



Researches.

To Strengthen Culture
of Knowledge

Project's First Edition
Researches Summery
2012-2013



مركز
Independent Culture
اتجاهات
Ettijahat





About Ettijahat. *Independent Culture*

“Ettijahat” is a cultural organization founded by a group of cultural activists in 2011. We focus on:

Stimulating the independent culture sector and cooperating with independent artists and cultural actors on dynamic and relevant projects that respond to their political and social environments, and that reflect people’s priorities.

Providing academic studies and field research required to design and build cultural projects that are in-line with the needs of the community.

Developing national policies and approaches to art and culture and integrating culture as a vital element in the country’s development sector.



About the Project: *Researches. To Strengthen Culture of Knowledge*

Project Description

The project is aimed at building the capacities of young researchers and granting them the opportunity to focus on working in the field of cultural study and research. The project's objective is to improve the skills of researchers, offer them direction and give them the opportunity to realize a research project (this could be their first research outside the framework of academic study) under the direct supervision of professional researchers specialized in culture who form the scientific committee of the project.

The project extends over a period of 7 or 8 months and includes three key phases: Phase I – Selection of young researchers and preparation of the training materials. Phase II – Training and Capacity Building. Phase III – realizing research projects under the supervision of professional researchers.

Through the selection criteria for the participating researchers, the project focuses on relevant subjects of cultural research connected to the developments that Syria is undergoing at present.

At the end of the project and based on the evaluation of the scientific committee, Ettijahat will publish a number of the realized research papers electronically first and as a book in a second stage. This procedure depends however completely on the findings of the selection committee with regard to the quality of the realized research papers.

“Ettijahat. Independent Culture” appreciates the scientific support of **“The Syrian Association for Culture and Knowledge”**.

Objectives

- Building the capacity of young researchers from various fields of cultural research
- Production of research materials that reflect positively on cultural work and can form a base for a long-term research programme to be implemented.
- Designing and piloting trainings programme in the field of cultural research.



Mimeta - centre for culture and development - focuses on supporting the service providers to the arts- and creative sectors in Africa, Asia and Latin America. We are aiming at strengthening structures through organization, information and advocacy, through platforms and mobility and through the development of creative economies.

Mimeta strongly believe in securing and fostering the moral and material interests of country's cultural production and expressions. These interests constitute a significant part of every nation's assets and may represent a major contribution to development, to human rights and democracy, and to the eradication of poverty.

Mimeta's main priorities are:

Democratization: Foster improvement in structures and the organizing of the arts sector.

Mobility: Foster intercultural cooperation of the arts sector.

Creativity and Economy: Foster cooperation between culture and the business sector.

This project was accomplished with the support of Mimeta - centre for culture and development.



Culture Resource

Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) is a regional, non-profit organization that seeks to support artistic creativity in the Arab region and to encourage cultural exchanges within this region and with the developing world.

The work of Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) is based on an appreciation of the value of the Arab cultural heritage and an awareness of the need for a new Arab creativity that liberates the imagination and stimulates progress.

Culture Resource also believes that artistic and literary activities are a social necessity that demands moral and material support by all active powers in the society.

The Establishment of Ettijahat. Independent Culture was supported through Culture Resource's Abbara Program.



Scientific Committee

Hassân Abbas

Born on 1955, holds a PHD in modern literature (literary criticism) from the New Sorbonne (Paris III) University. He is a Professor and researcher at the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO) (since 1992), Responsible for the cultural activities at the IFPO (1992 - 2006). Dr. Abbas is a Professor at the Higher Institute of Dramatic Art (2000 - 2009). He is the author of the (Citizenship Guide, Syria: A View from The Sky and the Cultural Cartography of Wadi al-Nassara Region....); and translator of the (Vision Machine, A Trip with the Haiku, The New Thinkers of Islam....). Dr. Abbas is a cofounder of several cultural, citizenship and human rights based associations.

Jamal Chehayed

Dr. Chehayed holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the New Sorbonne University (1974). He worked as a professor at the University of Damascus; currently he is a researcher at the French Institute for the Near East (IFPO), and a visiting professor at the Collège de France. He is the author of five critique books, in both Arabic and French languages, and translator of seventeen books from Arabic to French and vice versa. Amongst the books he authored: 'Memory in the Cotemporary Arabic Novel' (2011) and 'Discourse of Modernity in Literature' (2004). Amongst the books he translated: two volumes of Proust's seven volumes novel 'In Search of Lost Time', 'Lamartine Trip to the East', two volumes of Edgar Morin's 'The Method', 'Dictionary of Cognitive Science'. Dr. Chehayed main interests are narratives and modern criticism.

Rabih Nasser

He is a Cofounder of the Syrian Center for Policy Studies; a non-governmental non-profit institution (2012), works as a key researcher at the center in the field of development policies in particular in the field of economic growth, material and immaterial poverty and institutions. He worked as economic researcher at: The Syrian Development Research Center (2009 - 2011), the Arab Planning Institute (2007 - 2008), and Syrian State Planning Commission (2001 - 2005). Mr. Nasser's BA is in economics from the University of Damascus (1999), has a Diploma in financial and monetary economics from the University of Damascus (2000) and Master's degree in economics from the University of Leicester in the UK.



Supervisors

Jad Al-Kareem Sharaf Aljibai

Syrian writer and researcher, born in 1945

Graduated from the Public House for Teachers in 1965, with a bachelor's degree from Damascus University, faculty of Arab Language and Literature

Joined the Arab Writer's Union in 2000

A school-teacher and Arab literature schoolmaster in Lattakia, Sweida & Damascus up to 1982, an editor and a proof-reader at the Board of Arab Encyclopedia in Damascus during 1987-2010-. Assignee to writing and research

Published a number of books :("Freedom of the Other; Towards a Democratic Vision for the National Issue"), ("The Civil Society; ID of Diversity"), ("Issues of Rising"), ("The Kurdish Issue; Debate and Approaches"), ("Rose of the Present Cross; Towards a New Social Agreement and a Democratic Pan-Arabism"), ("A Road to Democracy"), ("In the Modern National State"), ("The Arab Ideological Phantom"), ("Life Debate" or "Dialectic of Knowledge and Politics, Conversation with Elias Murcos"), ("Modernity beyond Borders, Discussion on Freedom of the Individual"), ("ID and Memory, Conversation with Nabeel Al-Shwari"), ("From Tribalism to Citizenship, in press), beside to Manuscripts ready for publication.

Contributed with other colleges in producing joined books among of which are "the Destiny of the political Party in the Arab World", "Props and Cons of Arab Partisan Experience", "Democracy and Human rights in Syria", "Women Participation in the Political Life", "Human Rights in the Contemporary Arab Thought" , "Arab Thought Debate".

Published a number of researches in certain magazines such as: Wihdeh, Nahij, Tareek, the Arab strategic thought, Democracy, Kadaya, shahadat, the Kuwaiti Bayan, Adab and others. I contributed in editing "Encyclopedia of the Arab Thought (Maosoat Al-Fikr Al-Arabi), and published many articles in Arab Newspapers, such as Al-Nahar, Al-Safeer, Al-Hayat, Al-Bayan, Gulf and Arab News, and Al-Rai and others.

I participated in a number of seminars, and in Intellectual and Political Conferences. Contributed with a number of colleges in formation of "Civil Society Restoration Committees", "Association of Human Rights in Syria", Jamal Al-Atasi Forum for National Debate", "Human Rights Forum", I lectured in various cultural centers and forums spreaded in Syria between 2001 and 2004, joined political life since early youth (1962) until 1996.

