



DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18445

SYRIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE: PAST AND PRESENT

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Received: 15/02/2015

Accepted: 12/05/2015

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a review of the threats to the cultural heritage of Syria, recently brought to the forefront of current events because of the armed conflict happening there. We will discuss archeological sites designated as UNESCO (United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Sites and focus on the damage done to Syria's cultural heritage not only in the past, specifically during colonial times, when foreign museums acquired so many artifacts of Syrian heritage, but that which continues to the present day. Sadly, the pillaging of historical artifacts continues into present times, albeit with new and more efficient methods. Current political instability in the country has considerably increased the incidence of looting, leaving the cultural heritage in a very critical situation.

KEYWORDS: *Syria, colonialism, heritage, looting, devastation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Defining heritage is not a simple matter, as it is multifaceted and subject to continual change, a subjective concept that can be seen from multiple viewpoints. Still, its definition has been traditionally associated with the "legacy of ancestors," of the tangible and intangible, of objects and ideas that are socially significant.

Thus, the value of heritage assets can vary widely depending on extremely disparate points of view in today's industrialized society, which tends to consider heritage as an economic asset which has value only insofar as it can generate wealth. This concept and situation derives from a close relationship that has developed between heritage and tourism, although the ideal is that an article's value would be defined by its historical significance and uniqueness.

Given these premises, cultural heritage is the link with the historical heritage but also unites the aesthetic, artistic, and historical values that have defined and characterized our societies. So to recognize, know, and acknowledge one's heritage is to better understand both the present and the past (ICOM, 2013).

Based on the definition given by the UNESCO world Heritage Conference, we can say that Cultural Heritage is the foundation that links us to our history. It has symbolic value and provides a type of cultural identity. It is the key to understanding other peoples and is the ultimate expression and footprint of a society. Therefore to inflict damage to the heritage of a country is to damage the soul and identity of the people themselves.

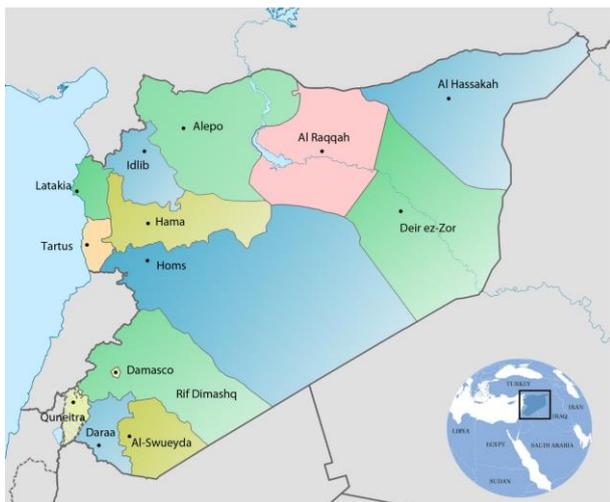


Figure 1. Location of Syria and administrative distribution

Within this context, Syria is a culturally rich country whose history dates back to earliest proto-history (Vlasic, 2013). Aware of this national historical wealth and the importance of preserving and pro-

tecting it, and acknowledging the magnitude of the financial, scientific, and technical resources required, the Syrian government signed an agreement with Hague Convention¹. With this agreement, all signatory countries commit to the protection and safeguarding of endangered cultural property in armed conflict (Álvarez, 2004).

Likewise, the Syrian government in 1970 certified an International Convention agreement on measures to be taken prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export, and transfer of cultural property. Finally, in 1972 they re-signed the World Heritage Convention², which obligates each signatory to provide assistance to others upon request for the protection of antiquities and cultural artifacts.

Therefore, each country will act for its own benefit and for that of others, and invest whatever resources are appropriate when needed. State parties are obliged to lend support to protect cultural heritage artifacts whether or not such artifact is enrolled in the list created by the convention. An artifact being excluded from the list does not signify that the article is not part of the country's heritage and that it does not have outstanding universal value (Hague Convention, 1954).

Syria has six regions in the list of entries of UNESCO Cultural Heritage sites (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013; Leventhal *et al.*, 2014:3): the Old City of Damascus (David, 1994: 196), the ancient city of Bosra, the site of Palmyra, the ancient city of Aleppo (Brusaco, 2012), the castles Crac de los Caballeros and Qal' at Salah El-Din, and finally, the ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Leventhal *et al.*, 2014:3). However, the properties provided in the Provisional List of UNESCO double the number, which are currently, enrolled (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013).

2. LOOTING IN THE PAST

Pillage, plunder, and looting of archaeological sites and cultural institutions is mostly a factor of a mobile economic-commercial environment and the depredations produced by a romantic ideology.

However, from the point of view of some researchers, it cannot be said that possession of antiquities is generally unlawful. In a sense, many museums may justify their possessions based on the fact that large quantities of ancient objects were stolen from their original locations during the so-called "Grand Tour" or colonial era. Due to the passage of

¹ General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) meeting in the low countries from April 21 to May 14, 1954.

² General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at its 17th meeting held in Paris from October 17 to November 21, 1972.

time, the documentation of their original provenance has been lost and they have become the default "rightful owners." (Brodie, 2003: 17).

So, how we can distinguish illicit material from the rest? In fact it is common to find in auctions the indication, "from an old European collection (*ibid*, 2003: 17)," which does not possess documentation of the object's source of origin. Neither is it known whether the auctioned product was at one time illegal. Thus, many people consider illegal any material that lacks documentation of its original source (Brusaco, 2012).

