

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2017

NEXT STATUTORY MEETING

The 3rd Statutory Meeting of the Shirīn International Committee will take place at the 63rd *Rencontres Assyriologiques Internationales* (RAI) in Marburg, Germany, 24–28 July, 2017. (<http://www.rai63.org/index.php/rai/2017/announcement>). It is planned to hold the statutory meeting on the first day (24 July), 17.00 - 18.30pm.

WORKSHOP

At the 63rd RAI the Shirīn (Syria) and Rashid (Iraq) organizations will host a workshop entitled "Heritage in Conflict: A Review of the Situation in Syria and Iraq" on Monday 24 July and Tuesday 25 July (<http://www.rai63.org/index.php/rai/2017/announcement>). A tentative workshop program is listed below; the final workshop schedule will be available shortly.

Workshop: Heritage in Conflict: A Review of the Situation in Syria and Iraq

F. Braemer, R. Matthews: Introductory note

Syria: The Organization and Action of "Local Authorities" During the War

S. Ismail: Archaeological Heritage Management in Northeastern Syria

R. Abdo: Experiment of Democratic Self – Management About Protection of the Archaeological Sites in Al Jazira Canton-Syria

A. al-Nabou: Le Centre archéologique d'Idlib en 2017

Y. Dallal: Protecting Cultural Heritage in Times of Conflict

S. al-Issa Samadi: Report on the Department of Antiquities in the City of Bosra Sham

The "Aleppo Case"

Y. Kanjou: Situation and Future of Old Aleppo

M. Fakhro: Protection Measures of Museums During the Wars, National Museum of Aleppo as a Model

Actions Abroad: Colleagues in Exile, NGOs

I. Sabrine, B. Varoutsikos, E. Cunliffe, L. Leckie: Protecting Heritage: The Work of Heritage for Peace and Others in Syria

Sh. al Shbib: Les défis de la préservation du patrimoine archéologique syrien dans les zones les plus menacées: efforts locaux et soutien

Ch. Ali: Patrimoine syrien: Pillage et trafic des antiquités syriennes – filières, mécanisme et contres mesures

- O. Nieuwenhuijse: The Raqqa Museum Inventory Project
- G. Philip: Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa (EAMENA): Progress Report on Work on the Middle East as of July 2017
- M. Novák: Report on a Summer School Project
- I. Ballouz: Syrian Heritage Archive Project. Digital Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage Between Limits and Chances
- D. Bouakaze-Khan, Z. G. Unal, N. A. Munawar, C. Zoroglu: Archaeological Heritage in Conflict Zones: the Turkey Network
- G. Stein, A. Gallego-Lopez, M. Fisher: A Comparative Analysis of Dynamics of Cultural Heritage Destruction and Preservation Efforts in Afghanistan versus Syria/Iraq
- M. Lebeau, C. Michel: An open discussion on an Ethics Charter for Near Eastern Archaeology and Assyriology
- Contributions and help from abroad (training, funding, damage assessment): what can be planned considering the current situation?

Reserve ('waiting list') workshop papers

- M. Fiol: UNOSAT projects
- H. Kühne: The Deir ez-Zor Museum Inventory Project – progress report
- A. Vaughn: ASOR projects
- H. Haydar: The reality of archaeological sites in the city of Niniveh in the period after Daesh
- A. Eastwood : Projects funded by British Council Cultural Protection Fund in Iraq and Syria

Posters

- A. Hamdon: The disaster of cultural heritage destruction in Mosul and proposals about its management
- A. Saleem Khazaal and I. H. Khalaf: Recent and Future projects in Iraq

ETHICS CHARTER

An Ethics Charter for Near Eastern Archaeology and Assyriology prepared by an International Collective of Assyriologists, Near Eastern Archaeologists & Specialists in the Ancient Worlds will be announced and discussed during the RAI (The Shirin Executive supports the charter, a copy of the Ethics Charter is appended to this Newsletter).

EXHIBITIONS

Berlin: *Syria between Destruction and Preservation – The Excavation of Tell Sheikh Hamad*, Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology, Free University of Berlin, June 24 to September 03, 2017.

The exhibition *Syria between Destruction and Preservation – The Excavation of Tell Sheikh Hamad* will be presented in the Campus-Library of the Free University of Berlin from June 24 to September 03, 2017. Curated by students of archaeological disciplines and supervised by Hartmut Kuehne, director of the mission, it aims to demonstrate that – contrasting the daily news of humanitarian sufferings and destructions – a small part of the Syrian (World-) Heritage is preserved outside of Syria in the excavation records of those international researchers who have cooperated with the Syrian Antiquities Department and enjoyed the hospitality of the Syria people over years. The exhibits consist largely of casts but also of some originals that the Syrian authorities had allowed to export for study purposes. The concept offers a time travel through those cities that had been hidden under modern Tell Sheikh Hamad up to the beginning of the excavation, are now re-identified, and have returned to intentional history: The Assyrian city of Dur-Katlimmu (since about 1300 BC),

which in its late phase (since about 650 BC) was also named Magdalu (Aramaic) and carried on as Magdala to the Late Roman Empire (300 AD).

