

SHIRIN REPORT

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Statutory Meeting: Monday 25 April 2016 (4:00 pm)

Agenda:

Attendance and Apologies

1. Report from the Executive Board
2. Reports from the National Committees
3. SHIRIN financial report
4. SHIRIN website
5. SHIRIN membership and donations
6. SHIRIN International Committee
7. Election of New Board Member/s
8. SHIRIN Cooperation
9. Existing SHIRIN Projects
10. New SHIRIN projects: how to select and support new projects?
11. Payment of Site Guards in Syria
12. Rebuilding: How to manage archaeology post conflict
13. Motion on Palmyra
14. Nomination of Marc Lebeau as an Honorary Member to SHIRIN Executive Board
15. Suggestions to enhance and improve SHIRIN

Attendance

SHIRIN Executive Board Members Present:

Frank Braemer (President), Hartmut Kühne (Vice President), and Andrew Jamieson (Secretary)

SHIRIN Advisors, Committee Members, and Other Representatives or Proxies Present:

Leila Badre (Lebanon), Michel al Maqdissi (Syria), Stefania Mazzoni (Italy), Piotr Bielinski on behalf of Tomasz Waliszewski (Poland), Michel Fortin (Canada), Alexander Sollee on

behalf of Mirko Novák (Switzerland), Masatoshi Yamafuji on behalf of Yoshihiro Nishiaki (Japan), Olivier Nieuwenhuys on behalf of Peter Akkermans (The Netherlands), Cecile Michel (France), Frank Braemer on behalf of Marc Lebeau (Belgium), Frank Braemer on behalf of Maria da Conceição Lopes.

Others Interested Parties Attending:

Leah McKenzie (Australia), Matthew Whincop (Australia), Mohamed Alsamam (Australia)

Apologies

Graham Philip (Treasurer)

F. Braemer regrets to report the resignation of Salam al Quntar as advisor to the committee.

1. Report from the Executive Board

Note: for the SHIRIN Annual Board Activity Report 2015-2016 prepared by Frank Braemer that was circulated prior to the Statutory Meeting on Monday 25 April 2016 please see the Appendix.

2. Reports from the National Committees

Reports from the following National Committee representatives were tabled/presented:

- France: Frank Braemer reported on the activities of the committee in France.
- Switzerland: Alexander Sollee reported on the following activities of the committee in Switzerland:

Legally speaking Shirin Switzerland exists since December 2015.

- i. President: Reto Jagher,
- ii. Vice President: Patrick Michel,
- iii. Secretary: Manar Kerdy,
- iv. Treasurer: Alexander Sollee.

Goals:

1. Education and training of Syrian colleagues;
2. Investigation of the possibility of making use of the Swiss Safe Haven law;
3. Fight against trafficking of antiquities; and
4. Providing information in Arabic by using social networks (e.g. Facebook).

Activities or planned projects:

21 May 2016 SGOA Conference on “Who owns Cultural Heritage?”;
7 September 2016 SHIRIN will be presented at a TedX talk in Bern, and
Conservation-Training of Syrian Archaeologists in Turkey within the framework of a

cooperation between the Adana Museum and the Sirkeli Höyük project. Whether or not this will be possible depends on the Adana Museum agrees to this project as well as approval by the Turkish authorities.

- Poland: Piotr Bielinski reported on the activities of the committee in Poland. These activities include the creation of a Palmyra database documentation and a new National Committee.
- Germany: Hartmut Kühne reported on the activities of the committee in Germany. It was noted the German National Committee was created last year.
- Australia: Andrew Jamieson reported on the following activities of the committee in Australia:

Continued support and collaboration with Syrian colleague (Dr Youssef Kanjou from the National Museum of Aleppo, currently based in Tübingen),

Intention to investigate opportunities to develop a project with the National Museum of Aleppo based on model proposed by Prof. Hartmut Kühne for the Museum of Deir az-Zor funded by the German Foreign Ministry,

Intention to curate an exhibition on Syrian cultural heritage for installation in the Classics and Archaeology Gallery at the Ian Potter Museum of Art at The University of Melbourne to raise awareness about the situation in Syria and SHIRIN (planned for 2017),

Intention to develop an education program (series of workshop/s) around Cultural Heritage Preservation and Disarming Social Disaffection with aim to broaden awareness within wider community.

