
Middle East – Topics & Arguments

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EDITORIAL



Dealing with the Past in the Present: How and Why?

Alexa Bartelmus and Giulia Francesca Grassi

Keywords:
Cultural Heritage; Ancient Near East;
Past; History; Transmission

Dealing with the Past in the Present: How and Why?!

In recent years, there has been an enormous amount of publications on “cultural heritage.” Typing only the English term—in quotation marks—in Google [4 Dec 2014] reveals allegedly 24,600,000 entries (of which of course not all will prove relevant or valid), and there are hundreds of books and even quite a number of journals that have “(cultural) heritage” in their title. Some of these lament the loss or destruc-

tion of cultural property, while others are concerned with matters of its protection, with its ideological or commercial aspects, or with legal issues, to mention only a few examples. So why add another one?

Unfortunately, in present days there is a tendency both at universities and in society as a whole to disregard subjects dealing with pre-modern history as being totally irrelevant to today’s life. The Ancient Near East is rarely known to anyone,² and even disciplines investigating more recent past periods of Near and Middle Eastern history attract relatively few students. Instead, presumably due to the dramatic events since the beginning of the new mil-

lennium, there is a very strong interest in recent developments in (mostly) the Arab world. But the past is highly relevant for understanding what goes on in the modern Near and Middle East, since it is also relevant for the people who regard it as their legacy.

During the past decades there were quite a few rulers in the Near and Middle East that made their countries’ ancient past a topical issue. One might think in this context of, for example, the Shah of Persia’s (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi; r. 1941-1979) huge celebration of “2500 years of the Persian Empire” in 1971 that celebrated the founding of the “Persian Empire” by Cyrus the Great (r. 559-530 BC) in the ruins of the ancient Achaemenid capital Persepolis (Grigor; Wiesehöfer), to which he invited visitors from all over the world, including many state rulers. Similarly, Saddam Hussein (r. 1979-2003) loved to decorate himself by counting selected famous rulers of Iraq’s past—the Old Babylonian king Hammurabi (r. 1792-1750 BC), the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605-562 BC), and the founder of the Ayyubid dynasty and conqueror of Jerusalem (in 1187 AD), Salah al-Din (“Saladin”; r. 1174-1193 AD)—among his predecessors (Baram 58; al-Gailani Werr 20; Robson 116), a practice, by the way, that was very common among the Ancient Near Eastern rulers them-

selves (Grassi 128). Hussein annually held a celebration in Babylon (Baram 48-51; Robson 116) after having restored the archaeological site and even having built his own palace there, overlooking the previous palace of Nebuchadnezzar. Also the reconstruction of the past of Israel has been affected by an ideological use of history and archaeology: If in the period of the colonization of Palestine, archaeology was practiced by immigrants in search of their roots, after the creation of the State of Israel, archaeology—one of the most popular pastimes in the country during the 1950s to 1970s—was also used as a means of legitimizing territorial rights (Elon). For these people the past clearly mattered; they used it to bolster their claims of legitimacy by referring to their countries' resplendent past.

Searching—in accordance with META's aims of interdisciplinarity and debate-orientation—for a topic that could be suitable to bridge the gap between the historically-oriented and the modern disciplines concerned with the Near and Middle East, and to raise mutual interest because it is equally relevant for all of them, "cultural heritage" (understood in its widest sense; see below) thus seemed to be a reasonable choice. Fortunately enough, this topic not only allows for multiple perspectives

and approaches, but also leaves room for discussion, not only between scholars of different disciplines, but also between academics and practitioners, and between people from "Western" and Near and Middle Eastern countries. We certainly cannot answer all the questions posed in our volume, but maybe we can inspire discussion. And of this we are convinced: No matter in which way, the past matters. That is why we have prepared this issue.

A source of continuing discussion is the question of whether important cultural artifacts whose provenance is unknown and that are therefore likely to stem from illicit excavations should be dealt with and published by scholars and thereby be made even more valuable than they already are. Two different perspectives on this question are presented by **Jody Tabitha Neal** in her article "Provenience, Provenance and the UNESCO 1970 Convention: Two Schools of Thought on the Publication of Indeterminate Artifacts."³

She argues that, on the one hand, the publication of an artifact with unknown provenance (or history of ownership, as opposed to "provenience," the location where an object was found) and the resulting scholarly discussion on its nature and cultural association can be important tools to rectify its archaeological record. This

again—in combination with the information provided by the object itself—adds to the knowledge of lost civilizations, and the respective artifact, which would otherwise remain lost to the world, thus becomes another puzzle piece in the reconstruction of world history.

On the other hand, however, publishing an artifact with unknown provenance indirectly fuels the mechanisms that have brought it into the antiquities market. This is not only morally dubious because the scholar thus ideologically supports a process of theft in which the respective countries—at least materially⁴—lose part of their cultural heritage, and increasing demand makes looting even more attractive, but it also has even more sinister ramifications: Recent studies have discovered that there is also a strong connection between the illegal antiquities trade and other, more serious crimes, such as corruption, smuggling of drugs and arms, prostitution, and perhaps even the funding of terrorism. So, whereas the damage to the historical information related to an artifact caused by the loss of its archaeological record might be counterbalanced—at least in part—by its publication and scholarly discussion (Neal also points to the fact that archaeology itself is "ultimately destructive"; 22), there are other kinds of damage related to the publication of indetermi-

nate artifacts that cannot easily be compensated for.

There are, of course, also “chance finds” that fall into a legal grey zone: The Dead Sea Scrolls, of which the first were discovered and kept by Bedouin shepherds, are perhaps the most prominent example.⁵ Such artifacts are neither the product of official excavations nor of looting.

As a kind of compromise, Neal suggests to distinguish between publications that are made for the sake of profit (like auction catalogues) and those whose aim is to “emphasize the loss of the archaeological context, and/or to highlight the situation of cultural heritage looting at present” and that are prepared “for the overall rationale to be the return of the piece to where it was stolen” (25).

In theory, there are today clear rules to determine whether an artifact is “legitimate” or “illegitimate”: All artifacts that were acquired after the year 1970, when the UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* was put into force, and that are not accompanied by an official export license cease to be legitimate. However, not all states have subscribed to the UNESCO convention, and its impact is always “bound by the national laws that govern each country” (20). Furthermore, even a

seemingly sound provenance record is not necessarily trustworthy: in recent years there have been some prominent cases where dealers managed to fake the necessary documents in order to sell illegally-acquired objects to museums. It is thus the responsibility of the institutions concerned with trading and purchasing cultural artifacts (like auction houses and museums) to carefully investigate their provenance—and to impose the necessary consequences if it should turn out to be dubious, even if this contradicts their own interests (some positive examples are given on p. 23).

Responsibility, and even a thought-leading role of museums and other academic collections with regard to the protection of cultural artifacts, as well as to the “mediation and translation of cultural differences” and the “improvement of bilateral and multilateral relationships” (37) are also key issues in the article of **Markus Hilgert**,⁶ the current Director of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, who, however, approaches the topic from a very different, both theoretical and programmatic, perspective.

The protection of cultural artifacts constitutes for him an “ideal example of transdisciplinary research” (37), to which he ascribes—following Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski (69)—the potential to

catalyze “processes of transformation in society” and thus to become a “transformative scholarship” (36): The different steps that were necessary to ensure effective cultural property protection (such as, for example, conservation, documentation, provenance research, research on the creation of suitable legal frameworks, and the establishment of training programs for all those concerned with cultural artifacts protection) required the collaboration of both academic and non-academic actors. Because of their “prominent position at the interface between research, culture, society and politics” (37), and because of their specific competences that lay “particularly in the multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary field of cultural property research” (32), institutions that curate—and do academic research on—substantial collections of cultural artifacts (e.g., archives, libraries, museums, and academic collections)⁷ were best-suited to guide such transdisciplinary research processes and thus had a “special responsibility” (32), not only in the field of cultural assets protection, but also with regard to the “multi-perspective mediation and translation of objects in transcultural spaces of reception” (36). As for the latter, Hilgert highlights the “multiperspectivity of objects” and “variability of ‘object identities’” (34) and postulates that those should be taken into

account, not only in research and documentation but also in the presentation of objects: modern object repositories should provide barrier-free access to their collections, not only physically, but also linguistically and culturally.

This could be supported—at least in part—by a recent technical development, namely the process of “virtualizing material culture” by means of digital media like “individualized mobile applications” or “three-dimensional (3D) digital documentation” (34). The latter especially offered an “enormous potential” (34) for doing research and conveying history since it allows for digital—and even (3D-)printed—replications of cultural artifacts all over the world.

Of course, having a *representation* of something is not the same as owning the *original object*, and digital reproduction will neither keep smugglers and collectors from selling or purchasing looted objects, nor state representatives from requesting the repatriation of prestigious objects of high ideological value to the countries of their origin. But at least for scholarly work, 3D-digitalization offers a bulk of new possibilities that are only in their infancy at present.

Modern archaeological techniques are extensively employed in the Rania Plain Proj-

ect conducted by the University of Copenhagen and described in our journal by its directors **Tim Skuldbøl** and **Carlo Colan-toni** (“A Damage Assessment of Iraq’s Past: Archaeological Heritage Management on the Rania Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan”).

The project’s aims are, on the one hand, to investigate the development of the Late Chalcolithic (4000-3300 BC) settlement of Bab-w-Kur in the Rania Plain (Iraqi Kurdistan) and to catalogue and protect its extant archaeological heritage; on the other hand, to understand the cultural landscape and the history of the human occupation of the Rania Plain, and to evaluate the damage that occurred to its archaeological heritage from the 1950s up to now. Thanks to advances in remote sensing with the use of satellite imagery and aerial photography (for example, by using small radio-controlled helicopters, known as ‘drones’), modern archaeology has developed effective means to document—and thus protect—Iraqi heritage.

The menaces to the archaeological heritage of the Rania Plain are constituted mainly of the seasonal fluctuations of an artificial lake and recent urban expansion. Differently from other regions in Iraq, Kurdistan has not been severely damaged by the ongoing war and the presence of the Islamic State (IS), which—as stressed, among others, by the participants in the

conference held in the headquarters of UNESCO on 29 September 2014 (Fuganti)—in general promotes a policy of destruction of the archaeological heritage of Syria and Iraq. On the one hand, the IS tries to cancel the cultural identity and the cultural heritage—even the Islamic one—of the regions under its control, sometimes meeting with opposition from the local population;⁸ on the other hand, jihadists use the illicit trade of antiquities to finance war expenses.⁹ Though Kurdistan escaped this pillage, the IS has affected the Kurds’ situation by causing an impressive exodus of Iraqis escaping from advancing IS fighters. In the province of Dohuk, 900,000 refugees joined in the past few months a population of 1,000,000 local inhabitants.¹⁰ In spite of the fact that several archaeologists operating in Iraqi Kurdistan were called back by their foreign ministries in August, and only a few of them have kept on working there in recent months,¹¹ the situation seems to be improving, and some scholars have already expressed their intention of going back to Kurdistan.¹² Before 1991, Iraq hosted the greatest number of international archaeological missions. After the wars, the first archaeological missions in Iraq in 2009-2010—Satu Qala (Universities of Leiden, Leipzig and Erbil/German Archaeological Institute); Qasr Shemamoq (Universities

Lyon 2 and Sorbonne); Bakr Awa (University of Heidelberg)—were all active in Kurdistan, which is today the only Iraqi region in which archaeologists can operate. As a result, the number of missions in the region increased in recent years.¹³ As stressed by Skuldbøl and Colantoni, “in comparison to a rather bleak damage assessment for the cultural heritage of the rest of Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan holds the possibility of a highly positive outcome for the preservation of a fragile and irreplaceable cultural patrimony” (51). Let us hope that water and urban expansion will not cause the damage that war was fortunately so far unable to cause in this region.

Urban expansion is a major problem for cultural heritage, not only in Iraqi Kurdistan, but also in the region of the Gulf, which has seen in the last decades of the 20th century an extremely rapid urban growth, a phenomenon investigated in the article by **Djamel Boussaa** (“Cultural Heritage in the Gulf: Blight or Blessing? A Discussion of Evidence from Dubai, Jeddah and Doha”). The urban centers of several cities of the area “were often demolished and replaced by alien, imported, high-rise buildings” (55). When not demolished, the historic centers suffered from overcrowding, neglect and a lack of city planning, which sometimes trans-

formed them into slums. However, the importance of the preservation of historic centers—both for the maintenance of cultural identities and for economic reasons—is starting to be perceived, and beginning to produce sustainable development policies. Three cases are taken into consideration in the article: Dubai (UAE), Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), and Doha (Qatar).

According to the analysis of Boussaa, the case of Doha is the most successful one, since the central area of Souq Waqif, after a period of decay, has been properly restored and promoted, becoming “a major hub” for the inhabitants and their activities, as well as a tourist attraction.

A ray of hope for the historic center of Jeddah, Al-Balad, seemed to come from the session of UNESCO in May 2014, where Al-Balad was added to the World Heritage List. The application was promoted by Jeddah municipality in order to stop the deterioration of the area, mainly occupied by private buildings outside the jurisdiction of the municipality. The dispute between private parties and the municipality has already caused the loss of the majority of the historical buildings, but the inclusion of Al-Balad in the UNESCO List may possibly help the municipality in preserving and promoting the area.

The survival of the historic area of Dubai was seriously threatened in the 1970s, and

only around 12% of the old buildings survive. The revitalization of the historical area of Shindagha dates back to the middle of the 1990s and has led to the creation of two heritage villages, which attract many tourists and, at least according to Boussaa, are “a blessing to the inhabitants of Dubai and the UAE” (60).

A more critical view on the heritage villages that were created in the United Arab Emirates in recent decades (Abu Dhabi; Dubai; Hatta; Sharjah) is expressed by **Marxiano Melotti** in his article “Heritage and Tourism. Globalization and Shifting Values in the United Arab Emirates” that deals with different aspects of tourism in the Emirates. According to him, in the heritage villages the past is “frozen in order to create a better and easier product for the market” (78). They tend to be physically separated from the cities, thus perpetuating a distinction between Dubai’s present, built upon hyper-modernity, globalization and a mix of cultures, in which the collections of Western museums may help to create its own heritage, and Dubai’s past: everything dated before the discovery of the oil.

The heritage involved is of course both tangible and intangible: on the one hand, some historic buildings are restored and preserved, but on the other hand, the ma-

major attraction in the villages is given by reconstructed uses and traditions.

Even archaeological evidence seems to be used more in its intangible than in its tangible implications. On the one hand, the evidence of an early trade is used to present modern shopping malls as the result of an historic process, or rather as a stable constituent aspect of the country; on the other hand, actual archaeological artifacts and sites—particularly pre-Islamic ones—are left unprotected, and the UAE has become a hub for the illicit antiquities market. At the same time, the archaeological interests (and investments) of the Emirates seem to be directed toward European sites, thus evidencing once again that the Emirates' policy towards tangible and intangible heritage is indissolubly and lucidly linked with tourism and marketing, and it even “becomes an instrument of international political and economic negotiation” (86).

“Museumification” (Weineck 99) and commercial use were certainly not among the main purposes of UNESCO when it enacted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003. Rather, according to UNESCO's definition, intangible cultural heritage is “traditional, contemporary, and *living* at the same time” (UNESCO, “Heritage”; our empha-

sis) and “contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large” (ibid.). Furthermore, “intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it” (ibid.). The latter claim, however, is somewhat contradicted by the fact that it is actually only state parties who can make proposals for inscribing “cultural practices and expressions of intangible heritage” (UNESCO, “Lists”) on the *Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*. This allows for another kind of ‘misuse’ of the concept, namely as a means to deal with socio-religious problems by domesticating cultural diversity and thus preventing independent cultural (and especially religious) identity.

An example of this practice is given by **Benjamin Weineck** in his contribution “Governmentalities of Alevi Cultural Heritage: On Recognition, Surveillance and ‘Domesticated Diversity’ in Contemporary Turkey.” He argues that the recognition of part of an Alevi ritual—the *semah* dance—as “intangible cultural heritage” and its inscription in the Turkish National Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010

were part of “a form of political conduct, which on the one hand” met “the Alevi communities' aspirations for recognition” (93), but on the other hand kept control over its interpretation, by downplaying its religious character (Alevism is not officially recognized as a religion in Turkey) and instead presenting it as “a cultural facet of Turkishness” that “does not principally deviate from Sunni Islam” (98).¹⁴ This notion was also supported by the naming of the ritual as “Alevi-Bektaşî,” since this term was “used mostly by Turkish-speaking Alevi, which excludes Kurdish Alevi and with that the notion of the politically subversive character of Alevism” (98). In this way, the assumed purpose of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, namely to empower vernacular groups and to undermine “formerly state-oriented approaches to monumental heritage sites” (101; cf. also the literature quoted on p. 93), would only partly be reached since—despite the increased visibility of these groups and their cultural assets—the recognition of the Alevi-Bektaşî cultural heritage would fail “to translate into the legal-political realm” (101).

Leaving the authority of interpretation of their own “cultural heritage” to the people involved, on the other hand, carries the danger of subjectivity and distortion of facts, which can turn out to be a source of

inter-cultural conflict, especially when it comes to the interpretation of history. History is not explicitly contained in the official definition of “intangible cultural heritage” by UNESCO (“Heritage”), but it is—at least in our opinion—highly relevant in this context. On the one hand, it is mainly their interpretation in terms of history¹⁵ that gives importance and value to (otherwise meaningless) material objects that have remained from the past. On the other hand, history shares many of the features that characterize “intangible cultural heritage” according to the UNESCO definition, if it is understood as a legacy that is received from past generations and as an important element in constituting a living community’s cultural identity.

Of course, with regard to the question of “how it truly was,” interpretation should not be left to the agents of history and their (real or ideological) heirs alone, because every community tends to interpret history in the way that best fits its ideological purposes and psychological or moral needs—and we, as modern Western scholars, are by far not above doing the same. In fact, there is not one absolute, objective truth (one might perhaps recall Hilgert’s “multiperspectivity of objects”), but rather, history is always subject to interpretation (Rüsen, “Einleitung” 27). Therefore, every community should at least have the right

to do research on its own past, to interpret it, and to tell its own story as part of its own “cultural heritage.”

An interesting approach to overcome the cultural differences in historical thinking in order to make different narratives comparable and thus to allow for global scholarly discourses on history in which “the Others”¹⁶ (that is, non-Western cultures; Rüsen, “Einleitung” 33) can actively participate has been offered by Jörn Rüsen (“Zugänge”), who suggests that a basis for such a discourse could be reached by searching for universals in historical thinking.

An important constituent of this process is Assmann’s theory of a “cultural memory” (Assmann, *Gedächtnis*) since there was “no human culture without the constitutive element of collective memory” (Rüsen, “Zugänge” 44) and “historiography as something culture-specific” would occur in the framework of such a theory as a “specification of a universal and fundamental cultural practice of human life” (ibid.).

Further, the theoretical frame of an inter-cultural comparison should “not only ‘define’ the area of what should be compared” and to “open a perspective within which ‘historiography’ or ‘historical thinking’ were taken into view as parameters of

comparison,” but also “name a number of aspects by which the variety of differences” (45-46) could be taken into view. This variety was constituted by the “different circumstances under which historical consciousness works, the challenges that generate it, and the functions it has to fulfill” (ibid.). Also, “cultural practices” and “mental processes” (ibid.) affecting it should be taken into account. Particular attention is attributed in this context to the “criteria of meaning” that are relevant for the “reconstruction of the past as history” and for the “logic of historical interpretation, poetics and rhetoric of representation, and the possibilities to understand the past as something relevant and important for the cultural orientation of present life praxis” (45).

Finally, one should ask for the “forms, processes, and factors of change, and the development of historical consciousness” (46).

In her article “Historical Thinking in Intercultural Perspective: Iranian Narratives on the Mongol Era,” **Anja Pistor-Hatam** applies this approach to modern Iranian historiography (from the 1930s until 2011) on the Mongol period.

By further taking into account the concept of “history of meaning” she investigates how “fictions of coherence” (104; Ass-

mann, *Mind of Egypt*) are constructed, and what meaning is thus “bestowed on the Mongol era by modern historical narratives written in Iran” (105)—that is, narratives that mostly “were written and published as textbooks to be taught at schools and universities”, and thus “continue to imprint public historical consciousness” (105) in Iran.

According to her analysis,

Iranian historiography until this day continues to be strongly determined by the placement of historical consciousness in a literary tradition of myths and legends, as well as the ideologically dominated narratives of various political currents (107)

Perhaps most influential is the idea “that ‘Iran’ had existed as a cultural entity since Achaemenid times” and was as such “a twenty-five-hundred-year old nation” (106). This idea was not only promoted by the creation of an according historiographical project during the Pahlavi era, but is still accepted—at least in part—in today’s Islamic Republic. Especially in the latter, (Shiite) Islam and divine predestination have become further important elements of historical narratives. Thus, for example, Ghazan Khan’s (r. 1295-1304) conversion to Islam was reinterpreted as “the beginning of a new era, equivalent to

the victory of the ‘Iranian element,’ the triumph of the Shia, and the reestablishment of an Iranian nation-state” (108). The indestructibility of a “nucleus of ‘Iranianness’” is often explained in terms of the “mental superiority of ‘Iranianness’ based on cultural heritage” (ibid.). Whereas such narratives “often lack plausibility and do not comply with scholarly standards like verifiability, rationality, and reflection of the individual scholar’s own viewpoint” they could be accepted—at least in part—in the context of a relativistic history of meaning” (ibid.).

In her conclusion, Pistor-Hatam once more addresses Rösen’s “principle of mutual recognition of dissimilarities” that “would imply that scholars in Iran and abroad had been reciprocally aware of each other’s publications” (109). This, however, seems not to be the case at present—at least not regarding the Mongol era. Whereas the “impact of ‘Western’ (and Russian) scholarly literature concerning the Mongol period on the construction of meaning by Iranian authors” had been considerable before 1979, Iranian authors writing about the Mongol period would nowadays “not give attention to the state of the art in international academic research” (110) any more. But also, Western scholars seemed hardly to take any note of what is being done in Iran.

Of course, with regard to Iran, one might be tempted to connect this with the current political situation: the Islamic Republic, its regime, and the values and ideas it promotes are often looked upon with distrust in the “West”; on the other hand, Iranian scholars (in Iran) can only act within the limits of their own socio-political context and have to meet certain societal expectations.

That it is not necessarily ignorance or differing ideologies that cause differences between the state of research on a country’s history (and its interpretation) in a country itself and abroad, and that some Middle Eastern scholars are even “desperate for international collaboration” (121), is stated by **Eleanor Robson** in her article “Creating Futures for the Past in Southern Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities,” which deals, however, with a different country and topic, namely the problematic situation of scholars working on ancient history in Iraq.

According to her observations (based on personal experiences) Iraqi scholars were absolutely not up-to-date regarding recent research on the ancient history of their own country. This situation could be explained by the historical developments during the last century that she divides into four distinct phases.

During World War I and the following British Mandate, Iraqi ancient history had been “solely for Europeans” (118)—with the result, by the way, that great numbers of important cultural artifacts of Iraq’s past ended up in European and American museums where they have remained until today.

This situation changed significantly after Iraq’s independence in 1932, when antiquities laws were changed in Iraq’s favor, the first Iraqi PhD students were sent abroad to study archaeology, and the Iraqis started to carry out their first own excavations. Still, pre-Islamic history hardly played any role in school education, since the curriculum was strongly under the influence of pan-Arabism and conveyed mostly respective “nationalist and militaristic” (116) narratives.

Under the Baathist regime (1968-2003), and especially under Saddam Hussein, antiquity increasingly became attractive, since by exploring and promoting Iraq’s glorious past, its leader could be presented “as the natural, inevitable successor of millennia of militarised dominance over the region” (ibid.).

Because of its association with Baathist propaganda, however, “public appetite for ancient history” today was underdeveloped amongst the older generation and faced “ignorance amongst the younger”

(118). Moreover, those scholars that still decided to deal with archaeology or ancient history suffered from the dramatic consequences that the international embargo enforced by the United Nations following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 had had for the Iraqi academic community—especially the isolation that the embargo had brought about and the resulting loss of “knowledge and expertise; of funding and prestige; of professionalism and control” (117). To keep up with the latest academic discoveries and developments was almost impossible for Iraqi scholars, except for those that had “particularly good knowledge of English, French or German and a particularly good internet connection” (118). But the technological infrastructure and library provision of the archaeological departments were “woeful” (120) and Iraqi students were “simply not trained in the search and analytical skills needed to locate and make sense of what is on the web” (ibid.).

Having composed her article with the explicit aim to “stimulate discussion, response and action” (113), Robson concludes her study with an appeal to scholars abroad not to leave Iraqi historians alone with their fate, and offers three suggestions for what viable support could look like: We should learn the Arabic language in order to enable face-to-face discussions

and push “our publishers to commission Arabic translations of our books” (121), we should scope the academic landscape in Iraq by identifying academics and cultural heritage organizations interested in collaboration in Iraq and discussing their needs with them, and we should advocate internationally in order to convince others “of the safety and value of working in-country” and “to get the message across that sustained engagement with Iraq’s ancient history is not merely a western indulgence” (122), since the people of Iraq had a right “to learn about their region’s past, both recent and ancient, should they choose to do so, to understand who they and their communities are, and how they came to be” (121).

Not only modern Iraqi historians face a lack of interest in their studies in their society, but “many governments worldwide are currently struggling to see the value in supporting academic humanities and social sciences” (Robson 118). This leads us to a final question to pose, that being the question of “belonging” of culture—in a more immaterial way than the one mentioned in the beginning.

While many would possibly agree that Ancient Near Eastern history and culture might indeed be of importance for the Iraqis, Iranians, and other Near and Middle

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Eastern peoples themselves, how many people are aware of the fact that Ancient Near Eastern ideas, notions, images and knowledge have influenced our own way of thinking and are deeply manifested in our own cultural tradition?

More than once in history, important impulses for what we regard today as important elements of modern Western culture have actually come from the Near and Middle East. Mathematics, astronomy, our calendar, and even the art of writing have been invented and developed in the Ancient Near East and were transported to Europe much later, via the Greek and Roman world—that we, influenced by a Eurocentric way of thinking, indeed regard as belonging to our own cultural realm.¹⁷

Later on, some important works of Greek philosophers and medical and technical writers have only survived because they were translated into Arabic or Syriac and/or adopted by Near and Middle Eastern scholars.¹⁸

On another, even less tangible level, even images that were created in the Ancient Near East have entered our “own” literary, artistic and musical tradition—especially via the Biblical tradition that, despite of its Near Eastern origins, has been totally absorbed by the “Western” world—so that they live on until the present day.

Of course, during the process of transmission, adoption, and selection, both the actual appearance and the interpretation of these ideas have changed, and what we see today is never identical with what it was once. (This is slightly different with material objects although those are also normally subject to transformation processes.) While some characteristic features stay, others become hardly recognizable any more, and in the course of time, even information on the nature of something might get blurred or even lost. But there might still remain a nucleus of information that reveals its true identity.

An illustrative example is the image of the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (556-539 BC) that was created after his death.¹⁹ His case is treated extensively by **Giulia Francesca Grassi** in her article “Nabonidus, king of Babylon.”

Who would nowadays still recognize characteristic features of the last (Neo-)Babylonian king, Nabonidus, behind the well-known series of pictures by William Blake (1757-1827), that according to his own description show “Nebuchadnezzar”—Nabonidus’ more famous predecessor who was still admired and imitated by Saddam Hussein at the end of the last century?

Who would even know that it was actually him who was the last Babylonian king, and not Belshazzar, as is suggested by the Bib-

lical story of the fall of Babylon in the Book of Daniel—that is to some persons perhaps even better known from the famous poem “Belsazar” of Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) or its musical version by Robert Schumann (1810-1856)?

And who would have assumed that this king was very much interested in the history of his own country, and that he used (quasi-)archaeological methods—that were not much different from the methods still used in the nineteenth and early twentieth century AD—to search for traces and messages of his ancestors (among which he not only counted members of his own dynasty, but also—like Saddam Hussein and other modern Near and Middle Eastern rulers—important kings of other dynasties of Iraq’s past)?

Past and present are not far away or very different from each other. They are just two sides of the same coin, and the past mattered in antiquity as—and for the same purposes as—it matters today: for the construction of identity, for ideological purposes and legitimation, and for power and prestige. Only the perspective on time was different for the people in the Ancient Near East: in their perception (reflected by the terminology used) the future lay behind their back (because it was still unknown to the people), while the

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past lay clearly visible in front of them (Wilcke).

Marburg, December 2014

Alexa Bartelmus and Giulia Francesca Grassi

Notes

¹ We would like to thank the other members of the editorial board for their continuous moral and practical support, our issue advisor Walter Sommerfeld and the anonymous reviewers for their very detailed and enormously helpful comments, and our proofreaders and student assistants for their excellent work. Also, we would like to draw attention to the fact that this issue not only contains articles that deal with the focus topic “cultural heritage” but—for the first time in the history of META—also an “Off-Topic” section in which Renate Dieterich presents a study on “More Than Movies: Cinema Petra in Amman During the Mandatory Period.”

² This was remarkably different about a century ago (Sommerfeld 139-140).

³ Because of its provocative question and two-sided argumentation, this article is presented here in the section “Anti/Thesis” that was originally intended to be filled by rivaling opinions of two different authors.

⁴ One could argue again, that by publishing at least they gain important knowledge about their own history [note by the editors].

⁵ The accounts of the discovery of the scrolls have been contradictory and there are several discrepancies, possibly due, at least in part, to the desire to pursue illegal excavations (Fields 23-24). For a detailed and illustrated account of the

discoveries, see Fields, and particularly pages 24-26 for the discovery of Cave 1 by Bedouin shepherds. For the discoveries of the scrolls and their vicissitudes, see also the report by their first photographer (1948), the scholar John C. Trever. – The Dead Sea Scrolls have raised enormous interest, not only in the scholarly community because of their historical and philological value, but also among people who recognized the potential they offered for ideological purposes. For example, the archaeologist Yigael Yadin wrote about the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their purchasing by his father, Eleazar Sukenik, for the nascent state of Israel: “It is as if these manuscripts had been waiting in caves for two thousand years, ever

since the destruction of Israel's independence until the people of Israel returned to their home and regained their freedom. This symbolism is heightened by the fact that the first three scrolls were brought to my father for Israel on 29 November 1947, the very day the United Nations voted for the re-creation of a Jewish state in Israel after two thousand years.” (quoted in Elon 40). On the other side, after the Oslo agreement between Israel and the PLO, the PLO demanded the restitution of the Dead Sea Scrolls because their authors would have been members of an “ancient Palestinian set” (Elon 45-46).

⁶ “Materializing Culture - Culturizing Material. On the Status, Responsibilities and Function of Cultural Artifact Repositories within the Framework of a ‘Transformative Scholarship.’”

⁷ Those are subsumed by Hilgert under the neutral terms “object repositories” or “cultural property repositories”; for a detailed explanation see p. 30-32.

⁸ For example, the inhabitants of the city have saved the minaret of the Great Mosque of Mosul by forming a human chain around it, in order to preserve it from the destruction planned by jihadists (Fuganti 6).

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→ ⁹ See Fuganti and the interview with Daniele Morandi, director of the project "Terra di Ninive" (University of Udine), by Paolo Beltramin. The USB flash drive of a jihadist found by the Iraqi intelligence in August contained the report of the sums collected through the selling of the antiquities of the city of Nebek: \$32,000,000 (Beltramin).

¹⁰ See the interview with Daniele Morandi by Cinzia Dal Maso.

¹¹ Cinzia Pappi, current director of the Satu Qala Project (University of Leipzig), personal communication.

¹² Cinzia Pappi, personal communication; interview with Daniele Morandi by Beltramin. We would like to thank Cinzia Pappi and Daniele Morandi for their helpfulness.

¹³ The great surveys are those of Erbil (Harvard); Dohuk (Udine); Zakho (Tübingen); Upper Zab (Poznań); Sulaymaniyah (IFPO); Shahrizor (London/München); see also the list in the article by Skuldbøl and Colantoni (note 4); "Mār Šiprim."

¹⁴ However, Weineck neither wants "to deconstruct Alevi Cultural Heritage as a mere strategic tool" nor to "deny the emotional value of ICH and its potential for preserving threatened practices and objects for the purpose of safeguarding and constructing identities": "governmentality" would simply make "use of it in a creative form" (95).

¹⁵ History is understood here in its widest sense, as a "universal cultural practice of remembering visualization of the past that aims to orientate one's own life praxis under the circumstances of the present and to provide it with a perspective for the future" (Rüsen, "Einleitung" 22; our translation).

¹⁶ All translations in this paragraph are our own.

¹⁷ Unfortunately, history of knowledge is not treated in this issue although it was our original intention to include it.

¹⁸ On the translation movement from Greek into Arabic in Baghdad during the first two centuries of the 'Abbāsīd rule (8th-10th century AD), see Gutas and Endress (especially 416-31). High Greek literature was rarely translated into Arabic, but the interests of the translators were vast: from agriculture, astronomy, pharmacology and optics to music, military treaties and philosophy (see the list provided by Gutas 193-96). As regards Syriac, the majority of the Greek scientific texts were translated in the 9th century AD as part of the 'Abbāsīd translation movement (Gutas 22). For the works translated into Syriac, see Duval 263-87.

¹⁹ Of course, the image that entered the later literary and artistic tradition is certainly not the one that Nabonidus himself would have wanted to survive: instead he would have loved to be remembered by future generations under his true name (for the importance of the survival of one's name in Ancient Near Eastern thinking, see Radner) and for the deeds he was proud of (rather than his failures)—a wish that is at least partly fulfilled by modern excavations and the decipherment of his own inscriptions in which he presents his own version of "his-story."

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ANTI/THESIS

ANTI-THESIS

Provenience, Provenance and the UNESCO 1970 Conven- tion: Two Schools of Thought on the Publication of Indeterminate Artifacts

Jody Tabitha Neal

This article explores the two opposing standpoints in regard to the publication of objects/artifacts of unknown provenance and the ultimate impact this has on the preservation of heritage. The debate is set against the roles and objectives of scholars, museums, heritage officials and auction houses, with an overall greater

consideration as to how these arguments are impacted by the UNESCO 1970 Convention, and vice versa.

Keywords: UNESCO 1970 Convention; Provenance; Heritage Looting in the Middle East; Sale of Looted Antiquities

The terms *provenience* and *provenance* are often used differently and interchangeably depending on the context and/or the training of the user. Both are derived from the same Latin word, and to one school of academics they mean identically the “location” an item was found. But to another school of thought, they have different meanings adhering to *where* an artifact came from and *who* has owned it since. As such, for the purposes of this article, *provenience* refers to the precise location where an artifact or archaeological sample was recovered archaeologically, and *provenance* the detailed history of where an artifact has been since its creation. A complete *provenance* will encompass a record of production, ownership, publication, exhibition and restoration.

Both *provenience* and *provenance* are important to ascertain when studying an artifact. While the *provenience* of an item can be traced if it is initially lacking (via carbon dating, reference checks of similar items, archaeological imagery, etc.) the *provenance* of an antique most often indicates the legitimacy (or lack thereof) with which it was acquired. Artifacts without *provenance* have often been perceived as “difficult objects” in the museum world due to the lack of discernibility as to whether they were procured in a legally

and ethically sound manner (Tubb). Nevertheless, this has not deterred many museums and publication institutes. It was estimated by the Archaeological Institute of America in 2013 that 85 to 90 percent of classical artifacts in collections and the art market have an unknown and/or poorly documented provenance (Antique Tribal Art Dealers Association 25).

On November 14th, 1970, the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was finally voted into force. This UNESCO convention and its complementary 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects—often seen as governing the protection of private owners and the “good faith” acquirer—are the core frameworks that guide institutions and law practitioners around the world in addressing the occurrences of illegal art and antiquities. The year 1970 is now pivotal, in that any items found to have been acquired after this year in the provenance records cease to be legitimate, unless accompanied by an official export license.

However, not all nations subscribe to the 1970 convention, and those that do may not necessarily enforce all of its provi-

sions. The impact of the 1970 convention remains bound by the national laws that govern each country, which highlights how a lack of unified law can mean an uncertainty in the final result of a trafficking case.

Despite these hurdles, the 1970 Convention is becoming increasingly effective across most Western countries, particularly in light of the recent, high-coverage media cases over the last two years concerning looting and repatriation. Indeed, as a result we could surmise that the adoption of the 1970 UNESCO Convention is fast becoming a *de facto* rule of thumb for many Western states and institutions. To the joy of many and detriment of some, artifacts that fall into the post-1970 acquisition category are becoming increasingly hard to legitimately sell.

Thus, as a first consideration, why might it be good to publish unprovenanced works?¹ Perhaps the clearest positive result is the availability for scholarly review and access to otherwise “lost” artifacts.

The Egyptologist Dr. Monica Hanna—most notable of late for her heroic actions to single-handedly protect Egyptian artifacts from armed looters—expressed her belief during the June 2, 2014 council review of

the Egyptian Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) requesting the assistance of the US government to protect their looted heritage, that a portion of looted items from Egypt are being purchased by US scholars. This is the antithesis of the vehement opposition that is publically voiced toward such actions by the majority of academics via various media channels. If her accusation is correct, we could surmise that these scholars are acting through covert means in order to protect the items from otherwise under-educated owners, who would not know how to care for them, and—at the core perhaps—to study the artifacts for themselves.

In 2000, archaeologists Christopher Chipindale and David Gill directed an investigation into the provenance of seven noteworthy museum acquisitions that demonstrated considerable uncertainty as to their legitimacy. Their research was published in the *American Journal of Archaeology* and was continued in 2001 with an examination by the authors and a team of archaeologists that aimed to focus the degree of the issue of unprovenanced materials in museum collections with a quantitative study.

Yet the issue unprovenanced works does not deter some historians and archaeolo-

gists. John Boardman, a former Oxford University Lincoln Professor and renowned archaeologist, has frequently expressed his view that all archaeological artifacts are inherently valuable with or without a definite provenance, and that to believe otherwise is “pure nonsense” (41):

Objects cannot be “tainted” or “illicit,” but only be so described by scholars who do not understand them, or by legislators. Objects are testaments of antiquity, whether handled by a thief or scholar; their integrity must be respected and their safety assured. To suggest that they should even be destroyed rather than kept in a museum betrays an appalling vacuum of scholarly integrity and responsibility, even philistinism. (117-18)

It may be argued that the publication of works without provenance is a way to rectify what was lost: that being the archaeological record. The publication of unprovenanced artifacts opens the floor for scholars and enthusiasts alike to trace origin (and thereby an indication of provenance), cultural associations and to engage in textual transliteration, where possible. Surely, access to this vital information that benefits and builds upon the knowledge of lost civilizations is vastly important? This question is clear in its moral

quest, but will these actions contribute to the protection of cultural heritage over time and on a global scale?

Philippe de Montebello, the former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1977 to 2008, has gone further in the support of the publication of unprovenanced works and cited his distrust of those who would shy away from an artifact that was lacking such documentation:

Can one really trust the scholarship of those who allow politics and ideology to trump their intellectual curiosity like that? It seems to me that one keeps one’s opprobrium for the looter or the circumstances of the event, but not for the looted object itself. To turn away from it in moral indignation is foolish, and in the end can lead to the suppression of knowledge. (67)

The channel of publication for such works without provenance and/or provenience must also be scrutinized for suitability. The intent and audience of an auction catalogue varies greatly from that of an academic journal. In the defense of the publication of works without provenance, the ultimate goal of publication should be addressed: a purely scholastic intention perhaps carries a more noble weight than the intent of sale and profit.

The case of the Dead Sea Scrolls, perhaps more than any other, highlights the problems of an unpublished and unprovenanced find. Publication of the scrolls has taken many decades, and delays have been a source of academic controversy. While it was more politics than a lack of provenance that delayed the publication, it exemplifies the impact on world knowledge such a delay in publication can have. This case also highlights an important consideration for the motivation of publishing unprovenanced work, that being the issue of “chance finds”: locals who recover objects of importance but may have only very limited knowledge of the exact location an item was discovered. As Michael Bennett, the Cleveland Museum of Art’s first curator of Greek and Roman Art, has further expressed:

It should not come as a shock that the modern world regularly disturbs ancient artifacts unintentionally, as urban and commercial development continues to spread across the globe. Large public works projects funded by tax revenues, as well as privately financed construction projects, routinely and inadvertently uncover buried antiquities. These are not looted artifacts. (36)

In the mid-1980s, John Boardman began an investigation for the British Academy

into excavations financed by public money over a period of five years, ending five years before the time of the investigation. His aim was to see what had become of the publication of their excavation reports. His research found that a site that had been legally excavated, but remained unpublished, was even more of a destroyed site than “the Bamiyan Buddhas” (109), since no public record whatsoever remains. He concluded that the results of his investigation were indeed depressing, and that in the last fifty years, far less than 25 percent of the material and subsequent results of professional archaeological excavations have been properly published, while the remaining had never gone beyond preliminary reports, if that.

In further support of this argument, the fact that archaeology, as a science, is ultimately destructive in its nature needs to be considered. The procedures and policies that have been built around this profession in the last few centuries do camouflage this fact, and certainly advancements in the preservation of cultural heritage during excavations are advancing in bounds on an annual basis. However, the fact remains that the preservation of the artifacts, the site and thereby the history would be far better off without any such archaeological intervention.

A final question to pose: what is provenance as a means of verification, anyway, and can this even be trusted? If the recent media cases that are surging in the international news at present are anything to go by, the answer is no.