California: *The Legacy of Ancient Palmyra*, online exhibition, The Getty Centre, California, http://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/palmyra/

In this 21st century, war in Syria has irrevocably changed the ancient caravan city of Palmyra, famed as a meeting place of civilizations since its apogee in the mid-2nd to 3rd century CE. The Romans and Parthians knew Palmyra as a wealthy oasis metropolis, a center of culture and trade on the edge of their empires. Stretching some three kilometers across the Tadmurean desert, the ruins of Palmyra, like all ruins, stand as bearers of meaning marking their place in history. For centuries, traveling artists and explorers have documented the site in former states of preservation. Created as a tribute to Palmyra, this online exhibition (*The Legacy of Ancient Palmyra*) captures the site as it was photographed for the first time by Louis Vignes in 1864 and illustrated in the 18th century by the architect Louis-François Cassas. Their works contribute to Palmyra's legacy, one that goes far beyond the stones of its once great buildings.

Melbourne: *Syria: Ancient History – Modern Conflict* سوريا: التاريخ القديم - الصراع الحديث, Classics and Archaeology Gallery, University Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne 28 March to 27 August 2017. <http://www.art-museum.unimelb.edu.au/exhibitions/future-exhibitions/exhibit-date/2017-03-28/exhib/syria-ancient-history-modern-conflict>

Syria: Ancient History – Modern Conflict سوريا: التاريخ القديم - الصراع الحديث explores three decades of fieldwork conducted in the middle and upper Euphrates River valley, focusing on the Australian excavations projects at Jebel Khalid, Tell Ahmar and El Qitar. The exhibition will illustrate the key findings of these archaeological projects and the contribution they have made to our understanding of this historically important area within the context of the current conflict and destruction. The exhibition more broadly considers how objects that have been lost, stolen or destroyed nevertheless remain part of collections and are the subject of ongoing research. The exhibition also draws attention to the current Syrian conflict and the destruction of cultural heritage, most notably at the site of Palmyra. The exhibition will be accompanied by a symposium 11 – 13 August 2017.



Pennsylvania: *Culture in the Crossfire: Stories from Syria and Iraq*, Penn Museum, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, opens 8 April 2017 to 26 November 2017. https://www.penn.museum/information/press-room/press-release-exhibitions/1105-cultures-in-the-crossfire-stories-from-syria-and-iraq?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=post&utm_term=press&utm_content=pr

PHILADELPHIA, PA 2017—Nimrud. Aleppo. Palmyra. Ebla. These ancient sites and many others in Iraq and Syria have found their way to the top of international news today, as the destruction of cultural heritage becomes both a by-product and a tactic of ongoing war throughout the region. What is really at stake? Why does it matter? What is the human story that accompanies this unprecedented loss? And what is being done to prevent further loss of the material culture, vast human history, and diverse cultural identities in the region of the world long known as the “cradle of civilization” *Cultures in the Crossfire: Stories from Syria and Iraq*, a new special exhibition at the Penn Museum opening April 8, considers these questions. Developed in conjunction with the Museum’s Penn Cultural Heritage Center, the exhibition explores the rich cultural heritage, human diversity, and achievements—as well as the movements and displacements of people and objects caught in the crossfire—through more than 50 objects from the Museum’s exceptional Near East and Mediterranean collections, as well as a range of Arabic manuscripts from the University of Pennsylvania Libraries, music and sounds, and documentary film clips. Contemporary artwork from Syrian artist Issam Kourbaj, interwoven throughout the exhibition, provides an art intervention—a modern-day response to the artifacts and exhibition themes. The exhibition puts the spotlight, too, on current work being done by the University of Pennsylvania and the Smithsonian Institution in conjunction with individuals and groups in the Middle East to help combat the loss of irreplaceable cultural heritage. The exhibition runs through November 26, 2018.

RECENT NEWS AND EVENTS

20 January 2017 public workshop Weltkulturerbe in Gefahr, Universitätsöffentlicher Workshop, Universität Konstanz, Panel discussion: Prof. em. Dr. Hartmut Kühne, Freie Universität Berlin und Organisation „Shirin“

8 February 2017 public lecture at the Institute of Law of Nations and International Law of the University of Giessen on “Syria – Destruction and Preservation of its cultural (World-) Heritage” presented by Prof. em. Dr. Hartmut Kühne.

