





# Introduzione

## *Introduction*

### ALESSIO RE

*Heritage: Beyond Walls* is an online capacity-building program launched in February 2021 by Fondazione Santagata for the Economics of Culture (established in Turin in 2018), aiming at establishing an information channel for Syrian university students in cultural heritage related disciplines.

The main goal of the program is to contribute in improving access to knowledge resources, breaking isolation, encouraging sharing and discussion, and empowering awareness and capacities towards cultural heritage as a resource for recovery, peace building and development.

The first edition of the program has been addressed to people coming from Syria, a country affected by emergencies, and where there is an high risk of loss of cultural heritage, where people and students in particular, face restricted possibilities in accessing knowledge and education resources on specific topics related to cultural heritage.

In addition, university students are severely affected by the consequent isolation and limitation to have access to knowledge opportunities, the effects of which are now stressed also by the COVID-19 emergency.

The limited access to knowledge is negatively impacting not only on the present, but also on the future of the country. It weakens the local human capital and its capacity and readiness to promptly and effectively act for recovery, also by means of a wise use of the country's cultural heritage potential.

Syria has been chosen as target because is one of the countries holding some of the most extraordinary tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the world and is home to:

- 6 UNESCO World Heritage Sites;
- 3 elements inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List;
- 1 Biosphere Reserve.

With its capital, Damascus, the oldest inhabited capital in the world (being populated since 635 BC), Syrian cultural heritage holds an extraordinary potential for economic recovery and social empowerment, and it represents an important resource for development, especially for the younger generations.

The project aims at establishing an informative platform offered to Syrian university students in cultural heritage related disciplines. In the long term, this initiative aims to enhance the capacity of cultural heritage to play an effective role as a contributor for peace, dialogue and durable development processes.

*Heritage: Beyond Walls* is made by 5 teaching modules, each one moderated by an international speaker, expert in specific topics. The topics discussed in the 5 different modules aim at enriching capacities and competences in the management and protection of Cultural Heritage in every aspect, giving to

*Alessio Re, Secretary General at Fondazione Santagata for the Economics of Culture*

participants all the tools to develop and implement a project for tangible or intangible Syrian Cultural Heritage. The 5 modules on which the program is developed are:

1. *Culture as a Capital*;
2. *Historic Cities*;
3. *Restoration & Beyond*;
4. *Public Archaeology*;
5. *Art & People*.

After the three months of online webinars and activities, each participant has been requested to develop and present a project idea related to a Syrian cultural heritage site, element or expression.

More than 40 project ideas have been presented with a short paper and the Scientific Committee of the initiative has evaluated and selected the best ideas to be awarded.

In the following pages, the best 3 projects awarded by the Scientific Committee and published in the «A&RT» Journal.

*Heritage: Beyond Walls* is a project ideated and promoted by Fondazione Santagata for the Economics of Culture with the collaboration of different cultural institutions and international agencies. Main partners are: Centro Conservazione e Restauro La Venaria Reale, Museo Egizio, Cittadellarte, RO.ME Museum Exhibition. In collaboration with: Kermes Journal, SIAT, «A&RT».

# Il significato culturale delle città antiche. Un restauro paesaggistico per la città antica di Damasco

## *The cultural meaning of ancient cities. A landscape recovery for the ancient city of Damascus*

**SONIA IBRAHIM**

### **Abstract**

*«The past remains integral to us all, individually and collectively. We must concede the ancients their place, but their past is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country. It is assimilated in ourselves and resurrected in an ever-changing present»<sup>1</sup>. Archaeological findings are pieces of evidence of the past, usually found in archaeological sites where they could be preserved well in a tourist attraction or a museum. However, recently in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region where instability has been a long-existing characteristic expressed in both armed and political disputes in several countries, especially in Syria, those fragments were found in the living cities that have a medieval core or ancient core. The archaeological finds or remains were left or integrated into different ways into the historic urban landscape of the ancient cities, left to deteriorate or neglected and sometimes lost without proper documentation<sup>2</sup>. Those elements are important not only because of their shape and inscriptions but as evidence of the historical importance of the cities and community identity and have the potential to play a key role in heritage making in a changing spatially complex multicultural city. Therefore, this paper seeks to increase the sustainability of urban planning and design interventions in the historic context of heritage cities with complex layers of histories, by documenting and the historic urban landscape as a tale or story of spatial memory and identity, creating mental images of memory of historical urban landscape elements and archeological finds that could enhance the understanding of the multicultural cities history, social inclusion, and play a significant role in the sustainable economic growth.*

Sonia Ibrahim, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museum, Damascus, Syria.

### **Introduction**

Conflict in cities caused by armed movements or contemporary development poses a challenge for historic urban landscapes for continuity of identities along with the creation of contemporary features. The Venice Charter of 1964 and the World Heritage Convention of 1972 confirms the need for an integrated approach linking contemporary architecture, sustainable urban development, and landscape integrity based on existing historical patterns and context. In addition, the Vienna Memorandum in 2005 emphasizes the mutual understanding of all actors in the future of our *historic urban landscape* to preserve the urban heritage while considering the *modernization and development of society* in a *culturally and historically sensitive* manner among strengthening identity and social cohesion. However, the need for tools of identifying memory and reconstructing it to drive the future recovery process, these tools are often underrepresented in the decision-making process.

**(Capitals, Architraves, Friezes, Cornices) found in the Straight Street:**

Heritage Elements (stone, arch ...)

has historical meaning value (the story of the element)