Leaving aside these considerations, it is necessary to look back in time. The Middle East has suffered the looting of the vestiges of its past at least from the seventeenth century during the rule of the Ottoman Empire (Simonetta, 2007). Many sites were affected due to the desire of a small, elite group of people to acquire works of art from antiquity. Looting was facilitated by local peasants and officials of the colonial state (Ottoman, French, and English) according to the English orientalist Dr. E. Pocock 1604-1691 (Twells *et al.*, 1816; Bernard, 1997), J. François Rousseau, 1738- 1808, French consul in Basra and Baghdad (Iraq) (Dehérain, 1927).

Likewise, S. E. Hamdy Bey, Director of Imperial Museums, Constantinople, at the end of the nineteenth century, facilitated large-scale looting in the area by various European and North American antiquarians concerned with the study of these antiquities (Hamdy-Bey, 1893: 293). His work allowed him to accumulate a large number of objects from various sites in the region, including some that were unearthed at the site of Amrit (Tartus, Syria). These became the "seed" artifacts for the founding of the Museum of Istanbul (Hamdy-Bey & Reinach, 1892; Torrey, 1920).

The outbreak of the First World War is a turning point in the development of the expeditions and archaeological excavations that were conducted in the regions of the Near East (Goode, 2007). All activities of the countries involved in this war, except Germany, stopped abruptly. Germany continued until 1917 when the British forces expelled them from the region of the Tigris and its proximities (Díaz-Andreu, 2007).

As an example of the German activity, reference should be made to M.V. Oppenheim (1932), who conducted several excavations in northern Syria (Kolinowski, 2007: 73; Edith Fragoso, 2011). Also of note is R. Koldewey (1914), with the support of the German Oriental Society. He worked in Babylon for eighteen years (1899-1917) until his expulsion, leaving behind 536 drawers of antiques for the British. But Britain was not only rewarded with these extraordinary pieces. This country also imposed its control over Palestine and Iraq, while France took control of Syria

after expelling the last remaining vestige of the German army (Woxman, 2010).

During this time the British director of antiquities, S. Cooke, was accused of trying to engage in smuggling Iraqi antiquities into Syria (Goode, 2007: 197). Meanwhile, the impact of the British presence was growing worse not only as a result of these acts—carried out by them with the aid of Syrian institutional staffs—but also because of intelligence activities aimed at the development of "archaeological surveys" as was done by C. McEwan (1937) in northern of Syria.

After the First World War, many archaeologists returned to their activities—excavations or purchasing goods—in these regions. In fact, two western expeditions are known to have occurred even after 1949 (Goode, 2007). However, the situation by that time had changed substantially and these "archaeologists" found they could no longer participate in many bulk purchases of antiquities because the costs had increased four hundred percent compared with pre-war times.

This new situation of buying and selling antiquities, with the increase in prices, also affected the finances of a large number of foreign institutions (Brusaco, 2012), including the Oriental Institute. We cannot forget that at this time the so called "Great Museums" were already well consolidated as preeminent institutions in Europe and North America (Goode, 2007).

However, it was the Louvre, because it was the first European museum open to the public and the first to display a collection of Assyrian monuments (Pillet, 1916), that first came to be known for its antiquities collection; a collection which came mainly from unearthing the palace of the Assyrian city of Khorsabad (Loud *et al.*, 1938).

The origin of this company was the dream of the Arabist J. Mohl (secretary of the Asiatic Society of Paris) to create in the Louvre the principle European museum for Mesopotamian antiquities. In 1842 he succeeded in convincing the French authorities to send the consul P.E. Botta (Botta & Flandin 1849; Waxman, 2008: 71) to Mosul, Iraq to engage in archaeological work. The pretext of this was research in biblical studies and to find the location of biblical sites. The result, however, was the removal of sculptures, inscriptions, and other artifacts which were sent to the Louvre (Pillet, 1958; Díaz-Andreu, 2007).

With this mission accomplished, in 1847 the first Assyrian museum in Europe with 37 monumental reliefs from Khorsabad was inaugurated. Also to be added were Palestinian and Jewish antiquities brought by F. Saulcy (1874).

In 1881, a Department of Oriental Antiquities was founded as a result of the large number of Sumerian

works discovered in Lower Mesopotamia. The most important contribution to this collection was made by C. Schaeffer (1931) from the excavations conducted at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) and those of A. Parrot (1936) at the site of Mari (Syria).

However, the collection was greatly enlarged by other non-archaeological interventions, i.e., via acquisitions and donations. Thus, the Louvre received large donations from private collections such as those formed by L. De Clercq and J. Coiffard in 1900 and 1958 (Le Rider & Seyrig, 1968).

The case of the formation of the collection of L. De Clercq, who has classified more than 600 pieces, is a clear example of acquisition by purchasing from the antiquities market while visiting countries ostensibly visiting as a photographer. However, he was just one of many travelers who purchased antiquities during the early age of the tourist business which began around 1830 in the regions of interest of ancient biblical sites (Munsterberg, 1987). Even today, The Louvre is enriched from looted archeological artifacts.

On the other hand, Britain and the U.S. based intervention model acquired antiquities through private funding. In 1844, through the British ambassador in Constantinople, Austen Henry Layard (1850; *id.*, 1853), a British representative in Mosul (Iraq) worked in British Museum-sponsored excavations at Nimrud and Nineveh (Pillet, 1916). In Nimrud he discovered, with three other palaces, the Northwest Palace of Asurnarsipal II and several temples. As a result of his being part of the excavation work, the British Museum houses many bas-reliefs of stone steles, the black obelisk of Shalmaneser II, sculptures, and other assorted objects of different types (Pillet, 1958).

The activity of H. Layard (1817–94) did not stop. With his assistant, H. Rassam (1826–1910), he discovered the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh with numerous reliefs. He also found the slats of the Library of Ashurbanipal, estimated as the most important group of slats extant (Díaz-Andreu, 2007).

