CHI is through being in contact with specialists, networks of volunteers and organization in Syria and northern Iraq, the collection of information from news and social media sources also is crucial for the damage report , the use of satellite imagery helped so much to monitor, document and verify heritage damage . ASOR CHI publishes regular damage reports, as well special monitoring reports, these reports focus on three major topics, documentation of damage, antiquities looting and smuggling and deliberate attacks to heritage places. The design of the report include a key summary of all reported damage, the published news articles in the media ,the military and political context of the damage ,key recommendation and actions ,details of the damage to each site which include monitoring and mitigation measures and weather each report has been checked via satellite imagery. All the report by ASOR CHI is available online

(ASOR CHI n.d (b)). ASOR CHI continues to run the Heritage Monitor website, which enables anonymous crowdsourcing of damage reports (ASOR (n.d (c)

### ***The Day After Cultural Heritage Protection Initiative***

The Day After is an independent Syrian Association based in Turkey, its work focuses to support democratic transition in Syria. In 2014 the Association established the Heritage Protection Initiative (TDA-HPI) in order to help on the protection of Syrian cultural heritage. The TDA-HI includes a network of heritage professionals and civil society activists who work in areas outside of the Syrian government control.

The main activities of the team are concentrated in 3 provinces: Idleb, Hama and Aleppo. TDA-HPI works on the documentation of the damage through producing regular reports which include rapid assessment and damage reports, also site monitors reports. In 2015, it started the Site Monitors Project, the monitors in this project are as a network of local archaeologists, museum curators and activists. The work done by them includes the documentation of the violations and looting of archaeological sites in the areas outside the regime control, in addition it includes the documentation of the damage caused by the conflict and tracking the sale of looted antiquities and finally the monitors try to implement small-scale intervention projects. (The Day After CHI, n.d)

### **B) Social media initiatives**

Since the start of the Syrian conflict the social media played an important role to document the damage and to raise the awareness about the damage of the Syria's cultural heritage, here are the most important initiatives on the social media which are working on the documentation.

#### ***Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger (Facebook page)***

This Facebook page appeared in the beginning of the Syrian conflict, The Facebook community page Patrimoine Archéologique Syrien en Danger (The Syrian Archaeological Patrimony in Danger) was launched in June 2011, this page during the first year of the conflict became the principal source to document the damage occurred to Syria's archaeological heritage. The work done by this initiative was led by a network of heritage professionals inside Syria. In the first period of the conflict they were able to post a lot of images of damaged historic, archaeological and religious sites. (Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger n.d)

#### ***Aleppo Archaeology (Facebook page)***

The work of the group of Aleppo Archaeology was concentrated on the documentation of the damage to the ancient city of Aleppo. The most of the posts in this page are in Arabic. The group behind this page played an important role to show the damage in the historic city of Aleppo (Aleppo Archaeology, n.d)

#### ***Archaeology in Syria (Facebook page and Twitter page)***

This Facebook page was active during the Syrian conflict, It includes updating on damage occurred to Syria's cultural heritage also updating of the activities to protect it (Archaeology in Syria n.d)



### **C) Satellite imagery documentation Initiatives**

The inaccessibility to the archaeological and heritage sites in Syria by archaeologists and heritage professional has made it difficult to document the damage. However the need to find a way to monitor damage to archaeological sites, helped to create several initiatives which used the satellite imagery in order document the damages occurred to cultural heritage

#### ***American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)***

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) realised several reports which are based on analysis of geospatial imagery about damage to UNESCO World Heritage Sites and Tentative World Heritage Sites in Syria, this project was in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology's Penn Cultural Heritage Center (PennCHC) and the Smithsonian Institution, and in cooperation with the Syrian Heritage Task Force. The objective of the assessment was to identify the current status of each site. The reports done by AAAS indicated that five of the six World Heritage sites suffered of significant damage (AAAS 2014) the report observed damage at every site (AAAS 2014)

#### ***UNITAR's UNOSAT programme***

In 2014 United Nation Institute for Training and Research's Operational Satellite Application Programme (UNOSAT) released a survey of eighteen cultural heritage areas inside Syria; this program was able to record 290 locations as damaged. It was conducted between June 2014 and December 2014 by using satellite imagery. The analysis of this survey resulted in damage assessment, which aimed to identify multiple classes of damage (UNITAR 2014)

#### ***The American School of Oriental Research (ASOR)***

The work done by the American School of Oriental Research (ASOR) on the use of satellite imagery to make damage assessment is the most important work in this field. This project is in collaboration between ASOR and the US Department of State to monitor the damage to archaeological sites in Syria by using recent high-resolution satellite imagery and continually updated satellite imagery from Digital Globe. The research carried by Jesse Casana and Elise Jakoby Laugier in 2017 "Satellite imagery-based monitoring of archaeological site damage in the Syrian civil war" demonstrates the results of the ASOR project, which was able to evaluate damage in nearly 5000 sites. This research was able to develop methodologies for effective and efficient monitoring of damage to archaeological and heritage sites using satellite imagery and trying to build a better understanding of regional patterns in the context of the Syrian conflict. The results gathered by this research help to give a better understanding about the looting in addition to monitor damage at thousands of sites in conflict regions (Casana et Laugier 2017: 26)

#### ***Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA project)***

EMENA project was established in 2015 to respond to the increasing threats to archaeological sites in the Middle East and North Africa. This project works to use satellite imagery to record and make available information about archaeological sites and landscapes which are under threat, it based at the Universities of Oxford, Leicester and Durham. The project demonstrated many threats to Syria's archaeological sites (EAMENA n.d)

## D) 3D documentation projects

### *Iconem project*

The DGAM in partnership with Iconem (company specializing in the 3D digitization) has started several projects to document the damage to archaeological sites in Syria, especially in Palmyra and Crac de Chevaliers, in Palmyra the work is concentrated on the documentation of the destruction affecting the temples of Bel and Baalshamin, the Monumental Arch, the Valley of Tombs and the Museum of Palmyra. The documentation is done by using 3D models known by using the technique of photogrammetry (Popular Archaeology 2016). During the last 2 years Iconem was able to produce 3D models of several monuments and sites in Syria. (Syrian Heritage Revival n.d)

### *Anqa Project*

This project was launched in 2015 as a joint initiative between CyArk and ICOMOs. The aim of Anqa project is to help to record heritage at risk in the Middle East and North Africa. The project focuses on building local capacity through training and provides local communities with the knowledge and tools to enable them to protect their heritage. The project that CyArk realized in Syria was in 2016, it was a training program for a group from the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museum (DGAM) in collaboration with UNESCO office in Beirut. The training included laser scanning, hand –held structured light scanners and photogrammetry. After the training in Beirut the group of DGAM began 3D documentation with photogrammetry in different important monuments in Damascus such The Madrassa al-Jaqmaqiyya and the Bimaristan Nur al-Din. In addition to Damascus CyArk has plans for another training programs for groups of DGAM from Aleppo and Homs where the heritage was more affected, the training will be on 3D processing which will able DGAM to document the damage in both Aleppo and Homs<sup>70</sup>.

### *3D model of the bazaar destruction in Aleppo*

This new project of 3D documentation is a project of the “Stunde Null initiative<sup>71</sup>” (This is meaning in German) in English it means “a future for the Time after the Crisis” it is a project developed by the German Archaeological Institute. The 3D Model of the Aleppo Bazaar it focuses on Aleppo as the city suffered of huge destruction and a lot of historical monuments were damaged. The project is in partnership between the German Archaeological Institute, the OTH Regensburg and a group of free researchers. It tries to create a 3D model of the Aleppo bazaar of how it was before its destruction in 2012. The aim of this model is to document the damage and to help on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Bazaar.

This model is developed on the basis of the plans and photos collected from several sources, using AchiCAD, SketechUp and 3ds Max<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> CyArk project IN Syria <http://www.cyark.org/news/project-anqa-progresses-in-2016>

<sup>71</sup> Stunde Null initiative

<https://www.dainst.org/documents/10180/2082824/Archaeology+Worldwide+Special+Issue+2016/0e33097d-1071-4c7b-b4dc-85b81a5cb7b2>

<sup>72</sup> An abstract about the project it was presented in the conference Visual Heritage <http://www.chnt.at/3d-model-as-a-basis-for-the-discussion-on-the-reconstruction-of-the-aleppo-bazaar-2/>

## 3-Objectives and Methodology

### 3-1 Objectives of the research

The idea of this research came up through the involvement of the author with the NGO Heritage for Peace on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage. The NGO work helped him to identify different gaps on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict. This thesis tries to cover several gaps relating to the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict.

The principal objective of this research is **analyzing the situation of the Syrian archaeological heritage during the conflict and the efforts to protect it**. In order to approach to this analysis we put some key questions, whose answers will be elaborated and deepened in the publications that make up this thesis

**Question 1:** How was the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict and how it became during the conflict?

**Question 2:** How the Syrian conflict affected on the Syria's archaeological heritage?

**Question 3:** What is the role of Syrian heritage authorities and Syrian civil society on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage inside and outside Syria?

The main base of this research assumes the main hypothesis which is to understand how the Syrian conflict affected on the Syria's archaeological heritage and its management. The research is based on this approach, specific objectives and hypotheses are proposed that developed through six articles

**The first contribution:** *“Syrian Archaeological Heritage Management Before and During the Conflict: a Comparison Study”* provides a comparative analysis between the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before and during the conflict. The main objective is to analyze the institutions that manage the archaeological heritage, the legislative framework, excavations, and museums, also it will highlight the main management problems before the conflict, another important objective as well is to highlight the actions taken by the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM, the main body responsible for Syria's antiquities) and other important institutions to safeguard Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict.

Through the review of the academic and institutional literature and semi interviews with employees at DGAM, the research shows the crucial role that DGAM played on managing Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict. It shows how DGAM did not receive the needed support from other Syrian institutions, and it confirms that their involvement was very limited. It shows that the participation of Syrian civil society in the protection, management and promotion of cultural heritage was very limited – very few cultural heritage NGOs existed before the conflict. It demonstrates the challenges that the DGAM faced during the conflict to protect Syria's archaeological heritage. DGAM was not able to continue its normal tasks: there are few excavations and little research, and restoration projects were stopped. Especially initially, the protection and documentation of museum collections, archives and archaeological sites became their main priority. It confirms that the role of the international

community in supporting DGAM has been limited. The complexity of the political situation has prevented the DGAM from collaborating with many of international initiatives, and in other cases the collaboration has been very limited.

**The second contribution:** *“The Illegal Excavation and Trade of Syrian Cultural Objects: A View from the Ground”* is a detailed case study from the ground on the illegal excavation and trade of Syrian archaeological objects, the main objective of this research is to analyze how the illegal excavation and trade of Syrian archaeological items happened inside Syria. This research provides texts of interviews with seven people resident in Syria who have knowledge of the illegal excavation and illegal trade .It shows that the illegal excavation and illicit traffic are kind of coping economy, which is an economy refers to local population groups that are coping or surviving.

**The third contribution:** *“Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict”* provides a view about the work of many initiatives of the Syrian civil society before and during the conflict that have an important role on the protection of Syria’s archaeological heritage. The objective is to analyze the work of these initiatives during the Syrian conflict which is to raise awareness, to safeguard collections, monuments and archaeological sites, to document and monitor the damages, to stop the looting, and illicit traffic .This research show how the civil society was able to participate and even lead efforts during the conflict. It presents the work of different NGOs who are carrying out activities inside and outside Syria to empower local communities while developing sustainable program for heritage protection.

**The fourth contribution:** *“The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria’s Heritage Protectors”* is a study about the Syrians who works on the protection of Syria’s archaeological heritage during the conflict. This study aims to collect evidences that would demonstrate the huge efforts of the Syrian to protect their heritage. It shows examples of local people who make many risks to protect the archaeological sites, during the work they are risking snipers, gunfire, and airstrikes in order to check they are safe, to record damage and make urgent repairs.

**The fifth contribution:** *“Protecting heritage during conflict: the work of Heritage for Peace”* is a publication which presents the work of a new civil society organization doing its activities from outside the country, it is Heritage For Peace .It presents the idea behind Heritage for Peace (HFP), then it gives an overview of the work done by the CSO in order to protect Syria’s cultural heritage , then it presents the recent project of the organization which is Syrian Heritage Law Training (SHELTr) ,which aims to provide an online curriculum offering Islamic court staff, heritage workers and government officials across opposition-held area in Syria. It confirms how is important to involve local communities in the protection of their cultural heritage during conflicts.

**The sixth contribution:** *“Using cultural heritage for the refugees: The Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin’s museums”* is a publication which deals with the Syrian refugees in Germany, it presents the Multaka project which is a cultural initiative dedicated to help new Syrian refugees in Germany and fostering their connections between Syria’s cultural heritage and Germany’s cultural heritage. The aim of this publication to highlight the role of Syria’s cultural heritage to connect refugees to their cultural heritage, and addressing the role that Germany’s heritage plays in the integration of these new populations.

The publications presented in this thesis are strictly related one to another and are presented sequentially, from the analytical framework of the management of the Syria's archaeological heritage then to the destruction of it and finally the efforts to protect it.

The relationships among the publications are highlighted in table 1; the first question is answered through the first article, in which it gives a detailed explanation of the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before and during the conflict. It includes several aspects of the management such as legal aspects, museums, archaeological excavations, archaeological sites and historical monuments, and local communities.

The second question is highly transversal, in each contribution, the destruction of the Syria's archaeological heritage was explained, but in the second article the destruction through the illegal excavation and illicit traffic was the most analyzed aspect of the destruction of Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict. The second article gives a better understanding of the destruction through illegal excavation and illicit traffic during the Syrian conflict.

Finally, through the answer of the third question we analyzed what are the efforts taken to protect Syria's cultural heritage by Syrian heritage authorities and Syrian civil society, the analysis includes the actions taken by DGAM which is the main authority of heritage in Syria, these actions are presented in the first article, in the rest of the other publications we analyze the role of different groups of Syrian civil society, these groups are based in Syria and especially in the oppositions areas, in addition the analysis includes groups which are organized through NGOs, the third article explains the role of the Syrian NGOs on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage inside and outside the county. The analysis in the fourth article highlights the risks and the limitations of the people who work inside Syria to protect and safeguard the Syrian heritage. The fifth article highlights the role the Syrian refugees on the promotion and protection of Syria's cultural heritage.

Table 1: The relationship between research questions and publications

Questions of the research	Article n.1	Article n.2	Article n.3	Article n.4	Article n.5	Article n.6
	Sabrine (2019)	Sabrine et Brodie (2017)	Sabrine (2019)	Sabrine, Cunliffe et Fischer	Sabrine et cunliffe (2019)	Sabrine (2019)
<b>First question</b>	<b>X</b>					
<b>Second question</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Third question</b>			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

Source: Author.

### **3.3 Research Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The research strategy adopted was to conduct multiple researches topics , during the research we were able to interview the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Syrian CSOs and local professionals who works on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict. The filed work was conduct with the people in Syria during different periods between 2015 and 2019. A steady correspondence has been maintained with the different informants and professionals who work on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage during this period. The main data collection techniques used in this research study was semi-structured interviews, participant observation, questionnaires and documentation analyses.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first is about the research strategy .It describes the research approach and it covers the reasons for selecting different research topics. The next section is about the procedure and the data sources and data collections and analysis finally, section three deals with the difficulties, limitations and access during the process of this research

#### **3.3.1 Research Strategy**

As stated, the main purpose of this thesis is to create a better understanding of the situation of the Syria's archaeological heritage and the efforts to protect it during the conflict. This entails a detailed study of the wider and local context factors influencing on the Syria's archaeological heritage such the management of it before and during the conflict, the actions taken to protect it by the official heritage authorities, the role of Syrian civil society on the protection of archaeological heritage.

#### **Selection of the research topics**

##### ***A) Management of Syria's archaeological heritage***

The selection of this topic was used to describe the work of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) which is the main authority in Syria to protect and Safeguard the archaeological heritage.

In this research I analysed several aspects which are considered the most important aspects concerning Syria's heritage management. These are: the legal aspect; museums; archaeological excavations; archaeological sites and historical monuments, and local communities. In addition to those five important sectors, I analysed briefly the secondary aspects such as human resources at the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), and the funding of Syrian cultural heritage management. In this study, I have conducted several analyses. An important part of this is based on personal observations and through my work at the DGAM. The work at DGAM helped me to understand the work of the different Directorates at the DGAM, and this analysis is based on that, supported by research from other sources. Also in this research there was a focus to understand how DGAM acted during the conflict.

## ***B) The Destruction of Syria's archaeological heritage***

To explain the destruction of Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict, the study of the illegal excavation and trade of Syrian archaeological objects was the chosen case to study how the conflict affected on the Syria's archaeological heritage.

During eight years of conflict, the destruction to Syria's archaeological heritage was well documented, many initiatives and projects worked and still working to document the damage occurred to Syria's archaeological heritage. There were some attempts to study the illegal excavations such ASOR and EMENA

Casana from ASOR project did the study "Satellite-Based Monitoring of Looting and Damage to Archaeological Sites in Syria", this study highlights the role of satellite imagery in monitoring the looting of archaeological (Casana, 2015) but there was not any research has been conducted to study the organization and operation of the looting and illicit trafficking inside Syria during the conflict, therefore the research that I did with Neil Brodie "The Illegal Excavation and Trade of Syrian Cultural Objects: A View from the Ground" is considered the first research in this subject during the Syrian conflict, and it gives a good understanding of the illegal excavation and illicit traffic in Syria.

## ***C) The Protection of Syria's archaeological heritage***

In order to understand the role of Syrian authorities and Syrian civil society on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage we conduct the research with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums and several groups from Syrian civil society.

The conduct research with DGAM shows how the role of it changed during the conflict and how it was not able to continue its normal tasks, the research and restoration projects stopped during the conflict and it shows how the protection and documentation of museum collections, archives and archaeological sites became their main priority of DGAM

The research also conducted several researches to analyze the role of the Syrian civil society on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict, the selected sample to analyze was different groups from different areas in Syria, the publication I did with Cunliffe and Fisher "*The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria's Heritage Protectors*". It analyse the collection of evidence that demonstrate the extensive efforts of the Syrians to protect their heritage. Another research was chosen to investigate the role of Syrian civil society which is the publication "*The role of civil society in the protection of cultural heritage during conflict*". it analyses the work of different new NGOs found during the conflict and who have been carrying out activities inside and outside Syria to empower local communities whilst developing sustainable program for heritage protection.

The research also focuses on the Syrian civil society who fled Syria because of the war it analyses how a CSO work from outside Syria to help on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage, this COS is Heritage for Peace, *the publication Protecting heritage during conflict: the work of Heritage for Peace*" which presents Heritage For Peace and the work done by it to help on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage then we talk about Multaka project (it is a cultural initiative in museums dedicated to Syrian refugees in Germany). This project demonstrates the role of Syria's archaeological heritage outside Syria and how it can help to foster the connection between the Syrian refugees and their cultural heritage. The participation of the Syrian refugees in this project helped to make raising

awareness towards the importance of Syria's cultural heritage protection and the need to restore it after the conflict

### **3.3.2 Procedure**

Every publication in the research has different topic approach; therefore the description of the procedure will be explained for every publication in separate way.

In the first publication, the research focused on DGAM, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with several staff from DGAM who were involved to manage several directorates at DGAM . The research also used many personal observations which are based through my work at DGAM between 2004 and 2010. During that time, as a student I participated in several archaeological missions; and I also worked with DGAM staff to prepare exhibitions in the National Museum in Damascus - particularly when Damascus became the Arabic Capital of Culture in 2008. During this period, I also worked in the Directorate of Excavations in the Administrative department. This experience helped me to understand the work of the different Directorates at the DGAM, and this analysis is based on that, supported by research from other sources such as the review of the academic and institution literature of archaeological heritage management and the DGAMs reports during the conflict.

In the second publication we conducted the research over the period June -July 2016. We used semi –structured interviews with a series of initial questions, but with room for the participants to express their own opinions. The participants have been anonymized; all the participants in this research come from the Idleb Governorate. There are seven participants who have been interviewed, every one of them was involved in trading illegal excavated objects or in illegally excavated archaeological sites .During the research we were aware of the safety of the participants, therefore they were anonymized and we did not encourage participants to photograph or to engage directly with any illegal activity, the collected information that we got through our participants helps to give better understanding about the problem of illegal excavation and illicit traffic inside Syria .

In the third publication we conducted the research to understand the role of civil society on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage. The research was conducted with initiatives of the local civil society inside and outside Syria, these initiatives were created by local and foreigners groups in order to help on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage, the groups who created these initiatives are mostly academics, archaeologists and former DGAM employees. We conducted the research over the period May-June 2018, we used semi-structured interviews but also we left a room for the participants to express their own views. The participants are members of different NGOs inside Syria such as The Syrian Centre for Cultural Heritage Protection, The Idleb Antiquities Centre, The Authority of Tourism and Protection of Antiquities in al Jazira Canton, the Department of Antiquities in the City of Bosra and the Archaeological Society of Aleppo. In outside Syria such the Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA), Le Patrimoine Archéologique Syrien en danger (LPASD), SHIRIN and Heritage For Peace, the collected data that we got through the participants of these CSOs demonstrate that these COSs played a crucial role to raise awareness, to safeguard collections, monuments and archaeological sites, to document and monitor the damages, and to stop the looting, and illicit trafficking of Syria's heritage

In the fourth publication “*The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria's Heritage Protectors*” this research was conducted in 2 ways, the first was through the media review of the Heritage For Peace media archive, which was created in 2014, this archive includes media articles about Syrian heritage damage and heritage protection efforts inside and outside Syria, in our research we used this media archive to look for evidence of risks taken by heritage workers, the second



was through conducting a field research by using an questionnaire .We designed a designed a simple Arabic questionnaire which could be filled in via a cell phone or Skype interview. The questionnaire went through two editions. The first was used in a preliminary version of this research, carried out in April 2016 ( annex 1), in this first round of data collection, the participants were seven male from Idlib and Maarrat al-Numan, and Apamea region , aged between 21 and 46 .Their level of education varied from high school to the postgraduate level . . All were involved in heritage protection during the current crisis and appeared to be active in the region encompassing Idlib, Apamea, and Marrat al-Numan.

From working with this early version we discovered that our questions did not give us precise information about the social and political risks faced by heritage workers in Syria. Also, because this early version had focused on respondents in the area around Idlib, Maarrat al-Numan, and Apamea, , we wanted to conduct a second round of questionnaires over a larger area. In June, we refined several of the questions in section 2 of the questionnaire ( annex 2), and interviewees were contacted by phone and Skype throughout the month of July 2016 over an area between Idlib and Palmyra.The Arabic questionnaires were then translated into English for analysis. In the second round of data collection we interviewed eleven participants. Responders were all men aged between 29 and 56 in a region covering Idlib to Palmyra. All were now involved in some form with the protection of heritage sites in Syria, ranging from those of purely local importance to sites or World Heritage status.

In the fifth publication “*Protecting heritage during conflict: the work of Heritage for Peace*” as a c-founder and president of the NGO I was involved from the beginning in the work of Heritage for Peace , I used to participate in designing and realizing in all the projects done by the NGO . This publication depends on a personal experience and personal observations. This publication provide a detailed analysis about all the project done by Heritage for Peace and in the same time it explains the difficulties the NGO has faced, but despite all the difficulties it stands as one of the first groups to provide international help to Syrian heritage workers on all sides affected by the conflict

In the sixth publication “*Using cultural heritage for the refugees*” I was involved in the Multaka project as a guide in the German Historical Museum , I used to guide Syrian refugees in this museum , in this publication I conducted interviews in Summer 2016 with a group of fifteen refugees verbally some simple questions with the intent of collecting some information on both how refugees felt about their heritage in Syria and Iraq before fleeing, and how they felt now, during the conflict ? What do they feel when they see some of their heritage in Pergamonmuseum ? How does Multaka help them to learn more about the German culture and the German history in the German Museum of History? We selected the following responses four refugees illustrate why Multaka is important for them .

### **3.3.3 Limitations and difficulties of the research**

My research is a research in conflict zone, the environment of conflict and violence is extremely complex, the violence during the Syrian conflict creates an atmosphere of total psychosis among the people which leads to a climate of insecurity, fear and distrust. During the time of my research I was not able to travel to Syria. The data collection that I obtained was collected by phone calls, Facebook chat and Skype calls. In the first publication where my research was basically about the work of DGAM . It was not possible to investigate the archives of DGAM which could allow me to have more data about DGAM work.

During this research I faced many political pressure and barriers, the fact of having a neutral political position and not having any political affiliation, it is not easy to be in contact with

two groups who support different parties in the conflict, for example I am in contact with DGAM who represents the Syrian regime and also I am in contact with the Syrian CSOs which the majority of these CSOs are affiliated to the Syrian opposition.

The data collection in the publications were concentrated in areas where I have contacts, but I was not able to conduct any research in areas of the control of the Islamic State, the presence of violence and the insecurity , were the re reasons to limit the access to heritage workers and the ability to conduct any research there .

During my research I was aware of some ethical challenges of conducting research in a conflict zone, therefore all the participants in my research were anonymized because the difficult context conditions which can produce increase dangers for them.

## **4 – The contributions of the research**

**The first contribution:** « *Syrian Archaeological Heritage Management Before and During the Conflict: a Comparison Study* »

Durham 8th July 2019

Commission of PhD Programme of *Ciències Humanes del Patrimoni i de la Cultura*  
Girona University

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am writing to confirm that Isber Sabrine submitted his chapter, '**The management of Syrian archaeological heritage before and during the Syrian conflict: a comparison study**', in *Community Heritage in the Arab Region*, edited by A. Badran, S. Abu Khafajah and S. Elliott, in January 2019. The text of the chapter went through two rounds of rigorous peer-review and was accepted for publication by the editors in September 2019. Sabrine's chapter will be going through a further peer-review process by the publisher, Springer, starting in April 2020. The volume is expected to be published in the autumn of 2020.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further inquiries.

Yours faithfully,



Arwa Badran, Ph. D.  
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# **The management of Syrian archaeological heritage before and during the Syrian conflict: Comparison Study**

## **1 - Introduction**

Located at the crossroads of the Mediterranean, Syria experienced the rise of the great empires emerging from Ur, Babylon, Akkad and Sumer, in addition to the rise and spread of major world religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) - all of which left their imprint upon an area that we today consider important to world history ; Syria is an open-air museum with six declared world heritage sites: the ancient cities of Damascus, Bosra, and Aleppo; the archeological site of Palmyra; Crac des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah El-Din fortresses; and the ancient villages of northern Syria also known as the "Dead Cities". To this we must add Syria's twelve inscriptions on the World Heritage Tentative List, including the ancient sites of Ebla, Apamea, Waterwheels of Hama, Dura Europos and Mari. Aside from these sites which are, by definition, of "outstanding universal value" (Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention), there are numerous rare and important collections of antiquities housed in, for example, the museums of Raqqa, Homs, and Hama, Damascus , Aleppo and other cities as well as built heritage such as the castle of Qal'at Ja'bar . Prior 2011, there were 138 national and foreign archaeological missions excavating on Syrian sites, while there are more than 10,000 tells in the country, and more than 5,000 of those archaeological mounds are scattered in the region of Jazira in northeast Syria (Ali,2013) .

Since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, Syria's cultural heritage has been one of the victims. It has suffered from shelling, looting, demolition, and many sites have been used for military purposes. All six Syrian World Heritage sites are in danger (UNESCO n.d. (a)) Right from the start, the international media has reported on the destruction<sup>73</sup>. As the conflict has continued, the extent of reporting has continued to increase, especially when ISIS started to destroy archaeological sites like Palmyra, Monastery of St. Elian, Raqqa, Mari and Doura europos . International media have played an important role in raising awareness of this issue. It has provided many reports about the destruction of World Heritage sites – such as Palmyra, Crac de Chevaliers, the Ancient Cities of Aleppo and Bosra, and the Ancient Villages of

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<sup>73</sup> See Cunliffe 2012.

Northern Syria; and they have provided numerous reports about the destruction of other sites, including churches, mosques, and those affected by illegal excavations. Illicit trafficking also received a lot of attention. The destruction of Syrian heritage has always been shown in the media as a consequence of the conflict but there are other indirect reasons for its destruction that are related to the way that it was managed before the conflict began.

This chapter provides a critique of these indirect reasons, examining a tranche of inadequacies and failings in pre-conflict management frameworks and processes within legislative structures, excavation projects, museums and the institutions that manage archaeological heritage, before turning to the situation contemporaneous with the conflict. The latter is discussed in terms of how the conflict has affected the sites, and how these sites and how these sites have suffered from illegal excavation, looting, and destruction. It will highlight the actions taken by the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM, the main body responsible for Syria's antiquities) and other important institutions to safeguard Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict. An exploration of the relationship between local communities in Syria and the country's archaeological resources is presented in both parts [and provides an opportunity for future crucial engagement.

## **2 - Institutional context of heritage management in Syria**

This section will present a general overview of national Syrian institutions involved in the management of cultural heritage. The focus will be on the DGAM; its structure and its tasks.

### **The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums**

The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) was created after Syria was granted independence in 1946<sup>74</sup>, as part of the process of establishing an independent Syrian institution of archaeology. From 1946 until today, it has remained the main body involved in the preservation of archaeological heritage, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture. The adoption of the Syrian Law of Antiquities (No 222) in 1963 aided in structuring the work of foreign archaeological missions in Syria, and gave the DGAM the authority to act as the main institution responsible for archaeological research.

In addition to the central administration in Damascus, the DGAM has fourteen branches around Syria; every province has a branch. The DGAM is charged with various activities<sup>75</sup>

They are :

- Excavations
- Registration and administration of the sites
- Preservation reconstruction and restoration
- Museums
- Control illegal excavation and illicit traffic

Prior to 2011, there were several associations dedicated to cultural heritage but their role was small. Most were founded between 1950 and 1960: they were involved in raising awareness of cultural heritage by organizing conferences and archaeological tours of those early associations, the most active today are: The Association of Friends of Damascus<sup>76</sup>, the Adiyat of Aleppo<sup>77</sup>, and the Syrian Historical Association of Homs, all of which were founded before the current Syrian regime came to power (Gillot 2008, p131) These groups suffered from a

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<sup>74</sup> Publications of DGAM N.d. (b)

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> The Association of Friends of Damascus website. Available at: <http://damascus-friends.com/> [Accessed: 03/06/2017]

<sup>77</sup> The Adiyat of Aleppo website. Available at: <http://www.aladeyat.org/> [Accessed: 03/06/2017]

lack of governmental support, funding, and resources. With more support, these associations could play very important practical role, as they have extensive experience of their specialist areas

### **3- Examples of local communities ‘participation prior 2011 on heritage management in Syria**

The participation of the local communities in the management of cultural heritage is crucial. Community archaeology has given local communities and groups around the world a voice in archaeology and heritage management (Chirikure and Pwiti 2008, p468) local participation helps them to access their heritage. In the last decade, much work was done on the use of the archaeological sites for the economic and educational benefit of local communities. The participation of the local community is the best way to protect archaeological heritage. According to Damm “community participation is not just about engagement, it is about giving power to the local communities in all aspects of heritage, including research and management” (Damm 2005, p76) Local archaeological heritage is a valuable tool to foster a sense of pride, working out how to “show it off is important as the conservation works” (Grimwade and Carter 2000, p36)

In Syria, the consideration of local communities in management was always modest, and limited to individual efforts, a selection of which is presented here. One of the most important initiatives is The Urkesh Eco-Archaeological Park in Tell Mozan, the ancient city of Urkesh located in northern Syria near the Turkish border. Excavations begun in 1984 under co-directors Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati . According to Giorgio “It is, then, with tender care that we must nurture a project like ours – aimed at a remote Syrian past, and yet so full of meaning for the Syrian present. So we had to design wholly new ways of showing how much life there is in the remoteness of a buried past. It is a moral presence. But not in the rhetorical sense that we only speak about it rather, in the very concrete and real sense that we are transforming culture into social glue” (Grimwade and Carter 2000, p36) . This archaeological project had a very important aim - raising local awareness of the importance of local culture through training in conservation and education at all levels in the villages of Tell Mozan and Umm er-Rabia(which is a village closed to the village of Tell Mozan) . During this project, a very good initiative started called The Gates of Urkesh - a social initiative for development based on renewing local handcrafts in the villages of Tell Mozan and Umm er-Rabia). Participants produced local handcrafts to sell them to tourists: the project has become a model of initiative at the grassroots level (Buccellati 2014b)



A team works at Tell Mozan. Source: National Geography Creative by Kenneth Garrett

The education program ‘Youth and Heritage’ was implemented in 2010 in Sweida province in Syria. The aim of the program was to increase the participants’ appreciation of their cultural heritages as natives of Syria, and mobilize youth to become conservators and advocates of local historic sites ( Alkateb 2013, p191) . This program tried to promote the local community's awareness of its oral heritage and access to archaeological sites in their surroundings, promote active participation by youth in their communities, build the capacities of local actors in the cultural field, and increase internal tourism. It included training and educational activities for teenagers and young adults to give them an opportunity to develop the perception of their cultural heritage as an asset (Alkateb 2013, p191) during this project, the participants from Palmyra and Sweida created anthologies of local songs and tales, and produced two short carton films that targeted children of Palmyra and Sweida. The project also resulted in two travelling multi–media exhibits - cultural busses - of project productions that travelled to Damascus, Palmyra, Sweida and their surrounding villages<sup>78</sup>.

Another initiative that worked with local communities was the project at of Shiek Hilal village in the Syrian Desert, conducted by the local association, The Association of the Friends of Salamiyah, with the funding support of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development. This project aimed to preserve the threatened architectural heritage through the participation of the local communities. The locals participated in training programmes about traditional handcrafts and the restoration of the traditional mudbrick village houses which were characterized by mud domes<sup>79</sup>. The project also worked to create local handcrafts such as embroidery, needlework and pottery.

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p194

<sup>79</sup> SANA. n.d

#### **4- Archaeological heritage management before 2011**

Prior to the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, very little attention was paid to identifying and analysing the major issues in managing Syria's archaeological heritage. Attention was solely focused on archaeological excavations. This absence of pre-conflict research has limited understandings of the impacts of war on the country's cultural wealth. Through an engagement with the author's work at the DGAM between 2004 and 2010<sup>80</sup> and with secondary sources, the most significant facets/loci/axes of heritage management in Syria – museums, archaeological excavations, archaeological sites and historical monuments, and community engagement with heritage – are explored in terms of their limitations.'

##### **3.1 - The legal framework and its limitations**

Heritage laws are one of the most significant tools in the management of cultural heritage. Several studies have been dedicated to give an overview of public support in heritage management which includes practice of and obstacles to legislative and administrative practice in this domain in (Cleere 2010, p4–12). Heritage management scholars have discussed heritage management practice related to the structure and the legislative system in different contexts (Doumas 2013, p112). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) have set up a number of guidelines for the management of their specific categories of heritage (Abdelkader et al, 2016 p8). For example, the World Heritage Convention (1972) recognizes the importance of state parties' legislation to control all activities and development process (UNESCO n.d. (c)). Unfortunately, whilst today Syria's heritage managers work closely with these organizations wherever possible, Syria's antiquities laws do not reflect modern international legislation.

Syria's heritage law is the Law of Antiquity No 222 which is dated to 1963<sup>81</sup>. Together with its amendments in 1999, it is the main regulatory legislative device for protecting cultural heritage. According to this law, the Ministry of Culture – represented by the DGAM – is the principal national administrative entity of all archaeological sites, monuments, objects and museums. These are all declared to be public national property. The law then sets up the main tools to prevent the destruction, transformation and damage to all of Syria's movable and immovable antiquities.

The Syrian Antiquities law explains the nature of Syria's heritage, its framework, categories, management, and the names of the State authorities in charge of its protection. It identifies antiquities as cultural property, and distinguishes clearly between movable and immovable forms of heritage. It lays down the national regulations surrounding cultural property, and explains the expected penalties in cases of destruction, or in the event of failure to protect them. The law also classifies the rights and duties of all workers in the field of archaeology and heritage, as well as setting out the framework for foreign archaeological research teams working on Syrian territory. This law has always been the main legal tool for cultural heritage

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<sup>80</sup> The analysis in this section is based on the author's personal observation throughout his work at the DGAM between 2004 and 2010. During that time, as a student the author participated in several archaeological missions; and worked with the DGAM staff to prepare exhibitions in the National Museum in Damascus - particularly when Damascus became the Arab Capital of Culture in 2008. During this period, the author also worked in the Directorate of Excavations at the Administrative department. This experience helped her to understand the work of the different Directorates at the DGAM, and this analysis is based on that, supported by research from other sources.