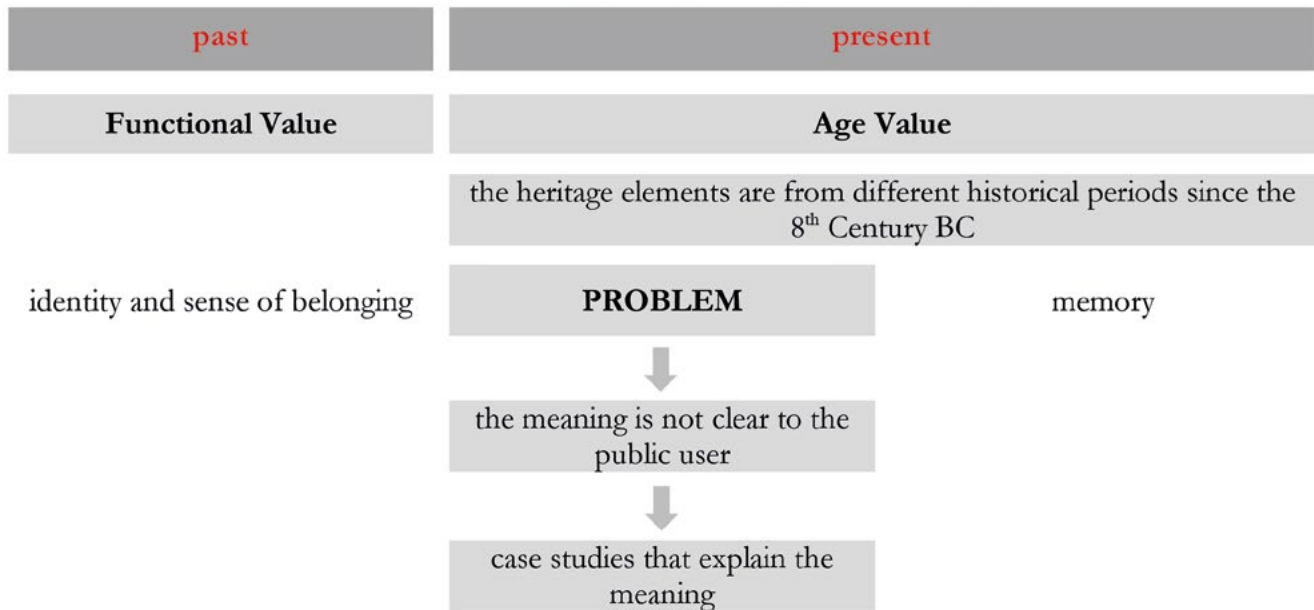


Table 1. Analysis of the problem.

Therefore, the project will explore those tools and the framework of the case study could be replicated in different historical cities with *critical history*. In addition, this project reflects on the UNESCO 2013 document on «a new life for historic cities» that emphasized urban heritage as a social, cultural, and economic asset for the development of cities.

The heritage elements or the archaeological fragments (stone, arch, the column parts...) have “historical meaning” value (the story of the elements) in the present time and the age value because they are from different historical periods. In the Damascus example (Figure 1) the fragments could be since the 8th century B.C. In addition, they have a strong connection to the identity of the street and its spatial memory as part of an ancient civilization. Although, in the past, they had the functional (constructional) value, however, none of that is clear anymore in the cities dynamic ambience.

What possible ways in representing the elements so people can connect to the history of the place and the historical and spiritual value of the elements? How to provide an interactive social heritage space that connects people to the history of the place and creates a sense of belonging through these archeological findings?

The existing built environment has intangible heritage, cultural diversity, socio-economic and environmental factors along with local community values all are the actors and effects in the success of the project to represent the archaeological findings to interact and mutually reinforce their role and meaning.

## 1. Challenge

The challenge of heritage-making in a changing environment involves the lack of mobilizing of academic studies in the use of archeology findings of the ancient cities from different actors (public actors, decision-makers, and institutions).

How to draw links between academia in archeology, architecture, policy, theoretical data and policymakers, public actors and urban planners, to tackle the challenge of presenting the meaning and the value of archeology finds and fragments in ancient cities? Examples are presented from Aleppo, Damascus, and Musel, however, the case study is in Damascus at the ancient “straight street” of “Medhat Basha street”. The project of presenting and visual mapping of the archaeological fragments could be replicated in different scenarios and different historical cities with ancient cores.

## 2. Main aim

The project in the case of Damascus will increase the vitality of the street, the tourist attraction and by that be significantly beneficial to increase the income for the shop owners on the two sides of the street as it is mainly a commercial historic street. Shops on the two sides of the street sell handmade goods from the intangible heritage of Syria, traditional food, and goods from traditional crafts like wooden boxes and copper products. The aim is to use the tangible and intangible heritage of the street as sources of social cohesion, factors of diversity, and drivers of creativity, innovation, and urban regeneration and development – we must do more to harness this power<sup>3</sup>.





Figure 1.1. Syria, Damascus: the Roman archaeological finds at the straight street of Damascus 2019, after conflict. Source: author.



Figure 1.2. Syria, Aleppo: new archaeological finds in the old city, 2019. Source: Alaa Alsayed.



Figure 1.3. Iraq, Mosul: archaeological finds in the rehabilitation projects after war 2021. Source: ICCROM.

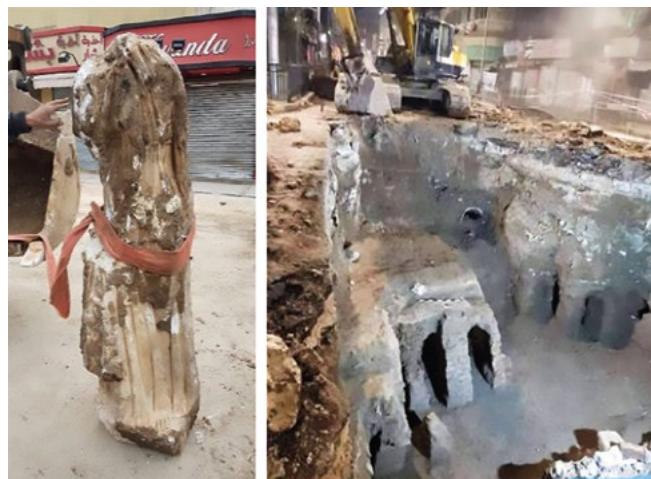
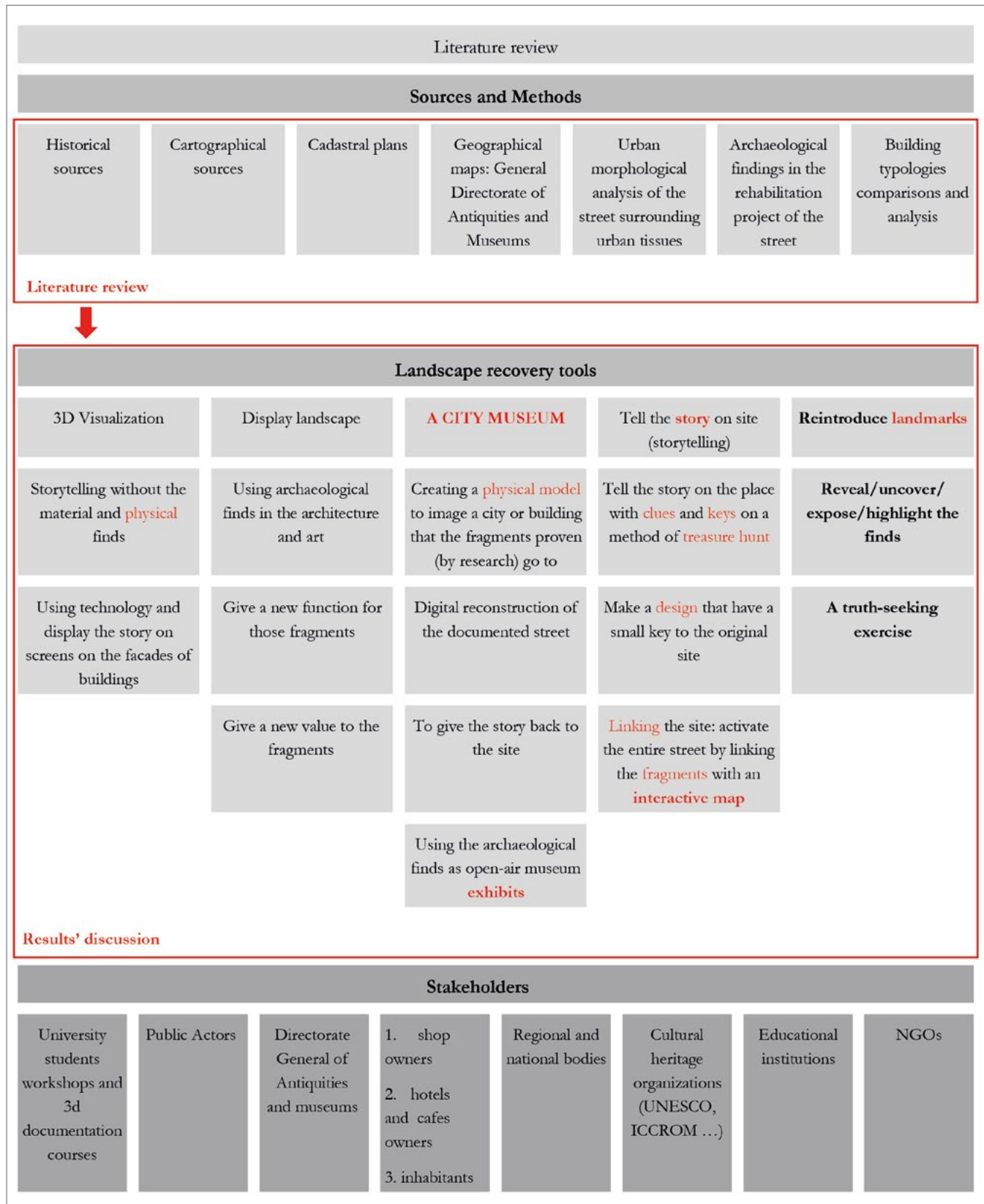