Dr. Marie Elias

Dr. Mary Elias holding PHD in Theatre from France, Professor in the faculty of French Literature at Damascus University of Letters.

- Head of the Faculty of French Literature (2003).
- Lecturer and supervisor on writing thesis for students' graduation from the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts in Damascus, that lasted up to the start of the year 2001. (The task is to read dramatic and theatre texts, theatre criticism and theatre lab).
- Contribute in drafting and updating the teaching curriculum and admission exams in the section of the theatrical studies at the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts since 2007 until now.
- Lecturer at the Jesuit University in Beirut – Lebanon.
- A member of the editorial board for the specialized refereed Magazine entitled Life Theatre issued by the Ministry of Culture in Syria until 2005.
- A member of editorial board for Damascus refereed Magazine as of 2002 until 2007
- A member of international selection committee for festival of youth theatre in Rome affiliated to the Italian Ministry of Culture
- President of selection committee for festival of Cartage entitled Theatre Days in Tunisia for its 2001 session.
- Palm academic carrier of knight and officer rank for specific tasks (such as scientific missions, translation, and cultural project management) to activate cultural relations and exchange in the fields of culture and theatre.
- Participate in a number of seminars, conferences and festivals where lectures presented in Arabic and French, and published several studies and researches in the field of theatre, literature and humanities in journals and periodicals (especially the humanities, theatre and celebrations, the actor and the body, theatre criticism, women in the Arab theatre and in Syria in particular... the Palestinian theatre...
- Saadallah Wanous theatre (a series of interviews carried out, some of them were published in Carmel Journal and Roads Magazine), several studies in the Algerian literature in French, Amin Maalouf literature, comparative literature and relationship of literature to reality.
- Management of training courses in the field of theatre in many countries including Damascus, Dubai, Amman and Alexandria.
- Introduce and develop the school theatre project in cooperation with the Ministry of Education in Damascus and supervise preparation of theatrical performances for children.
- In cooperation with the Syrian Fund for Development (started as voluntary work) working groups were formed to carryout field tours that accompany the moving library and present theatrical shows beside to opening a dialogue with children and with the youth in rural areas in Syria, an activity that goes side by side with projects of economic development that was the main objective of the Institution.
- Develop a working group for interactive theatre to be applied in the countryside of Syria and later in the Juvenile Institution in Damascus.

Publications:

- A book entitled "Exercise in Dramaturgy and Improvisation" publications of the Higher Institute for Dramatic Arts , Ministry of Education, Damascus 1988 (in

partnership with Dr. Hanan Kassab Hasan).

- A translation into Arabic of a play entitled "Isabel, Three Boats and a Swindler" to the Italian writer Dario fo, a Life Magazine Publication 1995, and Al Mada House later 1999.

- The theatrical Lexicon; concepts and terminologies of the theatre and performance arts, Library of Lebanon; Nashiroun 1997 (in partnership with Dr. Hanan Kassab Hasan).

- Translation into French of Saadallah Wanous play entitled "Historical Miniatures" published by ACT Saud F'rance 1997 (in partnership with other).

- "Ontology of Modern French Theatre" presenting and translating modern French theatre texts, Al-Mada House, Damascus, part I in 2002, and part II in 2006.

- Translating many of the Scripts (belonging to French writers or French speaking writers) instant translation, Suritage in collaboration with the French Cultural Center in Damascus.

- Issuance of a guide to interactive theatre in collaboration with the UN.

Roula Abu Khater

Roula Abu Khater, an architect and a lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture in Damascus University. Got the degree of architect from Damascus University in 1984, and continued specialized Higher Education in France at Marseille University (1990 - 1995). Specialization was in several domains such as architect and Modern Techniques – Architecture and Environment – Constructional Project in the Mediterranean Cities. Participated in several research projects with the IPFO funded by EU (Traditional Hammamat Project in the Mediterranean Cities (2005 - 2008), HAMMAMED Project; the fourth Euro- Mediterranean Heritage (2009 - 2011), a social and architectural study for Shaalan district in Damascus in collaboration with GREMMO from Lion – France. Got a funding grant for the project (Cultural participatory for heritage protection), from EU that administered implementation of the project from headquarters of IPFO in Damascus 2010 - 2011. Participated in several training courses (among of which GIS application- STELLA programme to develop and study scenarios in accordance with the dynamic system – cultural survey and recording of immaterial heritage in Palermo- Italy). Got the certificate in management and development of projects from Mastreet Institute for Administration in 2008, organized by Dutch Institute as well as the Danish Institute in Damascus, beside to a certificate in Basics of Planning and Architectural Development from University of Oldenburg - Germany in collaboration with the World Bank through remote sensing education 2003.

She participated in several international conferences among of which are WOCMES in Spain, July 2010- and in COMOS France Conference in October 2010 on performance of energy in old buildings. In addition, she attended several seminars on Heritage of traditional HAMMAD in Fas, Algeria, Cairo, Ankara, Vienna, and Damascus.

Publications:

- «Hammam Rehabilitation Reader», Heidi Dumreicher, Richard S. Levine and Magda Sibley-Behloul (ed.), Sonderzahl Verlag, 2012, Austria.
- Atassi, Sarab & Aboukhater, Roula, The Hammam in the Mediterranean Region: Architectural, Urban and Social Dimensions — A Multidimensional Approach.
- Aboukhater, Roula, Dumreicher, Heidi & Pfrimer, Ursula, The SWOT Analysis – A Tool for Hammam Managers.
- Aboukhater, Roula, Playing as an Innovative Tool for Raising Awareness about Cultural Heritage.
- Aboukhater, Roula, 2010, L'héritage urbain: Législations, acteurs et prise de conscience de la protection du patrimoine en Syrie, in conference book "Normes et procédures pour la réhabilitation des villes et quartiers historiques", Euromed Heritage IV, 89- December 2009, Rabat, Morocco, pp. 8799-; <http://www.euromedheritage.net/euroshared/doc/Actes%20Rabat%20Proceedings.pdf>
- Aboukhater, Roula, November 2008, Analysis of spatial structure and social significance of a sample of hammams in Mediterranean Cities, in ArchNet IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research. http://www.archnet.org/library/documents/one-document.jsp?document_id=10491



Participants

Aliaa Al-Mustafa

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Before and during the crisis

Jasmin Ayoud

Cultural influences on Syrian children (field study in cultural diversity).

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Syria & democratic challenge.

Wesam Asali

Rural housing in Syria: the culture of traditional architecture and its role in the reconstruction phase.



Aliaa Al-Mustafa

The reality of Syrian woman in the current crisis

Born in Hama on 1978, has a BA in Sociology from Aleppo University in 2002. She has a Diploma in educational rehabilitation from Albaath University in 2004.

Ms. Al-Mustafa is a trainer on international Human rights mechanisms with Geneva Institute for human rights (GIHR) and a member and trainer in the central team in Syria for child protection program in schools.

She published several articles and studies in various journals, newspapers, and websites (Tishreen newspaper, Alawan magazine, Manarat magazine, Frog - free youth view).

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Introduction:

Overview of the status of women between the stereotypical image and potentials: includes the various factors, be it social, economical, cultural, educational or political, that contributed to depicting the stereotypical image of Syrian women, prevented and continues to prevent her full independence. The overview also provides an assessment of potentials through relative improvement in the areas referred to, given the like between the enablers and the improvement achieved, particularly that the relative improvement and detention have been among the factors that triggered the current crisis.