In 2011 the New York-based art dealer Subhash Kapoor was arrested in Germany prior to being extradited to his native India in 2012, where he currently awaits trial for overseeing a vast, international antiquities smuggling syndicate. Under the guise of an otherwise reputable Manhattan gallery, Mr. Kapoor ultimately dealt in looted artifacts to the value of almost US\$100 million.

A key component to the success of this illegal trade was forged provenance. Mr. Kapoor and his associates knowingly faked a series of export licenses and prior ownership records for well over 200 objects that were then directly acquired by such world-renown museums as the National Gallery of Australia, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, among many others. These museums—and indeed, the practices of museum acquisition policies worldwide—have since come under immense public scrutiny.²

In response, the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) has set up a webpage dedicated to the defense of their involvement in the Kapoor controversy, stating:

If the allegations regarding Mr Kapoor are proven to be true, then our Gallery, along with leading museums around the world, will have been the victim of a most audacious act of fraud. If proven, this fraud has involved the elaborate falsification of documents by a long-established New York art dealer who had been dealing with leading international museums for almost 40 years. (“Questions and Answers”)

In an unprecedented move for a national gallery, the NGA has further stated that they will sue Mr. Kapoor if he is found to be guilty of the crimes for which he is soon to be on trial.

The impact of this case—and other successive cases of questionable provenance that have since come to light—has been staggering. For many museums, the process of collecting was regarded as the most vital activity to secure the continued survival of a museum, and therefore establishments were initially hesitant to alter their policies (Leyten). In the last few years however, this has begun to significantly change.

In 2013, Dr. Neil Brodie, Senior Research Fellow in the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research at the University of Glasgow and an archaeologist by training, cited the 2005 indictment of Marion True, former curator at the J. Paul Getty Museum who was prosecuted for illegal acquisitions, as an example of what he perceives to be a “criminogenic museum culture” (Brodie and Bowman Proulx 9). Brodie and his associates have concluded that this criminal culture is the result of the deviant behavior of “avaricious curators” who sidestep established conventions in their aggressive collecting practices.

Timely to the Kapoor case and after two prior decades of dispute concerning a claim of illegal acquisition, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston finally agreed to repatriate the “Weary Herakles” statue to Turkey in 2011. They admitted that they had never verified the statue’s provenance. The museum has since ensured that a full-time provenance expert remains on staff. “It is necessary for the MFA not to repeat the mistakes of our past,” stated the curator of provenance, Victoria Reed (quoted in Seiff).

At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the two “Kneeling Attendants” that had regally flanked the entrance to the Southeast Asian galleries for two decades were qui-

etly repatriated to Cambodia in 2013. When these statues were first acquired by the museum in the 1980s, there was little consideration for a provenance check, yet the timing certainly follows a pattern: from the 1970s onwards, Cambodia became engulfed in a turbulent civil war, whereby looting became rampant and the country would hardly be in a position to pursue a case of illegal acquisition and export. The same is now true of the Middle East today.

The reception to a questionable and/or lacking provenance is likewise beginning to be seen in the auction world. In May, Christie’s halted the London sale of Egyptian artifacts put up for auction by a man who claimed he had inherited them, after experts from the British Museum concluded that they had been stolen after the 2011 revolt. The auction house has since offered to repatriate a selection of Koh Ker statues that had been placed in their sales and found to have been illegally acquired post-1970. Christie’s states that their acquisition policies and proof of ownership demands upon potential clients have changed dramatically, particularly in the past 18 months. During their inaugural participation in the 2013 Kathmandu UNESCO 1970 symposium, Christie’s offered their commitment to work in tandem with UNESCO (and similar heritage agen-

cies) in the fight against the trade of looted antiquities, and declared in an official statement: “Illicit cultural property will find no place in our saleroom.”

In contrast, Sotheby’s was embroiled in an extremely rare legal case last year whereby the U.S. government battled on Cambodia’s behalf against the auction house for the repatriation of a statue, the fictional Hindu warrior, Duryodhana. Despite a prior refusal to comply, Sotheby’s finally settled the case out of court in December 2013 by promising to repatriate the three-million-dollar-statue.

The reactions and feedback of the museum and auction sectors indicate that the time when an item without provenance would be accepted for acquisition or sale is waning. However, the depth of the cases of illegal looting that surface in these professions are miniscule in comparison to the actual, devastating circumstances that often accompany heritage theft.

As previously outlined, works lacking provenance often correspondingly lack adequate details of provenience, but the greatest loss is that of the archaeological record. Without the most basic transcript of where the item(s) was found, as well as how and in what setting, the

artifact(s) remains entirely without context or an ability to provide any deep level of understanding. “In a very real sense,” states Neil Brodie, “looted archaeological sites are crime scenes” (quoted in Pringle). While the publication of an item without provenance may be made in an attempt to rectify this loss, it also indirectly fuels the circumstances under which it was acquired.

In 1991, Dr. Colin Renfrew—a former professor and Senior Fellow of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at the University of Cambridge—was widely criticized for publishing on a collection of unprovenanced figurines (Renfrew et al.). After this incident, however, Dr. Renfrew has become one of the most active advocates in the battle against the publication and acquisition of unprovenanced artifacts. In 2000 he authored the highly acclaimed publication “Loot, Legitimacy and Ownership: The Ethical Crisis in Archaeology” and in 2009 went on to win the coveted SAFE Beacon Award. He does not mince words in his admonition of museum practices:

[The museums] are quite disgraceful and lead the world in purchasing antiquities without provenance [...] in effect, indirectly, they’re supporting and financing the destruction of the world’s

archaeological heritage. They include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Art Institute of Chicago. (Safecorner, “Colin Renfrew”)

At the moral core, there is a fear that the purchase of works without provenance—unless caused by inadequate record-keeping—ultimately indicates to those opposing the ideology of unprovenanced works that an artifact has been stolen from its country of origin, and very often at a time of civil unrest. Purchasing artifacts without provenance can stimulate demand that leads to intentional looting for profit. The purchase of such artifacts can therefore be correlated to the direct support of this illegal action. Furthermore, the unfolding evidence that has begun to surface indicates a far more sinister involvement in criminal activity than the illicit-antiquities purchaser may realize.

Many buyers of unprovenanced works hold the idea that the illicit antiquities trade is relatively harmless, and the items would otherwise be lost or forgotten. However, this perception that the looting of artifacts is a “victimless crime” is false, according to the leading criminologist and professor Dr. Simon Mackenzie of the University of Glasgow (Barford). His inten-

sive fieldwork into the smuggling and sale of cultural heritage has shown strong links with antiquities traffickers to a number of serious crimes, including corruption, drug smuggling and prostitution. Further, according to new evidence sourced from the US army based in Afghanistan and Iraq, there is an indication that artifact smuggling syndicates are often closely linked with violent insurgents and perhaps ultimately the funding of terrorism (Pringle).

In support of these claims, Dr. Zafar Painan, in his address at the 2013 UNESCO Kathmandu symposium, explained how he had witnessed a clear correlation between drug smuggling and the looting of cultural heritage in Afghanistan. Further, Dr. Monica Hanna has stated that antiquities smuggled out of Egypt often use the same channels as drugs and arms, through the Sinai and into Israel. She has also found direct evidence that a recent drug bust in the country in June also uncovered looted Egyptian statuary (Safecorner, “Public hearing”).

The civil wars and political unrest that have marred the Middle East, over the last decade most notably, have led to an opportunity for cultural heritage looting for those unsavory and/or desperate enough.

Akin to the destruction and theft that befell the National Museum in Baghdad and numerous archaeological sites throughout Iraq in the aftermath of the 2003 US invasion, Egypt is now sadly victim to the same crimes.

Since the Arab Spring revolt of 2011, the impact upon cultural heritage in Egypt has been devastating. The Egyptian Minister of Antiquities, Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim Ali, has lamented that hundreds, if not thousands, of unprovenanced archaeological objects, likely stolen by “cultural racketeers” since 2011, have been appearing for sale in the United States via art galleries and internet auctions—to the laudable exclusion of eBay, which has denied unprovenanced sales.

A brief survey of the data on the import of cultural artifacts from Egypt to the USA in the years 2013-2014 shows an incredible increase of 56 percent compared to previous years, even excluding Egyptian artifacts being sent to the US via secondary countries (St. Hilaire). In an attempt to counter this loss, in March of this year the Egyptian government submitted a formal MoU to the US Obama administration, requesting to impose emergency restrictions on the import of ancient artifacts

lacking both provenance and provenience from Egypt.

The MoU broadly outlines restrictions that would allow immigration agents the ability to seize Egyptian cultural artifacts entering the United States if they lack official documentation, as opposed to their current stance where they have no authority to seize Egyptian items. This same type of agreement is already in force between the USA and sixteen other nations, notably those which have signed agreements under a 1983 law, the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (first ratified under the Ronald Reagan administration). Iraq is the exception to this group, and receives distinct consideration because of the looting that took place during the US invasion.

The Cultural Property Advisory Committee (CPAC) reviewed the MoU on June 2 of this year, with the results being largely in favor of supporting the movement. There is still a way to go before it can be implemented, however.

In light of the evidence, what could a viable solution be to the publication of unprovenanced heritage items? It is clear that the support—either the purchase or publication—of antiquities without prove-

nance has far deeper ramifications than merely turning a blind eye to a dubious ownership record. The evidence indicates that to buy and/or publish an artifact without provenance fuels the same vast, international crime circles that proliferate drug trafficking. If there were no demand for unprovenanced works, the supply would—in theory—stop.

Yet can exceptions be made? Perhaps in cases where the aim of the publication is to emphasize the loss of the archaeological context, and/or to highlight the situation of cultural heritage looting at present. This would allow for some knowledge exchange on the item but for the overall rationale to be the return of the piece to where it was stolen.

Such avenues do currently exist, to an extent, although more are clearly needed. The International Council of Museums publishes an online “Red List” of looted artifacts by country. Likewise, Interpol are in the process of updating their existing cultural heritage theft database with a new system termed PSYCHE (Protection System for Cultural Heritage) that will incorporate a greater cooperation with EU partners.

Fundamentally, the obligation for the future of artifacts without provenance falls

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on those countries with the greatest imports of looted antiquity, namely the Western world, both as the benefactor of archaeological projects and as the primary market for the destructive trade in illegal antiquities.

While the debate rages on, what can be concluded from this study is that the dispute largely boils down to two core questions: who owns history and who has a moral obligation to save it?

To the former question, George F. Comfort, a 19th-century American scholar and the founder of the Metropolitan Museum

of Art, surmised that history, and therefore historical artifacts, are not bound by time or country:

Homer sang not for the Greeks alone but for all nations, and for all time. Beethoven is the musician not of the Germans alone but of all cultivated nations. And Raphael painted not for the Italians alone, but for all of whatever land or age, whose hearts are open to sympathy with the beautiful in art. (de Montebello 55)

Yet those who advocate the moral case retain the belief that artifacts and works of art of such cultural significance belong in their

original context. It is hard to deny that the majority of plundered artifacts have found their way to museums in Europe and America, notably leaving a vacuum of culture in their provenience of origin. As the anonymous author of the battered banner hung outside the Kabul Museum in the wake of the 2002 Taliban expulsion writes: "A nation stays alive when its culture stays alive."

Notes

¹Note: this article will predominantly deal with the instances of looting in the Middle East and subsequent purchases by auction houses and museums in America, Europe and Australia. The looting of heritage occurs worldwide, with goods also being trafficked out of Asia frequently. It is well known, however, that the vast majority of artifacts trafficked from the Middle East do

not go to Asia but instead to so-called "Western" locations. As such, this article excludes the study of Asia. For such an introduction to heritage trafficking routes, see *culturalheritagelawyer.blogspot.com*.

²For information regarding the involvement of museums in the Kapoor case, see Finchman.

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META

Materializing Culture – Culturizing Material. On the Status, Responsibilities and Function of Cultural Property Repositories within the Framework of a “Transformative Scholarship”

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Keywords: Cultural Property Research; Object Repositories; Transformative Scholarship (“Transformative Wissenschaft”); Archives; Libraries; Museums; Digitization; Science and Research Politics

1. Introduction¹

Certain theoretical streams in the cultural and social sciences that are occasionally subsumed under the term “New Materialism”² (see Witzgall), as well as recent social, political, cultural and media technology developments require a theoretical and research-political repositioning of academic object repositories. For it is obvious that under the influence of these multi-layered, partly interwoven process-

es, the status, responsibilities, as well as the function and spheres of activity of these object or cultural property repositories with research commitment (on the term see section 2 below) are currently undergoing long-lasting change.

For the respective institutions, these changes not only result in complex challenges regarding contents and structure, but also present extraordinary opportunities for the fulfillment of their academic, social and political responsibilities.

The appropriate handling of these challenges and opportunities can substantially contribute to the sharpening of the academic and social profile of these institutions and increase their visibility on both a national and international level.

In this context, the concept of a “transformative scholarship” (“transformative Wissenschaft”) that serves “as a platform for the oriented integration of knowledge from different knowledge inventories in a society” and as a “catalyzer for processes of social change” (Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski 69) may be useful.

Object repositories with research orientation may become the protagonists of such a “transformative scholarship” if they exploit their potential for “transdisciplinary research” (Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski 42 and passim)—for example, in the field of cultural property protection—better than they have done in the past.

The present contribution shall set benchmarks for the theoretical and research-political repositioning of object or cultural property repositories with research commitment, as well as for future discussions on this topic.³

2. Object Repositories – Cultural Property Repositories

Before such a repositioning can take place, the question needs to be addressed which characteristic features are shared among institutions such as archives, libraries, museums or academic collections whose object inventories fall within the scope of cultural and social sciences, and how these features can—irrespective of the

material, formal, cultural, chronological and geographical disparity of their objects—be consolidated under a concise and theoretically founded term.

For only by defining shared characteristics will the shared role the respective institutions may have in science, culture, politics and society become obvious.

A helpful theoretical perspective is offered by the approach of *'artifact biography'* which stems from archaeologically influenced research into material culture (see, for example, Blinkhorn and Cumberpatch; Gosden and Marshall; Mytum; Shanks). This approach successively documents the different socio-practical contextualisations of an object, without distinguishing between its 'original' (that is 'primary') and 'hybrid' (that is 'secondary') 'participations' in social practices and thereby academically privileging and hierarchically ranking these various socio-practical 'scenarios.' According to this interpretation, artifact biographies are to be understood as "praxeographies" (Hilgert, "Text-Anthropologie" 115).

The theoretical and practical advantage of this view is that it does not favor any of the various socio-practical contextualisations of an object, an approach that diversifies the object-oriented research theoretically, methodically and with regard to contents.

For according to this approach, successive 'recontextualisations' of an object—especially in the context of contemporary academic, museal or digital practices—may become the subject of object-oriented research in the same way as the production of this object and its 'first participation' in social practices, a participation often privileged in research without obvious reason.

A relativistic perspective on objects and their consecutive 'participations' in social practices is furthermore offered by the concept of *multiperspectivity* that, generally speaking, describes the phenomenon of an attribution of varying meanings to objects depending on "systems of collective knowledge (including know-how and motivational knowledge), as well as subjective attributions of meaning conforming to those" (Reckwitz, *Transformation* 565).

Thus, in practical terms, the term "multiperspectivity" refers to the fact that the meaning and function of an object are always multiple and that 'our view on things' is not necessarily identical with that of other people.

An object showcased in a museum, for example, that in this particular context 'only' represents a certain object category within a scientific taxonomy can, at the same

time, be the icon of national pride in the place of its origin or a powerful cult object in the eyes of a religious community.

Thus, in principle, 'object identities' are variable and unstable, as they originate as a result of dynamic processes of subjective attributions of meaning and, accordingly, are subject to constant change. The appropriate treatment of human remains in museums and academic collections, a question that is controversially debated at present, is only one of many illustrative examples for this fact.

The assumption of entirely constructed and thus variable 'identities' of an object entails that inventories of archives, libraries, museums or academic collections can no longer be classified and described—at least not for the purpose of their cultural-theoretical conceptualisation—using, for example, material, formal, typological, cultural, chronological or geographical criteria. Rather, they have to be understood in general as theoretically and socio-practically indeterminate ensembles of objects that only become 'defined object collections' by their socio-cultural conceptualisations (e.g., "archive," "library," "museum") or the social practices they are exposed to (e.g., collecting, arranging, classifying, preserving, presenting), respectively.

If one assumes that the most prominent characteristics of institutions like archives,

libraries, museums and academic collections are their inventories of material and digital objects, overseen and curated, as well as the research conducted on them, one may describe these indeterminate ensembles of objects in theoretical and socio-practical terms as research-oriented *object repositories*.

“Repository” thereby designates any anthropogenic ‘conglomerate’ or cluster of objects in a particular arrangement or spatial context, whereas the term “object” refers likewise to inscribed and unscribed, marked and unmarked, material and digital artefacts, as well as natural things. Thereby, the term “object repository” also offers the greatest ‘flexibility’ for its epistemological, theoretical and methodological operationalization, such as in the context of object-oriented research, for example.

Furthermore, if one applies a political and social perspective on object repositories, one can say that they are *cultural property repositories*.

If nothing else, what is made clear by choosing this term is that the competences of the respective institutions lie particularly in the multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary field of cultural property research and that, therefore, these institutions have a special responsibility in protecting cultural property (see below

4.), an area of engagement increasingly becoming more relevant both socially and politically.

3. The Academic, Political and Media Technology Setting

3.1. “*Materializing Culture,*” *Culturizing Material, and Virtualizing Material Culture*
The academic, political and media technology frameworks within which object or cultural artifact repositories can act have been changing rapidly in recent years.

Status, responsibilities, as well as function and spheres of activity of archives, libraries, museums and academic collections with research mandates in the humanities or social sciences are presently influenced by three very dynamic processes that are located at the interface between research, society, politics, culture and technology, and that are extraordinarily multi-faceted. They can be characterized as “*materializing culture*” (Reckwitz, “Materialisierung”), *culturizing material* and *virtualizing material culture*.⁴

According to Andreas Reckwitz, “*materializing culture*” may be understood as a “fundamental reconfiguration of the perspective of cultural theories and cultural studies” by those theories that are often simplifyingly subsumed under terms like *cultural turn*, *practice turn* and *material turn*.

According to Reckwitz, “theories on media technologies, artifacts, space and emotion...” open up “new, additional empirical fields of analysis for recent cultural sciences” which, however, all contain a “more fundamental claim.”

This fundamental claim consists in “pointing to the fact that the socio-cultural world has ‘always’ been structured by media technologies, by artifact constellations, by spatial arrangements, as well as by affectivity and affectation, only thereby receiving its form” (20).

More than two decades after Bruno Latour vehemently argued for the inclusion of the “hidden” and “despised” masses of things (“non-humans”) into sociological analysis, objects as material participants in social practices regulated through meaning are increasingly becoming the focus of research strategies in the humanities and social sciences (see also Witzgall).

For cultural studies, the basically interdisciplinary field of material analysis acts as a bridge to questions and methods in disciplines such as sociology, natural science and information technology (for example Hilgert, “Artefaktanalysen”).

The term *culturizing material* is supposed to designate a thematic tendency that currently may be observed in different social, political and cultural spheres of activity.

Culturizing material manifests itself in the phenomenon that objects increasingly become the subject of practices and discourses located outside the fields of science and research and by now have attracted remarkable interest, a “new sensibility” (Coole), within the social, political and cultural spheres.

This involves three overarching complexes of problems that all belong to transdisciplinary cultural property research (see below 4.) and thus are also relevant for future measures in the field of cultural property protection:

1. the *provenance* and *appertinence* of objects;
2. the principal *multiperspectivity* of objects, depending on the individual or collective attributions of meaning (see above 2.);
3. the ‘translation’ of objects in situations of variable, transcultural reception.

Here, the term “provenance” does not only refer to the problem—currently under intense discussion—of cultural property unlawfully seized from its original owners during the Nazi Era, but, more generally, to the legal, political and cultural circumstances under which objects have arrived at their present location, to their legal status, and to the conditions

under which they could or should remain where they currently are.

In this context, one primarily thinks of cultural property of particular national or cultural significance, human remains, or archaeological objects for which no documentation is available regarding their circumstances of discovery or acquisition.

It remains unclear at present how the process of “culturizing material” in society, politics and culture is related to the tendency of “materializing culture” in cultural and social sciences as diagnosed by Reckwitz.

There are, however, far reaching implications, as postulated by Diana Coole, who assumes “that the new materialism offers a new ontological world of imagination, possibilities for a new sensibility, and practical guidance for the initiation of a critical social theory that is adequate for the 21st millennium” (Coole 46).

Finally, deriving from the multiperspectivity of objects (see above 2.) is the problem of ‘translation’ the objective of which is to achieve this multiperspectivity in the documentation, research and presentation of objects.

Relevant keywords in this context are the central principles of object presentation, “inclusion” and “accessibility,” the latter of which describes not only unlimited physi-

cal access, but also comprehensive linguistic and cultural accessibility.

Finally, parallel to “materializing culture” within academic institutions and “culturizing material” in the spheres of society, politics and culture, there are the processes often described as “digital revolution” or “digital transformation” and the possibilities generated through them for the digital documentation, representation and modelling of objects. They lead to a *dematerialization* of objects.

Very soon, this process of *virtualizing material culture* will not only cause a paradigm shift in object-oriented humanities and cultural studies research, but will also require a strategic repositioning of object repositories committed to research.

For only object or cultural property repositories can—by ways of their all-embracing object competence—accompany curatorially, consolidate scientifically, ground theoretically and guide practically this virtualization of material culture.

3.2. *Institutional Consequences*

In all likelihood, the three processes described above will permanently change the status, responsibilities and function of object repositories committed to research in the humanities or social sciences.

It can already be noted today that the tendency to materialize culture has signifi-

cantly enhanced the epistemological and political status of these institutions: Research questions and designs in the humanities are converging with the characteristic portfolio of topics and problems of object repositories committed to research. The artifacts that are curated by these institutions turn out to be indispensable evidence for research, especially for third-party-funded projects that are inquiring into different material cultures. All of a sudden, analytical skills in relation to objects that have long been dismissed as “ancillary sciences” have become key research competencies.

Institutions previously regarded as academic service facilities have become highly sought-after research partners on equal par whose unique features are the object inventories in their charge.

Obvious indications for this development and the political reevaluation of researching object repositories in Germany are, for example, joint third-party-funded interdisciplinary projects in the field of *material culture* research,⁵ thematically relevant lines of funding by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research; BMBF),⁶ the “Empfehlungen zu den wissenschaftlichen Sammlungen als Forschungsinfrastrukturen” (Recommendations for Academic Collections as Research Infra-

structures) of the Wissenschaftsrat (Academic Research Council) (2011), or the establishment of the BMBF's joint project “Marbach - Weimar - Wolfenbüttel” (since 2014), within which the “Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach” (German Literature Archive Marbach), the “Klassik Stiftung Weimar” (Weimar Classics Foundation) and the “Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel” (Herzog August Library Wolfenbüttel) want to link their collection-based research and establish joint research infrastructures, especially in the field of *Digital Humanities*.⁷

“Culturizing material” above all entails new and extensive social and political responsibilities for archives, libraries and museums.

Dealing appropriately with the challenges of the provenance, multiperspectivity and ‘translation’ of objects within the framework of transdisciplinary research on cultural property, as well as the resulting obligations for care and due diligence, open up various new fields of research and action for object repositories.

They can also render these institutions leaders in the cultural-political discourse on the general autonomy and equality as well as the mutual accountability of all involved dialogue partners. Internationalization and transculturation of object-oriented research in the humanities and in

social sciences can thereby develop in relation to the pertinent institutions’ aspiration to communicate the multiperspectivity of objects and the variability of “object identities,” to a broad public in a socially inclusive and culturally accessible way.

Virtualizing material culture—that is, the ‘dematerialization of objects’ by means of representation through digital media—offers possibilities and perspectives for such a broadly defined mediation that are only in their infancy at present.

Individualized mobile applications in museums that offer subtly nuanced and flexible representation options, digital artifacts that enable object-oriented research independent of the original, or virtual reconstructions of lost or destroyed coherent groups of artifacts will significantly increase the visibility and operating range of object repositories as institutions of research, culture and education on a national and international level.

In particular, the three-dimensional (3D) digital documentation of cultural property offers enormous potential compared to traditional 2D methods of documentation. Amongst other things, this potential accrues from the almost endless availability of the significantly more flexible and detailed 3D models, from their potential in the areas of cultural property documentation, fundamental research, and exhibition

design, as well as from the option to physically reproduce digital models by rapid prototyping procedures (for example, 3D-printing).

Finally, advances in digital 3D and automation techniques make commercially viable the serial capture of large numbers of cultural artifacts.

However, in all the fields mentioned above there remain academic, technological and legal challenges to which the object repositories with research commitment can contribute sound and demonstrable solutions, thereby guaranteeing the transfer to other, non-academic fields of 3D object digitalization.

3.3 Consequences for Research Policy

“Materializing culture,” culturizing material and virtualizing material culture all create an important frame of reference for repositioning object or cultural property repositories in relation to research policies. This political repositioning must be constituted by those unique features of object repositories that are immediately relevant for research as well as for the transfer of research results in scholarship, society and politics, and that render object repositories significantly different from other institutional actors of the academic system⁸ (especially universities and non-university research institutions).

Among these unique features are:

1. the object collections curated by object or cultural property repositories;
2. the analog and digital data and meta-data inventories that refer to these collections of objects;
3. the research relating to these object and data collections, as well as the pertinent theoretical meta-research;
4. the mediation or the translation of the object and data collections as well as of the research results into the academic and non-academic sphere;
5. the prominent position of many object or cultural property repositories at the interface between research, culture, society and politics.

Under the influence of the processes of “materializing culture,” culturizing material, as well as virtualizing material culture, these unique features enhance the formation and development of specific, high profile skills that all share a characteristic orientation towards objects.

In turn, these specific skills lead to certain social and political responsibilities associated with fields of action for the institutions in question. These characteristic competence and action areas are:

1. Fundamental object-oriented research, as well as the development or provision of object-oriented research

infrastructures. For example,

- digital and non-digital documentation; primary and detailed scholarly evaluation; publication of objects and object groups (in analog and digital versions); reconstruction of previously coherent collections of objects; material and conservation science-based analysis and documentation;
- analysis of objects and object groups under research schemes of the humanities, social and natural sciences, or information technology, also including external object collections;
- classification and publication of comparable external object collections; research projects with regional, chronological or socio-cultural reference to own object collections; archaeological field research; development of analytical methods and documentation and representation tools deriving from natural sciences and information technology, respectively;
- the generation and provision of 2D and 3D object data for flexible scholarly use, for example, in the reconstruction or surface analysis of objects, in museum contexts as well as in the internet of things and services;
- meta-research on theoretical conditions, disciplinary dispositions, methods, processes, standards and solu-

tions in the field of inventory-oriented research as well as digital research of objects (epistemological analysis);

2. Research-based protection of cultural property as well as “object politics”, for example,

- historical, institutional and political contextualization of objects (provenance, appertinence); biographical research on objects (“artifact biographies”); security and so-called dark field research (illicit excavations of archaeological sites, looting, illegal trade in cultural property); research into legal frameworks and (multilateral) processes of mediation;

- meta-research on disciplinary dispositions, methods, processes, standards and solutions in the field of cultural property research;

3. Mediation and translation of objects, as well as cultural education, for example,

- inclusive, accessible, multi-perspective presentation and mediation of objects and object groups (physically, digitally) and pertinent meta-research; research into methods and instruments for the transcultural presentation of objects;

4. Academic and social transformation by means of transdisciplinary research and design of social processes, for example,

- in the fields of cultural property protection as well as the multi-perspective mediation and translation of objects in transcultural spaces of reception (see below 4.).

A primary duty of object or cultural property repositories with research commitment must be to consolidate and further develop these duties and skills by means of innovative, transdisciplinary and trans-institutional research. Thereby archives, libraries, museums and academic collections can answer to their special responsibilities in shaping current social transformation processes.

4. Cultural Property Repositories as Agents of a “Transformative Scholarship”

The aforementioned skills and duties characteristic of object or cultural property repositories are marked by the fact that the underlying research features a transdisciplinary disposition.

It is an essential feature of “transdisciplinary research” that it offers “contributions to the solution of socially relevant problems” (Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski 42).

Thereby it is necessarily interdisciplinary and links different scholarly disciplines. Moreover, it involves relevant, non-scholarly actors in its research in order to achieve realizable recommen-

dations for actions. ... Transdisciplinary research reacts to the extended role of scholarship in modern times in which it is no longer only a producer of knowledge, but has also increasingly become an advocate and broker of knowledge. Transdisciplinary research catalyzes processes of transformation in society and thereby becomes a ‘transformative scholarship’. (ibid.)

According to Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski, it is also possible to observe a differentiation of forms of knowledge that are created within the framework of a transdisciplinary research. Besides the classical *system knowledge* (as ‘objective’ knowledge about correlations in and between natural and social systems) there is now also knowledge about transformations, i.e. about the practical reconfigurations that are possible, dependent on the respective actors, and knowledge about desirable (and therefore automatically ranked) futures. (42-43)

Physical and digital object research, cultural property research and research on object politics, as well as research on the multi-perspective mediation and translation of objects in transcultural spaces are research areas that are not only of high relevance for society and offer great potential for social transfer, but which also re-

quire the necessary integration of various non-academic actors (for example, institutions of education and culture, companies, ministries, public authorities, NGOs) and their respective skills and expertise.

Not least because of their prominent position at the interface between research, culture, society and politics, research-oriented object or cultural property repositories are virtually predestined to carry out transdisciplinary research.

For unlike any other group of institutions within the academic system, they are able “to integrate the knowledge of different disciplines and their interdisciplinary connections with actor’s knowledge regarding practical social and political challenges.” Thus, they have the capacity to “create a new balance between disciplinary and interdisciplinary research as well as transdisciplinary integration capacity” (Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski 47). An excellent example of such a challenge with social and cultural relevance to which object or cultural property repositories—in collaboration with other academic and non-academic actors—can make a significant contribution, is the protection of cultural property.

Because of the multiplicity and diversity of the tasks that result from the protection of cultural property, as well as the academic and practical skills and expertise that are

needed for their implementation, the protection of cultural property is an ideal example of transdisciplinary research.

For transdisciplinary research into cultural property ranges from fundamental object-oriented research (conservation, protection and maintenance, documentation, exploitation, publication) and research on provenance and appertinence to research on the prevention of illicit excavations, looting and the illegal trade in cultural property, as well as to research into the creation of legal frameworks that are optimally adjusted for the protection of cultural property (see for example the report of the German federal government on the protection of cultural property in Germany; Deutscher Bundestag).

Moreover, the transdisciplinary cultural property research should also provide the scientific basis for training programs and mediation models that are adjusted to the needs of all persons that are active in the field of cultural property protection (for example, scholars, museum personnel, staff of customs and law enforcement agencies), as well as decision makers in various executive authorities.

Finally, transdisciplinary cultural property research also strives towards the clarification of epistemological questions, such as the consideration of disciplinary dispositions, methods, processes and standards

in the fields of research on and protection of cultural property, as well as the theoretical reworking of concepts and terms (for example, Falser and Juneja).

Thus, transdisciplinary cultural property research not only provides a contribution to the protection of cultural property, but also catalyzes current processes of social transformation.

In particular, this concerns the social challenges of the mediation and translation of cultural differences, the improvement of bilateral and multilateral relationships on an international level, and the achievement of an international consensus on what “cultural property” and “cultural heritage” of global importance are and how they can be preserved in the long term.

The actors whose commitment is necessary for the accomplishment of these challenges originate from both academic and non-academic social realms, ranging from scholars in universities and non-university institutions, to the staff of ministries and law enforcement agencies, and representatives of the art trade.

Because of their unique features as well as their specific skills and responsibilities (see above, 3.3.), object or cultural property repositories can play a central role in transdisciplinary cultural property research.

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Thus, in the course of their theoretical and political repositioning, they can become pioneers of a “transformative scholarship” that serves as a “stage for the oriented integration of different knowledge inventories in a society” and supports “transformation processes practically, by means of the development of solutions as well as technical and social innovations” (Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski 69).

This would not only significantly sharpen the academic and institutional profile of the respective organizations on a national and international level, but also lead to an even stronger social integration of cultural property repositories and the scholarly and practical skills maintained by them. But first and foremost, object or cultural property repositories are thus best positioned to face the important socio-political challenges that lie ahead.

Notes

¹ A slightly modified German version of this article is published under the title “Materialisierung des Kulturellen – Kulturoisierung des Materiellen. Zu Status, Verantwortlichkeiten und Funktion von Kulturgutrepositories im Rahmen einer ‘transformativen Wissenschaft’” in Material Text Culture Blog 2014.2 <http://www.materiale-textkulturen.de/mtc_blog/2014_002_Hilgert.pdf>.

² All translations of German quotations are my own.

³ I would like to thank Kristina Heizmann for critically reading the present text and for numerous helpful comments.

⁴ On the related terms “New Materialism” or “Neo-Materialism” see in summary Witzgall.

⁵ For example, the SFB (Sonderforschungsbereich = Collaborative Research Center) 933 “Materiale Textkulturen. Materialität und Präsenz des Geschriebenen in non-typographischen Gesellschaften” (Material Text Cultures. Materiality and Presence of Writing in Non-Typographic Societies) of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation; DFG) at the University of Heidelberg, since 2011.

⁶ For example, “Sprache der Objekte” (Language of Objects), since 2012.

⁷ A comprehensive compilation of further scientific activities that can be understood as expression of the “materialization of the cultural” is offered by Witzgall 13 n. 1.

⁸ For the definition of the term “scientific system” see Schneidewind and Singer-Brodowski 23.

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FOCUS

A Damage Assessment of Iraq's Past: Archaeological Heritage Management on the Rania Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan

Tim Boaz Bruun Skuldbøl
Carlo Colantoni

This paper advocates an increasing focus on damage assessment, monitoring and adaptation to the impact of urban development on archaeologically rich regions.

As a case-study of the wider Middle East, the discussion focuses on archaeological strategies for damage assessment, monitoring and the management of archaeological cultural resources on the Rania plain in the Kurdistan autonomous region of north-east Iraq. The pressures of modern devel-

opment, with extensive infrastructure development, rapid expansion of population settlements and a hydro-electric dam—the waters of which inundate a substantial proportion of the plain—make the recording of valuable cultural heritage an urgent and demanding task.

Keywords: Heritage Management; Urban Developmental Pressure; Damage Assessment; Iraq; Archaeological Strategies and Methods

Damage to the cultural heritage of Iraq over the last three decades has been catastrophic. Military action, rampant looting and rapid development have resulted in damage on an unprecedented scale. Fortunately, the situation in the Kurdistan Region of the Republic of Iraq is far better than in the rest of the country. A myriad of issues fall under the broad umbrella term of cultural, and in this case archaeological, heritage: academic exchange, cultural identity, development (both infrastructure and economic), management and preservation, and politics and tourism. A brief overview of these issues forms the first part of this paper. The second part discusses the specific challenges, strategies and suggestions for the preservation of ancient cultural heritage noted by the authors during the University of Copenhagen Archaeological Project on the Rania Plain in Iraqi Kurdistan (see fig. 1), which includes a joint survey project on the Rania Plain with the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO).¹ Both these institutions collaborate closely in recording, assessing and monitoring the cultural heritage on the plain.

The Rania Plain is located in the Sulaimaniyah governorate and possesses a rich archaeological heritage. Today the plain and its many archaeological sites are heavily

affected by pressure from modern development. We are confronted with a number of major destructive forces: extensive infrastructure development, rapid expansion of population settlements, damaging agricultural practices and a hydro-electric dam. The widespread damage to the archaeological heritage calls for the development of management strategies. We believe that the Rania Plain case study is reflective of a general phenomenon and certain conditions that the wider Middle East is experiencing.

Central to a discussion of the management of cultural heritage in the context of landscape archaeology is the distinct form that it takes on the Rania Plain and of much of the Middle East, that of relic human landscapes: ancient settlements, in the form of earthen mounds and landscape features such as ancient canals and communication routes. In a fast developing region the problems regarding the preservation of recorded and, as yet, unrecorded archaeological sites against threats of destruction are great. At the same time the methods to catalogue, monitor and protect these resources are still evolving. The mitigation of potential damage and destruction to archaeological heritage requires as its basis a combined approach of (1) landscape survey (both on the ground by field survey and from the air by

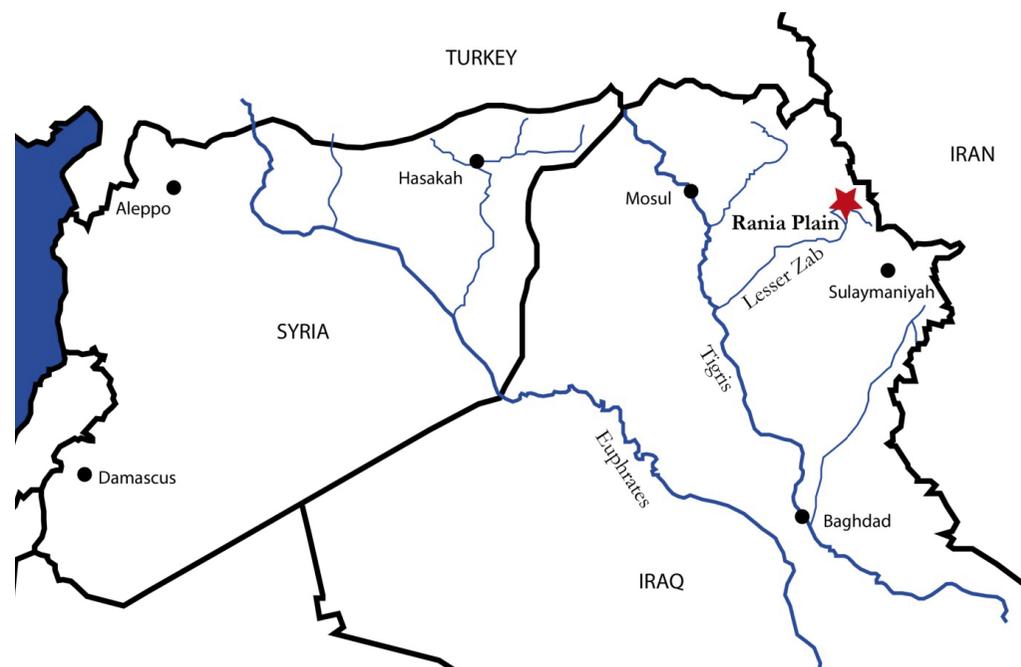


Figure 1: The Rania Plain, Northeastern Iraq.

Illustration: Tim Skuldbøl.

remote-sensing techniques); (2) salvage excavations; (3) the recording and cataloguing of archaeological remains; and (4) the construction of databases in order to provide the informational resources for stakeholders in the cultural heritage sector (government departments and museums, politicians, local communities, developers, archaeologists—international and local, such as the Kurdistan Archaeology Syndicate—, cultural management experts, funding bodies and heritage organisa-

tions) to effectively plan and protect the region's cultural patrimony.

The encouragement to preserve and conserve archaeological heritage *in situ* has grown considerably in recent decades, especially in Europe (for example the PARIS4 conference; see Gregory and Matthiesen). Despite the cultural and academic importance of protecting immovable archaeological features some regions of the Middle East suffer tremendously from the pressures of modern develop-

ment (not neglecting threats due to armed conflict and illegal activities).

Over the last few years press sources such as *Foreign Policy in Focus* (Monroe), *The Economist* and *Hurriyet Daily News* are increasingly reporting how Iraqi Kurdistan is a region undergoing rapid economic development. The expansion of modern towns and villages, rapid growth of industry and new infrastructure projects (e.g. roads, government facilities, sanitation and proposed oil pipelines) accompanied by agricultural intensification are buoyed by newly flowing oil wealth and pressure from ongoing population growth.

Rapid growth is regarded as being almost certainly detrimental to cultural heritage and, therefore, its greatest threat (Isakhan 27). As the economy develops and urban populations expand tensions will increase between government policy, private property rights, and the monetisation (often as a potential tourism resource) and preservation of heritage. Ancient relic landscapes, something not quite as tangible as a historical monument or ancient city neighbourhood, tend to be less fortunate in their preservation. These landscapes belong very much to the imagination: they lack obvious visible meaning, and thus lack immediately comprehensible financial or cultural value. This makes the preservation of the relic landscape a special

concern for local and central government planning decisions—planning decisions that require detailed documentation and clear evidence of cultural worth.

Political Background

The Iraqi Kurdish Autonomous Region, administered by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), consists of four provinces in the upper north-eastern part of the federal Republic of Iraq. *De facto* semi-autonomous since the end of the First Gulf War in late 1991, it has an economy based on oil revenue and a stable security situation that encourages development projects.

In the period following the First Gulf War, and the implementation of a no-fly zone in late 1991, Rothfield reports that the whole of Iraq suffered looting (“Preserving Iraq’s Heritage” 6). After the Coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003, in which there was widespread damage and looting of sites as well as the theft of artefacts from Iraqi museums, Iraqi Kurdistan remained relatively stable and has been spared the massive pillaging and destruction that sites in southern Iraq have and continue to suffer. This situation, in the opinion of Bogdanos, is partly due to the difficulty and danger of policing sites in the south (156). Rothfield states that as of 2006/07, of the ten thousand registered sites in Iraq, 10% are estimated to be badly damaged each year

(21). These statistics reflect a complex nexus of organised crime, the illicit antiquities trade and local economic desperation.

Iraqi Kurdistan is at present a safe, welcoming and stable environment in which to work. With the wealth of cultural patrimony existing in Iraq, the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) and the General Directorate of Antiquities for the KRG face a challenging and complex task to record, safeguard and monitor cultural heritage. However, due to the KRG’s autonomy there is strong subsidiary authority in the management of cultural heritage and antiquities within the federal republic that affects a unified national programme.