Figure 1.4. Jordan, Amman: Roman archaeological finds in new development projects (the box ferry, Downtown) 2020. Source: doa.gov.jo.



### 3. Methodology



**4. Case study analysis: the straight street of Damascus**  
Damascus is an ongoing metropolis since its birth in the second millennium B.C as the Aramaic capital, the *straight street of Damascus* appeared since the Greek city and it is the

longest street in old Damascus (1500 meters long), it connects the eastern gate to the western gate of the city old wall, and it is still the main street in the ancient city. The street was a magnificent avenue with noble pillars and fine archways<sup>4</sup>.





Figure 2.1. A traditional carpet shop in the straight street of Damascus and the archeological elements in use by shop owners. The goods are traditional carpets. Source: author.



Figure 2.2. The archeological finds in the straight street of Damascus. Different usage from the local community (street furniture, garden fence and even parking spot). Source: author.

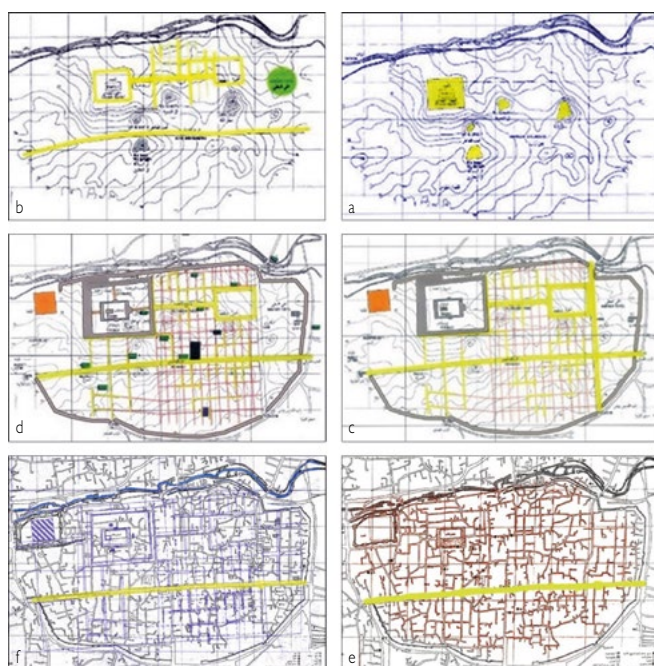


Figure 3. The chronological history of ancient Damascus and the straight street in yellow. a. Aramic City (Damascus between the 11th century and the 8th B.C.); b. Greek City (Damascus in the 8th century B.C.); c. Roman City (Damascus between the 1st century and the 4th A.D.); d. Byzantine City (Damascus between the 5th century and the 7th A.D.); e. Islamic City (Damascus after 7th century A.D.); f. Damascus in the 20th century and the Comparison with the conception of street planning and squares for (Hellenistic and Roman eras). Source: author.

## 5. The archaeological fragments

### 5.1. The tetra-pylon of the Roman city of Damascus

The Roman Arc de Triomphe was excavated from the straight road in 1950, where it was covered at the same point as it is now, but at a depth of five meters. The arch dates back to the third century AD during the Roman period. The arch was transformed into a public heritage space during the fifties, and by now transformed into a meeting point or a pedestrian node. However, currently, its space is used as a car parking place and neglected<sup>5</sup> (Figure 4).

The surviving arch spanned only the northern pedestrian thoroughfare; the central vehicular passage is hinted at by the footings of a considerably larger arch while the southern passage is missing. This array would originally have been repeated facing the other three cardinal directions<sup>6</sup>.

### 5.2. Fragments (finds)

Currently, most of the users do not realize the importance of the elements as Figure 5 shows. In a field observation done by the author in 2019<sup>7</sup> more than 70% of the community sample did not recognize the importance of the fragments.

## 6. Proposal

The paper will explain what methods we can use to landscape recovery.



Figure 4. The tetra-pylon of the Roman city of Damascus (1955, meeting point – 2020, parking). Sources: DAI, author.



Figure 5. The archaeological elements that have been found during the rehabilitation project. Sources: Emad al-Armachi, author.





Figure 6.1. Display landscape tool. The reuse of the stone. Source: author.



Figure 6.2. The tetra pylon of the Roman city of Damascus. Visualize on a screen. Source: author.



Figure 6.3. Screen describing the fragments. Source: author (for the interpretation: Giorgio Buccellati's presentation, Archaeology Travel).

### 6.1. Display landscape tools (civic engagement tools)

Reuse as street furniture and integrate it with the street landscape, and using a mobile application to display the value.

### 6.2. Presentation techniques

Urban heritage constitutes a key resource in enhancing the livability of urban areas. It fosters economic development and social cohesion in a changing global environment. Therefore, the proposal will try to involve more people in the preservation efforts, raise levels of awareness, and seek innovative schemes. By actively engaging public, private and civic sectors in the city, historic and contemporary, can be better preserved and celebrated (Figure 6).

1. Re-imagine buildings (based on the theoretical study) of the historic street and display them on the facade of buildings.
2. Partial simulation and 360° panorama method and interactive interface.
3. Building visualization and mapping the old city. If maps are initially subjective and construct they can influence decisions, values, and actions. Then why not embrace them and explore the old city by them. Why not embrace the efficiency of mapping.
4. Explanatory approach: reconstruct the idea of the historical urban fabric that existed (visually representation), as the city is not a static monument or group of buildings, but subject to dynamic forces in the economic, social and cultural spheres that shaped it and keep shaping it.