Question of research or central topic

Can the engagement of Syrian women in the current crisis – pro & anti government – be a crossing point to achieve their rights through changing their status, independence, self-realization, social status, educational function and stereotypical image? Or does the crisis only aggravate their suffering?

Identification of concepts

“Crisis engagement” is defined as a form of political participation which consists of two levels: involvement in public life, participation in the life of the state. Through this research, we will focus on the first level and identify the level of involvement in the public life starting from the minimum, i.e. the right to speak, shifting from “Shut up and be beautiful” mode (a French proverb) to an active listener, speaker and actor. “Shift of concepts” means relative and gradual change of concepts and acquisition of new connotations.

“Decline of standards” means deterioration of public values and relative acceptance of what was once unaccepted.

Research methodology

The descriptive method\approach was adopted in an attempt to approach the reality to the maximum level, in addition to the analytical method to derive as much as possible of governing principals and achieving results that are predetermined.

Former studies

Given the novelty of the subject matter, there is a scarcity of previous studies related to Syria that can be referred to. Only three studies were available:

“The presence of Syrian women in light of Syrian popular movement”, a study by Syrian researcher Nariman Amer.

“Democratic transition in Syria and issues of Syrian women”, by researcher Sawsan Zakzak.

“Participation of Syrian women in political life”, by Jad al-Karim al-Jbai.

Research hypothesis

- The involvement of Syrian women in the popular movement is a turning point to exercise their and obtain all their rights.
- The steady “shift of concepts” and “decline of standards” contribute to launch the project of Woman Independence, achieve self-attainment, improve social status and educational function, as well as change her stereotypical image.
- The transformation of movement into an armed conflict between different parties

including religious extremist groups in addition to the increased violence, have significantly reduced political engagement of women, aggravated their suffering, negatively affected the accomplished entitlements and deterred them from obtaining her full rights.

Key axes.

1- Forms of political participation for both pro & anti government women, and the use of personal interviews as a tool to learn about the impacts of such different participation (positive, weak, neutral) in selected samples of women.

- The role of the victim (both the official and opposition mass media presented the image of victimized woman on the back of her stereotypical image which provokes zeal and sympathy).

2- The shift of concepts and decline of standards regarding the participation of women (analyzing models and examples from different environment) and the attempt to identify the provisions of women.

3- kinds and forms of suffering:

Could the suffering of women have been less if she has not been involved at any form?

- Excessive violence, internal and external refuge, immigration.

- The inverse relationship between level of participation and level of violence (rejecting violence is a feminine attitude closely related to respect and preserve life).

4- The role of women's organizations in enhancing participation of women and alleviating their suffering.

5- Potential impact of participation in improving legal status of women, alignment of national laws with Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international conventions on women, and lifting of reservations.

6- Results & Summaries:

From the above-discussed topics throughout the research, we were able to verify the hypotheses we previously provided. The research made clear the existence of extremely critical facts that can be built upon, most importantly is the breaking the fear of patriarchal power, which can only be achieved through breaking the monopoly of knowledge, sciences, self-expression and writing, as well as launching a radical critic movement against all conditions that humiliated and subordinated women. Likewise, the emergence of independent civil organizations that launch woman-specific initiatives emanating from their self awareness of the values of freedom, independence, equality and justice is an indispensable gain. The role of civil society and relevant independent organization has proved to be of extreme importance through accomplishing social, cultural and humanitarian functions that are supposed to be the government's.

Sources of information & data

- Former relevant studies and researches.

- Interviews with women activists who have been abused.

- Studies and statistics on women participation and forms of suffering experienced.

- Syrian laws and legislations: (the constitution, Personal Status law, Penal code, Civil Code).

- International convention on women: conventions approved by the Syrian state, reservations on certain articles of these conventions).



Ayham Abu Shaqra

Revolutionary Newspaper Vision
for Syria in the Future

He is a writer, a journalist and a cultural activist graduated from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts, theatre studies department in 2008, and from faculty of Media in Damascus University on 2008. He is a trainer on development with UNICEF since 2009.

Mr. Abu Shaqra worked as trainer on the development and participation of youth with UNICEF and the Ministry of Culture for two years, a program implemented in several the cities and villages in Syria.

He has several pieces of writing and art directing for theatre, has a Diploma in art directing from the Directorate of theaters and music in 2006, and obtained a grant from Abdel Muhsen Qattan Institution in 2008.

Mr. Abu Shaqra has written his first play «Rami and Juliet» in the context of «play writing» workshop organized by «citizens/ artists» Organization. He also has several participations in researches in the field of «culture and society», he got two research funds; the first was from the Syria Trust for Development in 2011 and the second from Ettijahat. Independent Culture in 2013.

He also worked in the field of visual media as a news investigator Orient TV in 2009, a member of editorial in the Journal of the Podium covering Damascus Theatre Festival; and has several published articles in Syrian and Arab newspapers.

Mr. Abu Shaqra is interested in scenario writing and Drama; he contributed to many of the development activities in cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and UNICEF, also worked as a coordinator for the Syrian plays in Damascus Theatre Festival 2008.

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Context & theme:

Media has played a key role in reporting factual events as well as creating awareness regarding the conflict currently taking place in Syria. It has eventually become a socio-political weapon whose effect sometimes exceeds any other. The exaggeratedly-focused highlight of local, Arabic and international mass media on Syrian conflict has compelled each of the conflicted parties to produce its own “mass media” that provides information according to a subjective perspective that ultimately advocates its own perspectives and visions.

Within this context, the revolutionary forces and pro-revolution Youth Groups have produced more than 60 newspapers and periodicals to reflect their aspirations and vision about Syria in the future.

This research focuses on analyzing a specific aspect of these periodicals, namely: ‘visions about Syria in the future’ through discourse adopted by such periodicals and ideology they seek to disseminate. The published periodicals are characterized by various properties and attributes in terms of form & content, media discourse, circulation, privacy, attachment & detachment from reality, language, targeted audience and many other aspects.

The research derives its importance from the critical question posed by the entire Syrian people: where is Syria heading to? How do the conflicting parties visualize the future of Syria? The research does not certainly claim answering to such a grave question; it rather attempts to answer one of its subparts, namely: the vision of a part of the conflicting forces about the future of Syria. Since these periodicals are the mouthpiece of armed battalions, civil movements or co-ordinations, it is exceptionally important to study its discourse and identifying the visions within the current stage.

Methods & tools

Accordingly, the key topic of the research has been set: what is the vision of newspapers and periodicals published by revolutionary forces about the future of Syria? To answer this, a descriptive analytical method was adopted to study a specific, carefully-selected number of periodicals. The discourse assumed by the periodicals was accurately analyzed, attitudes described, examples drawn to support our analytical stance regarding their visions about the future of Syria. The periodicals were selected according to the following criteria: the opinion-based media – which gives way to analysis, articles & studies – rather than news-based media; the dedication and attention paid by such periodicals to answer topics related to the future shape of state; and finally the accumulation of quality materials that contribute to better clarify the vision.