- Japan: No report tabled.
- Italy: Stefania Mazzoni reported on legal issues and difficulties in creating a National Committee in Italy.
- The Netherlands: Olivier Nieuwenhuys reported on the following activities of the committee in The Netherlands.

Contacting Dutch SHIRIN representatives and discussing possibilities for developing Dutch initiatives.

Intention to develop a project on Raqqa, provisionally titled 'Focus Raqqa'. It will be a cooperation between DGAM-Damascus, Leiden University (Faculty of Archaeology), the Free University of Amsterdam and with the kind cooperation of Durham University (Graham Phillip) and the FU-Berlin (Hartmut Kühne). The project will start with a small pilot and have two foci, provisionally titled 'Raqqa Museum Project' and 'Raqqa Hinterland Project'. The project will be developed later this summer and submitted to an affiliate of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

That should provide some start-up funding, and if successful it could move on and be considered as a larger project.

- Canada: Michel Fortin reported on the possibility of collaborating with USA to create North America joint committee.

3. SHIRIN financial report

The following financial report was tabled and approved.

Report of 2015-2016 AISBL's accounts

- Since the last Statutory meeting (Bern, June 2015) - account balance €292.02
- Income (fees members and 1 institution donation) amount to €1168
- Expenses (bank charges, electronic signature certification services) amount to €229.07.
- SHIRIN account balance on 19 April 2016 is: €1230.95

4. SHIRIN website: <http://shirin-international.org/>

The following was noted: the website must develop quickly and be updated regularly, and there is a need for greater cooperation, technical advice and assistance.

Comments: Michel al Maqdissi noted the need for Arabic language material on the SHIRIN website. Michel offered to translate material into Arabic for posting on the website.

5. SHIRIN membership and donations

The following was noted: there is a need to develop a fundraising strategy/policy, processes and procedure for donations, and the management of these funds.

The following points were discussed:

- The role of National Committees;
- Suggestions for regulations;
- The need to prepare a policy; and
- Special donations.

Comments: H. Kühne noted the need for regulations relating to funding flowing to International and National Committees. He will prepare a paper on funding policy.

6. SHIRIN International Committee

The following points and initiatives were discussed:

H. Kühne raised the issue of national or international educational programmes (summer and/or winter schools).

O. Nieuwenhuys noted Erasmus programmes, and European Union supported programs for training.

H. Kühne referred to special programs initiated by several foundations to invite Syrian colleagues and/or students (e.g. Gerda Henkel Stiftung).

F. Braemer noted European systems such as Science for Refugees.

L. Badre sought clarification on the role of National and International Committees.

P. Bielinski noted the viability of using the model of the Red Cross.

7. Election of New Board Member/s

This agenda item was withdrawn (cancelled), as there was no longer any need to change the membership of SHIRIN Executive.

8. SHIRIN Cooperation

SHIRIN cooperation with the following groups was discussed: DGAM, Syrian National Council, UNESCO, North American groups, NGO's such as APSA, Heritage for Peace, and individual Syrians in exile.

F. Braemer reported on SHIRIN's relationship with UNESCO. Since 2014 there have been:

- Two conferences/workshops in Beirut and Berlin;
- An agreement to cooperation, but nothing practical has been decided, UNESCO identified other priorities not always aligned with those of SHIRIN and Syria (eg. Roster of Experts), and
- Good contacts established with UNOSAT, with 103 satellite images sent to directors of excavations for Damage Assessment Files.

It was noted that SHIRIN exchanges information with and has friendly relations with some NGO's, such as Heritage for Peace, APSA, Patrimoine Syrien en Danger, and some other projects including: ASOR CHI, SYRHER, and EAMENA.

Cooperation with RASHID (Research Assessment and Safeguarding of the Heritage of Iraq in Danger)

A meeting of RASHID was convened prior to the 2nd statutory meeting of SHIRIN in Vienna. F. Braemer attended the RASHID statutory meeting which main purpose was the approval of the Articles of the Association, the election of the board and general information. Professor Roger Matthews, from the University of Reading, was elected as President of RASHID International. It was also noted that cooperation with RASHID needs to be established and opportunities to work together need to be identified. Given the common interests of SHIRIN and RASHID it was acknowledged that it is in the interests of both organisations to collaborate.