<sup>81</sup> This analysis of the limitation of the Syrian Law of Antiquities has been carried out according to personal observations and through the author's experience at DGAM between 2004 and 2010



protection in Syria. However, it has created many difficulties for the management of Syria's archaeological heritage. Following here are some of the main limitations<sup>82</sup>.

#### *Lack of identification*

The Syrian Antiquities Law identifies items of a certain significance which is in the general interest to preserve, but it lacks ways of distinguishing between all types of cultural heritage - Syrian heritage is defined only as antiquities, and these are classified into just two types: movable and immovable antiquities<sup>83</sup>. Natural heritage, intangible heritage, and many other types of heritage more commonly considered today are excluded. In addition, antiquities are only considered to be included in the definition if they are more than 200 years old. The definitions are not compatible with the international conventions which have adopted and encouraged many definitions of the concept of heritage<sup>84</sup>.

Nowadays heritage laws need to identify the wide concept of cultural heritage, to include all forms of cultural heritage meaning; tangible and intangible heritage such as traditions, oral history, performing arts, social practices, traditional craftsmanship and representations. Having the concept antiquities as the only definition of cultural heritage excludes all the other forms of the wide concept of heritage, therefore the new international heritage law which includes conventions and charters changed to adapt the different forms of heritage meaning. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>85</sup> and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage are examples of this adoption.

#### *Lack of broader institutional framework*

The law defines the DGAM as Syria's main heritage management authority, without clarifying the role of any other national stakeholders. The law contains no elaboration on overall coordination between the central DGAM office, and its regional departments, but also between other organizations and institutions - national and local<sup>86</sup>. The lack of legal form identifying the relationships between the DGAM and other stakeholders has created tension; for example, conflict arisen between the DGAM and the Ministry of Tourism over the use of archaeological sites and historic monuments. The law specifies that the DGAM should – for example – mark historic properties, monuments and archaeological sites on the relevant maps, and that both they and the maps should be consulted during urban planning, but this rarely occurs.

#### *No clear ownership*

The law states that the DGAM retains certain management rights for sites and monuments, even if they do not own them. Antiquities – such as historic buildings – may be privately owned, or owned by other institutions<sup>87</sup>, such as the Ministry of Religious Endowments and Religious Bodies (Awqaf), who own many religious properties (mosques, churches, monasteries, etc) and have many responsibilities in their management. However, in order to preserve immovable registered antiquities, and to maintain their features and decorations, only the DGAM have the right to carry out maintenance and restoration<sup>88</sup>. In addition, the owner of a registered immovable antiquity may not destroy, move in full or in part, renovate or change

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<sup>82</sup> This analysis of the limitation of the Syrian Law of Antiquities has been carried out according to personal observations and through the author's experience at DGAM between 2004 and 2010.

<sup>83</sup> The first article of the Syrian Law of Antiquities

<sup>84</sup> For example, the definitions in the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO n.d. (c) )

<sup>85</sup> For further information see UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage

<sup>86</sup> See article 19 of Syrian Law of Antiquities

<sup>87</sup> See article 18, 19, 20, 21 of the Syrian Law of Antiquities

<sup>88</sup> See article 22 of Syrian Law of Antiquities

the immovable antiquity (often their home) in any way without prior permission from the DGAM<sup>89</sup>. This section of the law gave the DGAM a huge responsibility that it lacked the capacity to conduct comprehensively<sup>90</sup>. Yet, the law does not identify clearly what rights other institutions who own cultural property have, as opposed to the DGAM. For example, in the World Heritage Ancient City of Bosra, many people own houses in the ancient city: there was often tension between those people and the authorities as they were not allowed to carry out any kind of modification to their property. Many of the houses are very old, and people wanted to add modern amenities; an act that is forbidden by the law.

#### *Absence of the private sector involvement*

The law does not consider the private sector as a stakeholder in the management of the cultural heritage. For example, there is no role for private companies to participate in management plans of archaeological sites and historical monuments; the private sector exists only in the tourism sector as travel agencies.

#### *Absence of local communities' involvement*

Lastly, the involvement of the local community in heritage management is vital for a meaningful outcome in any heritage development process (Abdelkader et al 2016, p10) but the law does not take the interests of, and involvement with, local communities, into consideration. They have no responsibility in decisions relating to the protection of cultural heritage, and there are no provisions for consultations on what should be protected. Nor is there any framework that allows the DGAM to involve communities in the management of what should also be their cultural heritage. As a result, the implementation of the law on the ground led to tensions with local communities. Conflicts arose, for example, between employees of the DGAM and local people because of building restrictions close to archaeological areas<sup>91</sup>. Syrian law gives the DGAM the right to prevent all construction in archaeological areas, but it does not give compensation to affected local people. In addition, many local people worked at archaeological sites as vendors, trying to sell handcrafted products to benefit from tourist revenue. This often led to tension between those vendors and the authorities, as archaeological sites lack organized markets for the local craftsmen (Zobler 2014, p7198) Aware of the problems, Syria intended to reform the legal and the institutional structure of cultural heritage management: an important initiative started in 2010 aiming to update the law in light of its problems and international developments<sup>92</sup>.

### **3.2 - Syrian Museums**

In the last 20 years, many studies have been dedicated to the management of the museums<sup>93</sup>. More recently, museums researchers have started to discuss “new museology” which, according to McCall and Gray (2013, p. 55), “started with the intention of introducing a new philosophy around how museums function and a changed relationship between museums and their societies and communities”.

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<sup>89</sup> See article 23 of Syrian Law of Antiquities

<sup>90</sup> See article 20 and 22 of the Syrian Law of Antiquities

<sup>91</sup> In my personal experience, the author witnessed several conflicts between local people and the employees of the DGAM, arising because people were not allowed to build close to the archaeological areas.

<sup>92</sup> More information about the new legal initiative of 2010 is available on the DGAM's website here:

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?p=314&id=1114> [accessed 11/02/2017]

<sup>93</sup> To learn more about museum management see Davies et al. 2013, p350. According to Davies “there are four themes that in that recur in the literature, first, preserving the material culture or objects (rescuing, collecting and conserving the collection); second, understanding the material (studying and researching); Third, communicating (the presentation and interpretation of the collection whether in exhibitions, publications or events) and fourth, contributing to civic society developing a sense of belonging in individuals, contributing to community cohesion and helping to create national identity”.

Before the conflict, how Syrian museums were managed? Did they function according to the ideas of new museology? It is the answers to these questions that we will discuss in the next lines.

### **a) Museum Structure**

The Directorate of Museum Affairs is the part of the DGAM that is responsible for the management of Syrian museums: it has three units. The first is the documentation and museum exhibition unit, whose main task is to register, describe, and evaluate antiquities which have been discovered and transported to museums for exhibition. This unit also has the important task of holding exhibitions inside and outside Syria. The second unit is responsible for developing existing museums and suggesting the establishment of new museums in the country. The third unit is the educational and public relations unit, which carries out the task of encouraging schools and universities to visit museums, and preparing tourist guides and brochures for the museums in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism. Syria has 38 museums, divided into 5 categories<sup>94</sup>.

- **The first category** is the national museums, of which there are two - the National Museum of Damascus and the National Museum of Aleppo
- **The second category** is the 12 regional museums in Hama, Homs, Daraa, Deir al-Zour, Palmyra, Idlib, Latakia, Bosra, Tartous, and Kenitra
- **The third category** is the museums of popular art and traditions, which includes 7 museums distributed between the cities of Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Bosra, Palmyra and Deir al-Zor
- **The fourth category** is the archaeological site museums, which includes 3 museums: Arwad museum, Dura-Europos museum and Aleppo Citadel museum
- **The fifth category** is the 14 specialist museums, such as the Museum of Medicine and Science in Damascus, the Historical Museum of Damascus, the Calligraphy Museum in Damascus, the Museum of Mosaics in Maaret al-Numan, the Citadel of Damascus, and the museums of specific regional areas, such as the museum of Deir Atiya, the museum of Sheik Saleh al-Ali, and the museum of Apamea.

### **b) Museum Development**

For several years before the start of the conflict, the DGAM carried out projects to develop Syria's museums. These included, for example, a bilateral agreement between Syria and Italy in 2007: this project focused on restoration - to develop a high-tech lab in the National Museum (Damascus) to provide training to use the latest technologies, and establishing an exhibition room for Syrian mosaics for restoration purposes<sup>95</sup>. DGAM projects included restoring the Citadel of Damascus, and strengthening the management ability of the DGAM by establishing a database for Syrian cultural heritage. Other international projects included an agreement with the Louvre Museum in 2008 to encourage the development of archaeological sites with professional staff; there were staff exchanges to study and to restore artworks in Syrian museums, and to train Syrian students in the field of restoration. The

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<sup>94</sup> DGAM n.d. (c)

<sup>95</sup> Italian Agency for Development Cooperation ,Lebanon and Syria, Beirut Office

agreement also provides for the refurbishment of the exhibition rooms of the Eastern Antiques Department in the National Museum, and for the introduction and exhibition of Syrian antiquities in the Louvre (Alkhatib and Yazaji 2010, p191). Unfortunately, this agreement was cancelled in 2011 due to the conflict.

### **C) Problems with Museum Management**

The new museology concept is a term focus on a changed relationship between museums and their societies .It means a re-examination of purpose and diversification of role; moves towards de-centralisation; representational practice (excluded identities); museum interdependence (i.e. co-operation and networking with other museums and cultural organisations); diversification of publics and audiences; shifts to multi-disciplinarity (i.e. in displays and curators with multiple skills). The museums should have digitalized inventories, emergency plans ,education programs for children and adults and different publics

Linking this concept to the Syrian Museology, we can see that the Syrian museums are still far to reach this concept, for many reasons which we highlight them in the next lines

#### *Lack of trained personnel*

Syria has no faculties of museology and the majority of employees in Syrian museums are not trained to work in them. As a result, the museums have suffered from the absence of professional museum personnel. This has impacted all the museum categories listed above.

#### *Lack of inventory and documentation*

The lack of inventories was one of the biggest problems facing all the Syrian museums before the conflict. Every year, they received thousands of objects resulting from the archaeological excavations carried by foreign and national missions. The majority of those objects lacked any inventory or documentation; the knowledge about their origin was retained solely through identifying the location it has been retrieved from. The lack of documentation lessened their scientific value and made it difficult to study them.

#### *Lack of emergency plans*

No Syrian museums had any emergency plan, placing the museums, their collections, and their staff at risk. The emergency plan can help to prevent and minimize damage occurring from disasters (either manmade or natural)

#### *Modest role in the education system*

Museums have often played an important role in education in many countries, but in Syria this role was almost absent. The only museum that had an educational role was the Museum of Damascus, which carried out some activities related to cultural heritage education for local primary schools. This educational programme in the museum ran from 2007-2008: it allowed the children the opportunity to write in cuneiform, make clay figurines, and conduct their own mock archaeological excavations. The aim of this programme was to involve local school children in their heritage, which is infrequently mentioned in primary school books (Zobler 2011, p180)

#### *Lack of Syrian visitors*

The number of local visitors to the museums before the Syrian conflict was very modest; the majority of visitors were foreign tourists, despite the free entrance for Syrians<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid* p180

### 3.3 - Archaeological excavations

#### **Excavation Management Structure**

The Excavation Directorate is the part of the DGAM that deals with excavation, investigation, and archaeological surveys, and publication. It also gives the necessary authorizations to foreign scientific expeditions. Archaeological missions were classified into three different categories. The first is the foreign missions, which represent the majority of archaeological missions. The second is the national missions, of which there are few. The third is the joint missions, where Syrian and foreign archaeologists work together and which are co-directed by a Syrian and a foreign director. The foreign missions were the most active and productive missions. According to Gillot (2010, p. 10) “In spite of the increase in jointly managed projects, the majority of archaeological scientific production emanates from foreign missions, which possess both the scientific and technical knowledge and the funds necessary to manage research, excavation and publication of it”. According to Michel Maqdissi, the former Director of the Excavation Directorate<sup>97</sup> at the DGAM, there were 120 archaeological missions in Syria before the conflict. These included French, English, German, Spanish, Italians, and American, Polish, and Japanese missions. All the archaeological research in Syria was organized following the colonial model originally set up under the French Mandate (Gillot 2010, p. 14).

#### **Problems with Archaeological Excavation Management**

##### *Lack of communication between institutions*

One of the biggest problems affecting the management of archaeological sites before the conflict was the lack of communication between the related institutions. This gap occurred at different levels. The first was at the ministerial level, between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism, which disagreed regarding the management of antiquities. They are split between two different conceptions of the values and functions of archaeological sites and remains<sup>98</sup>. The second level was the lack of communication between central authorities and local authorities regarding heritage sites. Local authorities (DGAM directorates in provinces, provisional councils, etc.) considered that the intervention of central institutions was either restrictive or insufficient (Gillot 2010, p. 11).

##### *Lack of Arabic Publications*

According to the Syrian Antiquities Law, excavation directors should present a report to the DGAM in the end of their excavation campaign. Prior to 2011, all the reports presented were very brief, without any common method or standard system of presentation between the archaeologists. In addition, all the reports were in English or French, without consideration of the limits of the language abilities of DGAM employees, thus disassociating them from the knowledge of the heritage they were responsible for. In addition, all the most important archaeological publications are written in foreign languages, except a few journals like *Alhuliat Alatharia Asuria* (The Archeological Annals) and *Mahad Alhadara* (Cradle of civilization), which are in Arabic<sup>99</sup>

### 3.4 -Archaeological sites and historical monuments

#### **Management Structure of Archaeological Sites and Historical Monuments**

The management of the archaeological sites and historical monuments is the task of different directorates at the DGAM. The work is normally coordinated by three directorates,

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<sup>97</sup> Pers. Comm., during an interview with Michael Maqdissi in October 2015.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid* p11

<sup>99</sup> DGAM n.d. (b)

architecture directorate, building directorate and the site management directorate. Every directorate has several units which carry different tasks<sup>100</sup>.

### **Problems with the management of the Archaeological Sites and Historical Monuments**

The management of archaeological sites and historical monuments also suffered from problems, mainly coalescing around a lack of institutional interdependence, financial deficiencies and vague curatorial strategy.

#### *Lack of coordination between the institutions*

Prior the conflict it was a lack of coordination between the Ministry of Tourism and DGAM regarding the management of the archaeological sites and historical monuments. The contribution of the Ministry of Tourism was very limited and it focused just on the touristic promotion of the Syria's archaeological heritage

#### *Lack of national funding*

The lack of funding by DGAM led to limited implementation of the management plans in the archaeological sites and historical monuments. The strategy that DGAM followed regarding to the implementation of the management plans was dependent on the international funding

#### *Lack of clear restoration and conservation strategies*

The DGAM had no clear strategy regarding the restoration and conservation of archaeological sites and historic monuments before the conflict. Basically, the DGMA depended on the foreign archaeological expeditions to do restoration work such as the conservation of the Royal Palace in Qatna<sup>101</sup>. The Aga Khan foundation was the main foreign institution which supported the DGAM on the restoration and conservation. In partnership with the DGAM AKTC implemented several restoration and conservation programs in Qalat Salah ad-Din, Aleppo Citadel, and Masyaf Citadel<sup>102</sup>.

### **3.5 - Local Communities**

As community involvement in local heritage was largely a result of individual initiatives, there were number of problems besides those raised by a legal framework that did not account for organizations other than the DGAM.

#### *Lack of raising awareness*

Prior the conflict there was no policy for raising awareness of the importance of any heritage in Syria either locally nationally, or even globally: the strategy was simply to spread awareness and link it to government or public institutions without the participation of the local community ( Kanjou 2014, p275) The government strategy to involve local communities on the management of archaeological heritage led local communities did not consider that heritage belonged to them; rather the majority considered that heritage belonged to the government<sup>103</sup>

#### *Lack of cultural heritage education*

The educational system in Syria is limited regarding cultural heritage education. Syrian school history books concentrate almost exclusively on Arab history after the advent of Islam (Loosly 2005, p. 590), although some school trips are organized to visit the most important

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<sup>100</sup> All the information in this sector was gathered from the DGAM by the author, the information gathered through interview with DGAM staff and with direct observation

<sup>101</sup> The conservation of the Royale Palace in Qatna, <http://www.qatna.org/en-conservation.html>

<sup>102</sup> Aga Khan Development Network website. Available at: [http://www.akdn.org/publications/hcp\\_syria.pdf](http://www.akdn.org/publications/hcp_syria.pdf)

[Accessed: 10/01/2017]

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p275

archaeological sites<sup>104</sup>. In addition, the role of the museums in cultural heritage education is very limited.

#### *Lack of resources*

The DGAM had no budget for community involvement, and the national and foreign archaeological missions in Syria always received limited funding: the majority of the budget is dedicated to the archaeological research. Community archaeology requires a huge investment of resources that is not always available to researchers who are under pressure to publish rather than interact with the public (McManamon 2000)

#### *Conflicts between local communities and archaeologists*

Archaeologists sometimes considered local communities to be a threat to the safety of archaeological sites. According to Gillot (2010, p 11) “The local populations are usually excluded, or access is limited by private ownership. Some scholars consider, therefore, that archaeological research and archaeological heritage are somehow unfamiliar or external to Arab and Muslim societies”. In addition, the majority of the archaeologists do not share the results of their discoveries with the local population. They are far from being involved as a crucial partner on archaeological excavations.

But sometimes there were also positives regarding to the local communities Gillot (2010 ,p 13) notes these positives: ‘Archaeologists generally have an impact on the local population’s interest in history, particularly when the excavations are long-term research programs where the involvement of local workers turns them into mediators between archaeologists and members of the community’ and ‘exchanges [with local people] can help archaeologists with the interpretation of remains with their own knowledge and local memory’.

So the involvement of foreign archaeologists with local communities is crucial and their relationship should be a positive one where everyone can benefit

#### *Limited economic benefits for local communities*

The only benefit of local sites and monuments for local communities is employment, usually when some locals become workers in archaeological projects, but this work is usually only temporary, and is frequently poorly-paid as menial labour. According to Gillot’s (*ibid.*) working with foreign archaeological missions normally is better paid than working with national archaeological missions from DGAM, the seasonal salaries, normally could be one month or two month, the wages paid by the foreign archaeological missions workers can be superior to the local and average salary in agriculture or industry. DGAM did not have an adequate budget for the archaeological research needs ,the benefits for local communities through archaeological excavation was very limited and just for short period time.

The project at Mari (Tell Hariri) stands as an alternative example, where the French archaeological mission trained local people in mudbrick building and conservation techniques and paid them as craftsmen<sup>105</sup>.

## **4- Syrian archaeological heritage management during conflict**

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the humanitarian, political and socio-economic repercussions of the Syrian conflict continue to be catastrophic. As a result of the ongoing war, more than quarter of a million people have been killed, and more than

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<sup>104</sup> See Admin ibn (2015) for an interesting example.

<sup>105</sup> Sebastien Rey, pers. comm. 2012

half of Syria's population has been displaced<sup>106</sup>; the Syrian refugee crisis has become the biggest refugee crisis after the Second World War<sup>107</sup>. This conflict also has led to the destruction of a significant amount of Syria's cultural heritage. Many historical landmarks have been damaged or destroyed, while archaeological sites have been systematically plundered. Many actions were taken both nationally and internationally to help protect it, but the conflict demonstrated new challenges that people were unprepared for, and the policies for the protection of cultural heritage in Syria have failed (Brodie 2015, p1)

This section briefly summarises Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict, focusing on the reasons for its destruction, with a short analysis of how the management of heritage before the conflict has influenced the destruction during it. It is not the goal of this article to explore the many welcome attempts of the international community to assist in the protection of Syria's heritage; these can be seen in other publications<sup>108</sup>.

#### **4.1 - Syrian conflict as a direct reason for damage**

Since 2011, many initiatives have documented the damage. The DGAM has published both regular updates (available on their website<sup>109</sup>) and annual reports of the status of archaeological heritage from 2011, through to the 2016 report<sup>110</sup>. The report *Damage to the soul: Syrian cultural heritage in conflict* (Cunliffe 2012) was one of the first reports published collating the damage occurring (in May 2012). Other important initiatives have also played a vital role in documentation, such as the Syrian Heritage Archive Project<sup>111</sup>, *Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger*<sup>112</sup>, and the Association For the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA)<sup>113</sup>, who publish regular updates online; Heritage For Peace publishes a regular newsletter collating updates<sup>114</sup>; and ASOR (American Schools of Oriental Research) Cultural Heritage Initiatives working with The Day After Heritage Protection Initiative publishes regular reports online, as well as special reports<sup>115</sup>.

It is outside the remit of this chapter to provide a detailed discussion of the damage to Syria's heritage but here very briefly, are the most known types of damages occurred to Syria's heritage during the conflict up until the middle of 2018. They are :

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<sup>106</sup> World Vision 2017

<sup>107</sup> UN Refugee Agency 2016

<sup>108</sup> For example, see Perini and Cunliffe 2015, and Leckie et al 2016, for lists of actions, and Al-Quntar and Daniels 2016 for a more detailed analysis of them.

<sup>109</sup> DGAM website <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/>

<sup>110</sup> these reports are all available under the World Heritage site documents on the UNESCO website (for example: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23/documents/>)

<sup>111</sup> Syrian Heritage archive project website <http://syrian-heritage.org/en/about-us/situation>

<sup>112</sup> *Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger* Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Archeologie.syrienne/>

<sup>113</sup> APSA website: <http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/>

<sup>114</sup> Heritage for Peace website: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/>

<sup>115</sup> ASOR Syrian Heritage Initiatives website: <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/>



- Direct bombing and damage to archaeological heritage sites
- Military use of archaeological areas
- Civil occupation of archaeological sites and historical monuments
- Illegal construction
- Illegal excavations

Despite efforts by international organizations and international projects, many issues remain, such as the ongoing need for damage assessment and data collection which suffer from a lack of standardization and a high duplication rate.

#### **4.2 - Pre-conflict management as an indirect contributor to damage**

Although the conflict is the direct reason for the damage to the archaeological heritage, we now highlight other reasons, related to the way in which the heritage was managed.

##### **a) Application of the Syrian antiquity law and international law during conflict**

The Syrian Law of Antiquities, as mentioned above, was a weak law and was poorly applied, with no regard of local communities in question. Local communities before and during the conflict often considered heritage sites to belong to the government, rather than managed by the government on their behalf. The absence of government authority and authority figures during the conflict has provided local communities with the freedom to act without fear of arrest or prosecutions, for example, to construct illegally on heritage sites (Kanjou 2014, p275). The application of the antiquity law before conflict led to a huge gap between the local community and heritage authorities, contributing to a lack of respect for heritage during the conflict. Even where it is possible to access site, the DGAM does not always have the requisite support to enforce the law. The Syrian law of Antiquities during the conflict was not applicable in the areas where DGAM cannot arrive, the non-governmental authorities which replaced the Syrian government in some areas in Syria did not give any importance to the use of the Syrian Antiquities Law in their territories. Another obstacle also is that the nature of the Syrian legal frameworks, is a very centralized system with no broader institutional or non-governmental (NGO) stakeholder provision .During Syrian conflict Syrian institutions faced a problem which is the sanctions, they were imposed by the United States and the European Union against activities that involve the Syrian financial system, According to (Quntar, Hanson, Daniels and Wegener,2015) these sanctions as well also extend to Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM). The Syrian Sanctions Regulations only permit a limited humanitarian exemption, therefore for activities to support the preservation and protection of cultural heritage sites in Syria, including, but not limited to, museums, historic buildings, and archaeological sites.” For example American heritage professionals seeking to assist the protection of Syrian cultural heritage are legally obliged to forgo working directly with the Syrian DGAM.

However, another important legal issue is the application of international law. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, customary international law should apply at all times in all conflicts, and is binding on all parties: several articles call for respect for cultural property and prohibit looting<sup>116</sup>: it is these laws in particular which affect military conduct regarding cultural heritage during conflict. There are also a number of international treaties and conventions regarding heritage protection in conflict, only some of which were signed by Syria before the conflict, but no action was taken to implement them in national law. Several authors have discussed the ways in which international law should work to protect Syria’s heritage during conflict (Gerstenblith 2016; Cunliffe *et al* 2016). It is a complex area to navigate, but succinctly put, international law has not been respected by *any* parties involved

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<sup>116</sup> These articles are available on the website of the ICRC, in their Customary international humanitarian law database here <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/home>

in the conflict – state, non-state or civilian (Gerstenblith *ibid*) – and for several reasons, including its lack of implementation in national law, prosecution is unlikely.

## **b) Museums**

Syrian museums before the conflict faced problems due to deficiencies in - or even the total lack of - security measures, protection measures, emergency planning, insufficient staff training in packaging, conserving and handling objects, and in records archiving (Jamieson 2014, p477). These museums were not ready to face an actual conflict situation. Although the DGAM played an exceptional role in trying to protect them once it became clear emergency measures were needed, the challenges in transporting and storing thousands of objects very quickly was immense. According to the DGAM “*since the beginning of the crisis, all the museums have been emptied of their contents and the artifacts have been stored in secure locations. In addition, burglar alarms have been installed in some museums and citadels, and the number of guards and patrols has increased*” (Abdulkarim et al 2016, p10).

However, all the packing, transport, preservation and storage of Syria’s museum collections were done very quickly, and with inexperienced staff. Lack of planning meant there were no plans to prioritize the most important objects. As a result, thousands of objects were packed and stored without regard for curatorial standards in collections management and care, and hundreds of objects were destroyed in the process. Loss of documentation was a major issue, as many objects were accompanied by brief, but crucial records logging *inter alia* their source location. The whereabouts, or indeed continuing existence of these records, is unknown and potentially devastating for the scientific record if they are permanently lost. To their credit, the DGAM have put an exceptional amount of work into digitizing the museum records and documenting the objects. By 2016, more than 118000 objects (Abdulkarim et al 2016, p10) had been documented and archived, in cooperation with international bodies, using excavation records to reconstruct the inventories of the Raqqa museum (which was looted before its collection could be moved<sup>117</sup>), and the Deir ez-Zor museum (the Digitizing the official inventory of the museum of Deir az-Zour project<sup>118</sup>). In addition, training courses have been held for some (but not all) staff in emergency packaging and handling of objects, documentation, as well as other relevant courses (Abdulkarim et al 2016)

There are also problems storing all the objects – for example, the Aleppo museum collections were packed up, but for some time there was no adequate storage as they were stored in a basement to protect them from shelling. Unfortunately, the basement was below the water level, and it flooded, threatening the packages. . Some objects are too large to be packed up and stored: these had to be left in situ, but were heavily sandbagged – the picture of the sandbags around the historic entrance to the Aleppo Museum has become one of the iconic heritage pictures of the conflict.

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<sup>117</sup> More information on the Focus Raqqa project is available here: <http://www.globalheritage.nl/news/focus-raqqa-project-receives-funding>

<sup>118</sup> More information on the Digitizing the official inventory of the museum of Deir az-Zour Project is available here: [http://shirin-international.org/?page\\_id=795](http://shirin-international.org/?page_id=795)



Protection of the entrance of the Aleppo Museum. Source: Aleppo Archaeology

Lastly, many museums lacked adequate security measures – a small number of thefts occurred before all the museum contents could be packed up (Abdulkarim et al 2016, p30), and there are reports of curators sleeping in some museums to protect the building from burglaries (Dagher 2014) (as happened during the looting of the National Museum of Baghdad). To try and deal with these problems, some security measures have been installed (Abdulkarim et al 2016, p32) and emergency plans have also been developed and implemented for some museums, such as the National Museum of Aleppo (Jamieson 2014, p468).

### c) Excavations

During the conflict, the approach of the Directorate of Excavation has changed a lot. Archaeological excavation is no longer a priority as it was before, partly due to the budget cuts at the DGAM, but primarily due to the lack of security at many archaeological sites. The new approach has been to focus on archaeological documentation and the preservation of the administrative and scientific heritage kept in the archive of the Directorate of Excavation, particularly the archives and reports of the archaeological missions (Abdulkarim et al 2016, p43). Table 1 shows the number of archaeological missions in Syria before and during the conflict

<b>Missions</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>National</b>	35	57	27	23	28	22
<b>Joint</b>	58	47	10	0	0	0
<b>Foreign</b>	28	33	2	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	121	137	39	23	28	22

Table1: The number of archaeological missions in Syria before and during the conflict<sup>119</sup>

According to the excavation agreements between the DGAM and the foreign missions before the conflict, the latter were obliged to pay the guards of archaeological sites within which they were working.. Unfortunately, after 2011 most missions were unable to send the guards' salaries because of the political issues between the various governments, and the international sanctions of Syrian banks. As a result, about 40 percent of the guards no longer receive any money ( Sarkis 2014) and many no longer carry out their work. In addition, as security broke down, many guards found it harder to visit their archaeological sites. This lack of protection contributed to an increase in looting at many sites. The difficulties experienced by the guards and the ensuing effects at the sites suggest that the DGAM's site monitoring system may have been weak, and highlighted the DGAM's dependence on foreign archaeological missions. In addition, before the conflict, the majority of the archaeological missions would store their discoveries in their mission houses on the archaeological site. These storage facilities lacked any security measures, and during the conflict they had become an easy target for looters; for example, Heracla storage in Raqqa was looted in 2013<sup>120</sup>.

It is also worth noting, unfortunately and unavoidably, that the lack of excavations means that new students are not being trained, and unable to gain experience, impacting Syria's next generation of archaeologists.

#### **f) Local communities**

The conflict has significantly affected local communities, and many people living around archaeological sites have been forced to abandon their homes ( Al-Khateeb 2015). The impact of their situation on these places has been considerable, with violations against, and vandalism of the sites increasing. Desperation and necessity have played their part here, but pre-conflict lack of awareness and education has compounded the issue. At some sites, especially in Idlib Province, , many sites became shelters for local people; for example, buildings have been reoccupied in Serjilla, Al-Bara and Btirsas as shelters for refugees<sup>121</sup>. On the one hand, the lack of work and the need for resources to survive during the war has also pushed many locals to loot in many archaeological sites (Brodie and Sabrine, 2017). In addition, the lack of security and changes in law enforcement priorities have allowed illegal construction by local communities in many archaeological sites (Cunliffe 2012, p18)

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, p211

<sup>120</sup> DGAM 2013(b)

<sup>121</sup> DGAM. 2013 (a)



Syrian volunteers work to protect mosaics in the Ma'arra museum.  
Source: Ma'arra Museum Project/Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq Project

On the other hand, the conflict has demonstrated that there are local communities that care about protecting archaeological sites. Local initiatives to protect cultural heritage mainly rely on limited community resources – lack of resources remains an issue. The tight financial constraints of the DGAM, and the access issues due to the security situation, meant these initiatives have not always received central government support. Despite this, they contributed to heritage protection and restoration. For example, in the Church of Saint Mary of the Holy Belt (Um al-Zenar Church), local community volunteers created a garden over the pit where extremists burned the bibles and icons, and locally financed major restoration work to cleanse the nave and sanctuary of the thick soot and the heavy smell of burned furnishings and timbers (Iamb 2015) . At Crac de Chevaliers, local volunteers have worked with DGAM craftsmen since May 2014, making remarkable progress repairing and reconstructing parts of the castle. In Idleb Museum, the DGAM former employees worked together with locals to secure the museum collections and to put it in a safe place. Another example shows also that refugees are caring about their heritage, in the Zaatari camp in Jordan, refugees chose to recreate 12 of Syria's landmarks in miniature (Dunmore,2016)

It is also worth noting that some projects, such as the Urkesh Eco-Archaeological Park, continued during the conflict. For example the locals bought materials, such nylon and other materials ,to cover the walls of the tell to protect it from the rain and there was no damage to the site (Buccellati 2014a) .

There are also stories of locals who take many risks in order to protect the archaeological sites: they have gone out to sites – risking snipers, gunfire, and airstrikes to check the sites, record damage, and make emergency repairs. They have also faced down gangs of armed looters, and posed as undercover antiquities buyers (Cunliffe 2016). The risks also include the tension and conflict with members of the local community who were actively engaged in looting and who always try to tarnish the social reputation of the heritage workers engaged in documenting and controlling those

acts. The heritage workers also risked being identified by hostile parties as involved with x or y political faction. For examples there are frictions with owners of private land, on which some sites are located, in addition there were frictions with refugees, who were living on some of the Dead Cities (Cunliffe, Sabine, and Fischer, forthcoming) The heritage groups in the local community always suffered huge difficulties in order to do their work, lack of passports to access international training, lack of institutional affiliation, lack of funding and resources, lack of training and language ability to seek support<sup>122</sup>. All these examples demonstrate the extensive efforts of the Syrian locals to protect their heritage.

## 5- Conclusions

The role of the DGAM in managing Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict was crucial. The DGAM has always been the main authority responsible for archaeological excavations, the registration of the archaeological sites, the management of Syrian museums, and the reconstruction and restoration of historic buildings and archaeological sites. All those tasks are huge and complicated. The DGAM did not receive the needed support from other Syrian institutions; their involvement was very limited. In addition, the participation of Syrian civil society in the protection, management and promotion of cultural heritage was very limited – very few cultural heritage NGOs existed before the conflict. The discussion on the management of the Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict leads us to the fact that the legal and institutional structure of cultural heritage management was not appropriate to face its needs.

During the conflict, Syria's heritage has faced many challenges. The DGAM has lost access to hundreds of archaeological sites, many located in opposition areas. It was not able to continue their normal tasks: there are few excavations and little research, and restoration projects were stopped. Initially, the protection and documentation of museum collections, archives and archaeological sites became its main priority. The role of the international community in supporting the DGAM has been limited<sup>123</sup>; UNESCO established the International Observatory of Syrian Cultural Heritage focusing on: raising awareness; providing a forum for international expertise to collaborate<sup>124</sup>; building capacity, and assisting the DGAM with training programmes outside Syria<sup>125</sup>. UNESCO also conducted few missions inside Syria, such as the damage assessment mission to Aleppo in winter 2016/17<sup>126</sup>. Unfortunately, the complexity of the political situation has prevented the DGAM from collaborating with many international initiatives, and in other cases the collaboration has been very limited.

The Syrian conflict demonstrated the ineffectiveness of national and international law on the protection of cultural heritage. The applicability of international law to non-international conflict and to non-state actors remains very problematic (Van der Auwera 2013). UNESCO, for example, can work with the DGAM, but cannot work with any other heritage groups in the opposition areas, whilst some countries are forbidden from supporting the DGAM, as their governments refuse to recognise the Syrian regime. The Syrian national law proves its insufficiency to protect the cultural heritage. The intention

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>123</sup> For example, see Al-Quntar and Daniels 2016, Perini and Cunliffe 2015, and Leckie et al 2016.

<sup>124</sup> UNESCO 2017(a)

<sup>125</sup> UNESCO n.d.(d)

<sup>126</sup> UNESCO 2017(b)

to reform the legal and the institutional structure of the Syria's cultural heritage has been stopped because of the conflict. This need for reform remains a vital priority when the conflict is over, but whether it will occur remains to be seen.

Going forwards, the protection of Syria's cultural heritage will be crucial: Syria's cultural heritage can act as an important element to assist in reconciliation between the Syrians, providing a common focus and foundation for the diverse elements that shapes Syria's rich fabric. How Syria's heritage is to be managed after the conflict will be a crucial part of the country's revival. Local communities' involvement in Syrian cultural heritage will be part of the Renaissance of Syrian Cultural Heritage (Kanjou 2018)

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my colleague Dr Emma Cunliffe from Durham University, her valuable comments and feedback were of immense help. I am very thankful to Dr Juan Jose Ibanez, from the Spanish National Council and Dr Gabriel Alcalde from Girona University for their advice. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to all my DGAM colleagues who provided me with the needed information.