Following these findings, in 1850 Uruk was discovered (Middleton *et al.*, 2008). In 1878 the British collection added the Cyrus Cylinder of Babylon, the bronze gates of Shalmaneser III, several Urartian bronzes, and a thousand tablets and fragments of cuneiform. They also added more slats from *Dêr* (a monastery) (Díaz-Andreu, 2007). Finally, at the end of the century forty funerary busts from the site of Palmyra were added to the collection.

During the twentieth century, the dynamics and the objective of British archaeological work shifted toward research rather than the business-oriented purpose of past centuries. Within this new context, the British Museum sponsored various excavations, such as Carchemish (Potts, 2012: 782), between Tur-

key and Syria, Tell al-Ubaid (Contenau, 1928) (where bronze furniture, life-sized lion sculptures, and a high relief panel were found in a Sumarian temple), Ur (Speleers, 1928) (where the Royal Cemetery and other parts such as the "Standard of Ur", the "Royal Game of Ur", musical instruments and gold jewelry were found) and at Tell es-Sweyhat (Holland, 1976).



Figure 2. Monumental statues carved in stone from Tell Halaf

Today, the collection of the British Museum of the Near East includes 130,000 tablets and fragments, although it must be stated that all of these acquisitions were not made solely from sponsored excavations (Díaz-Andreu, 2007). It is known that in 1920 the British Museum bought several stone reliefs — see figure 2 (Edith Fragoso, 2011) — from the excavations at Tell Halaf which had been conducted by MV Oppenheim (1932). Several of the pieces were subsequently sold to finance the transportation costs of the remainder to Berlin (Díaz-Andreu, 2007). In this manner, other British museums played an important role in the acquisition of objects of the Middle East; we refer to the National Museum of Scotland and the Ashmolean Museum (MacGregor, 2001).

The collection of the National Museum of Scotland includes artifacts from different areas of the Middle East, from unknown contexts and locations. The Ashmolean Museum was founded in the eighteenth century (Ovenell, 1986) but it was in the nineteenth when its collection increased considerably from the acquisition of items on the antiquities market (MacGregor, 2001), a situation made possible by the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the increased popularity of travel to the Middle East (Fisk, 2012). A direct consequence of this rapid growth was the creation of a collection of oriental art consisting of 30,000 pieces. Of these, 4,000 belong to the Islamic world of the Middle East. An especially large quantity of archaeological material in this group is from Syria, Iraq, and Iran. As illustration, 137 items serve as powerful examples to illustrate this fact and can be viewed on their web site (www.ashmolean.org).

Finally, we must recall the German presence in the Middle East. These excavations, such as those carried out by MV Oppenheim at Tell Halaf (1932), were important to the development of the many museums of Berlin. These excavations resulted in such an enormous amount of archaeological objects that specific storage places for them were required. This resulted in shelters and custody, i.e. museums (Woxman, 2010). Thus arises the so-called "Museum Island" in Berlin, the northern half of an island in the Spree River where five internationally significant museums are located. The Pergamum Museum became the warehouse of archaeological goods stolen by Oppenheim and other German "archaeologists." The most glaring and obvious diminishment of Middle Eastern heritage is demonstrated by the piece that gives its name to the museum, the Pergamum Altar, rebuilt inside the museum with original parts. The remodeling of the museum and its extension allowed adding new pieces to the collection such as the Market Gate of Miletus, the Ishtar Gate, the Processional Way of Babylon, and the Facade Mshatta (Bilsel, 2012).

However, it is still amusing how, after the Second World War, U.S. General Dwight Eisenhower (Vlasic, 2013) took a personal interest in the protection, preservation, and repatriation of European heritage objects to the countries to which they belonged, and how this action helped preserve European cultural identity, while at the same time the cultural identity of the countries of the Middle East was being plundered by those same European countries, who should easily have been able to empathize with those countries that had undergone the same tribulations (Bilsel, 2012).

At this same time, western archaeologists and their representative institutions would find a new situation in Syria after independence from French control in 1946 (Joud-Allah, 2010). They would now have to negotiate directly with members of local governments. The objective of this measure was precisely to stem the outflow of its archeological assets to the West. Foreign archaeologists could no longer use the intermediation of its ambassadors as had been the norm until this time. This does not mean that the situation was now perfect; although there are no figures or documents, the existence of continued smuggling of Syrian cultural property is well known (Goode, 2007).

3. SINCE INDEPENDENCE TO PRESENT. LOOTING CONTINUES?

War has always been one of the worst enemies of the cultural heritage of nations, both tangible and intangible. The direct and indirect consequences of armed

conflict have damaged, and will continue to damage the cultural heritage of our past.

The harm to the world's heritage comes from several directions. First, the so-called collateral damage: the accidental damage to, or complete destruction of an historical artifact during an attack or defense operations (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013). Second, and perhaps the most blatant and overt, is the deliberate and wanton destruction of buildings of political or religious importance in order to eradicate the symbols of a particular ethnic, religious or political group (Brodie, 2003; 10). A third is the practice of taking "booty" during or after the conflict. In this case, the inducement is the economic value of the item being stolen combined with its marketability. Raids are often staged solely for the purpose of finding valuable artifacts (Baker & Anjar, 2012; Manzanera, 2013).

When a country is in conflict and authority is weakened or actually ceases to exist, the international market for objects of the nation's heritage enhances the activity of looting. This market is normally powered by private institutional collectors of the West (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013), the "demand countries," whose monetary investment not only promotes wealth destruction but also injects significant funding into a system that can even perpetuate the conflict in the "source country" (Brusasco, 2012).