Heritage in the Middle East

General threats to cultural patrimony in the Middle East are well documented. Amongst the most prominent are urban encroachment, infrastructure development, damage by agricultural expansion and intensification, looting of museums and archaeological sites (cf. Stone), and ideological or conflict driven damage to sites and monuments, including World Heritage sites. Threats to heritage are a problem in Jordan, Egypt, Afghanistan; endemic in western and southern of Iraq; and catastrophic in Syria.² Rapid modern urban sprawl is a clearly visible and pro-

found threat. The archaeologist Jason Ur (113) reports how the site of Kilik Mishik is slowly being swallowed up by the urban sprawl of Erbil, whilst the American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII) (2) has published satellite images showing the ancient city of Nineveh being encroached upon by an expanding Mosul. In Kurdistan, responsibility for the preservation of cultural heritage lies on the international level with UNESCO, on the national level with the SBAH, and regionally under the General Director of Antiquities for Kurdistan, which in the opinion of Palumbo, Agnew and Myers (340) lacks resources following many years of embargoes and political change. Yet Stuart Gibson in his report on the Kurdistan museum service believes the will for positive action is there with determined and committed museums (3). Moreover, there is a growing commitment in Kurdistan to the funding and training of local experts, government and Directorate of Antiquities staff.

Distinctions in the Types of Cultural Heritage

An important distinction to be made at this point is one between conventional heritage sites—ancient and historical monuments and buildings, and excavated archaeological sites—and relic landscapes

consisting of ancient man-made landscape features and indistinct settlements in the form of earthen mounds.

An ancient settlement usually consists of anonymous landscape features that do not offer an easy understanding of their significance. This type of landscape represents a case of heritage lying between the tangible and intangible; i.e. it is known but not clearly discernible. There are no easy ways of solving the problem of promoting these types of sites in the public imagination. Relic landscapes are not clear cut monuments of the type thought to warrant UNESCO accreditation (although a debate is emerging over 'Cultural landscapes'; UNESCO 12), but landscapes holding finite and easily damaged or destroyed archaeological data.

This form of heritage makes public awareness problematic as there are no easily discernible monuments (except for the ancient settlement mounds themselves) and a culture-historical significance that is abstract. On the Rania Plain, the vast majority of the sites are anonymous landscape features that require a specialised knowledge to fully appreciate their worth. They fall outside the boundaries that clearly demarcate heritage space and there is no obvious way of marketing them via national or international tourism. This lack of an immediate 'value' may hinder policy deci-

sions regarding development and exploitation of the landscape.

Surveys play a vital role in recording these landscapes. They underpin Iraqi heritage management by identifying and recording cultural resources such as sites, monuments and landscape features: many of which are not readily identifiable.

Heritage, Tourism and Identity in Iraqi Kurdistan

The primary focus of heritage preservation in Kurdistan is on monuments, caves and the built environment. The most prominent are the multi-national projects undertaking salvage and restoration work—such as the French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, UNESCO and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) projects—at Erbil's citadel, Koya's Ottoman era citadel, the site of the Neo-Assyrian rock reliefs at Khinnis and the internationally famous Shanidar caves. The Archaeology section of the KRG Tourism website ("Kurdistan. Land of Nature and History") is representative of policy. In contrast to research focused excavations, the Directorate of Antiquities in Erbil has undertaken salvage excavations at several small sites threatened by the expansion of Erbil.

Cultural tourism has been considered a driving force for the heritage industry and in the case of Iraqi Kurdistan there

have been doubts over the clash of priorities between preservation and tourism (Rothfield, "Iraq Cultural Heritage Policy: The Kurdish Problem"; Exell and Rico 674). Al-Taie reports how the Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities plans a programme of restoration and improvement to heritage sites across Iraq, including the construction of new tourism facilities and infrastructure.

A significant undercurrent in cultural heritage is the politics of identity, in particular identity formation. For the Kurdish Autonomous Region heritage can play an important role in the (re)construction of a distinct regional identity—as well as the negotiation of identities of minority groups within Kurdistan itself—as it seeks to differentiate itself and accentuate a distinct identity. As a means of solidifying identity cultural heritage is far less politically controversial than the issue of full autonomy.

Archaeological Research in Iraqi Kurdistan

In recent years the stable security environment in Iraqi Kurdistan and the Iraqi Republic's enthusiasm for archaeological research has led to a resurgence of projects in the region. The SBAH in Baghdad and the General Directorate of Antiquities of the KRG, based in Erbil, have welcomed new foreign-led and

joint projects to investigate Iraq's cultural heritage.

Previously, surveys were undertaken in most parts of Iraq with a peak in the 1960s and 1970s. In later decades the Kurdish region of Iraq was largely inaccessible to foreign projects due to wars, embargoes against the regime of Saddam Hussein, violent clashes and the general political instability in the region (Ur et al. 89).

At present, there are dozens of archaeological projects being undertaken in the Kurdish region.³ These are both international and local government led projects, and include a growing number of large and small-scale surveys and excavation projects recording the cultural patrimony in the region (see Altaweel).⁴ The Rania Plain Survey is itself contextualised by new archaeological surveys in surrounding provinces.

The Rise in Remote Sensing

Recent advances in remote sensing with the use of aerial photographs and commercially available satellite imagery has revolutionised archaeology in recent years, facilitating the growth in the discipline of satellite image-based landscape analysis.

Remote sensing is utilised in cultural heritage management and documentation and is a means of protecting Iraqi heri-

tage. High-resolution satellite imagery is deemed by Brodie and Parcak to be an economically effective means of undertaking this task. Publicly available satellite imagery, including open access Google Earth and Bing Maps, have been used to identify sites, and assess and monitor damage (such as looting) and long-term developmental pressures from urban and rural growth (see, for example, Lane; Contreras and Brodie; Parcak).

The development of simple damage assessment strategies and monitoring techniques require cost-effective solutions. The use of satellite imagery allows monitoring in the medium term. However, recent or high-resolution imagery are not always available or affordable. Short-term and fine-focus monitoring can be fulfilled by the use of self-procured aerial imagery and field surveys.

A popular new addition to the tools employed for landscape and site investigation and recording are small radio-controlled micro-helicopters—more commonly termed 'drones'—, often incorporating GPS units (Hill). Aerial photography and kite photography have been utilised for decades, but drones that have a payload sufficient to lift a small digital camera are more flexible platforms and have introduced economic, easily transportable and deployable remote sensing into the field.



Figure 2: The Dokan Dam.

Photo: Henrik Brahe and Tim Skuldbøl 2013.

They have been used for a range of tasks such as site identification, mapping (to produce high-resolution and 3D digital surface models) and site monitoring in many parts of the world (Casana et al.; Fernández-Hernandez et al.; Parcak).

The Rania Plain: Archaeological Background and Aims of the Project

The Rania Plain lies in an enclosed valley in the western foothills of the Central Zagros Mountains in north-eastern Iraq and

is a spatially and ecological constrained environment. The plain is approximately 30 by 20 kilometers square or about half the size of the Shahrizor Plain to the south. Within this area are the large urban centres of Hajiawa, Chwarqurna and Rania, and a large number of ever growing villages. The Sungasur Gorge gives access to the Rania Plain from the smaller Pishdar Plain to the east and through which the Lesser Zab River enters the plain and flows into the artificial lake created by the Dokan

Dam. The lake, which is located in the central and southern part of the Rania Plain, covers approximately 150 square kilometres or about a fourth of the plain. The multi-purpose dam was constructed in the late 1950s to regulate the flow of the Lesser Zab river, store water for irrigation and to provide hydro-electric power (see fig. 2).

The plain possesses a temporally profound cultural history with numerous archaeological sites dating from the early Neolithic to pre-modern times densely distributed across the landscape, particularly in association with the Lesser Zab river and natural springs.

Between 1956 and 1960, prior to the completion of the Dokan Dam, Iraqi archaeologists surveyed forty ancient sites on the Rania Plain (al-Soof) and subsequently investigated ten selected sites. One of the most extensively excavated was the now partially submerged Tell Basmusian (see al-Soof). The most famous site on the plain is that of Tell Shemshara. It was initially excavated by a Danish team in 1957 (finding early Neolithic and Middle Bronze Age occupation) and is currently being investigated by the University of Reading (directed by R. and W. Matthews)—working in the earliest Neolithic levels—and NINO, who are concentrating

on Middle Bronze Age occupation (Eidem; Eidem and Læssøe).

In 2012 a Danish team from the University of Copenhagen began investigating the twin sites of Bab-w-Kur. Located about 5 kilometers south-west of Shemshara, the sites lie deep within the inundation zone of the Dokan Dam (a band about 3-7 kilometers wide along the lake's northern edge). We recorded extensive surface remains—exposed by water erosion—of a walled and well-organized settlement from the Late Chalcolithic 2-4 period (4000-3300 BC) (Skuldbøl et al.).

The research goals of the University of Copenhagen project are: (1) to investigate the development of settlement on the plain, placing it into a wider analysis of the development of early urban societies of Northern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq, Syria and Southern Turkey); and (2) to record valuable data to be employed in the cataloguing and protecting of the extant archaeological heritage of the Rania Plain. To this end, we are developing simple and cost-effective strategies from established practices (many of which are shared by other projects in the region) to identify, monitor and mitigate damage and potential threats to intact cultural material. Methods such as high-intensity field survey, targeted salvage excavations, satellite imagery analyses, Geographical Informa-



Figure 3: The project uses a microcopter with a high-resolution camera. As a tool for recording cultural heritage they are a rapid, relatively inexpensive resource. Photos: Henrik Brahe and Tim Skuldbøl 2013.

tion Systems (GIS) analysis, geological coring and newly-emerging imagery technologies (see fig. 3) are being adapted to the specific challenges of the Rania Plain.

In the autumn of 2013, as a test of ancient settlement density of the wider Rania Plain project area and in collaboration with NINO, we conducted a preliminary high-intensity field survey involving the collection of surface materials—primary pot sherds—within a 4 square kilometers sample area. More than thirty sites were recorded, a third of which although small, were previously unknown. Almost all the sites lie in the lake's flood zone. The high site numbers in this sample demonstrates

the potential number of archaeological sites under threat in just this zone alone. The project uses an integrated approach to understand the cultural landscape of the Rania Plain. A rich data resource has been created by combining recently acquired survey data, satellite and aerial imagery, older data from Corona satellite imagery of the 1960s and 1970s, and data from the salvage-survey carried out by al-Soof in the 1950s. This has provided insights into: (1) the present state of preservation of the plain's archaeological remains; (2) evidence of damage dating to before the beginning of this project; (3) damage and threats due to recent urban expansion and the intensification of agri-

culture; and (4) the effects of the seasonal fluctuations of the lake on sites lying within its inundation zone.

The combined data of the survey and excavations will provide a better understanding of the nature, chronology and extent of human occupation on the plain (see Skuldbøl et al.; Skuldbøl, Hald and Colantoni).

The Rania Plain: Impact of Modern Developments and the Destruction of Archaeological Heritage

The archaeological heritage of the Rania Plain suffers a number of prominent threats. There is urban sprawl and infrastructure construction in the northern half of the plain, and intensive agricultural exploitation in and adjacent to the flood zone of the Dokan Lake in the southern half. Whilst archaeological sites lying within this zone are also subject to seasonal damage by the lake's waters. Looting, however, is rare in the region.

With the construction of the Dokan dam many of the archaeological sites on the Rania Plain were submerged. However, seasonal changes in the water level of the reservoir—as it rises in the spring and falls in the summer and autumn—expose many sites previously covered by the waters to waves and erosional processes that remove large tracts of *in situ* archae-



Figure 4: The destruction of intact archaeological remains at the site of Lower Waranka.

Photo: Henrik Brahe and Tim Skuldbøl 2013.

ological deposits.⁵ The depositing of silt by the lake is also concealing low mounds and other archaeological features. As a result, archaeological heritage within the flood zone is under tremendous threat (see fig. 4).

The towns and villages on the plain are rapidly expanding and together with the development of infrastructure threaten archaeological sites (see fig. 5). Threats are

exemplified by the modern Islamic cemeteries, which are often located on ancient mounds near modern villages or towns; the spread of industrial works such as the series of huge concrete works and factories in the towns of Chwarqurna and Rania (indicators of the construction boom on the plain); the construction of new roads; and the noted growth in the population corridor on the western side of the plain.

The ancient settlement mound situated in the middle of the town of Boskin is a particularly good example of a site being destroyed by modern urban expansion. In 1956 it was, according to al-Soof, a relatively large intact mound. Today the top and sides of the mound have been levelled for a water-pumping station. The remains of a cemetery cover part of the mound. On all sides houses encroach onto the mound together with deep, large pits said to have been dug by the Iraqi military. The pits are now being expanded and filled with town garbage (see fig. 6).

Intensive agricultural activities such as the deep-ploughing of fields, the digging of irrigation channels and earthen agricultural water reservoirs (primarily in the flood zone) are destroying many low mounded archaeological sites (see fig. 7).



Figure 5: Corona satellite image from 1968 versus modern Bing Maps image showing changes in roads and the expansion of the town of Rania.

Sources: Corona image 1968; DigitalGlobe 2014 and Microsoft Corporation 2014.

Discussion: Managing Non-Conservable Remains

How do you manage irreplaceable archaeological cultural material that cannot be easily preserved *in situ*?

Despite the value of protecting archaeological heritage *in situ* some regions of the Middle East are under tremendous pressure from modern development. Regions such as the Rania Plain require advocates if their current fate is not to be simply ignored. The multitude of separate demands and interests that regional authorities face, make the establishment of effective and comprehensive heritage protection a demanding task. Nevertheless, development

will and must continue, balancing the needs for heritage preservation and basic infrastructure, building space and farmland for the region's population.

We believe in an adaptive approach with an increased focus on developing and implementing damage assessment and monitoring strategies (the linchpins for managing endangered archaeological heritage) that are both simple and cost-effective.

Regional Databases for Site Recording and Preservation

A fundamental building block for the preservation of the cultural landscape in Iraq Kurdistan is the development of open ac-

cess and comprehensive site inventory catalogues that can be used to monitor threats to archaeological sites. These catalogues, containing details such as site location, chronological period and state of preservation, are already under development in some regions of the Middle East. Ideally they should possess the characteristics of being an interactive and easily maintainable GIS-based online database founded upon on contemporary satellite imagery. For the Rania Plain this means contributing documented sites, evidence of damage and potential threats.

Considerable effort and funding has gone into developing such a heritage inventory system. Ongoing projects include an Australian-led undertaking developing a database to record the damage to heritage in Iraq (Isakhan). In 2011 the Middle Eastern Geodatabase for Antiquities (MEGA-Iraq) project was initiated; a collaboration between the Getty Conservation Institute, the World Monument Fund and the Iraq SBAH. This web-based GIS database (founded on Open source software and underpinned by Google Earth) is designed to be a national inventory management system for the recording, monitoring and mapping of archaeological sites and monuments. According to Palumbo, Agnew and Myers (341), and Kennedy, the aim is to constantly update the conditions

of sites, for example: tracking damage, theft and threats from development with the data available on a restricted basis to the relevant authorities to minimise the chances of sites being easily targeted by unwanted attention.⁶ Significantly for work in the wider region, the project faced problems due to the state of security in much of the country (Palumbo, Agnew and Myers 348). This initiative has now been superseded by a new heritage inventory and management system, the Arches Project (a Getty Conservation Institute and World Monument Fund project).

Capacity Building and Co-operation

Capacity building and training programmes are under way in Iraqi Kurdistan with a number of multi-national and Institutional collaborations (Cereti and Giunta). Training covers: heritage management; the recording, conservation and preservation of buildings and archaeological sites; and surveying techniques (see the websites of the Sulaimaniyah Antiquities Directorate; the U.S. State Department and the University of Delaware).

During the October 2013 field research season the site of Bab-w-Kur was visited by students from the University of Raparin (Rania)—who later participated in a day of excavations—, and the Sulaimaniyah Antiquities Directorate. Work at the site was also

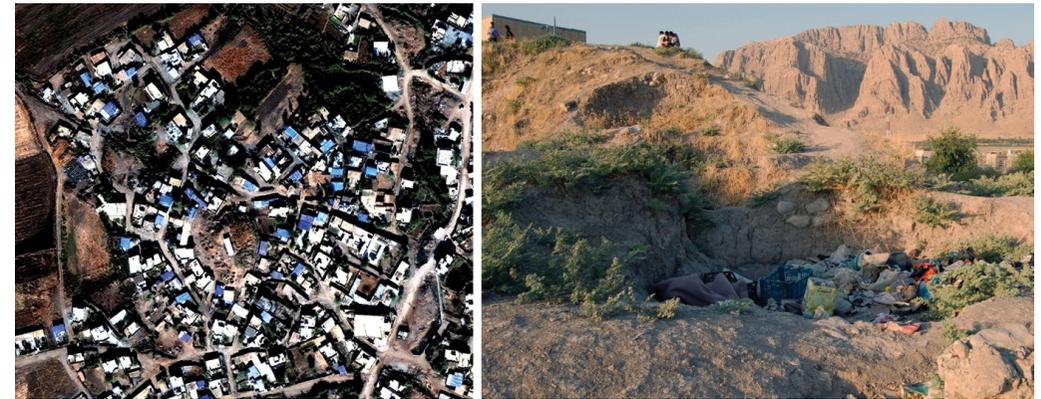


Figure 6: Damage to the ancient mound of Boskin.

A) World View 2 satellite image (Source: DigitalGlobe 2010). B) Photo: Tim B.B. Skuldbøl 2012.

the subject of television reports. These events testify to a growing local interest and pride in the cultural heritage of the plain. However, in order to increase the capacity for risk assessment and salvage work of the local antiquities directorate more funding and staff would be required.

Simple, Cost Effective Methods

In order to protect ancient landscapes and sites archaeologists need to support heritage practice by providing a basic level of information and observation in a timely manner. Recording and cataloguing of heritage resources are essential for long-term management and protection strategies. Archaeological impact assessments and the provision of sufficient data is necessary to formulate a

government policy of considered development, make informed development decisions at a local level and to prioritise archaeological rescue projects. To respond to the speed of change research needs to be cost-effective, efficient and rapidly disseminated. Tools and strategies may include:

- Comprehensive records of the region's heritage resources are needed to update the Atlas of the Archaeological Sites in Iraq. To assist this, simple site catalogues incorporating visual records, chronological and locational data, and status assessments should be produced that can be easily integrated into more complex database systems in development.
- Use of remote sensing to monitor

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Figure 7: The impact of intensified agricultural activities (water reservoirs) in a section of the Rania Plain.
A) Photo: Carlo Colantoni 2013. B) World View 2 satellite image (Source: DigitalGlobe 2010).

changes and threats to the heritage landscape. Drone photography offers cheap, targeted and up-to-date information compared to satellite imagery and can be employed to target areas that are known to be under threat. The project is in the process of compiling and monitoring threats, which will be shared with the local antiquities directorate.

- Engagement with stakeholders (e.g. local communities, governmental bodies, academic institutions and participants, and schools) to raise awareness of the cultural heritage value of the landscape and the threats it faces. Involving and informing communities allows them to engage with government bodies in the protection and preserva-

tion of their own heritage. The sharing of knowledge concerning sites under threat is necessary to effectively target salvage excavations or site documentation.

Our aim here is to open a discourse on how to formulate simple, cost-effective methods of recording and preserving a near-invisible heritage against modern pressures. Databases are in development, but they may take years to get up and running. In the meantime, the prospects for archaeological heritage management on the Rania Plain are in the balance. Rapid urban development and erosion caused by the lake are taking a toll on the relic landscape, whilst sites are being heavily

damaged and many will probably go unrecorded and therefore be lost.

In the case of the Rania Plain, the heritage landscape is not one of tension between the state and local community in sharing cultural and economic benefits—as can be witnessed in other parts of the Middle East—but is a landscape subject to threats that are more prosaic. Developmental demands, investment opportunities, vested interests, the profit motive and the lack of an obvious tourism dividend, are among the factors that intertwine to create a set of competing interests and demands on this cultural landscape. It is a historical relic landscape that still needs to be fully documented and one that requires communities and stakeholders to engage with the slightly abstract values of cultural worth. These are issues common to many parts of the Middle East, but in the case of Kurdistan and the Rania Plain, the extent of survey work presently being undertaken or planned has the potential to provide a comprehensive heritage management data resource for the Kurdish government in the short term. In comparison to a rather bleak damage assessment for the cultural heritage of the rest of Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan holds the possibility of a highly positive outcome for the preservation of a fragile and irreplaceable cultural patrimony.

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Notes

¹ The NINO Archaeological Project on the Rania Plain is directed by Jesper Eidem.

² The threat to Iraqi and Syrian heritage due to increasing sectarian violence and the struggle over territorial control during the summer of 2014 involving groups such as IS is yet to be fully understood.

³ To date, more than forty archaeological teams have commenced work in Iraqi Kurdistan (National Science Centre, Poland; Curry 18-19).

⁴ There are a number of landscape surveys presently being undertaken in Iraqi Kurdistan, these include: the Erbil Plain Archaeological Survey; the Shahrizor Survey Project; the Sirwan Survey Project; a provincial survey of the Governorate of Sulaimaniyah in collaboration with l'Institut français du Proche-Orient Iraq that overlaps with the Rania Plain; the MAIKI- Italian Archaeological Mission in Iraqi Kurdistan survey of the Chamchamal region; the Land of Nineveh Regional Project; the Upper Greater Zab Archaeological Reconnaissance Project; the Rawanduz Archaeological Program; Upper Tanjero Project; the Eastern Habur

Archaeological Survey and the Rania Plain Survey. In addition, there are a large number of archaeological excavation projects developing across Iraqi Kurdistan and a gazetteer of archaeological projects in Iraqi Kurdistan, including excavation projects, is now being prepared by John MacGinnis, Kostantinos Kopanias and Jason Ur (see also Altaweel).

⁵ Extensive damaged caused by the lake's waters have been reported by Eidem (9) at the site of Shemshara, whilst heavy damage is clearly visible on the mound of Basmusian.

⁶ Although, at the time of writing, this project was reported on the Arches Project website to have stalled due to administrative changes.

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Cultural Heritage in the Gulf: Blight or Blessing? A Discussion of Evidence from Dubai, Jeddah and Doha

Djamel Boussaa

In the Gulf and after gaining independence in the 1960s and 1970s, many cities witnessed a staggering rapid urban growth. The urban centers that formed the central parts of these cities underwent the continuous pressures of destruction and redevelopment. A large number of these centers were often demolished and replaced by alien, imported, high-rise buildings. The urban cores that escaped complete demolition survived as isolated pockets in the middle of hybrid environments.

This dilemma raises the important question: is this surviving cultural heritage a blight or blessing? To elaborate:

Is it “blight” and an obstacle that stifles our cities from moving forward to aspire toward a bright and prosperous future, or is it a “blessing” as an asset that can act as a catalyst to promote our cities while maintaining strong roots in their past? Accordingly, what should be the future of these surviving historic centers? Will they be demolished to pave the way for more ambitious growth, or can they be conserved and sustained for present and future generations? Will the historic city, as the heart of urban life and the main protector of our cities’ identities, survive and continue to exist within the

emerging global cities of today and tomorrow?

This paper attempts to highlight the importance of dealing with these issues of conservation and development, by raising and discussing the following question: How can our cultural heritage be a setting for appropriate conservation and development in emerging global environments? In order to discuss this issue, three historic centers in Gulf cities—old Dubai in UAE, old Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, and old Doha in Qatar—will form the cases for this research.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage; Urban Conservation; Sustainability; Tourism

Introduction

Historic centers present a rich cultural heritage, ranging from neighborhoods, streets, and plazas that reflect the past. Unlike the modern alien high rise towers, historic buildings and urban elements uncover long chapters of history and events that increase local pride and cultural identity. In addition to housing, the most significant buildings found in historic centers include mosques, *madrassas*, caravanserais, *khans*, *hammams*, forts, and palaces. Unlike museums—where the past is displayed, but not touched—historic cities and urban cen-

ters are places where life is bustling (An-glin 1).

During the late 1960s, when most of the Gulf countries gained independence, the initial goal of many governments was to change the image of the Gulf city from that of underdevelopment and poverty to that of modernity and prosperity. In order to accomplish this, they launched large-scale redevelopment projects to catch up with the modern world. However, numerous historic quarters and buildings were sacrificed along the way. Historic centers, strategically located in major cities and capitals, were seen as “obstacles” in the face of rapid modernization. Therefore, in many Gulf cities, complete historic areas were totally decimated, including Old Abu Dhabi and Al Shindagha in Dubai, and Fareej Al Slata and Msheireb in Doha.

Most historic centers that survived this wave of demolition faced issues in adapting to the needs and aspirations of the present. Most of the remaining historic centers suffer from over-occupation by low income tenants, lack of maintenance, neglect, decay, and lack of concern from the local and central authorities. Moreover, a lack of appropriate city planning and changes in consumer tastes have worsened the situation to

such a degree that these historic centers have been transformed into “slums” (UNESCO 5-7). The task of restoring these historic areas from blight to blessing, through conservation and development, needs to be urgently addressed before they disappear forever. With land values rising, these surviving historic patches face multiple pressures from their owners, tenants, and outside developers, to tear them down for massive and more profitable redevelopment projects.

The viability of a historic center depends on how its position, function, and values can be sustained within the rapidly growing and changing urban system, particularly with respect to modern districts. Central cores once bustled with life because they provided a diversity of services within a small area and lay within easy reach for pedestrians. Today, the introduction of vehicular roads has caused major disruptions to the old fabric of cities, destroying many significant historic districts and buildings.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine whether it is possible to reconsider both the cultural and economic functions of the remaining historic centers and districts in the Gulf. Despite their fragmentary survival, these historic areas should be seen as a blessing and not a blight,

and their life and identity should be sustained through appropriate urban regeneration strategies.

Cultural Heritage in the Gulf

Slum clearance in the name of modernity and improving the wellbeing of the population is a major cause of the erosion and destruction of cultural heritage in the Gulf. Lack of planning in historic areas has given developers and owners the ability to quickly erode this cultural heritage for maximum financial return. This trend has been stressed by Fethi:

Many historic areas and buildings were demolished overnight, or burned down by their owners for this greedy reason. But, when these market forces are properly controlled and channeled, say for cultural tourism, then these very destructive forces can become saviors of heritage. (55-56)

Thusly, the tensions between change and constancy, and the conflict between the goals of conservation and development, may be reconciled.

In the Gulf during the 1960s and 1970s, modernization was thought of as synonymous to Westernization; this resulted in a rejection of traditional values in architecture and urban design. The massive importation of foreign Western building

styles, planning regulations, and traffic techniques without any well-thought adaptation to local conditions caused the wholesale clearance of historic and traditional areas. Ronald Lewcock, a well-known conservationist with a long experience in the Arab world, wrote in 1990:

Contemporary city administrators and regional urban planners are loath to become involved in cultural preservation or adaptive reuse of old buildings [...] The architects and planners because almost all their training is in the provision of new buildings, new suburbs or new towns on virgin sites—they have practically no training in ways of improving existing buildings [...] On a practical level, both the politicians and the planners would generally prefer to clear an area in order to begin anew without all the attendant problems, complexities [...] that urban and building conservation involve. (34-35)

Under the impact of high density, many historic areas and centers deteriorated rapidly. The estimated number of historic cities or urban cores that survived in the Arab world, with varying states of conservation, is 200 to 250 (Fethi 49). Despite some level of decay, these historic remnants are still significant; with appropriate policy, they can still become vehicles for

enhancing and sustaining local identity and pride, while not hindering the ongoing growth of the cities.

The main reasons and arguments for conserving urban heritage in the Gulf (see fig. 1) can be classified into two categories. First, urban heritage helps forge individual community and national identities, enabling people to define who they are (Boussaa, "Search for Identity"). Secondly, urban heritage may have economic importance, as people increasingly seek to reuse historic areas and buildings as resources for trade, tourism, and other economic activities.



Figure 1: Showing the conservation efforts in Fareej Al Fahidi in Dubai which started in 1996.

Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

Urban conservation policies are usually area-based, through the designation of conservation areas. The conservation of a

historic urban center is not an isolated and individual project. Rather, this includes a series of projects—not only physical, but also social and cultural. They should all be combined together to respond to the local needs of the community (Orbasli 18). There is a growing understanding that most of the historic cities in the Gulf are facing multiple pressures. Competing demands for land use, introduction of new economic activities, and marketing of heritage resources place a heavy burden on local heritage players. The latter strive to find appropriate ways to manage these surviving old cores. During recent years, new policy mechanisms have emerged to reconcile the conflicting demands of conservation and development by applying sustainable development policies to minimize any further losses in cultural heritage resources (Strange 229).

Historic urban centers represent a great economic, social, and cultural investment that would be unwise for the community to waste. One reason for conserving urban heritage is its potential rehabilitation, and heritage tourism can be a major catalyst and incentive for urban conservation. Developing historic areas for tourism and commerce requires transition of conservation from a political, cultural, and social level to that of economic development.

Trade patterns in historic Gulf cities are rapidly changing; small workshops and craft activities are being displaced because they are seen as too noisy and unsanitary to be left in the heart of cities, which are preparing to welcome tourists. In many historic cities, local crafts and activities are being replaced by “souvenirs” and “coffee” shops because these kinds of shops generate more income—a trend known as gentrification. This trend happened in the historic city of Sanaa in Yemen, where the local craftsmen were displaced from the inner city to provide enough space for tourist amenities.

Urban heritage must be viewed as a blessing, as it is a primary actor in maintaining and regenerating the lost cultural identities of the Gulf cities. Familiar buildings such as mosques, souqs, and *madrasas* represent shared cultural values. They are more important than unfamiliar and alien objects in creating a “sense of place.” New developments in the social and technological field are only to be rejected if they destroy the historic environment. Change requires a strong relationship with the past in order to integrate and harmonize the old and new. Therefore, a marriage between conservation and development may be capable of improving the quality of life.

Urban conservation carries two main benefits with it: identity and utility, which refer respectively to conservation and development. A sense of identity needs to be enhanced to withstand the radical effects produced by rapid growth and globalization. Utility means keeping the heritage resource alive through an appropriate adaptive reuse program, involving elements such as tourism, trade, administration, and other economic activities. Urban conservation has become an important issue in the Arab world. Interesting conservation attempts can be found in cities like Sana’a, Tunis, Baghdad, Fez, and Aleppo. In the Gulf, the Sultanate of Oman has succeeded in preserving most of its urban heritage. Other Gulf countries are trying hard to save their cultural heritage as well, as can be seen in Dubai, UAE; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; and Doha, Qatar.

The Historic City of Dubai, UAE

Dubai, the second largest city in the UAE, is the most cosmopolitan and economically open city in the Gulf; it is less oil-dependent than UAE’s capital Abu Dhabi. Dubai is located at the crossroads of ancient Arabian trade routes midway between Europe and the Far East. The emirate lies on an area of 3,885 square kilometers, corresponding to 5% of the UAE; the present population numbers a

total of 2,248,908 persons as of May 2014 (“Population and Vital Statistics”).

With the exception of the traditional mountainous Hatta village, Dubai is a semi-desert, with one of the most spectacular harbors in the region. Dubai Creek, called locally “*Khor Dubai*,” is ten kilometers long and divides the city into two parts. The southern side is called Bur Dubai, which comprises three main historic districts: Shindagha, Al Fahidi, and Batsakia. The northern part includes old Deira, the new central business district, and the international airport. *Al Abra*, the traditional *dhow* crossing over the creek, is still largely used to commute between the two banks of the creek, Bur Dubai and Deira.

Rapid growth in the years following the formation of the United Arab Emirates in 1971 turned Dubai into a vast complex of construction sites. Roads, power lines, telephone lines, streetlights, and drainage were laid down within decades. While this rapid development improved the wellbeing of residents, on the way it sacrificed many significant chapters of the city’s cultural heritage. The rapid urbanization that followed during the 1970s threatened the historic center of Dubai with complete extinction. Today, the old core survives as disparate small parts in the city; only 371

historic buildings have survived from an original number of 3,000 (Bukhash). In Dubai, as elsewhere in the UAE and the Gulf, urban conservation has been enlarged from an initial concern with the protection of individual buildings and monuments to the conservation of groups of buildings and areas. During the last decade, heritage conservation has been increasingly seen as a valuable policy instrument in helping to regenerate many historical districts such as Shindagha and Bastakia. This trend has become synonymous with urban revival, since conservation of the urban heritage can help fulfill economic objectives as well as respond to social and cultural needs. Reconstruction of Al Shindagha forms an interesting example in revitalizing old Dubai.

Revitalization of the Shindagha Heritage Area

The original residence of the ruling family, Al Maktoum, was in the Shindagha district situated at the mouth of the creek, which was developed into the Sheikh Saeed's house, built around 1896 (al-Rostomani 30). The Shindagha area was completely swept away after a decision by the Dubai authorities in 1991 to launch a vast highrise redevelopment project along the creek. However, rehabilitation of Beit Sheikh Said from 1984

Program Type	Proposed Activities
Heritage Revival	Marine Heritage: Diving village, Traditional <i>dhow</i> s museum, Planetarium, Water living species exhibition, Abra stops.
	Inland Heritage: Heritage Village, Exhibition area for popular folklore, Exhibition area for traditional methods of building, Exhibition of photos and historical documents, School for traditional crafts.
Cultural Activities	Large Auditorium (2,000 seats), Exhibition rooms for contemporary artists, Seminar and video rooms, Offices for the heritage associations.
Tourism Activities	A hotel built with a traditional style (<i>Khan</i>), Traditional restaurants and cafes, Traditional market (Souq), Tourist information centers, Health center, <i>Abra</i> stops for sea cruise and sport.
General Services	Administration, Police, security and emergency units, Mosques, Public toilets, Parking areas.

Table 1: The Shindagha Revitalization Program. Author: Djamel Boussaa.

to 1986, and accompanying conservation awareness that was well-publicized through media, conferences, and newspapers, discouraged the higher and local authorities from implementing this project. They finally opted to develop the whole area for heritage tourism, as shown in table 1 and in figure 6.



Figure 2: Showing the Diving Village in Shindagha. Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

The revitalization of the historical Shindagha area goes back to March 1996. The project aimed at retracing the history of Dubai through the establishment of a tourist heritage village along the creek. The village is composed of two main zones; the first one, located at the beginning of the creek, is a marine heritage zone, with the Diving Village as its center point (see fig. 2). The second part is the Heritage Village (see fig. 3), where the historical ruler's residence Beit Sheik Said al Maktoum can be found (Bukhash).

In addition to these two heritage villages, a long pedestrian walk was proposed along the creek. The path starts from the Shindagha fort and ends at the creek entrance. Many gathering places and activity areas were established between the two ends of the walk. With the wise integration of appropriate lighting to enhance the traditional image of the area, the whole surroundings have contributed to creating an important attraction for global and local visitors. The construction work lasted one year, and the two heritage villages were opened to the public in March 1997, thus coinciding with the opening ceremony of the Dubai Shopping Festival. Since then, it has become the main hub of heritage and folklore activities that are performed during the annual Dubai Shopping Festival and other occasional celebrations.

The Dubai Shopping Festival is one of the world's largest family festivals. Every year since its launch in 1996, this event has attracted millions of people from around the world, a large portion of whom take the opportunity to visit old Dubai. During these festivals a number of major venues are designated, ranging from the Global Village to other sports and recreational venues. The Heritage Village and Beit Sheik Saeed in the historic district of Shindagha and Fareej Al Fahidi are considered the main heritage venues during

the festival. This annual event has injected new life in the once-forgotten Shindagha area. Today, it attracts many tourists and locals to the Shindagha, and Al Fahidi areas. In short, after long years of neglect and blight, the area has become a blessing to the inhabitants of Dubai and the UAE (Boussaa, "Historic Centers").



Figure 3: Showing the Heritage village in Shindagha. Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

The Historic City of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
Jeddah, the second-largest city in Saudi Arabia, is located on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, in a valley that ranges in width from 5 to 12 kilometers. It lies on a coastal plain between the *Al Sarawat* Mountain range to the east and the Red Sea to the west. Jeddah is the last port to survive on the Red Sea coast that continues to host numerous ships arriving from all parts. The city of Mecca is about 90 kilometers inland from there, and the re-

gion's climate is generally hot and humid, with minimal rain. The population of Jeddah is around 4,324,982, double the population of Dubai ("Population").

Its traditional role of trading coupled with its proximity to Mecca provided Jeddah with the opportunity to become an important national center. The main characteristics of Jeddah can be listed as follows (Abdu, Salagoor and al-Harigi 119):

- A center of sea, air, and land communication;
- Commercial and business center;
- Second diplomatic city of the kingdom;
- *Haj* and *Umrah* reception center;
- An educational health and cultural center.

As a major reception center, Jeddah remained a walled city for nearly 1,000 years. Its vast harbor had for centuries handled vessels carrying cargo to different ports worldwide, as well as ships transporting pilgrims to the holy mosques in Makkah and Medina. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869, Jeddah became one of the main ports on the trade route between the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean. Its merchants handled a regular volume of commerce with other Arabian ports, along with ports in India, Egypt, Africa; and Liverpool and Mar-

seilles in Europe. As a result, the city's wealth increased dramatically, and Jeddah's inhabitants became prosperous and cosmopolitan.



Figure 4: Demolition of houses for vehicular access and parking space. Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

The discovery of oil in 1936, and the beginning of its exportation in 1938, brought about an unprecedented pace of change. Economic changes resulting from the oil boom of 1973 coupled with rapid development created new physical environments in Saudi Arabia in general, and Jeddah in particular. As a cosmopolitan city, Jeddah witnessed colossal urban growth within a very short timespan. While this was beneficial to the local population as it improved their living conditions, it was implemented at the expense of many chapters of the city's cultural heritage.

During the decade 1970 to 1980, the number of cars multiplied by about twenty times. This brought vehicular access, along with parking problems and traffic congestion inside the confines of Al Balad (see fig. 4). Large avenues such as Al Dhabab Street were superimposed over the old. While the new streets facilitated accessibility for cars, many historic buildings in the way were "simply" wiped out. For instance, Beit Al Baghdadi—one of the significant palaces, built in 1881—was destroyed for widening a narrow street (King 48).

Jeddah doubled in size between 1974 and 1980, with new shopping centers, office buildings, and apartment blocks springing up everywhere. The area of the city grew from 1.5 square kilometers in 1947 to about 1,200 square kilometers in 1998—a growth of 800 times over fifty years (Abu-Ghazze 229). In order to meet the increasing need for housing and other services, speedy construction was seen as essential. There was no time to think of saving the city's cultural heritage; historic buildings were either swept away or left to deteriorate. For instance, Bab Mecca—the main gate of Jeddah—was only recently reconstructed after being demolished (King 46). Jeddah has now grown far beyond its ancient limits; but Al Balad re-

mains clearly defined and still survives as patches within modern Jeddah.

With weak planning controls in place, and the intention of many rich people to profit from the land available in Al Balad, highrise towers replaced the traditional, low-rise buildings. These tall steel, concrete, and glass towers dominated areas of particular historical or cultural value and interfered with the traditional skyline, affecting the image and distinctiveness of the city. The result was a hybrid environment of conflicting styles of old and new, highrise and low-rise, traditional and modern building materials. Because of the uncertainty about the future of Al Balad, some owners allowed their dwellings to deteriorate deliberately in anticipation of redevelopment.

Al Balad, covering an area of 62.45 hectares, has been radically altered. The sea which used to directly link with Al Balad has been blocked by a number of mushrooming highrise towers. Most of the surviving structures were built during the nineteenth century. Older buildings are rare, while the street pattern goes back to the sixteenth century. In addition to houses, a number of old souqs, caravanserais, and mosques still struggle to survive (ICOMOS 85-86).

Al Balad: Conservation Attempts

The massive destruction that occurred greatly threatened the cultural identity of the city. In order to stop this, attempts to save Al Balad began in the early 1970s. Conservation of old Jeddah formed one part of the city's 1973 master plan, which was prepared by the RMJM (Robert Matthew and John Marshall Consultants). To implement the conservation plan, a merchant's palace, three town houses, and a caravanserai were selected for a demonstration study. A number of rehabilitation projects have been launched since 1982; these involved particularly the Jukhdar, Nassif, Ba Haroon, and Sharbatly houses. The decision of King Faysal to restore Beit Nassif provided an enlightened and inspiring model for other forthcoming restoration projects. After more than a century of hard use, with as many as hundred people occupying the house at one time, Beit Nassif was still standing. The artisans working on the restoration of Beit Nassif and other historic buildings were determined to return this house to its original form (see fig. 5). Following its restoration in 1987, Beit Nassif was first reused as a public library with room for 16,000 books; however, in 1996 it reopened to the public as a museum that displayed the main historic artifacts of old Jeddah ("Nasseef House").



Figure 5: View of rehabilitated Beit Nassif (1987) and the enhanced outdoor environment.

Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

Extensive awareness efforts were launched to gain the support of the rich families and younger members of Jeddah's community. Two key aspects were used to increase this awareness: the provision of efficient services such as piped water inside the old buildings, and the creation of a series of landscaped areas with plants, fountains, benches, and pavements. This contributed in enhancing the "image" of the historic area. However, limited resources, along with a complex system of multi-ownership, made the results of these efforts insufficient to achieve holistic rehabilitation of the whole area (Abu-Ghazze 237).