The people can realize the importance of the site and are able to imagine how it was and the historical stages. Through the development of a scene that would explain the situation of the square before destruction. The presentation could show how the archaeologists imagined the site through the analysis of images and archaeological findings.

This will work as a concept of re-functioning of the archaeological fragments as tourist attractions and meeting points (Figure 5 and 6).

### 7. The vitality of a city, how can we regain the cities flourishing economy

Through the investigation in urban morphology, the research noticed that it is not about the experts to save the heritage and revive the city, it is actually about the community and the people respecting, being proud of their heritage, and envision it as a source of livelihood, not an obstruction of development.

This concept is absent in the urban development of the city, the Syrian community and as a result of the conflict and sanctions disconnected their land and history, the requalification of the different layers of the city's heritage will play a great role in the recovery and regaining trust in the city.

The research goal is to gather a team of experts (an archaeologist, an architect, and a historian) to raise awareness and

introduce and present our heritage by technologies and studies, to present the story of the city and the memory of the place to the community as it is their identity and pride. The author did different workshops at the University of Damascus and these methods could be introduced by the author to the university student in different similar workshops. In addition to the raising of economic benefits that the local community will have from the proper presentation of the world heritage city, the accessibility of knowledge would create a sense of belonging and inclusion and increase the public desire to visit the ancient city and by that increase the economic exchange.

Therefore, the project would be in the cultural meaning and storytelling of cities context. A previous paper, *The making of public street open museum – Case study: the straight street of the ancient city of Damascus*, presented technological techniques to present architectural heritage. However, the project would need a multidisciplinary approach to study the site in detail and present it. The methodology could be replicated in different historical cities.

## Conclusions

1. Interactions with people through technology can create a more effective cultural heritage that will be a source of identity and belonging and have a role in reflecting and presenting the history of the place. Although the stone is connected to a material value, however, it has a meaning and a story so the research will present it in a technical architectural way. The dynamic ambiance of the public heritage spaces is not an impromptu scenario, but it is made by the design of it. There are a lot of techniques in the world, it is more related to archaeological places not to a dynamic urban heritage context (living ancient public spaces). Therefore, the paper investigates a new methodology in preserving heritage elements.
2. The protection of history and artifacts is not limited to museums, but rather it should extend to cities to create more awareness and knowledge of their importance. They will be a part of the old-new identity of the public space. According to this idea, the archaeological elements transformed from an age value to a heritage, functional, aesthetic, and social value.
3. At the site, visitors get to see the standard information panels that explain the meaning and the significance of the monument they are looking at.
4. Documenting the *historic urban landscape* in spatially complex multi-cultural cities as a *tale or story of spatial memory*, identity, movement, and transformation have the potential for exploration of values, characteristics, and catalysts of change.
5. The *visualization* of historical urban landscape could enhance the understanding of the challenges to urban design and planning for *social inclusion* and *sustainable economic growth*.
6. Applying this method in processes of *decision-making* by including communities has the potential to identify the gaps in the current rehabilitation process.
7. Finally, after-war experiences around the world, teach us that recovery starts spontaneously in the historic regions because it strengthens the identity of people and affiliation of citizens. A lot of studies are needed to help people face this situation, protect and save the historic urban fabric.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Murphy A.B., Heffernan M., Price M., Harvey D.C., Delyser D., Lowenthal D. et al., *The Past Is a Foreign Country-Revisited*, AAG Rev Books [Internet]. 2017 [cited 2021 Apr 29]; 5(3):201-214 (available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rrob20>).

<sup>2</sup> راشد آ ففشتكلم طسوب نامع مررقت قنجل سرددت لولحل صم ير [Internet]. doa.gov.jo. 2020 [cited 2021 Apr 30] (available from: <http://www.doa.gov.jo/NewsView.aspx?Id=28&fbclid=IwAR1IUqvP6YHANFt0-FSUocr9jOJ8FDSsSaE8YiUEalufLep7lzlXB2jmeOU>).

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, *New life for historic cities*, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Ibrahim S., *Preserving Archaeological Elements in Urban Heritage Dynamic Street – The Making of Public Street Open Museum – Case Study: The Straight Street of the Ancient City of Damascus*, in: PT2019 [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2021 Apr 28]. p. 261-270 (available from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334093783\\_PRESERVING\\_ARCHAEOLOGICAL\\_ELEMENTS\\_IN\\_URBAN\\_HERITAGE\\_DYNAMIC\\_STREET\\_-THE\\_MAKING\\_OF\\_PUBLIC\\_STREET\\_OPEN\\_MUSEUM\\_-CASE\\_STUDY\\_THE\\_STRAIGHT\\_STREET\\_OF\\_THE\\_ANCIENT\\_CITY\\_OF\\_DAMASCUS](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334093783_PRESERVING_ARCHAEOLOGICAL_ELEMENTS_IN_URBAN_HERITAGE_DYNAMIC_STREET_-THE_MAKING_OF_PUBLIC_STREET_OPEN_MUSEUM_-CASE_STUDY_THE_STRAIGHT_STREET_OF_THE_ANCIENT_CITY_OF_DAMASCUS)).

<sup>5</sup> See previous note.

<sup>6</sup> Sack D., *Damaskus: Entwicklung und Struktur Einer Orientalisch Islamischen Stadt*, IFPO, Berlin 1989.

<sup>7</sup> See note 4.

# Gli hammam di Damasco, patrimonio materiale e immateriale per lo sviluppo della Siria. Il caso dell'hammam Al-Qarmani

## *Damascene Hammams, tangible and intangible heritage for Syrian Development. Case study Hammam Al-Qarmani*

**SHEREEN AL-KURDI**

Shereen, Al-Kurdi, Architect, Assistant of Syrian Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Damascus.

### **Abstract**

*This paper is a proposal to take advantage of the neglected traditional Damascene baths (known as Hammams) as a cultural capital for sustainable development in Damascus, by restoring and preserving its basic function in an environmentally friendly methods, and spreading awareness about these crafts by practicing it within ateliers in front of visitors transforming them into centers for tangible and intangible cultural heritage associated with the traditional Hammams, in a way that provides a source of livelihood for the marginalized human capital that inhabits these baths and its surroundings because of war, by rehabilitating and teaching them the traditional handicrafts used for the Damascene Hammams, also in the vicinity of the Hammams, and localize these handicrafts within dedicated business incubators to provide the appropriate job market for it.*

### **Introduction**

Damascus is the oldest inhabited city in history, and the remaining Aramaic and Roman monuments still bear witness to its civilizations, including the historical heritage baths (known as Hammams), which appeared in Roman times, and became a tradition for the Damascene people that went beyond the concept of bathing, to become a place for many social rituals that formed one of the pillars of the Syrian intangible heritage. With the Syrian war, these Hammams were neglected, and some were demolished, others turned into shelters for displaced people by the war, and the functions of many changed to different uses.