Periodicals were classified into three types: 1- civil pluralistic. 2- religious-oriented. 3- Undefined. Within the first type, *Syndian* was selected among many others of the same nature and attitude. For the second type, *The Sold Golan Heights* newspaper & *Sham News* magazine were selected since they take clearly-distinct courses under the religious-oriented press and can be regarded as key models of the ‘pluralism’ that the research aspires to underline. In respect to the third type, we have talked in general about the newspapers that showed no interest in handling the question of future. Then we shifted to periodicals that involve lots of inconsistencies and chose

one issue of *The Civilization of Revolution* (Hadaret Al-thawra). The study does not aim at pinpointing errors or inconsistencies as much as providing clear-cut evidence of the paradox we have been inquiring in this chapter.

Key findings

Pro-Syrian revolution newspapers produced three basic streams: first is the secular pluralistic stream: maligned for being excessively theoretical and detached from reality, yet it clearly visualizes Syria as intellectually enlightened, pluralistic, and equally embracing all citizens irrespective of their sectarian or ethnic affiliation where a peaceful and prosperous future is guaranteed for all. Within this stream, all citizens equally have the same rights and duties in a despotism-free country based on equality, justice and democracy, and where civil society plays a key role in its development and progress.

The second is the religious-oriented stream which involves a deep-seated split between extremists advocating Islamic succession "*Khilafah*" and other forms of governance dating back 1400 years ago of Islamic consultations "*Shura*", Islamic tax "*Jizyah*", succession and Pledge of Allegiance "*Bayaa*", and a less-fanatic, more-tolerant stream attempting to compromise religion and the civil state. Newspapers under this stream are predominantly emotional and declamatory, where affiliation to the Islamic World as a fundamental reference is more solid than it is to Syria.

The third stream stands in between the previous two since its main obsession is reporting and supporting the Syrian Revolution via media rather than propagating a defined vision, and consequently failed to generate a clear intellectual pattern or it suffers an acute lack of sufficient background to visualize the future, and so publishes whatever (they think) props up the revolution irrespective of the proposed ideology. The newspapers under this stream sometimes involve contradicted ideas within the same issue.

This multiplicity \ lack of visions genuinely reflects the reality of Syria as the aforementioned periodicals strived to mirror the inconsistencies and plurality of Syria. A periodical which enjoys clear vision, defined objective and solid intellectual background authentically reflect the real situation of a Syrian segment that holds the same attitude and vision. Likewise, the multiplicity as well as incompatibility of Islamic streams is a factual application of Islamic concepts sweeping the country. Such streams suffer shallowness and inexperience so it failed to create a clearly-defined pattern, and are merely under-progress intellectual streams or groups that involve unanswered significant questions. On the other hand, those who have unknowingly confused the concepts and previously absented themselves from politics, have unexpectedly engaged in a context intensively replete with various values, concepts, terms and ideas which are difficult to be fused within a short period of time. Eventually, many of these periodicals involved confused ideas and ambiguous vision.



Ghiath Mhethawi

Sarcasm in time of revolution.

Born in Jaramana, Damascus on 1987 and is a resident in Cairo, Egypt. He has a BA in Economics from the University of Damascus and a BA in Theater Studies from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Damascus. Mr. Mhithawi has a good command in Arabic, English and German; and works in the field of editorial and creative writing.

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With the outset of the so-called ‘Syrian Revolution’, I’ve been caught by the innovative way by which marginalized people used to express themselves where the society appeared to re-identify and re-arrange itself. Ordinary people have – literally and figuratively – took over the public squares questioning the nature of true cultural acts, and mechanisms through which these acts influence the re-constituted societies, in light of a notable retreat of whatever considered, in the political sense, centralized, dedicated, refined and conciliatory in favor of the marginalized, shocking and popular. Such quantum leap could not have occurred without the availability of various subjective and objective conditions in the Syrian society in this specific historical period. One of the most important of these factors is the tremendous advances in communications and structure of the web as well as its wide spread and availability to public hand. Accordingly, social media increasingly occupies a significant portion of relevant activities which led to a multi-layered and multi-sources movement whereby the “real” parallels and overlaps with the “virtual”, so that the cultural act complements its corporeal entity virtually, and hence becomes more concrete and crystallized within the space of free expression afforded by the world.

The first chapter of this research began with providing an analytical section in an attempt to approach the problematic solidity of symbolic image in dictatorial regimes, and the role of sarcasm and humor in fragmenting it based on the racking of Hafez Assad statue in the city of Raqqa once the regime has lost control over it. Dictatorships often build up its glory \ halo meticulously so that any attempt to question the authority or cultural and political expressions is considered a public blasphemy which requires a maximum punishment, and thus dictatorships derive its apparent strength and durability. Based on this idea, the role of sarcasm in activating sociopolitical criticism has been discussed. It was then necessary to talk about the role social media and in embracing the forms of sarcastic expressions, as well as marketing and disseminating the ideas of young generation.

To complete the research, it was necessary to select specific models from the experiences of young Syrian revolutionists in social media that were characterized by providing sarcastic treatment for problems of revolution, opposition and tyranny, and adopting new forms of expressing the reality in Syria.

The first experience to be addressed is “An Absurd Man`s Camera”. This webpage was created following the pattern of documentary web pages publishing photos of current events from the inside of besieged cities to adopt thereafter its own cynical style based on self-sarcasm an mockery of the dictator and everything at once using and intelligent and witty artistic style with much professionalism. Through this section, I have tried to analyze the method and mechanism adopted by the founders of this webpage, as well as its impacts on the real and virtual worlds. The founders were proved the wise jesters of revolution who feign insanity and ignorance as a method to encapsulate their deep sarcasm for the Syrian affair.

The second example dealt with the study was “signs of kafr Nabl”, that peaceful town in the countryside of Idlib Governorate, which provided a unique phenomenon in

the Syrian Revolution: signs loaded with deep, smart and sarcastic phrases as well as condensed cartoons but expressive of the developments of Syrian affairs. The town is inhabited by nearly 30,000 people who held weekly and monthly demonstrations to mock the regime, the opposition and the entire world in festive ceremonies which closely resemble the carnival rituals addressed by Bakhtin. The Russian philosopher views the carnivals held during the medieval times a form of expressing the repressed popular culture through a destructive sarcasm targeting all rigorous and austere social institutions. Accordingly, a comparison has been made between what happened in Kafr Nabl and the carnival structure according to Bakhtin.

The third example was the walls of Saraqib; a small town lying near Aleppo and Idlib. The young generation in Saraqib adopted the art of graffiti as a method of expression to take part in the peaceful movement of Syrian Revolution. Although expressions, graphics and the method adopted cynical at the minimum level, still the phenomenon of writing and painting wall after being destroyed and marginalized by the regime's war machine is an act of mockery and irony against the barbaric actions taken by the regime, which are totally useless in killing the strong will of people who insist on enjoying life and beauty. Sarcasm in this case is concealed in the deep structure of art products in Saraqib. It is exceedingly astonishing to persist on expressing yourself in such method amid death, destruction and intolerance that haunt every detail of your daily life. Endurance and maintaining the humane values are a symbolic destruction of tyranny.

I also tried to analyze the phenomenon of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry written on the walls of Saraqib, and how much his poetry about Palestine becomes contemporary to the Syrian situation.

Duty & effectiveness

All the examples examined in this research are only experiences based on marginal expression forms carried out by ordinary and non-professional individuals and getting increasingly more important to take the role of dedicated expression forms in an attracting shift if whatever marginal into the central. It becomes clearly evident the role of the young generation who have suffered for long years from marginalization, scarcity of opportunities and lack of care, and thus, the only option left is creating change at all levels standards. Little town and villages also emerged as a key 'incubator' for new forms of expressions; Saraqib and Kaf Nabl today are more important and influential in terms of peaceful revolutionary actions than big cities like Damascus, Homs and Aleppo. In this context, we can easily consider sarcasm as one of the marginal expression form that came into the surface during the period of revolution and undertook key role in – effectively and efficiently – keeping pace with the process of change.