Despite the level of dilapidation affecting many historic buildings, the fascinating and intricate *rawashins*, or projecting lat-

ticed windows adorned with intricate woodworks—though now intermingled with newly inserted air conditioning window units—imparted a special character to the old center. Most of the dwellings were about seven stories high, similar to the old Yemeni houses of Sanaa and Shibam. This work awakened Jeddah's inhabitants to the advantages of conserving Al Balad. About five hundred traditional houses still survive, and the policy of demolition of anything that was old—so vigorously pursued in the early 1970s—has been abandoned. As a result, Al Balad constitutes a unique attempt toward urban conservation for promoting tourism within one of the fastest-growing cities in the world (see fig. 6).



Figure 6: Enhancement of the urban space by shading areas and paving the external sidewalks.
Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

From Deterioration to a World Heritage Site

While Jeddah is constructing the world's highest tower, efforts to conserve its oldest Al Balad area are failing. Since most of the remaining historic buildings in Al Balad are private, efforts to undertake repairs and restoration are being undertaken by private parties. On the one hand, the Jeddah municipality by law cannot intervene unless it buys these properties. On the other hand, the community blames local authorities of not giving enough consideration to the old center. As a result, nearly a quarter of the houses in Al Balad have disappeared due to neglect and deterioration. Most of the houses are crammed with foreign laborers, beggars, and illegal immigrants of Al Balad's estimated 40,000 inhabitants, fewer than 5% are Saudis (ICOMOS 85-86).

The severe pressures on Al Balad represent a serious threat for its revitalization. Furthermore, owners are discouraged from undertaking any maintenance because, once a building has been demolished and replaced with a new structure, this can generate up to 50,000 Riyals, compared to 2,400 Riyals at present. Most of the owners are aware of the value of the land they are sitting on, and are waiting for the first opportunity to replace their old



Figure 7: Slow restoration work in Al Balad.
Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

houses with new structures. Already a decade ago, the number of houses was reduced from 600 to 150, translating into a loss of ten houses every year (see fig. 7).

The government has bought and restored some properties in the area, including a thirteenth-century mosque and Beit Nasrif—but it states that purchasing the rest of the remaining buildings would not be possible. Instead, it is planning to provide loans for property purchase, like done previously during the 1980s. In order to boost comprehensive restoration work, the Jeddah municipality prepared an application to include Jeddah on the world heritage list. This could stop the cycle of dilapidation and deterioration of Al Balad. A second step would be to promote Jeddah as a major tourist attraction, in addi-

tion to its role as a reception center for millions of people coming for *haj* and *omra*. Heritage tourism can still emerge as a primary catalyst of development in Al Balad. The financial input that tourism might deliver to Al Balad inhabitants could act as an incentive for conservation work. However, strong management is needed to avoid the expansion of fake and inauthentic structures, which can further erode the character and identity of the historic center that visitors are searching for. For example, Souq Al Alawi and Al Nada and other souqs could be promoted for local trade, crafts, and tourism. Al Balad can be revived into a sustainable living heritage by reinstating a mixture of residential, commercial, and tourism activities. In its 38th Session in Doha, Qatar during May 2014, UNESCO added Al Balad on the World Heritage List.

The City of Doha: Historical Background¹

Qatar's capital Doha is also the country's largest city, with more than 80% of the nation's population residing in Doha or surrounding suburbs. It is also the administrative and economic center of the country, with a population of 2,068,050 at the end of November 2013 ("Population Structure"). The city of Doha was founded in 1825 under the name of Al-Bidaa. The

name Doha came from the Arabic *ad-dawha*, which may have been derived from *dohat*—the Arabic word for bay or gulf—referring to the surrounding Doha bay. In 1820, Major Colebrook described it as follows:

Guttur—Or Ul Budee [Al-Bidaa] once a considerable town, is protected by two square Ghurries near the sea shore; but containing no fresh water they are incapable of defense except against sudden incursions of Bedouins, another Ghurry is situated two miles inland and has fresh water with it. This could contain two hundred men. There are remaining at Uk Budee about 250 men, but the original inhabitants, who may be expected to return from Bahrain, will augment them to 900 or 1,000 men, and if the Doasir tribe, who frequent the place as divers, again settle in it, from 600 to 800 men. (Rahman)

The city of Doha was bombed three times, which resulted in the disappearance of numerous historic buildings and areas. First, it was bombarded by the British vessel Vestal in 1821. It was bombed again in 1841, and the village was completely destroyed in 1847 after a battle against Al Khalifa of Bahrain near Fuweirat.



Figure 8: View of Al Koot Fort near Souq Waqif.

Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

The Turkish fort Al Koot (see fig. 8) was built by the Ottomans in 1880 adjacent to Souq Waqif and near the main *maqbara* (cemetery) to secure Doha. A small force was garrisoned at Al Koot, but this left with the signing of the protection agreement of 1916 between Great Britain and Qatar. Subsequently, Al Koot Fort was used as a prison for some time. Al Koot fort became home for the guards who patrolled the souq at night, a service paid for by the traders who refused to pay taxes in the souq. All this illuminates how Souq Waqif is deeply rooted in history and was established well before 1880 when the Ottomans built their fort. According to Mr. Mohamed Ali Abdulla, an Art designer from the Private Engineering Bureau in charge of rehabilitating Souq Waqif, the

latter goes back to the 1850s. (Abdulla, “Interview”).

In 1916, the city was made the capital of the British protectorate in Qatar. During the early twentieth century, much of Qatar’s economy depended on fishing and pearling, and Doha had about 350 pearling boats. However, after introduction of Japanese cultured pearls in the 1930s, the whole region—including the town of Doha—suffered a major depression, and Qatar was plunged into poverty. Oil was discovered in 1939, but its exploitation was stopped between 1942 and 1947 due to World War II and the Bahrain embargo. Oil exports and payments for offshore rights that began in 1949 marked a turning point in Qatar. The 1950s saw the cautious development of government structures and public services under British tutelage.

During the 1960s, new administrative centers sprang up to manage the vast oil revenues. The Government House, which opened in 1969, is today considered to be one of Qatar’s most prominent landmarks. Following the withdrawal of the British, the State of Qatar declared its independence on September 3, 1971. Doha as the capital of the new state became a massive construction site attracting thousands of foreign experts and workers employed in

construction. Since then, Doha has witnessed a most extraordinary expansion in real estate, international banking, and sporting and tourism activities. This is evidenced by the many modern towers, malls, hotels, and seats of power scattered throughout the city, and through huge developments like the Pearl—a whole commercial, residential, tourist, and leisure complex beyond the West Bay area. The physical development of Doha and the various conurbations of the peninsula have been accompanied by extensive preparatory work, which led on many occasions to the destruction of the Gulf’s cultural heritage.

Souq Waqif: From Survival to Revival

Located behind the Corniche off Grand Hamad Street, Souq Waqif is a showpiece of traditional architecture, handicrafts, and folk art, and was once a weekend trading area for the Bedouin. The origins of the souq date from the time when Doha was a village, and its inhabitants gathered on the banks of the Mushaireeb *wadi* (river) to buy and sell goods. Waqif means standing; this refers to how the merchants and inhabitants were obliged to do their businesses standing because of the water flooding on both sides from the Wadi Mushaireeb, and pouring into Al Khrais area in the souq before reaching the corniche.

Souq Waqif is a maze of alleyways covering a wide area, with separate sections selling perfumes and traditional forms of Qatari national dress, luggage, tools, general hardware and gardening equipment; tents and camping equipment; kitchenware, spices, traditional sweets, rice, nuts, and dried fruits. This souq is renowned for selling traditional garments, spices, handicrafts, and souvenirs. It is also home to dozens of restaurants serving cuisines from all over the world. Although this market dates back to the 1850s, it has been recently restored to its original character. It is now considered one of the top tourist attractions in Doha and Qatar.



Figure 9: Restoration Work in Souq Waqif.

Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

The private engineering bureau of Diwan Amiri was in charge of turning the souq from blight to blessing. The rehabilitation of the souq started in 2003 (see fig. 9).

Since most of the buildings in Souq Waqif were privately owned, the government bought these buildings from their owners for the project. After a detailed survey, it was found that two-thirds of the buildings were authentic; however, one-third of the historic buildings had been demolished and replaced by modern structures (Abdulla, "Suq Waqif"). The strategy adopted in conserving Souq Waqif consisted of the following measures and actions:

- Restoration of the old part of the souq;
- Replace the foreign new structures with reconstructions of the old ones;
- Modernize the infrastructure of the souq;
- Remove all the advertisement signs and all that disturbs the authentic image of the heritage area.

In order to achieve authentic rehabilitation, local building materials were used, such as Chandal bamboo on the roofs, and glass doors were replaced by traditional wooden doors and windows. After seven years of work, the dream of rehabilitating Souq Waqif has become a real blessing to the local community. It is a living heritage in the middle of a global environment; this has strengthened its position as a major hub for the Qatari people, and all residents of Doha. People go to

Souq Waqif for shopping, entertainment, and gazing. Souq Waqif has become a major attraction for all tourists and official visitors to Qatar.

Recently, Souq Waqif has become a major hub for art galleries and workshops, hosting several art galleries and local concerts during holidays and special celebrations. In addition to shops, cafes, restaurants, and hotels, the Souq Waqif Art Center is located in the restaurant area. The center combines a selection of small artistic shops with a number of exhibition rooms laid out around a long, narrow courtyard.

Beginning in 2004, the souq started to be rehabilitated according to traditional Qatari architecture techniques, using local building materials. Currently enjoying the last phase of rehabilitation, Souq Waqif is a major tourist attraction. There has been a souq on this site for centuries, as this was the spot where the Bedouin would bring their sheep, goats and wool to trade for essentials. It was a scruffy warren of concrete alleyways in recent years, but now its tourism potential has been recognized and it's been cleverly redeveloped to look like a nineteenth-century souq, with mud-rendered shop fronts and exposed timber beams. Despite "densification" of the area, the chief business of the souq continues unabated, and it remains

one of the most bustling and thriving traditional markets in Doha.

The revitalization project was based on a thorough study of the history of the market and its buildings, and aimed to halt dilapidation of the historic structures and remove a number of inappropriate altera-



Figure 10: Souq Waqif; a Living heritage day and night, and a major landmark that reinforces the local city identity. Photo: Djamel Boussaa.

tions and additions that reduced its authenticity. The Private Engineering Office in charge of rehabilitating Souq Waqif attempted to revive the memory of the place. In order to achieve this, modern buildings were demolished, metal sheets on roofs were replaced with traditional roofs of danjall and bamboo with a binding layer of clay and straw, and traditional strategies to insulate the buildings against extreme heat were reintroduced (see fig. 10).

Some new features were also introduced, such as a sophisticated lighting system that illuminates the market's streets. In complete contrast to the fake heritage theme parks that are mushrooming in the region, Souq Waqif is a traditional open-air public space that is used by shoppers, tourists, merchants, and residents alike, being kept as a living market day and night, thus becoming a blessing to the Qataris and expatriates after long years of neglect and decay.

Conclusion

When opting for heritage tourism in the Gulf cities, a cautious approach is needed with respect to the local traditions and customs of the host community. Therefore, strict management of heritage tourism should be established in order to maintain a balance between social and economic needs. Overemphasis on the tourist function creates pressures for new services and associated development, sometimes to the detriment of the local population, and can damage significant cultural assets. It is therefore important for tourism capacity to be carefully managed and controlled in a sustainable manner.

Diversity in both a social and functional sense helps increase harmony and vitality; therefore, it must be maintained and encouraged. Social diversity in the three old

cores is a sign of stability and a healthy, thriving urban environment. For example, the formation of slums and gentrification are two phenomena with similar effects, and both must be prevented. Functional diversity has always been a main characteristic of old centers. The historic centers of Dubai, Doha, and Jeddah should not be conceived of simply as physical entities, functional containers, an accumulation of goods and commodities, or a pattern of land uses. They should be primarily a setting for social interaction and cultural expression. Functional variety should be maintained, through the permitting of mixed uses.

Setting objectives for sustainable development is about establishing a sensitive balance between sociocultural and economic interests, between conservation and development. One way to avoid this is to see conservation as part of a much wider development process. Effective action to promote the management and rehabilitation of cultural heritage in the Gulf requires the adoption of a holistic policy based on the following assumptions:

- The Gulf cultural heritage is an expression of the lives of people who live and work there; therefore it should be inhabited;
- Historic cities and areas must function in such a way as to improve the condi-

tions for their inhabitants;

- Free market forces must be controlled inside historic cities;
- Urban conservation should be an expression of sustainable development;
- Action must be taken to promote economic development in old areas through heritage tourism.

Urban conservation with environmental concerns is also a key feature of sustainable development. This implies that development in the historic cores should be limited, but not to the point of stifling their economic vitality. Most heritage players recognize that such places cannot revitalize themselves without some kind of intervention. This means regulating and managing the physical and social fabric upon which their local identity and economic success are predicated.

Urban conservation strategies should discourage static preservation, which attempts to “fossilize” the past and turn our historic centers and districts into “blight” as open-air museums. There is a need to conserve and develop historic areas, to become “blessings” thriving and bustling with life. To achieve this, sustainable development policies should be introduced through housing, tourism, trade, and other economic activities. Heritage tourism in the Gulf is a way of fostering a major in-

centive for the survival and regeneration of regional cultural heritage.

In the three old cities examined, total preservation should not be the panacea. Where needed, some change of use may be introduced, but that should remain on a small scale. Since very few old buildings have survived, demolition should be avoided whenever possible, and should typically be chosen as a solution only for unsound buildings.

Urban conservation does not mean merely preserving a building, but also reviving its spirit and life. It means being flexible enough to adapt the objectives of rehabilitation to the needs of modern living, while respecting the local community's values. Rehabilitation of public areas is important and essential, as they add to the quality of a neighborhood and to the way in which people interact and identify with their locality. It is therefore paramount that rehabilitation includes public areas to strengthen people's sense of belonging and interaction.

Compared to Al Fahidi and Al Balad, rehabilitation of Souq Waqif presents a more successful example of sustaining cultural heritage in the present global cities in the Gulf (Boussaa, "Rehabilitation"). After long years of dilapidation and neglect, it has become a sustainable living heritage in the heart of Doha. Despite threats of the

expansion of high-rise developments around the historic environment, it is a strong statement and a message that a cultural heritage can survive despite the rapid emergence of global environments in the Gulf.

Most of the historic centers in the Gulf have been fragmented through unwise redevelopment and slum clearance projects. However, there is still the possibility to develop measures to reconstruct a unity in the dislocated urban fabric. A combination of rehabilitation, reconstruction, and new infill projects which respect the local traditional character should be developed.

Historic urban cores in the Gulf should become "blessings" by forming places in which people live, pursue their work, and enjoy their leisure time; they are not museums. They are primarily settings for social interaction and cultural expressions. Functional variety should be maintained through the permitting of mixed uses within individual and group buildings. For example, souqs and bazaars can be promoted for local trade, crafts, and tourism. Each declining historic area can be revived into an attractive living heritage by reinstating a mixture of residential, commercial, administrative, and tourism activities, thus transforming it from "blight" to "blessing."

The financial input that tourism can deliver to host communities can act as an incentive for launching more conservation work. But overemphasis of the tourist function might create pressures for new services and associated development, sometimes to the detriment of the local population, and can damage significant cultural assets. It is therefore important for tourism capacity to be carefully managed and controlled in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, strong management is required to avoid the proliferation of inauthentic structures, which can further erode the character of the historic center.

Change is *sine qua non* for revitalizing the surviving cities and environments; thus urban conservation should strive to make our urban heritage "blessing" and not "blight" by inserting new beating hearts in our historic centres. While change should be encouraged, it must be gradual, enabling assessment of the policy at intermediate levels, and thus allowing modification and adjustment when necessary. Transforming the Gulf cultural heritage from blight to blessing is about establishing a sensitive balance between sociocultural and economic interests, between conservation and development. Restoration of individual monuments without conserving or rehabilitating their historical contexts and economic forces is

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meaningless. It will eventually deprive the historic city of its “inhabitants,” and will end as an open-air and lifeless museum. This should be avoided if we intend to sustain a future for what survives of the Gulf’s cultural heritage.

From these three case studies of Dubai, Jeddah, and Doha, the surviving old cen-

ters should continue to be examined as part of the present-day dynamic reality, not as static objects of contemplation and tourist attraction. Urban conservation should aim to create harmony, avoid undesirable uses, and maintain the existing human scale of buildings, as well as their functional and cultural values. This means

searching for new active methods to transform historic centers in the Gulf from blight to blessing, through an integrated conservation and development approach.

Notes

¹ This part of the article is a reworked and updated version of Boussaa, “Rehabilitation.”

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Heritage and Tourism. Globalization and Shifting Values in the United Arab Emirates

Marxiano Melotti

Cultural heritage was a major factor in the formation of politics and identity for nation-states. Yet in Europe, a gradual overcoming of old nationalism has paved the way for its postmodern iteration, where it is interwoven with tourism, the market, leisure, and entertainment. As such, monuments, museums, and archaeological sites have become important elements to thematize tourism and consumption. Over the past decades, some rich Middle East countries—including the United Arab Emirates—have adopted a similar use of heritage: it has been used to build or reinvent national identity, and to pro-

mote recreational and tourist activities. Dubai and Abu Dhabi are two significant cases. Their intangible heritage helps to build local identity and to attract tourism, together with the cities' luxurious hotels and their ultra-modern shopping malls. Moreover, city administrations have even invited some major Western museums to open local branches, to increase tourism and confirm their new status as global cities.

Keywords: Heritage; Museums; National Identity; Postmodern Society; Tourism; Middle East; United Arab Emirates

Sand, Skyscrapers and Heritage

"It is strange to imagine that 20 years ago Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai's main thoroughfare, was mostly sand" ("Dubai Expo"). These words, from the official website of Dubai Expo 2020, are a proud celebration of the extraordinary and rapid transformation of one of the two main cities of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Features from sand to incredible and stylish skyscrapers designed by the most-courted star architects in the world, the site continues, show how Dubai has become "one of the world's most modern urban landscapes." At the same time, beyond the obvious and understandably self-celebrative tone, we may notice an interesting concept of the past. The new amazing Dubai appears to be built on sand—i.e., in the traditional Western view, on nothing. What was there before skyscrapers? Only sand. The site, of course, avoids emphasizing this Westernizing image and immediately presents a particular idea of heritage which, by mixing past and present, gives a strong idea of a winning continuity. "From the Persian Royal Road to the Han Dynasty's Silk Road, from the trading posts of the 19th century to the hypermodernity of today's UAE, people have always converged here" ("Dubai Expo"). The strength of the local heritage is related to its immateriality: the abstract

idea of “crossroads” becomes a conceptual basis allowing us to interconnect tradition and change, history and contemporaneous life. In such a perspective, hypermodernity—deprived of any possibly controversial meaning—appears to be a necessarily historical destiny of this region and a sort of intangible heritage, which presents itself through the materiality of huge and futuristic buildings.

The reference to the Silk Road is quite interesting. Under its harmless historical aspect, it evokes a traditional image of the East, built through centuries of literary and more or less mythical representation, dating back to Marco Polo and arriving directly to colonial and postcolonial Orientalism, including some current sophisticated narratives marked by contemporary “political correctness” (such as, for instance, the Silk Road Project and ensemble of the acclaimed French-American cellist Yo-Yo Ma). But the Emirates’ Silk Road is something different, as the “Heritage” section of the same website explains: “A new Silk Road that connects rapidly growing economies, such as India, China, Brazil and the African continent. Safe, inclusive and cosmopolitan, Dubai is now one of the world’s top ten urban tourist destinations” (“Heritage”). (In 2013 it attracted more than ten million visitors, the population of a megacity.) Thus, an image dear to the Western



Figure 1: Between tradition and modernity. Abu Dhabi skyline.

Source: Abu Dhabi Tourism Culture Authority.

tradition has become a celebration of a new modernity—one that includes European and North-American citizens as mere tourists and consumers.

Yet, this relationship with the past is not uncontroversial. Any urban transformation so deep and rapid reflects social change, which necessarily entails cultural change. This “road”—directly open to hypermodernity, global business, and international tourism—may create problems in a society with Islamic values respectful of tradition.

Not all countries have the spatial opportunity of the Maldives, which has built a successful tourist industry by gating international tourism in resort islands, which maintain quite an effective separation between inhabitants and tourists, local values and tourist practices, and “traditional” heritage and the new, themed heritage of the resorts (Melotti, “Cultural Heritage”). Dubai and Abu Dhabi are built upon hypermodernity, and this mix of worlds and cultures has a constitutive character. The site “Dubai for Tourism” exalts this nature,

which apparently makes Dubai “a unique destination that is both a dynamic business centre and a tourist paradise, offering more attractions, shopping, fine dining and quality hotels” (“Dubai Tourism”).

If the Maldives, in the tourist imagery, are a “tropical paradise” where you can live in your luxurious resort as a “new Robinson Crusoe” with your personal Mr. Friday, the Emirates present themselves as a “shopper’s paradise.”

Here, according to the mainstream of contemporary consumer society, and to the trends of postmodern experiential tourism, it is the shopping (at least in the expectation of the local Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing) that defines the core of the tourism experience in Dubai, and hence the tourist image and identity of the country. “From the timeless tranquillity of the desert to the lively bustle of the souk, Dubai offers a kaleidoscope of attractions for visitors” (“Dubai Tourism”). With this image shedding some light on the local idea of heritage, wilderness is interestingly defined as “timeless”: the past seems to disappear—or rather, to become something continuous, which helps to tie together tradition and today’s reality.

But, of course, hypermodernity has already arrived: the “lively bustle of the souk” shows precisely a process of folklor-

ization and thematization of local heritage. Everything is a potential tourist attraction, and may be sold as a tourist highlight: “from rugged mountains and awe-inspiring sand dunes to sandy beaches and lush green parks, from dusty villages to luxurious residential districts and from ancient houses with wind towers to ultra-modern shopping malls” (“Dubai Tourism”).

Malls and Museums

Heritage and business appear indissolubly linked in a typical postmodern relationship, which is presented as a historical connection. The section devoted to “Heritage” in the Dubai Expo website, after a quick reference to the local history that “dates back to 5,500 BC,” explains how “archaeological evidence suggests those earliest inhabitants engaged in trade with their neighbors—a trait that remains vital to the country’s identity today” (“Heritage”).

In other words, the ultra-modern shopping malls would be the endpoint in a long historical process. It is a sophisticated kind of theming: one has not even to use architectural elements to suggest, underline, or reinvent a tie with the past, as happens elsewhere; one may simply present a modern building as a piece of history.

Of course, the mall is not only a sign of the new local identity; it is also a meaningful institution of modern and contemporary Western society, where a large part of the history of globalization has been written. Shopping malls, as spaces of hyper-consumption where “we the people” may form and affirm our identity as global consumers, are monuments to Western and global society. Yet malls have also played a fundamental role in the development of UAE tourism. These huge and amazing spaces for consumption have been part of a policy aiming at promoting tourism and increasing the number of its destinations by creating and advertising a modern system of amenities and attractions (Henderson). In fact, the Dubai Mall—the “mother of all malls,” as was ironically but aptly defined by a well-known tourist guidebook (Walker et al. 294)—forms a brick in the new UAE global heritage, bridging the gap between worlds as the ancient Silk Road once did.

The other huge shopping center in Dubai, the Mall of Emirates, hosts Ski Dubai, “the city’s most incongruous attraction” (Walker et al. 298). With its five ski runs and ice sculptures, the facility satisfies other aspects of tourists’ and consumers’ multi-experiential demand. The insertion into a global system of habits of leisure and consumption deeply affects the whole envi-



Figure 2: Snow in the desert. Ski Dubai in the Mall of the Emirates, Dubai.

Source: Diego Delso, Wikimedia Commons.

ronment and creates a new heritage: in this interconnected world, sand can magically become ice. But it would be a mistake to ascribe the existence of this space to only the madness of the leisure industry, or to a will to demonstrate financial power and technical skill.

The snow conserved and displayed in the mall of this desert country comprises a local treasure, as do the alien Elgin Marbles jealously preserved in the British Museum. In Europe and in the United States, archae-

ological remains and masterworks of art have for centuries been regarded and used as tools for social and political identity, able to display the power of the local bourgeoisie or even of the nation: private and public collections were factors of class and national identity. National museums, such as the British Museum or the Louvre, were the real temples of modernity, where citizens were educated on their collective (often imperial and colonial) history, through the collective worshipping of the past and celebration of their powerful

nations, which were able to collect, conquer, or buy relics from any part of the world and any culture. The presence of alien pieces in the museums was proof of control exerted over other countries and other cultures.

In postmodern society, which has to some degree attempted to overcome colonial and national scenes, spaces of identity and political negotiation have shifted elsewhere. Malls are some of these new spaces, deserving of mobility and tourist gaze, which as temples of leisure and consumption display through merchandise a system of values for contemporary society. But this expression has probably already been surpassed. Over the last years, despite the global financial crisis that partially affected even these rich countries, the Emirates have placed a higher bid.

Abu Dhabi and Dubai have decided to reshape themselves not as typical great international cities, but rather as “global cities” (Sassen). Therefore, they have entered into competition with some of the most complex urban systems such as London or New York.

This process entails an effort of urban planning, beautification, and marketing (Spirou), based on the model of other big cities. Of course, in a general process of globalization where many centers and

many peripheries are mutually interconnected in a dynamic and transcultural way, many elements of the framework are, at the same time, models and imitations. Although the Emirates created their own model, they also absorbed some traditional Western ideas—such as the leading role of museums in urban planning policies, which implies a specific concept of heritage.

However, since the mid 1980s, the governments of the Emirates—and particularly the government of Dubai—have shown not only an awareness of the leading role of tourism in this process, but also a strong capacity to leading this, especially as concerns the relationships between urban beautification and tourism development (Henderson 91, 96). In only two decades, this has made of Dubai and Abu Dhabi a sort of “double global city” and a major international tourism destination.

Heritage and culture play a large role in urban renovation; yet, this process may cause problems for conservation of heritage. In the Emirates, the encounter of global and Western models with local and Arabian traditions has aroused identity issues (Boussaa; Szuchman; Khalaf, “Globalization and Heritage Revival”) and has given birth to a conservation lobby. Government bodies were aware of the danger, even for tourism, of shaping unat-



Figure 3: Building a global city. The new cultural district of Saadiyat Island.

Source: Tourism Development & Investment Company, Abu Dhabi.

tractive cityscapes too similar to global models, and instead supported forms of heritage revival (“*ihya’ al-turath*”) and urban renovation and beautification that united contemporary design and traditional style (Henderson). But this process, far from being a form of resistance to globalization, is exactly its usual result. Preserved and restored heritage, embedded in newly shaped urban spaces, becomes a sophisticated form of urban decoration and a tourist attraction, as a form of his-

toric thematization. According to Khalaf, this heritage revival—though part of the process of globalization—remained a national and ideological enterprise with symbolic meaning (“Globalization and Heritage Revival”). In any case, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, thanks to their financial strength, have been able to create a truly stunning system of new buildings and attractions that not only compete with the main international models, but have even become new models.

In this effort to implement the double-global-city system, Abu Dhabi has assumed the role of cultural district. As buildings that contain history, museums play a specific role, assuring a strong material and conceptual continuity between tradition and innovation, heritage and modernization, local patterns and global models. In this specific context, they seem to be able meet both the needs of new urban spaces and calls for stronger attention to the past.

Abu Dhabi has built a cultural district on Saadiyat Island to host local branches of the Louvre and the Guggenheim—two of the most prestigious museums in the world, the former in the old Europe and the latter in the New World.

The Louvre is the prototype of national museums which, during the modern age, have helped to create and strengthen national images and to affirm an idea of museums as tools of “civilization.” Nowadays, it is a magnet for new global cultural mobility, able to attract many millions of visitors every year, and proof of the power of the big museums in defending the international position of a country.

The Guggenheim, which developed far away from the royal, revolutionary, and Napoleonic allure of the Louvre, represents the glory of modern private entrepreneurship, able to obtain the same

success as the great old European institutions and even to transform the image and destiny of towns facing the post-industrial crisis. This is the case of the Bilbao branch of Guggenheim, inaugurated in 1997. This museum was thought not as mere cultural infrastructure, but as a symbol of a city open to creativity, luxury, leisure, and fashion, and as a powerful actor in urban regeneration (Esteban).

Both the Louvre—with its colonial, encyclopedic, “universal” collections of objects from all ages and countries—and the Guggenheim, with its collections attuned to the urban gaze of the new bourgeoisie, are huge, impressive institutions, impossible to imitate in this day and age.

The Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums (Abungu; Opoku; Melotti “Archaeological Tourism”), as significantly signed by both these museums in 2002, confirms that in a post-colonial world it is no longer possible to build similar collections, because nearly all states now defend their heritage. But, as Abu Dhabi shows, there is a device to avoid this difficulty: money. Abu Dhabi in 2007 made an agreement with France to pay \$1.3 billion to use the Louvre brand for thirty years, and the expertise of its curators for ten

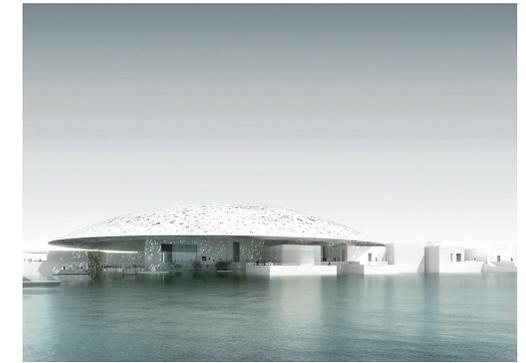


Figure 4: Heritage and starchitects. Rendering of Jean Nouvel's Louvre Abu Dhabi.

Source: Tourism Development and Investment Company, Abu Dhabi.

years, to exhibit some of its masterpieces. The construction of the new museum will cost an additional \$654 million.

The franchising of great museums is a clear sign of post-modernity. In a society where culture itself is a mere commodity to be consumed, museums can easily become nothing more than brands. Even more postmodern, if possible, is the idea that the container is more important than the content: the design of a museum and the name of its designer seem to overshadow its collections.

Thus, French starchitect Jean Nouvel designed the Louvre Abu Dhabi and a Canadian starchitect, Franck Gehry—who had already conceived the aforementioned Bilbao Guggenheim—designed the Abu Dhabi Guggenheim. That which through a

long cultural process Western culture has defined as heritage and art worthy of being collected and included in museums thus arrives in the Emirates and helps to create its new heritage.

The new branch of Louvre in Abu Dhabi is expected to play a delicate role in the crossroads of worlds and cultures, local and global, Arabian and Western. This has been captured by the official website of the Louvre, which presents the new institution as a “universal museum in the Arab world” with a “global vision of the history of the art” (“Louvre Abu Dhabi”). Now the design represents the core aspect of the museum, which is supposed to be an iconic building able to generate tourism by itself and thereby confirm the position of Abu Dhabi among the global cities. Its design combines “modern architecture and inspiration drawn from the region’s tradition” (“Louvre Abu Dhabi”). The museum, which uses elegant effects of light and shadow, “is covered by a white dome 180 metres in diameter, which is an emblematic feature of Arabian architecture, evoking the mosque, the mausoleum and the madrasa” (“Louvre Nouvel”). Local heritage and traditions reappear and thematize the building in a sophisticated way. Arabian and Islamic traditions, according to a typically post-modern approach, are

not “models,” but immaterial sources of “inspiration.” Thus local identity is paradoxically enhanced thanks to the process of globalization.



Figure 5: Culture in franchising. Rendering of Franck Gehry's Guggenheim branch in Abu Dhabi.

Source: Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority.

The national and local issues connected with the ideas of heritage in Europe and North America seem to have been completely overcome. The Abu Dhabi Guggenheim will devote a section to Middle-Eastern contemporary art, as an obvious tribute to local interests and values—but its American brand suggests its focus. The project, as the official Guggenheim website openly confirms, is “the creation of a vibrant cultural destination for visitors from around the world” (“Guggenheim Abu Dhabi”). Tourism, at least for the moment, has replaced any kind of na-

tionalism. The island, which hosts these museums, is thought to be a “world-class leisure, residential, business and tourist centre of global proportions” (“Guggenheim Saadiyat”). Culture, business and leisure (namely: museums, beaches, natural reserves, hotels, residences, architectural icons, waterfront, and sport facilities) are only different aspects of the same well-coordinated policy of urban planning and tourist marketing.

The Emirates lucidly use both modern and postmodern Western ideas of heritage as effective tools of marketing—addressed to Western imagery and consumers’ behavior—to promote local interests.

The Heritage Village: Living History Before and After the Oil Era

In such a context, what about EAU heritage? Surprisingly, the approach is quite traditional, though consistent with the tourist framework. In Abu Dhabi there are several historical monuments and an interesting archaeological museum. Yet, the tourist highlight is the Heritage Village, an open-air museum with replicas of old buildings and living-history activities, which “gives us an insight of the lifestyle and traditions of Bedouin and other cultures” (“Heritage Village”). We have to mention that in Western imagery (especially if related to Grand Tour and Oriental-

ism) Bedouins are the object of a romantic gaze which, together with the local processes of social marginalization, helped to construct “Bedouinness” and a World Heritage narrative, in a time when “Bedouinness in much of the Arab World had been or was being elevated to a marketable heritage” (Peutz, “Bedouin Abjection” 338; Saidel). On the other hand, this staged Bedouinness has sanitized some historical problems. Even the old “insecurity outside towns, on account of Bedouin raids” (Abdullah) has been transformed into vibrant weapons-dance exhibitions.

In the Village, of course, we are in the field of staged authenticity: traditions are crystallized in an otherworldly tourist space where, according to many websites, real life becomes “living exhibition” and the past blends with the present of non-urban inhabitants.

Heritage villages, as expressions of ethnic tourism, are often criticized by scholars for their lack of authenticity—tourism-oriented, politically corrected, sanitized, and frozen in time—and for the kinds of relationships among natives, tourists, and local authorities that they usually entail (al-Oun and al-Homoud; Bos-Seldenthuis; Timothy; Khalaf “Globalization and Heritage Revival”). In some cases, as happens in Bali, they are even part of a strategy of heritage management aiming at protect-

ing the “real” traditions from tourist impact by creating special spaces and special events reserved for tourists.



Figure 6: Shopping in the Heritage Village.

Source: Abu Dhabi Tourism Culture Authority.

In this context we can single out some particular local dynamics. The futurist Emirates have, to use Bauman's term, a “liquid” relationship with their past: they proudly enhance their history and invest in heritage (mainly at the level of higher education), but lack a nationalist approach and are not less (or even more) proud of their present and future. Heritage, in a coherent postmodern way, is approached as a resource worthy of being used in tourism, marketing, and urban policies. There is not the romantic and nostalgic look at heritage as something to be preserved, as typically happens in Europe. In the present case, the past is rather frozen in order to

create a better and easier product for the market. Furthermore, there are no issues related to local traditional identity, or at least they are not significant. The Village reenacts for tourists a Bedouin heritage that is perceived as archaeological remains, since the modern Bedouin culture is seen to be among the skyscrapers and not in the tents. In the Village, there is no local Bedouin community to be exploited by the tourist market. The villagers stage a nostalgic image of the country corresponding to the typical Western view of heritage, affected by a global, de-intellectualized attitude toward history and local traditions (a crucial point).

Western (and also Asiatic) tourists, as foreigners, usually do not know local history and generally lack the intellectual tools to decode local cultures. Coming from a post-political (and often post-nationalist) society, they are ever less educated on history and usually possess very little knowledge on even their own national history. In such a context, edutainment and living history—together with simple experiences of culture and leisure in heritage villages—may be effective means of spreading historical knowledge (Melotti, “Il ruolo emergente”).

There is no longer a problem of “staged” authenticity, because under the new aver-

age level of knowledge about heritage and history, an almost general acceptance of new, hybrid forms of authenticity and a general preference for edutainment have actually changed the relationship with the past.

A similar discourse may relate to new Chinese tourists (so cherished by the website Dubai 2020 and its “Silk Road” narrative). The Chinese attitude toward heritage and authenticity is different from the Western attitude and is, if possible, even more “liquid.” Reconstruction is a basic tool in Chinese heritage management, and it is deeply rooted in the Chinese tradition. Furthermore, as coming from quite a science-oriented and China-centered culture, the Chinese rarely have strong knowledge of alien cultural systems. Thus, their relationship with tourist-staged or themed activities tends to be friendly.

In such a context, why should the Emirates create a specific heritage narrative for the tourist market? And why should they risk creating domestic and international disputes by providing a more “solid” historical profile to their heritage? The global language of edutainment and themed activities, together with the more traditional language of heritage villages, are enough. They are also, above all, apt for any kind of visitor, regardless of religion or culture.

In this ahistorical context, heritage may be easily rewritten. Even the recent past may become archaeology, according to a local narrative where the division between pre-history and history coincides with the discovery of oil. In the Heritage Village you may see, as explained in many websites, “how people used to live before the oil era.” According to Picton, this division of history and culture “before” and “after” the oil era would reveal a “misleading, elitist and immobile” attitude that opposes “past” to “present” and “local” to “global” in a nostalgic way. On the contrary, it is a strong narrative where oil, as a metonymy for modernity, plays a central role and everything becomes heritage in a hyper-compressed view of history. At the same time this division overcomes the traditional distinction between Islamic and pre-Islamic culture, and imparts historical depth to a rather recent past.

Any heritage activity is carefully listed: “visitors can view” some mud-brick houses, a traditional mosque, a demonstration of falconry, they can take a camel ride and, of course, they can go “shopping in a traditional market,” “sample a typical Bedouin meal” and “buy original items” (“Heritage Village”). Material and immaterial heritage are mixed, in a folkloric context, with shopping and the new experiential culture.

The presence of falconry, a traditional activity which since some years was much advertised by the local tourist authorities, is particularly interesting (Khalaf, “Perspective on Falconry”). UNESCO, in parallel with new attention to immateriality being paid also by tourists and consumers, has recognized falconry as a “living human heritage” and has inserted it in the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (“Falconry”). Together with camels and coffee pots, falconry has become an icon in tourist heritage commodification and new consumerist culture (Szuchman 38).



Figure 7: Between heritage and tourist gaze. Falconry in Abu Dhabi.

Source: Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority.

In the context of the Village, with its reenacted traditional working activities, everyone and everything—from humans to animals—appear entrapped in the cage of

living heritage. This presents an obvious danger. Moreover, the crystallized reality of the Heritage Village defines a precise system of relationships among heritage, tourism and urban policies. History and traditions are part of a complex system of consumption—which, exactly as the two world-class museums in Saadiyat Island do, concurs in defining cultural and leisure aspects.

Not by chance, the Heritage Village is built on an artificial island, as are the huge hotels of Dubai (Palm Island) and the luxury and museum district of Abu Dhabi (Saadiyat Island). From an anthropological point of view, the “island” is an extremely meaningful reality in itself: it is a functional space that gives visual and experiential consistency to the “liminality” and “otherness” of the tourist and museum experiences—which, exactly as in ancient passage rites, must be symbolically isolated from normal everyday life.

As many blogs explain, the Village offers “a gorgeous view of the skyline—mixing traditional Arabian architecture and pure modernity—that lines the Riviera-style Corniche” (“Journey”). Through urban planning, the past and present are attentively juxtaposed in a mix where heritage, invention and theming appear strongly blended. The elegant waterfront of the town itself, which many sites stress as being in

French-Italian style, is a sign of this new global, atemporal, a-spaced, and cross-cultural heritage.

This confirms the strength of the local approach to heritage, based on a substantial convergence of tradition and modernity, where each element contributes to create a solid (but “liquid,” in Bauman’s sense) urban system.

A similar situation may be found in the Heritage Village that was founded 1996 in Dubai. Its physical separation from the city seems to perpetuate a clear distinction between Dubai’s past and present (Shusterman). However, a scholar who studied it some years ago testified its quick transformation: from “a modest exhibit of archaeological and ethnological relics and silent replicas of traditional life,” it soon became a more interesting and interactive museum with re-enactors and living history (Khalaf, “Globalization and Heritage Revival” 39). According to him, this village is now a “cultural complex of invented tradition” (20) and a “monument of national nostalgia” (28), designed “to provide a sense of identity for the imagined national community” (20) of the Federation established only in 1971. The village performs educational activities aimed at strengthening the national feeling and at glorifying the political leadership in the occasion of

the National Day. But it would be a mistake to consider these as old-style nationalist manifestations. The post-modern, globalized, and consumption-oriented context in which the village is embedded helps limit this use of heritage, as also occurs elsewhere (Melotti, “Turismo culturale”; “Power of Senses”). Indeed, the village is more a tourist attraction than a political device, as appears in its celebration of the Dubai Shopping Festival. At least according to its website, this festival, organized by the Dubai government since 1996, has become “world famous [...] as a shopper’s paradise” (“Dubai Shopping”).

Another website presents the activities carried out as follows:

Throughout Dubai Shopping Festival, the Heritage Village hosts a fascinating schedule of exhibitions, such as traditional cookery, shipbuilding and desert living skills showing you how Dubai’s residents lived, while a variety of stallholders offer you the chance to take home a souvenir of your visit. (“Dubai Heritage Village”)

In this age of global consumption, such a use of heritage is not the same as it was in the old European emperors’ time.



Figure 8: Frozen culture. A mannequin in the Hatta Heritage Village.

Source: Geordie Armani.

This experiential mix is also present in other regions of the Emirates. On the Hajar mountains, Hatta, an old village in a “picturesque setting” (“Hatta Heritage Village”), was converted into a heritage village that, according to local websites, “provides a fine example of traditional style village architecture” (“Hatta”) with its mosque, watchtowers, and houses made of stone, mud, reeds, and palm tree trunks. “Touring this site, visitors are able to see how the structures of the past were created, how the people of Hatta Heritage

Village protected their neighborhood and learn about the daily dealings of the Hatta Village people” (“Hatta Heritage Village”). This approach is quite traditional: a restored village and fort transformed into a monumental area, where the beauty of the surroundings contributes to the tourist experience.