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## The second contribution: “The Illegal Excavation and Trade of Syrian Cultural Objects: A View from the Ground



Journal of Field Archaeology




ISSN: 0093-4690 (Print) 2042-4582 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/yjfa20>


## The Illegal Excavation and Trade of Syrian Cultural Objects: A View from the Ground


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To cite this article: Neil Brodie & Isber Sabine (2017): The Illegal Excavation and Trade of Syrian Cultural Objects: A View from the Ground, Journal of Field Archaeology, DOI: [10.1080/00934690.2017.1410919](https://doi.org/10.1080/00934690.2017.1410919)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00934690.2017.1410919>

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Neil Brodie & Isber Sabrine. "The Illegal Excavation and Trade of Syrian Cultural Objects: A View from the Ground". *Journal of Field Archaeology*, Volume 43, Issue 1 (2018) : 74-84

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00934690.2017.1410919>

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### **Abstract**

The illegal excavation and trade of cultural objects from Syrian archaeological sites worsened markedly after the outbreak of civil disturbance and conflict in 2011. Since then, the damage to archaeological heritage has been well documented, and the issue of terrorist funding explored, but hardly any research has been conducted into the organization and operation of theft and trafficking of cultural objects inside Syria. As a first step in that direction, this paper presents texts of interviews with seven people resident in Syria who have first-hand knowledge of the trade, and uses information they provided to suggest a model of socioeconomic organization of the Syrian war economy regarding the trafficking of cultural objects. It highlights the importance of coins and other small objects for trade, and concludes by considering what lessons might be drawn from this model to improve presently established public policy.

### **Keywords**

Syria; looting; cultural objects; coins; policy

**The third contribution:** “Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict”

## **Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict**

Author: Isber Sabrine

### ***Abstract:***

The large-scale destruction of historical buildings, museum collections, and archaeological sites by different actors during the Syrian conflict has led to the development of civil society organizations initiatives (CSOs) for the protection of cultural heritage

Recognizing that solutions must come from within Syria, many initiatives in Syria aimed to address these problems by working with all Syrians to raise awareness, to safeguard collections, monuments and archaeological sites, to document and monitor the damage, and to stop the looting and illicit trafficking of Syria’s cultural heritage.

This paper will introduce the Syrian CSOs who worked on cultural heritage before the conflict also the work of different new Syrian CSOs during the conflict who have been carrying out activities inside and outside Syria to empower local communities whilst developing sustainable program for heritage protection. It will then conclude by distilling recommendations for Syrian CSOs in the field of cultural heritage that can be applied in the post conflict scenario

### ***Key words:***

Cultural heritage, conflict, Syria, CSOs, post conflict

## 1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the humanitarian, political and socio-economic repercussions of the Syrian conflict continue to be catastrophic. As a result of the on-going war, more than 400,000 people have been killed, and more than half of Syria's population has been displaced, according to the UNHCR with 5 million seeking refuge abroad and over 6 million, displaced internally (UNHCR 2017). Syria's cultural heritage is another victim of this conflict. It has led to the destruction of a significant amount of Syria's cultural heritage. Many historical landmarks have been damaged or destroyed, while archaeological sites have been systematically plundered and looted. The destruction of this heritage is huge. Thousands of monuments and archaeological sites are still under threat. Intangible cultural heritage was also heavily affected because of the conflict and the displacement of the Syrian people.

The sites, monuments and museums during these eight years of conflict were directly threatened by shelling and aerial bombing. Some have suffered extensive damage, and others have been destroyed entirely. Looting became a great threat to the archaeological sites and museums. Museum collections have been removed from their original museums by DGAM for their safe-keeping and protection to Damascus. The illicit traffic of Syrian antiquity increased in the international black market (Brodie 2015). However, as the conflict has continued, the extent of reporting by the international media has continued to increase, especially when ISIS started to destroy archaeological sites like Palmyra, and Nimrud in Iraq. Many actions were taken both nationally and internationally to help to protect the monuments and sites, but the conflict demonstrated new challenges that people were unprepared for, and the policies for the protection of cultural heritage in Syria have failed (Brodie 2015)

The Syrian Antiquity Law <sup>127</sup> was ineffective, and it involved many different types of restrictions - especially the absence of local communities' involvement. The Syrian Law of Antiquity does not take the interests of, and involvement with, local communities, into consideration. Before the conflict there was no framework that allows the DGAM to involve communities in the management of what should also be their cultural heritage (Sabrine 2020, forthcoming). This paper explains the concept of civil society before the conflict which consisted little involvement of community-based organizations and informal associations (Wael 2012). It will examine the role of Syrian civil society regarding cultural heritage, and it will give an historical overview of Syrian civil society initiatives in this field, showing how these initiatives worked to promote the protection of cultural heritage before the conflict. It will then show how the concept of civil society changed during the conflict.

Since the start of the conflict, hundreds of non-state-sanctioned civil society organizations have been established across the country with the aim of meeting humanitarian relief needs, such as the provision of food, security, medical treatment, and providing work for refugees (Brandenburg 2014). The role of Syrian civil society increased during the conflict, with local coordinating committees in different towns and cities across the country: this also led to new initiatives on the field of cultural heritage. The paper will offer an overview of these

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<sup>127</sup> Syrian Antiquities Law <https://en.unesco.org/cultnatlaws/list>

initiatives, both created inside and outside the country, and it will analyse their work on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage - raising awareness, safeguarding collections, monuments and archaeological sites, documenting and monitor the damages, and to stopping the looting, and illicit trafficking of Syria's heritage. Finally the paper will conclude with the role of Syria's cultural heritage for the civil society in the post conflict period, examining how cultural heritage could be an important tool to enhance peace in Syria.

## **2. Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before the conflict**

Since the end of the twentieth century, greater attention has been given to study the concept of civil society in heritage management (Van der Auwera and Schramme 2011: 60). Before the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, the role of Syrian civil society in the management of cultural heritage was very modest and the actions taken by it were very limited, despite the fact that, in the field of cultural heritage at least, civil society is needed (Ilczuk 2001:20-21). This participation of civil society helps local community to access their heritage, it is considered the best way to protect heritage. Yet, the participation of Syrian civil society in the field of cultural heritage has received less scholarly attention and the role of civil society has been ignored by the Syrian government. Before analyzing the role of Syrian civil society in the field of cultural heritage, however, it is crucial to define the concept of civil society in the Syrian context. Therefore, this paper will firstly demonstrate the concept of Syrian civil society prior 2011, supported by an historical overview of the legal framework of Syrian civil society. It will show the most important initiatives taken by Syrian civil society in the field of cultural heritage, and analyze their work and role in the protection and management of Syria's cultural heritage. It confirms even the concept of civil society in Syria is different of the western concept but it still very need on the field of cultural heritage

### **Understanding the concept of civil society**

Understanding the concept of civil society in Syria is crucial for this study. Before the conflict, the concept was not defined clearly by the government. Syria's civil society before the conflict for many Syrians did not exist, but the understanding and the engagement with it changed significantly over eight years of fighting.

#### ***The meaning of civil society in western thought***

The concept of civil society depends on regional, cultural, religious and political context. The understanding of this concept in Syria relates to Arab and Islamic schools of thought, which have different meanings to Western schools of thought which appeared in the eighteen and nineteen centuries. Western philosophers such as Ferguson, Locke, Hegel, Marx, Gramsci, and Habermas defined the concept of civil society in a precise manner. These philosophers were chosen because are the most important philosophers who discussed the concept of civil society.

Ferguson used the concept of civil society to refer to the interaction between social groups in a non-violent way (Glasius 2002:1). The linking of civil society with social cooperation between people was raised by Ferguson and Locke: this idea is based on rational self-interest,



an attitude they consider present in all human societies (Layton 2006:3). Ferguson stresses the social and cultural aspect of civil society while Locke emphasizes the political aspect (Locke, 2005: 256-258). Hegel defined civil society as the intermediary domain between the state and the family, in which individuals become public persons and are able to relate the particular to the universal through membership in various institutions (Kaldor 2003: 584). Hegel felt civil society consisted of various elements that are not necessarily in harmony, or with the same identity. He argued that civil society is very diverse in nature; he saw a need for supervision from the state to liberate civil society from corruption and disorder (Abdelraham, 2000: 24). For Marx, civil society is seen as an area of injustice, disorder, and conflict. For him it is important to consider the result of the economic organization of that society (Marx 1973:18). With Marxism, civil society obtained a global dimension. Italian Philosopher Antonio Gramsci reflected on global civil society, either as a counter-hegemonic force or as a part of the hegemonic capitalist system (Katz, 2006:33). He is recognized as one of the most original and important thinkers on civil society (Kaldor 2003: 584). According to Gramsci, the state exercises its power in different forms and at different locations. He considered that the political power of the state exists in the judicial system, the police, the armed forces, and in prisons, but he considered that civil society is the ideological power of the state, manifested through civil society institutions, whether educational, cultural, or religious, where the state exists in less visible way (Gramsci 1999:526). German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas argued the importance of civil society to create public opinion through communicative actions (König 2012: 22). Habermas tried to link the concept of civil society to the concept of public sphere (Edwards 2004:9).

All these political philosophers analyzed the concept of civil society in a specific historical context, in which capitalism replaced feudalism (Bruyn 2005: Appendix B.2.). Many western scholars have recently tried to define civil society today such as Encarnación, and Huyse. According to Encarnación, civil society is the domain of social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal system of shared values (Encarnación 2003: 24). Huyse linked civil society to the idea of active citizenship. He felt that civil society could carry out the following tasks: education and awareness raising, and the provision of services (Huyse 2001: 140). Modern civil society is defined as a set of NGOs; it is characterized by clear boundaries that make it different from the family unit, and from the rest of the society, as well as from the state (Ottaway, 2008:167-182). These concepts of civil society have been produced through western schools of thought, and did not consider the richness and diversity of social understanding in other cultures (Schönbächler 2016: 36). As we saw that the concept of civil society was discussed in many ways, regarding to cultural heritage we find that the concept which was defined by Huyse is the more adequate definition it confirms that the participation in heritage management by civil society is kind of an active citizenship and civil society can carry out many activities linked to cultural heritage such the promotion and the protection of cultural heritage

### *The meaning of civil society in Arab Islamic thought*

The concept of civil society in the Arab culture has a different definition from the western one. In Arabic, the translation of 'civil society' is *al-mujtama` al-madani*. However, there are many different understandings of the meaning of the term, such as the various forms of the root *jama`* (to join, assemble), *umma* (community of believers), *ahl* (kin) and *'asabiyya* (solidarity) (Browsers 2006: 62). In Arabic there are two definitions, there are *Al-mujtama` al-madani* (in Arabic means civil society which is the literal translation, but Islamists prefer a different term - *mujtama` al-ahli* - which denotes a more indigenous civil and civic community, and which is independent from the state, it has a traditional definition. This term also includes schools and charitable organizations (Sadiki, 2009: 37). Sadiq al Azm (Syrian philosopher), he is one of the most important Arab thinkers who talked about the concept of civil society. He makes a similar distinction between *mudjatama'a madani* and *mudjatama'a ahli* - the former contains modern forms of civil society while the second one contains traditional forms (DRI 2008: 3). The establishment of voluntary organizations by citizens at the local level, such as neighborhoods, towns, or villages, in order to find common interests is considered by the Arab scholars the origin of civil society in both the general Arab and specific Syrian context.

We cannot talk about civil society in Syria without mentioning its meaning in Islam. Civil society is very important in Islam: according to Hasan Hanafi "the importance of civil society derives from the need to balance the desires and needs of individual with the will and needs of society" (Hanafi 2002: 180). In Islamic communities, civil society was always organized through mosque and religious schools. In analyzing Arab civil society, Islamic organizations play an important role: they have a common objective, which is propagating the faith through the provision of charitable and social services (Hawthorne 2005:85-89). These Islamic organizations are considered a form of civil society.

Hanafi believes that there is a need to have a civil society formed from a mix between both Islamic and Western conceptions; he considers that the Western conception of civil society is based more on rights, and less on duties, whereas in Islam duties are given a higher priority over rights (Hanafi 2002:188). Civil society in Arab World still very connected to the Islamic organizations.

It is not easy to find the adequate definition of civil society for our study. In order to address what kind of definition we need to use in order address the connection between civil society and cultural heritage. We choose the western concept because cultural heritage concept in itself is a western concept and the involvement with cultural heritage is not connected to any religion or ideology, the participation by civil society in heritage management is seen as a right of active citizenship. Understanding this meaning in this way help us to see how Syrian civil society was connected to cultural heritage before and during the conflict. We will see its role and how it changed during the conflict to became more active role during this eight year of conflict

## 2.2 Syrian civil society prior 2011

In Syria there was a long tradition of organizing voluntary and civilian groups in order to face the needs of society (EC Delegation Damascus 2007b: 1). The earliest civil societies in the beginning of the twenty century in Syria consisted of guilds, professional associations, religious sects, and business groups (Hinnebusch1993: 243). In 1909, during the Ottoman period, the first law about associations was created. This new law helped to establish many associations in Syria at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with charitable aims such as supporting the elderly, poor, orphans, and widows (Khalaf et al 2014: 6). During the French Mandate ( 1923-1946), many more associations were created; they were active in the fields of social assistance, culture, and promotion of the role and position of women in society (Boukhaima 2002: 78). The bureaucracy of the French Mandate aimed to organize the artisan-labor sector through professional organizations by creating another law on associations in 1935 (Schad 2005: 202). Between 1930 and 1940, there was a fast increase in the number of Christian and Muslims associations, focusing on educational activities beside their charitable work (Boukhaima, 2002:80).

In 1958, law No 93 was passed, which required a license for every association from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MSAL), as well as imposing many restrictions on them. As a result, many civil society organizations (CSOs) did not register with the Ministry (Khalaf et al 2014:6). Today, this law is still the main legal tool which organizes Syrian CSOs. It places the state at the center permits it to guide and control civil society (Spitz, 2014:157). As a result of these restrictions, from 1960 to early 1970, few charities and religious associations were licensed. The Islamist uprising of the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in the suspension of registration of new associations, lasting until 1990 (Khalaf et al, 2014:6).

Today, the 1958 law permits MSAL to interfere directly in the work of association and a representative of the Ministry may be appointed to attend the meetings of the associations (Article 26). However, MSAL lacked trained employees to work in the field of civil society (Spitz 2014: 162). Most of the associations which were active in Syria prior to 2011 were charitable organizations and /or service provision, with some development associations established after 2000. The majority were created to serve poor and needy people: their work focus on basic services and provide health and education for children and young and other services such provide needs to orphans (Spitz 2014:168).The charity associations are considered the oldest form of civil society in Syria. The Syrian always considered donating to these charities as a way for the realization of zakat, a pillar of Islam that calls on every Muslim to donate for sake of the poor and the needy (Wael, 2012:10). In addition to these charity associations, there are cultural, human rights and youth and women's associations. According to the law Syrian associations need to get a clearance from the ministry in case when they cooperate with foreign institutions as well when they get foreign funding (Law 93 of 1985.Article 21). In 2001, when Bashar Al-Assad became president, the Syrian civil society organizations obtained more space. There was an increasing number of CSOs sector,

especially in the field of socio-economic development, also some new CSOs were created in the field of environment protection, women's rights and human rights (Spitz 2014:171). According to the report of Euro- Mediterranean Human Rights Network in 2008 on the freedom of association, there were 540 association which were registered at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, this number increased in 2005 to 1012 and to 1400 in 2007

The last five years before the uprising in Syria were remarkable for the increasing number of Syrian civil society organizations, but there was no advancement in the laws governing Syrian civil society organizations. The law No 93 of 1958 remained the main legal tool to organize civil society work in Syria .The Syrian regime's attitude towards civil society remained restrictive (Spitz, 2014:192). Crucially, cultural heritage civil society initiatives before the upspring in 2011 were extremely limited, with one exception - the Syrian Trust for Development, which we will talk about later.

### **2.3The role of civil society in the field of cultural heritage**

Civil society participation in the management of cultural heritage is essential.This participation permits local people to access their heritage, and is considered by heritage studies the best way to protect cultural heritage. According to Damm “community participation is not just about engagement, it is about giving power to the local communities in all aspects of heritage, including research and management” (Damm 2005:76). Local cultural heritage is a valuable tool to foster a sense of pride,working out how to “show it off is important as the conservation works” (Grimwade and Carter 2000:36). The engagement of civil society through local communities in cultural heritage management is a fundamental component of human rights of a society. It is impossible to separate a people's cultural heritage from the people itself and that people's rights (Bennoune, 2016:15). Referring to citizen engagement has become a moral stand for those actors in heritage who want to be progressive, open and right and distinguish themselves from the bad, old, elite heritage practice (Kisić and Tomka 2018:9).

In the last decades there has been increasing research on civil society involvement in cultural heritage management and the role between heritage authorities and civil society organizations. Cultural heritage allows us to see each other as parts of invisible entities or communities bound by common characteristics that transcend our differences (Barber 2003:81-84) Civil society is always able to achieve activities, which are independent of governmental influence and it can fill many gaps in work which government agencies cannot undertake , it is incapable of replacing the government tasks in the sphere of culture (Ilczuk 2001:20–21).

The participation of civil society in cultural heritage management and safeguarding has always been present in the international heritage conventions managed by UNESCO. The most important Conventions in this field are the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)<sup>128</sup> and the UNESCO Convention on Protection and

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<sup>128</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=17716&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17716&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)<sup>129</sup>. These conventions confirm the importance of civil society in safeguarding, protecting and promoting cultural heritage (Van der Auwera and Schramme, 2011:67). Cultural heritage CSOs play an important role in binding communities together through preserving and promoting their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Such organizations can provide public programs through which cultural heritage can be shared, and can build bridges between people and their cultural heritage.

However, in the majority of the Arab countries, the management of cultural heritage is still controlled by state institutions, heritage professionals, and academics, and it always lacks the participation of local communities. Civil society organizations are not sufficiently involved, and their legitimate role is still not taken into account. Syria was fairly typical in this regard, as will be shown.

## **2.4 Syrian civil society initiatives on cultural heritage before the conflict**

Prior to 2011, there were several associations dedicated to cultural heritage. They were involved in raising awareness of cultural heritage by organizing conferences, publishing books and articles about Syrian history and Syrian cultural heritage and organizing archaeological tours. Of those early associations, the most active today are: the Adiyat of Aleppo<sup>130</sup>, the Syrian Historical Association of Homs and the Association of Friends of Damascus<sup>131</sup>. Since Bashar Al-Assad came to power in 2001, new CSOs were created, of which the most important are the Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society<sup>132</sup>, the Syrian Trust for Development<sup>133</sup> and the Syrian Association for Gastronomy<sup>134</sup>. After giving an overview of their work we will also present some archaeological projects which involved Syria's civil society. After the detailed description of these CSOs and the archaeological projects we will try to answer on the question if Syrian civil society participation in cultural heritage was effective before the conflict? Understanding the answer of this question will help to compare how the role of civil society will change during the conflict

### **Was Syrian civil society participation in cultural heritage effective before the conflict?**

Before you list all the projects, at the end of the introduction to this section you should highlight that after you have described them, you intend to discuss this question.

#### **2.4.1 Syrian CSOs active in the field of cultural heritage**

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<sup>129</sup> [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=31038&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

<sup>130</sup> The Al- Adiyat of Aleppo. Available at: <http://www.aladeyat.org/>

<sup>131</sup> The Association of Friends of Damascus . Available at: <http://damascus-friends.com/>

<sup>132</sup> Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society. Available at <http://www.syrianeds.org/pages/athar.php?lang=ar&v=c&NID=4c80e8217d3f5>

<sup>133</sup> The Syrian Trust for Development. Available at <http://www.syriatrust.sy/ar>

<sup>134</sup> Syrian Association for Gastronomy. Available at: <http://www.gastrosyr.com/arabic/aboutus.htm>

Here we are going to talk about the civil society organizations which were created before the conflict, these organizations ordered from oldest to newest

### **The Al-Adiyat of Aleppo (the archaeological society of Aleppo)**

This association is the first association on cultural heritage in Syria. It was founded in Aleppo by a group of intellectuals in 1924. It played an important role of the foundation of the Aleppo museum in 1931. The association was originally named the Friends of the Citadel and Museum, but later the name changed to Al-Adiyat (the Archaeological Society). The association continued its work until 1939, and then it stopped because of the Second World War until 1950.

The main objectives of the association are:

- To work on the preservation of antiquities and archaeological sites in Syria;
- To cooperate with the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums and to help it to achieve its work on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage;
- To organize tours and visits to archaeological sites;
- To carry out archaeological and historical researches and publishing them;
- To giving lectures on archaeology, history and art;
- To cooperating with the Directorate of Tourism to promote the archaeological and historical sites in Syria.

The association has several sub-committees;

The tour committee organizes internal and external tours which attracted many interested people: the committee used to organize 25 trips every year. The second committee is the library committee which preserves the library of the association. This library includes 6000 books on heritage, archaeology, art, and literature. The third committee is the informatics committee which supervises the website. The website of the association provides information about the activities, and it is a good tool of communication between the association and its member's. The association used to publish several different publications every year, the first issue is the association journal which is a joint book with the Institute of Arab and Scientific Heritage in Aleppo, the second publication is the annual book which is published annually and it includes all the new results of archaeological excavations

In 1958, the association issued the right to establish branches in the rest of Syrian provinces under the supervision of the mother association in Aleppo. Now the association has 15 branches around Syria: most recently established in Damascus, although 5000 of the 7000 members are in Aleppo. Every Syrian can participate in all the activities of the association: participation does not require membership, it requires an application; Syrian citizenship, a have university degree, that the prospective member be known by two members of the association; he/she should approve the rules of procedure of the association; and payment of membership fees. Non-Syrians applicants may be admitted as associate members. Every member can vote in elections, and run for board director positions after one year of membership. The association played an important role in raising awareness about Syria's cultural heritage through its activities. It was, and still is, the main Syrian civil society organization in the field of cultural heritage.

### ***The Syrian Historical Association of Homs***

The association was founded in 1971 in Homs by a group of young people, the activities of the association since its foundation are:

- To work on preserving archaeological sites and historical documents
- To conduct historical and archaeological research, publishing historical and archaeological studies,
- To organize lectures on archaeology and history, in which it invites senior thinkers' researchers and historians, issuing the magazine "Historical Research Magazine";
- To contribute to the excavations of archaeological sites;
- To organize visits and trips to archaeological and historical sites inside and outside Syria;

The association is an active member of the Union of Arab Historians<sup>135</sup>. It includes three different types of membership: working members with university degrees in history or archaeology; supporting members who are interested in history; and honorary members who give a financial or other support to the association. Since its foundation the association has been holding a seminar series under the title "Books and Pens from Homs", which is a honorary seminar dedicated to writers and thinkers from Homs who enriched libraries with their books and research: the association has organized 13 seminars since its foundation<sup>136</sup>.

### ***The Association of Friends of Damascus***

This Association was founded in 1977 with the aim to protect the old city of Damascus and its historical monuments, heritage and environment through cooperation with competent government agencies. The association has over 1000 members - engineers, doctors, lawyers, university professors, teachers and other intellectuals, among them several ministers and officials. The main objectives of the association are:

- To assist the cultural heritage, municipal, and endowment authorities in the protection of cultural heritage and environment in Damascus and its surroundings
- Adopting and encouraging research and studies in order to revive the heritage of Damascus
- To help the archaeological authority to enrich the museums of Damascus with documents and artifacts worthy for preservation
- To Issue publications and magazines to disseminate studies that serve the objectives of the association
- To strengthen the links with all institutions and associations whose objectives in the same line with the objectives of the Association
- To cooperate with the endowment authority to preserve its historical properties, including artifacts, documents, manuscripts and the restoration of them
- To organize scientific and archaeological activities and trips to raise awareness on the protection of cultural heritage

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<sup>135</sup> <http://arabhistoryso.net/>

<sup>136</sup>The information about this association is taken from this website  
<http://www.esyria.sy/ehoms/index.php?p=stories&category=community&filename=200907011325053>

The activities of the association cover the city of Damascus and Ghouta (the surrounding of Damascus). The main activities of the association: are organizing lectures, seminars and raising awareness about the protection of cultural heritage and environment in Damascus. In addition, the association used to organize several photography exhibitions every year about the city of Damascus and its cultural heritage. On the other hand the association organized annually a series of traditional musical evenings in which the Damascus and Syria's musical heritage was exposed; another important activity of the association is the organization of trips and visits to various archaeological sites in Syria.

The association played an important role in the creation of the authority of the old city of Damascus; it is a department of the municipality of Damascus which controls the construction and the restoration in the old city in coordination with DGAM. In collaboration with the Engineers Syndicate in Damascus, the association organized several seminars in order to amend the construction, the restoration and the new organizational chart for the old city of Damascus<sup>137</sup>.

### ***The Syrian Trust for Development***

The Syrian Trust for Development is a non-governmental and non-profit organization. It was established in 2001 under the umbrella of the First Lady (Asma Al-Assad) to empower Syrian individuals and Syrian communities to participate in building their society. The vision of the organization is working to provide people and communities through Syria with the needed tools and skills to take charge of their lives and to benefit society and to shape their future<sup>138</sup>.

The NGO works to support social initiatives, trying to build partnerships with civil society organizations. Through its projects it aims to give a space to civil society in planning and decision making. It also aims to encourage effective citizenship and building of abilities and education through effective participation. The organization works with partners from the private sector, development organizations, and international organizations. The three main project areas are: rural development, learning; and culture and cultural heritage. Since its foundation, the Trust developed numbers of projects on education and development such as Fardos project, Shabab project, Massar project.

The Syrian Trust for Development worked on cultural heritage through three programs: the Rawafed project, the Syrian Handcrafts project and Living Heritage project. The Rawafed project aimed to develop community capacity in order to undertake cultural mapping and culturally-informed socio-economic planning processes<sup>139</sup>. The most important objectives in this project is to investigate in cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) for community development and connecting people with their heritage by training ,networking, and research,. The project worked to raise communities' awareness of the value and potential of local cultural heritage and to develop communities' capacity to invest in these and to promote their unique heritage. It developed tools to identify and document resources, and to engage with community members. From 2009 to 2011 a pilot participatory mapping project in the Wadi

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<sup>137</sup> The information about the association is taken from their website [Accessed at:23.04.2019]

<sup>138</sup> Syrian Trust for Development. [http://www.syriatrust.sy/en/guiding\\_principles#our-vision](http://www.syriatrust.sy/en/guiding_principles#our-vision)

<sup>139</sup> Rawafed project <http://www.discover-syria.com/bank/6391>



Al Nadara region in Homs governorate began: it started to build the capacities of a local research team. Through this a database of cultural resources was built with the aim of documenting local intangible heritage and a series of booklets were published providing a detailed documentation of ten intangible cultural resources (UNESCO n.d:p9): The research on intangible cultural heritage in Wadi-Al-Nadara identified different potential projects to safeguard local heritage, such as increasing the value of the water springs in the region. Building on this, the project started to renovate some of these springs to be used as educational museums to demonstrate their natural communal and historical significance. The project restored and preserved many water springs in the region with the involvement of local communities. Rawafed's work was a very important experience in Syria for demonstrating the importance greater participation of local communities in cultural planning and preservation of cultural heritage.

The organization before the conflict became one of the most important organizations to work on cultural heritage, it was the first organization who tried to connect cultural heritage to development in Syria, and unfortunately because of the conflict the organization stopped the majority of its activities. Its focus during the conflict was working on intangible heritage, we will talk about that later

### ***The Syrian Association for Gastronomy***

The association was founded in 2002. The objectives of the association are:

- To preserving traditional Syrian cuisine and its heritage;
- To promote and to define the Syrian cuisine;

The activities of the association are: promoting traditional Syrian cuisine through participating in international activities, encouraging Syrian local cooking to spread in the rest of the country, organizing cooking seminars, meetings, and exhibitions on cooking, reward the best and talent culinary projects and publishing scientific books on Syrian traditional cuisine. The association is a member of the International Academy of Gastronomy

### ***The Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society***

This association was founded in 2008 under a license issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and labour , the origins of this association came back to the Syrian Scouts Association, five former members of this association came together and created the Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society The most important objectives of this association are:

- To raise awareness among the young Syrian people to discover the nature and the archaeological sites around the country;
- To train youth volunteers and providing them with the necessary equipment in order to establish national exploration and documentation mission;
- To strength the connections between the different communities in Syria, between the communities in the city and the rural and Bedouin communities through discovering the

customs ,traditions ,beliefs of these communities and ways of their daily lives , in addition to exchange experience between these three communities;

-To organize specialized training seminars in the field of health care, environment and first aid through the establishment of emergency committees and units for relief and ambulance and providing them with the necessary equipment to serve the community in emergency situation; The most popular activities of the association are: organizing walking tours and camping around the country, the activities are divided into two types of activities, external activities which are the external tours and the internal activities such meetings which provide scientific materials supporting its external activities<sup>140</sup>.

#### **2.4.2 Cultural heritage projects with the involvement of civil society**

Prior to the conflict in 2011, several heritage stand-alone projects involved Syrian local communities. These projects were the work of archaeologists, experts, and local people. Here we present a selection of these projects. These projects were selected because they represent the projects which connected the local communities to their heritage in Syria and they are the ones who we have more information about them

##### ***The Urkesh Eco-Archaeological Park***

The Urkesh Eco-Archaeological Park was implemented in Tell Mozan (the ancient city of Urkesh) under the direction of Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati (the lead excavators at the archaeological site). The site is located in northeast Syria close to the Turkish border in the Khabur River plain. The excavations began in the Tell in 1980 and continued till 2011. The site is considered a very important archaeological site with remains include palace, temple, with large ground structure related to religious rituals. The archaeological project during these years was very connected to the local communities in the region, many of them participated in the archaeological work in the site. A few years before the conflict began, the archaeologists at the site created an eco-archaeological park with the aim of raising local awareness about their cultural heritage through training programs and education. The archaeological project had a very important aim - raising local awareness about the importance of local culture through training in conservation and education at all levels in the village. It began with a pilot project called the Gates of Urkesh - a social initiative for development: participants from the local villages of Mozan and Umm er-Rabia. Produced handcrafts to sell to tourists .The founders of this project are the Caripol Foundation AVI,Costen Institute of Archaeology and GMB Foundation ( Avasa ,n.d) <sup>141</sup>, the activities at the Eco-Archaeological Park were in coordination with DGAM and Syrian Trust for Development . The development projects at the site and the villages around it are based on linking all its social,cultural and economic dimensions .Before the conflict the strong engagement of local populations with the site was great, this engagement was through training local young people in many fields such excavation, photography, computer technology and survey . Before and during the conflict the team of the project succeeds to create many raising awareness activities through exhibits and school visits to the sites also

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<sup>140</sup>The information about the association is taken from their website [Accessed at:23.04.2019]

<sup>141</sup> <http://www.avasa.it/en/foundations.htm>

through travel conferences by the local members staff of the project in 22 villages around the site to explain the important value of the archaeological site also through guided tours to the sites in Arabic, Kurdish and English (Avasa,n.d). Buccellati in his recent publication gave many important evidences how the involvement of local community with the archaeological site before the conflict was crucial reason to protect it during the conflict , he says “The Mozanians in Mozan currently active in the project are MuhammadOmo who, as one of the two official guards, oversees all the work at the site; Ibrahim Khello who manages the record; Muhammad Hamza who continues analyzing the ceramics from past excavations and works on the signage; IbrahimMusa who maintains the internet connection; Amer Ahmad who processes data on the old archives and maintains local contacts”(Buccellati 2019). The project has become a model for initiatives at the grassroots level (Buccellati 2014).this project demonstrate a great importance to involve local communities with their archaeological heritage, it was very innovative project in Syria and it became a a very good useful example could be used to show how is important to involve local communities with their heritage.

### ***The Sheik Hilal village project***

Shiek Hilal village project\_was carried out by the Association of the Friends of Salamiyha in the village of Shiek Hilal in the Syrian Desert in 2008, with funding from the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development. Basically the region has become impoverished since 2000 after the ban on agriculture in the Syrian Desert .The project aimed to preserve the threatened architectural heritage through the participation of local communities. The project ran several training programs on restoration of the traditional mud brick village houses (characterized by mud domes), and on traditional handicrafts such as embroidery, needlework, and pottery (esyria 2008). The local communities restored 10 domes in 5 houses, and contributed to the reorganization of many public spaces in the village, such as gardens and streets. This project changed the village to make it attractive to tourists, and helped create jobs for the local people. The project stopped in 2011. The area became dangerous after this year because ISIS was just 10 km away from the Sheik Hilal village. All the 700 inhabitants of the village left it after the occupation of area by ISIS, they are living now in Salamieh (a small city in the region) and in other towns near the village. This project was as well a good example in which local people were connected to their local heritage<sup>142</sup>

### ***The Youth and Cultural Heritage Project***

The Youth and Cultural Heritage Project was implemented in 2010 as collaboration between Al-Makan Art and COSV (Comitato di Coordinamento delle Organizzazione per il Servizio Volontaro), a development NGO based in Italy with a regional office in Lebanon. The aim of the project was to empower youth in Palmyra and Al-Sweida to access to their cultural heritage by providing them oral history and photography training (UNESCO.n.d : p13).

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<sup>142</sup> Interviu with Mohamad Al-Dbiyat ( the founder of this project)

This project tried to promote and to raise local awareness of their oral heritage and access to local archaeological sites. It included training and educational activities for teenagers and young adults to give them an opportunity to increase their perception of their cultural heritage as an asset (Alkateb 2013:91). During this project, the participants from Palmyra and Sweida worked on the creation of anthologies of local songs and tales, and the project produced two short films directed at children on the archaeology of the two areas. The project also produced two travelling multi-media exhibits - cultural busses - of project productions that travelled to Damascus, Palmyra, Al-Sweida and their surrounding villages (Alkateb2013:194)

### **2.4.3 was Syrian civil society participation in cultural heritage effective before the conflict?**

During Bashar al- Asad's decade in power between 2000 and 2010, Syrian NGOs tripled , increasing from 555 in 2002 to 1,485 in 2009, an increase of 300% (Ruiz de Elvira et Zintal, 2010: 7). A new generation of NGOs emerged, including different areas such as development, environmental protection, and culture (le Saux 2006). However, cultural heritage specifically saw just three NGOS - Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society, Syrian Association for Gastronomy, and Syrian Trust for Development.

These CSOs played an important role in raising awareness about Syria's cultural heritage before the conflict, but their participation in the management of cultural heritage was very limited. The majority of these CSOs are located in Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs, the three biggest cities in Syria: their impact in the rest of the country is very modest.

In addition, the Syrian antiquity law does not take civil society organizations into consideration, there is no framework that permit DGAM to involve these CSOs in participation in the management of cultural heritage, DGAM always was the main responsible of the management of cultural heritage, the implementation of the law on the ground led to tensions with local communities (Sabrine 2020, forthcoming). If Syrian antiquity law included a legal framework which allows for the participation of CSOs that could allow CSOs to be a mediator between the DGAM and local communities, and could help to reduce the tensions between government and local communities regarding heritage sites. This tension especially happened when DGAM tries to register new site in the national list of archaeological sites or when DGAM wanted to identify the buffer zone around the sites which are listed in the world heritage list or use local properties sites to excavate new discovered archaeological sites

These CSOs, except the Syrian Trust for Development, suffered from a lack of government support, funding, and resources. The MSAL, which these CSOs belong to, lacks knowledge in the field of NGOs, promotion of services, and legislation (Spitz 2014:162), but also has only a small budget to support Syrian CSOs (ibid, 161). Despite the lack of government funding, for CSOs to receive funding from foreign institutions is very complicated: they need clearance by the MSAL, and additional clearance by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, limiting CSO collaboration with international bodies (Spitz 2014: 163). In addition, neither the DGAM, nor national and foreign archaeological missions in Syria had much (or any) budget for community involvement: the majority was dedicated to archaeological research and

restoration (Sabrine 2020,forthcoming). Before the conflict the Syrian civil society organizations faced many limitations by the government, for example every organisation needs a permission from the authorities to inform about the general assembly of the organization (Spitz, 2014:162). The lack of freedom of the Syrian CSOs was a big limitation to do their work and CSOs in the field of cultural heritage was not able to receive support from foreign institutions .With more support, these CSOs could play very important practical role, as they have extensive experience of their specialist areas. Now in many countries there is a crucial role of CSOs on making decisions related to their heritage, for example, Historic England ( Historic England n.d) in the UK allows local communities to nominate sites for national registration) – this is an important way communities can be involved. Also there are participatory meetings, etc, that they can voice views and opinions about local planning decisions that might have an impact on heritage (such as the major consultation that has just closed about where to put the new road around Stonehenge World Heritage site.) This is a good example shows how CSOs could be involved with their heritage.