9. Existing SHIRIN Projects

The following three key projects were identified and discussed:

1. Damage Assessment Reports (Files) on Excavated Sites (run by SHIRIN International)
2. Digitized Inventories of Museums of Syria (DIMS)
3. Historical Environment Record for Syria (HERS)

Damage Assessment Files (DAF)

F. Braemer reported on Damage Assessment Files:

- Reports follow the situation
- Information on sites has been updated
- Directors are best placed to provide information about situation in Syria

Digitized Inventories of Museums of Syria (DIMS)

H. Kühne reported on DIMS:

- The only ongoing project is “Digitizing the Inventory of the Museum of Deir ez-Zor” funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- The database applies the “Object ID”-standard developed by the Getty Institute and is maintained by ICOM for terminology of data fields. This standard is used by international organizations such as Interpol but also by large Museums such as the British Museum.
- The cooperation with the DGAM has been especially significant for accessing throughout the three year development of this database.
- The project also cooperates with CIDOC, a branch of ICOM; two IT-meetings were held in Berlin in late August and in November 2015.
- This year the project will also start evaluating excavation inventories to include in the official inventory those objects that were delivered to the Museum, but did not receive a Museum ID.

- H. Kühne calls for similar projects in cooperation with DGAM, to create as many inventories of Museums in Syria as possible since, the Museums of Syria are threatened by the civil war. These projects would have to be funded nationally but may use the experience collected by the pilot project at the Museum of Deir e Zor.

Comments/discussion:

O. Nieuwenhuys noted that there may soon be a Dutch initiative on the inventory of the Museum of Raqqa and Herakla, a museum that has been looted and partially destroyed.

Historic Environment Record for Syria (HERS)

The following points were noted on the Historic Environment Record for Syria:

- It is a project developed by Graham Philip (2012);
- It provides an extended view of all of Syria;
- It uses all surveys;
- It provides a basis for a new development tool; and
- It is using the software Arches (cf. The Oxford EAMENA project database should be ready for uploading of first information in autumn 2016).

Comments/discussion:

L. Badre: asked who is involved? (Graham Philip, post doc Durham Uni, and Frank Braemer Paleo Project).

H. Kühne: refers to DAI – ASOR agreement on future cooperation.

S. Mazzoni: asked is the DGAM involved?

H. Kühne: yes, DGAM is involved.

H. Kühne: mentioned the project of the Islamic Museum of Berlin: “Multaka: Treffpunkt Museum” (cf. Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MultakaTreffpunktMuseum/>), a training program for refugees to become museum guides for other refugees.

10. New SHIRIN projects: how to select and support new projects?

The following points were discussed relating to new projects:

1. Active teams and funds
2. Uniqueness of the SHIRIN goal
3. Collaborations benefiting to all involved

F. Braemer reported on the following:

1. Refugees: Refugees are likely to include members of excavation projects; humanitarian and ethical issues; and the role of SHIRIN
2. Training: Europe / International community; summer and/or winter schools for studying policies of preventative archaeology.
3. Publications: Developing and posting on the SHIRIN website a digitized catalogue (bibliography) of published articles and books on excavations in Syria during the last five years.

11. Payment of Site Guards in Syria

It was noted that the payment of site guards was possible via UNESCO (Beirut office) and DGAM (Damascus), but we are still waiting for the practical process proposed by UNESCO.

12. Rebuilding: How to manage archaeology post conflict

The following points were discussed:

- Preventative archaeology;
- Summer and/or Winter schools;
- Reviewing the past experiences of other countries (eg. Balkans, Afghanistan etc.);
- Rebuilding based on experience from countries like Lebanon;
- Surveying and accessing recent literature and publications, and
- The role of UNESCSCO in managing transfer.

