

## II. Papers

# Towards a Socio-Political History of Archaeology in the Middle East: The Development of Archaeological Practice and Its Impacts on Local Communities in Syria

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### Introduction

No longer is Archaeology regarded as a neutral or a purely scientific discipline, but as a process influenced by the aims of its practitioners, who are, in turn, deeply affected by contemporary intellectual, social and political agendas. As well, research undertaken on archaeological practice in non-western settings, that is closely related to colonial issues, has highlighted how archaeology could be a tool of scientific, cultural, political and socio-economic domination (e.g. Diaz-Andreu 2007; Kane 2003; Silberman 1989; Trigger 1984).

Indeed, in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, the past has been deployed by Western archaeologists to construct the non-West, to forge a cultural lineage to the West, and to separate opposing identities (Meskell 1998; Silberman 1989). Moreover and in spite of the decolonization process, for many scholars archaeology remains the ‘stepchild’ of imperialism (Baharani 1998).

However, the processes involved in the nationalisation of archaeology that took place in Middle Eastern countries that became politically independent after the Second World War challenge this idea. It is within this framework, that this paper addresses the socio-politics of archaeological excavations in Syria from the beginning of the twentieth century until today. It analyses the different stakeholders and perceptions associated with archaeology as a modern discipline, and considers whether this socio-political history defines the nature of archaeology, either as a colonialist and imperialist practice, a nationalistic and indigenous practice, or as a ‘hybrid’ practice. To sum up in the words of Y. Hamilakis (2008), who considers that modern Greek archaeology was produced in a ‘syncretic process where a peculiar, official, modernist archaeology replaced a series of indigenous, alternative, pre-modern archaeologies’, this paper questions the current point of view of many socio-political and colonial studies, that archaeology is only a tool of domination with no popular basis. It demonstrates, to the contrary, archaeology’s multivocality, through the analysis of archaeological accounts, interviews and participant observations carried out on several archaeological sites in Syria, particularly in Afamia, Bosra and Palmyra, which are part of a Classical, Greco-Roman and Byzantine, heritage (Gillot 2008).

The first part of this paper comprises an historical overview of the development of archaeology in Syria by identifying its external and internal factors. This part addresses the emergence of ‘foreign’ and ‘local’ archaeologies in Syria under the French Mandate and since the independence of the country in 1948. The second part of this paper deals with the sociology of the archaeological discipline in Syria and analyses the organization of archaeological excavations from the beginning of the twentieth century. It also appraises the influence of foreign archaeologists on the development of

local settings, both with regard to the jobs created by archaeological activities, and the interactions and mutual perceptions of archaeologists and local communities. In conclusion, the paper discusses the nature of Syrian archaeology as a colonial, national or 'hybrid' practice.

## The Development of Archaeology in Syria: Stakes and Prospects

Syria constitutes a case study, both specific and representative, of the history of archaeology in the Middle East, which is linked to the rediscovery of the Ancient East by Western historians, diplomats and missionaries, since the AD sixteenth century. Currently, Syrian archaeology comprises a dynamic field of research, largely nourished by the work of Western archaeologists. Syrian authorities thus proclaim Syria as the 'number one' of archaeological excavations and discoveries in the region (Bounni 1997: 109), due both to the number of missions present on their territory, and to the relevance of their discoveries for historic knowledge. Nevertheless, Syria has not always had the reputation of being 'an archaeologists' heaven'. Indeed, the interests of the first archaeologists in the Middle East focused on the Biblical, Mesopotamian and Pharaonic sites of neighbouring countries. Nevertheless by the end of the nineteenth century, some archaeological campaigns were undertaken at Classical period cities (Palmyra, Qala'at Semaan), as well as at the Bronze Age sites of Carchemish and Tell Halaf in Northern Syria (Bounni 1997; Chevalier 2002).

## The Colonial Period: Archaeology under the French Mandate (1918–1945)

As in other Middle Eastern countries (Meskell 1998; Silberman 1989), the development of archaeological research in Syria was connected, during the French Mandate period, to political stakes, and to the constitution of an archaeological and monumental heritage ('*athâr*' in Arabic) and defined according to its historic, political and aesthetic values (Gillot 2008). Archaeological research became a priority within the framework of colonial assistance provided by the French authorities, which created the *Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie islamique* (Islamic Institute of Art and Archaeology) in 1918, ancestor of the *Institut français des Études Arabes de Damas* (French Institute of Arabic Studies of Damascus) established in 1930. The *Service des Antiquités* (Department of Antiquities) and the *Mission archéologique permanente* (Standing Archaeological Commission) were also set up in 1919 (Gelin 2002; Chevalier 2002).