Archaeologists' involvement with CSOs has also been limited there was no real encouragement of archaeologists become involved, their relationship with the locals were all directed through DGAM and it did not make any efforts to change this reality, many considered local populations to be a threat to the protection of archaeological sites (Gillot 2010:11) and few share the results of their discoveries with the local populations. They are far from being crucial partners on archaeological sites (Sabrine 2019, forthcoming). In addition, local communities at or near archaeological sites received limited economic benefits from the presence of the site, or the archaeological teams working there (although there have been some notable exceptions, such as at Mari, where the workers involved in protecting and restoring the site were trained and paid as skilled laborers, rather than menial laborers. Civil society participation and involvement in local heritage management is largely limited to individual initiatives, rather than major association initiatives, such the three projects presented. .

Another limitation was the lack of raising awareness regarding to cultural heritage and this led to widespread apathy for cultural heritage in Syria, one of the barriers is the people themselves (e.g. al kateb 2013 gives examples, or–the destruction of historic houses in Aleppo in the 1980s and 1980s was not just done by the government to build new houses, but also by local people) So working on changing the conditions would make it easier to fight that and encourage involvement. CSOs in Syria will need to have better conditions in the future and more attention from the Syrian government, they could play a better role in the protection and promotion of Syria's cultural heritage.

After giving this detailed view about the role of civil society on heritage before the conflict, now we will introduce its role during the conflict and we will see how the role of civil society changed during the conflict

### **3. Syrian civil society and cultural heritage during the conflict**

To talk about Syrian civil society during the conflict, we must first understand it. Conflict plays a huge role in changing the actions of civil society organizations. During conflict, CSOs

could be identified by scholars as part of a conflict society which consists of all local, international, and transnational civic organizations involved in the conflict. Conflict society includes foundations and the media, specialists, business, research and education, religion-based groups (Marchetti and Tocci 2009: 206).

Since 2011, civil society organizations faced huge changes. Many new CSOs were founded to handle the needs on of people the ground, such as coordination of aid activities and provision of food, education, health support, the creation of jobs for displaced Syrians both inside and outside the country, and documentation of the violence (Citizen for Syria report 2017: 12). CSOs were particularly active in opposition-held areas which has suffered a huge decline in services and lack of governmental authority, such the countryside of Idlib, Aleppo, and Damascus, and Dara'a. In addition CSOs, were also created in the territories controlled by DSA (The Democratic Self Administration of Rojava) <sup>143</sup>where they are allowed to be registered compared to others CSOs in other areas , also CSOs extend to regime areas (Ibid: 12).

The report “Syrian Civil Society Organization Reality and Challenges” by Citizens for Syria (2017) analyzed the situation of CSOs in Syria between 2011 and 2017 and explained the fields of activities by CSOs and the challenges that they are facing in their work. it includes education and research, development and housing, religion , environmental activism, law ,advocacy and politics, health and culture and innovation. The culture and innovation category<sup>144</sup> identified several CSOs that work on cultural heritage protection such the Assyrian Cultural Association, The Al-Adyat, and the Association for Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage. However, many other heritage protection CSOs were not included, therefore this research will highlight the other CSOs working in this field. The research will analyze the work of CSOs founded before the conflict and their activities during it, and identify the new CSOs created during the conflict in order to protect Syria’s cultural heritage. Information about the CSOs comes from ten informal interviews by Skype with CSO members inside and outside Syria. There was no possibility to interview all the mentioned CSOs in this research. These interviews took place in autumn 2018. Questions focused on projects, their members groups, their relationships with the international organizations, the risks that they are facing during their work, the difficulties that they face and other more questions.

### **3.1 The work of Syrian CSOs which were founded before 2011**

#### ***The Syrian Trust for Development***

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, the efforts of the Syrian Trust for Development were concentrated on Syria’s intangible cultural heritage (ICH).The organization played an important role in the establishment of a dedicated commission for intangible cultural heritage called the National High Commission for Intangible Cultural Heritage, under resolution 2484 (UNESCO 2017). Work was concentrated on training programs for the Directorate of Folklore, the Syrian State Authority on ICH, and the DGAM: programs included training on

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<sup>143</sup> The Democratic Self Administration of Rojava changed later in 2016 to the name Democratic Federation of Northern Syria <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/c9e03dab-6265-4a9a-91ee-ea8d2a93c657>

<sup>144</sup> The list of CSOs (Culture and Art category) <https://citizensforsyria.org/ar/syrian-cso-capacity/lists/>

ICH management; the UNESCO Convention on ICH; and the relationship between ICH and Syria's historic monuments (Ibid: 3). The Trust has selected 100 ICH elements: of this list, 38 elements were chosen for documentation and published (in Arabic) in an illustrated book "Syrian Intangible Cultural Heritage Volume 1"<sup>145</sup>. The documentation of these elements was done with the participation of local communities. Since 2012, the Trust has worked to establish a national network of Syria's cultural heritage and local communities with this network the Trust aimed to identify gaps in local and regional data collection regarding to ICH (Ibid:4). The Trust established a website which permits local communities to record ICH elements, which became very useful for ICH documentation (ICH, n.d) . The Trust also worked with local communities to help them to develop local skills in order to preserve traditional crafts. They conducted a national survey on how the conflict affected on intangible cultural heritage in Syria (Ibid: 5). They raise awareness about ICH with young people in different areas in Syria, with programs including Small Artisans, Storytelling and Puppetry, and Our Heritage in the Eyes of our Children. The aim of these programs is to involve young people in caring about their CHI and to appreciate it. In addition, the Trust provides workshops for the local Syrian communities on the documentation of ICH, and urgent safeguarding of ICH during and after conflicts. Through these programs, the Trust helped to empower communities to participate in the management and the protection of ICH (Ibid:6).

The important initiative during the conflict was the Syrian Handcrafts project, designed to support Syrian artisans who inherited their crafts over many generations. The project aimed to train young newcomers and to develop their skills in traditional Syrian handcrafts<sup>146</sup>. The NGO created Syrian Handcrafts Ltd (under the name Ubbha Company) in 2015. The main aims of the company are: to contribute to the safeguarding and documentation of Syria's cultural heritage, and to raise awareness about Syrian cultural heritage locally and internationally. Company activities include handcraft production workshops (crochet, loom, natural handmade soap, homemade food production, blown glass, etc.), as well as craft training sessions<sup>147</sup>. In 2016, sales from 112 artisans totaled 103 Million Syrian Pound (206 thousand US dollars). The Syrian Trust for Development was able to lead very important initiatives for development in Syria and participated in a very innovative way in the safeguarding and documentation of Syria's cultural heritage.

During the conflict, the Trust took a clear choice to concentrate on the protection of ICH: this direction was different from its previous work, which focused on tangible cultural heritage. Maamoun Abdalkarim, former director of the DGAM stated "the DGAM and The Trust divided the role during conflict; DGAM was responsible for the protection of historical monuments, archaeological sites and museums, and the Trust was responsible for ICH"<sup>148</sup>. Over the last 7 years, the Trust has played the main role in the promotion and protection of ICH. All the projects realized by the Trust during the conflict were innovative and original in Syria and helped to increase the participation of local communities in the protection of ICH.

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<sup>145</sup> This quote was from an interview with Maamoun Abdalkarim in October 2018

<sup>146</sup> Syrian Handcraft project <http://www.syriatrust.sy/en/affiliate/5>

<sup>147</sup> Ubbha company

<http://ubbaha.com/index.php?page=show&ex=2&dir=docs&lang=2&ser=1&cat=412&act=412&>

### *The Al-Adiyat of Aleppo*

From 2012 and 2016, Aleppo suffered a major military confrontation between the Syrian opposition and the Syrian Army, ending at the end of 2016 when the Syrian Army entered the city with the support of Russian airstrikes (Barnart and Segupta 2016). During these four years of fighting, about 33,500 buildings were been damaged or destroyed (Laub, 2016), In addition, the battle killed 31,000 people, and led to heavy damage in the Old City of Aleppo.(UNITAR 2018)<sup>149</sup> As a result, the Al-Adiyat of Aleppo completely stopped its normal activities in the city of Aleppo, and many of its members fled the city. The conflict also affected the rest of its branches. The Homs branch was completely suspended and all activities stopped between 2011 and 2015: the office was vandalized and looted, and the majority of members left the city . The Al-Adiyat of Homs restarted their activities in early 2015 in the Arab Cultural Center, focusing on archaeological lectures<sup>150</sup>.

The Al-Adiyat in Aleppo restarted again in 2017; its activities have continued as they did before the conflict, doing lectures about Aleppo and its heritage, local tours in Aleppo, trips to archaeological sites in Syria and exhibitions<sup>151</sup>. Since 2017, the Al-Adiyat has participated in meeting and training with UNESCO regarding the reconstruction of the Old City. In March 2017, they attended a UNESCO Technical coordination meeting for the Old City of Aleppo held in Beirut<sup>152</sup>. In June 2018, they participated in a UNESCO training program for manuscript conservation in Matenadaran (The Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan). Now, almost two years after the end of the conflict in Aleppo, the Al-Adiyat is continuing its role to protect and raising awareness of Syria's cultural heritage, which is crucial for the reconstruction of the Old City of Aleppo.

### *The other associations*

Four associations were discussed in the previous section: the Association of Friends of Damascus, the Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society, the Syrian Historical Association of Homs, and the Syrian Association for Gastronomy. All website and social media updates of these organizations stopped between 2011 and 2016, so it was not possible to obtain information on any possible activities. By monitoring the Facebook pages of the Association of Friends of Damascus and the Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society, these associations restarted their normal activities at the end of 2016. There is still no

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<sup>149</sup> UNITAR report [http://unosat-sdn.web.cern.ch/unosat-sdn/unesco/syria/aleppo\\_publication/UNESCO\\_UNITAR-UNOSAT\\_2017\\_Publication\\_Full.pdf](http://unosat-sdn.web.cern.ch/unosat-sdn/unesco/syria/aleppo_publication/UNESCO_UNITAR-UNOSAT_2017_Publication_Full.pdf)

<sup>150</sup> The information about Al- Adiyat in Homs was collected via an interview with Mr. Malatious Jaghnoon (the former president of the Adiyat in Homs) in October 2018

<sup>151</sup> The observation of the facebook page of the al-Adiyat shows that they restarted activities in 2017: <https://www.facebook.com/TheArcheologicalSocietyOfAleppo/>

<sup>152</sup> THIS NEEDS FORMATTING AS A PROPER URL REFERENCE About the UNESCO meeting in Beirut <https://www.aladayat.org/%D9%83%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%83%D9%88/>



information about the activities of The Syrian Association for Gastronomy and the Syrian Historical Association of Homs.

### **3.2 New civil society initiatives and organizations to protect Syria's cultural heritage during the conflict**

During the conflict, many local initiatives were begun by local groups to help protect Syria's cultural heritage: the people who created these initiatives were mostly academics, archaeologists, and former DGAM employees. These initiatives can be divided into two types: groups inside Syria and groups outside Syria. The new CSOs inside Syria are distributed in different control areas: in opposition-held areas in the northern part of the country (the countryside of Idleb and Aleppo) and in the southern part of the country in Bosra; and the DSA controlled territories in the northeastern part of the country. The study will discuss the work of several new CSOs in the opposition areas such the Syrian Center for Cultural Heritage Protection in Idleb , the Idleb Antiquities Center in Idleb, the Syrian Association for the Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage in the Old City of Aleppo and the Department of Antiquities in the city of Bosra , in addition the study will discuss the work of the new CSOs in DSA controlled area such , the Authority of Tourism and Protection of Antiquities in al Jazira Canton, the Subarto Association ,the Olaf Taw Association and the Syriac Cultural Association. No new CSOs formed in the areas under government control.. In addition, the study will demonstrate the efforts of CSOs created outside Syria, particularly in Europe, in order to help protect Syria's cultural heritage.

#### **3.2.1 New CSOs In Opposition-Held Areas**

##### ***The Syrian Center for Cultural Heritage Protection***

By 2012, the DGAM was unable to act at many archaeological sites, especially in Idleb, southern and western parts of Aleppo, and the northern part of Hama. Many DGAM employees in those areas were no longer under the remit of the Syrian government and, as a result, they had to stop working for the DGAM, leaving a gap. This urgent need to act during the conflict was the main reason for creating the Syrian Center for Cultural Heritage Protection<sup>153</sup>. The center was founded by a group of volunteers comprising former employees of the DGAM who work independently in areas of Idlib, parts of northern Hama, and the western and northern parts of Aleppo, acting as an alternative institution to the DGAM. The actions taken by the Syrian Center for Cultural Heritage during the conflict are:

- Documenting smuggled antiquities
- Documentation of damaged and destroyed sites
- Awareness-raising actions in the local communities
- First aid and emergency actions at different sites

The Centre's most important project is the documentation and protection of the museum of Ma'arat al-Nu'man. The museum, located in a city with great strategic importance, has been under constant threat since 2011. In June 2015, the museum was struck by two barrel-bombs, a highly destructive improvised device. The Center undertook first aid measures for the

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<sup>153</sup> All the information about the center was taken by interviews with the members of the Center

building within the museum complex, removing and safely storing archaeological materials; they documented the damage to the museum building and the artifacts, and prepared a catalogue of damaged artifacts. For six years, the Centre has monitored and documented damage at the Dead Cities , Ebla ,the Mosque of Prophet Yusuf ,Tell Hazarnin - Tell Ma'ara Herma - Tell Teramla , Tell Al Qadim, Tell Al Qulayah, Tell Safwan ,Tell Talpas ,Tell al Nar , Tell Hayish - Tell Jafar ,Tel Tal , Tell Al-Harjan and Archaeological sites in Jabal Barish. In addition, the members of the center carried out several awareness-raising campaigns addressing local communities.

The center works independently and without any political affiliation to any group. Yet, despite all the important work done by the Centre, they lack support from international heritage organizations. The NGO Heritage For Peace tried to support them through training programs in Damage Assessment (Heritage For Peace 2014), and the ongoing development of the SHELTr training program in 2018 (Gerda Henkel Stiftung 2016). The center also received support from the SHOSHI Initiative (Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq)<sup>154</sup>, which is which is a consortium of the Penn Cultural Heritage Center at the University of Pennsylvania Museum; the Office of the Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture at the Smithsonian Institution; the Geospatial Technologies Project at the American Association for the Advancement of Science; Shawnee State University, The Day After—a Syrian NGO; and the U.S. Institute of Peace . Local Syrians — activists, archaeologists, and museum staff - (including some members of the Antiquities Center in Free Idlib) .It organized an emergency workshop providing the participants with basic supplies for packing and securing museum collections. .They packaged and hid the more portable treasures, coated the mosaics with protective materials, and then set to piling a mountain of sandbags against the museum's walls and roof, a tactic meant to both dissuade looters and absorb shockwaves from bombs. In May, the museum was hit in an airstrike, but the sandbags protected them. The project's in-country team conducted a systematic looting documentation and applied emergency protection to most endangered structures. Additional information is available in Section 2d - Training Courses. Similar emergency intervention has been conducted at the early Bronze Age site of Ebla, a tentative UNESCO World Heritage Site.

### ***The Syrian Association for the Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage***

The Syrian Association for the Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage is an independent civil nonprofit organization which aims to support the protection of archaeological and historical monuments in Aleppo. It was founded by a group of archaeologists and architects in Aleppo in 2013, and since its foundation until 2016, it was actively documentation and protecting affected historical buildings in the Old City of Aleppo. They documented the damage to of mosques, souqs ,schools, homes, and the gates in Aleppo's old city wall.In addition, the organization rescued the Minbar of the Umayyad mosque and its manuscripts,

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<sup>154</sup> The SHOSI Initiative <https://global.si.edu/success-stories/safeguarding-cultural-heritage-syria-and-iraq>

and put them in a safe place.<sup>155</sup> Some of their work is published in their Facebook page<sup>156</sup>. The team also carried out many small urgent restoration projects.

They also carried out awareness raising work among the local people in Aleppo between 2013 and 2015, and the refugee communities in Turkey in 2017. Most recently, they worked in a collaboration with Qibaa studio in Istanbul to create a series of puzzle games to teach Syrian children in Istanbul about their cultural heritage. The team faced many risks during their work: for example, many buildings they documented were in confrontation areas between the regime army and the Free Syrian Army. The team lost one of its founding members, Anas Raduan, doing this work<sup>157</sup>.

### ***Idleb Antiquities Center***

Idleb Antiquities Center is an independent center set up by a group of archaeologists in the Idleb region in 2015. The Center has tried to replace the DGAM, working to safeguard archaeological sites and artifacts damaged by the conflict. The center is also active in raising awareness among local communities on the importance of the protection of cultural heritage. They also document archaeological sites which are under constant threats from looting, air raids, neglect and vandalism. The center documents its activities through its facebook page. A study of the page indicates the most common activities are awareness raising and work at the Idleb museum.

-“The Save the Antiquities of Idleb” campaign is perhaps the most important campaign by the center, started in October 2018. Given the likelihood of increasing combat in Idleb at the end of 2018, as the regime looked to retake the area, the campaign aimed to draw attention to the threats facing archaeological sites in Idleb and to highlight the need to protect them<sup>158</sup>. The campaign was followed by organizing a conference to mobilize public opinion among the heads of local councils and other representatives from civil society in Idleb on the importance of the protection of archaeological sites.

The Idleb museum includes important collections, such the clay tablets of Ebla, but it was closed in 2013 five years later, the NGO was crucial in re-opening it in August 2018. The museum had been damaged by air strikes and looting during the conflict and the Center carried out maintenance with the support of the SIMAT (Syrians For Heritage) association. The Center also documented the museum artifacts. They received some international support from the Kaplan foundation through ASOR ( ASOR 2015) who gave this grant to help the Centre inventory, document, and preserve the more than 1000 artifacts received from local citizens (some of these artifacts were found illegally and accidentally) .The project also

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<sup>155</sup> Videos from May 2013 show the priceless 15th century minbar, or pulpit, being carefully dismantled by rebel civil activists to save it from fire. The video has a running commentary of the 10 day operation, explaining how they will hide its parts in various secure places until it is safe to return and reassemble it. Today they stand accused of selling it in Turkey. <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/is-reconstruction-of-aleppo-s-grand-mosque-whitewashing-history-1.728715>

<sup>156</sup> The association facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/psahrteam/>

<sup>157</sup> A post in the association facebook page about Anas Ramadan <https://www.facebook.com/psahrteam/photos/a.578875412145525/872661489433581/?type=3&theater>

<sup>158</sup> The campaign Save the Antiquities of Idleb <https://www.facebook.com/1070868956264699/photos/pcb.2166087336742850/2166087203409530/?type=3&theater>

included training for the members of the center in heritage documentation and preservation (CAORC 2018).

### *The Department of Antiquities in the City of Bosra*

Since the conflict started, the World Heritage site, the Ancient City of of Bosra, was damaged by shelling and fighting. Many historical monuments were affected, such the Roman theater, the Al-Umari mosque, and the cathedral, in addition to numerous historic buildings many of which were still occupied as modern residences (UNOSAT 2014) In order to protect the site, a group of young volunteers created the Department of the Antiquities of Bosra in April 2015<sup>159</sup>: the group is independent and not affiliated to any group in the Syrian conflict. The department consists of 10 volunteers; their tasks are divided between documentation, emergency restoration, and protection.

The team undertook a 4-day program to clean up the damage to Bosra, as well as documenting the damage and looting. The department has also carried out emergency restoration to safeguard buildings on the verge of collapse. Awareness raising is an important priority for the department: they participated in the UNESCO “#United for Heritage” Campaign in December 2015, reaching local communities in Bosra. They have also organized many events, lectures, and educational tours for students to visit Bosra, as well as collaborating with the local city council to discuss how to preserve the site. .

However, the department faced many difficulties realizing their work: the majority was done by volunteers, with no funding, limiting their options. In addition, the team lacked trained specialists to implement emergency restoration projects. Some financial support was received from ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives<sup>160</sup>, which provided the department with computers, cameras and office supplies. The department also participated in a regional workshop in Amman in December 2016, organized by the New York Metropolitan Museum. The workshop covered the protection of cultural heritage during conflict, and documentation methods for museums and artifacts. Participation in the workshop helped the department to gain experience in professional photography to document the damage (Enabbaladi 2016).

The department tried to contact UNESCO to inform them about their work and get support, but they were not recognized by UNESCO<sup>161</sup>. In July 2018, the Syrian army regained the city of Bosra, and DGAM became responsible for the old city again. However, they did not recognize the work of the voluntary department and did not include them in their work or staff. As a result, since July 2018 the Department finished as a civil society organization<sup>162</sup>.

## **2- The Democratic Self Administration of Rojava controlled territories**

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<sup>159</sup> The Facebook page of the department of the Antiquities of Bosra <https://www.facebook.com/%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A2%D8%AB%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%85-1642112122698614/>

<sup>160</sup> The ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/about/>

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Soliman Alissa, the founder of the initiative

<sup>162</sup> Interview with Soliman Alissa, the founder of the initiative

### **The Authority of Culture in Self-Management in North and East Syria (ACNES):**

ACNES was established by Kurdish authorities in the autonomous region in North and East Syria. This region also known as Rojava .This region is de Facto autonomous region ), announced by the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria as de facto autonomous in 21 January 2014 which include self-governing sub regions in different areas in North and East Syria. It includes areas of Euphrates, Raqqa,Manbi ,Tabqa and Deir Ez-Zor .This area is under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces. The previous name of the Authority at the time of establishment in 2014 was the Authority of Culture and Protection of Antiquities in al Jazira Canton but later in 2018 changed to the actual name The Authority of Culture in Self-Management in North and East Syria (ACNES). Before 2011, there were 20 archaeological missions were active in the province. Since the start of the conflict, all 20 missions left the country; the absence of security in the region led to looting, illegal excavation, and vandalism, and some archaeological sites became places of combat between the Islamic State and the Kurdish military groups. The need to act and to protect archaeological sites led to the creation of this Authority, even this Authority follows Syrian Democratic Forces but it is more closed to be a Civil Society Organization, it includes experts in archaeology and heritage which are members of the local communities in the region, the team of the Authority includes fifteen archaeologists, five architects, one Journalist, and twenty guards in the archeological sites, they work very independently of the Syrian Democratic Forces. They take the decisions by themselves and they make their plans for heritage as a civic organization<sup>163</sup>. ACNES plays a vital role in the protection of archaeological sites and the deposits of remains in the excavation centres of past foreign archaeological missions such as Tell Baydar, Tell Laylan, Tell Halaf and Tell Chegar Bazar. Since its foundation in 2014 till now the authority played a crucial role on the protection of archaeological heritage,. The activities of ACNES are focused on the documentation and protection of the archaeological sites in the region , The Authorities published three reports about the current situation of the archaeological sites in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Where it documented the violations, bulldozing, illegal excavations and illegal construction in the sites, in 2016 the authority documented 767 sites. The documentation efforts included important sites such Tell Baydar, Tell Mozan, Tell Guerra ,Tell Ajajh, Tell Laylan, Tell Halaf ,Tell Chagerbazar and others (ATAP 2016). The protection of the houses of the archaeological missions is also one of the important activities that ACNES realized regarding to the protection activities , these houses were used by the archaeological mission as storages of their archaeological findings , the Authority transported the archaeological collections in some houses to safety places. The Authority also works to control the illicit traffic and the looting; the reports of 2016 and 2017 demonstrated a collection of the confiscated archaeological objects by the authority. The emergency restoration is also one of the activities that the Authority is doing, in 2016, 2017 and 2018 the Authority realized different emergency restoration projects in different sites such Tell Baydar, Tell Mozan and the Jabar Castle. The raising awareness is also one of the important priorities of the Authority. The raising awareness activities include exhibitions, seminars and documentaries which deal with the importance of the archaeological sites in Aljazeera Canton ( ATAP 2016, ATAP 2017). The Authority also work to train students in archaeology on the documentation and

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<sup>163</sup> Interview with Ristem Abdo (member of ACENS in October 2019)

protection of archaeological sites , in the last two years the Authority organized several workshops training for student from Al-Furat University. The team of The Authority faces many risks during their daily work especially the risk of mines and the lack of security in the areas freed from the Islamic State in southern Haska<sup>164</sup>. The Authority dose not receive any support from outside Syrian either from DGAM , the collaboration with DGAM was just once when DGAM sent experts to help on safeguard a Mosaic in the archaeological site of Shuyukh Tahtani. The Authority lacks funding. The only funding that receives comes from the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria, in case if the authority receives more funding it will be able to do more activities regarding to protection of archaeological sites

### **CSO work on the protection of Kurdish and Syrian cultural heritage**

Before the conflict, Syrian Kurds faced many difficulties in preserving their language and cultural heritage: Kurdish culture suffered discrimination by the Syrian government; they were not allowed to use Kurdish language at schools and not allowed to create any cultural organizations. After 2011, the Kurds had more freedom to practice their traditions, which led to the creation of civil society organizations that work to preserve Kurdish history, and Kurdish cultural heritage, such as Subartu (CSO). Conversely, the conflict threatened the remaining Syriac Assyrian communities in Al-Jazira, who suffered religious persecution by the Islamic State, and as a result many of them left their homeland in 2014 and 2015. This threat to this ethnic group and their culture led to the establishment of CSOs who aim to protect the Syriac language and culture.

#### ***Subartu Association***

Founded in 2012 in Qamashli<sup>165</sup>, the main aim of this association is to raise awareness amongst local communities about Kurdish history and Kurdish cultural heritage in Al-Jazira province. Their main activities are organizing exhibitions and awareness lectures. These deal with different topics, especially Kurdish history, Kurdish language and culture . and regional archaeological sites.

#### ***The Syriac Cultural Association and Olaf Taw Association***

These two organizations are the main Syriac cultural organizations<sup>166</sup> in the province. Their main aim is to preserve Syriac culture by teaching the Syriac language and raising awareness about Syriac history and traditions. They are based in Al-Hassaka.

### **3.2.1 New CSOs outside Syria**

The destruction of cultural heritage in Syria resulted in the creation of new initiatives outside Syria which aimed to protect Syria's cultural heritage, created by Syrians in and outside Syria and foreign experts in archaeology and cultural heritage. The majority of these initiatives are based in Europe especially in Spain, France, Belgium and Germany. These initiatives have played an important role in documenting the destruction and raising international awareness.

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Ristem Abdo (Member of ACNES IN October 2019) .

<sup>165</sup> Subarto Association <https://www.facebook.com/subartukomele/>

<sup>166</sup> The Syriac Cultural Association <https://www.facebook.com/syriaccultural/>  
Olaf Taw <https://www.facebook.com/Olaf-taw-1686331638044611/>

### *Le patrimoine archéologique syrien en danger (LPASD)*

LPASD was the first initiative created outside Syria, in France in June 2011, just three months after the beginning of the Syrian uprising. It was a group of Syrian and European archaeologists who have documented the damage to Syria's archaeological sites and raised awareness about that destruction via social media (a Facebook page<sup>167</sup> and YouTube channel<sup>168</sup>) and interviews in international media. Their work was carried out in coordination with groups inside Syria to obtain photographs and reports of the archaeological sites.

The group appears to have been active from 2011 to 2014: since 2014 the group stopped posting on Facebook - posts after that were limited with the most recent postdating to 2016. In which they published an open letter with the title *Absolute despair with UNESCO* where they critique UNESCO for its response to Palmyra<sup>169</sup>. However, the group is remarkable as one of the first groups to document the damage occurring to Syria's cultural heritage and share it online. The damage to Syria's cultural heritage reached the international media in May 2012, when the Global Heritage Fund released a freely-available report (Cunliffe 2012) cataloguing all the information on damage to Syria's heritage available on social media at the time. The report was picked up by media in at least 16 countries (Cunliffe 2019, pers. comm), and was the first time that Syria's heritage damage reached widespread awareness. A significant amount of its information comes from LPASD, demonstrating the importance of their work.

### *Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA)*

APSA was founded in 2012 in Strasbourg in France. It was formed by a team of volunteers from different countries that includes archaeologists, journalists, architects, anthropologists, and heritage experts. Since its foundation, the group has worked to document heritage damage, looting, illicit trafficking, and to highlight the risks facing historical monuments and archaeological sites via its webpage<sup>170</sup> and Facebook page<sup>171</sup>. The information is classified by regions, provinces, site name, and monuments, and stored in a file maker database. The group has also released several special reports on their website on, for example, Palmyra (Ali, 2015). Damage updates are provided by people in Syria - mostly archaeologists, architects, and civilians.

APSA chose not to collaborate with the DGAM for political reasons – in fact it was initially highly critical of their efforts (Ali 2013). They also received no support from the international heritage organization such as UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS and ICOM.

In 2015, the association began a collaboration with ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives to supply information and prepare reports on damage occurring. Like LPASD, APSA played an important role in raising awareness about the destruction of Syria's cultural heritage, but like many other CSOs the association depended on volunteers; lack of funding was a problem; and work was limited as a result. Since January 2018, the Association has stopped publishing information about the damage.

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<sup>167</sup> LPASD Facebook page : <https://www.facebook.com/Archeologie.syrienne/>

<sup>168</sup> LPASD youtube channel : <http://www.youtube.com/user/SyrianArchaeological>

<sup>169</sup> LPASD post in Facebook : Absolute despair with UNESCO <https://www.facebook.com/notes/le-patrimoine-arch%C3%A9ologique-syrien-en-danger-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A2%D8%AB%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%B1/absolute-despair-with-unesco-an-open-letter/944191942315797/>

<sup>170</sup> APSA <http://www.apsa2011.com/>

<sup>171</sup> APSA facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011/>

## Heritage for Peace (HfP)

Heritage for Peace (HfP) is an NGO whose mission is to support Syrian heritage workers to protect collections, monuments, and sites during armed conflict. HfP believes that heritage can serve as a key focus of dialogue between communities, nations, and ethnic groups: heritage can, in fact, become a tool for peace building. HfP was unique at the start of the conflict for its focus on protecting cultural heritage during conflicts<sup>172</sup>, rather than simply raising awareness: by providing training and support in heritage protection to staff working on the ground, it aims to assist in mitigating and/or stopping the damage to cultural heritage and lay the groundwork for post-conflict reconstruction. HfP is an entirely voluntary organization, with staff of 20 people. Since its beginning in 2013, the organization aimed to engage its staff's local knowledge and previous expertise in conflict situations to promote capacity-building and knowledge transfer in order to create self-sufficiency in heritage management among heritage workers and local communities. The foundation of the NGOs was by a team of volunteers with the goal of helping to protect Syria's cultural heritage

HfP was founded in Girona, Spain under Catalanian law. It was created because of the urgent need to act during the Syrian conflict, the international community it was not prepared to intervene in the beginning of the Syrian conflict, in addition during the Syrian conflict existed many non-state actors who control heritage resources who were far to receive international support on heritage protection because the international heritage law is mainly applicable to states parties, governmental and intergovernmental just can work with heritage authorities that are supported by the recognized state authority, the NGO tried to fill this lack from its foundation, it decided to be neutral and taking no political stance on the conflict (Sabrine et Cunliffe, forthcoming 2020). HfP's projects have been concentrated on building capacity within Syria, monitoring damage, identification the work of the other groups in order to avoid duplication and preparing for the postwar reconstruction (Sabrine et Cunliffe, forthcoming 2020)

The projects realized by the NGO could be divided into categories<sup>173</sup>: crisis management a advice and assistance projects; training; damage assessment of sites; raising awareness through publications, interviews, talks, statements, press releases, and other measures And report on Actions to Protect Syria's heritage.

The projects of the NGO include:

- creation of an electronic resource platform that provided heritage workers with freely available tools and training materials for emergency management, risk mitigation, and other key skills they felt they were lacking.
- Assisting the DGAM by designing a Needs Assessment in September 2013, this project was an e-survey for DGAM, the goal of the survey was to collect information for heritage categories, to analyze the priorities of DGAM and to identify helpful strategies and resources for Syria's cultural heritage protection. The Task Force on

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<sup>172</sup> All the work of the NGO is explained deeply in a forthcoming publication in 2020 done by Isber Sabrine and Emma Cunliffe, the publication called Protecting heritage during conflict: the Work of Heritage for Peace

<sup>173</sup> <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/about-us/our-projects/>



Antiquities and Museum was the thirteenth project that the organization realized to help on the crisis management assistance; this project was designed in July 2014 to support the Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs of the Syrian Interim Government in Gaziantep in Turkey. Heritage for Peace since its establishment was able to organize two important trainings with Syrian heritage workers, the first one is “Basic Tools to Protect Cultural Heritage in Syria Now”. This project was organized for the staff of DGAM in Beirut 2013. The second project was training on Damage Assessment for Cultural Heritage for staff of the Syrian Interim Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs in Gaziantep (Turkey) in 2014. Heritage for Peace publishes its newsletter which is an update about the damage occurring to Syria’s cultural heritage. The damage is listed in the newsletter, is taken from news reports, reports by activists, and updates from the Syrians Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) and many other sources.

The organization as well was not able to realize other different projects, for many reasons and especially because of the lack of adequate volunteers, lack of funding and the lack of support from various institutions, these projects were: A Syrian Heritage Damage Assessment platform, Syrian Heritage in Small Hands, The Idlib and Aleppo Damage Assessment Task Force, A project to transfer knowledge (train-the-trainer workshops) regarding Evacuation, Handling, Packaging, and Storage of Movable Cultural Heritage and the research project Heritage For Peace: Theory And Practice Of Heritage Protection And Use For Peacebuilding During Conflicts (Sabrine et Cunliffe, forthcoming 2020)

Heritage For Peace continued its projects during 2020 and the actual projects that are realizing are concentrated on the empowerment of civil society on the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts, the first current project in this direction is the SHELTr project (Syrian Heritage Law Training) - a course in development by HfP in partnership with Save Muslim Heritage, and funded by Gerda Henkel Stiftung, with the aim of providing legal training to court staff in the opposition-held Syria on matters pertaining to cultural heritage (Sabrine et Cunliffe, forthcoming 2020). The second current project that the NGO is developing is Empowerment of civil society and local heritage authorities for the protection of cultural heritage in Iraq, Libya, Yemen and North-East Syria. This project will address in a two-day workshop in mid-February 2020 in Barcelona the problems facing CSOs and heritage authorities in terms of cultural heritage protection. The first day of the workshop will be dedicated to the presentation of the work of CSOs of the targeted countries as well as the work of a number of international funding bodies including ALIPH. The second day of the workshop will be dedicated to discussing the challenges and needs of cultural heritage in the target countries with presentation of concrete project ideas by civil society (prepared in advance) in these countries. It will also include a session on the basics of grant writing and project presentation an introduction to the ALIPH grant platform in view of ALIPH’s 3rd call for projects.

Heritage for Peace faced many obstacles and difficulties during its work during these years, working as a neutral organization in the context of conflict was not easy, some groups refused to work with it because of whom else it had worked with, some of the groups did not respect

HfP's neutrality. Another difficulty which is facing the NGO, as volunteer NGO with no paid staff, there are always difficulties to work with volunteers, such as stopping without warning, or resign their tasks when they become busy with their daily work

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## **SHIRIN**

SHIRIN was established in 2014 in Brussels by an international group of archaeologists who were active in Syria prior to the conflict. Syria before the conflict was a major knowledge zone for archaeology; there were more than 100 international archaeological projects active in the country. The main objectives of the organization are to support Syrian government bodies and non-governmental organizations in their efforts to preserve and safeguard Syria's cultural heritage<sup>174</sup>. SHIRIN tries to bring the expertise of the scientific community to help in the protection of cultural heritage. The main priorities of SHIRIN are suggesting actions and projects for the international funded bodies, utilizing the contacts of the former excavation managers to collect information on damage at excavated sites; and preparing tools to facilitate heritage management and limit illicit trafficking, such as preparing inventories of excavated objects stored in Syrian museums. SHIRIN's main projects include the damage assessments carried out in two campaigns. The first was done between September and November 2014 (SHIRIN n.d), and included reports from 20 sites and 14 dig houses; and the second was in April 2016, supported by satellite imagery in collaboration with UNOSAT. All the collected information about the damage was shared with DGAM, and some is publicly available on their website. Another important initiative associated with SHIRIN is the French-British initiative which seeks to unify archaeological excavation data to create a database in partnership with the EAMENA Project (EAMENA n.d) of archaeological site across Syria (estimated to be about three times as many as formally recorded by the DGAM). The other important project associated with SHIRIN is the Focus Raqqa Project<sup>175</sup>. This is a pilot project by the Center for Global Heritage at Leiden University in collaboration with DGAM. This project aims to make a detailed inventory of lost movable heritage of the Raqqa Museum, in order to facilitate future identification of the stolen objects on the art market. The Scanning for Syria project is also associated with SHIRIN and led by Leiden University. It aims to use a

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<sup>174</sup> SHIRIN <http://shirin-international.org/>

<sup>175</sup> Focus Raqqa project <http://www.focusraqqa.com/focusraqqa/index.php?lang=en#project>

new method for safeguarding information from lost archaeological objects by making three dimensional scans of plastic moulds<sup>176</sup>. SHIRIN also carried out project training in Switzerland for Syrian archaeologists called “First Aid for Syrian Cultural Heritage”. Topics included preservation of archaeological sites, conservation and protection of small artifacts and creating digital archives. The projects done by SHIRAN were of great importance. The organization stopped to do new activities since 2018 and the website of the organization (<http://shirin-international.org/>) disappeared. SHIRIN was a voluntary association, included different groups of western archaeologists who worked in Syria. The members of SHIRIN were divided politically; some of them were pro-Syrian Regime while others take the opposite position. This division affected deeply in the work of SHIRIN and was one of main the reasons maybe to stop its actions. SHIRIN could play an important role to unite the work of the western archaeologists towards the protection of Syrian archaeological heritage.