Despite the various conventions and regulations established by UNESCO, the truth is that there is currently no practical authority able to fully control this illegal market and provide the necessary protection of the cultural heritage of the nations of the world (Temiño & Acuña, 2013). The main cause of this failure is ever greater means of destruction coupled with technological advances that have opened up previously inaccessible locations (Brodie, 2003: 15).

To complicate the problem, an unlawfully obtained object can pass through several hands before reaching the collector. Meanwhile, the documentation on the status of the illicit origin is lost or intentionally destroyed (Kolinski, 2007: 76). Sadly, antique dealers and auction houses both act as enablers of the illicit transference of these objects. In the end, they are sold without provenance or any other form of documentation that might enable traceability to their origin or previous owners (Brodie, 2003: 16).

Further, any object that has been taken illegally, whether from a museum collection or from an illicit excavation, almost always escapes detection by inspection bodies. The object may not have even been recorded in the museum or excavation inventory before being stolen, thus its disappearance is never noted (Brodie and Renfrew, 2005: 350).

The situation is made worse by international legal constructs. Accordingly, it is possible to obtain title to an unlawful object if the collector or institution makes this transaction "in good faith". Thus, even if the origin of the object is illicit and its possession illegal, after being purchased in "good faith" the object will not have the legal status of having been stolen (Brodie, 2003).

Sometimes the citizens themselves turn into thieves who despoil archeological sites and other environs of opportunity by pilfering whole mosaics, statues, or any object they can find (Brusasco, 2012). Since many cultural situations and sites cannot be guarded round the clock, this calls for an awareness of citizens to preserve and defend the heritage that still survives in spite of the war and plunder. However, many people do not know the value and importance of that heritage, or, even if they have the knowledge, the need for basic survival overcomes their hesitancy. Given the sometimes life-or-death situation for themselves and their families, the financial gains achieved by stealing and smuggling their own cultural heritage creates an overwhelming option (Baker & Anjar, 2012). Thus, it is not surprising that this takes place. Compounding the severity of the problem is the ready market in these stolen goods in Europe and America due to the economic resources of their institutions and people (Baker & Anjar, 2012; Zablit, 2012; Vlastic, 2013).

In order to prevent this illegal trade, UNESCO, represented by its Director General I. Bokova, in collaboration with Interpol and ICOM (International Council of Museums), presented in New York the "Emergency Red List of endangered Syrian Antiques" (ICOM, 2013). The goal was to facilitate the work of the police, customs, and all others responsible for the protection of cultural property worldwide. This list is a significant service toward identifying and determining the categories of objects that are vulnerable to purchase and illegal export. UNESCO's efforts are also part of a larger project to fight corruption and bad governance that not only enables, but also benefits from this illicit commerce, estimated to be between 15% and 20% of the annual world antiquity trade (Vlastic, 2013).

Unfortunately, it seems this list has come too late, as in the spring of 2012 a street of columns built by Emperor Marcus Aurelius in the city of Apamea was looted; what remained was severely damaged (Corbin, 2013) – see figure 3 (Abd-alKarim, 2013a: 39) –. At present, the site of Heraqla, ten kilometers from the city of Al Raqqa (Abd-Alkarim, 2013b), has been pillaged several times by armed groups who specialize in antique theft. In these cases, it is not the citizens themselves who are spoiling this heritage, but private bands that are well organized and

have the financial backing and technology to carry out their work of plunder (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013).

This foray into the store of items containing objects of the Heraqla site (situated in the north), was stopped thanks to the rapid intervention of the guards, employees of the Board of Antiquities, and the efforts of the citizens of the local community. Soon after, in October 2013, another armed group raided the warehouse and seized hundreds of mosaics and works of pottery, the result of various excavations. In the end, many of the objects were taken to a safe place in coordination with the central administration of the DGAM³ (Abd-alkarim, 2013b; UNESCO, 2013a).

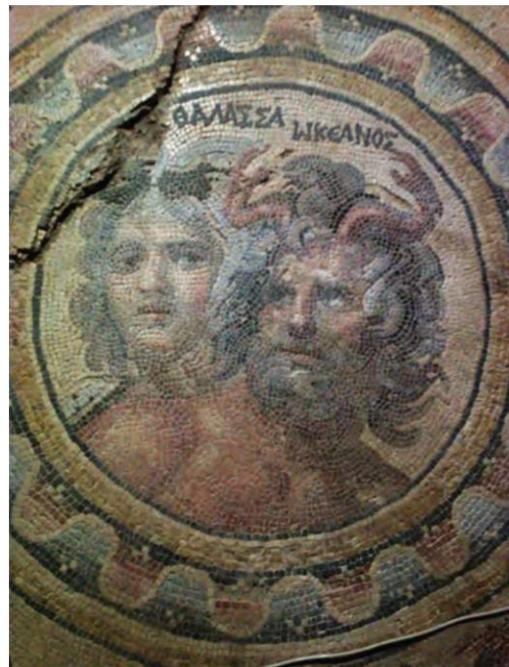


Figure 3. Deteriorated mosaic from Apamea

In several cases, the looters did not hesitate to use bulldozers to raze some little-known excavation sites in Rif Dimashq and Palmira. In November 2013, several archaeological sites, some within the list of World Cultural Heritage (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013), were looted; some were almost entirely obliterated. Examples include Tell Merdikh in Ebla, the ancient sites of northern Syria (where many churches were destroyed, their altars becoming the subject of plunder), Tell Sheikh Hamad, Mari, Halabiya, and Dura-Europos Bassira and in the region of Deir ez-Zor, Apamea in the Hama region and Tell al-Ash-ari in the region of Daraa (Manzanera, 2013; UNESCO, 2013c). Robberies have taken place in museums such as those in northern Syria where the artifacts stolen

³ Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Damascus.

were of incalculable cultural value (UNESCO, 2013a; Kanjou, 2014: 274).