Particularly interesting is the case of the Emirate of Sharjah. The town hosts a beautiful Heritage Museum, which “conserves and displays the rich traditional customs

and culture of Sharjah as a source of pride and inspiration to Emiratis and to visitors” (“Sharjah Museum”). This clear declaration illustrates a conservative approach: mannequins replace living history, but tourists can be gratified by the quality of the collection and the elegant setting.

But the most interesting point is Sharjah’s urban policy, where heritage plays a pivotal role. A Heritage Area has been established in the interior of the Heart of Sharjah, the largest historical preservation and restoration project in the region. This project, “planned over a fifteen year period, to be completed by 2025, seeks to revitalize the heritage district as a vibrant cultural destination by unravelling a glorious past: restoring historical buildings, constructing new structures following traditional Sharjah architecture and transforming them into hotels, restaurants, cafes, art galleries and markets, where the current generations and the future generations can experience Sharjah’s cultural and social fabric” (“Heart of Sharjah”). The contemporary, liquid, post-national approach to heritage is quite evident. Heritage and market proceed together. The idea is to transform a central part of the town into a cultural and tourist district through restoration, reconstruction and new construction. Oliver J. Picton, who carried out an interesting research in the Sharjah heritage

area in 2004, during the first phase of the project, remarks the complex level of interchange between heritage valorization, reinvention of tradition, educational purposing, and tourist commodification. According to him, the Sharjah heritage area—like other similar spaces in the Emirates—crystallizes local culture and helps to create a national feeling (Picton). However, whereas in the Dubai Heritage Village (managed by the Department of Tourism, Commerce, and Marketing) history and local culture are increasingly commodified, the Sharjah heritage area (managed by the Department of Culture and Information) hosts activities less addressed toward international tourism and more characterized by “educational, political, nostalgic and carnivalesque discourses” (Picton 72). These activities, which to Western visitors might seem “superficial and inauthentic,” would appear “very real and objective” to the local people and could effectively contribute to keeping their traditions alive (Picton 79).

In this view there would be a coexistence of a sophisticated “postmodern” gaze of the Western tourists, annoyed by the omnipresent staged authenticity, with a “modern” (or rather, a pre-postmodern) gaze of the local visitors, still interested in the staged authenticity. Of course, this is not strange, owing to the lively complex-

ity of contemporary society and the different speeds in globalization processes. Yet, such a reading does imply an “Orientalist” view.

The Souq al-Arsah (Courtyard Souq) is part of this experience. Lonely Planet presents this in an interestingly ironic way: “one of the oldest souqs in the UAE (which in this case means about 50 years). [...] Despite a thorough facelift, it’s still an atmospheric place, even though vendors now vie for tourist dirham [...] in air-conditioned comfort” (Walker et al. 312). A balance between tourism, heritage, and shopping is not easy to reach. Moreover, despite that souq’s claim of promoting local heritage, most items on sale as well as most vendors there came from outside the Emirates, at least at the time Picton carried out his research.

In that area is also the humble Sharjah Heritage Hostel, housed in a restored historic courtyard building. This is a real relic of “normal” tourism in a country whose tourist reputation pays dues to expensive hotels and where Arabian “authenticity” is sold at high prices (as for instance at the One&Only Royal Mirage, with its Arabian court and Moorish-style palace).

The Hearth of Sharjah project entails a process of crystallization and commodification of heritage, which can be read together with a similar process carried out

by themed hotels and resorts: history has become a mere experiential and emotional setting for tourist and leisure activities, inside a global process of convergence between archaeological sites, historic monuments, museums, theme parks, educational areas, hotels, and other leisure places (Melotti, “Archaeological Tourism”). In this context, the inscription of Sharjah heritage district on UNESCO tentative list appears appropriate.

Heritage Dynamics

Another point deserves attention: the heritage proposed to tourists is usually Islamic. Arabian and Islamic elements are even used to thematize tourism, though this could be regarded as offensive and in potential conflict with religion. Some Islamic monuments are included and advertised in tourist activities, such as the Jumeirah Mosque in Dubai or Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, which are amazing monuments that attest to the global urban completion of the two cities, together with the Yas Marina F1 Circuit, the Ferrari World Theme Park, and the above-mentioned world-class museums.

In contrast, the rich pre-Islamic culture of the country is more or less invisible. Despite the tempered character of local Islam, here we may find a trace of con-

fluct in relation to some aspects of the past.

In the Middle East, the relationship between archaeology and national policies has often been conflicted. For a long time archaeology had been read as a Western practice, strongly connected with colonialism and imperialism: Western archaeologists, educated in the cult of the ancient great civilizations, tended to believe that nothing original would come out of the Islamic world and reserved their attention mainly for the roots of Western civilization (Goode). This caused suspicion against archaeology and deepened the gap between the Western idea of heritage and local political (and religious) agendas.

Post-colonial nationalism renewed interest in the past and led to a diffusion of local schools of archaeology. Controversial but charismatic figures, such as Saddam Hussein, succeeded in using the Western image of the ancient great civilizations, yet from a regional repertoire, in order to strengthen their power and image. Adopting a well-known European model, Saddam became the new Hammurabi, just as Mussolini presented himself as a new Augustus. At the same time, thanks to archaeology, he succeeded in balancing Islamic nationalism founded on other historic and cultural models (Bah-

rani; Fales; Melotti, "Archaeological Tourism"). In general, however, the relationship with pre-Islamic archaeology remains conflicting and—in a turbulent framework of wars, revolutions, and crises—heritage appears to be deeply embedded in political debate and turmoil. From Afghanistan to the Maldives, from Iraq to Egypt, this periodically leads to attacks against museums, monuments, and archaeological sites (Stabile and Dal Maso; Arango; Melotti, "Cultural Heritage").

The Gulf area, once under the influence of the Ottoman Empire, differs in its archaeological tradition from other neighboring states that were more affected by European colonialism. Therefore, archaeology does not share this negative image and is not necessarily in opposition to local and national values.

The birth of scientific archaeology is tied to the discovery of oil (1938 in Saudi Arabia, 1958 in Abu Dhabi, and 1966 in Dubai), which entailed the arrival of skilled foreign workers in Saudi Arabia and in the Gulf countries. Abu Dhabi saw its first excavations in 1959, led by a representative of the British Petroleum, at the site of Umm an-Nar Island, which dates back to the third millennium BC. National and multinational companies contributed to the archaeological excavations, in order to better their image (Potts 193). These activities helped

to excite in the local elites an interest in archaeology, regarded as proof of modern, sophisticated behavior. Urban development was respectful of this heritage, also because halting building activities at the archaeological sites and defending the archaeological remains despite personal economic interest was considered a manifestation of sensitivity that assured prestige (Potts 193).

On the other hand, involvement of the oil companies in the local scholarly dynamics in the Gulf region and Saudi Arabia contributed to defining a mainly oil-oriented knowledge, which eventually concentrated on investigating tribal politics, Islamic politics, and leadership. Wahhabi Islam "became an object of study only to provide background about those who ruled in its name and were ready to be patronized by superpowers" (al-Rasheed, "Time of Oil"). Archaeology remained a sophisticated elite interest, depending on local dynamics of pride, while ethnography provided comprehension of local equilibria.

The historic and political context of the EAU is different from that of the other Middle East countries. Created in 1971, the federation is quite young and its member states are rich countries, to which oil has insured economic independence and international respect. Moreover, the govern-

ing elites appear solid and stable. Nationalism is not a primary element of this nation-state; thus heritage, though contributing to national identity (Saeid, Arifin and Hasim 2888), is not used in an overt nationalist way.

Oil and heritage are closely tied together: the wealth generated by oil has assured the strength of the power elite, which has implemented policies oriented toward preserving political assets. In this framework, the defense of tradition and its reinvention—along with, more recently, the policies of heritage conservation—effectively take on the function of ideological tools (Picton; Khalaf, “Globalization and Heritage Revival”). According to Saeid, Arifin and Hasim (2888), “preservation of cultural heritage inheritance [...] represents a fundamental pillar of the modern State of the United Arab Emirates.” This view is authoritatively confirmed by one of the most quoted phrases uttered by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, the founder and first President of the federation: “History is a continuous chain of events. The present is only an extension of the past” (“Sheikh Zayed in quotes”). In other words, there are no contradictions between history and development, and the present appears solidly built on the past. A subtle view, which in the Emirates has favored the spread (and acceptance)

of studies and activities connected with history and archaeology.

The processes of modernization and urban renovation, based on wealth, have raised identity issues—which, far from calling into question the socioeconomic system, helped increase attention to heritage conservation (Boussaa). As a matter of fact, heritage is used to balance the speed of modernization and, at least in the last two decades, to enhance tourism and urban beautification.

The general attitude toward ancient history in the region seems positive. The discovery in 1992 of a Nestorian monastery (which proved an ancient Christian presence in the area) was well accepted by Sheikh Zayed. Also archaeological remains testifying to ancient relationships with the Persian kingdom and Iranian cultures have not provoked problems. The only potential cause of conflicts related to heritage, according to Potts, was the discovery on the Oman peninsula of some remains tied to Harappa, an ancient civilization born in the area of modern Pakistan: Indian and Pakistani workers, which in the Gulf area live in difficult conditions, could have claimed to be the real founders of the civilization of their exploiters (Potts 196). But most likely, at least at the

moment, heritage does not appear to represent an enticing narrative for the Pakistani workers who are building the new Emirates.

Szuchman (32) stresses the role played in these identity processes by the reinvention and continuous display of Bedouin culture: Emirati citizens, characterized by “multiple identities” (Arab, Muslim, tribal, and national), would be invited to imagine an idealized and ahistorical past due to alleged cultural isolation; and foreign workers and resident expatriates (who represent the 82% of the entire population) would be reminded of their presence as mere guests in the country.

In short, the Emirates—strongly embedded in a post-national world—have shown a lucid postmodern use of heritage, conceived as an effective marketing tool in their relationships with Western societies. This does not mean that the Emirates do not pay attention to heritage or are not proud of their ancient history. On the contrary, archaeology and heritage studies are quite present in their universities, and heritage has become an important instrument for international networking. The Abu Dhabi branch of New York University (NYU), for instance, offers an important program on museum and cultural heritage studies, based on “the notion of an internationally and cross-

culturally 'shared heritage' of material culture" ("NYU Abu Dhabi"). Its courses deal with issues such as "How do those who live in 'the Middle East' relate to their past(s), and what discourses do they draw on to represent and authorize it today? How is 'the past' recovered, commemorated, embodied, erased, marketed and consumed in the modern Middle East?"

Precisely in this higher education milieu, often characterized by a presence of foreign (mainly Western) scholars, we find a new anthropological and sociological interest in heritage dynamics. The main idea, according to Peutz, is to overcome a "secondary orientalism," which "considers the majority of the Arabian Peninsula without 'culture' and without 'history' in comparison to the Arab States of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean" ("Perspectives from the Margins"). Moreover, there is a tendency to revamp anthropological research to overcome a prejudicial approach opposing "kaleidoscopic" Yemen, a supposed primitive and colorful space good for ethnographic research, to the "monochrome" Gulf area, regarded as a space good only for business (Carapico; Peutz, "Perspectives from the Margins"), or only due to interest in the sociocultural dynamics relating to exploited foreign workers.

It would be a mistake to assume that the Emirates have completely surrendered to Western imagery and heritage. The Arab countries of the area have deeply understood the political (and touristic) value of their own heritage, and are utterly attentive to heritage policies. Not by chance, in 2010 neighboring Bahrain, under the auspices of UNESCO, established the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), an autonomous and independent regional institution aiming at defending and promoting Arabian and Islamic heritage. Similarly, Saudi Arabia has actively promoted its archaeological and historical sites, pre-Islamic ones included, and has obtained the insertion of many of them in UNESCO World Heritage List.

Of course, the Emirates are also interested in UNESCO's activities, and actively try to obtain the inclusion of some sites in the World Heritage List (the "cultural sites" of Al Ain were included in 2011, and other seven sites and monuments were entered onto the tentative list between 2012 and 2014). This acknowledgement usually contributes to the tourist success of a destination and, even more importantly, helps to define its international image and the international role of its State. In other words, efforts at international recognition represent a tool for forming postmodern national identity.

Many heritage sites in the UAE celebrate World Heritage Day with educational and tourism activities. This confirms the inclusion of the Emirates in the new globalized world, which is increasingly dominated by supranational agencies, and also shows its interest in being recognized as a modern refined country, able to understand the significance of the UNESCO World Heritage List. Thus, beside the traditional political celebrations such as National Day and new tourist events such as the Camel Race Festival (Khalaf, "Poetics and Politics") or the Dubai Shopping Festival, the country celebrates World Heritage Day with a mixed political and touristic approach, consistent with a contemporary notion of heritage and the "liquid" culture of the country.

On the Dubai Customs website we may trace the traditional approach:

The [2014] WHD celebration sustains Dubai Customs' efforts to implant and promote national identity, being conscious that nations derive their identity from the heritage that runs deep in the veins of their citizens and the culture that is profoundly rooted in history. ("Dubai Customs")

Yet according to the list of planned events, we may find the usual tourist "festival" approach, as also Picton remarked.

Nevertheless, according to Szuchman, archaeology seems to be in a “precarious situation” (42): the new museum culture “sequesters the pre-Islamic past, while celebrating more recent and familiar notions of history and heritage” (45): the important archaeological area Umm al-Nar, located on an island together with an oil refinery and a military installation, is off-limits; most of the seven Emirates have no laws on trafficking and commerce in antiquities, and UAE has become a hub for the international illicit market in antiquities; many citizens are unfamiliar with the ancient history of the country and, even at a higher-education level, seem to have poor knowledge of local archaeology (42-44). Also worth mentioning is the attention paid by other Arab countries in the region to European cultural heritage in Europe (versus that “exported” abroad). In 2014, the Kuwaiti Sheikh Ali Khaled al-Sabah announced planned investments to assist in preservation of European archaeological sites and monuments such as Pompeii and the Colosseum; Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, board president of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, has signed an agreement with the Municipality of Rome for the restoration of museums and archaeological monuments in the city and for the organiza-

tion of exhibitions of Italian archaeological heritage in Saudi Arabia. In this complex strategy, heritage effectively becomes an instrument of international political and economic negotiation: a sort of common language on which to build other relationships (even in a Europe impoverished by the current crisis, heritage remains an important point on political agendas). Among other things, heritage means tourism and the tourist market. This is accompanied by a strong business policy, such as the 2014 purchase by Etihad, the national airline of Abu Dhabi, of Alitalia, the main Italian airline.

This approach to heritage, with its ability to mix market and culture, business and archaeology, in a more lucid and effective way than many European countries, marked as they are by more conservative ideas of the past, also provides a frame for the new Islamic marketing. The Global Islamic Economic Summit, which took place in Dubai in 2013, undertook to intercept the economic growth of Islamic countries and their middle class formed by consumers respectful of Islamic culture. According to Jonathan Wilson, editor of the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, the immaterial heritage of halal culture is becoming a global brand (Zecchinelli).



Figure 9: New heritage and tradition. Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Abu Dhabi.

Source: Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority.

Another famous phrase by Sheikh Zayed confirms the role of heritage in the Emirates: “A nation without a past is a nation without a present or a future. Thanks to God, our nation has a flourishing civilisation, deep-rooted in this land for many centuries. These roots will always flourish and bloom in the glorious present of our

nation and in its anticipated future” (“Sheikh Zayed in quotes”). Beside a genuine pride for history, here we may trace a “modern” use of history and heritage: the founder of new state appears to build a common history for his new political unit. The reference to God ensures a transcultural tie between different experiences (in time and space) and contributes to building a common heritage. But the construction of a national identity, in a context of quite homogenous cultural and social bases and general acceptance of this new asset, do not entail a nationalist approach.

Upon his death in 2004, Zayed himself immediately became a part of heritage: as a founding father, he was buried beside the stunning Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi, which had been erected by him and named after him. This huge mosque, considered a “visual pleasure” (Saeid, Arifin and Hasim 2891), was built between 1996 and 2007 to become, according to Zayed’s will, a new monument and a central piece of his heritage vision, mixing the past and present. Nowadays, it is the main religious center and one of the tourist highlights of the country. As explains the website of Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque Center “the father of the UAE,” who “aimed to establish a historical Mosque,” “has cre-

ated an Islamic monument” (“Sheikh Zayed”).

Even his aphorisms have become part of the country’s heritage. For some years visitors at the Abu Dhabi international airport were welcomed by the two previously mentioned phrases by the late Sheikh, which reveal a new “postmodern” and liquid approach mixing national identity, infrastructure, and tourism. Heritage had already reached a different phase: no longer a tool of national identity, rather an international business card for the country and something to be exposed to the foreign tourist gaze.

Building a New Global Heritage

This complex and dynamic process also involves hotels and resorts. We have already mentioned the sophisticated Arabian style of One&Only Royal Mirage in Dubai. Its website is assertive: “This is Dubai. Here on the shores of the Gulf, a wonderful place of intricate arches, domes and towers, infused with rich green courtyards and vibrantly colourful gardens” (“Royal Mirage”). Nature and themed architecture contribute to creating the Oriental and Grand Tour atmosphere that tourists appreciate. Cultural heritage plays a fundamental role in this process: “Bedouin lore tells of a magical place of supreme hospitality rising out of the sand”



Figure 10: The new heritage. Arabian Court at One&Only Royal Mirage Hotel, Dubai.

Source: One&Only Royal Mirage, Dubai.

(“Royal Mirage”). The real local community disappears, substituted by an abstract, timeless image built through centuries of travel reports and novels. But this local heritage must be “hospitable” to be accepted by the paternalist gaze of international tourism. This is a global international process, which also plays out elsewhere, for instance in the Maldives or the Bahamas. Hotels themselves belong to international groups that use the same marketing techniques everywhere. Tourists, too, move from one resort to another, search-

ing for supposed local authenticity, which is accepted only if it conforms to a global model of tourist “otherness” (Melotti, “Archaeological Tourism”; “Cultural Heritage”). “This is a wondrous place, composed of three distinctive environments—each flowing into the next to ignite the senses” (“Royal Mirage”). The center of the tourist experience is constituted by emotions: this sensorial tourism seeks the authenticity of emotions, which assures the authenticity of the experience and, indirectly, contributes to giving authenticity to the themed environments. This is the new heritage.

We face a process of heritage-making, where models and languages are global and globally interconnected. This process appears particularly rapid in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, accompanying the rapid growth of these two global cities. It is not a mere surrender to alien models. It is, rather, proof of deep and creative involvement in a global process. Heritage is a tool for culture-based marketing and, at the same time, a lively element able to transform and penetrate the dynamics of the new society. The crystallization is only apparent: heritage is living and transforming, together with society and the urban landscape.

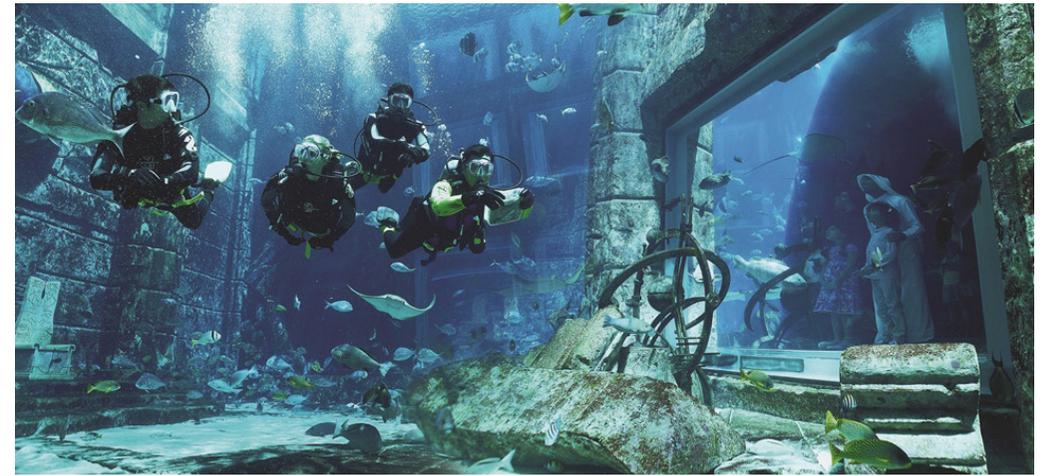


Figure 11: A postmodern archaeological site. The Lost Chambers at Atlantis Hotel The Palm, Dubai.

Source: Atlantis Hotel The Palm Dubai.

An interesting case of this is the Atlantis Palm Hotel, opened in Dubai in 2008 (Melotti, “Underwater Tourism”). It is the “Arabian” version of a hotel previously built in the Bahamas by the same multinational company, with the same Atlantis theme and the same aquatic attractions. The core of the hotel is the Lost Chambers, a huge themed aquarium, where you can “live out your own Atlantean adventure” and explore the “mysterious ruins of Atlantis, lost for thousands of years deep beneath the sea” (“Atlantis”).

The website, in a playful way, asserts that during the construction of the resort, a complex series of passages were unco-

vered, thought to have been buried for thousands of years by the waters of the Arabian Gulf. Upon further investigation, an ancient street system was discovered and the theory came into being that these were in fact remains of the Lost City of Atlantis.

Archaeology returns to the Emirates through the front door. If pre-Islamic heritage related to historical great civilizations of the past may raise controversies, the myth of Atlantis—conceived of as the basis for all world civilizations—does not. The idea of Atlantean remains under the artificial Palm Island inserts the Gulf in the mainstream of the Western imagery and

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places it at the same "archaeological" level. The whole world, from the Bahamas to the Emirates, appears to be based on the same civilization, which would have paved the way to a contemporary lively and vibrant globalization.

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Governmentalities of Alevi Cultural Heritage: On Recognition, Surveillance, and “Domesticated Diversity” in Contemporary Turkey

Benjamin Weineck

Although the term Cultural Heritage carries a rather positive connotation—bringing together notions such as safeguarding and human creativity—critical investigations have underlined the various strategic, economic and political rationalities inscribed in this term.

In 2010 UNESCO categorized the Alevi ritual sequence, *semah*, as Intangible Cultural Heritage and as such it was inscribed in the Turkish National Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage, although Alevis are oftentimes marginalized by the Turkish state due to its Sunni-Turkist conception of belonging. The celebration of an Alevi ritual as enriching Turkey’s “cultural diversity” thus necessitated an analytical approach that

comes to terms with the tension between this formal recognition, ongoing political surveillance, and the very specific notions of diversity that have been put into play. With reference to Foucault’s (as well as Rose’s) analysis of contemporary government as “governmentality,” Cultural Heritage can be grasped in its ambivalent (but not necessarily conflicting) form of governmental liberation and control. The paper thus enlarges the analytical scale of thinking about Cultural Heritage in its correlation with identity-formation, as well as the politics of recognition and governance.

Keywords: Alevis; Turkey; Diversity; Heritage; Governmentality; Ritual

Introduction: Governmentalities of Heritage

UNESCO has taken up a number of new measures since the beginning of the millennium in its endeavor to safeguard the Cultural Heritage of humanity. While former UNESCO activities on Cultural Heritage were exclusively directed at “tangible” cultural and “natural” sites, the more recent steps were taken in order to enhance an awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage (or ICH), such as oral traditions, rituals, or traditional crafts. A former focus on monumental heritage and natural sites was criticized by scholars and practitioners as paying too little attention to diverse and multiple forms of human creativity, which are expressed in a variety of practices and traditions (Coombe 375). Accordingly, the shift to ICH is:

recognizing that communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and re-creation of the intangible cultural heritage, thus helping to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity. (UNESCO Convention)

The UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* places the bearers of the particular traditions in the center of any safeguarding ac-

tivity—which, according to Merkel, “can be understood as a sincere attempt to contribute to their empowerment and to correct earlier elitist approaches” (68). Other scholars underline the importance of ICH for the formation and assurance of group identities (Wulf 86) or its capacity for enabling “vernacular” groups to figure in an “agentive way to act upon one’s own world” (Brosius and Polit 2).

In 2010, the Alevi *semah*-dance—a sequence from the *cem*-ritual¹—was declared to be ICH and as such inscribed in the Turkish National Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage as “fostering and enriching traditional music culture of Turkey” (UNESCO Nomination file 6). Alevis make up about 15 to 30% of Turkey’s population, yet are not legally recognized as a religious community in their own, as Sunni-Turkist notions of belonging were—and still are—salient in many aspects of Turkish politics and politics. The recognition of an Alevi ritual as Cultural Heritage, enriching Turkey’s “cultural diversity,” thus begs an analytical approach capable of encompassing Alevi aspirations for recognition, underlying governmental understandings of nationhood and diversity, *and* their mutual interrelations.

Therefore, this paper analyzes Cultural Heritage as a tool for the assemblage of governance and “diversity management.”

In order to grasp both the aspect of safeguarding and empowerment, as well as the particular (and most likely nationalist) notion of cultural difference that heritage policies enact, I consider it useful to draw upon an idea of government that captures some ratio of the liberating and limiting modes of political intervention vis-à-vis the population. The late Michel Foucault and his successors, particularly Nikolas Rose, have characterized contemporary government less in terms of ruling by law or discipline. Dissociating the exercise of political power from domination, they emphasize how (neo)liberal forms of conduct rather shape, guide, direct, or govern populations by recognizing and enhancing the individual’s capacity for acting upon him- or herself (Foucault, *Biopolitik* 97). Since liberalism requires individual freedom of the subject, the government’s responsibility is not to suppress, but rather to promote certain forms of subjectivity: Accordingly, *laissez faire* and freedom are perceived of as a specific way of *political* economy or political intervention rather than the “antithesis of government” (Rose 69). The way in which Foucault and Rose consider freedom to be a form of political conduct can inform an analysis of the politics on Cultural Heritage and its liberal notions of empowerment in several ways: The focus on empowerment of “vernacu-

lar groups” in ICH discourse on the one hand, and Alevism as a socio-religious problem of (nationalist/Islamist/neoliberal) government on the other requires a way of thinking that must come to terms with the ostensible tension between and alleged binary equations of liberation and control, inclusion and exclusion, empowerment and containment.

This paper seeks to analyze the emergence of—or, better put, the construction of—an Alevi heritage in Turkey as such a form of political conduct, which on the one hand meets the Alevi communities’ aspirations for recognition. Yet the character of the strategies and technologies applied, in concert with UNESCO as powerful actor in the assemblage of government, render very specific political understandings and *mentalities* of cultural difference to be legible, firm, and true. This way of thinking about government—in terms of the relation of specific political knowledge embodied in any political action or strategy—is called “governmentality.” It is my argument that references to Cultural Heritage may indeed forge coherence within the groups concerned—which would be desirable under liberal notions of citizenship and minority issues. Yet the language of UNESCO and the specific understanding of diversity it enacts prescribe to the communities a knowledge about them-

selves as being commodified and of “domesticated diversity” (Göner 127), which severely limits their capacities for both political participation and resistance.

Methodological Considerations

Many scholars have emphasized how heritage regimes, with their complex array of actors—heritage promoters of civil “indigenous” groups, national politicians and bureaucrats, intergovernmental regimes—bring to bear new forms of political conduct and subjectivity (Harrison 7; Tauschek 20). Hall highlights the evaluating character of Cultural Heritage policies as inherently classifying and arranging: Heritage thus represents not only the desire and practice of preserving certain aspects of the past, but constitutes “the symbolic power to order knowledge, to rank, classify and arrange, and thus to give meaning to objects and things through interpretative schemas” (88). These particular formations of knowledge and mentalities of government are embodied in the instruments, strategies, and politics applied. The approach of a governmentality of heritage tries to grasp this interrelation of knowledge and power, and the specific governmental understandings that are inscribed in political strategies, practices, and programs (Rose 2). Therefore, this approach relies on discourse analysis

and takes for granted the inventive character of language and any conceptual practice for reality—a reality that is of course always a specific political reality, which makes things and objects governable or that constitutes them as a problem to be acted upon.

This analysis of the governmentalities of an Alevi heritage in Turkey thus investigates the notions and governmental understandings of religious and cultural difference and belonging that produce the political practice. Neither does it ask, for example, if an empowering element of heritage policies succeeded or not, nor is it a hermeneutical investigation of the “real objectives behind a certain strategy” (Rose 56). Rather, such an analysis attempts to grasp the practices’ own accounts of reality by scrutinizing the forms of political order and subjectivity that are enacted by this governmental knowledge and by the political strategies it informs. As policies on Cultural Heritage rely on classification and arrangement, it is asked what kinds of operations are undertaken to render an Alevi ritual practice into Cultural Heritage of a polity that continuously reproduces Sunni-Turkist ideas of nationhood.

An important and analytically powerful aspect of governmentality analysis is its understanding of government as an “assem-

blage” (Coombe 379) of multiple, decentralized practices of conduct, which makes it possible to grasp intersecting national and transnational governmental forces (Turkey - UNESCO), as well as the subjects that act in this field of discursive possibilities and constraints. An analysis of governmentality also considers the creative ways in which subjects take up initiatives and behave toward these political strategies. Governing, in this sense, is the art of combining techniques of domination and freedom and an ability to set processes into motion “through which the self is constructed or modified by himself” (Foucault, “Hermeneutics” 204).

Intangible Cultural Heritage, which explicitly addresses the bearers of objects and practices that are to be turned into heritage, not only acknowledges “the importance of communities, in particular indigenous communities” in the creation and reproduction of the heritage of humanity (UNESCO Convention), but also considers ICH to be inherently “community based”:

intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it—without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage. (UNESCO Heritage)²

This form of governance thus also relies on the activity of these “communities, groups or individuals” to decide on their own terms about their Cultural Heritage, which contributes to the notion of heritage as empowering these communities vis-à-vis state actors (Merkel; Wulf; Brosius and Polit). An analysis of the governmentalities of heritage investigates the ways in which government shapes its subjects’ aspirations of recognition and harnesses their capacity for self-directed conduct to meet certain political ends. The question at stake here is how, for example, forms of knowledge and “interpretive schemas” (Hall 88) on Cultural Heritage are adopted by these groups and individuals taking up the UNESCO language of heritage and its underlying notion of empowerment to foster construction of their identities. What kind of subjectivity, what kind of political order and what concepts of the nation are portrayed in these aspirations for identity, and struggles for recognition and belonging?

I certainly do not deny the emotional value of ICH and its potential for preserving threatened practices and objects for the purpose of safeguarding and constructing identities. The analysis taken up here also does not aim to deconstruct Alevi Cultural Heritage as a mere strategic tool made up by bureaucrats to meet certain ends. Like-

wise, the specific form of political conduct called governmentality does not deny a possibly emotional value of heritage, but rather makes use of it in a creative form and takes into account the will and capacity for its subjects to safeguard their heritage. As will be shown, this does not turn out to be a mere functionalist approach to government, which may turn its subjects toward any desirable direction without fearing resistance or problems of “translating” programs into action. On the contrary: There are certainly spaces and possibilities of resisting governmental will and conduct, and parts of the Alevi movement in Turkey do have the capacity to continuously challenge the nationalist, Sunni-Turkist dominance. Yet there is reason to doubt whether the UNESCO language of Cultural Heritage is able to empower and represent the marginalized. This problem is also raised by Göner (129), who employs a Gramscian reading of the Alevi associations’ activities in their quest for recognition: She refers to the activities of some Alevi organizations, like the Karacaahmet Foundation in her example, as codifying the diverse Alevi belief system(s). The notions of order and codification embedded in these endeavors, according to Göner, appropriate the very normative perceptions of religion held by the members of the majority, i.e. Sunni Muslims. In order to

be represented as a religious group in its own, these activities subscribe to the hegemonic framework of religion which requires, for example, a single written sacred text. The aspect of consent to a hegemonic knowledge about oneself is central to this Gramscian approach to power and doubtlessly useful in coming to terms with the politics of representation on Alevi in Turkey. Although these thoughts on hegemony and an ostensibly *voluntary* consent to it (as its central characteristic feature) also constitute to the backdrop for this paper’s analytical framework, the approach followed here differs from a focus on hegemony in that it analyzes liberal government’s conduct as the practice of being made up of “citizens capable of bearing a kind of regulated freedom” (Rose; Miller 174). This understanding comes to terms with the UNESCO’s perception of empowerment of “communities,” their intelligibility, and their representation. Since Butler so powerfully underlined an inescapable alliance of representation and coercion in *Gender Trouble*, critical investigations must be careful to attend to such narratives of representation and empowerment. Also in the context of Heritage Studies, many scholars have emphasized the inherently political and bureaucratic character of heritage regimes and their capacity for iden-

tivity politics and nationalist aspirations for identifying and inscribing belonging (Smith “Archaeological Theory”; Ashworth). Analyzing and criticizing the construction of a particular Turkish Alevi-Bektaşî heritage and the paternalistic discourse involved may also empower further critical reflections on ongoing subtle forms of surveillance and less subtle forms of physical violence in the field of identity politics and national engineering.

Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage: Issues and Actors

Every year, a committee consisting of members elected by the UNESCO General Assembly judges state parties’ proposals for inscribing elements onto the “Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage” (UNESCO Convention). In 2010 it granted the *semah*-dance, a sequence of the Alevi-Bektaşî *cem*-ritual, the status of ICH.³ There are five criteria that must be met in order to be granted inscription, among which is that the element “will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and to encouraging dialogue” and that it will be included in the National Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO Criteria). Although state parties are those that must apply for nomination, one of the criteria is also that

the actors, groups, or communities concerned should extensively participate in the application process (UNESCO Criteria). This very aspect should raise a flag regarding the institutional requirements shaping heritage construction: As state actors are the ones in charge of applying to the UNESCO (in collaboration with “civil” actors), it is their specific concepts of Cultural Heritage that may be accepted by UNESCO. Heritage thus most likely becomes an instrument of a nationalist agenda: In her work *Uses of Heritage*, Laura Jane Smith underlined how political discourse on heritage has the potential to underpin certain communities’—specifically, those in political power—concepts of history, nationhood, and belonging (11). This functional and strategic notion that heritage is “created as needed” (Ashworth 26) is analytically useful in coming to terms with an Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage. Alevi communities in Turkey are in an ambivalent position: A Kemalist interpretation of the nation links Turkishness to Sunni Islam, which excludes both Alevis as non-Sunni Muslims, as well as Kurdish-speaking Alevis. As such, the Law on Dervish Lodges (*Tekke ve Zaviye Kanunu*) of 1925 forbade all forms of religious orders and associated ritual practices, clothing, and titles. This has also had wide implications for Alevi ritual practice: Whereas

mosques and imams, for example, are able to obtain public finance, Alevi *cem evi*s are defined as “culture houses” and as such are not publicly fundable.⁴ In fact, this aspect of aspired-for equal citizenship (*eşit yurttaşlık*) is one of the main issues in the struggle for recognition of Alevi communities in Turkey, as well as in the diaspora (Sökefeld 229). Additionally, Alevi children are required to participate in Sunna-conform religious education at school (*din ve ahlak dersleri*),⁵ and mosques are built in Alevi villages (Göner 118). On the other side of these assimilationist policies toward Alevism are a bevy of Alevi-Bektaşî cultural organizations which, in accordance with the UNESCO Criteria, were also included in the application processes for their Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, Nomination file 14).⁶ And yet tolerating the work of these Alevi-Bektaşî NGOs does not render the communities recognized as religiously different subjects on a level that is institutionally equal to Sunni Islam. This ambivalence is also connected to the question of whether Alevism is considered “culture” or “religion.” Recently, Massicard (107) has emphasized how Turkish polities like the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) or the Ministry of Education continuously avoid referring to Alevism as a “religious minority.” In textbooks for the aforementioned compulsory religious ed-

ucation in school for example, Alevism is rendered merely a mystical “interpretation in Islamic belief” (107) and is not considered as a school of belief in its own right (*mezhep*). The differences between Sunni Islamic and Alevi religious practices are, in line with the argumentation of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, explained as cultural specificities due to geographical spread and the Alevis’ inhabiting rural landscapes far from urban centers (104). As another aspect of this policy of culturalization, the *Diyanet* positioned itself as a promoter of Alevi cultural history and knowledge when it published texts like the hagiographies of the saint Hacı Bektaş in the series of *Alevi-Bektaşî Klasikleri* (Massicard 104). Likewise, since 1990 the Ministry of Culture and Tourism took over management of the annual Hacı Bektaş Festival that takes place at the Bektaşî *tekke* near Nevşehir (139). The rituals performed there are also broadcast live on TV, but are promoted as part of Turkish heritage, cultural diversity, and folklore, delinked to any notion of religious or theological deviance from Sunni Islam. Furthermore, the word “Alevi” does not appear at all in the 250-page volume on *Religious Life in Turkey*, issued by the *Diyanet* in the beginning of 2014.⁷ The mentioned study assimilates Alevism within the realm of Islam, and thus draws the con-

clusion that 99.2% of the Turkish population is Muslim (XXX). Inner-Islamic difference is acknowledged along the lines of schools of thought, i.e. Maliki, Hanafi, Shafi’i, Hanbali, and, additionally, the Shi’ite Caferi (XXX).

Both of these measures—culturalization and annihilation—are examples of a type of political conduct toward Alevis that arranges and classifies a certain understanding of cultural difference and religious deviation. Although they allow for and promote some form of Alevi cultural expression, other, less-subtle forms of control continue to exist: The Ministry of the Interior regularly directs private television stations on how to cover, for example, cultural events like the *Hacı Bektaş Festivali* or the *Newroz* celebrations, including what kind of vocabulary to employ (Massicard 92).

The Alevi-Bektaşî *semah*-dance, which was rendered UNESCO ICH in 2010, also corresponds to this notion of a cultural rather than religious characterization of the Alevi-Bektaşî belief system: Although the ritual sequence depicts the Alevi-Bektaşî understandings of God’s relationship to human beings, this religious aspect has come to be ever more “de-sacralized” (Massicard 131). The *semah*-dance, as one part of the Alevi *cem*-ritual, has gained considerable importance over other ele-

ments of Alevi-Bektaşî ritual practice. Dinçer stresses how rural urban migrations and the geographical diffusion of Alevi communities have had an immense impact on the communities’ ritual practice since about the 1950s (35). Her fieldwork revealed that in urban *cem*-rituals (in Izmir and Istanbul), in which Alevis from various regions with different mother tongues and varying concepts of ethnic belonging participate, the *semah* as one of the “twelve services” of the *cem*-ritual played a predominant role in relation to the other ritual sequences (37). Motika and Langer also emphasize that in the public performance of rituals, some sequences are either omitted or reduced to mere symbolic acts (99). Since the various forms of Alevism do not possess a canonizing religious apparatus, the religious character of the ritual is oftentimes downplayed when participants of different geographical, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds gather for a ritual (Massicard 130). Likewise, when turned into a common Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage, the various forms of the ritual are interpreted as an “evident sign of the richness in *semah* culture” (UNESCO Nomination file 4) and not, for example, as an evident sign of the richness of diverse theological reflections other than those of Sunni Islam.

Additionally, it is Intangible Cultural Heritage that is sought in the recent UNESCO conventions. Thus, the institutional channels to articulate the demands of heritage and identity require a focus on rituals, as opposed to tangible artifacts of the past. This stress on *semah* as Alevi-Bektaşî heritage is an example of how socio-religious developments within the Alevi communities are underpinned by the UNESCO discourse on Cultural Heritage: In this respect, Massicard quite aptly speaks of “external- and self-folklorization” (130) because “culture,” on the one hand, serves as the “most consensual way of Alevi organizations to foster belonging” (134). As Turkish political discourse denies Alevism being thought of as a religious group of considerable size, some of the Alevi-Bektaşî organizations explicitly promote *cultural* common denominators—such as the *saz*, poetry, or the *semah*—to amalgamate various Alevi communities with differing notions of religious and ethnic coherence (130). On the other hand, this cultural understanding of Alevism as Turkish folklore corresponds to the patterns and understandings of the *Diyanet* about Alevism, accommodating the very discourse that denies Alevis in Turkey their own religious education at public schools or state-funded locales for religious devotion (*cem evi*) analogue to mosques.

There is yet another aspect of heritage policies that may provide insight into forms of political knowledge about Alevism as Turkish folklore, concerning the naming as “Alevi-Bektaşî” of the Cultural Heritage. Strikingly, only four of the eighteen NGOs involved in the heritage construction operate under the heading “Alevi,” while others use names referring to the Saint Hacı Bektaş or to tribal associations such as *tahtacı* (UNESCO Nomination file 13). These denominations again bear witness of the ambivalent standing of Alevis in Turkey, and to the specific character of a certain form of understanding of cultural difference: In the 1990s when most of these organizations were founded, it was generally not allowed to draw on names that could suggest a possible separation of the Turkish nation along religious, social, or ethnic lines (Sökefeld 231). Yet it was and is tolerated that these organizations may represent Alevi interests. The tight bond between “Alevi” and “Bektaşî” in many of these denominations and, in fact, in the naming of the ritual in question as “Alevi-Bektaşî” heritage, also denotes a certain form of state-controlled, domesticated difference: As Dressler has pointed out, the term Alevi-Bektaşî is used mostly by Turkish-speaking Alevis, which excludes Kurdish Alevis and with that the notion of the politically subversive charac-

ter of Alevism (25). Although Alevis and Bektaşîs share many ritual practices and belief systems, and as such may be conceived of as a *single* community, the term Alevi-Bektaşî also makes opaque the institutional, social, and geographic differences of both of these groups. A strong emphasis on an Alevi-Bektaşî synthesis may thus be read, according to Dressler, as a means of strengthening a certain Turkish-Alevi agency in the Turkish public sphere by weakening the notion of social and cultural differences between Turkish and Kurdish speaking Alevis in striving for the nationalist quest of unity (25).