The research also highlighted the desire of Syrian people to escape the melodramatic aspect when expressing themselves; as they recognized the inability of weeping and lamentation to express since its pathetic effect has been consumed especially with the long period of the crisis. This can be compensated by resorting to the grotesque in approaching the painful and funny at the same time, which requires a unique effort

and a reasonable artistic culture that allows the blending of intellectual thinking with emotional inventory to create an expressive artistic state, unlike the melodrama that relies on the easy surrender to emotions.

The extension of Syrian Revolution for more than two years and the accompanied struggle against all forms of tyranny has introduced more professional artistic and cultural forms of expressions, since the personal tools and ways of expressions are refined on daily basis. A remarkable development can be observed daily in terms of the capabilities of the founders of “An absurd man`s camera” and “People of Kafr Nabl” (although no such development has been noticed in the performance of young people of Saraquib). One advantage of the long-term battle against tyranny that such phenomena which depend on innovative working methods became qualified to shift from a transient phenomenon produced by subjective and objective conditions within a given situation, into dedicated phenomena creating the nucleus for institutions of cynical political and cultural expression. The long period of Syrian Revolution contributed, and continues to contribute to the emergence of new attempts that seek to find their way in expressing the concerns of people in different and alternative ways.



Iyas Yousef Shahin

Cultural map for the village of Ain Feit (a model of one of the villages in occupied Golan).

Iyas Shahin is an architect graduated from the University of Damascus in 2007 ranked 2nd \180.. Taking advantages of his position as an Academic lecturer and tutor - Faculty of Architecture \ Damascus University.

In 2010, Iyas founded IWlab with his partner Wesam Asali.

IWlab is a ‹laboratory› that brings architecture and educational practice together.

In July 2010, they won the first place in two national competitions with their Mábar (Passages) proposal, an educational project for children, and Moment proposal, an Urban Exhibition for Sarouja. Winning these opened the way for IWlab to collaborate with many educational and cultural organizations.

On a personal level. Iyas got a master's degree in architectural design.

During his academic and professional career, Iyas received many cultural grants by many cultural centers in Damascus and participated in several workshops About (cultural design, art and architecture) at Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, London and Finland.

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This research study aims at monitoring and documenting the cultural resources for one of the villages in the occupied Golan (verbal, tangible and intangible heritage), as well as exploring the sustainable memory of displaced people following the 1967 war.

Developing the cultural map for the village of Ain Feit as a model of the villages in occupied Golan will be a significant step for the protection and documentation of a rich memory threatened to be forgotten and lost.

The research relies on several methods to engage the local society (displaced people) who maintain a sufficient spatial memory for the village within the process of developing the cultural map like carrying out open discussions with the displaced villagers, making individual interviews with the specialized experienced people, as well as taking advantage of a wide range of previous researches and documentaries that focused on the different categories of cultural resources available in the region. Resources of research information are based mainly on a group of personalities who have enough confidence in their field of specialization and wide knowledge concerning cultural resources of the village.

Main chapters of the research

- Introducing the village of Ain Feit (geographical location – historical overview of the colonization & displacement – demographics).
- Identifying of cultural map and cultural resources of Ain Feit.
- Introducing the village of Ain Feit.

Linguistically speaking, Ain Feit is a reference to the gorgeous and beautiful spring. There are also other interpretations but they are historically unsupported.

Based on the charts, geographical and topographic studies, the village of Ain Feit is located in the northwest side of the Golan Heights at the intersection of longitude (35.45) east of Greenwich and latitude (33.22) north of the equator, to the west of the village of Mas`ada. Ain Feit is administratively appended to Quneitra Governorate to the northwest.

The territories of the village are mostly slopes slanting west and northwestwards by over 30 degree. Plains only located to the west of *Kherbet al-Souda* and east of *Aziziat* Hill.

The village has a dark volcanic soil in general. However, calcareous soil can be found to the east of the village at the region of Olive Groves and caves, as well as yellow soil in the Sothern tip of *Zera* Valley located in the west.

Climatically speaking, the village is located within the first stability area where the rainfall exceeds 800 mm, and may have been heavier in the past due to the large numbers of developed water valleys and remnants of trees – trunk diameter is more than 1 meter – at the top of the southern tip of the Grand Valley.

Human settlement dates back to a very ancient era, precisely the stage of carved caves, due to the existence of many geometrically-engraved caves in the region of *Ard al-Safra* to the west.

The settlement of the population for the pre-displacement stage in 1967 is historically inaccurate. However, the nature of houses found, memory of current aged people and the circumstances of Ottoman Occupation suggest that such settlement dates back nearly 300 years ago. The existence of a heavy spring pouring 510- Liters\second was the main reason behind the settlement.

Demographically speaking, the majority of the populations are Alawite Muslims. Christian and Armenian families are also reported to have inhabited the village for long times. As the case in all villages in the Golan Heights, nomads lived in the outskirts of the village. Through laborious search, 47 families with their origins and roots have been identified in the village.

The cultural map

Cultural maps are defined as a methodological tool to identify and manage information on local cultural assets.

Depending on the available resources described previously, a set of cultural resources of the village have been documented as follows:

1. Architectural & urban heritage:

The study showed that the rural lifestyle of the village of Ain Feit significantly affects the construction pattern at the architectural and urban level. Such effect is distinctively manifested in the buildings and residential compounds in terms of materials, composition, shape and relations with social life and mutual influence with the inhabitants` behavior.

2. Transferred tangible heritage (folk costume and clothing)

3. Handcrafts and manual skills

4. Festivals and events

5. Natural vegetations

6. Food

7. Social rankings

8. Verbal heritage – spoken-dialect poetry

Conclusion

Definitely, documenting the cultural map of the village of Ain Feit through the live memory of its inhabitants and photo archives requires a persistent work. However, the research cannot cover all aspects or document the full image of what Ain Feit used to look like. Nevertheless, conducting the research is only the first step to a continuous work that exceeds and complements this research.



Jassmin Abo.Fakher

Culture of voluntary and humanitarian work in Syria
Before and during the crisis

She graduated from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Art in Scenography on 2010, and currently a 4th year's student in Translation, the Open Education in Damascus University. She works in the Opera House, the decoration department since 2011

Ms. Abou-Fakher attended several workshops on different subjects, such as: -«Design (artistic & the Architecture styles in design)», -«Scenography (Space Theatre Al Hamra theatre)» in 2006, -«Puppet theater and ways to move them)» with French producer philip pejeanty in 2008, -«One minute film (messages among women)», -«Theatre for the Performing Arts» with the Spanish International Cooperation and the Spanish Embassy and the Teatro in 2009, -«Beckett and theater direction» with the Organization Damascus Theatre Lab in 2011, and «Opera Scenography» in 2012.

Ms. Abou-Fakher attended as well the Accessory Design and Supervision, the opening of the «first festival of tartus summer» in 2010. Also the Accessory for a Film Titled «My Last Friend» in 2011.