### **1. The historical importance of the Damascene Hammams**

The importance of the Damascene Hammams rises because of the unique water engineering system that was the reason for their emergence, which are the Aramaean and Roman water channels network in the historical city of Damascus.

The Qanawat River in Damascus is the oldest water tunnel built in history by the Aramaeans; this river separates from the Barada River and heads east through a stone canal to Damascus. In the Roman Empire, the Romans maintained the Aramaic tunnels and made additional ones, they also built the Roman baths in line with them. The water used to pass through a network of tunnels, where the water flowed through them according to studied inclinations below the groundwater level towards Damascus city to transport water to its homes, where the water collects and transferred by gravity to the so-called Talee in every Damascene house. Hammams draw water from the



nearby Talee, and the water is transferred through clay tubes to a fire boiler and then to water facilities inside Hammam.

## 2. Damascene Hammams as an intangible heritage

Hammam played a big role in the social life of the Damascenes, it was a place for family and friends to meet, hold social events, brunch parties, sing, special meals, recover from some diseases, and celebrate some of their social occasions. Hammams used to allocate a specific time for men that differs from the time for women, so the bathing journey begins with Al-Barany where the customer takes off his clothes and wears Hammam's clothes, then enters the Al-Wastani, followed by Al-Jawani which is divided into a special compartment, part of its floor is called "fire tiles" where the water heating system passes under the marble tiles that raises its temperature for heating. In Al-Jawani natural medicines are used to treat the skin and hair, then the customer returns to al-Wastani, where his body dries up, and moves to al-Barany to wear his clothes back and drink tea or coffee.

• The mostly known occupations in the traditional Hammam where:

- Al-Muallem the Hammam's owner;
- Al-Natour, welcomes customers, hand over their secretariats, and offers them drinks;
- Al-Rayes, supervises the washing process;
- Al-Ballan, massages the customers;
- Al-Qumimi, lights the fire to heat the water.

And the Damascene Hammam held a specific bath traditions:

- The "bridal bath", where the bride bathes with henna traditions before the wedding;
- After two weeks of marriage, the mother of the groom invites the family of the newlyweds to Al-Ghamra bath;
- The groom's friends take him to the "groom's bath", then led him to the wedding ceremony with Levantine rhymes;
- The "birth bath" that takes place on the seventh day of childbirth;
- The "forty bath" when completed forty days after childbirth;
- Hammam was also the perfect place to find a suitable bride, as girls are without makeup.

## 3. Project objective

The project aims to shed light on the neglected archaeological Damascene Hammams as an asset of the tangible and intangible Syrian cultural heritage, and to demonstrate their role in sustainable development by involving the neglected local human capital in the process of rehabilitating Hammams and reviving the extinct Damascene heritage rituals associated with it, spreading culture, traditions, and handicrafts, related to Hammams, with the aim of making it an environmentally friendly traditional health resort, incubator for handicrafts, and an interactive place for exchanging views and spreading the Damascene heritage and teaching it for future generations.



Figure 1. Al-Barani section in a traditional Damascene Hammam, 1870. Source: unknown.



Figure 2. General view of Hammam Al-Qarmani. Source: unknown.



Figure 3. Al-Barani section. Source: unknown.

This proposal will adopt a case study of a typical Damascene heritage Hammam (Hammam al-Qarmani), which is the last historical landmark in the Sarouja heritage area. This Hammam remained forgotten until 2006 when the Damascus governorate demolished the traditional Souk Al-Atique that surrounded and hid it, and its place became a

park, in this place Hammam al-Qarmani appeared as a neglected monument in the heart of Damascus. So, preserving this Hammam is necessary for the following reasons:

1. *Socio-economic*: the possibility of re-using this Damascene Hammam and making it a source of income to support community development;
2. *Cultural protecting* it from major encroachments, and the intention to demolish it, especially with the construction of high towers around it;
3. *Geographical*: the strategic location of the Hammam within the main nerve of Damascus city;
4. *Tourist*: the heritage Hammam attracts tourists who want to know about the Damascene heritage, using its location near the touristic areas, such as the historic Damascus wall, Damascus Citadel, Takkiyya, and Damascus Museum..., also its proximity to the main bus station and the tourist hotel area;
5. *Environmental*: the Hammam is surrounded by a large green spot, that can be used by re-establishing the concept of Souk in a modern way that preserves the environment and protects the heritage industries;
6. *Future planning*: the possibility of applying this proposal to several Syrian heritage Hammams;
7. *Developmental*, involving local and governmental organizations, volunteers and industrialists, in the proposed process.

#### 4. The Damascene Hammam al-Qarmani

Hammam al-Qarmani is the largest of the sixteen Damascene Hammams, extending over an area of 500 m<sup>2</sup> in the northwest of the Damascus Citadel, its name goes back to Baktut al-Qarmani, who restored and rebuilt it in 1340. The Hammam remained in service until 1990, when Damascus governorate demolished Souk Al-Atique, the neglected Hammam al-Qarmani was exposed and became vulnerable to encroachments that damaged parts of it, so its walls became a place for throwing dirt, it was damaged by mortar shells that affected its surroundings during the Syrian war, and also because of the construction of towers near it.

The design of the Hammam-al Qarmani with twelve domes follows the general style of the Roman baths that were restored in the Islamic eras, as they consist of three sections:

1. *Al-Barani*, a square-shaped courtyard, surrounded by four Iwans, its roof is covered by a dome containing eight stained glass windows, the dome was decorated with symmetrical floral motifs and drawings of scenes in the city of Damascus, which made it one of the most beautiful domes of the Damascene Hammams;
2. *Al-Wasani* consists of a square-shaped central hall covered with a dome that contains a number of *Qamaris* which are glass openings for the introduction of sunlight into the Hammam. Two Iwans open to the hall;
3. *Al-Jawani*, a hall covered by a dome that contains Qamaris, three Iwans branch out of the hall covered with

barrel-shaped domes contain Qamaris. Each Iwan contains marble jars that fill with water, it also contains a famous jar attributed to Sheikh Al-Qarmani, people used to light candles for him and offer vows.

#### 5. The basic requirement of the proposal

##### Challenges

1. The archaeological Hammam is currently in bad condition, it is neglected, and some of its parts were damaged.
2. Demolishing (Souk Al-Atique) that surrounds the Hammam turned into a neglected park.
3. The Hammam and its surrounding park are shelters for the displaced and homeless people due to the war.
4. The new design plan for the area did not contain the Hammam! It was replaced by three towers, which indicates an intention to demolish it.
5. The proximity of the Hammam to the main transportation stations, made it vulnerable to the entry of vandals.
6. The professions and handicrafts associated with the Damascene Hammams disappeared.
7. The disappearance of the intangible heritage rituals related to the Damascene Hammams.
8. Spreading the culture of Damascene Hammams will increase its value, which will urge the stakeholders such as the governorate of Damascus, the owners and others to preserve and invest in this cultural heritage asset to be a commodity for future.
9. Investing the Hammam in a vital area within the city of Damascus is of great economic importance.