### **SIMAT (Syrian for Heritage )**

SIMAT , It is the acronym of Syrian For Heritage in Arabic (سوريون من أجل التراث) The most recent initiative is SIMAT, a non-profit association founded in early 2018 in Berlin by a group of Syrians experts from the fields of archaeology, conservation, and heritage (SIMAT 2018 a). **SIMAT is neutral and independent organization**, whose mission is to strive to preserve Syria’s cultural heritage. In its work, the association prioritizes Syrian participation in the protection of cultural heritage and tries to empower Syrian experts to develop ways to protect, conserve, and study cultural heritage. SIMAT’s efforts to protect cultural heritage include beside to the tangible cultural heritage also the intangible heritage. The organization tries to implement its projects not just in Syria but also where there are Syrian refugees - especially in Germany and Syria’s neighboring countries. Work includes documentation, emergency conservation, training, research, workshops and publications. From its foundation in January 2018 till November 2018, the organization has already begun six projects.

The Dier Soubat-Al Bara project is documenting the archaeological site and trying to implement emergency interventions to safeguard the damaged site (SIMAT 2018 b). The Idleb Museum project aims to protect and preserve the museum collections and to rehabilitate the museum building ( SIMAT 2018 c). SIMAT has also developed four awareness-raising and education projects. The Hekayya project was developed inside Syria, and a mosaic project (SIMAT 2018 d) and the Biet Nana project (SIMAT 2018 e) were developed in Berlin and In collaboration with Idleb Antiquity Center, SIMAT provided a new report on the situation of the archaeological site of Cyrrhus (SIMAT 2018 f). The association has several partners: the Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative, the Penn Cultural Heritage Center, and the Idleb antiquities Center. SIMAT contribution to the protection of Syria’s cultural heritage is and will continue to be an important contribution.

### **The Day After (Cultural Heritage Initiative)**

The Day After (TDA) is an independent Syrian association based in Turkey: its work is focuses on supporting democratic transition in Syria. In 2014, the Association established the

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<sup>176</sup> Scanning for Syria project <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/archaeology/scanning-for-syria>

Heritage Protection Initiative (TDA-HPI) in order to help on the protection of Syrian cultural heritage.

The TDA-HPI includes a network of heritage professionals and civil society activists who work in areas outside of the Syrian government control. The main activities of the team are concentrated in three provinces: Idleb, Hama, and Aleppo. TDA-HPI produces regular reports which include rapid assessment damage reports and site monitor reports. In 2015, it started the site Monitors Project, a network of local archaeologists, museum curators, and activists. The work done by them includes the documentation of violations and looting of archaeological sites in the areas outside regime control (TDA-HPI 2017). The monitors also try to implement small-scale interventions, realising many mitigation measures in the Idleb region.

### **3.3 Syrian civil society organizations and international heritage institutions**

In all the previously mentioned initiatives, Syrian civil society played an important role in documenting the damage and the looting occurring to Syria's cultural heritage, and raising awareness of the problems.

Despite the important work done by all these initiatives, even today they lack support of most international heritage institutions. The bodies that might want to give out western aid money have strict rules about things like transparency, gender balance and financial accountability; not all of these organizations can meet these tests. Western governments, and other donors are very concerned to ensure that any money that they give out is not 'wasted' and even more important does not end up in the hands of individuals or groups that they cannot support UNESCO and the other international institutions have supported the work of the DGAM and a few civil society organizations. The main UNESCO program, Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage Project, begun in 2014 in collaboration with ICOMOS and ICCROM ended in December 2018 (UNESCO Office in Beirut pers. comm. Dec 2018. n.d(b)). It was ended because it was a fixed term project and there was no funding more to continue the project. This program aimed to provide operational responses to help with the protection of Syria's cultural heritage, but the majority of the activities were designed to support the DGAM. Over the project's duration, the program organized many capacity building training programs for DGAM staff. However, UNESCO was able to collaborate with just two civil society organizations- the Syrian Trust of Development and the Al-Adiyat of Aleppo. The Syrian Trust was accepted as an accredited NGO by UNESCO, and was recognized for its work on the protection and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO 2017). The Al-Adiyat of Aleppo participated in several UNESCO technical coordination meetings for the old city of Aleppo. In addition, in June 2018, the Al-Adiyat participated in a training program about the conservation of the manuscripts organized by UNESCO in Matenadaran (The Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan) (UNESCO 2018)

UNESCO organized two international expert meetings to rally the international community to safeguard Syria's cultural heritage. The first was in May 2014 in Paris (UNESCO 2014) and the second was in June 2016 in Berlin (UNESCO 2016). In both meetings, representatives of the new Syrian CSOs presented their work to the international organizations, and in both meetings it was agreed that it was important to support the new CSOs. Nonetheless, there were no remarkable actions taken to support them. The international conventions for heritage protection lack any way to provide support to groups in non-state controlled areas, and the

financial sanctions limit economic support: this legal complexity is one of the main obstacles facing UNESCO in any attempt to support heritage protection in non-state controlled areas, despite the fact that the majority of heritage protection work in these areas is carried out by CSOs.

There is a need for UNESCO and the international heritage organizations to change their strategies during conflicts, and to provide more support for CSOs. Al-Quntar and Daniels (2016) have suggested, for example, that the international heritage organizations could (and should) intervene to support CSOs in non-state areas as one of the many humanitarian actions that offer direct support to local people in crisis.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This research identified the role of Syrian civil society before and during the conflict, it demonstrated how the conflict was the main reason to create new civil society organizations for the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. The study shows how the role of Syrian civil society organizations changed during the conflict, CSOs during conflict especially the CSOs which are located in the opposition held areas and in the Democratic Self Administration of Rojava, participated directly on the management and protection of cultural heritage, this participation was limited to DGAM before the conflict. All the new civil society organizations inside and outside the country played a crucial role to document the damage and the looting of the archaeological sites, and to raise awareness on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage during conflict.

The conditions of work of the CSOs initiatives are so difficult, they faced and still facing many obstacles to do their work on the protection of cultural heritage, the CSOs inside Syria especially in the opposition held areas and the Democratic Self Administration of Rojava still do not have any support or recognition from the international heritage institutions, the only support comes just from CSOs outside Syria and individual research centres. The majority of new CSOs lack the funding, the sanctions by United State and the European Union against the Syrian financial system did not help to send funding to inside Syria and always there is a need to find a mediator to send money or equipment. The political division of the country between different areas, opposition held areas, the Democratic Self Administration of Rojava and the Syrian government areas did not permit DGAM as a Syrian government agency to collaborate with any of the new CSOs in the other areas. The members of the new CSOs inside Syria often faced many risks during recording damage and looting or making emergency repairs in the archaeological sites, they have faced gangs of armed looters, mines, snipers, airstrikes and gunfire (Cunliffe, 2016). The study also demonstrated that the Syrian civil society organizations in the field of cultural heritage lack the coordination between themselves, sometimes we can find that two civil society organizations were doing the same work in the same region such the Idleb Antiquities Center and the Day After (Heritage Initiative) ,they worked both to document the damage and looting in the Idleb region and they lacked the coordination on doing documentation of the damage . The political division in Syria affected in CSOs collaboration and coordination so the CSOs in opposition areas, the Democratic Self Administration of Rojava and in the Syrian government areas are not able to coordinate any common actions or activities. The lack of support and funding beside the change of the

military situation in Syria were the main reasons that some CSOs stopped their activities, the Syrian Association for the Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage stopped its activities in Aleppo since 2015 because of the lack of funding and international support, the Department of Antiquities in the city of Bosra stopped doing activities<sup>177</sup> in 2017. In July 2018 the Syrian official army took the control of Bosra and the DGAM returned to be the main responsible of antiquities in Bosra (DGAM 2018)

CSOs in the field of cultural heritage in the post conflict will be a main player on the reconstruction of Syria's cultural heritage therefore there will be a need for a new Syrian heritage law which should take to consideration the engagement of CSOs in the field of cultural heritage and in the same time this law should organize the relationship between the heritage authorities and the CSOs. In Syria CSOs in the field of cultural heritage can play an important role in the reconciliation and peace building, cultural heritage is an important and necessary asset in the post conflict recovery processes (Viejo Rose 2013 :144) . Cultural heritage is and it will be always an important tool to the reconstruction of Syria

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<sup>177</sup> A statement by Soliaman Alessa ( the former director of the Department of Antiquities in Bosra <https://www.facebook.com/saif.aldeen.336>

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**The fourth contribution:** “The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria’s Heritage Protectors

### **The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria’s Heritage Protectors**

Isber Sabrine, Emma Cunliffe

#### **Acknowledgements:**

This article could not have been completed without the kind assistance and generous donation of time of the Heritage for Peace volunteer team: the newsletter team, who collate the news stories: Waseem Albahri, Paul Bishop, and Krystal Osborn; the database team who logged them: Lydia Magnavacca and Nikki Payntar; and the Arabic translation team: Waseem Albahri, Omneya Abdel Barr, Rand Assad, and Jumanah El-Assad. We would also like to thank the Durham University Archaeology PDRA Reading Group for their invaluable feedback.

This article is dedicated to the Syrians who have worked in exceptionally difficult circumstances to protect their heritage, risking everything, and in particular to those who paid the ultimate price and lost their lives.

## 1. Context

*“The archaeological sites and the historic buildings are an important part of my identity, they represent my history. They are part of me.”*

*“I am always proud that I was born in this place which includes the most ancient civilizations in the world”*

All estimates agree that to date more than 400,000 people have died and millions are displaced in Syria’s ongoing war. At the same time, the destruction of Syria’s heritage has become a regular feature of current western news reporting, resulting in international interest and widespread condemnation. Syria has six World Heritage sites, 11 locations on the Tentative World Heritage list<sup>178</sup>, at least 5,000 registered archaeological entries, and potentially more than 13,000 sites<sup>179</sup>. In addition, there are numerous significant religious sites, and countless historic buildings, as well as more than 30 museums, and libraries, archives and other forms of tangible heritage, to say nothing of Syria’s rich intangible heritage, which is also under threat. Yet somehow, the links between Syria’s tangible and intangible heritage, and the people they are a part of, are often overlooked. This link is vital, highlighted in a recent report made to the United Nations Human Rights Council, which emphasised that not only should protection (of both tangible and intangible heritage) be a priority, but it is a vital part of human rights (Bennoune, 2016).

The NGO Heritage for Peace (H4P)<sup>180</sup>, of which the authors are members, is one of a number of new NGOs and projects established to assist Syrians in protecting their cultural heritage (Perini and Cunliffe, 2014b). Work includes practical projects to help protect heritage and the collation of information about damage to Syria’s heritage and work being done to protect it, distributed in a regular newsletter<sup>181</sup>. From reporting the work to protect Syria’s heritage and our own contact with the Syrian people, we felt there was a need to provide an evidence base that a) detailed the rarely recorded extent of their efforts and the incredible lengths they go to, and b) showed the impact of

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<sup>178</sup> Only 11 sites have been nominated, comprising 12 submitted nominations on the World Heritage Tentative List: *Dura Europos* (8 June 1999) and *Mari, Tell Hariri* (8 June 1999) were submitted separately, but have a twelfth nomination as a joint submission - *Mari and Europos-Dura sites of the Euphrates Valley* (23 June 2011).

<sup>179</sup> Data collected by the Fragile Crescent Project, the CRANE Project, the PaleoSyr Survey, and ASOR.

<sup>180</sup> [www.Heritageforpeace.org](http://www.Heritageforpeace.org)

<sup>181</sup> Previous Damage Newsletters: Heritage for Peace webpage (<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/>)

heritage loss on the Syrian people. This was initially collated from media articles, but we were later able to conduct interviews with Syrians engaged in heritage protection on the ground to gather a second body of evidence.

## 2. Media Review

### 2.1 - Methodology

The H4P media archive was used to look for qualitative evidence of risks taken by heritage workers. Building on media data collected intermittently by Cunliffe between 2011 and 2014, the H4P archive was created in early 2014, when H4P began to collate media articles about Syrian heritage damage and heritage protection efforts inside and outside Syria. Articles were sourced from regular reviews of more than 38 Facebook feeds of different organisations (including Syrian and international NGOs, private organisations, and cultural heritage institutions), organisational newsletters and websites, and Google Searches using the keywords 'Syria + Heritage' and 'Syria + archaeology'. Although articles recorded were primarily in English, several Arabic Facebook feeds were also monitored (Annex A). Over time, the search algorithms became more refined, and the sources of information became more extensive, but the information should not be considered comprehensive. Information was initially only held in the H4P archive, but was later published in a regular newsletter, and collated into a series of reports (Leckie et al., 2017; Perini and Cunliffe, 2014b; a; 2015). The original goal of the archive was to collect qualitative evidence on a variety of topics, aiming for breadth of information, not extent of coverage of each story: the number of times stories were reported in different papers, and for how long, was not recorded. Given these limitations, it was not possible to conduct quantitative assessments of stories to indicate trends or comparative importance of information in media coverage. Instead, this data provides qualitative examples only.

In addition, data collected from the media archive should be treated with caution. There are considerable difficulties in getting information. Accounts are difficult to verify: reporters face heavy restrictions and the Committee to Protect Journalists labelled Syria 'the most dangerous place in the world for journalists', in 2012-2014. Between 2011 and 2016, 94 journalists were killed, and others have fled or gone into exile. Reporters Without Borders added 141 netizens and citizen journalists killed (which includes some of the above journalists), and an additional 25 netizens & journalists imprisoned in 2015.

Even where information is available, there can be significant issues in media reporting (Pollock, 2005; Fradley, 2017), and there have been numerous cases of churnalism – the reuse of stories amongst papers without fact checking<sup>182</sup>. As an example, one story in *New Statesman* (Bowen, 2015) conflicted strongly with a social media account<sup>183</sup> regarding how a museum collection was saved from Daesh, and the extent of danger faced by its saviours, providing an important cautionary warning. In one, the men were heroes, saving the museum collection whilst bullets flew overhead,

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<sup>182</sup> Conflict Antiquities Blog contains numerous debunked examples

<sup>183</sup> Palmyra News Updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/palmyranewsupdates/photos/p.1057755717596726/1057755717596726/?type=3&theater> [Accessed 01/12/2016]

and one man was shot: in the other, the museum was evacuated four hours before Daesh reached the museum. Even examining the event with hindsight, there is no way to tell.

### 2.3 - Results

Western mainstream media reporting, as seen in previous media accounts of Middle Eastern conflicts (for example, Pollock, 2005), tends to portray heritage destruction in terms of Western neo-colonialist values - a grand narrative of civilisation and the representation of the origins of the values of Western civilisation, with a heavy emphasis on the World Heritage site of Palmyra. Members of the public would be forgiven for thinking that Palmyra is the only site in Syria (never mind the only site damaged during the conflict), and that Da'esh is the only group responsible for destruction. Yet, studies of the extent of damage (for example, Bjørge et al., 2014; Casana and Panahipour, 2014; Danti, 2015) confirm that it extends far more widely. The sites primarily discussed in the media are the large classical Greco-Roman cities familiar to Western audiences, and not only are other sites rarely discussed, but the people who live close to them also rarely feature (Eaken, 2016).

*“What might not have been clear if you followed the news stories and photographs is that there is also a modern town of Palmyra (Arabic Tadmur) adjacent to the ancient site, with tens of thousands of inhabitants. [...] We can name the sites that have been looted and damaged: Palmyra and Apamea and Mari – the temple of bel, the arch of triumph, the great mosque of Aleppo. But the Syrian dead are nameless” (Press, 2016).*

It is a fundamental rule of journalism that a human-interest angle is key: as such, it is surprising that the stories of the Syrian people who care about and who work to protect their heritage are so little reported in comparison to the loss of the built heritage. One author can attest from experience that - on multiple occasions - when asked for interviews about the destruction of Palmyra, attempts to turn the story from the structures to the Syrians themselves were regularly rejected. Even when the tragic death of Khalad al-Assad was broadcast, journalists refused to discuss the other heritage workers threatened and killed. (For a more detailed discussion see examples in Pollock and Bernbeck, 2005; Wengrow, 2010; Pollock, 2016).

The media review dataset is biased towards a certain site type, and is not comparable in its coverage to the data collected from the questionnaires. However, although the review was dominated by major classical sites, there were rarer articles dealing with many other types of heritage, including archaeological sites, museums, libraries, and religious buildings. The review also provided numerous examples of the impact of heritage destruction, and of Syrian efforts to protect it, most of which passed relatively unremarked in mainstream media. Indicating the deeply felt impact of heritage destruction, numerous artworks have been created depicting heritage loss. For example, the series “Cultural Beheading” by Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos<sup>184</sup> was created to highlight the relationship between people and heritage.

*Figure 1. Cultural Beheading: “When the remnants of culture fall between the hands of savages, stones and cultural heritage could be decapitated too” (Copyright: Humam Alsalim and Rami Bakhos).*

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<sup>184</sup> <http://www.studentshow.com/gallery/26282319/Cultural-Beheading>

### 2.3.1 – Risk Factors to People (Physical and Social)

*“When the jihadist group Jabhat al-Nusra took over the town of Idlib in northwestern Syria in March 2015, a local archaeologist and activist named Ayman Nabu confronted the city’s Nusra-appointed mayor and told him that if anything happened to the Idlib Museum, they would have to kill Nabu as well.” (Eaken, 2016)*

A review of media sources has identified a number of major risks taken by heritage workers to protect heritage:

- Negotiating with armed groups, including Daesh, at Bosra (Kusa, 2015 ) and Palmyra (Lamb, 2016).
- Facing gangs of armed looters / armed gunmen at the Raqqa museum (APSA, 2013), Tell Ammar (DGAM, 2015), the warehouse at Herakla (BreakingNews, 2013), and others
- Regularly risking snipers and airstrikes to protect sites. For example, the Syrian Association for Preserving Heritage and Ancient Landmarks, working with the Heritage Office of the Free Aleppo Council, has tried to save the stones from the fallen Umayyad minaret for rebuilding, walled up the courtyard sundial and shrine to the Prophet Zackariah, and dismantled the historic minbar in the Great Mosque, under constant risk of sniper fire<sup>185</sup>
- Traversing more than 120km of fighting to attend training courses (Parkinson et al., 2015).
- Posing undercover as antiquities buyers to document looting (Lamb, 2015b).
- Archaeologists in Aleppo spent 12 hours talking to Western specialists on Skype to correctly preserve and move 600 medieval manuscripts and astrological instruments at the Aleppo Mosque’s library at risk from airstrikes (Parkinson et al., 2015).

## 3. Questionnaire

### 3.1 - Methodology

Seeking more information on the types of stories identified in the media review, we designed a simple Arabic questionnaire with the intent of collecting information on the social and physical risks faced by Syrians when protecting their heritage. Given the complexities of the term heritage in Arabic (see Fekri et al., 2008 for examples), we used (*ātār*) – antiquities and archaeology – as used and defined in the Syrian Law of Antiquities 222. The questionnaire went through two versions. The first was used in a preliminary version of this research, carried out in Spring 2016<sup>186</sup>, but the questions did not give us precise information about the social and political risks faced by heritage workers in Syria. In addition, this version focused only on respondents in the areas around Idlib, Maarrat al-Numan, and Apamea. We refined several questions, and conducted additional interviews over an area between Idlib and Palmyra. The Arabic questionnaires were translated into English for analysis.

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<sup>185</sup> Detailed on their Facebook page:

[https://www.facebook.com/pg/Department.Archaeology/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=542308499175809](https://www.facebook.com/pg/Department.Archaeology/photos/?tab=album&album_id=542308499175809)

<sup>186</sup> This informed the CBRL/SOAS conference paper “Caring for the Past” (April 2016).



The following discussion applies to both questionnaires. Both questionnaires comprised three sections (Annex 2 contains the expanded second version). Section 1 asked for basic demographic information, and asked open questions on local and national heritage. Section 2 began with open questions asking about views of heritage in the local community, and the effects of the war on how heritage was valued. We also asked respondents about risks involved in protecting heritage, and their relationship between their work and the local community. Finally, we asked them to offer any specific comments related to heritage work in Syria that they wished to include. We also asked about the risks facing sites, in order to contextualise the risks the workers faced. Section 3 comprised two grids of closed questions; this grid was the same in both versions of the questionnaire. These questions addressed (a) the time period before the war and (b) the present day, asking respondents to agree or disagree with statements on a scale of 1 to 5.

There were several issues with data collection. Interviewees were identified from a limited pool of those we had contact details for who were willing to participate. These primarily comprised former colleagues of one member of H4P from the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), or their colleagues, and cannot be considered a random sample. They were also all male. All participants asked agreed to complete the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted by telephone with interviewees working in highly dangerous environments with unpredictable cell phone connections in an active war zone. We are therefore extremely grateful to those who wished to respond. Secondly, the similarity of replies to some of the questions in the first round of interviews suggests there was some discussion or possibly direct collusion between interviewees. The second round of questionnaires covered a broader geographic range, and included more appropriate questions that earned more detailed answers. Despite this less than ideal set of circumstances, some interesting data was obtained.

## 3.2 - Questionnaire Results

In the first round of data collection (Spring 2016), H4P interviewed seven male respondents aged between 21 and 46. Their level of education varied from high school (two) to the postgraduate level (MA); occupations included excavation staff, site guard, local archaeology department, freelance lawyer, construction worker, and university lecturer. In the second round of data collection (Summer 2016), H4P interviewed eleven participants. Responders were all men aged between 29 and 56 in a region covering Idlib to Palmyra. Seven possessed bachelor's degrees; one was a high school graduate, while two held an MA and one a PhD. Of the eleven, five were still in their pre-war jobs. All were now involved in some form with the protection of heritage sites in Syria, ranging from those of local importance to sites of World Heritage status. Divergences between the survey conducted in the spring (V1) to the summer (V2) are indicated in *italics*.

### 3.2.1 - Attitudes to heritage before and during the conflict:

From their responses to the grid of closed questions, they indicated that:

#### Before the conflict:

- Heritage was important both locally and nationally; respondents were proud of their history
- Built and religious heritage were important

- Support was generally available in the community for site protection
- Damage often occurred to heritage sites
- It *was not (V1) / was sometimes (V2)* dangerous to protect sites
- The local community visited heritage sites
- There was some ambivalence in the local community about the value of heritage and/or heritage tourism
- The local community, in general, did not share the respondents' pride in heritage sites.

#### Present Day:

- Heritage was important both locally and nationally; respondents were proud of their history
- Built and religious heritage were important
- Support was generally available in the community for site protection
- Damage often occurred to heritage sites

These items were generally given the same weight as for the period before the conflict. However, in the present day, respondents now noted:

- The local community *did not (v1)/sometimes (v2)* visit heritage sites
- Heritage tourism was now seen as more important to the local economy
- It was now dangerous to protect sites.

The grid questions revealed a shift in local attitudes about the value of heritage between the two periods. There was a positive shift in the value placed on heritage sites by the local community, who were now more invested in their sites and more supportive of protection efforts.

The differences in the grid between the spring and summer are minor, and are likely the result of sampling over a broader area. The general impression given by the closed question grid in both the spring and summer questionnaires is one of (a) the increased danger of protecting archaeological sites and (b) the increase in value placed on sites by the local community.

### 3.2.2 - Risk Factors to Sites:

Section 2: Have the archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects you work with been affected / damaged / threatened during the conflict? Give examples of what has happened to them.

Responses to the open questions identified numerous risk factors to heritage sites. Sites were threatened by airstrikes, as well as the use of sites as barracks: here respondents specifically identified Apamea, the Dead Cities, and Marrat al-Numan. They identified damage to the mosaic museum at Marrat al-Numan; damage to the Idlib museum; and damage caused by explosives at Bosra. They identified the widely reported destruction to the Temple of Bel, the Temple of Baalshamin, the Arch of Triumph, and damage to the Museum and numerous tombs at Palmyra. Damage to different locations such as Serjilla and Shinshara in the Villages of Northern Syria World Heritage Site were also highlighted. Illegal digging and looting constituted threats, particularly at Apamea and Ebla, as did the ploughing of sites for crops, which endangered monuments and structures. Building material from archaeological sites was on occasion being reused to provide shelter.

### 3.2.3 - Risk Factors to People (Physical):

Section 2: Does protecting heritage involve physical risks? If yes, please describe examples.

Respondents also identified physical risks experienced by the people trying to protect sites. These included the danger of working at sites visible from the air as surveillance or bombing raids could occur - either by chance or as a result of their work being discovered. At some sites that were repurposed for military use, it was difficult or dangerous to work alongside armed people. For example, there was suspicion between different factions, and one respondent noted in this regard that taking photographs of sites could arouse the suspicion of group x or y. Attempts to resist looting could cause friction with armed groups—and also within the local community, from which it appeared some looters originated. They faced harassment by militant groups and also by some locals—although it was not explained whether the latter was because those “*locals*” were (for example) members of looting gangs. One respondent noted that several heritage workers had died, and another highlighted mines and landslides triggered by bombing. Another respondent said that he and several colleagues had been injured by small arms at Palmyra, while a different interviewee said that there was a risk of kidnapping and beatings. Snipers were also identified as a threat.

### 3.2.4 - Risk Factors to People (Social/Political/Fiscal):

Section 2: Does protecting heritage involve social risks? If yes, please describe examples.

By far the most commonly reported issue was that of tension and conflict with members of the local community *who were actively engaged in looting*, and who tried to tarnish the social reputation of heritage workers engaged in documenting and controlling those acts. The looters “*sometimes spread false and bad things about us in our community*” or “*try to break our good relationships with the military opposition groups or with the people in our local communities*”.

Other risks identified included the difficulty encountered in working with multiple, competing factions for permission to work. Heritage workers risked being identified by hostile parties as involved with x or y political faction. “*Conservatism*” in society was noted as a problem (by one respondent), which may be a reflection of Islamist group control. One respondent said that there was friction with owners of private land, on which some sites are located; another said that there was friction with refugees, who were living on some of the Dead Cities. There were also fiscal risks: heritage workers toiled largely without pay.

### 3.2.5 - Heritage Value:

Respondents indicated that antiquities were important to Syria in a general sense as a unifying factor, for a sense of shared identity, and contributed to Syria’s global importance as a place of great antiquity. Sites were inspiring and there was tangible pride in Syria as a “*place of the first civilisations*”. The responses to the open questions in section 2 of the revised questionnaire provided further information. It is clear that interviewees feel deeply invested in the built heritage of Syria. One respondent said that they are “*important elements for my identity*”, while another said that they were a “*shared value*” of all Syrians. “*Through them [the buildings] we can understand the history of the population*” said another; several candidly recorded their anguish at seeing the destruction of

their country's built heritage, saying how angry and sad it made them feel. When asked what role *"Syria's archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects"* played in daily life, interviewees replied that they were important for developing tourism, and were part of their work – *"I worked for 20 years as a guard, my job which I loved all my life"*. Another said *"They were a place for my inspiration and the work that I love"*. For some they were personally important via their education, and one felt that *"they were places of beauty and peace"*.

To gain a more complex understanding about the importance of sites to the community, we asked respondents to survey 2 for additional details.

Please explain the importance of Syria's archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects in your local community.

One interviewee linked the community's interest positively to the economy, noting that sites were a *"main resource"* for tourism. Another made a negative economic link, saying that his community was poor and *"always suffered from a lack of resources and a bad economic situation"*, and did not care greatly for archaeological sites. A third linked sites to the fostering of a common historical identity, while a fourth noted that some (in Bosra) actually lived in the old town and thus had a daily interaction with the World Heritage site—so much so that *"the majority of them are able to explain the importance of every site in Bosra"*. Unsurprisingly, Palmyra was singled out as a site of major economic importance. Overall, five responses highlighted the benefits of tourism to the community; one offered no response, two said that the community was uninterested, and three identified the role of heritage in providing the community with a common identity in which they took pride.

Do you think that the damage and destruction of your local archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects has affected the local community? Give examples of how?

*"Tourism stopped"*, noted one in response to this question, adding that those employed (*"workers on cultural heritage"*) lost their jobs. (This important social and financial consequence of the war naturally has a deep impact in the community, as it affects peoples' social position and their ability to feed and look after their families). Reflecting regional differences—and perhaps the differences in status between various sites—one respondent said that beyond those employed at the sites there was little impact on the community, while another said that *"many people in the local communities were upset about the destruction of the archaeological sites and the looting of ancient objects"*, and *"tried to help [with] the protection of the sites"*. One respondent said that in Bosra there was a deep impact on the economy, which depended greatly on tourism, and that many people lost their jobs as tourists stopped coming (the inference being that these included those beyond the immediate circle of heritage workers). At Palmyra, one respondent lamented the cessation of tourism and excavation work, and noted a major impact on the community – the virtual forced abandonment of the

population as the inhabitants fled the fighting: *“The people in Palmyra lost their main resource to live”*. Here, all but one stated clearly that the termination of heritage tourism caused severe damage to the local community in both emotional and financial terms; only one said that the community was unaffected as their priority was *“food and security”*. This is the same respondent who indicated that there was not a great deal of value placed by the local community on sites, and it may be inferred, perhaps, that this comment refers to an area that was not an internationally recognized site, and where tourism was not as great an economic boon for the community, or perhaps a source of its pride.

## Section 2: How do non-heritage workers in your local community view your work?

Do you talk to your community about your work protecting heritage? Do other members of the community help you protect your heritage? If yes, please describe how.

Despite all 11 saying that they talk to members of the community about their work, 8 respondents said bluntly that part of the community saw their work as a waste of *“energy and time”*, or something *“not needed in this time”* where the priority is *“the protection of humans [and] the protection of heritage is not a priority.”* Others felt their community understood that the respondents’ efforts constituted *“important work for Syria”* and that they *“look positively to our work and try to support us”*. 6 of the 11 said that they had little support from the local community from their work, again noting that their priorities are skewed towards more immediate pressures and less towards the preservation of archaeological sites. However, when they did help, members of the local community did so as volunteers to clean up damage caused by munitions, volunteer drivers, and to help *“raise awareness in our local community on the protection of cultural heritage”*. One interview said that local community leaders pressured the Free Syrian Army on their behalf to curb illegal excavation, the robbing of stones, and *“illegal reconstruction”*.

### 3.2.6 - Other:

When asked if they had specific comments to add to the questionnaire, respondents said plainly that the international community has not done enough to protect Syrian heritage and called for greater support. One noted that the Free Syrian Army as well as other, unnamed factions had actually protected them and allowed them to work. One respondent said that local workers had reached an accommodation with local Islamic courts, imams, and Islamist militants, also allowing them to work.

## 3.3 - Case Study: The Idlib Museum

In the process of interviewing questionnaire respondents, one volunteer also volunteered this case study.

*In March 2015, the city of Idlib came under the control of military groups opposed to the Syrian government. On the first day we tried to get in touch with the militants; two people managed to get to the museum, where they found a few armed people to protect the museum. They found only a few artefacts in the museum itself – the rest of the collection had been hidden. The Syrian regime stated*

*that the museum was under the control of terrorists, and identified Al-Nusra as the perpetrators. To begin with the militants could not find where the collections were stored, but a bombing raid exposed the storage location to militants.*

*News spread that the collection was worth billions and people tried to convince the militants to sell it. We managed to intervene, reaching out to a group of militants called Ahrah Al-Sham, who agreed to protect the museum collection. However, there was tension with Al-Nusra. After several discussions the [different] militants formed a religious committee to find a solution. The committee named an imam, who we were able to talk to. We explained to him the importance of the museum's collection, and used the history of Islam as an example: when the Muslim armies entered the Levant during the time of Omar Bin al-Katab [i.e. initial invasion of Roman Syria in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> c. AD] they did not destroy monuments or archaeological sites. The imam agreed with us in the end, and worked with the committee to stop the sale of the museum collection.*

#### **4. Discussion**

*“When lamenting the masonry and sculpture destroyed by the Islamic State, we can easily overlook this shifting human story. We too readily consign antiquities to the remote province of the past. But they can remain meaningful in surprising and ordinary ways. “This is the meaning of heritage,” Ms. Kuntar said. “It’s not only architecture or artifacts that represent history, it’s these memories and the ancestral connection to place.”*

(Syrian archaeologist Salam al-Quntar in Tharoor, 2016)

Although the questionnaire sample was small, it dealt with both pre-and during-conflict responses, which the media review did not. Conversely, the media review took a broader definition of heritage than that used in the questionnaires (atar - antiquities), and from that we could compile a broader picture of the impact and effects of heritage destruction and protection.

The questionnaires revealed many risks faced by the respondents in protecting heritage.

Questionnaire responses revealed complex attitudes in the local community towards heritage workers and heritage itself. In our preliminary analysis, we noted a certain ambivalence about the role played by heritage in the local and national communities. Respondents indicated that value was placed on both built and religious heritage, and heritage tourism was valued, particularly for its financial benefits, but then they also indicated that heritage was often damaged, even before the war, and that heritage did not play a *major* role in the community and sometimes was not especially valued at the national level. One respondent said specifically that the local community was not

generally well educated about cultural heritage, and was not deeply involved in heritage issues before the war. (Certainly, pre-Islamic heritage is only a very small segment of Syria's educational curriculum).

The media review provides an example of this complexity of local perceptions, using an internationally important site – Palmyra. Admin Ibn<sup>187</sup>, author of the Facebook page *Heritage & Culture of Syria*, wrote of her ambivalent experience as a schoolgirl on a trip to Palmyra (Admin ibn, 2015): “the excitement for us was not seeing that destination but it was the journey to get there. So, when we finally arrived, little was spent eying the ruins or learning about it. We spent most of the day sitting in the huge courtyard of Baal temple, clapping hands and singing Syrian songs and dancing to the beat of a small Syrian drum”. Although the site was lost on her at the time, she went on to write of the love she later developed for it.

Ketz, wrote for AFP (2014) about the contradictions of the tourism value of the site to local people pre-conflict, and their contribution to its damage during it. “Of Palmyra's 85,000 residents, 5,000 worked in hotels, restaurants, shops, as drivers and guides or organisers of desert excursions under canvas. [...] Palmyra Museum director Khalil al-Hariri shows [sic] AFP three limestone stelae and parts of a sculpted sarcophagus depicting people including children carved in high relief. "They were sliced away with a chainsaw," he said. "We recovered them two days ago in the basement of a house." [...] It is clear that some residents have taken advantage of the turmoil in the country to turn a profit, knowing the value of such antiquities. And Hariri admits that.”

Nevertheless, despite this apparent lack of interest in nationally important sites, questionnaire responses indicated the local community did visit local heritage sites, often for the purposes of relaxation and recreation. When the before and during grid questions were compared, questionnaires revealed the value of heritage in the community appears to be enhanced, and whilst the local community are unable to visit sites as often as they used to, they are at least partially supportive of efforts to protect them - such as the efforts of our respondents.

Although these findings are based on only a small number of respondents, case studies gathered from the media review support this idea of the growing awareness of the importance of heritage through its loss. The importance of community action was highlighted by the Syrian Director-General of the Antiquities authority, Dr. Maamoun AbdulKarim, who noted at Palmyra:

*“I think Daesh (ISIS) understood very strongly that if they continued to destroy buildings, they would be attacked by the local community.”[...] The local community increasingly strongly opposed the wanton ISIS destruction, often risking their lives to end the jihadist iconoclasm. The local citizen's resistance and public demonstrations prevented more damage to their and our cultural heritage and identity” (Lamb, 2016).*

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<sup>187</sup> This is the name the author has asked to be referred to by.