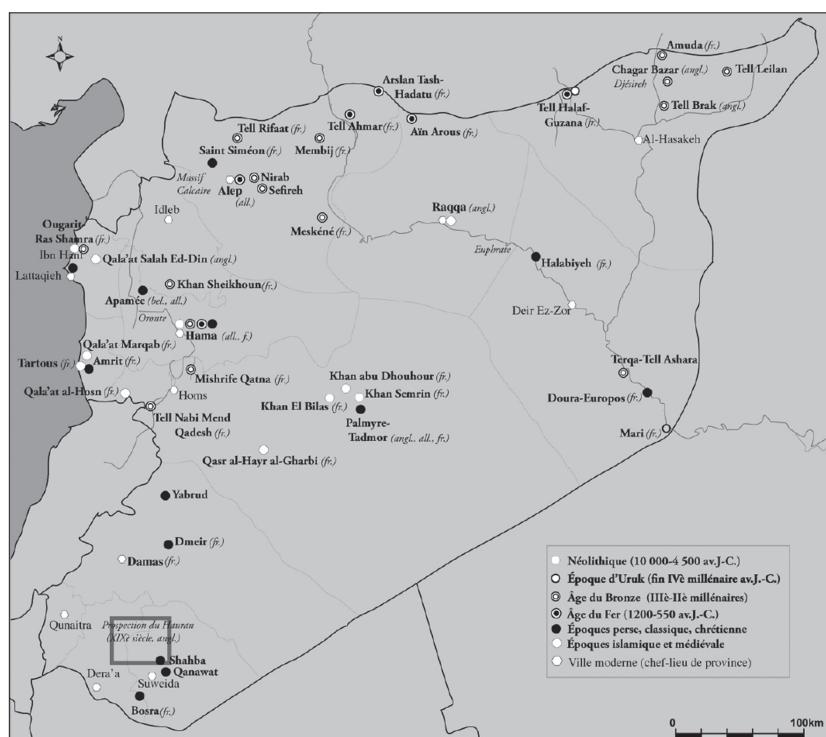


Figure 1. Archaeology under the French Mandate (Gillot 2008).

France consequently benefited from the sharing of antiquities and facilitated the restart of excavations begun before the First World War, that were, however, based on new archaeological approaches, such as the survey of the Syrian mounds of the Middle-Euphrates. New excavations were opened at Palmyra, Mari and Ugarit, testimony to the interest in Classical Antiquity and Phoenicia. These enterprises remained hazardous and for strategic and political reasons, the excavations were led by, or were under the supervision of, French officials because of the political instability of the region. In the 1930s, more scientifically based programs were developed under individuals such as Claude Schaeffer (1898–1982), Maurice Dunand (1898–1987) and André Parrot (1901–1981), who contributed to the forging of a paternalist and colonial image of archaeologists (Gelin 2002; Al-Maqdissi 2008). However Syrian archaeology remained a marginalized field of studies in comparison with the archaeology of other Middle Eastern countries.

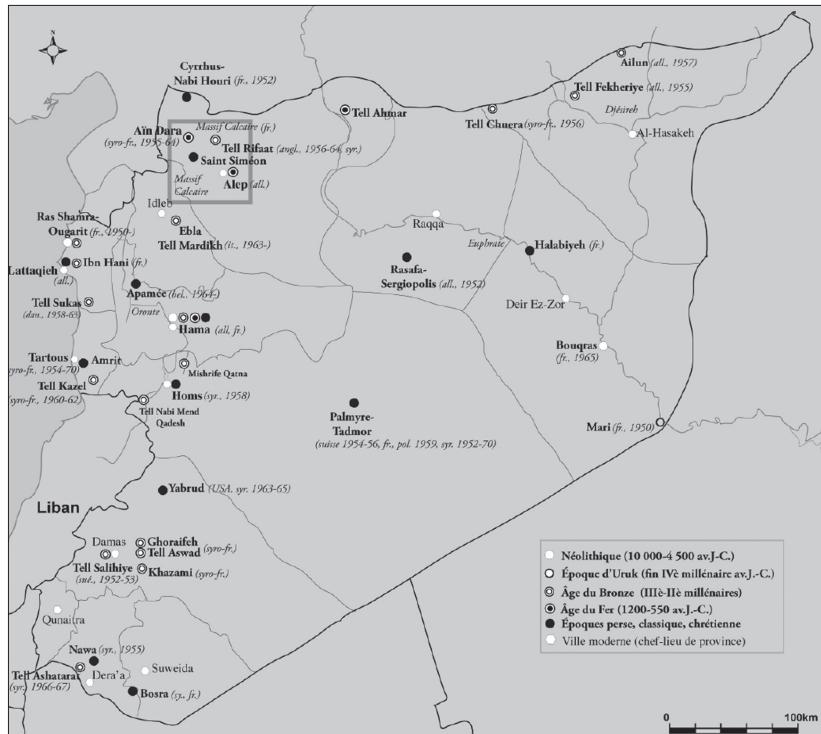
In those days, archaeology as a modern science, could be described as a colonial discipline, imported and led by foreigners with a view to justifying the French presence by investigating the roots of Western civilisation, and also intended to know and control the ‘Other’, by investigating and dividing the different identities. As for the attitude of ‘Syrian’ society, in particular of local populations, towards archaeology and antiquities, it is difficult to assess whether archaeology was perceived as only a colonial and imperialist practice. Agatha Christie’s novel (1946), recounting her experience of excavations with Max Mallowan in Syria, to the contrary indicates that the development of archaeological excavations gradually facilitated an economic relationship, either in the form of salaries and *bakhsheesh* related to archaeological work, or to the trafficking of antiquities. Also, the presence of the foreign archaeological missions seemed to have made the Syrian elites and local workers progressively aware of the territory’s ancient history, but we cannot ignore the fact that this awareness could have existed well before their interactions with archaeology. What remains difficult to assess is whether archaeological remains were perceived by these groups of people as their heritage (‘*turâth*’ in Arabic).