At the Raqqa Museum (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013; 8), a group of people presented themselves as security personnel and stole many boxes containing archaeological material under the pretext of having to move them to a safe place. Of these, only three have been recovered (Kanjou, 2014: 274). In the castle of Jaabar, various ceramic objects were stolen while an excavation was in process (Abd-alkarim, 2013b; Unesco-2013b).

From Hama Museum, a large bronze sculpture from the Aramaic era was stolen (Corbin, 2013). It is believed to now be part of the international illicit market (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013; UNESCO, 2013a).

The Folklore Museum in Aleppo has been the site of many robberies of glassware, spears, and many other types of pieces. This museum is particularly susceptible to robbery because of its proximity to the Turkish border and the relative ease of transportation of stolen objects (UNESCO, 2013a).

Maarrat Museum, located near Aleppo and therefore, also the Turkish border, has been the subject of looting by well-armed and organized groups that have destroyed or stolen more than thirty pieces of art, statues, and small clay dolls. Fortunately, the

museum itself has avoided destruction (UNESCO, 2013a; Kanjou, 2014: 274).

If the loss of Syrian heritage is the result of armed conflict, it is also a cause. For example this is evidenced by occurrences in the ancient city of Aleppo (Fuensanta & Toscano, 2013: 5), where we are going to illustrate the extent of the damage suffered on the archaeological heritage.

3.1 Aleppo

Aleppo is considered one of the most important cities in the Middle East for its 150 archeological sites, representing a large number of civilizations. These sites include a citadel built in the twelfth century, the Great Mosque, and various schools from the period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Also damaged have been houses, fields, and public baths—a cohesive group that form part of the city's unique cultural fabric.

The Management Service of World Heritage, the Directorate General of Antiquities, and the Museums Department of Antiquities in Aleppo compiled a list of more than 121 damaged buildings. This number does not include the market bloc, which was burned in 2012 (Abd-alkarim, 2013c:57; Cunliffe, 2014). We have divided the ancient city into four main districts according figure 4 (Author edition).

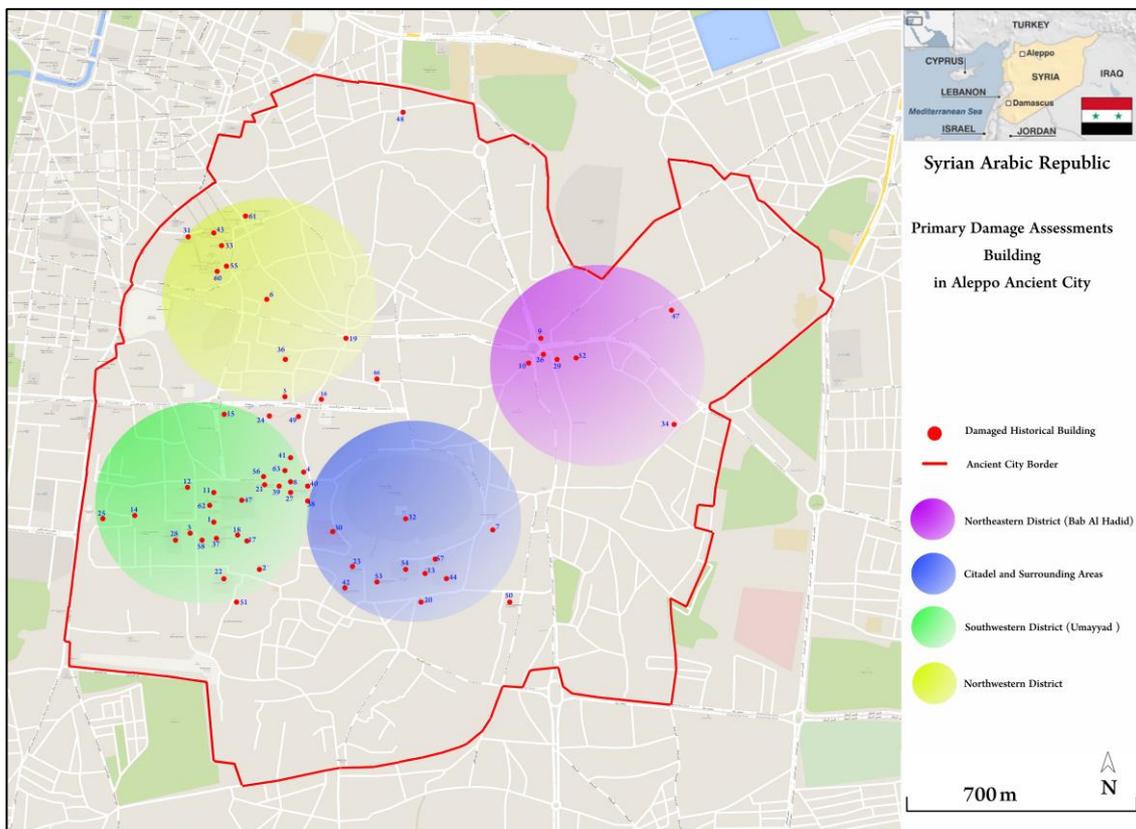


Figure 4. Boundary of Aleppo's ancient city and distribution of damaged Historical Building