##### Opportunities

1. A magnet for tourism, with the opportunity of using it to raise awareness about Hammam's heritage and cultural importance.
2. An opportunity of reviving Souk with a modern concept.
3. These displaced people are neglected human capital, ready to work to secure their livelihood.
4. The distinctive strategic location of the Hammam in the center of Damascus, and its wide area, within the old, modern and touristic city, makes the investment in it great opportunity for development.
5. The presence of the transportation center station near the Hammam makes it accessible to all society segments.
6. An opportunity to revive and preserve traditional handicrafts.
7. An opportunity to re-devote intangible traditions and rituals associated with entering the Hammam.

#### 6. Hammam Al-Qarmani: a Tool for Building Sustainable Development for the Future of Damascus

The proposal's idea based on the restoration and rehabilitation of the main building of the Hammam to return to its original form, and the investment of the surrounding park



for community development, by transforming them into a community attraction center as a (Cultural Development Institution concerned with the tangible and intangible cultural heritage associated with the Damascene heritage Hammams) through the following steps:

#### *a) Socially*

Attracting displaced and homeless families who resides in the park and surrounding areas of the Hammam in co-operation with NGOs and the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs, by teaching them the following within a handicraft incubators:

1. The traditional crafts associated with the Hammams;
2. Bathing Heritage crafts (natural laurel soap, cotton towels, traditional clothes, natural fibers, handmade rugs, natural treatments for skin care...);
3. Intangible heritage traditions related to the Damascene Hammams.

After being trained and educated, these people will form the first seed to invest in the project, as they practice what they learned in front of the Hammam's visitors and exchange views to explain its heritage importance, while making and selling handmade products, which will be in great demand with the growing demand for handmade and natural products.

#### *b) Architecturally*

1. Restoration of the Hammam building to its original form using original materials, based on its old plans, manuscripts and photographs, and preserving its function as a traditional bath and transforming it into a modern, traditional Damascene health resort.
2. Rehabilitation and designing of the park to contain:
  - a craft incubator that contains ateliers for Hammam handicrafts, in which the displaced make and sell traditional products;

- a hall for training courses about the Hammam's heritage handicrafts, as well as workshops to exchange views and ideas on heritage matters;
- A public square for practicing the Damascene Hammam's intangible heritage rituals.

#### *c) Developmental*

1. Providing a source of livelihood for the displaced, through the establishment of traditional ateliers linked to Hammams, which manufacture and sell their products to the public, moves the economy forward;
2. Investing in a privileged location and a large space for a Hammam of great heritage significance, will turn it into an attraction center with huge economic benefits;
3. Establishing a craft incubator to embrace, teach and market the traditional crafts, until the craftsman becomes independent, with the ability to change the craft according to need;
4. Involving NGOs in the education, training, rehabilitation, and attracting homeless families;
5. Reliance on clean energy in operating the Hammam, which will reduce its operational cost.

#### **7. Expected impact and beneficiaries**

1. This proposal will devote a new vision of investing the heritage assets in Syria by considering them as a (human-material-social-cultural-natural-economic-developmental) capital for future;
2. Involving the displaced in spreading the local culture, and transforming them from dependents to breadwinners, by investing in the inherent capabilities of this marginalized group of people;
3. Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (No poverty, Zero hunger, Clean water and sanitation, Affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic

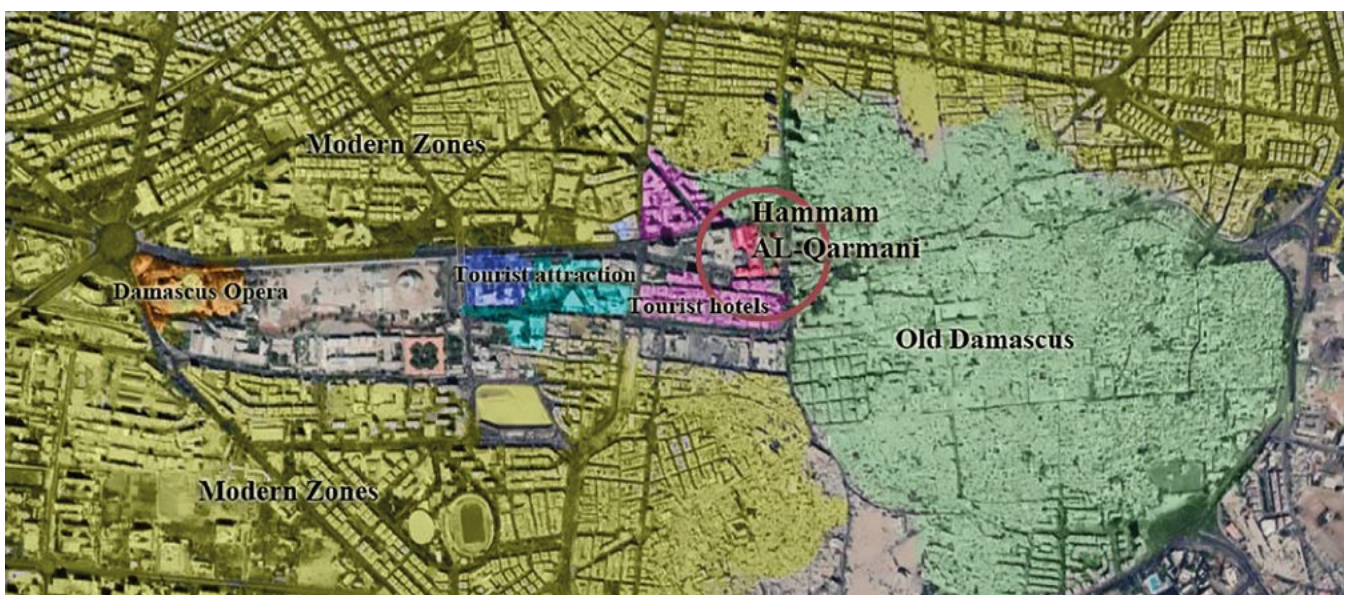


Figure 5. Hammam Al-Qarmani's strategic location. Source: unknown.

growth, industry innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption, partnerships for the Goals);

4. Providing a place, the first of its kind in Syria, for practicing and teaching intangible Damascene cultural heritage;
5. Increasing public awareness of one of the assets of Syrian tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and spreading this culture among the new generation;
6. Reviving a neglected tourist asset, and attracting tourists to taste the Damascene Hammam heritage;
7. Reviving and benefiting from many traditional handicrafts associated with Hammams;
8. Setting a prototype for investing in the Damascene Hammam for community development, which can be applied to the rest of the Syrian Hammams;
9. The project reduces unemployment rate, and thus the disappearance of the homeless in the geographical area surrounding Hammam, which will be reflected in the area's high societal level.