### The Nationalisation of Archaeology (1948–1980s)

After political independence successive Syrian regimes attempted to identify, protect and emphasize a national heritage (*athâr*) as defined by its national, historic or aesthetic value (*Syrian Law of Antiquities*, Chapter 1, art. 1). The renewal and reorganization of the bureaucratic structures founded under the French Mandate were part of a process aiming at developing a national and independent archaeology. Arab people thus staffed the *Service des Antiquités*, the ancestor of the *General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums* funded in 1959 (GDAM). The creation of a bilingual journal *Les Annales archéologiques syriennes* (*Syrian Archaeological Annals*) and the development of the national museums of Damascus and Aleppo also stimulated the development of a national archaeology, under personalities such as Salim ‘Abd al-Haqq and Adnan al-Bunni.

In addition, Syrian Antiquities Law (*Qânûn al-‘athâr*) adopted in 1963, laid down the rights and duties of archaeological missions. From 1963 on, archaeological excavations were subject to a licence which could only be granted by the antiquities authorities. This special licence is granted on the basis of the scientific and financial capacities of the applicants (*Syrian Law of Antiquities*, Chapter 4, art. 42 to 44). The law also laid down the rules applicable to the archaeologists, such as: the obligation to return all the discoveries to Syrian authorities and to publish their research; to protect and maintain the sites they were excavating; to cooperate and accept the presence of a representative of the GDAM; and finally, to pay the salaries of guards (*Syrian Law of Antiquities*, Chapter 4, art. 46, 47 and 51)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Under the law, antiquities (*athâr*) means all the movable and immovable properties, alienable and inalienable, which man had built or made more than two hundred years ago (before the end of the 18th century). The more recent possessions can be registered and can benefit from protection if the Antiquities Authorities (GDAM) recognize them as of exceptional historic, artistic or national value (*Syrian Law of Antiquities*, chap. 1, art. 1 and 3). However, the immaterial heritage (*turâth*) still does not enjoy legal recognition and protection. The



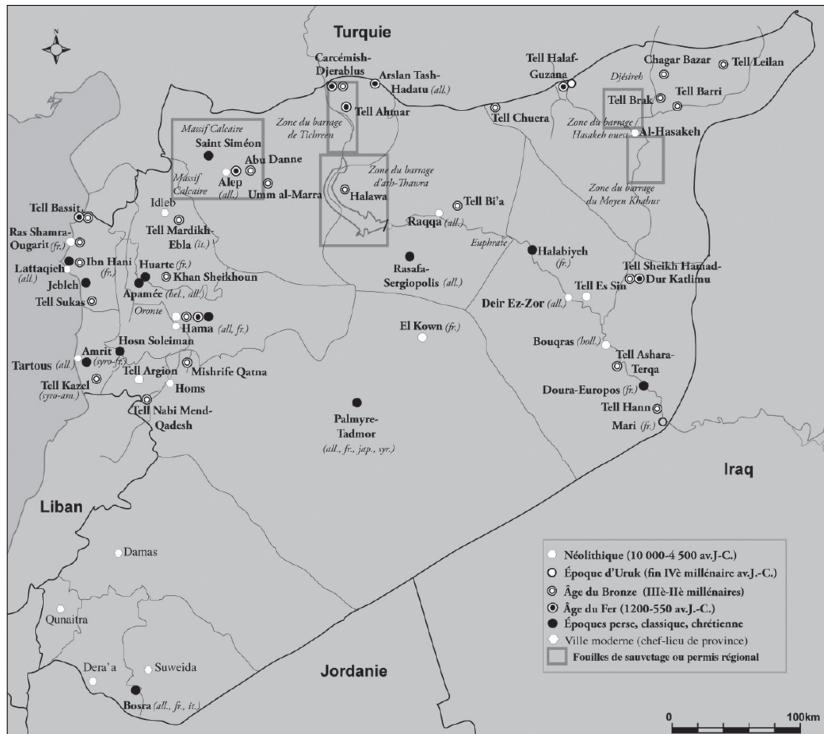
**Figure 2.** Archaeological excavations from political independence until the late 1960s (Gillot 2008).

Also, the training of Syrian national archaeologists was improved through academic courses in the Universities of Damascus and Aleppo. These heritage protection measures were also supplemented by the total or partial expatriation or exclusion of local populations who either occupied or exploited the archaeological sites. Consequently, the opposition of populations towards the conservation of archaeological sites seemed to grow in accordance with the implementation of a strict system of penalties.

The expansion of archaeology itself began at the end of the 1960s. The excavations at Ebla, restarted under a long-term program of research on urban development, were an important turning point in Syrian national archaeology, corresponding with the end of the previous and hazardous ventures at the site. In 1974, the discovery of the archives of Ebla focused the world's attention on Syria, which then became one of the most attractive countries for archaeological research. Subsequently, archaeological research developed during the UNESCO international campaigns to salvage the sites of the Middle-Euphrates, threatened by the construction of the ath-Thawra dam in 1968, and the Tishrin dam in the region of the river Khabur in 1982. Joint archaeological research projects contributed to the strengthening of cooperation between foreign and national archaeological teams, and to a better understanding of Sumerian antiquity. Syrian government authorities acknowledged that town and country planning had to be accompanied by heritage management and protection measures.