1. The southwestern district of the ancient city, where the Umayyad Mosque is located. The minaret and the eastern fence were destroyed, in addition to damage sustained by the body of the mosque see Figure 5 (Chulov, 2014). More than 1,500 old shops (*Al-Medina Souk*) of the City Market (*Al-Bahri*, 2014:33) – part of a group of covered markets, which date back to the fourteenth century AD, see Figure 6 (Chulov, 2014) – were burned in the summer of 2012 (VV. AA., 2013:37). Further, a large number of schools, mosques, and markets were destroyed (Abd-Alkarim, 2013d:7), see Table 1.
2. The citadel and surrounding areas located in the old city center have seen the heaviest fighting (Suy, 2013) since it broke out, bringing the demise of some historic buildings entirely as a result of the bombing of tunnels beneath the area including Carlton Archaeological Hotel, Yalbouga Mosque, and Khan Qurt Bey. Additionally, other historic buildings have sustained significant damage and have been turned into semi-ruins, as happened to the Grand Serail, the Sultaniye Madrasa, and even Khusruwiye mosque and other buildings and private properties surrounding the citadel (Leventhal *et al.*, 2014; Danti, 2014: 19) (see table 3). The citadel itself, as well as the north tower, have been the main targets of shelling (Kanjou, 2014: 272). The roof, façade, and minaret of Al-Otrush mosque have been damaged considerably (Danti, 2014: 17).
3. The northwestern district: damage has been detected in different buildings (see Table 2), but it is less extensive than what has occurred in the vicinity of the citadel. Several cases of destruction have been recorded in this region, one of which is the al-Mahmandar Mosque, which was built in the fourteenth century. Bab al-Nasr, dating back to the Ayyubid period (twelfth and thirteenth centuries), suffered heavy damage (Al-Afandi & Abdul Rahim, 2013; Danti, 2014:23), as did the shops next to it, which were burned. Shells also hit the nineteenth century Maronite church and caused considerable damage to the sixteenth century Evangelical church. Neither was the thirteenth century Jumblatt Palace spared from the devastation (Abd-Alkarim, 2013c:19).
4. The northeastern district of the ancient city: Many archeologically significant buildings, including the Al-Hadid Gate and many ancient markets and baths have been damaged (see Table 4). Also damaged were buildings such as Haroon Dada Mosque and Qadi-Askar mosque (Danti, 2014:17; Abd-Alkarim, 2013c: 60).

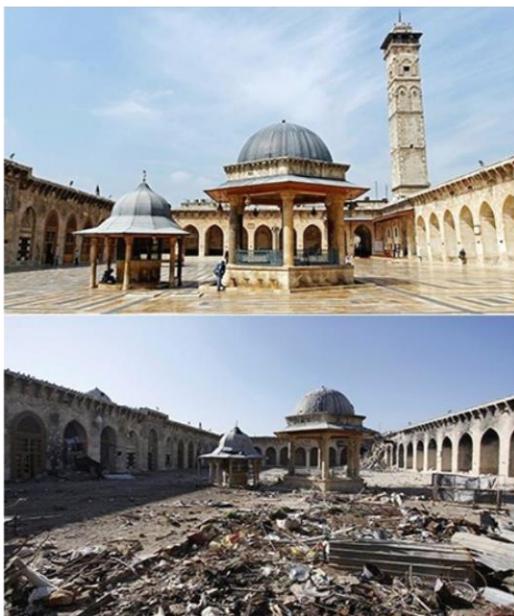


Figure 5. The Umayyad Mosque (Aleppo) before and after

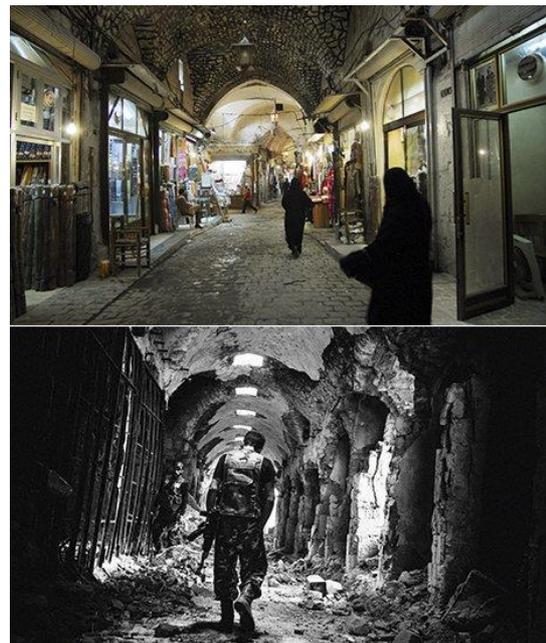


Figure 6. The Old Souk, Aleppo. Above in 2007 and below in 2013

Since early 2012, the Director General of UNESCO, I. Bokova (UNESCO, 2013d), has been publishing press releases asking those involved in the conflict to cease their activity in order to preserve not only heritage but human lives. She has met with Interpol and the Secretary General of the UN to remind them of the validity and meaning of international conventions concerning world heritage sites

and antiquities. Occurrences such as the fire in the old souk of Aleppo are evidence of the urgent need to take protective actions in Syria, especially considering that this city has been designated a World Heritage Site (UNESCO, 2013f).

We had to wait until the summer of 2013 for UNESCO to sound the alarm for the impending destruction by targeted bombing of other World Heritage Sites, including the ancient cities of Aleppo, Damascus, and Bosra, the Krak des Chevaliers and Salah El-Din castles, the ancient ruins of Palmyra, and several ancient villages of northern Syria (Cunliffe, 2012). The purpose of this alarm was to mobilize all member countries in supporting the preservation of these sites in accordance with their agreements made previously at The Hague (Unesco, 2012; Manzanera, 2013).

During the months before that alarm, I. Bokova (UNESCO, 2013e) made 191 addresses to the Executive Board of the Cultural Heritage of Syria pointing out measures and appeals from it on behalf of the UNESCO statement. To gain greater support, meetings were also held with Interpol, ICOMOS (International Council of Museums and Sites), ICCROM (In-

ternational Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) and the UN (UNESCO, 2013e).