13. Motion on Palmyra

The following was noted:

- The motion was signed by 49 Directors of excavations, 36 researchers archaeologists, art historians, and historians working in Syria and the Near East and 9 institutions signed motion.
- At least 2 drafts of the motion were prepared and revised.
- The motion was sent to Director General of UNESCO on 3 May 2016.

The following points were mentioned:

USA petitions, Salam Al-Quntar, political issues, Russian involvement, cooperation with UNESCO, cooperation with Syrians abroad, and DGAM, UNESCO did not contact DGAM, UNESCO must consult with the Syrians, there was no consultation with groups with any experience, and rebuilding ruins.

14. Nomination of Marc Lebeau as an Honorary Member to SHIRIN Executive board

H. Kühne moved to elect Marc Lebeau as an honorary member of the SHIRIN board, based on Marc's expertise and his important role in creating and founding SHIRIN.

The vote was unanimous and Marc Lebeau was declared an honorary member of the SHIRIN board.

15. Suggestions to enhance and improve SHIRIN

The board has discussed and decided on possible avenues for improvement of internal organization:

- A "mobile office" associated with the president will be established; it will be in charge of current affairs and of coordinating internal work with the corresponding departments; the person in charge is to be financed by membership fees and donations.

To define the field of functions and responsibilities more clearly "departments" are assigned to the members of the board. These consist of:

- external affairs (int. committee, int. cooperation, int. activities): president,
- internal affairs (nat. committees, membership): vice president,
- accounting (fund raising): treasurer,
- public relations (communications, outreach, update of homepage): secretary.

It is further suggested to encourage the members of the IC to actively participate in current work. Presently it is important not only to support ongoing projects, but also to develop proposals for new projects.

Skype meetings of the board will be regular and obligatory. A *jour fixe* will be established: for example, every first Thursday of the month, 9:00 a.m. GST; in these meetings current affairs will be discussed, also decisions and work assignments will be made.

Relation to National Committees:

The relation of SHIRIN International to the National Committees (NC) has to be defined still leaving enough freedom to the NC for initiatives. A list of specific tasks assigned to the NCs will be suggested to them in a circular mail in the near future.

New Projects:

In the near future the board will submit to the IC some ideas for new projects and ask for comments, support, and self-initiatives.

SHIRIN Executive Board:

Frank Braemer (President), Hartmut Kühne (Vice President), Graham Philip (Treasurer) and Andrew Jamieson (Secretary)

APPENDIX

SHIRIN

Annual Board Activity Report 2015-2016

Since the creation of SHIRIN, the board has focussed on raising awareness about its existence, particularly via its website. Members of our organisation have communicated our aims and activities in meetings, congresses, conferences, publications and letters.

We have worked for SHIRIN's own development

Working together with national scientific communities, SHIRIN National Committees were created in Belgium, Australia, France, Germany (27th November 2015), Switzerland (25th November 2015), United Kingdom (January 2016), Poland (1st April 2016). The formation of National Committees is an important step in the organization's development and there is a need to encourage other SHIRIN representatives to form National Committees. National initiatives for Syrian Heritage are more numerous than international ones. Permanent feedback between National and International Committees is needed to maintain the connection.

We have established contacts with Directors of excavations with two goals: 1) encouraging them to pay the guard(s) of their sites and dig houses, and 2) asking them to fill in Damage Assessment forms on their sites for which they are the best experts.

We have maintained the SHIRIN website, regrettably not with the necessary energy, skills and time to make it a real tool for external and internal communication. It is a deficiency that needs to be addressed in the future. Our colleague André Tomé still maintains the site technically for free with a fantastic reactivity.

We have supported, after healthy discussion, the motion about Palmyra written by a group of SHIRIN colleagues – the president being among them – after the UNESCO March 27th statement. The same text was proposed at the Warsaw Palmyra Conference this week.

We have offered to work collaboratively with other institutions (DGAM, Syrian National Council, UNESCO, PennMuseum/Smithsonian Group, ASOR, SHAP/MIK, DAI, UNOSAT) and associations (APSA, Heritage for Peace, PSAD) on a neutral basis: and we have had real and friendly exchanges of information with these groups, but no in depth collaboration, except with DGAM, to the present day.