The process of public and national appropriation of archaeology became even stronger after Hafez al-Assad and the Alawis minority seized power in 1970–71. Archaeology and history participated in the legitimization of the new power regime, and the construction of an Arab and multicultural identity superseded local particularities. The secular character of the Syrian state, and social and territorial fragmentation, led the Alawis minority holding power to define the national identity using elements other than religious or ethnic considerations (Valter 2002). Archaeology and history

classification and the protection of antiquities are decided and confirmed by presidential and ministerial decrees (*Syrian Law of Antiquities*, chap. 1, art. 2 to 4). Any site, monument or object registered as ‘athâr’ is thus considered as preserved for the good of the public but without abolishing the private property over the land (*Syrian Law of Antiquities*, chap. 1, art. 4).



**Figure 3.** Archaeological excavations during the 1970s and 1980s (Gillot 2008).

also served in justifying territorial claims, guided by the idea of an 'historical Syria', the cradle and crossroads of civilizations, and covering Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. In recognition of this the President registered the protection of antiquities in the Syrian Constitution in 1972.

At the same time, the work of foreign archaeological researchers and institutions also participated in the construction of a 'world' heritage. Indeed, even though Syrian national archaeological research had grown and developed, most of the research was undertaken by foreigners. The recognition and hard work provided by Syrian institutions for the registration of sites onto the UNESCO World Heritage List contributed to strengthening the role of foreign experts in the definition and management of archaeological heritage, as well as to acknowledging the universal value of national heritage. Finally, under the influence of a flourishing trade in antiquities in Europe and America, the plundering of sites and illegal excavations intensified, which put pressure on Syrian government authorities to foster archaeological collaborations at an international level.

At that time, there were three types of approaches towards archaeology and archaeological remains: for foreign archaeologists, archaeological remains were considered as cognitive resources and as a universal heritage; for Syrian authorities and the Alawis regime, they were national heritage (and to a lesser extent world heritage) and tools of legitimization; for international institutions, such as UNESCO, archaeological remains were sources of information and of collective memory, not even of national importance, but primarily of universal significance. Finally, for Syrian society, archaeological remains had economic and cultural values, but the appropriation of them as part of an 'official' history, and their recognition as part of their national identity, varied from community to community.

### Intensification, Internationalisation and Commodification of Archaeological Research

The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by the intensification and the diversification of archaeological research, in a political context that became more and more favourable to the presence of foreign archaeological missions, whose numbers were estimated at 86 in 1996 (Bounni 1997). At present in 2010, there are 120 archaeological teams active in Syria (Gillot 2008).

One reason for this development was the increasing difficulties that Mesopotamian archaeologists

were encountering working in Iraq, as a result of the Gulf wars and the political insecurity of the region. Another reason was the more severe attitude of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities towards foreign archaeologists. Also, new approaches to archaeology were gradually emerging, in particular archaeologists were beginning to think hard about their impact on, and their relationships with, Syrian national and local stakeholders. The traditional model of 'colonial' excavation was gradually being challenged, and was giving way to other approaches that privilege the involvement of local communities (Pollock and Bernbeck 2004: 41–44). In addition the GDAM was endeavouring to improve Syrian national research in archaeology within the framework of joint archaeological projects and teams, and with European training programs. Finally, this evolution came along with a growing Syrian national and local interest in heritage protection and tourism development.

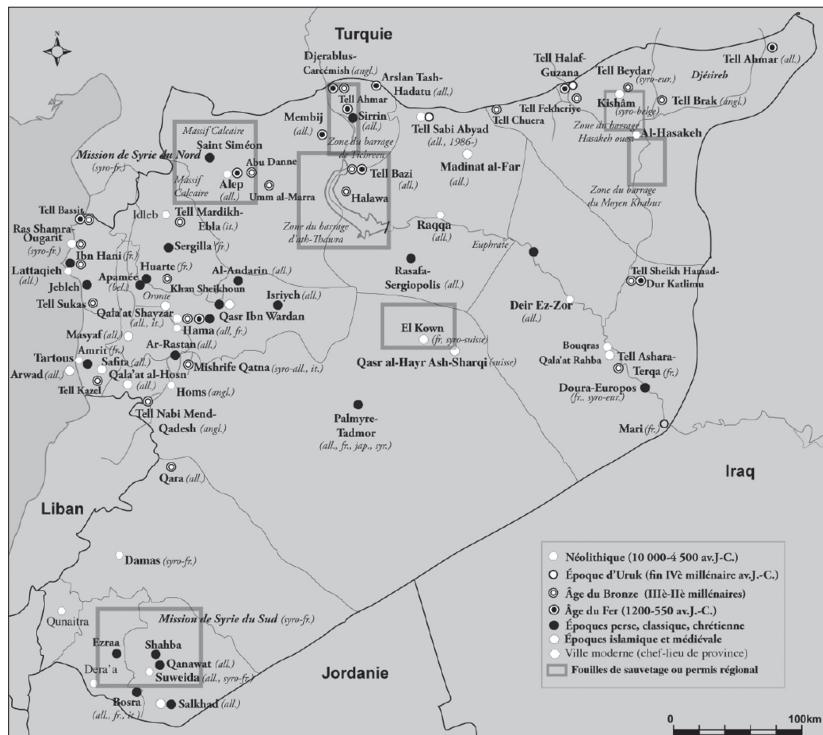


Figure 4. Syrian archaeology since the 1990s (Gillot 2008).