### 8. The project feasibility

The proposal's importance lies in the fact that companies, governmental and private institutions will flock to invest in Hammams, support and participate in its activities for the following reasons:

1. The distinguished location of the Hammam in the center of Damascus makes it an easy-to-reach attraction center for all society segments;
2. The current state of the Hammam does not require much costly repair work, due to the ease of obtaining the local original materials;
3. Medical and pharmaceutical companies will benefit from promoting the application of their natural products inside the Hammam;
4. The Hammam's use of environmentally friendly clean energy makes it cheap to operate with high economic feasibility and sustainability;
5. The high economic viability of the craft incubators, so it is possible to change the incubated crafts according to economic studies;
6. There is no need to attract qualified craftsmen, as the proposal depends on qualifying the workforce and transferring experience through training courses;



Figure 6. Man displaced by war living in the area of Hammam Al-Qarmani. Source: unknown.

7. This project will be the first of its kind in the Middle East that uses the local tangible and intangible heritage to raise the community development and local economy.

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# Conservazione del patrimonio materiale e immateriale oltre le mura del complesso Mevlevi Takkiya ad Aleppo

## *Preservation of the Tangible and Intangible Heritage Behind Walls of the Mevlevi Takkiya Complex in Aleppo*

**GHAITH MAKTABI**

### **Abstract**

*The city of Aleppo is distinguished by its richness and cultural and religious diversity, which gives it a special spirituality that distinguishes it from other countries of the East.*

*When talking about religious spirituality stemming from rituals and the details of following the paths, and what they behave in their daily lives, the Mevlevi Takkaya (Islamic hospices) directly come to mind.*

*One of the most important symbols of the Islamic world is located in Aleppo, which was once the main center of the world's Takkaya (hospices) and it was damaged during the war.*

*The main goals and objectives of this project is to revive the Mevlevi Takkaya complex at all levels that pertain to it, restoring its status and importance to the lovers of the Syrian and Mawlawi heritage. Especially since this complex is currently limited its activities from being a mosque only, while it used to occupy several functions and rituals in the past.*

Ghaith Maktabi, Aleppo, Syria

### **Introduction and the project objective**

“Takkiya” is the Turkish word for “hospice” and “corner”. And the word “Takkiya” itself is ambiguous in origin and contains interpretations. Some of them refer it to the Arabic verb “Itika’a”, meaning recline, lean or depend, especially since the meanings of the word “Takkiya” in Turkish mean reclining or relying on something for comfort and relaxation. Hence the hospice in the sense of a place of rest and “i’tikaaf” The French orientalist Kilman Hawar believes that the word came from the Persian “hospice” meaning flogging, and it is recalled that the sheikhs of the Sufi corners used to make sheepskin or other animals their slogan<sup>1</sup>.

It is a model of charitable architecture, to receive and treat the sick and travelers and serve the poor, or as a shrine or a retreat for the Sufi orders<sup>2</sup>.

The city of Aleppo was greatly damaged in the last war, and there is no doubt that its cultural heritage was damaged. When the conflict stopped in the Old City, I did not hesitate to go there, despite the harshness of the scenes.

The Mevlevi Takkiya, in the Bab al-Faraj area in the old city of Aleppo, has been damaged during the war.

And when I visited it several times, it occurred to me that this place could be revived and the damaged one restored, and the intact stones would be strengthened.

In addition to working on reviving the rituals that were taking place in it, such as the Mevlevi dance and the dhikr and supplication sessions.

Therefore, the aim of the project is to revive the tangible and intangible heritage present in the Mevlevi Takkiya in Aleppo.

### 1. Brief description of the case

The Takiyya al-Mawlawiyya, known today as al-Mula'khana Mosque, is a residence complex for a religious order located to the east of Bab al-Faraj, outside what once were the walls surrounding the old city of Aleppo. The complex derives its name from the Mawlawi (Mevlevi) order of Sufism who trace their spiritual lineage to famous mystic and poet Jalal al-Din Rumi. Its foundation dates to the middle of the sixteenth/tenth century AH, but much of it is a later addition. The complex comprises a cemetery, residential quarters, service areas, and a large sama'-khana (a prayer hall and oratory for Sufi ritual concert, known as sama'). These buildings are arranged around two large courtyards. The main entrance to the complex is on its north side. Two gates lead from the street onto the first courtyard, which occupies the eastern half of the complex<sup>3</sup>.

The westernmost gate is surmounted by a minaret with an octagonal shaft and an arcaded balcony at the summit covered by a dome<sup>4</sup>.

The first courtyard is wider than it is deep. Directly opposite the entrance on its southern side is the large sama'-khana, constructed in the nineteenth/thirteenth century AH. This building is a domed square that rises two stories. On the interior, four large pillars spanned by arches on which the dome rests divide the space into a central domed bay, four rectangular side bays, and four-square corner bays. A mihrab with a muqarnas hood marks the qibla on the structure's southern interior wall. Adjoining the sama'-khana to the east is an open cemetery, forming the remainder of

the southern façade of the courtyard. Occupying the eastern side of the first court is a complex of buildings, including a prayer hall and space for women<sup>5</sup>.

A covered portico on the west side of the first courtyard provides access to the second courtyard that occupies the western side of the complex, which includes a kitchen and residential quarters<sup>6</sup>.

The historian Kamel al-Ghazi described it – between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – by saying: «This hospice is large and has a special endowment for its expenses. The norias on the Queiq River was placed by one of the sheikhs, and it fed the hospice (Takiyya) gardens with the necessary water, and this - no doubt - gave another beauty to the Takkiya from the outside».

The Mevlevi Takayya (hospices) were centers of worship, culture, and arts in the countries in which they were found, as well as schools of different arts, so everyone who wanted to learn something found his demand in it of calligraphy, language, and music, in addition to that, the kitchen in these places used to introduce the culture of forming foods, as well as libraries were Serving book lovers and guest house for tourists and traveling dervishes.

### 2. Identification of the main needs

The need to implement this project is divided into two axes:

1. *Tangible Heritage*: Restoration and consolidation back to the 16th-century site, an Islamic site that was in the past the main center in the world for the Mevlevi Order;
2. *Intangible Heritage*: Reviving the rituals and customs that were included in this place, such as Mawlawi dancing, religious chanting, cultural sessions, and other intangible heritage details that were damaged by the war and we began to lose its mentors.



Figure 1. Entrance to the Mevlevi Takkiya from the outside (for those arriving). Source: author.



Figure 2. Entrance to the Mevlevi Takkiya from the inside (for those leaving). Source: author.

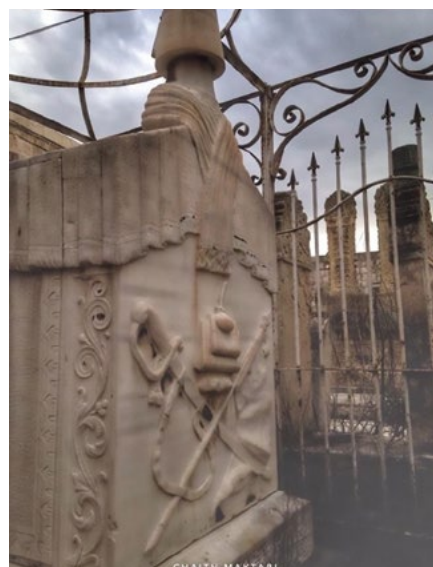


Figure 3. An old tomb rich in beautiful details in the cemetery. Source: author.