We must emphasize the presence and strong involvement of our Syrian colleagues in many initiatives outside Syria – an involvement maintained in constant cooperation with research stakeholders. These collaborations, even if less visible, are essential to the continued participation of the Syrian teams in global discussions. The National Committees are probably the best place for such initiatives.

We have clarified choices for projects.

After spending the year 2014/2015 working out proposals for many concrete projects in a variety of fields, we chose to maintain a limited number of projects. The criteria for selection were:

- 1) Existence of an active team and own funding,
- 2) Uniqueness of goal to avoid unnecessary and useless duplication of efforts,
and
- 3) Collaboration benefiting to all involved bodies.

The 3 projects which are in effect are the Damage Assessment on excavated sites, the Digitalized Inventories of Museums of Syria (DIMS), and the Heritage Environment of Syria (HER). The project of Digitalized Inventories of Museums of Syria (DIMS) opened a collaboration with DGAM. The project of Historic Environment Record of national sites and monuments of Syria established contacts for collaboration with the EAMENA project (Oxford). These two projects have their own funding outside of SHIRIN.

Following this policy, our project providing regular updates on Syrian Museums was abandoned because it replicated the efforts of DGAM who had already produced a well-organised information system on the matter. The monument and building task force was similarly abandoned because it was not tenable given financial restraints and a lack of definable leadership.

In the future we think that any new projects must be engaged in fields not yet developed by other organisations to avoid duplication. For each initiative, the committee must first build a suitable pilot project so that an evaluation can be made of its viability. Projects are only to be maintained if appropriate teams and funds are available for it.

Funding SHIRIN

So far our association only receives funds from memberships, that is more or less 800€ each year. There were no expenses in 2015/2016, except a few office devices and bank fees.

What can we do to obtain more funding, if we think SHIRIN must have the capacity to manage and fund its own projects?

1) Strengthening SHIRIN's own development

The creation of National Committees has been successful and very positive. However, we must be aware of a new challenge: ensuring consistency between the activities of both International and National Committees. SHIRIN can establish relations between similar national projects and give an international echo to these initiatives. The sharing of information is important to avoid duplicating previous efforts and thus wasting valuable resources and time.

A number of other issues will need to be addressed during the Vienna meeting.

In many countries and states, local administrations and universities have launched actions to protect heritage in war torn countries. These initiatives require local interlocutors. The National Committees are recognized as qualified and informed interlocutors by national institutions. They can then aid in launching actions in support of Syrian colleagues and students in exile. Part of their function is to help to assess the inventories and scientific archives concerning Syrian heritage in various countries. National Committees can also provide options for the many volunteers who want to "do something" for Syrian Heritage. These committees are also essential in raising awareness of Syrian heritage to a more general audience. Finally, National Committees are the best medium for contacting our colleagues, and for launching campaigns for affiliation to SHIRIN. They provide a way to get the minimal independent funds which we need to maintain a basic functioning of the association including website maintenance and travel for representation (remember that half of the fees paid to SHIRIN come back to the legally declared National Committees).

Assessing damage, restoration and reconstruction: In some countries projects have been developed for training Syrian experts in restoration techniques, in the archaeology of the post war period (Australia, France, Germany, UK, USA), in assessing damages with formal tools allowing us to obtain comparable estimations of the scale of damage across various initiatives (SyrHer), and in using cutting edge computer techniques (3D tools mainly) for monument or object reconstruction hypotheses.

Providing expertise concerning illicit traffic in antiquities: This involves staying in contact with the Art Market as the experts on such matters. Illicit trade is a serious problem and it is difficult to address. We suggest that the work around illicit trafficking is best coordinated at the level of the National Committees, the nearest interlocutors for the local selling companies. At the international level it is very difficult to establish SHIRIN as an interlocutor, for example with Interpol. We recommend that National Committees provide feedback and reports on their expertise in illicit trafficking to the International Committee.

The formation of National Committees is an important step in the organisation's development and there is a need to encourage other SHIRIN representatives to form National Committees: we send a special call to International Committee members to **make every effort in creating committees in Japan, the Netherlands, Lebanon, Denmark, Canada, Portugal, Italy and Spain!**

National Committees are allocated space on the SHIRIN website (http://shirin-international.org/?page_id=1283) which we must update.