Given it is by the Director-General of Syria's Antiquities Directorate, the statement could be contested as political hyperbole. However, the media review found reports on the efforts of the local people to protect Palmyra's treasures during the conflict (Lamb, 2014). *"The Director of Palmyra's very impressive Museum, Dr. Khalil al Hariri, showed this observer more than one hundred priceless artifacts that had been stolen by rebels and recovered over the past two years from hiding places. This was mainly accomplished with the help of the local Syrian Nationalist population who refer to themselves as Palmyrenes. Sometimes risking sniper fire or revenge attacks, local citizens continue to collect and report to authorities the stolen treasures. These and many other antiquities are now secured due to their efforts."*

Further afield, in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, refugees chose to recreate 12 of Syria's landmarks in miniature (Dunmore, 2016). Resources were so scarce they used whatever materials they could find – local basalt rock, polystyrene, cement, MDF, and even wooden kebab skewers. Although the group were primarily artists, the driving force behind the project was a computer engineer. None were heritage workers. Through exhibitions in the camp, the project has helped to reconnect refugees with their own cultural heritage. For tens of thousands of children in Zaatari – many of whom have little or no memory of Syria – this is their first opportunity to see these famous landmarks.

*"We chose this project to draw attention to what's happening in Syria, as many of these sites are under threat or have already been destroyed," Ahmad explained. "It felt like a good way to get the message out, because art is a language that doesn't need to be translated." (Dunmore, 2016)*

*Figure 2 and Figure 3: Models created by the Art from Zaatari Project. Copyright: UNHCR 2015*

Interpreting this ambivalence towards heritage before and during the conflict is difficult. It may be that the richness of local heritage was so deeply embedded in the local landscape that a day of recreation – whether at a world-renowned site or a local site - was perhaps a normal part of everyday life, and thus not originally considered worthy of note. Removing access to a part of that daily experience, even at the local level, and damaging/destroying it, has perhaps highlighted the importance of heritage in day-to-day life to normal Syrians. It has thus become more important to protect it as damage to it mounts. This contrasts with western views of Syrian heritage, where archaeological and classical heritage are given significant cultural value in schools from a young age, but religious heritage is often overlooked. This is supported by a study of Arabic responses to heritage destruction which determined that religious sites and local sites were frequently more important to Arabic-speakers than the destruction of major archaeological sites (Cunliffe and Curini, Forthcoming).

The increased support for heritage work noted in the questionnaires could indicate that it may have been elevated in status as a result of the war, although it is also clear that there are numerous elements in the local community either opposed to heritage workers or who find their work of low priority. The former includes looters and criminal gangs, who have every reason to look negatively on



heritage workers, while the latter perhaps include those driven from their homes or who live near sites that never provided a major economic benefit to them to begin with. The complex views of the community about heritage make the activities of our respondents and of those noted in journalists articles all the more astonishing: they continue to work against the odds—often without pay and under threats to their lives and livelihoods—to afford Syria’s heritage sites some modicum of protection.

Additional anecdotal discussions with our respondents highlighted further difficulties: a lack of passports to access international training (in some cases resulting in smuggling themselves over borders); a lack of institutional affiliation, resulting in a lack of support from international organisations who require evidence of financial stability and proof of legitimacy; a lack of funding and resources – including cars and petrol to access sites; a lack of training; and language ability to seek support. In addition, the institutions they do work with, such as Syria’s museums, frequently fall short of international standards, and lack inventories, emergency evacuation plans, and other measures considered essential to protect heritage in conflict (Sabrine, 2019 (In press)). Staff of the DGAM have devoted considerable time to developing these since 2011, but in areas the DGAM cannot access such work remains limited. Given the reality of these difficulties, international standards and legal conventions may only form guidelines, rather than foundations for action. Even were it applicable in an asymmetric conflict (Cunliffe et al., 2016; Gerstenblith, 2016), the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property, for example, has a number of stipulated peacetime measures for heritage protection that have not been adhered to, hindering its implementation in conflict. The reality of the situation on the ground is often far from these ideals, and as a result, they cannot always form the foundation of our efforts to assist.

## 5. Conclusions

It was our aim to collate evidence that would demonstrate the extensive efforts of the Syrians to protect their heritage. We hoped such work could be used to inspire a more positive and accurate representation in the media, and to generate greater support for those in need. Although our sample was small, and cannot be considered to be more than indicative of possible trends, attitudes to heritage may be changing: before the conflict, heritage equalled archaeology / antiquities, and – when asked – Syrians explained its primary benefit as touristic. It may be that the conflict and destruction have – tragically – raised the value of Syria’s rich and diverse heritage in Syrian society.

The war has brought the heritage dichotomy to the fore. It is people who made the heritage, and who care for it and about it, and yet who are often removed from its narrative. Archaeologists and heritage professionals frequently insist that heritage is not worth dying for – an attempt, perhaps, to downplay the value of heritage against the loss of human life for fear of appearing selfish. Yet, even outside Syria, there are countless examples of those who felt otherwise: the Monuments Men and Women of WWII, the brave men of Timbuktu who smuggled manuscripts out in their robes to protect them from extremists, Alia Muhammad Baker - the librarian who did the same in Iraq in 2003, the human chain that formed outside the National Museum in Tahrir Square in Egypt during the revolution – the list goes on. To many people, heritage *is* worth dying for, and our failure to recognise that does its heroic protectors – to whom we owe so much - a grave disservice. In our

attempts to highlight the value of their lives to us, we remove the choice from them about how to live those lives – and what to risk them for. Instead, we should focus on how to aid them in this difficult work, rather than focussing on the objects and buildings they protect, an approach promoted by the understanding that “cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible, interrelated and interdependent” (Bennoune, 2016: 3). In her report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur notes:

*74. A human rights perspective on the protection of cultural heritage must emphasize the human rights of cultural first responders – those on the frontlines in the struggle to protect it. They are the guardians of the cultural heritage of local groups, and indeed of all humankind, and thus critical players in the defence of cultural rights. They often put their safety and that of their families on the line to carry out this work. States must respect their rights and ensure their safety and security, but also provide them, including through international cooperation, with the conditions necessary to complete their work, including all needed material and technical assistance, and offer them asylum when that work becomes too dangerous.*

*75. The Special Rapporteur believes that, in many circumstances, defenders of cultural heritage should be recognized as cultural rights defenders and therefore as human rights defenders and that they should be afforded the rights and protections that status entails.*

(Bennoune, 2016: 17)

Western archaeologists often talk about the unifying power and peacebuilding potential of a pre-Islamic heritage, but there is rarely evidence to support these seemingly empty statements. Yet, “cultural rights are key to the overall implementation of universal human rights and a crucial part of the responses to many current challenges, from conflict and post-conflict situations to discrimination and poverty” (Bennoune, 2016: 3).

We have begun to collect evidence of this, which we hope can form a foundation to encourage peacebuilding work in the future. For example, Heritage for Peace witnessed this first hand when, at our Santander Conference in 2013, H4P were able to arrange for the DGAM and the Opposition Ministry of Culture to sit at the same table and discuss the protection of Syria’s heritage, signing the same outcomes<sup>188</sup>. We see the same unifying power Bosra, where both sides came together to negotiate to attempt to protect the city (Kusa, 2015 ), and in the religious ruling to protect the museum collections in Ma’arat al-Nu’mān. In Homs, extremists took control of the Church of Um al-Zenar, which has been located on that site since 59AD, making it one of the oldest in the world. They burned the Bibles and vandalised the church and its icons. Christians and Muslims came together to clean and restore the church, building a garden in the burning pit. As one journalist commented: “Syrians, almost without exception from my experience are deeply connected with their cultural heritage and do not distinguish all that much among its origins. Rather it appears that they are proud to help others protect and rebuild their damaged religious and cultural sites and focus more on the task of restoration of their heritage than fixing blame” (Lamb, 2015a).

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<sup>188</sup> Heritage for Peace Santander Conference: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/about-us/our-projects/heritage-and-conflict-international-conference-santander/>

The past has the power to bring peace during conflict, demonstrating something greater than any individual set of beliefs. Beyond that, however, we also see numerous examples of ordinary people taking risks to protect their heritage. We have talked to staff of the DGAM, continuing in their work despite a lack of pay, and the loss of contact with their employers, and we have collected evidence of those who – in their former pre conflict lives - had nothing to do with their heritage. Today construction workers, lawyers, and civil engineers all count themselves amongst Syria's heritage protectors. They are extraordinary.

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## 8. Annex 2: Questionnaire (Version 2)

Interview Number (NOT name): \_\_\_\_\_

Male / Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Education: School / Degree / MA / PHD

Subject:

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Job before the Conflict:

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Are you still employed in that job? Y/N

Are you originally from this community (Were you born / raised here before you began working here).

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**We are going to ask you a set of quick questions that look at the situation before the conflict, and during the conflict, and 12 detailed questions.**

1 - Describe how you feel about Syria's archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects?

2 - Before the conflict, did Syria's archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects play a role in your daily life?



3 - Please describe the role they played

4. What sort of archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects are you involved with?

Locally important / Nationally important / World Heritage importance

5 - Please explain the importance of Syria's archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects in your local community.

6.1 - Have the archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects you work with been affected / damaged / threatened during the conflict?

6.2 - Give examples of what has happened to them.

6.3 - do you think that the damage and destruction of your local archaeological sites, historic buildings and ancient objects has affected the local community?

6.4 - Give examples of how?

7.1 - Does protecting heritage involve physical risks?

7.2 - If Yes, please describe examples.

8.1 - Does protecting heritage involve social risks?

8.2 - If Yes, please describe examples.

9 - How do non-heritage workers in your local community view your work?

10 - Do you talk to your community about your work protecting heritage?

11.1 - Do other members of the community help you protect your heritage?

11.2 - Please describe how?

12 - Do you have any comments you would like to make

Please continue to the short questions on the next page

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

<b><i>Before the conflict I felt:</i></b>					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My local heritage was important to me	1	2	3	4	5
I was proud of Syria's heritage	1	2	3	4	5
My local heritage was important to all of Syria	1	2	3	4	5
The local community did not care about their heritage	1	2	3	4	5
Built heritage (e.g. buildings and monuments) played an important part in my local community	1	2	3	4	5
Religious built heritage (e.g. mosques, churches) played an important part in my local community	1	2	3	4	5
Heritage Tourism was not economically important to my local community	1	2	3	4	5
The local community visited local heritage sites	1	2	3	4	5
It was dangerous to protect heritage sites	1	2	3	4	5
There was no support from my local community to help me protect sites	1	2	3	4	5
Damage often occurred to my local heritage	1	2	3	4	5

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

<b>Today I feel:</b>					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My local heritage is important to me	1	2	3	4	5
I am proud of Syria's heritage	1	2	3	4	5
My local heritage is important to all of Syria	1	2	3	4	5
The local community do not care about their heritage	1	2	3	4	5
Built heritage (e.g. buildings and monuments) plays an important part in my local community	1	2	3	4	5
Religious built heritage (e.g. mosques, churches) plays an important part in my local community	1	2	3	4	5
Heritage Tourism is not economically important to my local community	1	2	3	4	5
The local community visit local heritage sites	1	2	3	4	5
It is dangerous to protect heritage sites	1	2	3	4	5
There is no support from my local community to help me protect sites	1	2	3	4	5
Damage often occurs to my local heritage	1	2	3	4	5

**The fifth contribution:** “*Protecting heritage during conflict: the work of Heritage for Peace*”

**CLASSICS AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

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16 October 2019

Attention: Commission of PhD Programme of *Ciències Humanes del Patrimoni i de la Cultura*,  
university of Girona

To whom it may concern,

With this letter we confirm that the paper by Isber Sabine and Emma Cunliffe, titled “Protecting Heritage during conflict: the Work of Heritage for Peace”, submitted in January 2019, will be published in the forthcoming monograph (*Heritage in Conflict*) of the Ancient Near Eastern Studies supplement series published by Peeters Press (Leuven). The article was peer-reviewed by two referees. The volume, edited by Heather Jackson and Andrew Jamieson, is expected to be released in the third quarter of 2020.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if more information about the planned publication or evaluation process is needed.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Andrew Jamieson'.

Assoc. Prof. Andrew Jamieson

Editor, *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*

[www.peeters-leuven.be/journoverz.asp?nr=1](http://www.peeters-leuven.be/journoverz.asp?nr=1)  
[www.peeters-leuven.be/search\\_serie\\_book.asp?nr=32](http://www.peeters-leuven.be/search_serie_book.asp?nr=32)

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# PROTECTING HERITAGE DURING CONFLICT: THE WORK OF HERITAGE FOR PEACE

## ABSTRACT

The large-scale destruction of historical buildings, museum collections, and archaeological sites by different actors during the Syrian conflict has led to the development of initiatives and programs by International Organizations (IOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In 2013, the NGO Heritage for Peace was created in Spain. It is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support all Syrians in their efforts to protect and safeguard Syria's cultural heritage during the conflict.

This paper begins with the idea behind Heritage for Peace (HfP). It will then give an overview of the work being done to protect Syria's heritage by the NGO. Within this context, we then present Syrian Heritage Law Training (SHeLTr) project. SHeLTr aims to provide an online curriculum, offering Islamic court staff, heritage workers and government officials across opposition-held area in Syria . After carrying out a survey of lawyers, imams, and archaeologists, HfP - with the support of Save Muslim Heritage and financial support of the Gerda Henkel Foundation - has designed a course that presents how cultural heritage destruction is addressed in three different frameworks: Syrian domestic law, Islamic law, and International Humanitarian law. We will present the ongoing work of this project, and perspectives for the future.\*<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> **Acknowledgements.** The work of Heritage for Peace is dependent on the time and dedication of a large of a number of volunteers, who we wish to thank. However, we especially wish to thank Rene Teijgeler, Bastien Varoutsikos, and Dianne Fitzpatrick. We also wish to thank those who generously donated money to Heritage for Peace, in particular the Gerda Henkel Stiftung Foundation.

## 1 - INTRODUCTION

Since Syrian conflict began in 2011, the humanitarian, political, and socio-economic repercussions of the Syrian conflict continue to be catastrophic. As a result of the ongoing war, more than 400,000 people have been killed, and more than half of Syria's population has been displaced, with 5 million seeking refuge abroad and over 6 million displaced internally (UNHCR 2017). Syria's cultural heritage also became a victim: the conflict has led to the destruction of a significant amount of Syria's cultural heritage – shown, for example, in a 2014 UNOSAT analysis<sup>221</sup>, and in the regular damage reports by ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives<sup>222</sup>. A recent analysis by UNESCO and UNOSAT (2018)<sup>223</sup> demonstrated that of the 518 assessed historic and religious buildings, only 8 showed no visible damage. Thousands more buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, libraries, archives, and other forms of heritage are still under threat. Every site inscribed on the World Heritage List has suffered: in 2013, the World Heritage Committee decided to place the six World Heritage sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger<sup>224</sup>.

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) has been the main Syrian authority responsible for archaeological excavations, registration of archaeological sites, management of Syrian museums, and the restoration and preservation of historic buildings and archaeological sites. However, during the conflict, DGAM staff have not been able to reach many areas to carry out their duties, especially in Idleb, Aleppo, the northern part of Hama, Daara, Dier al-Zour, and Al-Raqqa. In these areas, DGAM employees were no longer under the remit of Syrian government, and no longer on the payroll - as a result they had to stop working with DGAM. Although some ultimately went on form local government heritage departments, or local organisations, this took many

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<sup>221</sup> Bjørge *et al* 2014

<sup>222</sup> ASOR CHI 2018. Weekly reports

<sup>223</sup> UNITAR/UNESCO 2018

<sup>224</sup> UNESCO (June 2018) *List of World Heritage in Danger*

years, leaving a clear gap at the start of the conflict. This urgent need to act during the conflict – a previously uncommon stance - resulted in creation of civil society initiatives.

The new cultural heritage civil society organizations (CSOs) were distributed across different geographic areas: in opposition-held areas in the northern part of the country (the countryside of Idleb and Aleppo); in the southern part of the country in Bosra; and also in the DSA (The Democratic Self Administration of Rojava) controlled territories in the north-eastern part of the country. The areas under government control did not witness new CSOs. In addition, new initiatives were created outside Syria which aimed to protect Syria's cultural heritage. These initiatives were created by Syrians and foreign experts in archaeology and cultural heritage, and members mostly comprised academics, archaeologists, and former DGAM employees. Since 2011, all of these initiatives - those inside Syria and those based externally - have played an important role in documenting the destruction and raising awareness<sup>225</sup>.

Heritage for Peace (HfP) is one of these CSOs: it was founded in 2013 by a team of volunteers with the goal of helping to protect Syria's cultural heritage. Since the NGO was founded, it has been in frequent contact with Syrian heritage workers of all denominations, trying to find ways to assist them in saving and preserving their heritage. This paper discusses the work done by the NGO since its foundation, summarising several of the projects undertaken. These include: crisis management advice; training and workshops; raising awareness; and other activities related to the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. The NGO supported both the DGAM and heritage groups in opposition-held areas that were not able to receive support. The paper will also present the NGOs current project: the

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<sup>225</sup> More information on these NGOs, and their membership, can be found in a series of online Heritage for Peace reports - <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/news/reports-towards-protection-syrian-cultural-heritage-summary-international-responses/>



SHELTr project (Syrian Heritage Law Training), a course aiming to provide legal training to court staff in opposition-held Syria on matters pertaining to cultural heritage. Finally, the paper will highlight some of the difficulties that the NGO has faced during its work and some lessons learned during its work. By necessity, this summary provides only a brief overview of five years of work: HfP are currently preparing an analysis that looks in depth at the work of the NGO, and evaluates all of its successes, its failures and the reasons why.

## 2 - THE IDEA BEHIND HERITAGE FOR PEACE

When the Syrian conflict began in 2011, it demonstrated that the international community was not prepared or able to protect cultural heritage during conflict: indeed the prevailing argument was that it would be necessary to wait until the conflict was over – whenever that was - and then send aid to what remained. Others felt it was clear that they needed to reflect on new ways of working and new measures of protection (and some continue to argue this is still the case today<sup>226</sup>, despite the changes in international practice). HfP was founded on the principle that it was vital to work during the conflict, rather than waiting until it was over. This stance directly contradicted many of the pre-existing international NGOs in 2013<sup>227</sup>, although it now seems so commonplace, it is easy to forget how quickly this has changed.

HfP also recognized that there was a gap in existing work in situations of civil war. Since international heritage law is mainly applicable to states parties, governmental and intergovernmental organizations can largely only work with heritage authorities that are supported by the recognized state authority, and with whom there is existing diplomatic

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<sup>226</sup> Brodie 2015, p: 319

<sup>227</sup> Although this statement is anecdotal and direct evidence is not available, knowledge of damage to Syria's heritage became widespread in 2012, when a report was published by the Global Heritage Fund (Cunliffe 2012). The report was widely circulated in heritage circles (and picked up by news outlets in more than 16 countries). However, a review of the 2011-2014 H4P International Action report (Perini and Cunliffe 2014) demonstrates that the vast majority of international work to protect Syria's heritage (rather than simply raising awareness about damage to it) did not begin until at least 2014, a year after H4P had already undertaken several projects to help Syrian heritage workers.

relations. In situations of civil conflict, non-state actors may control heritage resources, but have no access to support or aid. HfP sought to fill this gap by working with all parties in conflict situations: to do this we understood we needed to be independent from any existing and structure, and to be neutral<sup>228</sup>, taking no political stance on the conflict.

HfP's mission statement is:

*“Heritage for Peace is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support all Syrians in their efforts to protect and safeguard Syria’s cultural heritage during the armed conflict. As an international group of heritage workers we believe that cultural heritage, and the protection thereof, can be used as a common ground for dialogue and therefore as a tool to enhance peace. We call on all Syrians of any religion or ethnicity to enter into a dialogue and work together to safeguard their mutual heritage”.*

HfP was founded in Girona on March 2013 under Catalan law, where its office is based. Crucially, it has no paid staff, but is composed entirely of an international network of volunteers. Over the years, these volunteers have included academics, heritage professionals, and independent consultants from Australia, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands, Syria, Spain, the UK, Turkey, France and the United States, all of whom were dedicated to working to protect the cultural heritage of Syria.

We believe that heritage can serve as a key focus of dialogue between communities, nations, and ethnic groups: heritage can, in fact, become a tool for peacebuilding<sup>229</sup>. In 2013, when it was founded, HfP was unique in that its special focus is on protecting cultural heritage during conflicts. By providing training and support in heritage protection to our colleagues, the NGO

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<sup>228</sup> The issue of neutrality is extremely complex, and one we spent much time discussing. There is not space in this paper to go into those discussions, but we point readers to the article by one of our founding members, which was hugely influential in our thinking - Tejjeler 2011.

<sup>229</sup> Walters, D., et al. 2017.

works to assist with mitigation and/or stop the damage to the nation's cultural heritage, as well as laying the groundwork for reconstruction. HfP's work engages local knowledge and the previous expertise in conflict situations of its international staff to promote capacity-building and knowledge transfer in order to create self-sufficiency in heritage management among heritage workers and local communities inside Syria.

### 3 - HERITAGE FOR PEACE'S WORK DURING THE CONFLICT

HfP's projects have been focused on building capacity within Syria to address the interlocking challenges of site and museum protection, stopping looting, monitoring damage, identification the work of other groups on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage in order to avoid duplication, and preparing for postwar reconstruction<sup>230</sup>. Only a selection of our of key projects are discussed below, divided into categories: crisis management advice and assistance projects; training; damage assessment of sites; and our report on Actions to Protect Syria's heritage. Other work included: providing assistance to facilitate the participation of Syrian museum workers at the conference of Arab Museums in Beirut organized by the American University of Beirut (May 2013); creating a 'No-strike list' for Aleppo<sup>231</sup>, published on the website of the Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield in cooperation with the UK Blue Shield (June 2013); and the delivery of a Resolution for the Geneva talks on Peace in Syria, drawn up in agreement with the Syrian National Coalition. This Resolution was for discussion at the Geneva Peace Talks (Jan 2014), requesting all warring parties to protect the Syrian cultural heritage during the present conflict<sup>232</sup>. Lastly, the NGO has also carried out considerable awareness raising through publications, interviews,

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<sup>230</sup> The projects carried out by Heritage for Peace are listed on our website:

<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/about-us/our-projects/>

<sup>231</sup> Details available on the HfP website: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/news/no-strike-list-for-aleppo/>

<sup>232</sup> The Resolution is available on the HfP website: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Resolution-for-Geneva-talks-on-Peace-in-Syria-Jan-2014.pdf>

talks, statements, press releases, and other measures. Our Facebook page<sup>233</sup>, for example, has almost 2,500 followers.

In addition, there were a number of other projects that the NGO was not able to realize, for reasons including: lack of funding; lack of adequate volunteers; and lack of support from various institutions. These project proposals included:

- *A Syrian Heritage Damage Assessment platform*, which aimed to create a collaborative, web-based platform that would have been accessible to everyone working to document and assess damage to cultural heritage in Syria, including experts, institutions, NGOs, and activists on the ground.
- *Syrian Heritage in Small Hands*, a project based on the use of cultural heritage education for Syrian children in refugee camps in Turkey; it aimed to connect Syrian children refugees who suffered violence, displacement, and trauma to their cultural heritage.
- *The Idlib and Aleppo Damage Assessment Task Force*, a project which aimed to train Task Forces and facilitate their work within Syria
- A project to transfer knowledge (train-the-trainer workshops) regarding Evacuation, Handling, Packaging, and Storage of Movable Cultural Heritage, to help on Damage Assessment work and to provide the resources to execute the work *in situ*.

*Heritage For Peace: Theory And Practice Of Heritage Protection And Use For Peacebuilding During Conflicts*: an project submitted to Humanities in the European Research Area for funding (unsuccessfully) in partnership with CSIC and a number of other institutions. The project aimed: to develop the theoretical understanding and the Peace-Conflict framework; to provide additional training in heritage first aid, to raise awareness of damage, to promote a fatwa by Islamic authorities, and to to use heritage for peacebuilding by

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<sup>233</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/heritageforpeacesyria/>

building on the Santander model, promoting knowledge of Syrian heritage in the refugee camps, and to promote inter-confessional and political dialogue, using heritage as “places of encounter”, places with high symbolic significance for the parties in conflict, where these parties could find each other as part of the reconciliation process.

### **3-1 Crisis Management Advice and Assistance**

E-Resource Platform: In 2013, most Syrian heritage sites and museums lacked disaster plans, and Syrian heritage professionals lacked crisis training. In order to support and help the heritage workers, in March 2013 – as one of its first projects - we created an electronic platform which provides heritage workers operating during conflict with resources and advice on heritage protection in all sectors (museums, libraries and archives, monuments and archaeological sites)<sup>234</sup>. With this resource, we aimed to meet the need for practical advice for those who cannot access support. However, we struggled with the language barrier. Most free resources in crisis response and emergency management are only available in English<sup>235</sup>, but the majority of heritage workers in Syria do not know foreign languages fluently, if at all. We tried to make as many Arabic resources as possible available, helping heritage workers to get a practical overview of the necessary emergency management procedures. The NGO updated this list regularly at the start of the conflict with documents and guides on heritage protection during conflict and disasters, but its importance was in the early stages of the conflict, and as time passed it became less essential.

Needs Assessment: Heritage for Peace also designed a Needs Assessment, in order to better advise and assist the DGAM, drawn up in September 2013. The project need was identified during a training course with the DGAM (discussed below). This project was intended as an e-survey for DGAM staff, with the goal of collecting information in different heritage

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<sup>234</sup> The Resource platform is available at: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/resources/disaster-after/>

<sup>235</sup> It is noteworthy that at the start of the conflict, not even the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the key international law relating to heritage protection in armed conflict that was signed by Syria in 1958, was available in Arabic.

categories. We then hoped to analyze the priorities of the DGAM, and to identify helpful strategies and resources for Syria's cultural heritage protection. HfP was in intensive contact with DGAM to design and carry out this survey, but ultimately the survey was not carried out, as shortly after its design was completed, the DGAM withdrew.

Task Force Proposal: The Proposal for a Task Force on Antiquities and Museum for the Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs of the Syrian Interim Government in Gaziantep, Turkey, was the third project that the NGO undertook. It built on an initial training course for Ministry staff (discussed below).

After discussions with the Ministry, HfP was asked to design a Task Force on Antiquities and Museums, with funding from The Dutch Government for the first phase of the project. The proposed structure for the Task Force by H4P was sent to the Deputy Minister of Culture and Family Affairs on July 14, 2014, with the intent that it would allow the Interim Ministry to begin operating in the field of cultural heritage<sup>236</sup>. The Task Force design proposed human and financial resources: to establish effective control over sites, monuments, libraries, and museums; to mitigate damage from combat and looting; and to advocate and raise awareness of Syria's heritage at a local level, especially with regard to illegal digging on archaeological sites and the illicit trade in antiquities. HfP proposed that the Task Force be made up of a Director, four Task Groups, and two Liaison Officers. The task groups included: Museum and Library Affairs; Archaeology and Site Management; Historic Buildings; and Legal Affairs. One Liaison Officer who coordinate with local authorities and a second who coordinate with the military council of the Interim Government. The Force would hold its main office at the Interim Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs in Gaziantep, Turkey. The design of this task force was similar to the DGAM's organizational structure, in order to

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<sup>236</sup> The press release is available on H4Ps website: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Task-Force-Press-Release-24-June.pdf>

facilitate its integration with the DGAM (or the other way around) once the conflict was over. Unfortunately, this design for the Task Force was not realized on the ground. It remained a theoretical plan, primarily due to the lack of adequate professionals and staff at the Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs of the Syrian Interim Government in Gaziantep. The staff of the ministry were not prepared to deal with cultural heritage: they depended on heritage sector workers inside Syria, who lost trust in the Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs, and stopped collaborating with them in 2015. Ultimately, the Syrian Interim Government failed to take any sustainable practical actions to protect Syria's cultural heritage in the opposition held areas for some time.

Heritage and Conflict Conference: The conference "*Heritage and Conflict: Learning from previous experiences to safeguard cultural heritage during the Syrian crisis*" was the fourth project aiming to support Syrian heritage workers. The conference aimed to bring together Syrian experts and international experts who had worked in previous conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon to discuss possible measures to help reduce the risks of damage to Syria's cultural heritage and to fight illicit traffic of antiquities, learning from past experience. The conference was organized in April 2014 in Santander, in partnership with the Spanish National Research Council and the institute of Prehistory at the University of Cantabria. The conference established a climate of co-operation focused towards exchanging experiences and data. International experts presented case-studies from a variety of previous conflicts, highlighting their efforts to limit the destruction of cultural heritage in these countries during conflicts. The discussion of international conventions and protocols on the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts was also felt to be key. At the end of the

conference, the participants agreed to the *Santander Statement and Outcomes*<sup>237</sup>. In this statement, the participants agreed on a Declaration regarding Syria's heritage in which they:

*“Invite the governments, multilateral and international organisations, civil society organisations and especially the national and international heritage communities to*

*1. affirm the role cultural heritage can play in enhancing the peace process*

*2. support and assist the parties to realize their efforts to safeguard and protect the cultural heritage of Syria*

*Call upon the governments, especially those of the Syria's neighbouring countries, to do their utmost to stop the illegal trade in Syrian artefacts.”*

In addition, they agreed on a number of conference outcomes. These were:

1. to work together on the creation of Syria's cultural heritage database and to use one uniform damage assessment form;
2. to work on preparing a register of 'Who is Who' in Syrian heritage expertise,
3. to continue publishing the International Responses Towards the Protection of Syria's Cultural Heritage by Heritage for Peace;
4. to make available Manuals and Guidelines on the Heritage for Peace website on training materials to promote the use of international standards;
5. to make a case for the use of cultural heritage as a tool for peace building in Syria;
6. to raise awareness of the importance of the protection of Syria's cultural heritage both inside and outside Syria;
7. to support the creation of local Emergency Teams, and advise the national and international stakeholders to coordinate actions with them for the protection of cultural heritage.

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<sup>237</sup> Santander Statement and Outcomes <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Santander-Statement-and-Outcomes.pdf>



The conference was particularly noteworthy at an international as level as it was the first time that members of DGAM (themselves employees of the Syrian remgine) and the Syrian Interim Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs sat at the same table and reached an agreement about a topic of mutual importance. In addition, this project was important for the NGO because it was able to apply its mission on using cultural heritage for peace building for the first time.

### 3-2 Training

The NGO organized two training/workshop events – one for the staff of the DGAM, and one with staff of the Syrian Interim Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs.

Basic Tools to Protect Cultural Heritage in Syria Now: Heritage for Peace was the first NGO from abroad to contact the DGAM, and discussions resulted in this training program. This first workshop was organized for staff of the DGAM between 28 April and 1 May 2013. The aim of this training was to assist DGAM in protecting and safeguarding Syrian archaeological sites, historic monuments and museums, by presenting *Basic Tools to Protect Cultural Heritage in Syria Now*. Heritage for Peace was unable to come to Syria, so Beirut was chosen as an alternative that was accessible to all. Five members of different DGAM departments attended, and three members from HfP. In this training, the organization tried to stress its neutrality: a policy of no politics and no pictures during the training was heavily emphasized. Participants were expected:

- Not to discuss politics, and to recognize the norms and values of HfP
- To discuss religion only in the context of the program
- To behave as professionals.

DGAM staff presented the actual situation in Syria and as a result of this presentation, HfP was able to discuss suggestions regarding a needs assessment for the DGAM. During the training HfP, presented several “Lessons Learned” from other countries regarding of the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts .The last presentation in the workshop was about post conflict situations, with examples about cultural heritage in post conflict situations such Iraq, Bosnia, and Lebanon. At the end of the training, and as an evaluation, HfP and the staff of DGAM started to identify a list of needed projects for the DGAM. These included capacity building for the DGAM, the need to map archaeological sites and historical monuments, training in workshop packaging, handling & storage for evacuation, the need to reduce illicit trade and illegal excavations, the need for foreign missions in Syria to meet (carried out by UNESCO in May 2014 - “Rallying the International Community to Safeguard Syria’s Cultural Heritage”<sup>238</sup>), and training to document damaged archaeological sites and historical monuments in Syria.

Damage Assessment for Cultural Heritage: The second training project was a Damage Assessment course for the staff of the Syrian Interim Ministry of Culture and Family who are based in the Idlib region. It took place between 23 and 26 November 2014, with funding by the Dutch Government. This training was intended as a Train-the-trainer course, where participants would pass on their acquired knowledge and practice to their colleagues in the regions where they were working. It included lessons on risk management, damage assessment principles, and free GPS applications for smartphones. The training was extended at the request of participants; the last day was spent on prioritization of needs and short introductions in some basic skills such as management, computer use, accounting and administration In addition, equipment was provided to facilitate damage assessment work

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<sup>238</sup> UNESCO, (2014, 28 May) held an expert meeting: “Rallying the International Community to Safeguard Syria’s Cultural Heritage”

within Syria. The equipment was based on needs identified by participants, which include laptops, digital cameras, and motorcycles. The prioritization of their needs was the last phase in the training. The damage assessment training was very considered to be very helpful by the attendees in increasing their skills for uniform and objective collection of data on damage, and on enhancing the reliability of the data. At the end, HfP surveyed participants to evaluate the training: its success was also was examined during damage assessment exercises. The results of the survey and the exercises demonstrated that the training was successful: in the post-training evaluation, one of the participants noted “*Before I did not really know what to write down on the damage of an archaeological mound but now I do and I can even see the details of the damage*”<sup>239</sup>. .

### **3-3 Damage Assessment of Sites**

**Survey of Archaeological Site Directors in Syria:** Within the framework of international co-operation established under the auspices of the UNESCO Observatory for the Safeguarding of Syria’s Cultural Heritage, HfP contacted archaeologists who had directed archaeological projects in Syria before 2011. They were invited to participate in a brief survey that aimed to gather information about the known status of archaeological sites<sup>240</sup>. HfP planned to share the results in open discussions with recognized and trusted heritage bodies. In May 2014, the NGO received a list of archaeological missions and the names of the directors of the missions from the DGAM. The survey was primarily distributed via email, but the NGO also by participated in two international events. The first was on 23 May 2014 in Paris, at the UNESCO international expert meeting “Rallying the International Community to Safeguard Syria’s Cultural Heritage<sup>241</sup>”. Many directors of archaeological missions who had

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<sup>239</sup> The press release on the training is available on the Heritage for Peace website: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Damage-Assessment-Press-Release-1-December.pdf>

<sup>240</sup> The invitation is available on HfP’s website: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Heritage-for-Peace-Invitation-to-Site-Directors.pdf>

<sup>241</sup> UNESCO 2014

worked in Syria attended. The second was ICAANE<sup>242</sup> in Basel. HfP took the opportunity to attempt to seek support for the assessment at both events. Unfortunately, few answers were received from the directors, and with these modest results, we could not use the information in any meaningful way.

**Damage Mailing list: In February 2014, Heritage for Peace started to publish its “Damage Mailing list”<sup>243</sup>. This email circular, using the free Mailchimp program, contains news of damage occurring to Syria’s heritage, updates about looting, reports and updates about heritage protection work from people inside Syria, and updates on international activities related to Syria’s cultural heritage, as well as links to news articles about any of them. Information is collected from approximately 40 social media channels and news websites, as well as via general web searching using keywords, but we struggled to access Arabic information. Between February 2014 and December 2018, the NGO has circulated 110 newsletters, all available on the website, and it has approximately 400 subscribers. In 2014, when the circular was begun, it was the only source of collated information about the damage occurring to Syria’s heritage. However, later that year ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (then ASOR Syrian Heritage Initiatives) began to publish regular, detailed reports on damage in Syria<sup>244</sup>, with funding from the American Department of State. H4P chose not to remove the damage section, but the focus shifted to the summary of actions to protect heritage, with the goal of cataloguing work, preventing duplication, and providing opportunities for greater cooperation.**

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<sup>242</sup> International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE)

<sup>243</sup> To see the Damage Mailing list letters, visit: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/>

<sup>244</sup> <http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/weekly-reports/>

### 3-4 Other activities

Heritage for Peace report: Towards a protection of the Syrian cultural heritage: A summary of the international responses: The early stages of the conflict were frequently subject to concerns of duplication of effort. The first report, published in April 2014, offered a summary of the actions that have been undertaken by different bodies and organisations towards the protection and the conservation of the tangible cultural heritage from the beginning of the Syrian uprising up until March 2014. The report aimed to: increase international awareness; strengthen collaborations between scholars, and establish contacts between individuals, organisations and stakeholders interested in this matter. It was followed a second report 6 months later, another report a year after that (October 2015), and another report in March 2017, covering October 2015 to December 2016. Highlighting the difficulties of being staffed by volunteers, the 2017 report remains incomplete. The reports have been cited in a number of articles addressing cultural property protection in Syria<sup>245</sup>. However, due to the difficulties in completing them, and the lack of feedback regarding their utility, it is expected the 2017 report will be the last.