Figure 4. General view from the Takkiya Square, showing the damage in the Sama' Khana building, which is located in the depth of the image. Source: author.



Figure 5. A room containing the tomb of the chief calligrapher in the Ottoman Empire. Source: author.

### 3. Proposal

Therefore, the main goals and objectives are to revive this complex at all levels that pertain to it, at which time it will be taken advantage of and restore its status and importance to the lovers of the Syrian and Mawlawi heritage.

Especially since this complex is currently limited its activities from being a mosque only, while it used to occupy several functions and rituals in the past.

#### Briefly goals

1. Restoration and consolidation of the site to preserve it. (Tangible Heritage);
2. Reviving the rituals and activities that were practiced in it. (Intangible Heritage);
3. Reviving the idea of the hospice – Takkiya – kitchen, feeding the needy and teaching cooking to those who want – where there was a kitchen within the hospice (Community Fraternity);
4. Establishing small shops in suitable areas within the complex, to sell souvenirs and handicrafts, related to the religious and Syrian heritage. (Tourism Investment and Support)

### 4. Activities

#### 4.1. Restoration and Consolidation

- Create a team of seasoned workers, specialized engineers, and heritage experts;
- Estimating damages, needs and the mechanism to deal with them;
- Restoration of the Sama' Khana building located within the complex (in which the Mevlevi rituals, prayer and seclusion sessions were practiced, in addition to the educational sessions);

- Restoration and documentation of the cemetery located within the complex (it includes rare archaeological tombs of prominent figures dating back to the Ottoman period, one of whom is the chief calligrapher of the Sultan);
- Restoration of the mosque building located within the complex (which is currently available to visit and pray in it, but it needs attention to restore its luster and spirituality);
- Designing awareness and educational posters and billboards, talking about the monument and its importance, to be putted in several corners within the complex.

#### 4.2. Reviving the rituals

After the restoration of the Sama' Khana building, the followers of the Mevlevi Order who are within the city – they are few – will be encouraged to return to practice, especially since the Mevlevi dance is an immaterial heritage damaged by the war, as many experts of this important religious ritual immigrated or died. Accordingly:

- Providing and restoring the Sama' Khana building;
- Organizing weekly/monthly Mevlevi sessions in the hall (which encourages the interested people and restores attention to the Takkiya hospice to visit it);
- Organizing training sessions for those interested in this traditional religious ritual (this ensures that it continues and does not disappear with time).

#### 4.3. Reviving the idea of the Takkiya kitchen

Hunger is one of the harsh results of the war, and Aleppo, which was one of the richest cities in the East, suffers today from poverty and lack of job opportunities, which led to poverty and hunger for many residents. Accordingly:

- Design a small kitchen similar to the one that existed in the Takkiya hospice in the past;
- Activate it periodically under the supervision of the hospice administration and in coordination with government agencies and funding and operating agencies (the Endowment Directorate, the Interior Directorate, non-governmental organizations, charitable societies...);
- Providing meals to the needy with an organized mechanism of action, which may be permanent or seasonal (depending on the possibility, funding and support);
- Reviving the idea of “teaching cooking” that was practiced in the hospice Takkiya kitchen in the past.

#### 4.4. Establishing shops within the complex

As indicated in the introduction, the Mevlevi Takkiya in Aleppo is a complex that includes a large area, a mosque, Sama' Khanah, a kitchen, a cemetery and others..., that is, it contains empty spaces that can be invested in small traditional shops (from the spirit of the place), especially in the spaces that occupy the outskirts of the entrance to the complex. Accordingly:

- The revival of handicrafts in the area, which was located in the vicinity of the Mevlevi Takkiya;

- Teaching handicrafts (intangible heritage), especially since the experts of these traditional trades are scarce and have begun to become extinct;
- Showing and selling Syrian and religious souvenirs and antiques;
- Add a touch of tourist attraction to the region.

## 5. Expected impact and beneficiaries

### 5.1. General Benefits

- The archaeological and tourism sectors of the city;
- Preservation and revival of a historical landmark of religious and heritage significance;
- Preserving rituals of the intangible heritage, preparing a suitable place for their practice and keeping them for generations.

### 5.2. Direct Benefits

- Religious vocalists, organizers of dhikr sessions and prayers;
- Those who remain who practice the Mevlevi and Dervishes;
- Historians and researchers in the Syrian and Aleppo heritage;
- Organizing activities to feed the poor and needy people;
- Tourists and visitors to Aleppo and Syria;
- Handicrafts and traditional experts.

### 5.3. Impact measurement

- Organizing events, achieving success and attracting people;
- The spread of the Mevlevi dance and the return of its previous glory;
- Coming of Experts to the Takkiya complex to contribute to the preservation of intangible heritage (Mevlevi dance, manual occupations, religious chanting...);
- Opinions of experts and visitors of the complex;
- Success in returning Takkiya Al-Mevlevi Complex to its functions and roles.

## 6. Project Feasibility

Certainly, any project needs a good study before starting it, and the most important constraints that hinder the success of this project are *Government Approvals* and *Adequate Funding*. However, they are not difficult restrictions to overcome, as it is certainly currently the government agencies in Syria encourage and support projects, especially those concerned with restoration and reconstruction.

Accordingly, a letter must be submitted to the concerned authorities to obtain approvals and moral and logistical support, such as Directorate of Endowments, Directorate of Antiquities, Tourism Directorate, and the restoration committee of the Engineers Syndicate.

With regard to “adequate financing”, the good thing about the idea of this project is that it is flexible within the implementation mechanism, meaning that if there is little funding, there is the ability to reduce some project activities or implement them through the available resources.

One of the most important strengths and opportunities of this project is the possibility of obtaining financial and moral support from non-governmental organizations, and civil and charitable societies.

Due to the proliferation of international and local organizations and societies in Syria, which contribute to supporting the restoration and development processes in addition to contributing to the financing of youth projects and ideas.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hawar, Kilman, *The Book of Beginning and History by Al-Mutahhar bin Taher Al-Maqdisi attributed to Abu Zaid Ahmad bin Sahl Al-Balkhi*, Chalon edition, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> An article containing a definition of the meaning of “Takkiya”, Anadolu Agency website (إلى أين نؤم.. فراقنا إلى أين نؤم) “اي الفتل” (روصم ريرقت) ين امدت ع قش ع اي الكح “قلبس آل” و (aa.com.tr).

<sup>3</sup> Al-Jasir, Lamyā, *Dur al-mutaṣawwifa fi madinat Ḥalab. al-khanqabat wa'l-rubūṭ wa'l- zawaya wa'l-takaya*, L. al-Jasir, Aleppo 2008, pp. 330-348.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.