Heritage and Determining Diversity

The support for an Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage is in accordance with a discourse that renders Alevism a cultural facet of Turkishness which, in turn, does not principally deviate from Sunni Islam. This specific understanding of Alevism as folklore, “enriching” Turkey’s cultural diversity, is affirmed and put into play by the very mechanisms of Cultural Heritage management that include the element in question in the “National Inventory of Cultural Heritage.” The inscription signifies specific understandings of difference, but does not clash with the preserving and empowering nature of heritage. On the contrary: It valorizes this understanding of difference,

commodifies it, and renders it true by inscription. The policies of Cultural Heritage thus bear the limiting notion that though it recognizes and celebrates Turkey's and the world's cultural diversity on the one hand, this does not translate into de facto practice on the other. Recognition is thus only granted under the rubric of belonging to a cultural minority that enriches Turkey's cultural diversity, but that is—as heritage—detached from serious political questions such as, for example, religious politics. Ashworth called this aspect of heritage policies “museumification” and “vernacularization”: Transforming, for example, the dervish lodge in the city of Hacı Bektaş into a museum makes it into folklore, detaches its subjects and their beliefs from the present, and renders them insignificant in current struggles of political participation and resistance. Heritage as such has the power to signify as unimportant ideas and practices that “could potentially challenge or distract a dominant ideology” (Ashworth 33) or challenge hegemonic demarcations of belonging. Strikingly, although the various shareholder Alevi associations in the making of the ICH vary considerably in their political, religious, and cultural outlook, they nevertheless unite under a common Alevi Cultural Heritage. Even such different actors as the Pir Sultan Abdal Association and the

CEM Vakfı, as only two examples, are listed among the “Concerned Communities organization(s)” in the UNESCO Nomination file (13), although both of them differ in their understanding of Alevism. The former has a rather state-critical, leftist outlook, while the latter represents a form of Alevism within Islam and accords to current Turkish politics (Massicard 49). In order to bring such different actors together, the common Alevi heritage *semah* is also defined and appropriated to the different needs: Distinguishing between *içeri* and *dışarı semah*, the nomination file conceptualizes two ways of reading the ritual sequence: one more secular than the other. It is stated that *içeri semah* should be held in small circles only with faithful people attending, whereas the *dışarı semah* underlines the cultural/folkloristic character of the dance (UNESCO Nomination file 5). The process called “museumification” is thus accompanied by an appropriation which renders the *semah* as representative both for the Alevi-Bektaşî associations and for the Turkish state, to which it belongs as Cultural Heritage. This perspective challenges the liberal, activating, and empowering notions that Intangible Cultural Heritage brings to bear. Of course it seems that policies of ICH provide “indigenous communities,” to use the UNESCO language, with the

agency “to act upon one's own world” (Brosius and Polit 2). UNESCO's discourse on Cultural Heritage provides language, frames of reference, and infrastructure for identity demands and recognition. Yet this very notion of the “self” must be called into question if we are to criticize the paternalistic political practices of representation in the context of an Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage. At this point, it is useful to recall a central element to the kind of political conduct that was analyzed here as governmentality: Rose argues in his *Powers of Freedom* that it is impossible to “counterpose subjectivity to power” (55). Linking practice and the conduct of subjects and government in a web of power relations may also serve to help come to terms with the both empowering and limiting aspects of Cultural Heritage described above. The promotion of a certain kind of cultural diversity, as “domesticated diversity” (Göner 127), accords to this specific form of political conduct: Policies on Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage do not work as a kind of political power that would forbid, deny, or punish a certain form of Alevism by law or coercion. It rather exercises its power via an assemblage of strategies that enhance and activate self-conduct, encouraged by the preserving, safeguarding, and self-directed notion of heritage, along with UNESCO's lan-

guage of empowerment. Massicard points to this very “external and self-folklorization” (130) in the practice of Alevi-Bektaşî identity politics. Indeed, it corresponds with a form of political conduct in which the technologies of government meet the technologies of the self—a form that refers to the “empowering” element of ICH discourse, as it places responsibility on the side of the individual, or the “indigenous communities.”

Yet the “vernacular” actors involved in the process are not merely physical bodies that may be imbued with a certain desirable form of conduct, identity, or self-awareness. The selection of *semah* as heritage and its naming as Alevi-Bektaşî heritage underpin political and socio-economic developments “within” the Alevi movement, and which are far older than heritage policies, which additionally were not set in motion by these political programs alone. Yet these interrelated processes of governmental strategies addressing and meeting the technologies of the self are what characterize governmentality as a form of political power.

Analyzing governmentalities of heritage thus allows going beyond an understanding of politics in binaries such as domination and freedom, and also characterizes political power as dispersed among many different agents (Rose 2). It thus enlarges

the perspective on minority politics of diversity management in the Republic of Turkey. Göner has characterized these diverse stages and forms of minority politics on Alevi in Turkey as “difference repressive” and “difference blind.” In her argument, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) constitutes the beginning of these modes of thinking about minorities, since the treaty only grants non-Muslim religious groups such as Jews and Christians the status of minorities (112). Turkey’s politics, such as the *Diyamet*, thus embody forms of repression in that they represent a Sunni-Turkist idea of the nation. She further argues that European Union (EU) demands of recognizing Alevi as a religious or cultural minority during the negotiations about Turkey’s EU membership⁸ opened up a new space to articulate and promote Alevism in Turkey, as it invoked a new notion of cultural diversity and minority rights. Although this undermined the former “difference blind” and “difference repressive” nature, Göner also underlines how state policies supported only a certain notion of Alevism—i.e. Alevi-Bektaşî, freed of a potentially Kurdish character and the potential of political subversion. This new approach includes “difference but at the price of domesticating” it (127).

Göner’s article was published in 2005, long before the politics of heritage came

to serve in a way she characterized as the “creative but not repressive nature of the new hegemonic discourse” (130), which is a form of political conduct that relies on a variety of actors and draws on the semantics of enhancement and empowerment rather than repression. In the same way that the EU demands of recognizing Alevism as a cultural/religious minority intersected with national policies and produced a discursive frame of reference, the UNESCO’s endeavors to promote Cultural Heritage also possess a certain capacity to enhance citizens and civil groups in efforts to preserve their cultural practices and artifacts. Yet bureaucratic and institutional limits as well as specific governmentalities heavily shape this process, and limit the liberating and empowering nature of such politics. The “creative but not repressive nature of the new hegemonic discourse” quite aptly encompasses the practice of Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage in Turkey, as their heritage subscribes to a notion of alterity promoted by state-loyal institutions.

Concluding Remarks

The politics of Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage in Turkey benefit from intergovernmental endeavors to promote and to safeguard humankind’s creativity and diversity. UNESCO provides a discursive frame to

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which individual citizens and (“indigenous”) groups may refer in order to protect objects and practices perceived to be in danger of extinction. The policies of Intangible Cultural Heritage explicitly address civil and not state actors for their purposes, which various scholars see as a step toward empowering those groups, and undermining formerly state-oriented approaches to monumental heritage sites.

Undoubtedly, such intergovernmental bodies and their politics of Intangible Cultural Heritage may help to promote some form of visibility for vernacular groups, or for other actors and their cultural assets. Though, as this analysis has shown, it is doubtful that these instruments help to raise awareness on the social and political problems faced by these very groups: The recognition of an Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage in Turkey neither translates into legal recognition of Alevism as a group that religiously differs from Sunni Islam, nor does it challenge the homogenizing nationalist discourse with its stress on Sunni-Turkist ideas of nationhood. The specific institutional settings in heritage regimes, in which states remain the most important actors in the carving out of heritage, diversity articulated through Cultural Heritage in Turkey remains “domesticated” in that it is accommodated to the polity and to the requirements of hegemonic sets of knowledge on diversity.

An analysis of the governmentality of heritage reveals the particular political mentalities and understandings of cultural diversity which are embodied in the very policies that promote these values. A form of government that includes these dominant readings of reality harnesses the self-conduct of its population within these discursively drawn lines of possibility. A pursuit of consent to this very order is attained through liberal empowering notions of agency and of safeguarding a heritage perceived to be in danger. Likewise, this form of conduct also heavily shapes ideas of what may be thought and said about Alevi-Bektaşî communities in Turkey: As Turkey’s Cultural Heritage, they are perceived of as a folkloric rather than a religious group that may subvert established ideologies. “Recognizing” this heritage is accompanied by forms of appropriation that make this Alevi-Bektaşî ritual representable and recognizable in the first place. The meaning and consequences of this recognition are powerfully prefigured by the very language of UNESCO and by the dominant understanding of pluralism salient in Turkish nationalist discourse. Thus, equipping the nation-state with a central role in the definition of its “vernacular” heritage provides an opportunity to strongly shape and codify the understandings of this vernacular, upon which the

“communities” themselves may act. From this perspective, the assemblage of government produces the very subjects and specific understanding of difference that it comes to represent. The capacity “to act upon one’s own world”—as formulated by empowering notions of ICH—may thus be grasped as consent to a prefigured concept of belonging rather than agency. As a result, the recognition of an Alevi-Bektaşî Cultural Heritage fails to translate into the legal-political realm, and turning *semah* into Cultural Heritage maintains its unequal status vis-à-vis Sunni Muslim forms of worship. Attempts to reach an equality of partners in the context of Sunni-Alevi relations, or in any “vernacular politics,” thus have to rely on other, less predetermined vocabulary than the liberal empowering notions of intergovernmental actors. A focus on government through enhancement of certain desirable forms of conduct taken up here thus uncovers the power relations between government and subjects, and the inseparable tie between recognition and surveillance.

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¹ The *cem*-ritual is a congregational ritual in Alevi ritual practice. It consists of various sequences, of which the dance sequence *semah* is but one part. For an overview on Alevi rituals, see Langer "Alevitische Rituale"; for an ideal-typical description of the ritual, see Karolewski.

² The idea about fostering communities for the sake of governing is aptly termed by Rose in his *Powers of Freedom* as "government through community" (167).

³ The term "Alevi-Bektaşî" is not mine, but used by various organizations from this spectrum in heritage discourse. See UNESCO nomination file No. 00384.

⁴ See, for example, the clear comment of Prime Minister Erdoğan on this issue:

"Whichever Alevi I meet says, we were Muslims. The prayer place for Muslims is the mosque. Alevism is not a religion [*din*]. Therefore one cannot compare [Islam and Alevism]. If we made this distinction, why should we divide Turkey? One is a house for prayer; the other is a culture house. *Cem* houses cannot receive the same [financial] assistance that the mosques receive. If there is somebody who wants to support *cem* houses this cannot be hindered" (quoted in Sökefeld 245, highlights and additions there).

⁵ After a European Court of Human Rights decision, pupils may be exempt from the lessons. Yet every pupil requires for this a court order in his or her own right, which makes such an exemption both expensive and institutionally lavish.

⁶ These are: Alevi-Bektaşî Federasyonu, Hacı Bektaş Veli Anadolu Kültür Vakfı Genel Merkezi, Hacı Bektaş Veli Kültürve Tanıtma Dernekleri Genel Merkezi, Pir Sultan Abdal Kültür Derneği Genel Merkezi, Pir Sultan Abdal 2 Temmuz Kültürve Eğitim Vakfı, Karacaahmet Sultan Eğitimve Kültür Vakfı, Cem Vakfı Genel Merkezi, Dünya Ehl-i Beyt Vakfı, Ankara Cem Kültür Evlerini Yaptırma Derneği, Hüseyin Gazi Derneği, Hübyar Sultan Alevi Kültür Derneği, Hacı Bektaş Derneği, İstanbul Alevi Kültür Derneği, Tahtacı Kültür Eğitim Kalkınmave Yardımlaşma Derneği, Turhal Kültürve Dayanışma Derneği, Gazi Üniversitesi Türk Kültürüve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Merkezi, Alevilik Araştırma Dokümantasyonve Uygulama Enstitüsü (UNESCO Nomination file13).

⁷ *Türkiye'de Dinî Hayat Araştırması*. Diyanet İşleri Bakanlığı, Ankara, 2014. I thank the anonymous reviewer for this hint.

⁸ In fact the EU has shifted its demands and its language on demarcating difference over the course of time: As Dressler has shown, the EU since 2007 has refrained from defining Alevism as a religious minority, as the questions of Alevism being a religion or a culture, or being a religious tradition within Islam or outside of it, continue to be intensely discussed by Alevis themselves (13).

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Historical Thinking in Intercultural Perspective: Iranian Narratives on the Mongol Era¹

Anja Pistor-Hatam

This paper will apply Jörn Rüsen's „inter-cultural comparison of historical thinking“ to modern Iranian historiography on the Mongol period (C13th-14th). In order to appreciate the differences in the historical narratives under examination, Jan Assmann's „history of meaning“ with its „fictions of coherence“ shall be referred to. As the analysis of modern Iranian historiography on the Mongol era demonstrates, it is only under the assumption that these historical narratives are to be understood in the context of a relativistic history of meaning that it is at all possible to accept large parts of their content as plausible.

Keywords: Historical Thinking; Fictions of Coherence; Historical Narratives; Mongol Era; Iran

“Intercultural Comparison of Historical Thinking”

Regarding historiography in an international perspective, how can we compare various national historiographies without falling into the trap of Eurocentrism? According to Chakrabarty, “Europe works as a silent referent in historical knowledge” (2). Its dominance “as the subject of all histories” is still part of the “theoretical condition under which historical knowledge is produced” (2). Bearing this in mind, we

may however search for universals in historical thinking shared by societies in various parts of the world that possess different concepts of time and meaning. In order to be able to compare these various types of historical thinking, one has to accept their dissimilarities. Yet, at the same time, one also has to relieve them from the dichotomy of “self” and “other,” and from related positive and negative attributions (Rüsen 16).²

German historian Jörn Rüsen proposes a theoretical approach that relates to an “intercultural comparison of historical thinking.” According to Rüsen, there is no exclusive and universally accepted historical interpretation of historical facts, because these same facts are located in different perspectives. Consequently, a perspective-based character of historical narrative and a diversity of historical thinking must be accepted as given (27, 32). To make room for different perspectives on historical circumstances, a “universal category of equality” would have to be a prerequisite. This “universal category of equality” includes the assumption of “equality in the use of reason to establish the plausibility of histories” accompanied by the “principle of the reciprocal appreciation of differences” (29).

In this paper, I will use the case study of modern Iranian historiography on the Mongol period to apply Rüsen's "intercultural comparison of historical thinking." These historical narratives were published in Iran from the 1930s until 2011. Mostly, they were written and published as textbooks to be taught at schools and universities, where they continue to imprint public historical consciousness. In order to appreciate differences in the historical narratives under examination, I will refer to Jan Assman's "history of meaning" ("Sinngeschichte"): What is the meaning bestowed on the Mongol era by modern historical narratives written in Iran? How are fictions of coherence constructed to shape meaning in the historical events of the epoch? As the analysis of modern Iranian historiography on the Mongol era demonstrates, it is only under the assumption that these historical narratives are to be understood in the context of a relativistic history of meaning that it is at all possible to accept large parts of their content as plausible.

The Emergence of Modern Iranian Historiography

The first Mongol invasion into Muslim lands took place between 1219 and 1224. When Genghis Khan went back to Mongolia, he left governors behind to rule the

conquered territories in his name. About thirty years later, his grandson Hülegü undertook another campaign to defeat the remaining enemies of the Mongols on the Iranian plateau and in Mesopotamia. In this campaign, the Isma'ilis were crushed, Baghdad was conquered, and the Abbasid caliph killed. Although the first Mongol invasion had already been disastrous for the affected regions, erasure of the Abbasid caliphate by "unbelievers" was perceived as a disaster by many Muslim contemporaries and later commentators. Hülegü and his successors established themselves in Iran (roughly the region from Herat to the Euphrates) as the Ilkhanids (1258-1335). They not only rebuilt their ruined territories, but also integrated them into the vast Mongolian empire, with its strong focus on long-distance trade. The Ilkhanid government was the first to be closely associated with the Iranian plateau since the time of the Sassanians (224-651). And although historiography had already been written in the Persian language during the rule of the Buyids (945-1055), it was only at that point that Persian historiography truly flourished (Melville, "Historiography"). Rashid al-Din Fazlollah (ca. 1247-1318) and 'Ata Malek Jovayni (1226-83) rank among the most influential historians of their time. Their historiographical works are still con-

sulted as important sources on the Mongol era in Iran.

Modern Iranian historical thinking as well as its historiography were deeply influenced by European concepts since about the middle of the 19th century. As Ansari has pointed out in his recently published book on Iranian nationalism, Iranian memories and historical narratives were in that era replaced by a European metanarrative. Histories provided by Iranians "were relegated to the realm of literature, redeemed only by their artistic and aesthetic qualities." They had to be substituted by "facts" (17). However, only a few intellectuals were able to implement these new standards, which led to a "simplification of the intellectual corpus into digestible morsels which often bore little relation to the complex realities of intellectual life in the West" (29).

During the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-41), historiography became a part of nation-building. Although traces of proto-nationalist historiography could already be detected in the late 19th century (Amanat, "Legend" 292-93), it was only in the 1930s that an official historiographical project was begun. By means of a state-sponsored official historiography, "national history" from the Achaemenids (558-

330 BC) to the Pahlavis (1925-79) came into being (Amanat, "Historiography"). As part of the ideological framework, "the idea that the Iranian 'nation' in its combined geographical and political sense emerged during the Achaemenid period" was adopted (Ashraf). Alessandro Bausani referred to this concept in establishing what he called "Aryan and Neo-Achaemenid nationalism" (ibid.).

During most of the Pahlavi era, a lack of political freedom and the impossibility to write critical or even balanced historical or political treatises resulted in the reserve of historians. Additionally, the use of history for politically motivated contortions and embellishments entailed frustration on the part of historians as well as the public (Azimi 428). Analytical and independent critical thinking was not encouraged in the humanities. Instead, a quasi-textual positivism, in "learning by rote and unquestioning deference to elders" were cultivated (429).

Although some professional historians familiar with European concepts of historiography got to work in Reza Shah's time, they were not successful in completely or in some cases even mainly replacing specialists for literary studies and other enthusiasts in providing textbooks for schools and universities to this day. Yet,

professional historians or not, they were all under the influence of the official nationalist discourse, and convinced that "Iran" had existed as a cultural entity since Achaemenid times.

Even before the Iranian government decided that a national history had to be written, three of the founders of modern Iranian historiography—literary historian 'Abbas Eqbal (1897-1956), political thinker and politician Hasan Pirniya (1872-1935), and journalist, publicist and politician Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh (1878-1970)—met in Paris in order to plan for such an endeavour. Eqbal and Pirniya later counted among the illustrious authors who contributed to this multi-volume national history. Whereas Pirniya was responsible for ancient Iran, Eqbal dealt with the period from the Mongols to the Qajars (1779-1925) (Andisheh 139; Vejdani 310-11, 330-32). Even though 'Abbas Eqbal was not a trained historian, he was the first scholar to concern himself with the Mongol era as part of an Iranian national history. In doing this, he laid an important cornerstone of modern historiography in Iran.

Furthermore, beginning in 1924, a large number of European—including Russian—publications on Iranian history were

translated into Persian (Azimi 424). In this way, even those writers of historical narratives who had no knowledge of European languages were able to acquire insight into European or American scholarship on Iran. Until this day, well-known authors of the early 20th century to the late 1970s are quoted by those writing about the history of the Mongol era in Iran. Their interpretation of this historical epoch still influences Iranian historiography. However, it appears that this attempt at providing a Persian-speaking public with international, state-of-the-art historical writing has been considerably reduced since 1979. At least as regards historiography of the Mongol era, hardly any publications that have appeared outside Iran after the revolution are quoted in Persian historical narratives under review.

Returning to the Pahlavi era, it is important to note that apart from the official nationalist discourse that influenced the writing of national history, a number of counter-discourses also existed. Nearly all Iranian intellectuals who participated in these various nationalist discourses, be they laypersons or clerics, had one thing in common: They all believed in "the primordialist nature of Iran as a twenty-five-hundred-year old nation" (Aghaie,

"Nationalist Historiography" 25). Yet, they disagreed on questions of Iran's "relationship to the West, the nature of its government and leadership," and, of course, "the role of religion vs. secularism in shaping Iran's national identity" (ibid.).

Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, concern with historical matters has apparently increased. Yet, historiography is still dominated by enthusiasts who are mainly interested in reviewing documents instead of critical study and contemporary research (Amanat, "Study of History" 6). Even though we may interpret mere publication of documents as a strategy to avoid political controversy (Aghaie, "Islamist Historiography" 235, 259-62), the fact remains that methodologically and analytically satisfying studies are scarce. Typical of what Aghaie calls "Islamist Historiography" is its condemnation of 19th- and early 20th-century orientalism. Additionally, Islamist historiography characteristically accentuates the importance of Islam in Iranian history, divine predestination, and the central role Shiite scholars (*'olama'*) allegedly played in political incidents (234). Simultaneously, historians of different convictions and approaches also write historical narratives. In addition, those scholars who were active during the Pahlavi era are either still working, or at the least, their publications from

this period are still consulted. Overall, we can conclude that Iranian historiography until this day continues to be strongly determined by the placement of historical consciousness in a literary tradition of myths and legends, as well as the ideologically dominated narratives of various political currents.

Iranian National Historiography and the Mongols

In undertaking an "intercultural comparison of historical thinking," we have to focus on cultural as well as socio-political contexts of historiography. Regarding our case study, this includes, inter alia, how Iranian historians are situated in respective systems of government and rule. As regards the situation of these authors, 'Abbas Eqbal may be considered to have been a part of the system. He was, after all, asked by the Reza Shah government to write part of the envisioned Iranian national history. With this survey work, which was supposed to reconstruct Iranian history "from the beginnings to the present," a distinct "Iran-time"—that is, the creation of a unique time frame connecting "glorious" pre-Islamic Iran with an awakened present and a rejuvenated future (Tavakoli-Targhi 97)—was established that served to legitimize the rule of the Pahlavi shah. Although nationalism was one of the most important

subjects in his life and work, Eqbal had managed to keep his distance and not become part of the socio-political elite of his time (Azimi 381-83). In the same way as Eqbal, the literary historian Abd al-Hoseyn Zarrinkub (1923-99) argued the cause of nationalism, and supported the official nationalist discourse under Mohammad Reza Shah.

In the Islamic Republic, essential components of these nationalist ideas have been preserved. Therefore, those authors who argue for these ideas do not necessarily oppose the current regime. On the contrary, as in the case with the historian Shirin Bayani (b. 1938), her reasoning aligns very well with the present official ideology that emphasizes the correlation between Shiite Islam and Iranian nationalism. Accordingly, the ruling elite of the Islamic Republic is legitimized insofar as the narrative of Iran's ultimate liberation from any kind of foreign rule, as well as the final victory of Shiite Islam, are approved to have been procured by the revolution of 1979.

Turning back to Rösen's "intercultural comparison of historical thinking," it is important to note his assumption that there exists "consistency in the use of reason." According to Rösen, this consistency is essential for the plausibility of historical narratives, and has to involve

the “principle of mutual recognition of dissimilarities” (Rüsen, “Einleitung” 29). As regards modern Iranian historical narratives about the Mongol period, these are largely affected by reinterpretations and fictions of coherence. These reinterpretations and fictions of coherence have for their part to be ascribed to socio-political conditions and associated nationalist and religious ideologies, respectively. Consequently, on closer examination they often lack plausibility and do not comply with scholarly standards like verifiability, rationality, and reflection of the individual scholar’s own viewpoint. It is only under the assumption that these historical narratives are to be understood in the context of a relativistic history of meaning that it is at all possible to accept large parts of their content as plausible. Instead of deconstructing perceived fictions of coherence, a relativistic history of meaning simply recognizes them as plausible. We also have to consider that history itself is the produce of a culture or society within its own semantic paradigms (Assmann vii, 13). A relativist approach to the history of meaning may be compensated for insofar as the historical narratives point to a diversity of historical thinking in inter- as well as in intra-cultural perspectives. In this way, the polyphony and contingency of historical actions

cannot be suppressed by a monophonic narrative.

Now, what exactly are these fictions of coherence that can be found in historical narratives on the Mongol era? And, in which way has this era’s history been reinterpreted? A few examples follow, which will be subsequently analyzed:

In order to transform defeat into victory, the narrative of the Iranian phoenix persistently rising from the ashes is used to reinterpret history: helped by their superior (Islamic-) Iranian culture and civilization, Iranians overcame the Mongols and tamed the Mongolian dragon.

According to a frequently repeated narrative, the Mongol conquest of Baghdad and the fall of the Abbasid caliph are transformed from an irritation brought about by a historic breach or rupture for contemporary Iranians and Shiites into a long-desired and hailed affair, comprising the liberation from the Abbasid-Arab-Sunni yoke.

By reinterpreting history in relation to Ghazan Khan’s (gov 1295-1304) conversion to Islam, the Mongol enemy is seen as forever subdued; conquered and conquerors exchange places, the Islamic-Iranian element prevails, and Shiite Islam becomes the predominant religion in Iran. This fiction of coherence marks the begin-

ning of a new era, equivalent to the victory of the “Iranian element,” the triumph of the Shia, and the reestablishment of an Iranian nation-state.

According to a primordial nationalist assumption, a nucleus of “Iranianness” is ultimately simply indestructible.

With the purpose of transforming defeat into victory, it is essential to confront the brutality of the Mongol conquests with a spiritual and moral elevation on the part of the defeated Iranians. In light of the oft-described decadence and symptoms of decline in Iranian society on the eve of the first Mongol invasion, this becomes a difficult task. Nonetheless, most authors try to emphasize the mental superiority of “Iranianness” based on cultural heritage.³ As maintained by these modern writers: At the end of the day, the people who are culturally more powerful will prevail. Iran, which is said to have been Islamized by the pen rather than the sword, had always fought a war of the pen and emerged victorious (Eqbal 81-82; Hajj Sayyed Javadi 395-97; Alborz 84-87; Dadfar 81-82; Qadyani 11-12; Kasayi 986-88; Bayani, Vol. 2 383).

More than anybody else, Shirin Bayani has provided a reinterpretation of the Mongol era. Her fiction of coherence integrates

well into the political landscape of the Islamic Republic: That is to say, Bayani attributes a fundamental significance to Shiite Islam as a substantial element of Iranian identity, and to the Shiites as champions of Iran's independence. Since she cannot prove the alleged Shiite resistance to the Mongols, Bayani not very convincingly argues that their prevalence is due to dissimulation (*taqiyyeh*) and to the fact that the majority of 13th- and 14th-century historians had been Sunnites (Bayani, Vol. 1 304-05; Vol. 2 571). She places Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274) in the center of this fiction of coherence on the Shiite battle for Iranian independence. Bayani is convinced of this famous scholar's religious as well as political obligation to help overthrow the Abbasids when the time had come (Vol. 1 305-09). Bayani is joined in her appraisal of Nasir al-Din Tusi by other authors who also see in him a personification of the Iranians' political presence and their national consciousness (Kasayi 988; Ja'fariyan 52).

Shiite Islam relies on the martyrdom of prophet Muhammad's grandson al-Hoseyn, who was killed in the battle of Karbala in 680, according to its origin myth. Referring to the significance of martyrdom, Bayani emphasizes the crucial commitment of Shiites who fought against the Abbasids and the Mongols, using

martyrdom as a means to reach their aim (Vol. 2 571). Again, Iranians—this time as Shiites—are described as sufferers, as victims of arbitrariness and oppression, who can only fall back upon the war of the pen, their secret struggle, and their willingness to give their lives for the common cause. In this ongoing “clash of cultures” evoked by Bayani in one of her books, Iranians used religion and administration to fight the Mongols. Islam, mainly Shiite Islam, was brought into play against the Mongol code of law (*yasa*), and the “Iranian element” in the end succeeded in destroying and absorbing the “foreign elements” (367-69). For Bayani, like for other authors, the final point of assimilation was reached when Ghazan Khan converted to Islam. Through his conversion, the enemy was forever subdued; conquered and conquerors traded places, the Islamic-Iranian principle prevailed, and Shiite Islam became the predominant religion in Iran, thus initializing its religious independence (435-36). Ghazan Khan, it is said, was one of the greatest rulers of the Orient and Iran; apart from being Muslim, he was also an Iranian ruler, thus transforming the Ilkhanid into an Iranian reign (466, 471; Mortazavi 89, 173; Montazer al-Qa'em 1, 255). This fiction of coherence on the Islamization and Iranization of the Ilkhanid ruler (who additionally ended a period of

humiliation and initiated a new era in Iranian history) is supported by contemporary narrative sources like Rashid al-Din's famous universal history “Collector of Chronicles” (*Jame' al-tavarikh*) (Melville, “History and Myth” 140). According to Melville, some verse-chronicles describe the rule of the Ilkhanids in the style of the *Shahnameh*, yet “another cycle of Iranian kingship, brought to a peak with the reign of the philosopher king and just ruler, Ghazan Khan” (142). There obviously is a great similarity of myth and history contained in these narratives. In the context of the construction of meaning, this new era becomes equivalent with the victory of the “Iranian element,” the triumph of Shia, and the reestablishment of an Iranian nation-state.

Conclusion

As part of my conclusion, Rösen's already mentioned “principle of mutual recognition of dissimilarities” should be read-dressed. This principle would imply that scholars in Iran and abroad had been reciprocally aware of each other's publications. However, in the case of the historical narratives discussed here, this does not seem to be the case. As already stated, hardly any publications on the Mongol era printed in European languages after 1979 were included in the texts analyzed here.

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More precisely, Iranian authors writing about this period do not give attention to the state of the art in international academic research. It is difficult to determine to what extent scholars working on the Mongol period abroad, for their part, are observing how that is being done in Iran. For the present, it can only be stated that concerning the relevant references studied, one hardly comes across any allusion to related Persian publications. Regardless, the pre-1979 impact of “Western” (and Russian) scholarly literature concerning the Mongol period on the construction of meaning by Iranian authors remains considerable.

As stated above, the fictions of coherence included in the historical narratives analyzed in this study serve as constructions of identity and self-assurance. Therefore, they cannot be defined simply as “fabrications.” On the contrary, they have to be recognized as constructions that give meaning to often contingent historical events. Questions of governmental legitimacy become involved in this context, as do standards of truth that are conveyed by historical narratives. Closely linked to self-awareness is the established collective memory that not least builds on fictions of coherence like the permanent victimization of Iran. If nothing else, these fictions

of coherence are consolidated by modern historical narratives on the Mongol era in Iran and maintain significant bearing on political thinking and action in the country. Modern Iranian authors studying Mongol history in Iran are assigned the task of giving meaning to this history. They must integrate this particular era into the “linear time of the nation” (Özkirimli 209) and comply with requirements of society regarding the construction of meaning. In this regard, their outlook on Mongol history in many respects clashes with today’s international academic standards.

The extent to which outcome of these historical narratives is accepted as plausible depends not least on the respective academic paradigms. Until the 1970s, the entanglements of historical narratives written in Iran and abroad were relatively firm. Afterwards, however, a more sophisticated approach—tightly linked to the standards of historical science in general—eventually became widely accepted among international historians of the Mongol period. This approach additionally changed the way these historians perceived their sources. Historians then began to make allowances for their narrative character. Historians of the Mongol period also became aware of the fact that they themselves depended on observation theories of con-

temporary historians. But the Iranian authors cited here have not joined in with these new paradigms. Therefore, this “principle of mutual recognition” has only rarely been applied in the past thirty years. As a result, Iranian historical narratives may represent alternative interpretations of history, which decode the same facts from various perspectives. However, these narratives can for the most part only be accepted as plausible if one reads them as contributions toward a history of meaning that leaves room for fictions of coherence, which in this context must be recognized as legitimate.

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→ Notes

¹ This article is based on a paper given at the conference "Persia and Rum" in November 2013 at the British School in Rome. For a more extensive study of modern Iranian historiography regarding the Mongol era see my *Geschichtsschreibung und Sinngeschichte in Iran: Historische Erzählungen von mongolischer Eroberung und Herrschaft, 1933-2011* ("Historiography and the History of Meaning in Iran: Historical Narratives on Mongol Invasions and Rule, 1933-2011"). The book also includes an English summary.

² All translations from German are my own.

³ Boroujerdi accuses Iranian historians who reduce historiography to the study of Iranian cultural heritage of "fetishization of the past." He calls this approach "heritage-ism" (45-46).

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Creating Futures for the Past in Southern Iraq: Challenges and Opportunities

Eleanor Robson

Iraqi archaeologists and Assyriologists are desperate for communication and collaboration and intellectual challenge. Almost every colleague I meet in Iraq is keen to set up research partnerships and training programmes. Yet they are working in a vacuum, mostly isolated and unheard in their own country and beyond. There is little public discourse on local history and archaeology, and little Iraqi government understanding of the value of these matters in civic and cultural life. In this paper I explore how this situation came to be; why it is

a matter of concern; and what, if anything, we as western academic historians, should try to do to about it. In the latter sections of the paper in particular, I do not try to be comprehensive but draw upon my own experiences and observations, in relation to the UK context in which I work. My aim is not simply to describe but to stimulate discussion, response and action.

Keywords: Iraq; Cultural Heritage; Archaeology; Assyriology; Politics; Collaboration

Let us begin with a thought experiment.¹ Try to imagine that the biggest, best funded research centres on ancient British monuments such as Stonehenge and Avebury are all in East Asia. Some British universities carry out some basic archaeological exploration of smaller prehistoric earthworks, such as the Rollright Stones, but publish little of their work. The British public has a basic understanding of the cultural importance of stone circles—they vaguely remember studying them at primary school—and like to visit them for family picnics and school trips. In order to keep up with the latest discoveries and theoretical developments, however, one needs to read the academic literature in Chinese, Japanese and Korean. All online resources, as well as most popular histories, television programmes, etc., are in these languages too, and their authors show little interest in getting them translated into English—which, by and large they do not speak very well. Indeed, most of the best researchers hardly ever set foot in the United Kingdom (UK) and rely instead on decades-old archaeological surveys, satellite imagery and large collections of artefacts, whether excavated or purchased, now housed in their own countries.

This scenario may seem very far-fetched. But it approximates the current state of an-

cient Babylonian history and archaeology in southern Iraq. In October 2012 I gave two lectures on Old Babylonian mathematics, literature and scribal schooling in the ancient city of Nippur in southern Iraq. This was nothing unusual in itself, for these are subjects I have researched, on and off, over many years. What marked the occasion was not so much the *content* of my lectures but the *context*. For the first time since the 2003 Iraq War I was back in southern Iraq itself, around 20 miles from the site of Nippur, which I had first visited just a day or two earlier. Initially, I was struck only by the oddity of the fact that I had become expert on the place (or at least some aspects of it) over a decade before actually setting foot in it. But as my visit wore on I became increasingly aware of, and uncomfortable about, how little my audiences knew about what was, in effect, local history. Here I was, giving lectures in English to Iraqi academics (mostly mathematicians) and university students (mostly archaeologists) about their own cultural and intellectual heritage. And in order to do so, I had to dramatically simplify the story that I was telling, even compared to when I talk to school children or amateur history groups in the UK. It was not just a matter of language—my words were being translated into Arabic sentence by sentence by a kind colleague—but of concep-

tual content too. Then, when people asked me for further reading, I could give them one recent article of mine that has been translated into Arabic but almost everything else required a good grasp of academic English, French or German, a high-speed internet connection, and/or the means to buy or borrow expensive, low-print-run books. With some notable exceptions—for instance the journal *Sumer*, and the work of University of Baghdad archaeologist Abdulillah Fadhil and his students—there is little local academic publication of ancient Iraqi history and archaeology, whether for researchers, students or the interested general public. The more I thought about the situation, the more ethically problematic it seemed.

It is not that there is no local interest in ancient history. My invitation to Diwanayah had come from Dr Ahmed Zainy, a Berlin-trained mathematician at the Women's College of the University of Baghdad, who had been using my work in his undergraduate teaching. Some of the most acute and appreciative reactions to my most recent book have come from within the Iraqi mathematical community. And my talks generated a lot of animated discussion amongst my Iraqi friends and colleagues. French-educated Basra mathematician Dr Hanna Ali Munther, for instance, introduced me to a colleague as the person

who had taught her most about the history of her own country.

Likewise, Iraqi archaeologists and Assyriologists are desperate for communication and collaboration and intellectual challenge. Almost every colleague I met in Iraq was keen to set up research partnerships and training programmes. Yet, despite multiple international initiatives to engage significantly and intensively with Iraqi cultural heritage professionals (Stone and Bajjaly), many feel they are working in a vacuum, mostly isolated and unheard in their own country and beyond. There is little public discourse on local history and archaeology, and little Iraqi government understanding of the value of these matters in civic and cultural life. In this paper I explore how this situation came to be; why it is a matter of concern; and what, if anything, we as western academic historians, should try to do to about it. In the latter sections of the paper in particular, I do not try to be comprehensive but draw upon my own experiences and observations, in relation to the UK context in which I work. My aim is not simply to describe but to stimulate discussion, response and action.

Building a Country, Constructing a Past

To understand the state of ancient history and archaeology in Iraq today we need to go back at least a hundred years. For con-

venience I shall divide the past century into four distinct phases.

1. *Wartime and Mandate Iraq*

The ancient history and archaeology of Mandate Iraq were initially constructed as a purely British enterprise, while its Islamic heritage was deliberately underplayed. The tone had already been set during the British occupation of Mesopotamia during World War I (Bernhardsson 57-92). Many archaeologists were recruited into the Arab Bureau, due to their expert local knowledge: most famously Leonard Woolley and T.E. Lawrence, who were then excavating together at Carchemish, and of course Gertrude Bell. Antiquity thus gained an unexpected prominence in Britain's conduct of the war. Both the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum lobbied to impound the finds from pre-war German excavations as war booty. The British Museum even seconded two Assyriologists to Mesopotamian forces in order to carry out excavations at ancient Sumerian cities in the occupied southern marshes.

When the new Kingdom of Iraq was created under British Mandate in 1920 it was conceptualised as an essentially Arab entity, and a Sunni Arab one at that (Sluglett; Dodge). In this view, pre-Islamic, pre-Arab antiquity was irrelevant to state for-

mation, whose citizens for the most part were not, in any case, supposed to be educated or intelligent enough to appreciate its value. Baghdad had had a college of law since 1908, and engineering and teacher training colleges were set up in 1923, but as late as 1935 the American-led Monroe Commission reported that Iraq was not ready for the introduction of university education, as a surplus of highly educated young men with no suitable jobs to go to would undoubtedly lead to political unrest (Lukitz 115-17). Iraq did not establish a state higher education system until the mid-1950s.

British archaeology benefited greatly from the Mandate (Bernhardsson 130-64; Goode, *Negotiating* 185-202). Gertrude Bell, as Honorary Director of Antiquities, set up a legislative and administrative framework almost single-handedly, in the face of fierce opposition from more independence-minded Iraqi politicians. Two large-scale British-American expeditions ran at Ur and Kish until shortly after 1932, when the occupation officially ended. Other American, German and French teams were allowed to work in the country too. Almost all of the sites they explored were southern cities of the third and early second millennia BC, namely from the first half of ancient Babylonian history. Iraqi involvement was notably absent. The la-

bourers and support staff were of course local men. But no effort was made, anywhere by anyone, to train promising young Iraqis in how to uncover the ancient past of their country. Indeed there was no real means to identify recruits and instruct them in academic work.

Likewise, the nascent Iraq Museum was not initially conceived as an institution made for or by Iraqis. It had no ambitions to bolster the current political messages of pan-Arab unity and no resources to do so, being furnished exclusively with finds from European and North American expeditions, which had no interest in the great Islamic empires of the past. Nor did it aim, as many western museums did, to display imperial trophies or chart a progressivist narrative of mankind's ascent from primitive savagery. It was simply a collection of stuff from excavations, curated haphazardly by Bell and increasingly reflecting her withdrawal from current political life.

2. *Independent Iraq*

When Britain formally withdrew in 1932 the former Education Minister Sati' al-Husri became the first Iraqi Director General of Antiquities (Bernhardsson 164-210; Goode, *Negotiating* 203-28). He revised Bell's antiquities laws in Iraq's favour, which had the effect of discouraging foreign expeditions as it was now harder to bring

finds back home to display to sponsors and publics. Meanwhile, the first Iraqi PhD students were sent to study archaeology in Chicago. Taha Baqir and Fuad Safar would go on to become leading figures in the field. The first Iraqi-led excavations were carried out at the classical Islamic sites of Samarra and Wasit, and Abbasid monuments were restored. Planning began for a much larger and more accessible Iraq Museum.

In schools, meanwhile, history teaching had already been centred on pan-Arabism since the early 1920s (Simon). Post-independence, the curriculum became ever more explicitly nationalist and militaristic, focusing on thirty to forty Arab, mostly Sunni Muslim, 'heroes' of the past as moral role models for Iraqi youth. There was little room in this version of history for the ancient, pre-Arabic past of the region, let alone for global perspectives.

3. *Back to Antiquity in Baathist Iraq*

Given that Baathism was an explicitly pan-Arabist political movement, one might have expected the trends of the post-Mandate years to continue and intensify. However, over the period 1968-2003 Iraq increasingly presented itself as a modernist—and, in the early decades, secular—state built on a deep antiquity (Baram; Davis, *Memories*; "The Museum"). The

Ministry of Information produced glossy English-language publications with titles such as *Mesopotamia Yesterday, Iraq Today*. The state exerted centralised control over the past in various ways: through school history curricula, through the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, and through public images of the regime, of Saddam in particular. Collectively they presented Iraq and its leader as the natural, inevitable successor of millennia of militarised dominance over the region, headed by powerful men such as Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar and Salah al-Din (Goode, "Archaeology"; al-Gailani Werr). The Mongol, Ottoman, and Mandate periods of 'foreign occupation' were deliberately downplayed.