### 4 - SHELTR, A LEGAL TRAINING PROGRAM TO PRESERVE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SYRIA

Our current project is SHELTr (Syrian Heritage Law Training) - a course in development by HfP in partnership with Save Muslim Heritage, and funded by Gerda Henkel Stiftung, with the aim of providing legal training to court staff in the opposition-held Syria on matters pertaining to cultural heritage<sup>246</sup>.

The program was born out of research carried out by Heritage for Peace on the current judicial landscape in the opposition-held areas of Syria. Questionnaires were completed with

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<sup>245</sup> E.g. al-Quntar and Daniels 2016; Lostal 2017

<sup>246</sup> Varoutsikos (2016, 06 December) discusses the project on the GHS website.

various stakeholders including imams, lawyers, heritage experts, and local council members - results emphasized three key points:

- the large majority of the legal affairs in the opposition-held areas of Syria are handled by Islamic courts, or local courts basing large amount of their ruling on Islamic jurisprudence, while also including aspects of Syrian National Law on an ad hoc basis.
- cultural-heritage-related questions were addressed on average 1 to 5 times a week.
- an increasing portion of these courts' staff lack proper legal training, especially in matters of cultural heritage.

SHELTr relies on the development of a curriculum addressing legal aspects of cultural heritage protection in three legal frameworks relevant in Syria: Syrian National Law, Islamic Law, and International Humanitarian Law. Specifically, the project objectives are to:

1. Research the interactions between International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Islamic Law around the theme of cultural heritage, for application in Muslim countries worldwide
2. Promote the use and implementation of IHL and foster productive interactions with other existing legal frameworks such as Islamic law and Syrian National Law in courts in the opposition-held territory
3. Remind local legal stakeholders about their duties regarding protection of cultural heritage.
4. Reach out to community leaders and decision-making actors in the opposition-held territory to influence behaviours and good practices towards cultural heritage across Syria.

The project is divided into 5 phases (preparation > content development > e-course formatting > e-course > evaluation-assessment).

Through this program, local legal stakeholders will be better informed to advocate for, and adjudicate on, the protection of cultural heritage in the opposition areas. Ultimately, it is hoped this project will improve the protection of cultural heritage and mitigate looting and the illicit antiquities trade in opposition-held areas through the participation of the community leaders and other decision makers.

## 5 - CONCLUSION: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF HERITAGE FOR PEACE

Since its foundation in 2013, Heritage For Peace has faced a number of difficulties, but has also achieved a number of successes. Some of the obstacles and limitations are detailed here. Perhaps the greatest difficulty has been neutrality. Working as a neutral organization in a conflict is complicated, and in trying to maintain its neutrality HfP faced many difficulties. Not all groups were willing to recognise or respect HfP's neutrality – some refused to work with the NGO because of who else it had worked with, for example. Others felt the NGO should work with them alone. Some attempted to use HfP's work with 'the other side' to try and slander the NGO's reputation.

The organization is a volunteer-based NGO, with no paid staff. Although heartfelt thanks are given to the volunteers who did so much work, managing them and their work (as volunteers ourselves) is not an easy task. In addition, there are always difficulties when working with volunteers: some were not professional, for example stopping without warning, or falling behind deadline when ill but without telling anyone; others were highly professional but needed to resign their tasks when they become busy with other work or personal commitments<sup>247</sup>, leaving staffing gaps that also took time to fill. There were also problems with the lack of international support, and the international system that prevented NGOs from

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<sup>247</sup> One volunteer continued to try and support the NGO whilst on maternity leave, as they were aware no other volunteer could cover their work!

sending support into Syria. Lastly, although we had a number of extremely supportive volunteers who assisted in translation, the international HfP volunteers always faced difficulties communicating with Syrian colleagues because of the language barrier.

However, despite these difficulties, Heritage For Peace has achieved a number of actions worthy of remark. First and foremost, the NGO was at the forefront of the change in dialogue about heritage protection in conflict, from one of waiting until a conflict is over before aiding, to one of a recognized need for intervention and assistance while it is ongoing. HfP demonstrated that action is not only necessary, but possible, and within a year many other NGOs and projects were doing the same.

Secondly, as an independent NGO, HfP did largely succeed in working with both sides in a bitter conflict, and was the first to offer support to either side when the conflict began. In addition to its work with the DGAM, the NGO undertook several projects in opposition-held areas, such as the training in damage assessment for staff of the Syrian Interim Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs, and it is currently working on the SHELTr project in partnership with the Syrian Center for Cultural Heritage Protection. Here, Teijgeler's work on neutrality (2011) has been key, and has underpinned the NGO's approach, proving practical guidance in what – for many – is a theoretical issue. Additionally, the NGO played an important role in liaising between heritage workers in all areas in Syria and the international heritage community.

HfP has always worked to support all Syrians to protect their heritage, recognizing the role of local communities is crucial. Although they were ultimately not realized, HfP tried to create heritage Task Forces in Aleppo and Idlib, and the Santander Outcomes recognized the need for local Emergency Teams. Through the SHELTr project, H4P aims to support local leaders



in the protection of cultural heritage, by improving their skills and knowledge in this area. The lack of support for heritage protection at the local level remains an ongoing problem in Syria, despite the fact that significant heritage protection occurs there (Cunliffe, Sabrine, and Fisher, forthcoming).

Lastly, and perhaps its other most important achievement, the conference in Santander confirmed that the protection of cultural heritage can be used as a common ground for dialogue between opposing parties in a conflict. Although few of the conference Outcomes were realized, HfP was able to promote dialogue between the DGAM and the Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs of the Syrian Interim Government – both representatives of their respective governments. (It is also notable that this occurred in April 2014, before most Syrian heritage protection projects had even started.) It is unfortunate that we were unable to get funding to develop our work using heritage as a peacebuilding tool.

As a voluntary organization, the NGOs future is never certain, but despite all the difficulties the NGO has faced, it stands as one of the first groups to provide international help to Syrian heritage workers on all sides affected by the conflict, and its work has paved the way for heritage protection as a foundation for dialogue and for peacebuilding, highlighting the importance of heritage to all Syrians.

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**The sixth contribution:** “*Using cultural heritage for the refugees: The Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin’s museums*”



Commission of PhD Programme of *Ciències Humanes del Patrimoni i de la Cultura*

Date: 20/10/2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I am writing to confirm that the chapter submitted by Isber Sabrine, "**Using cultural heritage for the refugees: The Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin's museums**", was submitted on May 2019. The text of the chapter went through two rounds of rigorous peer review process and only when all two set of referees were happy with the changes made after their suggestions, was the chapter accepted for publication in December. The chapter will finally published in 2019 in two volumes of Cultural Policy Yearbook 2019 in English and in Turkish, edited by Deniz Ünsal and Nevra Ertürk, Published by İletişim Publishing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if more information about the evaluation process is needed.

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**Using cultural heritage for the refugees:**

## **The Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin's museums**

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### **Abstract :**

Since the unrest began in March 2011, the Syrian conflict has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Millions of refugees have been forced to leave their homes and, since then, have been living in camps in Jordan, Lebanon, or Turkey, in harsh and sometimes degrading conditions. Others have undertaken a dangerous trip across the Mediterranean and Europe, making the current crisis one of the biggest refugee movements since WWII.

Over the past five years, Germany has become the main destination of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Europe. This paper will introduce the Multaka Project. In Arabic, "Multaka" is a meeting point. This project is a German initiative that is dedicated to helping new refugees in Berlin and fostering their connections between their cultural heritage and Germany's cultural heritage. It was initiated at the end of 2015 with 25 Syrians and Iraqis trained as museum guides to provide native-language tours for refugees across several of Berlin's museums.

Through interviewing Syrian refugees involved in the project, we will highlight the role of Syrian cultural heritage in the construction of a new life for the refugees in Germany, and changing perceptions of their own heritage in their home country, and addressing the role that Germany's heritage plays in the integration of these new populations.

**Keywords:** Multaka, refugees, cultural heritage, integration

### **1- The Syrian refugee crisis: the Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Germany**

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, about 11 million Syrians have fled Syria. After six years of war, the majority of the Syrian refugees are still within Syria or have sought refuge in countries neighboring Syria itself. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 5.5 million have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, and 6.6 million are internally displaced within Syria. The UN estimates that only 1 in 10 Syrian refugees lives in camps. The rest are struggling to settle in unfamiliar urban communities or have been forced into informal rural environments (UNHCR, 2019).

The conditions in many camps are poor, especially in Jordan and Lebanon. In Jordan, the Zaatari refugee camp has become one of the largest cities in Jordan, with more than 100 thousand refugees. One of the biggest problems for Syrian refugees in these countries is to find a legal way to work: they struggle to find jobs and - as they are not allowed to work - they work illegally, accepting low salaries which are not enough to cover their most basic needs. The young Syrian refugees face an uncertain future with no real prospects. Syrian children suffer from a lack of schools and teachers; thousands of Syrian children were forced to leave school in order to help their parents. In addition, in many places in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, many families cannot afford transportation to get their children to school. Exacerbating the problems, Lebanon and Jordan have few resources and depend entirely on the international community to help the Syrian refugees. The situation in Turkey is slightly better: Turkey offered substantial support to build twenty-two camps. However, the Syrian refugees in Turkey suffer from a language barrier which still limits them when finding work.

The lack of future prospects and the desire for a better life are the key reasons many choose to flee to EU countries. More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015 (more than 300 thousand of which are Syrians). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 3,770 migrants were reported to have died trying to cross the Mediterranean in 2015 (BBC, 2016). Between 2014 and 2016, Germany was the EU country that received the highest number of new asylum applications. According to the German Interior Ministry, between January 2015 and October 2015, 243,721 Syrian citizens entered Germany to seek asylum (The Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, 2015); Germany hosted the very first conference on the Syrian refugee situation in October 2014 in Berlin (Supporting Syria & the region 2018).

The refugees in Germany are distributed across German regions according to tax revenues and total population (Katz, Noring & Garrelts, 2016). German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in August 2015 in her famous speech: "*We can do it*" which represents her open-door refugee policy. The public response to the refugee crisis was impressive. Many Germans have committed themselves to civil society initiatives that aid refugees arriving in the country, especially when German authorities were stretched to their limits. Civic activities include the provision of basic needs, such as accommodation, information, transportation and clothing (Mayer, 2016). Despite the increasing population movements and the abuse of the refugee crisis for the political agenda of some parties in Germany, the statistics show that a large majority of Germans believe their country should be open to seekers of refuge. Even in July 2015, when the inflow of asylum seekers had already increased considerably, 93 percent

supported welcoming people who sought to escape war or civil conflict (*Ibid*) Germany was, and still is, a welcoming country for the refugees.

## **2- Cultural Heritage as a need and not a luxury for the refugees**

After eight years of conflict, for many refugees there is still no hope of returning to Syria. The feeling of isolation in their new countries is one of the biggest problems they face. A sense of belonging is an important need and cultural heritage can play a crucial role, providing an automatic sense of unity and belonging within refugee groups, as well as allowing them to better understand previous generations and the history of where they come from. During the recent conflicts, the national identity in Syrian and Iraq became threatened by the increasing sectarian hatred and violence that is now prevalent. However, cultural heritage can play an important role in the reinforcement of identity and belonging. As Lowenthal (1985) confirms: “The association between heritage and identity is well established in heritage literature – material culture as heritage is assumed to provide a physical representation and reality to the ephemeral and slippery concept of identity like history, it fosters the feelings of belonging and continuity” (pp. 224-231). The value of the representation of heritage is vital in reconnecting the Syrian and Iraqi refugees to Syria and to Iraq. As Laurajane Smith (2016) argues in her book *The Uses of Heritage*: “Certainly, the representational and symbolic value of heritage in constructing and giving material reality to identity is well recognized, although analysis of the way heritage is thus used is often articulated in terms of national identity” (pp#).

Developing a connection between the refugees and their cultural heritage in the new host countries could make refugees feel respected, reaffirming the importance of cultural heritage as a cultural right. According to a new report on cultural rights presented to the United Nations General Assembly by Karima Bennoune (the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights): “Cultural heritage is significant in the present, both as a message from the past and as a pathway to the future. Viewed from a human rights perspective, it is important not only in itself, but also in relation to the human dimension, in particular its significance for individuals and communities and their identity development processes” (Bennoune, 2016). Therefore, providing education on cultural heritage for the refugees, particularly as it is now experiencing such huge destruction during the conflict, is important, as it could help them to have more self-esteem regarding their culture and in themselves. It was from this that Multaka was born.

## **3- The idea behind Multaka**

The Syrian and Iraqi refugees who live in a city as large as Berlin can easily feel lost and alone among so many new cultures and backgrounds. Therefore, the idea behind the Multaka Project which is a project by the Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum is twofold. Firstly, it aims to utilise the Syrian and Iraqi heritage which already exists in the Pergamon Museum, in order to show the refugees the huge international value of their heritage. Guided tours are organised in the both museums of the Pergamon Museum - the Museum of Islamic Art and the Ancient Near East Museum. The Museum of Islamic Art hosts unique exhibits such as the Aleppo Room which was obtained in 1912 by Friedrich Sarre in Aleppo. The



room was originally in the House Wakil in Aleppo (Discover Islamic Art, n.d) and the Mshatta Façade is the decorated part of the facade of the 8th century Umayyad residential palace of Qasr Mshatta, one of the Desert Castles of Jordan, in addition to hundreds of objects originally from Syria and Iraq. The Ancient Near Museum displays objects from Assyria, Sumeria and Babylon. The main display is the famous Ishtar Gate and the Processional Way of Babylon, together with the throne room of Nebuchadnezzar II. According to Stefan Weber, the director of the Museum of Islamic Art and who is directing the project: “The displays in the Museums of Islamic Art and the Ancient Near East Museum are based on the outstanding testimonies of human history principally from Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Iran. Both museums provide many narratives of the migration of cultural techniques between Europe and the Middle East, the plurality of societies or of the cultural interconnectedness in each epoch up to today” (Weber ,2016 pp. 3). It was hoped that the rich heritage of Syria and Iraq in the Pergamon Museum could play a fantastic role in increasing the self esteem of the refugees in their new culture, and demonstrate the value their heritage holds for the rest of the world and that their culture played an important role on the development of the history of the humankind.

A significant challenge remains about the integration of the refugees in Germany. The German government is providing courses in German language to help them to integrate into society and find employment. Therefore, the second goal of Multaka is to help the refugees to integrate into German society through learning about German history and German values through the German Museum of History. It is hoped this will help them to understand the society in which they are now resident. The tour guides in the German Museum of History also help the refugees to develop links between Germany's cultural heritage and their own heritage. The guided tours in this museum show what Germany was like after the Second World War. They see the ruins and the pictures of the destroyed cities in Germany during and after World War II, and they see how they are now, learning how the divided country was ultimately unified by Bismarck. The objects chosen within the tours focus on teaching the refugees about German history in order to reflect on the actual situation in Syria and Iraq. This reflection could give them a sense of hope for the future. This museum offers an important opportunity to reflect about wars, post war, the project aims to connect the actual situation of the conflict in Syria and Iraq to the German past and it demonstrated that also the museum is a place of hope.

In addition to the guided tours in the Islamic Museum of Art, the Near Ancient Museum of Art at the Pergamon Museum and the German Museum of History, Multaka also is conducting guided tours in the Bode Museum which is home to two collections: the Sculpture Collection and Museum of Byzantine Art and the Münzkabinett (coins). In addition, the museum also contains paintings from the Gemäldegalerie (Painting Gallery), which are presented alongside the European sculpture to form a dialogue between the two art forms

This museum was chosen for Multaka as “It makes a reference to the inter- religious roots and the common origins of Islam, Judaism and Christendom. Cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean region were characterized over the centuries by religiously and ethnically plural societies, which today are under threat” ( Weber, 2016, pp. 3) . This museum is a place

which the refugees can learn about the tolerance and the respect between all the three religions. The visits in this museum show that the museum is as well an important place where we can see the shared values and principles between the three religions.



Guides des Projekts „Multaka: Treffpunkt Museum“  
© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Foto Milena Schlösser

In principle, Multaka helps to use the museums as a place for intercultural dialogue, it tries to find links between the refugees' countries of origin and Germany. The invitation of refugees to participate in workshop, special guided tours with German people help them to be in direct touch with the host community and to create links between them.

In this sense, Multaka is a project which gives the refugees the motivation to look positively to their culture of origin. It facilitates the meeting with their own history and culture. This facilitation of discovering the roots of the refugees culture in the museum is a motivation to give them self-esteem. Multaka plays an important role to encourage the cultural participation of refugees to be active members in their new community (Weber, 2016, pp.5).

#### **4- Project structure and Management**

Multaka is an Arabic word which means meeting point: for the project, Multaka means that the museum becomes a meeting point. The project started in November 2015, the starting was very fast from the idea to getting funding to starting. The main challenges were finding funding, and finding suitable guides. However, the project quickly obtained initial funding support from the federal program “Demokratie Leben” (Live Democracy) of the German

Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth. The reaction of the young Syrians and Iraqis (who were invited to be guides in the project) was very positive. In less than one month the guides got the needed training by the museum staff and started to guide groups within the four selected museums.



Teilnehmer einer Führung des Projekts „Multaka“ im Museum für Islamische Kunst  
© Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, Foto A.R.Laub

In terms of the structure, four people manage the project. Their responsibilities are divided into several areas: the project leader is the Director of the Islamic Art Museum at the Pergamon Museum. He has legal responsibility to apply for funding and to develop the project. Beside him are two Project Managers. Their tasks are to communicate and coordinate between the four museums' educational departments, to act as a point of contact for the media, to organize workshops, to coordinate communication between the guides, including their training about the museums and to organize the guided tours and marketing of the project. They also do financial controlling, outreach and evaluation. The fourth member of the team is the financial administrator who is responsible for the project budget and reimbursing the guides (Freunde Museum Islamische Kunst, n.d). The salaries of the project managers and the fees of the guides occupy the most significant part of the project budget.

In 2015 and 2016, the project received grants from several German public institutions, private foundations and private donors. These included the German Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth in 2015, and in 2016 the project received the second main public

grant from the Federal Ministry for Culture and Media (BKM). The private foundations Schering Stiftung and the Stiftung Deutsches Historisches Museums also generously supported the project. Multaka in the last 2 years got as well generous support from Alwaleed Philanthropies Foundation (Artforum, 2018) and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (Museum für Islamische Kunst, 2018 )

The project has now 25 guides who were selected in two phases. The first phase was in late 2015 and includes 19 guides. The second phase was in 2016 and included a further 6 guides. The guides came from diverse professional backgrounds: architects, artists, musicians, lawyers, and also archaeologists and conservators. The majority of them are preparing their PhD theses in Berlin. They are newcomers themselves to Germany - some came as refugees and the rest came as students. They were trained by museum educators from the Education and Outreach Departments of the Staatliche Museen and the German Museum of History through programs that focused on the museum's specific content and issues of didactics, and on methods of communication and dialogue. The guides were free to choose the museum they were interested in the most, as well as the objects. The museum educators in the four museums highlighted some objects which are relevant to the refugees, and the guides then add their own interpretation to make sense of those objects. In 2019, the guides remain part of the project development through regular project meetings.

Multaka takes place twice a week with the four museums. The first tour is on Wednesdays, and the second is on Saturdays. The duration of the tour is around one and a half hours and all the guided tours for the refugees are free of charge. The tours are based on dialogue between the refugees and the guides.

Reaching the refugees is the main challenge of the project. The project team, in collaboration with the guides, primarily try to reach the refugees through social media. Multaka has a Facebook page which has now 4170 followers (Multaka Facebook page, n.d) and a Twitter account. Another way to reach them is through promoting the project by delivering flyers in the refugee camps, the language schools. Lastly, the refugees who already participate in the tours play an important role, inviting their friends and relatives to attend the guided tours.

Starting in 2016, Multaka also facilitated many workshops. The aim of the workshops is to provide an opportunity where refugees and locals can meet and get to know one another. The workshops are on different subjects, such as photography, mosaic work, textiles, glasswork, writing and the representations of women in Islam and Christianity. Through these workshops the project tries to identify the shared cultural aspects between Germans and Syrians. In these workshops the refugees and the local German community have the possibility to meet and to exchange their ideas and experiences. During the workshops the participants normally are accompanied by a Multaka Guide. Between 2016 and 2019 Multaka was able to organize dozens of workshops (Multaka, n.d).



Multaka Glass workshop  
© Berlin Glas .e.V

## 5- Refugees feedback

In summer 2016 during different guided tours, we asked a group of fifteen refugees verbally some simple questions with the intent of collecting some information on both how refugees felt about their heritage in Syria and Iraq before fleeing, and how they felt now, during the conflict. We asked what they felt when they saw some of their heritage in Pergamon Museum. How did Multaka help them to learn more about the German culture and the German history in the German Museum of History? We selected the following responses. Four refugees illustrate why Multaka is important for them. The number of the respondents is small but it can give a good overview about the connection of the refugees with their heritage and in the same time it demonstrates who Multaka is helping the refugees to reflect on their own heritage and the heritage of their new country.

Fadi is 31 years old from Lattakia in Syria, where - before fleeing to Germany – he worked as an electrical engineer. He said: “I just visited the national museum in Damascus, and the only archaeological site in Syria I visited was Crac de Chivaliers, the education on cultural heritage was very modest and what I learned about the Syrian History was by myself, there were some trips by school but the role of those trips was very limited and the teachers who did these trips didn’t explain enough about the places. The Syrian conflict affected a lot on the Syrian heritage when Palmyra was damaged I felt that I lost something very important. It is

part of my history and the only thing that I feel proud about my country because it is a proof to show that we gave something important to the world, participating in Multaka gave me the chance to know more about our rich Syrian Heritage”.

Jony is 32 years old from Tartous. He worked as a doctor before fleeing to Germany. He said: “In Syria the main reason of not taking care of our cultural heritage is the lack of the awareness about the importance of this heritage and the ignorance of the people, I think the Syrian government did not take a good role on that and didn’t have a strategy on that, they involvement was minimum and just for economical reasons. I remember many places suffered from the vandalism, if you visit the archaeological sites before the war you can see that the local people write their names on the walls for example. Even during the war the government could play more active role to transport the important objects to safe places. When I visited the German Museum of History I felt sad and I asked myself why we do not have museums like this museum, why we do not care about our cultural rich heritage that we have. Visiting the German Museum was a great opportunity to know more about Germany and the Germans”.

Muhamad is 47 years old from Idleb, where he worked as an archaeologist in the Museum of Maarat al Numan before fleeing to Germany. He said: “The number of the Syrian public who visited the museums were very limited, the majority of the visitors who visited the museum were students and foreign groups, even the normal people from the city of Maarat al Numan did not visit the museum. The students normally came to the museum accompanied with teachers who explain few things about the museum. The local people always visited the archaeological sites but their visit was not a cultural visit, it was kind of relaxation especially in spring season because the region of Idleb is very nice. Unfortunately the normal people who visited those sites were not curious to learn about the history and the functions of those sites. The interested people were the people who have sort of education. As an archaeologist who visited the Pergamon Museum I feel very proud and happy that a lot of the objects in this museum are from Syria. It is fantastic feeling when I see people from all around the world come to see those objects. As an archaeologist I hope that Germany who conserved this heritage during more than one hundred years will play an important role in the restoration and the reconstruction when the war is over. Pergamon Museum makes you look differently to Syria. In Pergamon Museum it is the land of the first civilizations and tolerance and not the county of war. The only thing that I brought with me from Syria is my ID card as an archaeologist in Syria which is a symbolic thing very important for me”.

Said is 34 years old from Aleppo, where he worked as a merchant before fleeing to Germany. Said was very active in Multaka- he participated in many tours in the four museums. He said: “I was very happy to discover that in Berlin there is a place which represents Aleppo. It is the Aleppo room, watching this room in Pergamon makes me always remember how was our life in Aleppo, how we were very happy in our old city. It helps me to forget all the destruction that happened to our nice city. I miss Aleppo a lot, even the small things like just going to a place to eat (beans or livers) in the old city or going to the square in front the citadel and drinking something, even just walking through the market of Aleppo. In the German Museum of History I saw how Berlin and Dresden were destroyed, the destruction of Berlin and

Dresden makes me think on my city and give me a hope that Aleppo one day will come back to be like Berlin and Dresden. The Syrians who are now in Germany as refugees have now a great opportunity to learn and develop their capacities in order to come back to Syria and help on the reconstruction of the country as the German did in the past, we are really lucky to be here now”.

The selected sample is very diverse, the participants worked in different carriers in Syria before fleeing to Germany, electrical engineer, doctor, archaeologist and a merchant, their opinions in this sample demonstrate several divers reflections relating to Syria’s cultural heritage and also to Multaka project. The opinion of the first participant “ Fadi” confirms an important issue relating to the situation of Syria’s cultural heritage before the conflict which is the lack of education on cultural heritage in Syria. The education system in Syria uses few materials when it comes to cultural heritage education: Syrian students learn about cultural heritage through limited school history books, the books concentrate almost exclusively on Arab history after the advent of Islam (Loosly 2005, p. 590). Through the schools, the Ministry of Education organises scholarly trips to museums and archaeological sites’ however, these trips normally lack adequate guides who know the sites, limiting their educational value. Syrian museums do not have educational departments and they did not contribute to support cultural heritage education, their role was almost absent. The only museum that had an educational role was the National Museum of Damascus, which carried out some activities related to cultural heritage education for local primary schools (Zobler 2011, p180). The second and the third participants “Joni and Mohamad” gave a very important observation about how Syrian people were so far from their cultural heritage; both of them confirmed that Syrian local communities did not visit the museums and the archaeological sites. Before the conflict the number of local visitors to the museums before the Syrian conflict was very modest; the majority of visitors were foreign tourists, despite the free entrance for Syrians. (Zobler 2011, p180). Both of them as well confirmed how is important the participation of the locals to visit the museums and the archaeological sites, the participants described how Multaka is helping to fill the gap to connect Syrians to their heritage, through the Syrian collections in both Islamic Museum for Art and the Ancient Near East Museum, Syrian refugees have the opportunity to learn about archaeological sites such as Tell Halaf, Mari, Ebla and many other archaeological sites in their country, in addition Multaka demonstrates another important value of the Syrian collections in these both museums, which is how these museums are becoming places where the Syrians refugees feel proud about their cultural heritage when all the people from all around the world come to visit it.

The destruction of Syria cultural heritage during the conflict was very presented in the four interviews, the four participants have expressed the pain of this destruction. Syrian refugees continued to revival their heritage not just only in Germany but also in another countries, in Zaatari refugee camps in Jordan, refugees chose to recreate 12 of Syria’s landmarks in miniature (Dunmore 2016). Resources were so scarce, they used whatever materials they could find – local basalt rock, polystyrene, cement, MDF, and even wooden kebab skewers . Through exhibitions in the camp, the project has helped to reconnect refugees with their own cultural heritage. For tens of thousands of children in Zaatari – many of whom have little or

no memory of Syria – this is their first opportunity to see these famous landmarks(Dunmore 2016).

Through the visits in the German Museum of History,the participants have expressed their respect towards the German history,especially the period after the Second World War in which the Germans where able to rebuild their country again after the war.The second and fourth participants believe that Germany could help in the reconstration and restoration of Syria’s cultural heritage.Germany since 2013 started to help in the protection of Syria’s cultural heritage through the Museum of Islamic Art and the Germana Archaeological Insitute,who started the project Syrian Heritage Archive Project, in this project they work to digitize and to archive photo collections and research data on Syria,also to build documentation and damage assessment for the sites and the historic monuments which were affected by the conflict.( Syrian Heritage Archive Project ,n.d) .In addtion to Syrian Heritage Archive Project , there is another German Project which is Stunde Null Project which means “ A future after the Crisis”,it was launched by theArchaeological Heritage Network (ArcHerNet) in 2016,this project aims to support capacity building of experts and communities for the safeguard of cultural heritage in Syrian and in the region also to enhance coordination in the post conflict . This project helps to support students , heritage experts and future decision makeres in Syrian and in the region and to enable them to protect their heritage and to plan for it reconstraction after the war (ArcHerNet,n.d) . Although this sample of participants was small but it highlighted the importance of the Multaka initiative for the refugees and it confirmed the need to work through culture to help the refugees to discover their new country.

## **6- Multaka’s impact in museology**

Over the last years, the project received strong interest in both international and German media. It was featured in many TV reports, including the BBC, Al-Jazeera, Deutsche Welle, ZDF, and others. In addition to the TV reports, many international and German newspapers wrote articles about the project, including The New York Times, The Guardian, Der Spiegel, the Art Newspaper, NPQ, and others.

Media coverage has been positive. Multaka was presented as a project which helps the refugees to integrate in the German society. For example, the Art Newspaper reported “Berlin’s museums use culture as a means of integration for refugees - In the Multaka project, refugees lead guided museum tours for others displaced from Syria and Iraq”.

Multaka won several awards and prizes in the last 4 years; the first one is a special prize for projects on the cultural participation for refugees, the project was selected as one of the best cultural projects for the refugees in Germany. It received this award from the German Minister of Culture in May 2016. In November 2016, Multaka was selected the best cultural project in Germany in the reception event organized by *Deutschland Land der Ideen* in the towers of the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt am Main. The third prize came in October 2017. It was the Zenith Photo Award, among 53 projects. The fourth prize was given to Multaka by the Heritage & Museum Award in 2018; Multaka has been awarded a special recognition under the title “Syria Initiative –Museum as a Mediator of Shared Heritage”



In the last years, Multaka project inspired several museums to organize tours by and for the refugees. In Oxford, the Pitt Rivers Museum and the Museum of History of Science adapted Multaka jointly. The Museum of the History of Science trained refugees to guide tours for the astronomical instruments and other Arab objects (History of Science Museum, n.d). In addition Multaka at Pitt Rivers Museum focused on the recent acquisition of textiles from the Middle East at the museum. At the time of writing, the refugees are co-curating an exhibition based on the collection of the textiles which will open in April 2019 (Pitt River Museum, n.d). Another museum inspired by Multaka was the Bern Historical Museum. The museum offers tours where visitors can meet people with a refugee background who have been trained as museums guides. The tour by the refugees guides through the exhibition, offers to the visitors new perspectives on current world events. The guides are from different countries such Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, and Eritrea.

The Penn Museum in Philadelphia in USA is the third museum which was inspired by Multaka. The museum tours are offered by Syrian and Iraqis refugee guides. The name of this project at Penn Museum, Global Guide Public, started first to offer tours in the Middle East Galleries. In the fall of 2019, the museum will offer as well new tours in Mexico and Central America Gallery and in Africa Galleries. The tours through the Middle East Galleries are available in English and Arabic (Penn Museum ,n.d).

The Multaka and the projects inspired by Multaka in UK, Switzerland and USA demonstrate that museums can play an important role in critical periods such as the refugee crisis. Multaka and its partner projects are helping to raise awareness among local people, immigrants and refugees about the importance of the cultural heritage to create bridges between different cultures. The Multaka project played an important role to change the classical image about the museum and it confirmed that the museum could be a social actor in society.

## **6- Final words**

Within four years, the Multaka project facilitated hundreds of refugee visits to Berlin Museums and helped them to know more about their new host country. The project has become a real meeting point: hundreds of Germans came with refugees and participated in the tours with them. They listened to the guides even though they do not understand Arabic. Multaka has proved that cultural heritage is an important tool to support the people who lost everything, and that culture is a need during the worst times people can face.

Multaka demonstrated that the museums can become an active place to respond to the crisis that the society faces. The participated museums within the project transformed into a real space for inclusion. Multaka confirmed the need to work through culture, in order to build respect, peace and appreciation towards the newcomers in the European society which nowadays is facing the movement of the populists' parties who try to spread fear about refugees and their culture. The adaption of Multaka by other museum in different European countries shows the need to act jointly toward the refugees crisis in Europe.

Multaka also showed that the refugees are able to integrate and be part of German society. The motivating ideas behind Multaka will continue to support the refugees against their fears of transformation of their culture. These ideas will confirm that Germany is a country of respect and tolerance where refugees can make a new home.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all the guides in the project and all the museum staff who made Multaka happen.

I give special gratitude to Professor Stefan Weber, the Director of Museum of Islamic Art who adopted Multaka from the beginning as a project in the Museum of Islamic Art. I am also very thankful to Dr Emma Cunliffe for her comments on this article.

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## 4- Discussion

### 4-1 Introduction:

This thesis aims to explore the situation of Syria's archaeological heritage during the Syrian conflict in general .My intention is to illuminate the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before and during the conflict. The issue of studying the destruction of Syria's archaeological heritage has grown in importance in the light of eight years of conflict. In this thesis I tried to focus on the destruction of Syria's archaeological sites through analyzing the illegal excavation and the trade of Syria's archaeological objects. One of the most important aims that I intend to bring to light is the role of Syria's civil society on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage before and during the conflict, therefore I analyzed the efforts done by Syrian civil society organizations (CSOs).The study tries to illuminate their role before the

conflict and how changed this role during the conflict, it explores the work done by them inside and outside the country.

During eight years of the Syrian conflict .Concerns have been expressed about the documentation of damage occurred to Syria's cultural heritage. Previous studies presented the conflict as the main reason of the damage of Syria's cultural heritage. So far, however there has been little discussion about the problems of management of Syria's cultural heritage before the conflict and how these problems affected on the protection of it during conflict .In addition no research has taken into account the organization and operation of looting and trafficking of archaeological objects. In these previous years many studies addressed the work of the international heritage institutions and their role on the protection of cultural heritage during conflict but insufficient attention has been paid to the role of civil society on the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts. In the context of the Syrian conflict however there has been little recorded work of the efforts and the incredible actions by the local Syrians on the protection of cultural heritage. This thesis tries to cover various gaps which previous work has not specifically addressed in the field of the protection of cultural heritage during conflict. It is designed to remedy that weakness in the field by studying and analyzing how the weak management of Syria's cultural heritage before the conflict played an important role on the destruction of it during the conflict. The study also highlights the understanding of one of the main reasons of the destruction of Syria's archaeological heritage which is the illegal excavation and trafficking of archaeological objects inside Syria. After analyzing the problems of management of Syria's archaeological heritage and the destruction by the illegal excavation and looting my main focus will be on this under-researched area of the role of Syria's civil society on the protection of cultural heritage.

This chapter begins in a compression between my research and previous researches on Syria's cultural heritage during conflict .Then it will present the most important findings that I got during these years of research and finally it will interpret these finding as lessons might be drawn to improve better ways for the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts.

#### **4-2 The consequence of the bad management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict**

Prior to 2011, the start of Syrian conflict, very little attention and research was undertaken to study the management of Syria's archaeological heritage .Prior studies that have noted the importance of the management were in (Gillot, L.2008 and Gillot, L 2010) and in ( Zobler, K. A. 2011 and Zobler, K. A 2014). Very little was found in the literature on the question of the problems of the management of Syria's archaeological heritage. In reviewing the literature, no data was found on the association between the bad management of Syria's archaeological heritage and the destruction of it during the conflict. To answer the first question how was the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict and how it became during the conflict? This research in its first part was designed to determine the answer of this question, with the aim to understand how it was managed before 2011 in order to understand what the effects have been during the conflict. It set out with the aim of assessing the importance of analyzing important aspects concerning Syria's heritage management such the legal aspect; museums; archaeological excavations; archaeological sites and historical monuments, and local communities' engagement with heritage.