8 March 2017 public lecture at Melbourne Museum on Syria: Ancient History – Modern Conflict, presented by Andrew Jamieson. <https://museumvictoria.com.au/melbournemuseum/whats-on/syria-ancient-history-modern-conflict/>

17 March 2017 film screening and panel discussion: *The Destruction of Memory. The war against culture and the battle to save it* (Written, directed and produced by Tim Slade). Q&A session with Tim Slade, Andrew Jamieson, Kristal Buckley and Kate Darian-Smith. <https://msd.unimelb.edu.au/events/destruction-of-memory-the-war-against-culture-and-the-battle-to-save-it>

Dr Emma Cunliffe recently announced the release of the fourth volume of the Heritage for Peace report on actions to Protect Syria’s heritage. It is available at the following URL: <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Heritage-for-Peace-Int-Actions-report-vol-4-oct-2015-dec-2016.pdf> The Press Release, with links to previous reports, is available here.

<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Press-Release-Int-Act-Report-V4-March-2017.pdf>

UNESCO MEETING ON ALEPPO

On 8 March 2017 UNESCO hosted the First International Coordination Meeting for the recovery of Aleppo's heritage (<http://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-hosts-first-international-coordination-meeting-recovery-aleppo-s-heritage>) after a first emergency assessment mission to Aleppo on 19 January 2017 (<http://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-reports-extensive-damage-first-emergency-assessment-mission-aleppo>). See also <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=2243>

The March meeting brought together the following organizations: UNESCO, GTZ, DAI, ICOMOS, ICCROM, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, a representative of the Lebanese Govt. and the Consul for Switzerland in Syria. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Syrian DGAM, the Min. of Tourism, Min. of Culture, UNESCO representative for Syria, the Syrian Trust Fund for Development (owned by the First Lady), and Aleppo stakeholders including the Aleppo Governorate representative, the Aleppo City Council, the Aleppo Architect Union, the Aleppo University and the Awqaf. There were no NGO representatives working on the ground until December 2016.

During the meeting, local groups presented their work on clearing rubble in the city. It was noted that local groups do not clear out or remove "historical" rubble, However, they are producing damage assessments, but apparently all using different frameworks and standards. The Aleppo University presented a new Master program that is training architectural students in "rebuilding". The Aga Khan foundation has a reconstruction plan ready to implement and they have signed a MoU with the DGAM and the Syrian Trust Fund for Development. Calls for donations will be launched soon. UNESCO and the Syrian government are currently selecting a candidate to spearhead the reconstruction project on the ground, which will start before the end of March.

Another meeting was held in Aleppo on March 15 to finalize the plan. A number of recommendations were developed:

- The return of Aleppo residents to their homes is considered a priority, as is encouraging employment and investment in important landmark projects which will support the redevelopment of the Old City of Aleppo. Nevertheless, it should be noted that for the Aleppo Souk where buildings were owned by the Awqaf or private individuals, Syrian legislation allows for the entity in charge of the reconstruction of a building to claim ownership if the original owner is not around. This de facto situation will make the government the main owner of a large part of the Old Aleppo.
- A database of Aleppo cultural heritage is needed integrating work previously undertaken by national and international organisations.
- Surveys should be made in available areas before landfill and reconstruction work begins; Old Aleppo should not be treated as an island, isolated from its surrounding environments so work should also focus on the local and regional surroundings.
- The opening of a training center dedicated to traditional crafts and architectural heritage is highly recommended.
- Finally, the spiritual and social values that created the heritage by upholding values of justice, religious tolerance, human brotherhood, love and peace must be considered.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Alter Orient aktuell Nr. 14, 2016 on cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq; was disseminated to members of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft. (If interested, contact Adelheid Otto, president of DOG and she may be able to send you a copy).

Syrian Archaeological Heritage, Five Years of Crisis 2011-2015, published by Ministry of Culture, DGAM, Damascus 2016. Scientific supervision by Maamoun Abdulkarim and Lina Kutiefan.

Maamoun Fansa, Carola Simon, Lena Wimmer (eds) : *Strategies to rebuild Aleppo*, papers of the conference held in Berlin April 2016, The Association of the Friends of the Old City of Aleppo. NA verlag ISBN 978-3-945751-96-1.

A History of Syria in One Hundred Sites edited by Youssef Kanjou and A. Tsuneki was recently published in Arabic (see book cover below):



ITEMS OF INTEREST

Global fund to protect cultural heritage launches with \$75m and board led by US billionaire Thomas Kaplan: [Global fund to protect cultural heritage launches with \\$75m and board led by US billionaire Thomas Kaplan](#)

NATIONAL COMMITTEES

Shirīn National Committees are allocated space on the Shirīn website (http://shirin-international.org/?page_id=1283) which must be updated. Please check your page and inform us what your needs are and what information you would like posted on your national web page.