2) Working together with DGAM:

Direct and indirect contacts with DGAM members in workshops, meetings, conferences are regular and good. In the past year we frequently exchanged information and occasionally collaborated on specific demands.

Since the beginning of SHIRIN we have encouraged the directors of excavations to pay the site guards. The main obstacle is money transfer to Damascus. Ad-hoc individual solutions were found by a few colleagues. We have asked the UNESCO office for Syria in Beirut, to find a reasonable solution, which we may now be able to offer. Hopefully it will be possible to transfer money to

UNESCO who will make a contract with DGAM. The transfer to Damascus will be made officially via UNDP. The exact process will be known soon.

A long term collaborative project was initiated in August 2015: Project of Digitalized Inventories of Museums of Syria(DIMS). This opened a collaboration with DGAM for building a pilot process including first the inventory of Deir Ez Zor Museum.

3) Contacts with the Syrian National Council:

Attempts to contact the Syrian National Council for Collaboration did not receive any answer for a long time. Recently (April 2016), the new colleague in charge of Syrian Heritage, Dr A. Al Mukdad contacted us. If we approve the proposals, after having received and examined them, decision will be made on the best frame for collaboration.

4) Liaising with UNESCO and adjusting how we work together:

A first presentation about the SHIRIN project was very well received by the "Patrimoine mondial" team in a meeting in Paris in November 2014. During a second meeting organized in February 2015 by the Beirut UNESCO team for Syria who manages the 3 years European Union fund "Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage", we agreed to collaborate in the development of site and museum object databases, and in the creation of a group or "task force" for expertise about medieval monuments. However, effective cooperation on these projects failed as the UNESCO team had identified other priority targets according to its goals, team involvement capacity and funding capacity.

Lending support to the DGAM team and engaging in projects with them is currently UNESCO's priority target. We were invited to attend a number of meetings (eg 30 July and 20-21 August 2015 in Berlin) aimed at prompting reflection and input about these issues. While these projects are clearly collaborative and do not provide the necessary framework that would allow SHIRIN to develop independently, they are still highly fruitful and worthwhile.

The initial UNESCO announcement describing the organization of a roster of experts for Syrian Heritage in which the international scientific community, including SHIRIN, would have had an operative place, has not yet materialized. It is still a project for the future.

5) Building tools for promoting an international policy for Syrian preventive archaeology

5a) Damage Assessment Files: About half of the 120 directors of excavations contacted with a request to file damage assessment files on the sites that they were excavating, responded in 2014/beginning of 2015. A second campaign for damage assessment file updates was launched in April 2016.

5b) Acquiring images of the sites for damage assessment: We had discussions for 5 months with UNOSAT to obtain the image files for analysis by directors of excavations. 103 more or less recent (2011-2016) images for 103 sites were obtained for free. Complemented by the use of Google Earth or Bing images they are good tools for damage evaluations.

5c) The Heritage Environment of Syria: A pilot project exists, with an aim to build a general site database and gazetteer open to the international scientific community. This would be independent of the DGAM one, but sharing information with it will still be a necessity. A basic archaeological map is necessary to assess any preventive action. A funded PhD student will work on the project starting in January 2016. Within this scheme the Durham team is applying to be co-investigators for phase 2 of the EAMEAN Oxford project. They would then be in charge of data from Syria and Iraq.

5d) Creating a Digitalized Inventory of Museums of Syria: Since July 2015 a pilot project “Digitizing the official inventory of the Museum of Deir az-Zor”, supported by the Free University of Berlin and funded by the Foreign Ministry of Germany has worked in close cooperation with the DGAM under the umbrella of UNESCO’s “Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage” project to produce an illustrated list of the officially registered objects in the Museum of Deir az-Zor. A meeting of the stakeholders (FU Berlin, UNESCO, DGAM, DAI, ICOM-CIDOC) sponsored by UNESCO was held in Berlin on 20-21 August, to organize the cooperation and to decide on further steps. Another meeting between the DGAM, DAI and FU Berlin was organized in Berlin on 15-21 November, 2015.

Frank Braemer (President)

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Syrian Heritage in Danger: an International Research Initiative & Network