To sum up, the monopoly exercised by institutions and scientists on archaeological research and management went along with the minimal involvement of Syrian private cultural and tourist groups (represented by the Sunni and Christian elites) and civil society until the 1990s (Gillot 2008)<sup>2</sup>. On the one hand, these groups are still considered to be intruders and not stakeholders, and their activities are still regarded as a threat to heritage conservation. On the other hand, the recognition and tolerance of alternative views about heritage (other than the official and archaeological one) remains low. Consequently, archaeology is, at the same time, regarded by Syrian society as a tool of cultural imperialism by the European and Western countries, and as an instrument in the service of the Syrian regime, as part of the imposition of an official national memory and identity. These negative perceptions are illustrated by various behaviours, such as the refusal to acknowledge a national heritage, the plunder of archaeological sites, or indifference towards their preservation. More rarely, these attitudes may result in opposition to the presence of foreign archaeologists. However, these negative perceptions are counterbalanced by more positive ones, and some local communities do appropriate, in their own certain way, the historical and cultural values associated with archaeological remains.

<sup>2</sup> From the 1990s, the opening of the State to international tourism and to a 'social market economy' and the limited liberalisation and democratisation of the State under Bashar Al-Assad, has led to a progressive involvement of civil society in cultural matters (Gillot 2008).

## **The Sociology of Archaeology in Syria and the Impact of Excavations: The Role of Archaeologists, National Institutions and Local Communities**

Archaeological research in Syria is led by a set of national and foreign individuals. Archaeological projects conducted under the auspices of universities and research institutes are classified into three distinct categories: foreign missions representing the majority of archaeological projects operating in Syria, national missions representing the minority of archaeological missions operating in Syria, and joint missions, consisting of Syrian and foreign archaeologists and co-directed by a Syrian and a foreign director. In addition, foreign research institutes are important participants who coordinate the work of archaeological missions. These were founded shortly after Syrian political independence in order to foster international collaboration and to ensure the continuity of the European and American archaeological research in the Middle East<sup>3</sup>. In spite of the increase in jointly managed projects, the majority of archaeological scientific production emanates from foreign missions, which possess both the scientific and technical knowledge and the funds necessary to manage research, excavation and publication of it.

Nevertheless, there are also many local alternatives to foreign interpretations of Syrian archaeology and heritage, that emanate from Syrian historians, the GDAM and the Ministry of Tourism. In fact, while foreign archaeological missions feel they are subjected to many pressures and manipulations, they also seem to enjoy some autonomy according to the nature of their relations with Syrian authorities.

There are also a number of public and institutional authorities, at national and international levels, involved in the research and management of archaeological heritage. National authorities are represented in the Antiquities Council, the supreme decision-making body handling all the matters related to the protection and excavation of antiquities and sites. The Council includes representatives from the Syrian Ministry of Culture, and the GDAM, representatives from the government and municipalities, representatives from the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Religious Endowments (*Awqâfs*), the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Higher Education, representatives from the engineers' union, and from the committees of protection of historic centres, and finally, the President and representatives of the Baath party. In addition, the GDAM is the primary authority responsible for monuments, sites and museums under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Its role is to record, study and protect archaeological and historic sites and remains, as well as to collect and disseminate information about their role.

Interviews with national institutions (Gillot 2008) identified two main trends. On the one hand, the Syrian political regime and its institutions are split between two different conceptions of the values and functions of archaeological sites and remains. The Ministry of Culture (GDAM) regards the quality of scientific, national, historic and educational information archaeological sites and remains can provide as more important than their use as a tourism and economic resource, which is regarded as important by the Ministry of Tourism and the local municipalities. Collaboration between these two ministries is only recent and there are still disagreements between them regarding the management of antiquities. Although the protection and restoration work of sites and antiquities are ensured by the GDAM, the organization of festivals and the tourism development of archaeological sites is the responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism. From our interviews it can be deduced that heritage and tourism authorities do not really communicate with each other or work together. On the other hand, there is a more discrete conflict between central authorities and regional and local authorities, particularly with respect to the choice of heritage sites selected and valued and promoted. In addition, local authorities consider that the intervention of central institutions is either restrictive or insufficient.

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<sup>3</sup> Among the most important, are the *Institut français du Proche-Orient* (formerly *Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie Islamique de Damas*), the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*, the Dutch Institute of Archaeology, the Danish Institute of Archaeology and the Cervantes Institute.

Finally, Syrian society is involved in archaeology in two different ways. First of all, the Syrian intellectual and urban elite, as members of archaeological societies and heritage associations, generally associates antiquities (*athâr*) with heritage (*turâth*) and considers that the protection of archaeological remains is a duty and a responsibility which lies both with citizens and government. They are highly interested in archaeological excavations, which they support through local archaeological and historic societies (founded in the 1960s). While this is the attitude in Syria, in Jordan the distinction between *athâr* and *turâth* is still present, both in the law and in the society (Jacobs and Porter 2009). This testifies to the diversity of perceptions of archaeology and archaeological remains in Middle Eastern countries. Secondly, local communities represent a heterogeneous category<sup>4</sup>. As users of archaeological sites and their environment, they engage in different activities on and around archaeological sites, regarded as work (farming, pasture, archaeological digs, traffic of antiquities) or leisure (walks and picnics, festivals, cultural visits). Some people among local populations may participate as part of the workforce in archaeological excavations and restoration works. These represent interesting activities, which secure well-paid seasonal and temporary employment and, as the number of posts is limited, are subject to fierce competition between local people.