The new Iraq Museum was opened in 1966, telling a unified narrative of the country's past, from neolithic hunter-gatherers in the north to the glories of Abbasid Baghdad. Regional museums were sent highly uniform mini-collections of artefacts to display so that the same story could be told from Dohuk in the mountainous north to Basra in the Gulf marshes. In this way local histories, regional identities, and other challenges to the authority and unity of the state were minimised: the diversity of Iraq's long past was homogenised into a single, unifying story which all could identify with but to which

no constituency or community could claim privileged access.

At the same time, Iraqi modernism encouraged other countries to set up research institutions in Baghdad, especially those that focused on the regime's preferred aspects of ancient and pre-modern history. The oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s brought huge budget increases to the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and a renewed emphasis on pre-Islamic sites with complex international archaeological rescue projects prior to major damming works. Archaeological excavation continued throughout the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, while nationalist rhetoric increasingly focused on the ancient past in order to downplay commonalities with Iraq's Shia neighbours. Very much in that vein, late in the decade the heavily restored archaeological site of Babylon began to host an annual international festival of Iraqi arts and culture (Tracy).

4. *Sanctions and Beyond*

Foreign missions withdrew from Iraq in the run-up to the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, as the state started to take 'human shields' as hostages. Just four days later the United Nations enforced an international embargo on financial and trade relations with Iraq. That month, in retro-

spect, marked the beginning of long decades of isolation for the Iraqi academic community. Many provincial museums were looted in the post-war Shia uprisings of spring 1991 and then stayed permanently shut. The Babylon Festival somehow staggered on but the Iraq Museum too closed to public, re-opening only briefly for special occasions such as Saddam's birthday in 2000. Large-scale looting of archaeological sites was impossible to control, as the State Board's budget was now dramatically reduced. Illicitly excavated artefacts, especially cuneiform tablets, flooded international antiquities markets. Museum and university staff suffered like the rest of the population with the drastic impact that international sanctions had on everyday life. University teachers could not live on their salaries alone; students, if they could afford to study, chose more potentially lucrative subjects. Heritage professionals came under increasing surveillance and increasing pressure to support the party line. Contact with the outside world became virtually impossible, except on tightly controlled state visits to conferences or, latterly, monitored and censored emails. New publications, data, methodologies, and technologies—and these were substantial in the 1990s—all passed them by. This loss of contact, in other words, led to many other losses: of knowl-

edge and expertise; of funding and prestige; of professionalism and control. As we shall see, it has been hard to regain these vital but often intangible assets now that circumstances are different.

The Current State Context

These, then, are the complex roots of Iraq's often unhappy relationship with its ancient past. For a century already, some have seen its pre-Arab, pre-Islamic antiquity as irrelevant to its present and future, while for others—particularly Baathists—modernity can only be constructed out of antiquity, thereby deeply tainting that antiquity for the rest. What hope, then, for Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria in the twenty-first century? Does Iraq currently have the capacity to engage with its ancient precursors? What is gained by doing so and what is otherwise lost?

As I finish writing this piece, votes are being counted after the national elections of 30 April 2014. It is currently impossible to predict what the immediate future holds after a year of increasing political corruption and violence, exacerbated by pressures from war-torn Syria and UN-sanctioned Iran. It is not all political doom and gloom, however. Provincial elections are widely acknowledged as successful, with a sophisticated combination of party lists and personal votes allowing people to re-

ward locally successful, honest and popular politicians whatever their political stripe (Haddad). Similarly, on the face of it, Iraq has never been in better economic shape, according to recent reports from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. There is potentially plenty of state money available to support research and education into the country's past, assuming that there is the political willingness and institutional infrastructure to do so.

However, the think-tank Chatham House (*Iraq Ten Years On*) and the charity War Child (“Mission Unaccomplished”) last year drew attention to Iraq's major underlying structural problems. It is the youngest sector of the population who are feeling the worst effects of the post-war period. In a country with a population of 33 million, 18.5 million—56%—are under twenty-five, 12.2 million—37%—under fifteen. Less than half of 12-17 year-olds are in school and drop-out rates in both primary and secondary school are nearly 10% a year. Although 9% of the country's budget goes on education, 90% of that goes on salary costs, leaving very little for infrastructure. As a result over 40% of schools are in need of repair or reconstruction, and a further five thousand schools need to be built—and teachers trained for them—if Iraq is to meet the educational needs of

its fast-growing youth population. The national literacy rate stands at just 78% compared to a world average of 85%, the same as Tunisia and Tanzania and significantly better than India or Egypt at 72%, but worse than Iran, (pre-war) Syria, and South Africa.

The school system and state curriculum have remained largely unaltered since the war, except for a thorough de-Baathification of its contents. According to a 2011 UNESCO report (UNESCO, "World Data"), children study history for just two 40- or 45-minute periods a week, in years 5-6 of primary school (ages 10-11) and years 1-3 of secondary school (ages 12-14). Thereafter secondary schooling splits into two streams, 'literary' and 'scientific', for ages 15-17. The history quotient goes up to three periods a week for 'literary' students but disappears entirely for 'scientific' ones. Ancient history is taught only at primary school. The schools themselves are drastically under-resourced and the teachers under-trained. UNESCO's education programme in Iraq focuses on improving mathematics, science and technology provision, and the promotion of civic values. The word 'history' does not feature at all on the Education Areas of Action section of UNESCO Iraq's website, despite the fact that another high-profile theme of its in-country work is Culture. On that part of its

website UNESCO Iraq states that "safeguarding cultural heritage and rehabilitating cultural institutions are essential elements for national reconciliation and socio-economic development". But that imperative does not seem to extend to equipping civil society with the means to appreciate and take advantage of such initiatives—only making provision for tourists. My worry is that UNESCO is unwittingly replicating the cultural conditions of Mandate Iraq, when ancient history was solely for Europeans.

The public appetite for ancient history is underdeveloped because of its association with Baathist grand narratives amongst the older generation, and ignorance amongst the younger. There are few opportunities to learn about current research on Iraq's ancient past, unless one has particularly good knowledge of English, French or German and a particularly good internet connection. Books in Arabic are still in circulation of course, but those from the 1960s and later are tainted by their political overtones, and those from the 1950s and earlier are woefully out of date. Museums are not yet set up to offer public education, for adults or children, assuming that they are open at all. Print and broadcast news media are highly fragmented and focus primarily on matters of political interest. Government edu-

cation initiatives are narrowly utilitarian and have not yet grasped the potential of humanities subjects in general, let alone ancient history in particular, in developing a strong civil society.

Many governments worldwide are currently struggling to see the value in supporting academic humanities and social sciences, however, not just those like Iraq with more immediately pressing concerns. The British Academy has recently advocated for "prospering wisely" through, in Lord Stern's words, "conceptual clarity and impartial, evidence-based research and analysis, together with open-mindedness and creativity in exploring new ideas" which "can guide—and promote—reasoned political and public discourse, by bringing fresh knowledge and ideas to the fore" (British Academy 2). It is not just about the obvious economic benefits to the creative, cultural and tourism industries. A particularly powerful section argues that "local history (...) makes us who we are. (...) Identity and well-being are inexorably linked" (13). Perhaps even more pertinent to present-day Iraq, "by explaining how narratives of the past created present differences, historians (...) can help us celebrate diversity and not merely tolerate the different" (22). As Diarmaid MacCulloch puts it, "particularly in a democ-

racy, telling the story right is really very important, because so many people are involved in making decisions, even if it is just a vote at an election" (22). Or as Saad Eskander, Director of the Iraq National Library and Archives, said to me in 2013: "If we do not know ourselves, who are we reconstructing this country for? If we cannot look back, we have no memory, we have no identity and we cannot move forward." In this light, it is difficult to sustain the argument that history has no place in any country's future.

Ancient Iraqi History Now

Let us turn to the production of ancient Babylonian history in Iraq at the present time, starting with its most visible symbol, the Iraq Museum.

In retrospect, it is now clear that at least some of the looting at the Iraq Museum in 2003, in particular the ransacking of staff offices, was motivated by its close identification with the previous regime (Polk and Schuster; Stone and Bajjal). There was of course also professional as well as opportunistic theft of artefacts, but this is not the place to dwell on that particular episode. Indeed, I would argue that international concern, even obsession, over the fate of particular archaeological objects stands in stark and shameful contrast with the general indifference to the fate of

Iraqis themselves, both individually and institutionally.

The Iraq Museum and its parent organisation the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage have both suffered major losses of senior staff through de-Baathification, death, and emigration. Current managers and the ministerial staff that oversee them are clearly under-trained and out of their depth. These factors all have repercussions that are detrimental to the Museum itself but—paradoxically—generally beneficial to the provincial structures it nominally regulates. With rare exceptions the Museum is still closed to the public and to researchers, over a decade since the war (Arraf). There is an education officer with good English who can give tours, however. The galleries have been refitted and repopulated with objects, some of them several times, but the end result is much as it was pre-war: large numbers of artefacts grouped by type or material into relatively small cases which often seem too small for the very large galleries, and very little explanatory text or none at all. The staff have by and large relied on outside agencies for gallery refurbishments, especially UNESCO, and there is little domestic curatorial activity. There is still a palpable victim culture—that the museum is still suffering from the war ten years ago, with an explicit expectation that foreign agencies,

governmental and non-governmental, should continue to come to its aid. This attitude is in stark contrast to the energy and entrepreneurialism of other cultural heritage organisations across Iraq.

The Iraq Museum, as home of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, is still nominally in control of cultural heritage in the country's eighteen provinces, including the three that make up Iraqi Kurdistan. In practice, however, its inertia means that for the most part local officials are relatively autonomous and free to innovate where they have the energy to do so; they almost always have the money. As I am focusing here on ancient history, I will mention only in passing the extremely impressive efforts driven by the Shia shrines authorities in the holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala to document the material culture of historical Islam; and by the avowedly secular and non-sectarian Iraqi National Library and Archives in Baghdad to digitise and get online all official documentation of the twentieth century Iraqi state, torture records and all. However, both are indicative of a new and exciting move to the creation of local historical narratives. In Basra, for instance, the dilapidated old museum has been replaced with a new one in one of Saddam Hussein's former palaces on the Shatt al-Arab river. The museum is to be funded and managed jointly by the State

Board and—for the first time—by Basra Provincial Council, through its Tourism and Antiquities Committee. UK charity Friends of the Basrah Museum and the British Institute for the Study of Iraq also provide assistance (“Friends of Basrah Museum”). The final phases of work are now underway, and it is hoped that the building will open to the public some time in 2015.

A formal operating plan spells out the museum’s aims, stressing local stories as much as national history. Objects for the museum will be sent from Baghdad, but unusually the choice will be negotiated with the local museum director, Qahtan Alabeed, and supplemented with locally sourced artefacts. The majority of gallery space is given to Sumerian and Babylonian (ancient southern Iraqi) history, along with that of Basra itself, from ancient times to the present day. Assyrian (ancient northern Iraqi) history gets just a single small gallery of its own. It has not yet been decided whether the museum will charge an entrance fee—a prohibitive \$1 for Iraqis has been mentioned, \$10 for foreigners—or will open its doors for free.

Where, in this setup, do new historians, archaeologists, and cultural heritage experts come from? And how do they get trained? There are thirty-three state universities in Iraq, thirteen of them in Kurdistan, and a further twenty-two private ones. All have

suffered badly from sanctions-era and post-war academic emigration, lack of infrastructural investment, and training, etc., and a top-down bureaucracy (Jawad and al-Assaf). The top 15% of school-leavers are channelled into studying engineering, medicine, and pharmacy. Even my mathematician friends complain that they do not get the brightest students. The historians and archaeologists certainly do not. Since 2009 there has been a large-scale graduate scholarship scheme, funded by the Ministry of Higher Education, which has supported over 22,000 students to date. There is also plethora of similar European and US schemes for Iraqi graduate students—in March 2013 ICEF estimated that they amount to about \$200 million—but the majority of those understandably go to students in science, technology, engineering and medicine. Most (but not all) of the state universities have archaeology, ancient history and/or cultural heritage departments, but I know of no systematic survey of them.

I have personally visited the archaeology departments of Qadissiyah University in Diwaniyah and Kufa University in Najaf. At Qadissiyah, the archaeology department is not connected to the internet. The head of department has a laptop and there are at least two classrooms with digital projectors but only one of them is functional.

Technological infrastructure in the much better-funded Kufa University is significantly better. Library provision at both institutions, however, is woeful: budgets are tiny, and the students’ language skills do not extend to reading European textbooks. Even having good skills in conversational Business English does not equip one to read highly technical excavation reports, or the rebarbative musings of an erudite Assyriologist. And Iraqi students are simply not trained in the search and analytical skills needed to locate and make sense of what is on the web. Well-meaning projects to mass-scan archaeological reports to PDF and to negotiate free access to JSTOR for Iraqi universities are therefore largely ineffective. However, all staff and students have phones or tablets—all graduands from the University of Kufa are presented with smartphones by the provincial governor—and everyone is on social media of some sort or another.

The University of Kufa runs training excavations at the early Islamic city there, while their counterparts at Qadissiyah have had digs in recent years at the Old Babylonian cities of Marad and Pi-Kasi (known locally as Abu Antik because of the wealth of ancient artefacts found there). Qadissiyah Assyriologist Saad Salman Sinaa is editing cuneiform tablets found at the latter site. Up at the University of Mosul (which I have

not myself visited) the archaeology department has been working with a team from Boston University, headed by Professor Michael Danti, to reform its curriculum, in a project funded by the US Embassy in Iraq.

Since 2013 young Iraqi archaeologists are also being trained at the British-Iraqi excavations at Tell Khaiber in Dhi Qar province. Dhi Qar University has no archaeology department; the trainees, all university graduates, come from the provincial office of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, along with senior archaeologist Ali Khadem whose primary responsibility is the enormous site of Ur. It is hoped to extend the training programme significantly in future seasons, funding permitting.

Conclusions: Possible Futures, Enabling Change

The nation state of Iraq is extraordinarily resilient, despite its obvious major flaws—or even because of them, as Fanar Hadad has recently argued. Whatever Iraq's fate as a political entity, there are thirty-three million-odd people living there. They, like everyone, deserve the right to learn about their region's past, both recent and ancient, should they choose to do so, to understand who they and their communities are, and how they came to be. There is great potential to enable that to happen,

not least because current stasis in central government is allowing local identities to flourish as never before since the 1950s. The worry is that, at worst, the old centralised Baathist historical narrative will be replaced by competing sectarian accounts, which are just as limiting, biased and off-putting as the one they replace.

Where do outside experts fit in? Do we have any role in changing the current picture, given that our collective efforts over the past decade have largely failed to be transformative? Westerners certainly should not be dictating terms to our Iraqi colleagues but equally we should not continue to ignore them. Equally, business as usual will not be good enough. Digitising materials is pointless without finding aids and further support. Out-of-country training for limited numbers of people is likewise often suboptimal: once they are back in their home institution, experience shows that they struggle to implement what they have learned without the resources, infrastructure and managerial support that we take for granted. I see three basic prerequisites for the collaborative development of a viable professional infrastructure.

1. Arabic Language

We need to learn to speak it, and write it, in such a way as will make sense to Iraqi

audiences—professional or public—and enable them to engage and respond. We do not expect our undergraduates, let alone our public audiences, to know any foreign languages, so why should that be a prerequisite in Iraq? Of course it is necessary at graduate level but certainly not before. That might mean in the first instance pushing our publishers to commission Arabic translations of our books. But it also means being able to speak face-to-face with colleagues, students, and school groups in their own language. Over the past few months the Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus collective (Oracc) has been developing mobile-friendly design for its educational sites such as *Knowledge and Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, *Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses*, and *Cuneiform Revealed*. The next step, funding permitting, will be Arabic translation, cultural adaptation, and focused training for Arabophone users and content creators.

2. Scoping the Landscape in Iraq

There is no shortage of energetic, intelligent, frustrated academics in Iraqi universities and cultural heritage organisations who are desperate for international collaboration, and the innovation and inspiration that collaboration brings. Identifying them and discussing their needs seems a

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key first step, while ensuring that our own academic needs and principles are met. The partners we work with need not just be academics and university students. In-country NGOs can help develop public education programmes. UNESCO Iraq needs to be encouraged to connect its education and culture strategies more coherently. Government ministries—whether Education, Higher Education, Culture, Tourism and Antiquities—print and broad-

cast media, commercial and industrial sports: all are potential allies.

3. Advocating Internationally

Many of us need to commit to this future. A handful of individuals, or even a handful of organisations, cannot work with every prospective Iraqi partner. Equally, a huge public relations exercise will be necessary, to persuade colleagues, managers and funders of the safety and value of working

in-country, with the right partners and under the right conditions. In particular, it is important to get the message across that sustained engagement with Iraq's ancient history is not merely a western indulgence. Iraq's past matters deeply to many Iraqis, for whom it is a powerful and effective means of asserting collective identity, and celebrating cultural diversity, in these most destructive and divisive of times.

Notes

¹ This paper is a revised version of a talk given to the Institute for Classical Studies' Ancient History Seminar in London in May 2013, at the kind invitation of Amélie Kuhrt, under the title "Publics, Practitioners, and Politics: Talking Babylonian History in Southern Iraq." I wrote it in the context of formulating the next five-year plan and case for support for the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, whose governing council of trustees I currently chair, and submitted it for review in the spring of 2014. In revisions (autumn 2014) I have not attempted to take account of the ever-changing political and military situation in Iraq,

especially since ISIS' invasion of the Mosul region in June 2014, as updates become outdated almost as soon as they are written at the moment.

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CLOSE UP

Nabonidus, King of Babylon

Giulia Francesca Grassi

It may seem anomalous to devote this column, which should contain the portrait of someone who contributed to the issue's main topic, to the last Neo-Babylonian king, having at disposal a considerable number of renowned scholars, explorers, philologists, and archaeologists who could well have deserved this attention: Pietro Della Valle,¹ Carsten Niebuhr,² Georg Friedrich Grotefend,³ Paul-Émile Botta,⁴



William Blake (1757-1827), *Nebuchadnezzar* (Tate impression), ca 1795-1805. Color print, ink and watercolor on paper (543 x 725 mm; frame: 661 x 829 x 50 mm). © Tate Gallery, London 2014 (Reference N05059).

Austen Henry Layard,⁵ Robert Koldewey,⁶ and Ernest Renan⁷ are just some of the many possible illustrious candidates. There is basically one reason for the choice of Nabonidus: he is one of the very few characters involved with cultural heritage as both agent and object. As agent, he has been considered the first archaeologist ever, and—even if his description as “archaeologist” may be extreme—his use of

the past for ideological purposes is undeniable; as object, he—or rather his acts, attitudes, and dispositions—were reinterpreted and transmitted to modern times through different literary testimonies.

Keywords: Nabonidus; Neo-Babylonian Dynasty; Biblical and Parabiblical Literature; Greek Historians; Archaeology; Ancient Near East in Modern Culture

Nabonidus and the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty

Before turning to these testimonies, a short history of his reign and that of his predecessors is necessary. It must be kept in mind that this brief historical introduction does not aim to evaluate the historical character of Nabonidus, nor to shed new light on the evidence we already have.⁸ There are many open questions about his reign and his personality which will not be discussed here, because they are beyond the scope of this paper.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire is conventionally understood to begin with King Nabopolassar (Akkad. *Nabû-apla-ušur*), who in 612 BC was able to take Nineveh, thus inheriting a considerable part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. His son Nebuchadnezzar (or Nebuchadrezzar; Akkad. *Nabû-kudurri-ušur*) expanded the reign and affirmed his control over the Levant in its entirety: in Jewish tradition, this monarch became famous for the siege and capture of Jerusalem in 587 BC, and for the ensuing deportation of the city's ruling class (see e.g. Sack 53-59).

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach (Akkad. *Amēl- or Awīl-Marduk*), who was murdered after only two years of reign by his brother-in-law Neriglissar (Akkad. *Nergal-šarra-ušur*).

Upon the latter's death, in 556 BC, his very young and weak son Lābāši-Marduk became the victim of a conspiracy after just a few months of rule. One of the conspirators, Nabonidus (Akkad. *Nabû-na'id*), ascended to the throne, apparently with no claim to legitimacy. Despite a number of arguments to the contrary (see e.g. Dougherty 51-63; Mayer), Nabonidus' kinship with the Babylonian royal line remains far from proven and does not in fact seem to be likely (see Beaulieu, *The Reign* 67-86). Nabonidus' father was a certain Nabû-balāṣu-iqbi, otherwise unknown to historical sources (68);⁹ his mother, who was far more relevant for Nabonidus' career, was Adda-guppi, probably an Aramaean priestess from Harran, and specifically a devotee of the moon god Sin. Adda-guppi claimed, in her well-known "autobiographical" inscription that was actually promoted by her son after her death,¹⁰ to have introduced her son to the court (no mention is made of her husband). If she had, as claimed, been born under the last major Assyrian King Ashurbanipal, she was ninety-five years of age when her son became ruler, and it is therefore likely that Nabonidus himself was rather advanced in years at the time of his accession to the throne.

Nabonidus is famous for his attempts to bolster the cult of the moon god Sin to the

detriment of Marduk, the main deity of Babylon, and for his extended stay in the Arabian oasis of Tayma¹¹ following a military campaign to Lebanon, Transjordan, and Arabia.

The reasons for his voluntary "exile"—strategic, religious, economic, or possibly a mixture of all these explanations—have been long debated, but ultimately remain unclear.

Somewhat clearer are the consequences that such a prolonged absence from the Babylonian capital entailed. In the first place, Nabonidus aroused the hostility of the priests of Marduk and the Babylonian intellectual milieu, who kept repeating sharp criticisms of his absence, his malfeasance, and his "impiety" (in reference to the loss of centrality of the Babylonian god Marduk) in a remaining literary document concerning his reign known as *Verse Account*.¹² Secondly, he was forced to appoint a substitute in Babylon; his choice fell upon his son Belshazzar (Akkad. *Bēl-šarra-ušur*), who became governor of Babylon and co-regent at the same time (the Belshazzar of the Book of Daniel).

On October 12th, 539 BC, Babylon was conquered by Persian troops, apparently without any resistance. Cyrus entered the city seventeen days later, putting an end to the Neo-Babylonian Empire, and to Nabonidus' reign. Belshazzar was possibly

killed,¹³ while Nabonidus, no more in Tayma, apparently escaped death.¹⁴

The Archaeologist/Antiquarian

As stressed by Beaulieu (*The Reign* 139-43), Nabonidus is the only Neo-Babylonian monarch who makes references in his inscriptions to both Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs, tracing an ideal royal line in which some kings are overlooked. This practice testifies to his willingness to interpret the past through a historical perspective, and to use it for political purposes. His interest in the past is also manifested by the excavations he undertook in several cities, from Ur to Larsa, and to Sippar and Harran, in order to restore/rebuild temples. It is true that other kings before him reported identifying previous building phases in temples, and mentioned the kings involved in them—but his descriptions are far more accurate and complete, and in some cases he even tries to date the monarchs who reigned before him and whose buildings and artefacts he unearthed in his excavations.

In nineteenth century literature, Nabonidus' interest for archaeology was overestimated: depicted as completely absorbed in his diggings and antiquarian studies, he with this attitude was nearly accused of facilitating the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (Hommel 779). This gro-

tesque picture of the king was immortalized in a movie which is a milestone of the silent era, David Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916). The main character during the fall of Babylon is Belshazzar, while Nabonidus is shown announcing the discovery of the foundation stone of King Narām-Sîn (third millennium BC). Griffith (1875-1948), who depicted Belshazzar in an unusually positive way, as the champion of tolerance, had studied the most recent discoveries about Babylonian civilization before making this episode of his movie, and this was evidently the picture of Nabonidus he got from his readings.¹⁵

This image of Nabonidus as Romantic antiquarian was corrected by Goossens in 1948. Goossens rightly pointed out that the finding of the oldest foundations was necessary in order to properly rebuild the temples, and that Nabonidus was more engaged than his predecessors because he was very religious. However, *pietas* alone is hardly responsible for the accurateness and the interest in the past shown by the king, and for his archaeological activity, which were considered almost maniacal in the nineteenth century¹⁶ and are still described as “bordered on the obsessive” (Oates 131). Nabonidus' concerns about the past, his predecessors, and the restoration of temples and cultic traditions certainly had religious

motivation;¹⁷ but they were also related to a desire to legitimate his rule, and to build his authority upon the past, as suggested by many scholars (cp. e.g. Beaulieu, *The Reign* 138-43; Roaf; Garrison 46, with further literature).

Moreover, historical interest is not absent from Nabonidus' reports, as admitted also by Goossens. In this context, it may be useful to have a look at some of Nabonidus' reports on his excavations, which could have been taken, *mutatis mutandis*, from a nineteenth century archaeological report. The episode of Narām-Sîn quoted in *Intolerance* is taken from an inscription of Nabonidus, possibly known by Griffith through the summary of Morris Jastrow (Drew 43; Jastrow 295; for the text, see now Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 422, 438). In this text, Nabonidus tries to date the foundations of the temple of the sun god in Sippar, which were laid by king Narām-Sîn who he thought reigned 3,200 years before him. That timespan is overestimated, since Narām-Sîn ruled in the twenty-third century BC (according to the middle chronology), and he was not the son of Sargon of Akkad, as stated by Nabonidus, but rather his grandson. However, this effort of dating a predecessor is uncommon for his time, and it does not seem to be connected with a religious explanation.

In another report, Nabonidus narrates that he assembled many workers (the competence of his craftsmanship is stressed in several passages) in order to locate the foundations of the E'ulmaš Temple in Akkad. The efforts of his predecessor were apparently unfruitful,¹⁸ as were his own efforts, at least for three years—but then (Nabonidus speaks in first person):

(The craftsmen) spoke to me: “We have been looking for the foundation, but we have not found it. But there has been a downpour of rain and we have seen (that) it has made a hole.” I spoke to them as follows: “Dig in this hole until you have found the foundation there!” They dug in this hole and they certainly found the foundation of the E'ulmaš (laid) by Narām-Sîn [...] and they reported it to me. My heart rejoiced and my face shone [...]. (2.14 II: Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 456 (Akkadian text), 464 (German translation); translation by Schaudig, “The Restoration” 160-61)

Another famous episode relates that he found a statue of Sargon¹⁹ during the restoration of the Ebabbar temple in Sippar. The head was broken, but

In order to revere the gods and to show respect to kinship, he (scil. Nabonidus) summoned skilled craftsmen, renovat-

ed the head of this statuette, and restored its face. (Royal Chronicle III-IV²⁰: Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 592, 594; translation by Schaudig, “The Restoration” 158)

Besides the fact that the “respect to kingship” seems to be, once again, associated with a political interest in the past, this second text is among the most ancient ones that relate the restoration of an archaeological artifact by specialized craftsmen (Podany 13).

Nabonidus had no successors, and he did not establish any archaeological school, but his methods were not significantly different from the ones used in archaeology for centuries to come and until some decades ago. Moreover, the two examples quoted above seem to denote a certain degree of personal involvement. Of course, we are far from Fabrizio Del Don-go's rapture for the discovery of a bust of Emperor Tiberius in Miseno (Stendhal, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, chapitre 7), and also far from the absent-minded antiquarian of Romantic origin. However, Nabonidus' dramatic report about the discovery of the foundation of Narām-Sîn is hardly the result of mere religious concern, which could have been expressed in a shorter and less theatrical way. The king seems to have been genuinely concerned and in-

terested in his discoveries, and tried to create a bridge with the past.²¹

One may argue, of course, that his excavations were not archaeological (Schaudig, “The Restoration” 155-61; “Nabonid”). However, a purely academic interest in archaeology is a recent phenomenon, and it is even questionable if archaeology may be free from political and religious motivations.²² Also the idea that his relation with history is not historical²³ is rather problematic because we are not dealing with a modern scholar. The idea that past peoples had different cultures, and were not “just like us” ultimately goes back to the Renaissance. Before the Renaissance, no break was perceived between the ancient world and the modern one.²⁴ Nabonidus could see no break between Sargon, Nebuchadnezzar, and himself—quite the contrary, he considered himself their heir. If it is true that the modern study of the past begins with the Renaissance, and modern archaeology much later, it would be unfair to deny that the last Neo-Babylonian king did have a historical perspective, as well as some perception of the importance that cultural traditions may have for the construction of a political identity—and for legitimating someone's own power, an idea by no means out of fashion.

Nabonidus likely deserves the place Paul Bahn (1-2) and Alain Schnapp (13-18) gave

him, at the very beginning of *The Cambridge History of Archaeology*, and in the first pages of *La conquête du passé*, respectively. Actually, his name is nowadays known, apart from a restricted group of Assyriologists, mainly for his antiquarian and archaeological interests. However, his most significant legacy in modern culture is somewhat hidden under a name that is not his own, but rather the name of his illustrious predecessor: Nebuchadnezzar, whom he apparently admired. Some ancient writers maintained memory of the king, even if they did not always record his name. However, at a certain point some narratives and motifs with Nabonidus as the main character started circulating with Nebuchadnezzar as protagonist. This is likely due to the fact that these stories were transmitted by Jewish communities, and if Nebuchadnezzar was well known to the Jews as the destroyer of Jerusalem and the source of Jewish exile in Babylon, Nabonidus was not, since he was irrelevant for the history of Judah.

Ailing Kings and Misplaced Names

Greek historians seem to have had at least partial memory of the king, even if they do not mention him by name. He and his son are possibly hidden behind the name Labynetos in Herodotus' *Histories* (I, 74, 77, 188; fifth century BC), and while in Cy-

ropaedia by Xenophon (fifth-fourth century BC) the kings who sat on the Babylonian throne before its fall are anonymous, they are two and were said to be father and son.²⁵

In Mesopotamia itself, king Nabonidus was definitely still remembered: after the death of Cambyses (522 BC), two usurpers took the programmatical name of Nebuchadnezzar (III and IV), both pretending to be Nabonidus' sons. Even in Hellenistic Mesopotamia the memory of the king lived on: on the one hand, exponents of the clerical milieu of Babylon were still writing against him at the end of the fourth century BC (*Dynastic Prophecy*: see Grayson, *Historical-Literary Texts* 24-37); on the other hand, the historian Berossos—whose account is preserved in works of Eusebius (third to fourth century AD) and Josephus (first century AD)—and who was active in Babylonia between the fourth and the third century BC, provides the correct order of all the monarchs in the Neo-Babylonian dynasty.

The testimony of Josephus is quite interesting, because it reflects the problems that this Jewish historian of the Flavian era had to face in describing the fall of Babylon. In his *Contra Apionem* (I, 20), he quotes Berossus, and states that after the murder of Lābāši-Marduk, the kingship was conferred to Nabonidus (for more de-

tails, see Grassi 197-98). In his *Jewish Antiquities*, on the other hand, he affirms that after Lābāši-Marduk, Belshazzar “who was called Naboandelos²⁶ by the Babylonians” (X, 1) took the throne and was defeated after seventeen years of reign (the number of years of Nabonidus' kingship). The differences between the two versions of Josephus need explanation.

Josephus evidently had Berossus before him; but he must have had the Bible as well, particularly the Book of Daniel. It is actually the Bible—and a set of biblical and parabiblical motifs emanating from the Jewish communities—that conditioned later traditions and perceptions about the fall of Babylon, as well as our own perception. If asked who was the king of Babylon during the fall of the city, our memory would probably recall the scene of Belshazzar's feast, perhaps through Rembrandt's brush. This happens because in the Bible, no mention is made of Nabonidus, and the last king of Babylon here is Belshazzar, who was historically never a king, but just a crown prince. However, the situation of co-regency of Nabonidus and his son may well have created ambiguity about the name(s) of the king(s) reigning over Babylon immediately before its fall, both among the Greek historians and in the Bible.²⁷

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Josephus did his best to reconcile the two testimonies, and considered Belshazzar the alias of Nabonidus. The name Belshazzar was the first of Nabonidus' literary aliases: once the historical memory of the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty was completely lost, the aliases became several: in the lists provided by the Byzantine chronographer George Syncellus/Syncellos, the aliases of Nabonidus became three, and none of them is related to the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, but rather to the Median and Achaemenid ruling houses (see Grassi 199).

Not explicitly being mentioned in the Bible, Nabonidus—differently from his son Belshazzar—does not occur in later Jewish traditions. But he was not entirely cancelled out by the biblical author of Daniel, who just provided him with another kind of alias: Nabonidus lies behind the king who in the Bible is said to be the father of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar.

The tale of Nebuchadnezzar's madness in 4 Dan. is very close to the tale of Nabonidus' disease, as found in some Aramaic fragments from Qumran Cave 4 published in 1956 by Milik, the so-called "4Q Prière de Nabonide," a fragmentary and difficult Jewish narrative text. The similarities with the madness of Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel are striking: both kings are afflicted by a disease for seven years, both of them are in the desert (or at

least, in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, driven out of human society and dwelling with the wild beasts), both of them are aided by a Jew, and both of them are allowed to recover their health by abandoning impious behaviour and praying to the "true" God.²⁸ Another parallel is the terminology used for the idols described in 5 Dan., during Belshazzar's feast, and in the *Prayer of Nabonidus* (for more details, see Grassi 190-91).

Almost all scholars agree that Nebuchadnezzar's madness is the reinterpretation of Nabonidus' disease;²⁹ which was not, however, insanity. Even the critical *Verse Account* does not state that Nabonidus was mad, albeit his strange behavior is often stressed. Possibly some aspects of the nature of the king, perceived as odd, and his erratic life (the stay in the desert at Tayma) produced this legend of madness/disease and retirement from the civil world (cp. Beaulieu, "Nabonidus the Mad King" 137-38), a retirement that in the case of the Bible is represented by a king eating "grass as oxen" (4 Dan., 25 and 33; and Nebuchadnezzar is actually disguised as an oxen in the short story *Le taureau blanc* by Voltaire³⁰). Another example of the influence of the memory of Nabonidus in the portrait of Nebuchadnezzar resides in the importance accorded to the interpretation of dreams in the two episodes con-

cerning the latter in the Bible (2 and 4 Dan.). In fact, it is known that Nabonidus fostered a great consideration for dreams and that he is "the only Neo-Babylonian ruler who reports dreams in his inscriptions and who claims to have made important decisions based on their ominous content" (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 218). In inscription 13 he pretends to have left Tayma after a nightmare; in inscription 1, after declaring himself "the strong delegate of Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar, my royal predecessors," he reports an interesting dream in which he declares to have seen his predecessor Nebuchadnezzar, whom he asked to relate favorable signs for his accession to the throne (see Beaulieu, *The Reign* 152, 110-12).

Curiously enough, the usurper Nabonidus, who considers himself the true political successor of Nebuchadnezzar, and seeks in this dream "a posthumous confirmation of his rule by his prestigious predecessor" (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 112),³¹ is transmitted to later cultural traditions mostly with the name Nebuchadnezzar. It is Nabonidus who ultimately lurks behind the lonely, troubled king errant in the desert, well-known from the Bible, and later on from the color prints by William Blake (see Seymour, "The Artistic Legacy"), and from the third opera—and first masterpiece—of young Verdi.³²

Notes

¹ Pietro Della Valle (1586-1652) traveled for twelve years in Asia (Turkey, Palestine, Persia, India, Oman) during the 17th century. He provided important descriptions and reports of the places he visited, which may be found in his book *Viaggi di Pietro Della Valle il Pellegrino* (cp. Della Valle, with introduction and commentary), published with enormous success mostly after his death. For a short biography, see Micocci.

² Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815) was a German traveler, versed in both languages and sciences (mathematics, astronomy, geography), and known for his participation as cartographer and geographer to the Danish expedition to Arabia of 1761, of which he was the only survivor. For the life and travels of Carsten Niebuhr, see, e.g., Wiesehöfer and Conermann, and particularly Lohmeier in that volume.

³ Carsten Niebuhr in 1778 produced accurate copies of the trilingual (Old Persian, Elamite, Akkadian) texts of Persepolis, which were used in 1802 by the classical scholar and philologist Georg Friedrich Grotefend (1755-1853) to lay the foundation of the decipherment of cuneiform: by supposing that the inscriptions probably contained some royal names of the Achaemenid dynasty, he was able to identify the names of Darius and Xerxes in the Old Persian texts, as well as some royal titles, and to establish the phonetic values of some signs. In 1835 and again in 1844, the British Orientalist (and army officer) Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810-1895) copied a long trilingual text, inconveniently positioned on a cliff hanging 122 meters from the ground in Behistun (Iran), and was thus able to provide a translation of the Persian text. Later on, in 1857, Rawlinson himself—together with the Irish reverend and Assyriologist Edward Hincks (1792-1866), the German-French Assyriologist Jules (or Julius) Oppert (1825-1905), and William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) who was far better known as a photography pioneer—took

part in a famous experiment promoted by the Royal Asiatic Society, at the suggestion of Fox Talbot: They were given a copy of an Akkadian inscription and asked to provide a translation. The four translations were essentially similar (the versions of Rawlinson and Hincks were the closest), and Akkadian cuneiform was considered deciphered. See e.g. Bahn 108-09; Larsen, esp. 468-69; Schmitt 722-23.

⁴ The French-Italian archaeologist Paul-Émile Botta (born Paolo Emiliano Botta; 1802-1870), son of the historian Carlo Botta, was French consul in Mosul. During his mandate he did excavations in Nineveh (Kuyunjik) and later, with greater success, in Dur Sharrukin (Khorsabad), where Botta located the palace of Sargon II—the first Assyrian palace to be unearthed. The great majority of his finds were sent to Paris where they were displayed for the first time in 1847: the Louvre was the first museum in Europe that displayed Assyrian monuments (see Parrot). For Botta, see Parrot; Larsen, esp. 28-53.

⁵ Botta's "heir" and a friend, the English archaeologist and politician Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894), excavated Nimrud and Nineveh where he found the palace of Sennacherib and the famous library of Assurbanipal. For Layard, see Fales and Hickey; Larsen.

⁶ The German architect and archaeologist Robert Koldewey (1855-1925) excavated Babylon, and developed modern archaeological methods (in particular, a new method in excavating mud bricks). For Koldewey's excavations, see Seymour, "Robert Koldewey."

⁷ The great French writer and Orientalist Ernest Renan (1823-92) has been sharply criticized for his ethnical (and political) theories. However, his work made an important contribution to Oriental studies, and particularly to Semitic epigraphy: In 1867, he presented to the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, of which he was a member, his project aimed at publication of the *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum* (CIS). On this project of Renan, apparently his favorite one ("De tout ce que j'ai fait, c'est le *Corpus* que j'aime le mieux"), see Dupont-Sommer (the quotation is taken from page 539); on Renan, see recently van Deth.

⁸ The bibliography on Nabonidus is endless and cannot be fully cited in this paper. For the history of Nabonidus and his reign, the most important study is Beaulieu, *The Reign*. For a shorter study, see e.g. Beaulieu, "King Nabonidus"; Dandamayev. Still very useful is Dougherty.

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→ ⁹ Nabonidus has been considered the chief of an Aramaean tribe (Dandamayev), or even a brother or half-brother of Nabopolassar (Mayer)—although there is absolutely no evidence for this.

¹⁰ For this text and its literary genre, see Longman 97-103. Adda-Guppi is considered by Mayer an Assyrian princess, but, as in the case of Nabonidus' father, there is no proof of a royal origin.

¹¹ For the archival and literary sources about Nabonidus' sojourn in Tayma, see Beaulieu, *The Reign* 149-85. For the recent excavations in Tayma, see e.g. Hausleiter. For the North-Arabian inscriptions of Nabonidus, see Hayajneh; Müller and al-Said, "Nabonid in taymanischen Inschriften"; "Nabonid in thamudischen Inschriften."

¹² The product of the intellectual and the religious milieu, it was written after the fall of Babylon. A real piece of propaganda, it describes the reign of Nabonidus in negative terms, magnifying Cyrus' merits (for the *Verse Account*, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 563-78). For the new theology of Nabonidus and his difficult relationship with the intellectuals, see Beaulieu, "Nabonidus the Mad King."

¹³ According to the Bible (5 Dan.), Belshazzar was killed in circumstances which mix up historical events and folktales (see Grassi); we lack any Akkadian source concerning the end of Belshazzar.

¹⁴ Berossos tells us that the king, after surrendering in the siege of Borsippa, was sent into exile in Carmania (cp. Verbrugge and Wickersham, F10b, 61), while the *Chronicle of Nabonidus* or *Nabonidus Chronicle* (a chronographic text, preserved on one tablet, which describes the events of Nabonidus' reign from his accession to the period following the fall of Babylon; for the text, see Grayson, *Chronicles* 104-11) states that he was captured in Babylon. The so-called *Dynastic Prophecy* (II, 20-22) confirms Berossos' statement that Nabonidus was sent into exile (Grayson, *Historical-Literary Texts* 25).

¹⁵ On Griffith's interest in the last discoveries from Babylonia, his readings, and the image of Nabonidus (portrayed by actor Carl Stockdale, 1874-1953) and Belshazzar (portrayed by actor Alfred Paget, 1879-1925) in the movie, see Drew 43-45. The movie, which in its author's aim was a manifest against intolerance, is formed by four episodes: a contemporary story; Jesus' mission; Bartholomew Day; and the fall of Babylon. For this movie, see Drew.