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The research discusses the idea of voluntary work and its situation in Syria through two main chapters:

- The first one describes the theatrical framework of volunteering, its roots linguistically, historically and conceptually until forming its general and modern definition. Then, the research begins to present the details of the "voluntary work" including its types, tools, branches, motives, obstacles and the benefits it provides to both volunteers and those who get its services and finally its importance for society.
- The second chapter presents the Syrian Interpretation of volunteering discussing its legislations and laws in the country and how it was affected by the country's general policies prior, mentioning details about NGOs operating in the country, presenting details of the organizations such as their numbers, allocation, types and what they have been working for before the "Syrian Crisis", and the research also discusses the changes in priorities and mechanism of voluntary work as a response to the massive changes in Syrian community during the "Syrian Crisis".

Key findings

- The ongoing laws doesn't match the current needs of NGOs and doesn't supporting the modern methods of management, regulation, networking and financing.
- The most NGOs in Syria located in the cities while the rural areas suffer from a lack of voluntary initiatives.
 - Before The "Syrian Crisis", the most NGOs in Syria work in the "social support" field.
 - The inactivity of civil society in Syria considered as one of the very first reasons behind the community's uprising.
 - The Syrian Crisis caused a shift in the voluntary work path in Syria in all its fields, priorities, work mechanism, motivations and the obstacles.

The research goes on following the descriptive method in the case study and getting information through specialized centers which offer statistics and information describing the situation in Syria.

The research continues establishing many points which in all aim to define the concept of voluntary work in Syria and describe the obstacles this field faces, establish the link between voluntary work and the ongoing uprising and stress the need to activate the role of civil society.

Finally the research recommends supporting voluntary work and providing ways to further enhance its mechanisms and techniques, so it would interest more people to join.

The research also highlights the importance of government's role in raising awareness by including material about volunteering in the curriculum, the media role in spreading the word about volunteering, the private sectors role in supporting voluntary work in funding and training and the role of all sectors in encouraging research regarding volunteering.



Jasmin Ayoud

Cultural influences on Syrian children (field study in cultural diversity).

Jasmin Hussein Ayoud born Ras Al Ain 11 /18/ 1984, Educational work as a researcher and a certified instructor in the Early Childhood Development Regional Center. Holds a master's degree in child-rearing and currently a PHD student, I have a great interest in the field of cultural and community development. I look forward to the future with great optimism and my motto in life, «Start and the end in your mind.»

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The research aims at identifying the most important family and societal factors affecting the cultural identity of the Syrian child, and the most influential of these factors on the future child's personality. It also aims at identifying the role of education in fortifying and preserving the cultural identity through providing numerous relevant proposals and actions.

The problem of the research has revolved around the following question:

What are the determinants of the formation of the child's cultural identity under the cultural diversity of Syrian society?

This question has been answered through the research attempt to answer the following sub-questions:

- What does «cultural identity» exactly means? What are its components?
- How do family education and school learning contribute to preserving the cultural identity under the cultural diversity in Syria?
- What are the key factors influencing the formation of cultural identity of the Syrian child?

The researcher has adopted the analytical descriptive method in monitoring the key determinants of cultural identity and analyzing the factors that may be responsible for the formation of the cultural identity in the Syrian society.

To achieve the objectives of the research, the researcher designed a questionnaire specifically targeting teachers and parents of children and adolescents (3 – 12 years). The questionnaire included a set of items that measure the degree to which family and educators focus on the child's acquisition of a group of beliefs, customs, values, knowledge and attitudes that shape the cultural identity.

The research sample consisted of (525) of randomly selected parents and teachers representing the original society.

Answering research questions

First question: What are the most influential cultural determinants in the context of family education?

Based on the results of the statistical tables, the most influential cultural determinants in the context of family education were as follows:

- 1- Moral education representative of community features.
- 2- Folkloric songs.
- 3- Native language (Arabic Language or any other language spoken Syrians like Armenian, Assyrians, Kurds and others).
- 4- Folktales.

Second question: What are the most influential cultural determinants in the context of educational institutions?

Based on the results of the statistical tables, the most influential cultural determinants in the context of educational institutions (kindergartens – schools) were as follows:

- 1- Cultural diversity and pluralism in the curriculum content & teaching and learning activities.
- 2- Consolidating the child's sentiments of pride of the cultural heritage in Syria.
- 3- Consolidating the child's national sentiments through emphasizing the importance of studying\analyzing the mutual history.
- 4- Providing children with authentic information and experiences about cultural diversity in other countries.

- 5- Developing up-to-date curriculum with a special focus on Arabic Language.
- 6- Extra-curricular programs and participating in national holidays.

Recommendations:

• in the context of family education:

- Rational moral education that promotes peace, openness to other cultures and the emphasis on cultural and civilized communication and mutual benefit among different civilizations.
- Ensuring that mother-tongue education is an undeniable right for children in a consistent way to enhance their national affiliation through educating Arabic language.
- Children`s engagement in celebrating festivals of religious rituals like making sweets and buying clothes ...etc.
- Uniting the children with their cultural heritage through storytelling, folktales and encouraging them to memorize some of the old songs.
- Educating children to internalize principals of openness and accepting others on ethical rounds rather than religious, ethnic or sectarian ones.
- Enhancing positive education based on dialogue and understanding rather than violence.
- Connecting children with their cultural heritage through encouraging them to practice traditional games that develop intelligence and positively activate the child`s leisure time.
- Developing the children`s sense of belonging and loyalty through storytelling of the glorious past and making trips and visits to museums and ancient ruins.
- Augmenting patriotism and loyalty to homeland through the children`s engagement in certain activities (like agriculture, harvest and seeding) in a way to increase environmental awareness and preserving the environment.

• In the context of educational institutions

- Developing curricula including Arabic Language and history to keep up to date and meet the children`s needs in keeping pace with modernity and increase the adherence to their cultural identity through simplified and focused curricula based on the interactive and proactive methods rather than recitation and rigid memorization.
- Enhance Arab cultural identity through – most importantly – supporting the Arabic Language and enriching the Arab character intellectually and emotionally to be fully aware of his freedom, dignity and ability to actively keep up and participate.
- Children engagement in the planning and implementation of national celebrations in order to increase their patriotism and sense of pride of the glories and cultural heritage of their country.
- Allowing the children to freely express their views, heritage, customs and traditions through theater, songs and folk dances specific to each area.
- Underlining the importance of translation and interpretation of other cultures in accordance with our cultural identity, weather transferring our Arab culture to others or vice versa.

Suggestions

- Conducting a study about the crisis of cultural identity in the Syrian society.
- Conducting a study about the relation between affiliation and cultural identity in a globalized world.



Mohd Musaad Asaad

The marginalized in the independent Syrian documentaries

He is born in Damascus on 1988, a student at the Higher Institute of Dramatic Art in Damascus, dramatic studies department. He also holds a Diploma in Interior Design from Damascus Training Center (DTC), 2008.

In 2009 he participated in the writing and directing of a short feature film entitled 'Room number zero'. The film was broadcasted at the University City festival in Damascus and won the first prize, and was presented in Sinemardin film festival in Mardin, Turkey, 2009.

Mr. Musaad Asaad has several critiques pieces about films and theater plays in Syrian magazines and newspapers, such as Shurofat and Tishreen newspaper.

Between the years 2008 - 2012, he participated in series of on cinema and theater, including the followings: -'writing the cinematic screenplay in Sinemardin film festival, 2009', -'dramaturgy in play "The zoo story" by Edward Albee, Bab Troupe for Theatre arts in 2010', -'documentary films' (TAKWEEN) program with Dox Box film festival in Damascus on 2010, and -'configure dramaturge' in Damascus theater laboratory on 2012.