The local use of archaeological space is often in conflict with archaeological research activities and protection measures, in such a way that local populations are perceived, by institutions and archaeologists, as a threat to the knowledge and protection of archaeological sites. Therefore, local populations are usually excluded, or access is limited by private ownership. These measures can lead, in some cases, to misunderstanding and strong opposition towards archaeological research and conservation procedures. Some scholars consider, therefore, that archaeological research and archaeological heritage are somehow unfamiliar or external to Arab and Muslim societies (e.g. Huot 2008; Loosley 2005). However, the situation is more complex.

### **Fieldwork Organisation and the ‘Colonial’ legacy**

Although it is not the only research activity, excavation is considered as the most distinctive practice of the archaeological profession. Excavation gives researchers and local populations an opportunity to interact. In Syria, archaeological projects generally comprise a team of scientists, either Syrians or foreigners, and teams of workers, recruited locally. The organization of fieldwork is basically the same at all Syrian sites. After prospecting and selecting the site to be investigated, the first step consists of obtaining a licence from the authorities, through the presentation of an application file which specifies the identity and the qualifications of its members, the limits of the site to be excavated, as well as the program and duration of the project. After licence approval, the next step is to find accommodation for members of the research teams, and a storage place for discoveries. If necessary, the archaeological team may commission the building of a house or the rental of one. Within this framework, agreements are concluded with the notable members (*sheikhs*) of the local community. Then, the project’s field director will ask the foreman to propose workers for the site, based on his recruitment list that he has established, based on the qualifications of the workers or their interpersonal affinities. The foreman is someone the field director can trust, who looks after the site and the house and who is the link between foreign archaeologists and local workers. He generally enjoys a higher position in the community due to his authority. Foremen are selected at the beginning of a dig and usually stay in the role as long as the excavation lasts. The function is generally passed on from father to son.

A team of workers comprises three or four men, performing three types of functions: the pick-man, the ‘shoveller’ and the basket-man. This organization is very hierarchical, to the extent that, in addition to the salary, a reward system (*baksheesh*) is established for particular discoveries. The pick-man therefore possesses an advantage over his two teammates given that he is the first one to

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<sup>4</sup> The term ‘local communities’, is more neutral than ‘Indigenous communities’, and refers to the current localization of people who live nearby archaeological sites. These people could be, but are not necessarily, ‘Native’ or ‘Descendant’ communities, and may have settled recently or not in the region.

interfere with the site and to see any artefact. This system also allows for the empowerment of teams and hopefully discourages them from stealing the objects discovered. Salaries and *baksheesh* can be paid daily, weekly or monthly. Finally, a typical day of excavation starts at sunrise and ends before the warmest hours of the afternoon, or at sunset.

This organisation is inherited from the 'Colonial' model introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century by British, French and German excavators. This system is well known thanks to the accounts of Leonard Woolley, Max Mallowan and Agatha Christie, who wrote about the excavations at Carcemish, Ur, Chagar Bazar and Tell Brak. Woolley's (1932), Mallowan's (1977) and Christie's (1946) accounts provide details about the traditional conduct of excavations, the composition of teams of workers, as well as the role of the foreman. They testify that the discoveries made by local workers not only brought them money but also considerable personal prestige:

There is another way in which the high spirits of our workmen can be turned to good account. The whole gang is divided into companies of four, consisting of a pick-man, a shoveller and two basket-men who carry the loose earth from the diggings to the light railway, which transports it clear of the work and dumps it in the river. All these are paid alike, but there is a great emulation for the post of pick-man, for he has on the whole the easiest job, and also has far the best chance of finding antiquities and thereby earning baksheesh and honour. (Woolley 1932: 129)

During the excavations we employed 200–250 men, sometimes less, sometimes more. They worked for us from sunrise to sunset with an interval of half an hour for breakfast and an hour for luncheon. It was a strenuous day's work for which they were paid at the rate of one rupee, the equivalent of about eighteen pence. In addition, bakshish, that is tips, were awarded for all small finds as an encouragement to them to keep their eyes open. The gangs consisted of a pickman, a spademan and four, five or six basketmen according to the distance which the soil had to be carried. ... The Arab tribesmen were desperately poor and lived next door to starvation. ... They were controlled by our foreman, an elderly father, Hamoudi Ibn Sheikh Ibrahim from Jerablus in North Syria who had worked for Woolley for many years at Carcemish before coming to Ur, and brought with him three sons. I can still see the old man, Hamoudi, perched like a great eagle on the side of a cliff, exhorting and encouraging the men, prevailing over them by a mixture of threats, invective and sarcasm. In the course of four or five years an esprit de corps had developed, as it always will, if men are well led, bound by a common purpose and made to feel a sense of pride in their work ... (Mallowan 1977: 42–43)

'Nowadays,' says Hamoudi, 'payment is not made in gold. Nevertheless the Khwaja is extremely generous. Moreover, in all probability the Khwaja will build a house here – a house of such beauty and grandeur that it will be mentioned far and wide. What prestige will that house of the excavation not confer upon the Sheikh?' (Christie 1946: 70)

Woolley also insisted on the commitment of British archaeologists with respect to local matters, especially with regard to the personal relationship they developed with populations. He opposed and compared German attitudes to those of the British:

The fact was that the German engineers at Jerablus were not capable of managing natives: they neither understood nor tried to understand them, and would not even trouble to see that they received just treatment. Employing as they did large numbers of workmen – far more than we had on our excavations – they could not be expected to cultivate those personal relations that we always encouraged with our men ... (Woolley 1932: 110–111)

Finally Agatha Christie's account (1946) tells us about the relationship between archaeologists and local communities and the socio-economic impact of excavations. The foreign archaeologist is depicted as a paternalistic figure, and the presence of an archaeological mission is regarded as providential. At the same time, populations are infantilized:

'See how fortunate you are!' he (Abd es Salaam) shouts, waving his arms. ... 'Immense wages are paid to you – yes, whether you find anything or nothing that money is paid to you! What generosity, what nobility! And that is not all! In addition to these wages, further money is paid to you! Like a

father the Khwaja watches over you, he keeps you even from doing each other bodily harm! If you are ill with fever, he gives you medicine of first-class power! How happy, how fortunate is your lot! And yet further generosity! Does he leave you to work thirsty? Does he make you provide your own water to drink? No! No, indeed! Though under no obligation, freely, in his great generosity, he brings water for you to the mound, all the way from the Jaghjagha! Water brought at vast expense in a cart drawn by a horse! Think of the expense, of the outlay! What wonderful good fortune is yours to be employed by such a man!" (Christie 1946: 151–152)

To sum up, archaeological research in Syria is still organized following the Colonial model, although the paternalistic attitude of archaeologists seems less. In addition, the commitment of archaeologists to local matters varies depending on the nationality of the missions. British archaeologists are particularly concerned with their impact on local settings, as their personal accounts show, while French archaeologists do not generally express any views about it.

### The Impact of Archaeological Excavations on Local Settings

First of all, the economic impact *in situ* of excavations and restoration works can be estimated in terms of local job creation. Indeed these activities offer opportunities of seasonal jobs creation, and the wages paid can be superior to the local and average salary in agriculture or industry. For example, in Afamia (North-Western Syria), the archaeological mission employs between 30 and 50 workers for an average duration of 6 weeks. Salaries paid to the workers are two or three times higher than those paid in the Syrian public sector, industry and agriculture. The daily salary amounts to 200–250 Syrian pounds, i.e. 3 € at the exchange rate in 2008 (Gillot 2008). Since 2004, the workers benefit from a sixth day of work, which is paid double the daily wage. The weekly salary thus amounts to 2000 LS, or 33 €. A man working continuously during these 6 weeks earns approximately 12,000 LS, or 200 €. In monthly terms, a worker thus earns 8400 LS, approximately 130 €. As a comparison, the legal minimum wage is at present 5880 LS a month, or 87 €. Working conditions can vary from one mission to another but generally, the appreciation of the workers is positive. Nevertheless, because of its temporary character, archaeological employment is only regarded as an extra or additional activity to the main job. A person will therefore share their working day between the excavation and its exploitation or business or its post in the administration.

Secondly, the socio-cultural impacts of archaeological excavations on local settings can be estimated in terms of interactions between archaeologists and local populations. On the one hand, from the beginning of the twentieth century, and despite the colonial and imperialist context in which they worked, archaeologists seem to have had personal relations with native populations and have contributed to the improvement of the social, cultural and economic conditions of the latter (Matthews 2003). This is still the case today. In fact, foreign archaeologists usually try to learn some Arabic words to communicate with local populations and some of them organize public talks or contribute to the improvement of local conditions. Archaeologists generally have an impact on the local populations interest in history, particularly when the excavations are long-term research programs where the involvement of local workers turns them into mediators between archaeologists and other members of the community. Additionally excavations can foster mutual exchanges between archaeologists and local populations, who can help archaeologists with the interpretation of remains with their own knowledge and local memory (toponymy, technical know-how, etc.). However, local populations are far from being involved in the interpretation process and are still regarded as 'passive'.

On the other hand, the attitudes of local populations are often friendly towards foreign archaeologists, because archaeological digs bring opportunities in terms of employment and enable local populations to extend their knowledge of archaeological remains. Local populations actually visit archaeological digs whenever there are particular discoveries or in order to attend festivals (to display traditional Bedouin customs or celebrate important historical events). Their interest is also stimulated by local school visits, which encourage pupils to return with their family. If hostile behaviours are rare, the appraisal of the foreign archaeologists' attitudes vary according to communities and regions (Loosely

2005). For example, Christian populations and Alawis communities seem more favourable towards the presence of the western archaeologists (in particular women archaeologists) than Sunni populations, who disapprove of some attitudes (alcohol consumption, clothing, shared accommodation etc.). Phenomena of resistance, even opposition, can thus appear, particularly when the excavations clash with local activities. The variable intensity of archaeological research can also engender contradictory perceptions. Finally, some people do not necessarily understand or share the interest in archaeological research and consider that the funds dedicated to the study or restoration of sites are disproportionate to local more fundamental necessities.