MEMBERSHIP

Shirīn cannot develop or function without your support. All our funds come from our members. Please renew your membership. Remember that half the fees come back to the National Committees (if regularly declared). In case of affiliation to both Shirīn and Rashid the fee is reduced to half. We encourage you to launch affiliation campaigns in your respective countries.

SHIRIN Executive Board

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

<http://shirin-international.org/>

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Syrian Heritage in Danger: an International Research Initiative & Network

Towards an Ethics Charter for Near Eastern Archaeology and Assyriology

January 7th, 2017



Introduction

The field of Near Eastern Studies and its various disciplines, from Archaeology to Assyriology, from prehistory to modern times, are now more than ever in need of a charter addressing general ethical principles that concern all scholars in this field, both as individuals and collectively. Such a charter must also respect the autonomy of scholars and their freedom of expression. The current document constitutes a first step in that direction.

Research in the Near East

The purpose of research is to contribute to the development of knowledge and the advancement of science. It relies on the principles of honesty, scientific integrity and responsibility, on which the society bases its confidence.

The ethical principles by which these disciplines should abide do not substantially differ from those of any other scientific or scholarly field: awareness of plagiarism/copyright infringement, fair processing of collected data, responsibility for the reliability and objectivity of the information, safeguarding intellectual property, abstaining from harassment or discrimination of any kind, obligation to communicate the results of the research to the scientific community and to the public in a timely fashion.

Nevertheless, the actual practice of these disciplines is often carried out in the different countries of the Near East. This means that scholars need to be mindful of their host country's specific customs and social norms.

Scholars must respect the laws and regulations of the countries in which they work, in particular as they apply to their research endeavors. Along with the due respect to these laws, scholars should exhibit respect for the labor force they hire to assist them in their projects, for the local students they help to teach and train, for the local colleagues with whom they collaborate, and for the local administration with which they work together.

Near Eastern Archaeology and Assyriology in Wartime

Archaeologists of the ancient Near East and Assyriologists have an ethical obligation to be attuned to what is happening in the lands where they carry out their professional activities, especially when basic human rights are being violated. The current conflicts in Syria and Iraq and the subsequent instability in the entire region put scores of human lives in jeopardy and represent a serious threat to the cultural heritage of the region.

The international community of scholars must contribute to the assessment of the damages done to the cultural heritage of these areas and to inform the general public. Scholars must

also educate both society and the media in regard to the consequences of the tragic destruction of cultural heritage and advise on how to restore or reconstruct whatever may have been damaged. The international community of scholars must join the local archaeological bodies and the civil society in each country in order to prevent further irreparable losses.

Nevertheless, it is ethically unacceptable to use the reality of this destruction to further political agendas or to spread propaganda. To dwell exclusively on the destruction of a country's cultural heritage is callous and ethically questionable as are disregarding or glossing over the loss of human lives, the tragedy of those who suffer in the midst of conflict, and the pain of those who must live in exile for their own safety. It is the duty of the scholarly community to pay respect to and show compassion for the inhabitants of those countries ravaged by war. Respecting the laws of a country does not imply insensitivity.

In the context of a violent conflict, scholars must exercise extreme caution before establishing, or maintaining preexisting, relations with belligerent factions, governments included. All individuals are free to hold their own political beliefs. Nonetheless, because researchers often act as members of institutions and in many ways represent the field at large, it becomes incumbent especially in these difficult circumstances to adhere to basic ethical rules.

Relations with the International and Non-Governmental Organizations

In the case of the destruction of and damage to cultural heritage, UNESCO is mandated to provide assistance, expertise and financial aid. It is also true that UNESCO is only allowed to collaborate with governments recognized as such by the UN, regardless of human rights violations. Other international organizations, such as ICOMOS, ICOM, ICCROM, and the World Monuments Fund do not need to follow the same UN constraints.

The role of the international community of scholars is to assist these international organizations while being simultaneously aware of their inherent limitations. Expertise and recommendations are welcome during a conflict and in the post-war period, as by then the task of restoration and reconstruction will be immense.

By the same token, scholars should assist and respect the courageous endeavors of local NGOs and exiled colleagues and students, by providing them with assistance, support and encouragement.

This document, based on official statements and an exchange of views among members of the community of Assyriologists, Near Eastern Archaeologists and specialists of the ancient worlds is intended as a starting point to assist colleagues in often difficult or uncertain conditions, and for general guidance.



An International Collective of Assyriologists, Near Eastern Archaeologists & Specialists of the Ancient Worlds

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