Currently, he is working on a research about the independent Syrian documentary film, in collaboration with 'Ettijahat. Independent Culture'.

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The research revolves around a set of independent Syrian documentary films produced between 2000 – 2011, in light of the change took place with this art form after 2011 where the independent documentary in Syria has shifted from a marginalized and minor art – compared to other dramatic and artistic forms – intone of the most important art forms triggered by the protest movement. In this context, filmed documents as well as documentary films have an undeniable pivotal and organic role in the events occurred, and continue to occur in Syria.

Within this research, 10 films are under close scrutiny and study, arranged according to the date of production as followd:

- The Cousin: by Mohammed Ali Attasi, 2000
- They've Been Here once: by Ammar Al-Beik, 2000
- Salt Skin: by Nidal Hassan, 2002
- A Flood in Baath Country: by Omar Amiralay, 2003
- Before Disappearing: by Joud Korani, 2005
- I Who Hold Flowers to Her Grave; by Hala Abdullah & Ammar Al-Beik, 2006
- Six Ordinary Tales: by Mayyar Al-Roumi, 2006
- Silence: by Rami Farah, 2006
- Zaid: by Reem Ali, 2007
- Granite Mountains: by Nidal Hassan, 2009

In approaching these films, the research relies on “marginalization” as a common theme combining all, which is a natural reflection of the marginalization suffered by the independent documentaries, filmmakers as well as supports during this period, wither through being banned, oppressed or neglected, taking into consideration the marginalization characterized the innovative documentaries in general, compared to the centrality and dedication of narrative, trade or serious film productions.

The research also addresses the independent Syrian documentaries as a work of art that possesses general technical tools closely connected to the creative documentary film in its global shape - away from the peculiarities of Syrian cinema – and through studying narrative forms used in these documentaries apart from the topic being handled and in relation with the documentary film in its general form.

The research consists of four chapters. The first two chapters deal with the image of the marginalized individual as presented in the independent Syrian documentaries in an attempt to monitor the mechanism by which the marginalized director of documentaries has been reflected on the choice of characters and locations.

The third chapter provides a comparison between the images of the marginalized as presented in independent documentaries compared to the official mass media.

Such comparison identifies the contradiction between those two images as a formal governmental form of expression and an independent one. The forth chapter tries to identify the formal features of the film through studying the narrative techniques applied.

In studying these documentaries, the research depended heavily on deep observation as a key source to read and understand the film, based on the critically-accepted reading and analysis methodologies of the film in general, and the creative documentary in particular. This general reading is offered within one theme, namely “marginalization” which is then subdivided into many other themes (the marginalized individual – marginalized place – marginalized popular stories), in an attempt to pinpoint a common identity for these selected films according to the nature and date or production (2000 – 2011), a period that enjoys political and historical peculiarities in Syria.

The research also touched on some pure artistic aspects that characterize the documentary film through studying narrative techniques adopted, apart from the topics dealt.

It also provides a precise and systematic definition of the general term “independent documentary film”, as well as a historical overview of independent Syrian documentary filmmaking, based on a wide range of historical and artistic references that formerly addressed this topic.

The research tries to explore the active cultural infrastructures in the Syrian society in order to reveal the deep factors causing cultural marginalization. This is exactly the objective set by “Researches, to deepen the culture of knowledge” as one of the key principals of the work. Accordingly, the research was an attempt to pinpoint the identity of independent Syrian documentary films, being a significant cultural phenomenon that has suffered a systemized marginalization in the past, but brought into the interface of new cultural production in Syria through the protest movement in 2011.

All the films share the trend to address the various forms of marginalization, each film through its unique way and artistic form. The issue of marginalization is widely considered by the majority of theorists as among the most important factors that triggered the peaceful movement in 2011, and still prevailing in Syria until this moment.

The research also points out to the ability of independent cultural production in general to devise the problems and concerns of society to be exported to the public opinion rather than the ideological official culture which spares no effort in redecorating\beautifying the image of society and put it in a predetermined path.



Saleh Awety

The problem of culture media in Syria

Journalist and researcher, worked in the field of Broadcast media , including reports and preparation tv programs with several television channels in Syria from 2008 to 2011. He has experiences in making documentary films in domain of culture and art, one of them in 2010, a movie called 'when the stars dancing'; about Syrian creograve and ballet art.

Published social investigation and field surveys with AL-Iqitsadi magazine and some of news online websites, in addition to articles with Arab newspapers.

He Participated in several workshops concerning of media and culture, such as workshop in Beirut about production documentary films with (BBC channel) and organization unesco in 2012

Including projects for short films, and training workshops in 2009 - 2010 with Gothe Institute in Damascus and Deutsche Welle academie (DW deutsch) that included topics like:

Online Journalism - Broadcasting Media - Cultural Journalism. Moreover, he attended to training project with (Areej Organization) in the field of investigative journalism about 'the communities of Squatter areas in Damascus' in 2008.

He had a B.A in Media from Damascus University.

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The research addresses the problem of culture media in Syria in terms of its relationship with the cultural product and influential, as well as having clear elements of work that identify its own identity. The research also approaches the relations among the concepts of culture and media in terms of the nature of the concept and its function, in addition to studying the influence of political and social aspects on the content of social and media material provided and the process of cultural media as a whole.

The research approached this problem in light of the major change that has accompanied the protest movement in Syria since 2011 and the subsequent developments which have significantly influenced the media and culture milieu in terms of intellectuals, cultural production or mass media used. Thus, the concept of cultural media, which theoretically consists of the interaction between media and culture, has become totally different and more extensive than it used to be in the past, with a notable increase of the role undertaken by intellectuals and journalists as well as the emergence of new modern concepts like online media, virtual society, alternative media and many other newly-generated concepts.

The descriptive analytical approach has been used to measure the available general and cultural publications, as well as monitor and observe the available websites dealing with the issues raised, the press models used, nature of writers, language used, processing methods, forms of expression and measure the influence of sociopolitical reality, in addition to utilizing some – even few – of the basic reliable resources in the history of Syrian journalism and academic resources on culture, media, political power and cultural media (studies conducted by Mr. Hashim Othman on Syrian journalism between \1877 – 1970\ has been suspended after this date, and indicated, through searching in the history of Syrian publications, to some cultural magazines and newspapers issued during this period), a number of articles and materials available in Syrian and Arab newspapers and magazines dealing with the proposed research points, lectures and seminars held to discuss media and cultural media, in addition to seeking the opinion of experts who were contemporary to the near history of Syrian journalism along with some current actors on the cultural media.

Following the analysis and comparison of previous research date and facts, the mechanisms, usually used by cultural journalism to work within the existing conditions of cultural activities and the nature of published contents as well as analyzing the quality of writers, journalists, readers and elements involved in the production of cultural media materials at the professional and creative level with an attempt to project it on the Syrian experience in different stages, were identified.

Investigating the dialectical relation among the concepts that form and influence cultural media in four directions: culture & media, political authority & culture, political authority & media, political authority & cultural media, approaching some models adopted by the political authority in dealing with media (undermining, encouragement, maneuvering, and intimidation), and how cultural media managed to find its own ways to raise controversial issues amid the behavior of the authority

ranging between the fixed and variable in terms of its relation with cultural journalism, and the relationship adopted by cultural media in historically expressing the political conditions and after the protest movement in Syria in 2011.