¹⁶ According to Hommel, Nabonidus' archaeological interest conducted him "zu einer wahren Manie" (778).

¹⁷ He also installed his daughter En-nigaldi-nanna as high priestess of the moon god in Ur, a practice well-documented before him, but no more current in his time (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 122-23).

¹⁸ He goes so far as to quote unlikely—and presumably invented—incriptions (cp. Schaudig, "Nabonid" 475-78; "The Restoration" 155) of his predecessors confessing their failure. However, he was apparently also interested in actual ancient inscriptions: quite a few of those were copied during his reign as can be shown by their respective colophons. See recently Bartelmus and Taylor.

¹⁹ At least, a statue that he thought was that of Sargon: Schaudig denies the possibility that it was a statue of Sargon, and he takes this deposit of Sippar as a *pia fraus*, arranged by the priests or the intellectuals of the city ("The Restoration" 158).

²⁰ Of the four literary texts dealing with Nabonidus' reign (*Nabonidus Chronicle*; *Verse Account*; *Dynastic prophecy*; *Royal Chronicle*), the *Royal Chronicle* is the only one which provides chronological information about the building activities of the king. For this text, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften* 590-95.

²¹ As observed by Schnapp about the restoration of the Ebabbar of Larsa, "Le roi (scil. Nabonide) ne désire pas seulement faire effectuer des recherches pour identifier un lieu hautement chargé de symbolisme, un monument qui atteste de la continuité du pouvoir. Il cherche explicitement à s'installer dans la longue durée et l'expression du temps ici revêt une dimension matérielle. La fouille est nécessaire non seulement pour découvrir le lieu de mémoire, mais aussi et surtout pour le faire fonctionner." (18).

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→ ²² “[...] archaeology is always political. I argue that scholars should not try to deny this fact or obscure it behind a veil of false objectivity.” (McGuire XI). The recent book by McGuire offers further literature and stimulating examples.

²³ E.g. Schaudig, “Nabonid” 493: “Ähnlich, wie die Grabungen Nabonids nicht eigentlich archäologisch sind, ist der Umgang mit der Geschichte nicht eigentlich historisch.”

²⁴ On the birth of archaeology and perception of the past, see Schnapp. To put it with Panofsky's poetic words: “The Middle Ages had left antiquity unburied and alternately galvanized and exorcised its corpse. The Renaissance stood weeping at its grave and tried to resurrect its soul. And in one fatally auspicious moment it succeeded” (113).

²⁵ As regards the elder king, the first remarkable detail is that he is said to have led a successful war against Syria and Arabia (*Cyropædia* I, 5, 2), information that well fits with the well-known fact that Nabonidus actually left for a military campaign in 553 BC to Lebanon, Transjordan, and finally Northern Arabia, where he lived for ten years. For Nabonidus and Belshazzar in Herodotus and Xenophon, see Grassi 195-97.

²⁶ Note that Nabonidus is called Nabonnios in *Contra Apionem*, Naboandelos in *Jewish Antiquities*; the name of Nabonidus, as well as the name of other Babylonian kings, is often distorted in the Greek testimonies (see Grassi).

²⁷ For Belshazzar and his role in ancient and medieval testimonies, see Grassi.

²⁸ In the *Prayer of Nabonidus* we have only the diviner who suggests Nabonidus to pray to God, but it is likely that the lost part of the work contained the exaltation of the true God as in 4 Dan. (see Collins, “4Q Prayer” 86).

²⁹ Literature on the *Prayer of Nabonidus*, as well as that concerning the relation between the two texts, is endless: see e.g. Beaulieu, “Nabonidus the Mad King”; Collins, *Daniel* 217-18; “4Q Prayer”; Eshel 887-88; Flint; Kratz; Lemaire 126-28.

³⁰ “Conte philosophique,” *Le taureau blanc* was published in 1774. In this masterpiece, “le seul conte de critique biblique du XVIIIe siècle” (Pomeau, XXXV), Voltaire mixes characters and situations of the Bible in a narrative full of humor and vivacity. The metamorphosis of Nebuchadnezzar into oxen lasts for seven years, and it is caused by the prophet Daniel. On the intertextuality of *Le taureau blanc*, see Cotoni.

³¹ We may also note that Nabonidus reverts to some cultic practices from the time of Nebuchadnezzar (Beaulieu, *The Reign* 122-23). It is interesting to notice that also Saddam Hussein considered himself deeply bound to Nebuchadnezzar (cp. e.g. Fales 172).

³² *Nabucodonosor* (later *Nabucco*), opera in four parts, was composed by Verdi to a libretto by Temistocle Solera (after *Nabucodonosor*, play by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornue), and first performed in Milan at La Scala on 9 March 1842. The first Nabucco was baritone Giorgio Ronconi (1810-1890).

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OFF-TOPIC

More Than Movies: Cinema Petra in Amman During the Mandatory Period

Renate Dieterich

The movie theatre can be considered as one of various modernizing forces that dramatically transformed Middle Eastern societies in the 20th century. Cinema Petra was the biggest and most important movie theatre in Transjordan throughout the 1930s and 1940s and had a multi-purpose function. It not only screened movies but also served as a place of cultural communication and space for interaction. It was a major place of public gathering and entertainment during the 1930s and early 1940s and became part of the public space needed by Amman's urban elite for their cultural and political activities. Thus the cinema contributed to the emergence of a critical public sphere in the growing young Transjordanian capital.

Keywords: Amman; Transjordan; Arab Cinema; Cinema Petra; Social History

The movie theatre can be considered as one of various modernizing forces that dramatically transformed Middle Eastern societies since the turn of the last century. Transjordan was part of this transformation with the advent of modern schooling, local newspapers, broadcasting, instant communication through telegraphs and telephones, and cultural innovations like the gramophone and moving pictures. Cinema Petra was the biggest and most important movie theatre in Transjordan throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Located in Amman, capital of Transjordan, it had a multi-purpose function. It not only

screened movies but also served as a place of cultural communication and space for interaction, with room to host several thousand guests.

The following study of Cinema Petra and its influence on Amman's society focuses on the years of the British Mandate until 1946.¹ Consolidation of Hashemite power in the country along with the emergence of ambitious social groups characterized political, economic and cultural developments during the 1930s and 1940s in Transjordan. The mandate ended shortly before the first Arab-Israeli war and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. In the wake of these events, the state not only changed by name—from the Emirate of Transjordan to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan—but also expanded its territory and increased in population. The years 1946-48 therefore marked a clear historical caesura for the (Trans-) Jordanian society, as a massive influx of Palestinian refugees and migrants radically altered the social composition (Hanania). Since the 1990s, research interest on Transjordan has increasingly drawn attention to questions of social and socio-economic history, but research on Amman proper is still scarce (Amawi, *State and Class*; Fischbach; Hannover and Shami; Rogan and Tell). This study will shed some light on the development of Amman's society through

the lens of Cinema Petra's history and its effects on social and cultural change. This is interesting from several points of view: Firstly, the attendance of movie shows was a sign of emerging mass consumption in the Middle East during this period. Secondly, the cinema showed Arab, European and American films and thus exposed the inhabitants of Amman to different lifestyles and cultural norms. Thirdly, the hall of Cinema Petra served as a central point of public gathering throughout the period described. It witnessed not only movie screenings but served in many instances as a meeting point for political, philanthropic and cultural purposes. The most valuable sources for a study of the different cinematic enterprises in Transjordan are contemporary Arab newspapers, mainly *Filastīn* ("Palestine"), *al-Difāʿ* ("Defense") and *al-Urdunn* ("Jordan"), in its early days called *al-Urdunn al-Jadīd* ("The New Jordan"). Some studies on the history and social development of Amman also mention those cinemas or quote from conversations with eyewitnesses from those days. The very few memoirs about Amman in the 1930s and 1940s add to these details. These sources tell much about the setting of the movie theatres, the various ways in which the inhabitants of Amman used the cinema, the kind of entertainment of-

fered, and for which other purposes the theatre houses were used. The evolution of Amman as capital of the new nation state was exceptional, not only seen against the background of semi-colonial state formation by European powers through the treaty of San Remo in 1920, but also due to the fact that the city had been depopulated for several hundred years until the end of the 19th century. Both the Hashemite state and Amman's urban society constituted new elements in the social setting of Transjordan.

The Historical Setting: Transjordan as a Nation State—Amman as Its Capital

The founding of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921 by the British was meant to calm the nationalist aspirations of the Hashemite family after the Great Arab Revolt and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Emirate was nominally ruled by an "independent government" with Amir Abdullah as the head of state from 1921 on, but in fact, the British maintained control over all vital spheres in terms of economy, politics and administration. A British resident in Amman who in turn was subordinate to the high commissioner in Palestine represented the British mandatory force. In the early years, the Amir struggled against various forces challenging his rule, amongst them exiled Syrian

nationalists and tribal forces attacking him in raids from the south (Wilson 60-84; Dann 84, 88). By the end of the 1920s, Abdullah had succeeded—though only with strong British support—to neutralize opponents and to consolidate Hashemite reign in Transjordan. A political and economic elite in the country was still to emerge. This process began in the 1930s and accelerated in the 1940s. At the beginning of the 1920s, Transjordan comprised of 300,000 inhabitants, half of which were nomads, while the other half were mainly small-scale cultivators. Illiteracy was widespread and schools did not exist outside the few towns. Amman, in contrast, hosted merchants, of whom many had emigrated from Palestine and Syria. It was the center of political action in Transjordan and also the place of central power as represented by the Hashemite court and the British residency. Amman has a long, though not continuous, tradition of settlement starting in prehistoric times. It flourished under different rulers and varying names throughout the centuries, but after the disastrous Mongolian conquest in the 13th century, Amman lost more and more of its importance and was eventually completely abandoned. Natural disasters, mainly earthquakes, decisively contributed to the decay. It remained uninhabited for centuries, though

its lands and springs were used by Bedouin tribes for pasture and cattle raising. The Ottoman power started to pacify the area in the middle of the 19th century. Part of this pacification was the settlement of Caucasian refugees in Amman and other Transjordanian villages beginning in 1878. Thus, Circassians, and from 1907 onwards, Chechens, became the re-founders of the city when they established themselves in the ruins of ancient Amman.

The choice of Amman as the new capital in 1928 was due to several factors: The first was the Hejaz Railway, which had reached the town in 1903 and connected Amman in northern and southern directions. In the early 20th century, the railway station near Amman became the central point for travelling pilgrims on their way to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The construction of the railway led to a first—though still very modest—impetus for the development of the city where merchants and moneylenders from Syria and Palestine settled. Secondly, there was a small airport in Marka, close to Amman, already operating during World War I (Rogan 93). The airdrome was of use for the British striving to control their mandatory area. Equally important was the existence of water: springs in the surrounding mountains and a small river in the city centre supplied the inhabitants of Am-

man with water and allowed for agricultural use of the land (Rifai 137).

Though Amman was a small village during the 1920s, with 2,000 inhabitants in 1921, it grew slowly but steadily during the following years and comprised approximately 20,000 citizens in 1939 (Hacker 56-59).² From its early beginnings, Amman's society was composed of different groups of inhabitants with varying national, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Because the city had scarcely been populated before the state formation, its inhabitants were necessarily migrants, either from other parts of the country or from abroad. For this reason, Amman proper did not know a tradition of urban notables comparable to urban centers of Bilad al-Sham. Nevertheless, members of influential families and tribes soon gained important positions in the new state or played a significant role in anti-Hashemite opposition.³ Even though the social composition of Amman's population was more complex than that of other Transjordanian towns, the influence of conservative tribal values and norms was significant (Alon, "The Tribal System" 216-19).

Parallel to the population growth, new and modern institutions gradually emerged that contributed to the social transformation of the city in particular and the process of nation building in the nascent state

in general. One such institution was the cinema. It was in principle open to everyone and permitted autonomous access to information and entertainment even for those who were illiterate.⁴ As a place of public gathering, it became one of the central meeting points for an emerging urban elite. What Vanessa Schwartz has described as the "interlocking relations between the boulevard and the press" in late 19th century Paris also holds true for the example of the cinema in Amman: "[It] created a culture in which individuals from different classes and of both sexes were expected to derive pleasure from the same sights and experiences" (16). This was new for Transjordan, where such elements of a mass consumer culture were still to emerge.

In general, Palestinian and Syrian immigrants dominated the local economy until the 1930s, while farming remained a Circassian domain. This Palestinian and Syrian economic dominance can be seen on the numerous leasing documents from the period showing that many of the shops, storerooms, restaurants and also movie theatres in the commercial centre in old downtown were run by Arab immigrants from Greater Syria and Palestine (Rafi' 65-86). Smaller groups of migrants came from the Hijaz, Iran or Uzbekistan. In addition, there was internal migration of native

Transjordanians to the city. In particular, families from Salt, the former provincial centre, chose to establish themselves in the city, a trend that continued well into the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1930s, landless migrants from Palestine settled in Amman, as did merchants from Najd on the Arabian Peninsula after the pacification of the Transjordanian-Saudi border (Hacker 35). The 1930s and 1940s witnessed increasing building activities that produced new housing types. The houses were built for wealthy middle-class residents and their nuclear families, and marked a turning-away from traditional housing designed for extended families. Thus, the gradual social change of the urban population was also reflected in a new building trend (Wood 18-21).

During the mandate period, Amman's social fabric underwent a deep transformation, with the emergence of an urban constituency (Droz-Vincent 13). Under the influence of modernizing institutions, Amman's citizens were not exclusively confined to ancient identities, as the predominant tribal population structure of Transjordan would have suggested, but were able to redefine their interests and organize themselves along different and overlapping identities (Robins 44). Such developments included the establishment

of religious and ethnic clubs, sports clubs, welfare societies, and the running of cafés and restaurants where men—but not women—could meet and converse. In addition, immigrants from Palestine operated a printing press and edited a local newspaper, *al-Urdunn* ("Jordan"). The education system, which had hitherto mainly relied on traditional Islamic *kuttāb* schools teaching only basic reading and writing, now improved. Government as well as private engagement enabled gifted Transjordanian students to pursue their studies in Palestine, Syria or Lebanon (*Filastīn* 26 July 1926, 18 June 1938, 8 Mar. 1941; *al-Difā'* 15 Aug. 1935; *al-Urdunn* 1 Dec. 1940).

The Arab Cinema

In 1895, the Lumière brothers introduced a new and exciting medium to the public: the cinematograph, a machine that was both a camera and a projector. This marked the birth of moving pictures, which have fascinated a worldwide audience ever since. The success of movies was from its beginning not confined to the Western world. Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the Arab world was almost from the very beginning part of the worldwide audience of moving pictures. The first public movie screenings in the Arab world took place in 1896 and 1897 in Egypt, Algeria and Morocco. In 1900, the

world of moving pictures reached Palestine through the screening of films at the Europa Hotel in Jerusalem (Shafik 10). In the Middle East, the cinema contributed to the acceleration of social change in the 20th century, as did the railway, the telegraph, the press and the radio.⁵ The screening of movies introduced hitherto unknown subjects, lifestyles and social norms to the spectators. This does not, of course, only apply to the audience in the Arab world but to all cultural surroundings. However, movies as "urban spectacle" (Schwartz 3) supported a process of individualization and diversity accompanying the shaping of modernity in the Arab world. This process had already been triggered before, but the interwar period witnessed new kinds of entertainment and mass consumption, and a different notion of leisure time.

As an unprecedented crossroads of key elements associated with modern life, cinema combined a technological attempt to transform reality into spectacle with an audience of spectators gathered as an undifferentiated and constantly changing mass audience (Schwartz 200).

Ever since, the compatibility of cinematic entertainment with Arab and Muslim norms and values has been a subject of debate: "Arab cinema is frequently criticized as evidence of Westernization and

acculturation. [...] [It] raises questions about authenticity and acculturation, tradition, and alienation, and the roots of these relations and ideas" (Shafik 4). However, the Arab world gradually adopted the new medium, picking up on timeless subjects such as romance but also contributing to the ongoing anti-colonial debates and the shaping of political opinion, thereby producing new images of itself (Shafik 11-18).

Public Space and National Representation in the Capital

Since the 19th century, Middle Eastern urban centers such as Cairo, Damascus and Rabat had experienced the outcomes of Western town planning. European architects implemented their ideas of modern towns away from the traditional old cities, thereby decisively transforming the economic and social lives of their inhabitants. Amman, in contrast, did not become such a "colonial city" because it was so scarcely populated when the British arrived. Therefore, the mandatory power saw no need to 'organize' an oriental city or to redirect town development towards more 'modern', i.e. Western, forms of town planning. However, there was a clear tendency in Amman to install elements of the modern nation state. National symbols underlining the aspired new common identity of the people became visible on many occa-

sions. Both the Hashemite court and the British residency supported this process. This creation—or construction—of a uniting national identity went hand in hand with the emergence of public places. There were, however, no public buildings or officially designated indoor places for public events. Therefore, venues for public gathering in Amman were mostly private premises, like cinemas, hotels, schools or simply private houses, which, for example, hosted literary circles.

Despite this, the rulers used the streets and squares of the city to present themselves and to represent the new nation. Amman witnessed organized military parades, public receptions of high-ranking official guests, and celebrated historical events that were important to Arab nationalism⁶ and to Transjordan's identity as a nation state. On such occasions, the inhabitants of the city decorated their houses, went out to greet the official foreign guests, or just enjoyed themselves at the various entertainments, which were organized by the municipality or by the Hashemite court. Other examples were the street parades that were regularly held to commemorate religious festivities like *'Īd al-Aḡḡā*, the Muslim feast of immolation.⁷ The frequent pro-Palestinian protest demonstrations and strikes of the 1930s were

another sign of a new use of space by the population creating a new sense of collectivity among the people. The growth of Amman, combined with new means of entertainment, the emergence of mass consumption, and growing political sentiments of Arab nationalism contributed to the gradual emergence of a public sphere where citizens came together for collective leisure activities, discussion and social activities. In this respect, Amman did not substantially differ from Arab urban centers like Beirut or Damascus even though its number of inhabitants was much smaller (Skovgaard-Petersen 12-15).

The Cinema in Transjordan

The owners of Cinema Petra were both Christians, as was the editor of *al-Urdunn*, the local newspaper. The latter had moved to Amman from Palestine, while the owners of Cinema Petra were Syrians by origin. The causes for the Christian dominance in the Palestinian press can be traced back to developments in the Ottoman Empire and Western missionary activities in the 19th century. Political, cultural and religious resentments had for a long time deterred Ottoman rulers from the establishment of the printing press (Shomali 225-28). Books in Arabic were imports from Western countries brought to the East. In 1846, French missionaries brought the first print-

ing press to Jerusalem. The Palestinian press began to flourish after the Ottoman reforms of 1908 and stayed mainly in the hands of Greek Orthodox Christians for many years to come (Ayalon 57-59). The running of cinemas, in contrast, was not confined to the Christian minority, while religious restrictions were behind the fact that bars and alcohol-serving restaurants in Transjordan were always owned by Christians.⁸ The running of the entertainment business in the city was therefore a Christian affair, but Cinema Petra was frequented by all inhabitants of the city regardless of their creed, as will be shown below.

The movie theatres of Amman symbolized the advent of a modern institution in a rather conservative surrounding. Various reports of enthusiastic approval of the cinema by the public suggest that this new institution gained wide acceptance. This enthusiasm stood partly in contrast to the quality of the shows, which were at times described as somewhat pathetic. In addition, we can read complaints about the high entrance fees, which were twice as much as those at the cinema in Haifa (Malkawi 153). While Palestinian cinemas like the one in Haifa translated foreign films for the audience, the Transjordanians had to watch them in their original language. This did not prevent them from flocking to the

pictures, however. "The story of Amman's early cinemas is a story of a city entering modernity with new emerging public spaces of sociability and entertainment" (Daher 31). The first movie theatre in Amman, owned by Rushdi al-Şafadi and called *al-Sharq al-'Arabī* ("Arab East"),⁹ was set up in 1925, screening films in open-air performances (*al-Urdunn* 27 Mar. 1926, 8 May 1926). The first movie theatre building was realized in 1929 by the Syrian Abu Sayah al-Qabbani, owner of Cinema Nasr.¹⁰ It was amazingly spacious and could host up to 1000 people. Cinema Nasr screened silent movies, both Arab and foreign (Rashid 245-46; Abu Ghanima 86; Ayoub). Among those films were the early works of Charlie Chaplin and Hollywood productions with cowboy subjects, which drew the attention of the inhabitants of Amman. This was parallel to developments in the Levant where these American-style films also attracted the masses (Thompson 91). The silent movies were accompanied—as in Europe—by live music, performed by a three-man band. The show took place every evening, with night shows on weekends.

One of the very few memoirs of Amman written by a woman is the one by Najmiyya Hikmat, who tells about her visit to Cinema Nasr when she was a child. She recounts the wide space inside the house giving

room for many people, the band playing from behind the screen, and that a Charlie Chaplin film was screened that day (27). Due to the shortage of electricity supply, Cinema Nasr had its own generator to secure the functioning of the necessary technical devices (Ayoub).¹¹ The end of this first cinema project came in 1934 when Cinema Petra opened its doors to the public. A third movie theatre, Cinema al-Imara, was opened in the early 1940s, also run by a Syrian (Rashid 246; Abu Ghanima 90). It screened open-air shows during summer time. The novelist 'Abd al-Rahman Munif, who has described his childhood in Amman in the 1930s and 1940s, recalls such open-air-sessions during the summer attracting crowds of people. Some of them paid the entrance fee while others preferred to watch the films for free from outside, sitting on the pavement (175-76). The owners of Cinema al-Imara finally placed a thick curtain in order to hide the screen from outside spectators.

Cinema Petra

The 1930s were crucial for the constitution of a public discourse on political and social issues in Transjordan. The central power in Amman now controlled all parts of the country and was able to contain the power of rebelling tribal sheikhs (Alon, "Tribal Shaykhs" 77). But the colonial expe-

rience in the Arab world and developments in Palestine, especially after the beginning of the revolt in 1936, had a strong influence on the political atmosphere in the country. Strikes, demonstrations and political statements in favor of the Palestinian cause were frequent.¹² The inhabitants of Amman and other towns in Transjordan engaged in charity work and the collection of donations to support the victims in Palestine (*al-Urdunn* 29 June 1936; *Filastīn* 25 June 1935, 1 and 11 July 1936). The circulation of the Palestinian press in Transjordan contributed to a growing political consciousness among the citizens. Another source of discontent was the difficult economic condition in the 1930s sparked by consecutive years of drought (Amdouny 134-37).

It was during those troubled times that Cinema Petra, deriving its name from the famous Nabataean city of Petra in the south of (Trans-) Jordan, was set up on Basman Street by Wadi As'ad and Tawfiq Qattan.¹³ The theatre soon got ahead of its competitor and became the most popular movie theatre in town. But its success was not only due to the film business but also to its function as a public venue. The inhabitants of Amman used it not only for entertainment, but assembled in its premises for social, cultural and political purposes. Throughout the 1930s and early

1940s, it became a major place of public gathering and amusement and one of the central places of public space in Amman.

Cultural, Political and Philanthropic Activities

The hall of Cinema Petra was used for various events of public interest. People from different ethnic or religious backgrounds regularly gathered in the cinema, guided by common interest and thus partly overcoming traditional bindings of religion, family or tribe that dominated society in Transjordan. The Christian minority, which comprised approximately eight percent of Amman's population, used the hall of Cinema Petra repeatedly for festivities of their religious schools. However, these events were by no means confined to members of their own creed, but also open to the Muslim inhabitants of the city (*al-Urdunn* 23 July 1939, 11 July 1943).

The cinema also connected the Transjordanians to cultural developments in the Arab region through films and singers, mainly from Egypt and Syria. Many of the very successful films of the time, mostly directed by Egyptian producers, found an audience at Cinema Petra. Until the 1950s, when the majority of Arab states had become independent from former colonial or mandate rule, Egypt was the only Arab country with nameable film

producing companies and film directors (Shafik 9). Like other Arab countries, Transjordan did not have local film production until the late 1950s. This fact is reflected in the selection of films screened at Cinema Petra, which were either Egyptian or US productions.

In addition, theatre companies came to town to perform in front of enthusiastic audiences, and music shows entertained the public. A film with the music of the famous Egyptian singer and actor Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab attracted the masses in 1934. This film, called *Al-Warda al-Bayḍā'* ("The White Rose," Egypt 1933), was directed by the Egyptian Muhammad Karim and tells the story of an unfulfilled love between a servant and the daughter of his wealthy employer. The white rose here is a symbol for the pureness and decency of this love. The use of such symbols, as Viola Shafik has pointed out, was a new and innovative element of cultural expression in Arabic arts (60-61).

Qays wa Laylā ("Qays and Layla," Egypt 1934), screened in 1941, is another example of a film depicting a passionate but sad love story. The plot refers to an age-old famous Arabic love story that has inspired countless storytellers, authors and filmmakers throughout the Arab world and beyond.

While the Egyptian film *Intiṣār al-Shabāb* ("Triumph of the Youth"), produced in 1940 and screened the same year in Amman (*al-Urdunn* 1 Dec. 1940), also touched on the pitfalls of love and desire, it is more revealing to look at the role of the female singer and dancer in this musical, embodied by Asmahan al-Atrash,¹⁴ sister of famous Druze singer Farid al-Atrash. The two siblings, Druzes and originally from Syria but living in Egypt since the failed Druze revolt in Syria in the mid-1920s, acted and sang in this musical film, representing themselves as artists in Cairo. The positive depiction of the artist's life in bars and nightclubs marked a breach with long-established moral resentments against this kind of profession, especially for women (Moubayed 522-23). Cinema Petra also served as a music hall. In 1940, the Palestinian Broadcasting Band performed in Amman, accompanied by the band of the Arab Legion in addition to Arab singers—including a woman—and local schoolboys. This concert was broadcasted by the Palestinian radio station and was the first transmission from Transjordan (*al-Urdunn* 1 Apr. 1940). The Palestinian Broadcasting Band in cooperation with the Transjordanian ministry of culture also organized a children's party at the cinema (Abu Ghanima 90). In 1943, the popular musician Farid

al-Atrash performed live at Cinema Petra (*Filasṭīn* 27 Nov. 1943). Actors and actresses from Egypt and Syria arrived in town to stage their plays. They introduced another modern form of cultural expression, owing their success in large parts to the fact that they were far beyond any local production (Landau 94). Ramsis, one of Egypt's most famous theatre companies and led by Yusuf Wahbi (81-83), arrived in Amman in 1938 for a three-day visit at Cinema Petra, and again in 1942 (*Filasṭīn* 24 Apr. 1938; *al-Difā'* 2 Apr. 1942). Like in other countries, the fact of females acting on stage was impressive because this kind of profession was usually regarded as immoral (Landau 76). Local performances carried more of the characteristics of amateur theatre (Rashid 246).¹⁵ Transjordanian schoolboys and boy scouts presented their own theatre plays. In 1941, young men from Amman performed the Arab play *Faṭḥ al-Andalus* ("The Conquest of al-Andalus," 1931) written by Fu'ad al-Khatib. Among the actors was Sulayman al-Nabulsi, who became Jordan's Prime Minister in the 1950s (Abu Ghanima 89). The author, al-Khatib, was a prominent figure of the pre-war nationalist movement and had been close to the Hashemites ever since. He lived at the court of the Amir, who himself loved Arab literature and poetry and had a literary sa-

lon (Hannoyer 32-33). The Amir's literary salon was another place where cultural activities unfolded; however, it was private, in contrast to public places like Cinema Petra or Hotel Philadelphia, which was another important venue for public events. In addition, the Amir's salon was directly linked to the state and not an institution driven by citizens' involvement and engagement, as was Cinema Petra.

The charity organization *al-Jam'īyya al-Khayriyya*, founded in 1941 by Shukri Bek Sha'sha'a, the Transjordanian Minister of Defense and Interior, also convened at Cinema Petra. The organization was active in supporting the destitute part of the population in Amman (*Filasṭīn* 20 Dec. 1940, 2 Mar. 1941). Among other activities, it paid the hospital bills for those who could not afford medical treatment, supported students from Transjordan at Cairo's Al-Azhar University, and maintained an asylum for the poor (*al-Urdunn* 2 Mar. 1942). On the occasion of 'Īd al-Aḍḥā 1940, it announced the collection of donations for its activities, thus connecting the traditional Muslim religious duty of *zakāt* with modern forms of charity work (*al-Urdunn* 27 Jan. 1940). A festivity organized by the organization in March 1941 brought together the elite of Amman, merchants, students and officials from the government.

They listened to music played by the Palestinian Broadcasting Band, the music corps of the Arab Legion. Later, Fakhri al-Barudi, a well-known nationalist from Syria, spoke to the public (*al-Urdunn* 10 Mar. 1941). From then on, the charity organization planned such a festivity on a yearly basis and always convened at Cinema Petra (e.g. *al-Urdunn* 15 Dec. 1942).

When the theatre company with the well-known actress Nadia arrived in town together with fifty actors and actresses to stage a nationalist play at Cinema Petra, the charity organized a singing and dancing party for the public accompanying the performance. The proceeds went to the poor of Amman (*al-Urdunn* 6 Nov. 1941), while the company itself donated its takings from the ticket sales.¹⁶ The play had an educational tenor, telling the people about the virtues of democracy and the fight of an oppressed country against a tyrannous force. A film about Mecca and the Hajj, screened in 1942, is another example of the educational function that the cinema fulfilled (*al-Urdunn* 3 May 1942).

In 1946, the charity demonstrated its commitment to the Palestinian national cause by participating in a festivity, organized by the municipality of Amman and a Palestinian committee from Haifa, for the support of orphans in Palestine. The organizers collected donations from the inhabitants

of Amman, the Arab Legion played, and a lottery under the auspice of Amir Abdullah took place in the hall of Cinema Petra (*al-Difāʿ* 14 and 15 Apr. 1946).¹⁷ In 1944, the Islamic College in Amman held a celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday at Cinema Petra. The guests who filled the seats of the cinema were all members of the political and economic elite of the country. Their generous donations to the amount of 5000 Palestinian pounds were designed for a new school building (*al-Urdunn* 14 Mar. 1944).

Other events held at Cinema Petra were literary competitions or remembrances of the deceased. Some of these obsequies, like the ones for King Ali and King Husain in 1935 (*Filasṭīn* 27 Mar. 1935; *al-Difāʿ* 2 June 1935), were reminiscent of the Hashemite efforts to establish a Greater Arab state. They were part of the Hashemite aspiration to legitimate their rule in the emirate and their pan-Arab endeavors. The festivities in 1942 for the remembrance of the revolt may serve as an example of such attempts to construct a national Transjordanian identity in connection with Hashemite rulership in Transjordan. Amman, capital of the emirate, was decorated with flowers and flags on this occasion, the Amir spoke to the crowds lining the streets, and the mayor of Amman invited more than 3,000 official guests to a cele-

bration that was held at the hall of Cinema Petra. This huge number indicates how spacious Cinema Petra in fact was. The band of the Arab Legion played and poets recited from their work stressing the national overtone of the event (*al-Urdunn* 24 Aug. 1942). Thus, such commemorations contributed to the construction of a national identity in Transjordan, and they largely benefited from Cinema Petra as the central public space in town.

Another political event was the reception of Sultan al-Atrash, leader of the Druze revolt in Syria in 1937. He was greeted by rejoicing masses on the streets. A festivity to honor the guest with 1500 participants was organized in the hall of Cinema Petra (*al-Difāʿ* 16 and 19 May 1937). In 1940, all students of the country were invited to gather for a festivity at Cinema Petra in order to support the Palestinian national cause. The Arab Legion played and the director of the education department held a speech (*al-Difāʿ* 7 Apr. 1940).

Shortly after the Second World War, Saïd Ramadan¹⁸ came to Amman to attract the Transjordanians to the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood. He lectured on the religious and political ideas of the movement at Cinema Petra. 'Abd al-Rahman Munif recalls the event as follows:

When he [Sa'ïd Ramadan] gave one of his scheduled speeches, the Petra

Cinema would be thronged by young and old. Even those who avoided the cinema because they considered it to be corrupt pushed and shoved others to get in so that they could listen to the orator who knew how to excite people and appeal to their emotions. (251-52)

This speech, as Munif remembers, gave a boost to the efforts of the Muslim Brotherhood in Transjordan, who had set up their first office in the emirate in 1945.

Morals, Gender and the Cinema

Romantic love and forbidden relationships have always been among the prominent subjects of the film industry from the very beginning, regardless of the creator's origin. Such love stories sometimes met the moral resistance of more conservative parts of society and the religiously learned, as had been reported from Egypt, Lebanon and Syria (Shafik 49). 'Abd al-Rahman Munif mentions such resentments that parts of society showed towards the cinema in Transjordan (Munif 252). Nevertheless, with the exception of Wahhabi 'ulamā' in Saudi Arabia, there was no fundamental rejection of movies grounded on Islamic aniconism by Muslim scholars and the issue of exposing people did not arouse religious resentment.

Others criticized the owners of Cinema Petra for completely different reasons: they accused them of being "too much interested in their own profit" and "not caring about the national interest" (*al-Jazeera* 11 Jan. 1940). The reason behind such criticism was the fact that Qattan and As'ad had screened *Marie Antoinette* (USA 1938) in the building of the Arab Legion in Marka, circumventing the payment of the custom duty (*al-Jazeera* 11 Jan. 1940; Abu Ghanima 91).¹⁹ This is an interesting point because it shows that the cinema business was a profitable economic undertaking closely watched by the community.

Another element of Cinema Petra's modernizing force was the fact that it was also open to the female populace. In the beginning, the movie theatre held a special show for the women of Amman once a week. Later, Cinema Petra provided for separate space for men and women, thus enabling both sexes to watch a movie at the same time, and occasionally offered special shows for women (Ayoub). This stood in contrast to the Syrian and Lebanese example of cinemas created exclusively for a female audience (Thompson 95). The much smaller potential audience in Amman can presumably explain this difference and it is argued here that the population of Am-

man was simply not big enough to make a women's cinema profitable.

Some of the films and theatre shows staged at Cinema Petra depicted a very different role for women than the traditional one. They contradicted long-established moral values about female behavior. *Intiṣār al-Shabāb* is an example of a film presenting women with "dubious professions" as singers or dancers in a positive way (Moubayed 522-23). Such films, watched by a large and enthusiastic audience, reflected a changing notion of female appearance in public and the role of women in society.

Another sign of changing role perceptions was the growing female participation in charity activities. In 1938, a group of women from Amman staged a play—in this case for an exclusive female audience—and donated the profit to the poor of the town (*al-Urdunn* 13 Apr. 1938). The English Girls' School staged a theatre show in 1943, performing for a mixed audience, made up of—among others—members of the government and other influential personalities of the town (*Filasṭīn* 22 July 1943).²⁰

The Transjordanian Women's Union, founded in 1945 by Amira Zain (the wife of Amir Talal, son of Abdullah) and Emily Bisharat, in addition to the wives of many influential notables of Amman, used Cin-

ema Petra for its annual festivities (*Filastīn* 27 Feb. 1945, 4 Sept. 1945, 6 Mar. 1946). While Amira Zain was a Muslim, Emily Bisharat came from a Christian family. As the example of the Transjordanian Women's Union shows, there were no religious barriers preventing participation in such welfare activities.

Their activities reflect a growing interest of Amman's women to take part in public life. Again, this development was parallel to that in other Arab countries and had its roots in the social and political transformations of the mandate years. In addition, as Elisabeth Thompson points out, "[...] the war had mobilized women in philanthropic organizations" (98). Such philanthropic ambitions were also part of the elite formation in the city. Ellen Fleischmann describes a very similar situation for Palestine, and Amman's female populace was no different in this respect (96). It was attached to a trend measurable in the whole region during that period. Transjordan in general and Amman in particular were not distant, isolated places, but stood in close relation with regional political, economic and social developments.

Conclusion

The political and economic transformation that Transjordan underwent during the years of the British mandate necessarily

influenced the process of social change in the country and in Amman. Cinema Petra as a site for communication is but only one example of this gradual social change in the city. Other important institutions fostering this transformation were schools such as the Bishop's School that opened its doors in 1936, the Islamic College and the Arts and Crafts School (Amadouny 155-57), the Arab Legion that provided job chances for young men and the numerous government departments and government-related establishments that implemented state authority in the whole country through modern administration. Cinema Petra served a variety of purposes. It was not only a movie theatre but also a place of public gathering. People from different backgrounds assembled in its hall for varying reasons. While some sought recreation and entertainment, others were inspired by social responsibility or were driven by political conviction. Cinema Petra played an important role for the cultural development of the city through the numerous literary events that were held there. Both guests from other Arab countries and local artists entertained with recitations from their works. Cinema Petra thus became part of the public space needed by Amman's inhabitants for their cultural and political activities and may be understood as an indicator of the devel-

opment of Amman's urban society. The manifold uses of the theatre crosscut boundaries of class and gender. On the one hand, it was a place where the urban elite could represent themselves through various cultural and philanthropic activities and where discussions of common concern could unfold. On the other hand, with its movie shows it welcomed all inhabitants of the city regardless of social origin, provided they could pay the entrance fee.

The various social events held at Cinema Petra reflected the growing collective responsibility and simultaneously the shifting identities of Amman's citizens. Amman's merchants, politicians and landowners were the key actors of national affairs. Using Cinema Petra's spacious assembly hall, they started to organize themselves politically, culturally and philanthropically. Muslims and Christians came together for rituals like obsequies, thus blurring religious boundaries. Innovative cultural experiences with educational or political undertones triggered the integration of regional trends. The inhabitants of Amman developed a public discourse on cultural, social, economic and political issues connecting them with the broader Arab public sphere and its centers in Cairo, Damascus, Beirut and Baghdad. This discourse is reflected in the

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various events held at Cinema Petra. With the introduction and incorporation of modernizing institutions both from regional Arab and Western culture and the gradual formation of collective action, the emerging urban elite became the agents of a broader social and political transformation process.

Notes

¹ Cinema Petra existed well beyond the end of the mandate but the 1930s and 1940s were clearly its golden years. Later, competing cinematic enterprises like Rainbow Cinema on Jabal Amman—which still exists today—were more attractive to audiences, and other places and options for public gathering and the dissemination of information emerged.

² All numbers, however, are estimates because no official census was conducted.

³ Among those were the Circassian Al-Mufti family residing in Amman, the Al-Majali from Karak, the Al-Tall from Irbid, or the Tarawnah tribe, the latter acting as part of the small nationalist opposition with its slogan “Transjordan for the Transjordanians” (Robins 45).

⁴ At that time, the majority of the Transjordanian population was illiterate or nearly illiterate. However, this fact did not necessarily mean that they were not informed. In fact, newspapers were read out loud in many Arab cities in cafés and other public places for those who could not read them themselves (see Ayalon 4). For an analysis of the importance of coffee houses in Jordan see al-Muslih; and Daher 24-25.

⁵ Broadcasting in the region started rather late with Radio Cairo in 1934 and the first transmissions from Palestine in 1936.

⁶ For a discussion on the evolution and different notions of nationalism in the Arab world during the first half of the 20th century, see Jankowski and Gershoni.

⁷ *Al-Urdunn* 11 Jan. 1930 (festivity of the Arab renaissance), 15 Oct. 1930 (return of Amir Talal from a trip to Cyprus), 16 Dec. 1930 (arrival of King Husayn Ibn ‘Ali); *Filastīn* 19 July 1934, 21 July 1934 (celebration of Amir Abdullah’s return from Great Britain); *al-Difā’* 28 Oct. 1934 and *Filastīn* 25 Nov. 1934 (celebration of Amir Talal’s wedding); *al-Urdunn* 7 Aug. 1935 and *Filastīn* 17 Aug. 1935 (visit of Amir Saud ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz); *Filastīn* 24 Sept. 1939 (festivity of the Arab renaissance); *al-Urdunn* 18 Oct. 1942 (festivity at the end of Ramadan); *al-Urdunn* 24 May 1942 (celebration of Arab independence). Eugene Rogan has already pointed to the fact that the new state tried to exhibit its national identity through symbolic acts on the streets of Amman (100-106).

⁸ Alcohol consumption is forbidden by Islamic law.

⁹ Arabic name of the new state of Transjordan.

¹⁰ Later, Qabbani was joined by a Sharabji as second owner (*al-Urdunn* 6 Aug. 1930).

¹¹ Amman did not have a central power plant until the late 1930s and electrical supply came from generators run by individuals.

¹² For the development of Transjordan’s public opinion on regional and national politics in the 1930s see Kharaysat.

¹³ The two, who were Christians of Syrian origin, also planned to open a wine and dancing bar in downtown Amman close to Husseini Mosque (*Filastīn* 3 May 1934).

¹⁴ For a biography of Asmahan, see Zuhur.

¹⁵ For a list of various theatre plays that were staged in Amman during that period, see Malkawi 154-55.

¹⁶ The municipality announced a sum of 140 Palestinian pounds, which went to the charity (*al-Urdunn* 28 Dec. 1941).

¹⁷ While Islamic law contradicts raffles and lotteries, they were quite frequent during these days in Transjordan, which hints at the fact that religious resentment against lotteries was unknown then.

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→ ¹⁸ Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was Said Ramadan's father-in-law. For decades, Ramadan was an activist of the movement and its judicial adviser. Maan Abu Nowar gives an earlier date for Ramadan's visit to Amman. He dates it to 1943 (114-15). However, most of the research on the Islamist movement in (Trans-) Jordan indicates that this branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1945. Therefore, Munif's dating carries more plausibility.

¹⁹ The tax exemption resulted from the military status of the Arab Legion base in Marka.

²⁰ The English Girls' School was run by the British Church Missionary Society.

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