It is well to remember that safeguarding the heritage of the peoples of the world should concern everyone. The preservation of our cultural heritage is nothing less than a powerful tool for building social cohesion. Recognizing and understanding the heritage of other peoples can be a tool for world peace. This reminds us once again of the importance of UNESCO, and that it continues to coordinate international efforts with all parties in the conflict to eradicate the illicit trade in Syrian antiquities (UNESCO, 2013b; *id.*, 2013e).

Due to political instability and lack of verifiable information, it is very difficult to assess the total damage caused by warfare, thieves, and opportunity-seekers in all these places, and to Syrian heritage in general (Brusasco, 2012). What we can say is that any archeological site close to the front in this war is likely to be destroyed; the list of truly endangered sites is much longer than currently estimated (Fuen-santa & Toscano, 2013).

Table 1. Damaged Historical Building in Southwestern District

Historical Building	Damage	N. on map	References
Al-Adiliyah Masjid, Madrasa	Damage to the building and the minaret	2	Al-Afandi, 2013; DGAM, 2014e; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Ahmadieh Madrassa	Damage to the building	3	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Fustuq Khan. Al-Sahibah	Damage to the building	8	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014e.
Al-Fustuq Mosque. Al-Sahibiyah	Damage to the building	8	DGAM, 2014a; Danti, 2014.
Al-Halawiyah Madrassa:	Damage to the building	11	VV. AA. 2013; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Harir Khan	Damage to the building	12	DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Jumrok Khan	Damage to the building	37	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Kameliyah Zawia	Damage to the building	14	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Khasrafia Mosque	Damage to the building	15	DGAM, 2014e.
Al-Khiesh Khan	Damage to the building	62	DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Medina Souk	Damage and fire in Old Shops	1	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a
Al-Nahhaseen Hammam	Burning shops	17	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Qarqnawi Khan	Damage to the building	64	DGAM, 2014e.
Al-Sabon Khan	Burning shops	39	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Sharqiya Madrasa	Damage to the building	21	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Shibani Church	Damage to the building	22	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Swiqa Souk	Serious damage to the shops	24	DGAM, 2014a; DGAM, 2014g; DGAM, 2014h.
Al-Tut Masged	Damage to the building	25	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Aslan Dadah Mosque	Damage to the building	27	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Bahramieh Mosque	Damage to the building	28	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Bahramieh Souk	Burning shops	28	Abd-alkarim, 2013c.
Haj Musa Mosque	Heavily damaged	63	Al-Afandi, 2013.
Khan Al-Jumrok Souk	Burning shops	37	Abd-alkarim, 2013c.
Khan Al-Nahhaseen Souk	Damage to the building	18	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Khier Biek Khan	Damage to the building	41	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Omayyad Mosque	Destroying the minaret and serious damage to the building	45	VV. AA. 2013; Al-Afandi, 2013; Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a; Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014.
Science & Medicine Museum Bimaristan Arghun	Damage to the building	51	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Toot Mosque	Damage to the building	58	DGAM, 2014a.
Waqfiye Library	Damage to the building	56	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; Al-Afandi, 2013; DGAM, 2014a.

Table 2. Damaged Historical Building in North-Western District

Historical Building	Damages	N. on map	References
Al-Absheer Mosque	Damage to the building	61	DGAM, 2014e.
Al-Aksarawi Mosque	Damage to the building	5	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Enjiliah Church	Damage to the building	6	DGAM, 2014e.
Al-Mahmandar Mosque	Damage to the building	16	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; Al-Afandi, 2013; DGAM, 2014a.
Bab Al-Nasr District	Severe damages to the buildings and shops, fire in stationary souk	19	Al-Afandi, 2013; DGAM, 2014b; DGAM, 2014e; Danti, 2014.
Catholic Church	Damage to the building	31	DGAM, 2014a.
Fish Souk	Damage to the building	60	DGAM, 2014e.
Ghazale Beyt	Damage to the building	33	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Jinblaat Dar	Damage to the building	36	Al-Afandi, 2013; DGAM, 2014a; DGAM, 2014e.
Maidani Mosque	Damage to the building	59	DGAM, 2014e; Danti, 2014.
Maronite Church	Damage to the building	43	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Othmaniya Mosque	Damage to the building and the minaret	46	DGAM, 2014a.
Qastal Harami Mosque	Damage to the building	48	VV. AA. 2013; DGAM, 2014e DGAM, 2014a.
Traditional Folk Museum (Bayt Achakbashbash)	Serious damage to the building and theft of artifacts	55	DGAM, 2014a.
Wool Souk	Damage to the building	60	DGAM, 2014e.