Nevertheless, contrary to the idea of the externality of archaeological heritage to Syrian communities expressed above, and following the results of interviews in Syria, it can be argued that local populations do appropriate, in their own way, the history established by foreigners and/or Syrian experts. They also do recognise the cultural values of archaeological remains, considering them as part of their history and formation of their identity, even in the case of the remains from a distant past or a different culture. What differs is the criteria of recognition of archaeological remains as heritage (*turâth*), which may diverge from the more widely accepted or nationalist aesthetic, historical and national values recognised by Syrian Antiquities Law (Gillot 2008). Finally, while the socio-economic and cultural impact of archaeological excavations exist, they are occasional and even limited. In the absence of real programs of collaborative research, archaeological excavations do not generally offer real opportunities to give responsibilities to, and involve, local populations in the interpretation and presentation of the past.

## Conclusion

This socio-cultural history of archaeological practices in Syria allows us to reconsider some of the interpretations promoted in socio-political and colonial studies about archaeology (e.g. Diaz-Andreu 2007; Meskell 1998; Silberman 1989; Trigger 1984). In these studies ‘colonial archaeology’, developed in non-western settings, is defined as a practice linked to one of the most powerful strategies deployed by imperialism, that of surveillance, observation or spying. Within this framework, foreign archaeologists are considered as observers, who help to objectify the ‘Other’ through an analysis of the past. This idea is largely promoted in the studies on archaeology in the Middle East, mainly regarded as an expression of imperialism by Western powers in the Orient. As Larsen (1989: 239) points out: ‘the role of orientalist attitudes in the development of the archaeological traditions in the area was much more subtly pervasive, and it shaped the priorities involved in the work, as well as the understanding of the finds’. On the contrary, post-colonial studies (Hamilakis 2008; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008) have started to produce critiques that are opening up completely new perspectives to previous accounts. Indeed this research suggests the existence of alternative histories and phenomena of ‘resistance’ to the Western archaeological understanding of the past and witnesses the colonized voice and interpretation of the past, either in colonial or post-colonial periods.

This history of archaeology in Syria reflects these debates. Firstly, associated with the exercise of colonial power, archaeology became a national matter after political independence, and more recently, it became a socio-economic matter, with the development of tourism policies. Archaeology in Syria has thus been bound to scientific, socio-political and economic stakes from the beginning of the twentieth century. The modern practice of archaeology was imported by colonial powers, in particular by the French Mandate authorities, as well as by foreign institutions and archaeologists from Britain, Germany, Belgium, etc. If this heritage is still present, in terms of the legal apparatus, the origins of archaeologists and the fieldwork organisations, the important process of the nationalisation of archaeology has occurred. Moreover, local histories have also developed under the impulse of archaeological societies and individuals.

In this process of nationalisation/internationalisation/localisation, the archaeological discipline became a meeting place between foreign archaeologists and institutions and Syrian archaeologists and

institutions, but also between archaeologists, either foreign or Syrian, and Syrian society, especially local communities. Of course, foreign influence still remains important and represents an important part of archaeological scientific output, as does technological knowledge, still concentrated in Western hands and totally unknown to the local public. However, could we still consider archaeology solely as a form of imperialism from the West? If we take into account the local reformulation and appropriation of foreign research, as well as local discourses about the past, why should we not consider ‘Syrian’ archaeology as a ‘hybrid’ practice?

Adapting Hamilakis’ quote (Hamilakis 2008), we can argue that modern Syrian archaeology is a hybrid discipline, which resulted from local and extra-local, pre-modern and modern influences. Syrian archaeology also developed due to internal (technological and epistemological) and external (socio-economic and political) factors. Syrian archaeology has thus become a complex practice, stimulated by foreigners and Syrians, and distinct from archaeologies practised in other Middle Eastern countries or in Europe. Besides, if some still consider archaeology as a discriminatory (official and therefore non-popular) practice, and either colonialist or nationalist, it is also obvious that Syrian society derives some economic or socio-cultural benefit from archaeological excavations.

Our study thus reinforces the relevance of post-colonial theories, which stress the importance of the local population and the mutual influence between Western and local archaeologists, institutions and communities. Nevertheless, archaeology doubtless remains an elite practice, controlled by Syrian government authorities and intellectual elites, as well as by foreign archaeologists and institutions. The future challenge is thus its ‘decolonization’ (Hamilakis 2008; Nicolas and Hollowell 2007) and the constitution of a more democratic or equitable practice, on the model of the ‘public’ and ‘reflexive’ archaeology developed elsewhere, in Turkey, America and Australia (e.g. Hodder 2003). This move towards a multivocal archaeology implies the involvement of local communities in the interpretation process and the management of archaeological heritage, as well as the recognition of their active role, and of the complementarity between expert and popular knowledge.

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## Flinders Petrie and Eugenics at UCL<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

William Matthew Flinders Petrie is considered the father of scientific archaeology and is credited with developing a chronology of Ancient Egypt using the nondescript artefacts that other archaeologists had ignored.<sup>2</sup> He occupied the first chair of Egyptology in England, and was also well-known for the

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the History of Science Department at the University of Oklahoma, especially Cornelia Lambert, Katherine Pandora, and Lisa Torres Stewart, as well as Tim Murray, Stephen Quirke, and Pamela Jane Smith, for their comments and questions which helped me to think through many of these issues. Their help has only made this article better; any mistakes are my own.

<sup>2</sup> The title 'Father of Scientific Archaeology' was given to Petrie posthumously and appears in a great many of his obituaries and biographies: 'Archaeology in Egypt was his main subject, and British archaeology in Egypt, in the sense of the theory and practice of scientific excavation, was largely his creation'. ('Prof. Sir Flinders