The current research found that the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict faced many problems and limitations. The legal framework lacks identification and border institutional framework, there is no clear ownership in the law, the absence of the private sector and local communities' involvement in Syrian antiquities law. Another important finding was that museums also faced many problems, the Syrian museums lack of trained personnel, inventory documentation, emergency plans and Syrian visitors, in addition the Syrian museum play a very modest role in the education system. This study found out also that the lack of communication between the related institutions is one of the biggest problems affecting the management of archaeological sites before the conflict, this lack of communication led to problems in the management of archaeological excavation, archaeological sites and historical monuments which lack of clear restoration and conservation strategies. The results of this study indicate the modest role of the local community participation in the management of Syria's archaeological heritage because there was no policy for cultural heritage education and raising awareness of the importance of Syria's cultural heritage before the conflict. The study shows that the local communities received limited economic benefits from cultural heritage. It demonstrates as well the conflicts between local communities and archaeologists. This study confirms that the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict has influenced the destruction of it during the conflict. There are several possible explanations for this result; the Syrian Law of Antiquities was poorly applied, with regard of local communities. This research found that the application of the antiquity law before the conflict led to a gap between the heritage authorities and local community, in addition contributing to a lack of respect for heritage during the conflict. These results are likely to be related with the application of the international law which lacks of implementation in the national law. During the Syrian conflict international law has not been respected by any parties involved in the conflict - state, non-state, or civilians ( Gerstenblith 2016). There are, however, other possible explanations of the destruction during the conflict related to the management of the museums before the conflict. Syrian museums before the conflict suffered many problems such the lack of protection measures, security measures, and insufficient staff training in packaging, record archiving. This study confirms that the Syrian museums were not prepared to face an actual conflict situation. The lack of security led to stop the archaeological excavation. The study shows the new approach of DGAM regarding to the excavation. This new approach has been to focus on archaeological documentation and preservation of the administrative and scientific heritage of the Directorate of Excavation. Another important finding which this study demonstrates is how the conflict affects in local communities who live closed to the archaeological sites, it shows that lack of work and the need of survive during the war was the reason to loot by the locals in the archaeological site, in addition many archaeological sites were used by locals refugees as shelters. The lack of education and raising awareness before the conflict was the main reason of violation and vandalism against archeological sites by the local people.

The findings in this first part of the study help us to understand how the destruction of archaeological heritage during the Syrian conflict was one of the reasons of the bad management of it before the conflict. These findings have important implications for developing new strategies for the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts. This study

confirms the importance of the good management of archaeological cultural heritage as a tool to prevent and reduce its destruction during conflicts and natural disasters.

#### **4-3 Better understanding of illegal excavations and illicit traffic during conflicts**

Several studies and reports have shown how Syria's archaeological heritage suffered from the illegal excavation and looting of archaeological sites (Abdulkarim et al 2016, Cunliffe, E.2012, Casana, J.2015). The prior studies have noted the destruction by the looting and the illegal excavation but no research has been done to study the organization and operation of the looting and trafficking of archaeological objects. To answer to the second question in this research how the Syrian conflict affected on the Syria's archaeological heritage? We decided to focus on the consequence of the Syrian conflict in the destruction of archaeological heritage through analyzing the illegal excavation and illicit traffic of archaeological objects in the ground. The illegal excavation played an important role to increase the destruction of archaeological heritage during the Syrian conflict. The research set out with the aim of understanding how the illegal excavation and illicit trafficking of archaeological objects happened during the conflict, in order to get this better understanding of the illegal excavation and illicit traffic. The research has been conducted seven interviews with seven persons who have first-hand knowledge of the trade. It is interesting to note that the majority of the participants accused Syrian army forces of taking bribes or even to be involved on facilitating the transport of archaeological objects. This finding is consistent with that of (Danti and Prescott 2014; Harkin 2014) which confirm that the proceeding of illegal excavation in Apamea happened with the knowledge of local army commanders. Another important finding was that other armed groups were involved in looting and not only the Syrian army. Some participants accused the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to be involved in looting. Several of them also commented on the involvement of the Islamic State in organizing illegal excavation and trade of archaeological objects which confirms what was discovered in the Abu Sayyaf documents recovered by US Special Forces in May 2015 (Keller 2015; USA 2016). The results of this study indicate the main routes of transporting the looting artifacts from Syria to the neighborhood countries. It confirms that since the start of the Syrian conflict Turkey had become the main route out instead of Lebanon. The participants confirm that the routes through Lebanon became dangerous for people in opposition controlled areas because of the control of the Syrian army but the routes through Lebanon are still in use to some extent.

This study has been able to analyze the economic influence of the looting in the Syrian conflict. It followed the study of Jonathan Goodhand in Afghanistan which is a study about the opium economy in wartime. This study confirmed the definition of economy in war time by Goodhand. It analyzed the three different types of economies which are related to illegal excavation and illicit traffic. These three economies are interacting economies and they are identified as conflict economy, criminal economy and coping economy. They are characterized by the conflict actors. The participants in this research described through the interviews these three economies. The conflict economy is defined as an economy supported by armed groups in the conflict for a political objective. The observation of the participants in the research confirms that many armed groups such Daesh, Al-Nusra Front (JAN) and some groups of the free Syrian army, these groups used to excavate illegal and trade illegally with archaeological objects to finance their war. Criminal economy is defined by the intervention

of the criminal's actors who profit from opportunities which were created by the conflict. According to the observations in this research the actors which play a main role to create the criminal economy, we can define them as criminal commanders and corrupt people in the Syrian government, in addition the buyers who buy the archaeological objects illegally to trade them are considered as actors in the criminal economy. , the participants distinguished these buyers into two types, new buyers and long-established buyers who are associated to corrupt army members. The third type is the coping economy which is done by local communities and poor peoples who lost their traditional means of economy during the conflict and they were forced to adapt illegal ways to ensure their lives. The majority of the participants in the research demonstrated that they are actors of this coping economy; they suffered unemployment, displacement or both as a consequence of the ongoing conflict. This study tried to give some ideas about the pricing of the trade of the archaeological objects. The participants described the prices of the objects inside Syria. This study supports evidence about pricing from previous observations (e.g Brodie 2014) and it confirms that these prices inside Syria are only a very small percentage of what can be achieved in the black international market. The study confirmed that the actions taken before 2011 against the control of illicit traffic by the Syrian government were modest and it can therefore be assumed that the policy taken by the Syrian government was not a good policy and it did not succeed to stop the damage caused by the illegal excavation. These findings in this study raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of the routes of looted artifacts from Syria. It helps us to understand the routes of illicit traffic. It confirms that Turkey became the main route during the Syrian conflict. The present study raises the possibility that the objects in demand are the small and portable objects such as coins, glass vessels and metal objects, these objects are easy to transport across the border. The present results are significant in at least four major respects which are socioeconomically, politically, criminally, and materially. The study recommended the need of a humanitarian policy as a response against the illegal excavation and the illicit traffic in Syria. The work on repair of civil society, fighting the corruption and the resumption of normal economic activity are the solutions to reduce the illegal excavations. The study recommends that further work could be done to reduce the ongoing visible trade of coins and small objects. There is a need to further studies, which take these variables into account, will need to be undertaken to research the illegal excavations and illicit traffic from Syria

#### **4.4 Analyzing the role of Syrian Civil society in cultural heritage before and during the conflict**

The third question of this research was what is the role of the Syrian civil society on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage inside and outside Syria? Very little was found in the literature on the question of Syrian civil society and its relationship with Syria's cultural heritage. The research through the third publication *Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict* tries to present the Syrian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and their work on cultural heritage protection before and during the conflict. It shows how the work of these CSOs changed during the conflict. The study firstly tries to make a definition of the concept of civil society in Syria and shows what are the origins of this concept and how it is different from the western context. The research is divided into two parts, the first one is Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before 2011 and the second part is Syrian civil society during the conflict. Understanding the concept of civil society within the Syrian context is



needed to know how the Syrian civil society is connected to cultural heritage. The research presents an historical overview on the development of civil society since the ottoman period till now days. The current study found that the charity associations in Syria are considered the earliest form of the Syrian civil society. It presents as well the situation of CSOs before the unrest in Syria. It shows how increased the number of Syrian CSOs just few years before the conflict, in addition It confirms the lack of the legal tools to organize their work in Syria. Regarding to the involvement of CSOs in cultural heritage, the study discuss the work of several association dedicated to cultural heritage prior 2011. It gives an overview about the most important associations such as The Al- Adiyat of Aleppo, The Association of Friends of Damascus the Syrian Exploration and Documentation Society , the Syrian Trust for Development and the Syrian Association for Gastronomy and the Syrian Historical Association of Homs. The study explained their efforts on the promotion of Syria's cultural heritage. It also presents several heritage stand-alone projects involved Syrian local communities. These projects were done before 2011 by archaeologists, experts, and local people such the Urkesh Eco-Archaeological Park, the Shiek Hilal village project and the Youth and Cultural Heritage Project, these projects even they are individual projects but they were good examples to show the importance of the civil society participation in Syria's cultural heritage before the conflict.

The first part of the study concludes by answering an important question if the participation of the Syrian CSOs in cultural heritage was effective before the conflict? The study demonstrated that the participation of CSOs in cultural heritage was limited participation because of the insufficient laws, there are no laws organize the relationship between DGAM and CSOs beside that the lack of freedom of the CSOs , they were not able to receive any support from foreign institutions. The second part of the study presents how the conflict played a crucial role to change the nature of Syrian civil society. Since 2011 many new CSOs were found to face the needs of people in the ground. It shows that CSOs were active in opposition-held areas which had suffered lack in services and governmental support. Regarding to the role of CSOs in cultural heritage during the conflict, the study analyzed the work of CSOs founded before the conflict, for example it shows how the work of The Syrian Trust for Development changed and how its work became more concentrated on the protection of Intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which is different of its direction before the conflict. The study demonstrated that the majority of CSOs stopped their activities between 2011 and 2016 but at the end of 2016 the majority of CSOs restarted their normal activities. The study analyzed as well the work of the new CSOs which were created during conflict in order to protect Syria's cultural heritage. It presents the work of these new CSOs such as the Syrian Center for Cultural Heritage Protection in Idleb, the Idleb Antiquities Center in Idleb, the Syrian Association for the Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage in the Old City of Aleppo and the Department of Antiquities in the city of Bosra , in addition It discusses the work of the new CSOs in DSA (Democratic Federation of Rojava – Northern Syria) controlled area such the Authority of Culture in Self-Management in North and East Syria (ACNES) which had before the name the Authority of Tourism and Protection of Antiquities in al Jazira Canton, the Subarto Association ,the Olaf Taw Association and the Syriac Cultural Association. The study shows that there are no new CSOs formed in the areas under government control. In addition, the study demonstrated the efforts of CSOs created outside Syria, particularly in Europe, in order to help protect Syria's cultural heritage, such as Heritage for Peace (HFP), Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA) SHIRIN , The Day After (Cultural Heritage Initiative) and SIMAT (Syrians for Heritage).

The study demonstrated how all these new initiatives played a crucial role in documenting the damage and the looting occurring to Syria's cultural heritage, and raising awareness of the importance of the protection of cultural heritage. In addition the study analyzed the difficulties, that they these CSOs are facing in their work such the lack of support of most international heritage institutions, also the risks during recording damage and looting or making emergency repairs in the archaeological sites, these risks are such as gangs of armed looters ,mines ,snipers, artistries and gunfire . Finally the study concludes with recommendations of the role of CSOs in the post conflict in the reconstruction of Syria's cultural heritage and in the reconciliation and peace building in Syrian society.

#### **4-5 Protecting Syria's cultural heritage under fire**

As a continuation, and in order to complete the answer of the third question about the role of Syrian civil society on the protection of cultural heritage, this thesis tries to analysis the great efforts done by the local Syrian people to protect their cultural heritage, this analysis was done through the fourth publication *The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria's Heritage Protectors*. The idea of this research was born because of the need to provide more evidences of the efforts of the Syrian people who work to protect their cultural heritage, these efforts were rarely recorded in the international media another need of doing this research is to demonstrate the impact of cultural heritage loss on the Syrian people, in order to provide these evidences and to understand the impact of cultural heritage loss on the Syrian people, we conducted a research inside Syria. It was done through interviews by Skype, telephone and Facebook with Syrians working on the protection of cultural heritage inside Syria. In addition to get more evidences, the research was supported by the media evidences which were collected from the Heritage For Peace media archive. This research presents different lacks of the media coverage on reporting the destruction of Syria's cultural heritage. It confirms that the main discussion on the media was focused about the discussion of the damage occurred to the large classical Greco-Roman cities familiar to western audience such Palmyra, but other sites from another periods were rarely discussed, indeed the people who live close to these sites also rarely presented in the media (Eaken 2016). The media review shows as well that there is lack of reporting the efforts to protect heritage by Syrian people in mainstream media. It identified some risks that are facing heritage workers such facing gangs of armed looters or snipers and airstrikes, so this lack of reporting in the media, led us to research inside Syria, in order to do this we designed a questionnaire for the heritage workers in Syria regardless of their political affiliation or their region in Syria. The sample of the Syrian in this questionnaire was small one, the questions focused in both pre – and during conflict, the questionnaire focused on the archaeological heritage (*atar* - antiquities).

The questions in the questionnaire were divided into different sections such the attitudes to heritage before and during conflict, risk factor to sites and risk factors to people (social, political, and fiscal), value of heritage before and during the conflict. Through the answers of the questionnaires we were able to identify more deeply the risks which faced the Syrian heritage workers in protecting heritage; the respondents identified physical risks by the people trying to protect sites. These risks included the danger of working at sites visible from the air as bombing raids. The heritage workers faced as well armed groups in the sites, it was

reported that it was difficult to work or deal with the armed people, for example it was suspicion between different factions, and sometimes taking a photographs of damage in the archaeological sites could arouse the suspicion of different groups. Attempts to fight looting and illegal excavation could cause friction with local communities where the looters come from, or could cause friction with armed groups. It was reported that some heritage workers had been injured during doing their work in the heritage sites. The participants also confirmed that always there was a risk of kidnapping and beatings. The answers also confirm that heritage workers faced many social risks for example, it was always tension and conflict with the local community who were involved in looting, such as they tried to sometimes spread false and bad things about heritage works in the local community or sometimes they try to break good relationship with the military groups. The participants identified as well fiscal risks, they mostly operated without pay. Regarding to the value of heritage in the society, according to the participants their opinion on that was ambivalence, some respondents answered that the value of heritage was placed on both build and religious heritage, the majority of them said that heritage tourism was valued for its financial benefits, but they also explained that heritage was as well often damaged, even before the war ,some of them said that heritage was not especially valued at the national level and it did not play a major role in the local community. Responses indicated that the value of heritage to the community has increased during eight years of conflict and even the local community were unable to visit heritage sites as before but they demonstrated efforts of support to the heritage workers. Even these finding are based only a small number of respondents but cases studies gathered from the media review support this idea of the growing awareness of the importance of heritage through its loss, in the media review we found stories on the efforts of Syrian locals to protect Palmyra's treasures during the conflict (Lamb 2014). Another stories in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, refugees chose to recreate 12 of Syria's landmarks in miniature (Dunmore 2016) .

The findings in this research supported our main aim to collect evidence that demonstrate the great efforts to protect heritage by the local Syrians. Through the results we hoped to generate more support for the heritage workers in Syria, even our sample was small one but it demonstrated the complications that are facing the local to protect their heritage. It identified all kind of risks to protect cultural heritage during conflicts. It confirmed that it still a big gap by the international community to give support for those in need

#### **4-6 Protecting Syria's cultural heritage from outside the country**

Our research focus in the role of civil society in the protection of Syria's cultural heritage during the Syrian conflict, therefore we tried to analyze this role through the third publication *Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict* it presented the Syrian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and their work on cultural heritage protection before and during the conflict, through this publication we learned about the new CSOs inside and outside Syria. The fourth publication *Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria's Heritage Protectors* focused to demonstrate deeply the work of Syrian heritage workers in the protection of cultural heritage inside Syria; it was able to provide evidences of their efforts to protect their cultural heritage as we saw before new initiatives were created outside Syria which aimed to protect Syria's cultural heritage. These initiatives were created by Syrians and

foreign experts in archaeology and cultural heritage. In the fifth publication *Protecting heritage during conflict: the work of Heritage for Peace*, we try to highlight the case of a CSO which works from outside Syria in order to protect Syria's cultural heritage, the aim in this research was to give an overview of the work done by Heritage for Peace (HfP) and to summarise several projects done by the NGO. Its projects were divided to crisis management advice projects, training and workshop projects, and raising awareness activities. The NGO was able to support DGAM and heritage groups in opposition-held areas that were not able to receive support for their work. This research highlighted how HfP which is based in Girona, Spain as CSO was able to carry out these efforts in order to help on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. The NGO in its work believe that heritage can serve as a key focus of dialogue between communities, nations, and ethnic groups: heritage can, in fact, become a tool for peace building (Walters, D., et al. 2017). The projects by the NGO have been concentrated on monitoring damage, stopping looting, building capacities within Syria, identification the work of others groups on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage in order to avoid duplication. The research included the discussion of the main key projects, included crisis management advice and assistance such E-resource platform which aimed to meet the need for practical advice in heritage protection for those who cannot access support Inside the country, other project was delivered in the same direction was the needs assessment project which aimed to assist the DGAM. The next project provided by HfP to assist on crisis management was the Task Force proposal on Antiquities and Museums for the Ministry of Culture and Family Affairs of the Syrian Interim Government in Gaziantep, Turkey. Another project was aiming to support Syrian heritage workers is a Conference called "*Heritage and Conflict: Learning from previous experiences to safeguard cultural heritage during the Syrian crisis*". It was organized by Spanish National Research Council, University of Cantabria and Heritage for Peace, it aimed to support Syrian heritage workers through bringing them to meet with experts who have experience in previous conflicts such Bosnia-Herzegovina, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon. The conference aimed to learn from previous conflicts in order to help on reducing the risks of damage to Syria's cultural heritage and to fight illicit traffic of antiquities, in addition to these projects in crisis management, the NGO was able to organize several training projects such *the basic tools to protect cultural heritage in Syrian now*, which was organized for members of DGAM in Beirut in 2013, the other training was on *damage assessment for cultural heritage*, it was a training course for the staff of the Syrian interim Ministry of Cultural and family in Gaziantep in 2014. In addition to this the NGO was able to organize many raising awareness activities through publications, interviews, talks, statements, press releases, and other measures. The last project discussed in the research is the actual project by HfP which is the "SHELTr project (Syrian Heritage Law Training), it is a training course in partnership with Save Muslim Heritage, and funded by Gerda Henkel Stiftung, it aims to provide legal training to court staff in opposition held Syria on cultural heritage protection. The research discusses as well a number of the project that the NGO was not able to realize, for reasons including: lack of funding; lack of adequate volunteers; and lack of support from various institutions. The research also was able to discuss the difficulties that the NGO faced in its work such the complexity to work as a neutral organization in conflict, in addition the difficulties to work with volunteers and without funding. Even the NGO has faced many difficulties but it stands as one of the first groups from outside Syria to provide international support to Syrian heritage workers on all

sites by the conflict, its work has confirmed how an NGO from outside the country was able to support the efforts on the protection of cultural heritage during conflict, also it confirmed the importance role that cultural heritage can play in a conflict as a foundation for dialogue and peace building.

The research continued with the sixth publication “*Using cultural heritage for the refugees, the Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin’s museums*” the Syrian refugees crisis became one of the biggest refugee crisis in the modern history. Millions of Syrian refugees were forced to leave Syria and to live in camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Europe, through this publication we aimed to demonstrate the need to work through cultural heritage in order to give support to Syrian refugees who fled outside the country, the Multaka project presented in this research is a good example to connect Syrian refugees to their cultural heritage in Berlin. This project deals with the Syrian refugees who came to Germany which become the main destination of Syrian refugees in Europe. It is an initiative by the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, started in the end of 2015 and still ongoing by 25 Syrian and Iraqis trained as museum guides with the aim to provide native-language tours for refugees across several museum in the city, through these tours the project aimed to connect refugees to their cultural heritage especially through the Syrian archaeological objects which exist in the Pergamon museum. The interviewed refugees involved in this project confirmed how this project helped them to understand the cultural heritage of Germany through the guided tours in the German Historical museum where they can learn about German history and German culture. This project demonstrated the importance to use cultural heritage for refugees and how cultural heritage could become an important tool to give self-esteem to refugees. Multaka as well be plays and will play an important role to protect Syria’s cultural heritage through Syrian refugees

#### **4-7 Conclusions**

As we saw that the research was able to answer the main three questions, the first one how was the management of Syria’s archaeological heritage before the conflict and how it became during the conflict? The answer of the first question was able to analyze the main aspects of the management of Syria’s cultural heritage before and during the conflict. It demonstrated that the problems of the management before the conflict and how these problems affected on it during the conflict. It concluded with the main finding that the bad management of Syria’s archaeological heritage was one of the reasons to damage it during the conflict. It confirmed the need to create a new strategy of the management of Syria’s archaeological heritage in the post conflict period .With the second question how the Syrian conflict affected on the Syria’s archaeological heritage? The research focused to understand the ways of damage through the illegal excavation and illicit traffic, the research was able to demonstrate that ,the actions taken by the Syrian government before the conflict were modest .In addition this research helped to give more details about the routes of looted objects from Syria. It was able to demonstrate that the objects that are more in demands are the small and the portal objects. The study gave an important recommendation to reduce illegal excavation and then the illicit traffic through the need of a humanitarian policy as a response to act against illegal excavation and illicit traffic.The study on this subject was one of the first studies but it still a

big need to further studies on this subject to research more on illegal excavation and illicit traffic. The third question what is the role Syrian civil society on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage inside and outside Syria? Answering to this question took the major part of this thesis; we were able to research Syrian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) through the third publication *Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict*. It demonstrated the work of CSOs on cultural heritage protection before and during the conflict. The study highlighted the crucial role of the new civil society's initiatives in documenting the damage and the looting occurring to Syria's cultural heritage, and raising awareness of the importance of the protection of cultural heritage. The study gave an important recommendation on the role of CSOs in the post conflict in the reconstruction of Syria's cultural heritage and in the reconciliation and peace building in Syrian society. Then the research continued with the fourth publication *The Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria's Heritage Protectors*. Through this publication the research was able to demonstrate the efforts done by the local people in Syria to protect their cultural heritage. It showed the different kinds of risks to protect Syria's cultural heritage during the conflict. Through the fifth and the sixth publication we highlighted the role of civil society on the protection of cultural heritage from outside the country. The fifth publication *Protecting heritage during conflict: the work of Heritage for Peace*. It gave analysis of a CSOs works from outside Syria on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. It explained the main projects of the organization, on the other hand the sixth publication "*Using cultural heritage for the refugees, the Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin's museums*". This publication highlighted the importance to work with Syrian refugees in order to connect them to their heritage outside the country. This publication demonstrated that cultural heritage could become an important tool to give self-esteem to refugees.

## 5- Final conclusions

This thesis set out to analyze Syria's archaeological heritage during the Syrian conflict. The study has argued how the Syrian archaeological heritage was managed before and during the conflict, it discussed the reasons which affected in the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict, in addition it showed how the management of Syria's archaeological heritage affected on it before. In this investigation, the aim was to study the destruction of Syria's archaeological sites; therefore the research was to examine the destruction through the illegal excavation and the illegal trade of Syria's archaeological objects. Another important main goal of the current study was to determine the role of Syria's civil society on the protection of Syria's cultural heritage; the present study was designed to determine the role of Syrian civil society before and during the conflict, a major part of the study focused to explore the work done by civil society and their efforts to protect.

The research has analyzed the main aspects of the management of Syria's cultural heritage before and during the conflict. The study has identified the weakness of the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict; it has shown that the weak management played an important role on the destruction of it during the conflict. The second major finding

through this study is the better understand of the illegal excavation and illicit traffic from Syria .The research was able to highlight the organization of illegal excavation during the conflict .The results of the investigation give more information about the routes of looted objects from Syria .It has shown that the trade of small and portable objects is the most easier way to cross the borders. The study has come up with an important result, in order to reduce illegal excavation and illicit traffic; there is a need of humanitarian policy as a response to fight against illegal excavation and illicit traffic. The research has shown the relation between Syrian civil society and cultural heritage. One of the more significant finding to emerge from this study is analyzing the role of Syrian civil society in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage before and during the conflict. The research has also shown how the new civil society's initiatives played a crucial role to document the damage and the looting occurring to Syria's cultural heritage, and to raise awareness. The study has highlighted all different kinds of risks, which are facing civil society inside Syria to protect Syria's cultural heritage during the conflict. Finally the study was able to show how civil society could be involved on the protection of cultural heritage from outside the country .It has chosen two initiatives ,Heritage for Peace initiative and the Multaka project imitative ,in both cases the study demonstrate the important role that civil society can play to protect heritage from outside the country

In general, the study was able to cover various gaps in the knowledge regarding to the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. This study has raised important questions about management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict and how the consequences of the management before the conflict affected on it during the conflict, the findings of this study identified analysis to develop new strategies which will help to support on the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts .The results from this research support the need to do good preparedness in order to prevent the destruction during conflict. The findings of this study indicate a better understanding of the illegal excavation and illicit traffic of the Syrian objects. This research provides insights for understanding the organization and operation of the looting and trafficking of archaeological objects. The current data highlight the economic influence of the looting in the Syrian conflict. Overall, this study strengthens the idea of Goodhand in Afghanistan to identify the economy related to illegal excavation and illicit traffic. The evidences from this study confirm the definition of three economies which were identified by Goodhand in Afghanistan; they are the conflict economy, the criminal economy and the coping economy. The following conclusion can be drawn from the present study on illegal excavation and illicit traffic, is the need of humanitarian policy to act against illegal excavations and illicit traffic.

These results of this study indicate the Syrian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and their work on cultural heritage protection before and during the conflict. It highlights the important role of Syrian Civil Society; the findings find how the work of these CSOs changed during the conflict. The findings of this research provide insights for the historical development of civil society since the ottoman period till now day's .The results support the idea that Syrian Civil Society lacks of the legal tools to organize their work. The study on Syrian Civil Society has risen important questions about the nature of the role of civil society during the conflict on the protection of cultural heritage .These findings show how CSOs are active in opposition –held

areas which suffered lack in services and governmental support . Overall, this study strengthens the idea of how civil society can play an important role on the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts. This research found the need to provide more evidence of the efforts of the Syrian people on the protection of cultural heritage, these findings were rarely recorded in the international media. The finding demonstrated how the new initiatives by the civil society played a crucial role in documenting the damage and the looting occurring to Syria's cultural heritage, and raising awareness of the importance of the protection of cultural heritage. In addition the findings in this study provides insights for the difficulties, that these CSOs are facing in their work such the lack of support of most international heritage institutions, also the risks during recording damage and looting or making emergency repairs in the archaeological sites, these risks are such as gangs of armed looters ,mines ,snipers, artilleries and gunfire . The study has raised important questions about the nature of these risks, these risks could be physical risk such the danger of working at sites visible from the air as bombing raids or armed groups in the sites, or social risks social risks for example, it was always tension and conflict with the local community who were involved in looting .The findings of this study also provide evidences of the efforts of new civil society initiatives outside Syria which aimed to protect Syria's cultural heritage. The findings also demonstrate the need to work through cultural heritage in order to support to Syrian refugees who fled outside the country. The following conclusions can be drawn from our research on civil society that it still a big gap by the international community to give support for civil society organizations during conflicts .The research on civil society also concludes with recommendations of the role of CSOs in the post conflict in the reconstruction of Syria's cultural heritage and in the reconciliation and peace building in Syrian society.

The research has provided deeper insights into the problems of the management of Syria's archaeological heritage; the findings will be of interest to take in account important implications in order to develop new strategies for the management of Syria's archaeological heritage in the post conflict. The findings reported here shed new light on understanding the illegal excavation and illicit traffic during the Syrian conflict. The contribution of this study has been to identify the stakeholders who are involved on illegal excavation and illicit traffic, this project is the first comprehensive investigation of the economic influence of the looting in the Syrian conflict. The analysis of illegal excavation and illicit traffic undertaken in this study has extended our knowledge of how illegal excavation and illicit traffic are organized during the Syrian conflict. This work contributes to existing knowledge by Jonathan Goodhand in Afganistan by providing three kinds of economies which are related to illegal excavation and illicit traffic, they are conflict economy, criminal economy and coping economy. This research contributes to recent historiographical debates concerning the crucial role of civil society in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage .The study gives an useful approach which help to expand our understanding of the role the Syrian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and their work on cultural heritage protection before and during the conflict. This analysis of the relationship between Syrian Civil Society and cultural heritage should help to improve predictions of the role of civil society in the post conflict. The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature on heritage studies in conflict .First on management of cultural heritage during conflict, second on understanding



illegal excavation and illicit traffic during conflict, second on the role of civil society during conflicts. The present study lays the groundwork for future research into illicit traffic during the Syrian conflict also into more research on the role of civil society on the protection of cultural heritage during conflicts and in the post conflict .This study adds to the growing body of research that indicates civil society participation in heritage management during conflicts

A limitation of this study is that there was no possibility to go to Syria and to conduct the research because of the challenges involved from conflict such as the risk for the researcher to go to Syria, an important part of the data collection was obtained by phone calls, Facebook chats and Skype calls. The research has been influenced by social media, in English and in Arabic. The social media helped to collect data on the damage occurred to Syria's cultural heritage, also it helped to obtain information about the civil society organizations. Being limited to work with the archives of DGAM, the study lacks more information relating to the analysis of the management of archaeological heritage. The small sample size which was selected to research the illicit traffic and illegal excavation did not allow doing more analysis on how the illegal excavation and illicit traffic is happening in other regions in Syria; the selected sample was concentrated in Idlib region. The study did not evaluate all the reasons of damage affected to Syria's archaeological heritage .It is unfortunate that the study just included the damage caused by illegal excavation and illicit traffic .It was not possible to evaluate another kind of damage because of the difficulties to work inside Syria. Since the study was limit to areas where the researcher has contacts, it was not possible to conduct any research in areas of the control of Islamic State, the presence of violence and the insecurity , were the re reasons to limit the access to heritage workers and the ability to conduct any research there when the Islamic State controlled a large area of the Syrian territory .

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study was able to highlight important issues relating to the situation of Syria's archaeological heritage during the conflict. Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insight into the management of Syria's archaeological heritage ,in addition it was able to analyze the main aspects of the management of Syria's cultural heritage before and during the conflict .Notwithstanding the relatively limited sample of interviews to study the illegal excavation and illicit traffic , but this work was able to offers valuable insights to give more details to understand how the illegal excavation and illicit traffic is happening during the Syrian conflict. The current study was able to study the relationship between the Syrian civil society and cultural heritage before and during the conflict .It showed the work of CSOs on cultural heritage protection before and during the conflict. Although there was no possibility to conduct research inside Syria but the research through the fourth publication *the Extraordinary, Ordinary Syrian: Syria's Heritage Protectors*. It succeed to show the great efforts done by the locals people in Syria to protect their cultural heritage .Although the current study is based on a small sample of participants but it was able to show the different kinds of risks which are facing Syrian heritage workers to protect Syria's cultural heritage during the conflict. Notwithstanding of the great role of the Syrian people inside Syria, the study suggests also to show the role of Syrian civil society on the protection of cultural heritage from outside the country through the sixth publication *Using cultural heritage for the refugees, the Multaka Project: a cultural initiative for the refugees in Berlin's museums*, this study offers some insights to highlight the importance to work with the Syrian refugees in order to connect them to their heritage outside the country

## **5-1 Recommendations for further research work**

The main three questions raised by this study are the first one how was the management of Syria's archaeological heritage before the conflict and how it became during the conflict? Then the second one was how the Syrian conflict affected on the Syria's archaeological heritage? And the last one was a question about what is the role of Syrian civil society on the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage inside and outside Syria? The study tried to answer these three questions through the six publications but the study should be repeated using similar methods but inside Syria, the limitations to conduct the research did not permit to analyze the archives of DGAM before the conflict. Repeating the research in order to analyze the archives of DGAM before the conflict would be a fruitful area for further work in the future. The study focused on analyzing the illegal excavation and illicit traffic of archaeological objects in the ground through conducting seven interviews with seven persons and it was focused in the area of Idleb , this study should be repeated interviewing more people and in more areas in Syria. Analyzing the illegal excavation and illicit traffic in other areas in Syria would be a fruitful area for further work. Several questions still remain to be answered such as what are the needs of the management of Syria's archaeological heritage in the post conflict? Another important question also still remain to be answered how will be the role of Syrian civil society in cultural heritage after the conflict? A natural progression of this work to analyze the needs for the management of Syria's archaeological heritage in the post conflict also more research using controlled trials is needed to analyze the illegal excavation and illicit traffic in different areas in the country. More broadly research is also needed to determine the work of the new civil society organizations which were created during the conflict. The current study analyzed deeply the work of a new civil society organizations which is the CSO Heritage For Peace, the study highlighted the case of this CSO which works from outside Syria in order to protect Syria's cultural heritage, considerably more work will need to be done to determine the work of another new initiatives such the Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA) SHIRIN , The Day After (Cultural Heritage Initiative) and SIMAT (Syrians for Heritage).The issue of the role on civil society in cultural heritage in the post conflict is an intriguing which could be usefully explored in further research for example studying the role of civil society and cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina and another countries and how it was involved in the reconstruction of cultural heritage in the post conflict will help us to establish a good understanding on the role of civil society in cultural heritage in the post conflict.

This study set the stage for further research to establish the needs of the management of Syria's archaeological heritage in the post conflict, in addition further modeling work will have to be conduct in order to determine a new strategies for the management of the Syrian archaeological museums, the Syrian archaeological research, and also new plans for the conservation of the archaeological sites and historical plans. Further research also needs to examine more closely the links between the damage of Syria's archaeological heritage and illegal excavation and illicit traffic; this study set the stage to establish more research on the topic of illicit traffic and illegal excavation.

The findings of this study have number of practical changes which need to be made relating to the management and protection of Syria's archaeological heritage, they will help to develop new strategies for the management and the protection of Syria's archaeological heritage in the post conflict, another important practical implication that this study demonstrate important steps to be taken before the conflict in order to reduce the destruction during conflicts. The findings in this study suggest several courses of action to reduce the ongoing visible trade of coins and small objects. A key policy priority should therefore to plan for the long-term care of reducing the illicit traffic which is the need of a humanitarian policy as a response against the illegal excavation and illicit traffic in Syria. The findings of this study have a number of important implications relating to the role of CSOs before and during conflicts .The information in this study can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed to support the Syrian civil society organizations in their work on the protection of archaeological heritage. The findings of this study have also a number of important implications to use cultural heritage as a tool to connect the refugees who suffered conflicts to their cultural heritage. It demonstrated that cultural heritage could become an important tool to give self-esteem to refugees and a tool for the reconciliation in the post conflict.

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## **ANEXO 1**

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## **ANEXO 2**

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### **Abstract**

Este paper examina el papel de los refugiados en la diáspora en la protección del patrimonio cultural. En concreto se examina el papel de los refugiados sirios en la diáspora en Europa en la protección del patrimonio cultural sirio durante el conflicto.

El patrimonio cultural siempre ha sido una víctima de las guerras. En las últimas décadas muchos países como Bosnia, Iraq y Afganistán han sufrido graves destrucciones. Durante estos últimos cinco años es Siria la víctima, en primer lugar en su población, pero también en su patrimonio. Los seis sitios declarados patrimonio mundial por la UNESCO han sido muy afectados por los combates, a la vez que innumerables yacimientos arqueológicos han sufrido saqueos y los materiales robados son objeto de tráfico ilícito. En Europa nacieron diversas ONGs como la organización no gubernamental Heritage For Peace (Patrimonio por la Paz) en España, la asociación The Association for the protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA) en Francia y la Syrian Heritage Archive Project en Alemania, con el fin de trabajar para mitigar la destrucción y el pillaje del patrimonio sirio.

Este paper examina el trabajo realizado por estas ONGs y se va a concentrar en el caso de Heritage for Peace. Desde su creación, Heritage for Peace permanece activa en la protección del patrimonio sirio. ¿Cuáles son sus objetivos?, ¿cómo trabaja?, ¿cuáles son sus proyectos actuales? En este artículo responderemos a estas cuestiones, mostrando que es posible trabajar por la protección del patrimonio durante el desarrollo de conflictos.

### **Palabras clave**

Patrimonio cultural, conflicto, diáspora, Heritage for Peace, Siria