Table 1. Damaged Historical Building around Citadel of Aleppo

Historical Building	Damage	N. on map	References
Al-Ajami Cuisine Mosque	Damage to the building	4	DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Fatwa Dar		7	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Al-Kalam Building Police Headquarters	Severe damage to the building	13	DGAM, 2014e; DGAM, 2014a; Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014.
Al-Otrush Mosque	Severe damage to the building	20	DGAM, 2014a; DGAM, 2014e; Danti, 2014.
Al-Shouna Khan	Severe damage to the building	23	DGAM, 2014e; Danti, 2014.
Carlton Citadel Hotel	Completely destroyed along with many surrounding structures	30	DGAM, 2014a DGAM, 2014e; Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014.
Citadel Of Aleppo	Damage to the Citadel Entrance and the North Tower	32	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; Al-Afandi, 2013; Kanjou, 2013; Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014; DGAM, 2014a.
Immigration An Passport Old Building	Damage to the building	35	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Khan Al-Kittan Souk	Burning shops	38	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Khan Al-Wazir Souk	Burning shops	40	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.
Khusruwiye Mosque	Almost completely demolished	42	Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014; ; Danti, 2014.
Ministry Of Justice Headquarters	Heavily damaged	44	DGAM, 2014a; Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014.
Qurt Bey Kahn	Demolished and nearby structures heavily damaged	49	Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014.
Sahet Al-Maleh Mosque (Al Tun Agha)	Damage to the building	50	DGAM, 2014a.
Sultaniye Madrasa	Serious damage to the building	53	DGAM, 2014e; DGAM, 2014f; DGAM, 2014h; Danti, 2014.
The Grand Serail Of Aleppo	Heavily damaged	54	DGAM, 2014e; Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Danti, 2014.
Yalbougha An-Nasry Hammam	Destroyed	57	DGAM, 2014d; DGAM, 2014e; Leventhal <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Danti, 2014.

Table 4. Damaged Historical Building in Northeastern District

Historical Building	Damage	N. on map	Reference
Al-Haddadin Mosque	Damage to the building	9	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014e; DGAM, 2014a; Danti, 2014.
Al-Hadid Bab	Damage to the building	10	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a; DGAM, 2014c; DGAM, 2014e.
Al-Zaher Souk	Severe damage to the shops	26	DGAM, 2014e.
Haroon Dada Mosque	Severe damage to the building	34	DGAM, 2014e.
Najarin Basement	Severe damage to the building	--	DGAM, 2014e.
Nakosa Mosque	Severe damage to the building	29	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a; Danti, 2014.
Qadi Asskar Mosque	Severe damage to the building	47	DGAM, 2014e.
Souk Al-Ghazal Hammam	Damage to the building	52	Abd-alkarim, 2013c; DGAM, 2014a.

4. CONCLUSION

Syria is a great country that has suffered throughout history. It's where great cultures have lived and left their legacy. Beginning with Syrian prehistory, researchers from the most important and prestigious universities in the world have put great effort into unearthing and unravelling Syria's cultural legacy. It is due to the excellent state of preservation of the materials obtained in excavations that scholars have been able to glean so much information from the relics of the Syrian past. But there have been many more cultures which have left their legacy in these lands and others towards the east, and who have given the area a rich and diverse heritage.

For this reason, people who care about and are concerned with heritage deeply regret the conflict that exists today in Syria. They are extremely concerned about the situation of instability of all its inhabitants and the issues that concern us, and in many cases cause irreparable damage to the cultural heritage of Syria.

When the conflict is resolved we may recover, to a greater or lesser extent, the aesthetics of the heritage affected by the destruction caused by the conflict. For a great many artifacts, as a result of accurate written descriptions and photographic or electronic images, we have the keys to at least partially recover the article's former splendor.

Will we mourn the loss of artifacts that fill museum cabinets – the decorative beauty of the culture of ancient peoples of Syria? In these artifacts we might find knowledge and wisdom passed from generation to generation using a common language implicit in these pieces. They give us a glimpse into the knowledge of the time and of processes – not only what was done, but how and why. In these artifacts we see illustrations of the nature of their environment in raw materials – physical, mental, emotional, artistic – as well as psychological and motivational. This is true not only in the creation of useful tools, but also in the creation of beautiful objects that adorned people, even as we do today to showcase identity, personality, and social status.

Obviously, the loss of any culture's heritage is a loss for all mankind. This is true not just for Syria, but for all countries that have experienced conflict and its concomitant abuse of the rights of the people to be secure in their heritage. The importance of which is even today a relatively new concept. As we have already mentioned, the loss of heritage is a loss for all people, not just for those countries in conflict and from which the artifacts are stolen. With a loss of cultural heritage comes a loss in social prestige and

even their very identity. With the loss of cultural heritage we suffer the diminishment of our human legacy.

Therefore, UNESCO has recently dedicated itself to protecting this heritage that belongs to all humanity, regardless of who they are, where they come from, or where they presently find themselves. One might be justified in asking, though, why intervention was delayed. Though the crisis has been ongoing since 2011, UNESCO has been reminding all parties involved in the conflict of The Hague Convention agreement only since 2013. Why was it necessary to wait for so many world heritage sites to be destroyed before sounding the alarm?

In this environment hypocrisy takes center stage. From the point of view of many of the member states themselves, there is strong motivation for perpetuating the conflict. This is not the official view, but those in the shadows and on the sidelines, the private collectors and institutions. Even if they are not disposed to full-out war, they are certainly eager for the circumstances that enable them to acquire new antiques and treasure. The atmosphere of conflict brings with it the injection of cash for their trade as their country mutates into a booming black market for the trafficking of antiquities from any and all sources. One might theorize that the former colonial powers of this region themselves have direct or at least indirect relationships with bands of illicit antiquarians.

The loss of heritage is not only a result of armed conflict. There were and are legal loopholes by which Syrian heritage goes missing. During colonial times, historical artifacts were collected on a wholesale basis, eventually filling entire warehouses and museums in the occupying countries. To justify the existence today of pilfered Syrian antiquities in museums around the world the current possessors claim that they know the artifact was acquired illicitly, but then say, had the object not been removed, that small part of Syrian history would no longer exist. Should we therefore be thankful for the plundering suffered under colonialism?

We feel a tragic loss when our valuable cultural artifacts disappear. They become fuel for the black market, perpetuating the economic foundation of the plunder. Then they are lost to all, having value neither for their beauty nor for scientific research where much could be learned from them. Instead, they become hidden away in a collector's vault, reduced to a state of having no value for anyone, save for their illicit procurer.

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