In relation to the history of Syrian culture journalism, the research provided a comprehensive review for most cultural publications issued during the history of Syrian journalism, and analyzed the most important, especially those considered a landmark in the history of Syrian publications. The importance of this axis is highlighted through placing the reader in the cultural, political and social climate accompanied the stages of historical change and its impact on the Syrian cultural journalism.

In terms of online cultural media, the research provided an overview of the nature of available Syrian websites in terms of coverage and dealing with cultural affairs, independence as a media channel, as well as the spread of social media, associated modern communications and the potential deployment in the cultural aspect.

Based on the experiences and remarks that came out of the research, a preliminary plan has been developed concerning the factors that help in creating active culture and media within a work-healthy civil society, and consequently the impacts of these factors in creating effective independence regarding the theoretical and practical aspects of concept of cultural media.



Samar Ramadan

Local proverbs related to seasons, months, winter seasons and agricultural knowledge in the region of Safita, and their standings in popular memory.

Ms. Ramadan has a Diploma in Archeology from Damascus University. She participated in the documenting project of Mosaics preserved in the museums of Syria within the scientific cooperation project between Damascus University – department of Archaeology – and General Directorate of Monuments and Museums, and the European Centre For Byzantine Buildings (EKBMM) in Thessaloniki – Greece.

She also participated in a poster titled 'Symbols Revolution in Alniuliet' for the conference of 'Pluri-disciplinary approach of ancient landscape, territory and cultures of the eastern Mediterranean' in collaboration of the University Aut3noma, Barcelona.

Ms. Ramadan participated in archaeological excavations with national and foreign missions. She writes, coordinates and photocomposes, in addition to good command of computer programmes.

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Proverbs are widely considered one form of popular literature symbolizing the relationship between man and his natural, political, economical and cultural environment. They are the outcomes of people's experiences and practices earned through their long daily lives, and the expression of a vivid popular memory passed down through generations.

One aspect dealt with by proverbs signifying accumulated cognitive value is the relationship of human societies with nature and weather, its changes, local designations of seasons and months, as well as agricultural knowledge.

Theme:

The research examines a wide range of proverbs related to winter seasons and popular subdivisions, seasons and months of the year, as well as agricultural knowledge in the city and villages of Safita. The research also attempts to study the significance of such precious verbal heritage and reserve being in the popular memory of successive generations inhabiting the region, and its importance, value and current usage by different generations in light of scientific advancement and use of machines in various agricultural activities, and consequently the circulation, development and sustainability of this heritage across the generations.

Methodology & tools

The study included a review of popular divisions of months and winter seasons, in addition to months and folk knowledge related to agriculture and the relevant proverbs. It also examines a specific set of popular proverbs commonly used in Safita, where 22 proverbs were selected from one book: "Proverbs and Popular Expressions in the Syrian Coast in General and Safita in Particular" by researcher Nazih Abdl Hamid. The selected proverbs were divided into 4 matrixes as follows: season-related proverbs, proverbs dealing with winter seasons: "The Forty Days", "The Fifty Days", "The Seven Borrowed Days" and "Ajaz", month-related proverbs, and proverbs related to agricultural knowledge.

Data and information were collected through designing a questionnaire containing closed questions about a specific set of proverbs classified into four matrixes, as well as one open question to learn more about the relevant proverbs in their memories at the time being. The sample included 90 people; 30 of each of the following generations: 1st generation: 60 - 90 years, 2nd generation: 30 - 60 years and 3rd generation 1 - 30 years. The respondents from each generation were chosen randomly from different villages as well as the city of Safita, so both are involved.

Results:

Observations and results were concluded based on the problematic issue being raised and the outcomes of the survey. Key results were as follows:

- The percentage of those familiar with the proverbs provided from the 1st and 2nd generation was noted to be analogous, which suggests a continuation in the circulation of those proverbs between the two generations. The 3rd generation, on the other hand, had a low percentage which indicates what can be considered a 'rupture' with the 1st and 2nd generations in terms of circulating the relevant proverbs.
- Proverbs related to winter seasons and agricultural knowledge had the lowest

percentage among the four matrixes under consideration for all generations collectively. This indicates that the proverbs are no longer occupy a considerable space in the popular memory, which in turn raises a question about the decreased familiarity of agricultural knowledge, taking into consideration that the majority of population in Safita depend on agriculture for living. However, the general orientations toward getting involved in other careers – particularly governmental – as well as the gradual abandonment of agriculture knowledge have been the direct cause of decreased numbers of those who know such proverbs and realize their value through generations.

- Proverbs related to seasons have not passed down to the 3rd generation with only 3% of them recognizing such proverbs. The result is not unexpected compared to the recognition of these proverbs among the 1st and 2nd generation.

- The proverbs of months scored the highest percentage of being recognized by the 1st and 2nd generations among the four matrixes provided.

- The knowledge of 3rd generation with the four matrixes and included proverbs ranged between 3.3% for winter seasons, 6.6% for months, 10% for seasons and 7% for agricultural knowledge, which indicates almost a rupture between the 3rd generation on one side, and the 1st and 2nd from the other, in terms of the circulation of this verbal heritage. This issue must be taken into consideration in order to explore new means of continuation and communication among generations in terms of this artistic popular heritage which draws its strength from the deep roots in local communities. Hence, the knowledge transmitted through generations carrying a cultural, social and economic value is a form of expression peculiar to a given society, passed down through generations and developed in response to their environments.

- The questionnaire provided appears to show a positive and strong indicator to be built upon in preserving and reviving such popular heritage given the prevalent conviction among the three generations of the cognitive value those proverbs enjoy.

The research earlier has underlined the various climatic changes, be it the increased temperatures or variable rainfalls, which explains the unsuitability of some proverbs in our time, and considerably influenced the different activities of human, agriculture and livestock. Furthermore, people now are using plenty of modern devices and means that provide warmth in cold winter and keep away the oppressive heat of summer. Agriculture has been downgraded to a minor means of substance and no more considered the only source of livelihood. Proverbs then are variable and evolving through time, as well as keeping pace with events and developments, and thus generating new proverbs and elimination of others that no longer valid for existing culture. Through proverbs, we can recognize the concepts and values that were prevalent in a particular social stage.



Tarek Gazee Azizeh

Syria & democratic challenge.

Journalist and researcher, Born in Latakia on 1982, and graduated from Damascus university, faculty of Law in 2006.

He published several articles and studies in various journals, newspapers, and websites (Al- Adaab Journal, Al- Mashkat Journal, Al- Akhbar newspaper, Tishreen newspaper, Alawan, Palestinian Studies, Frog - free youth view).

Mr. Azizeh participated in establishing and editing cultural websites (Frog - free youth view; Manarat- towards a modern, civil culture), and worked as an executive manager in Oscar company for web design and programming.

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The researcher commences with having two key contradictory readings in describing and explaining the developments taking place in Syria. The first reading, adopted by the existing political regime along with its allies and supporters, refers to a “foreign conspiracy” led by the United States and its allies in the region and the world against the ruling regime in Syria in order to change its policies that reject western domination and support resistance movements in Lebanon and Palestine. According to this reading, popular protests demanding “rightful and justified” reforms have been exploited to create chaos and sectarian sedition in the country through supporting “armed terrorist groups”, and that the regime is trying to restore stability and fight terrorism, and at the same time despite all, is carrying out that eventually lead to create a democratic regime in the country.

The opposed reading assumed by the majority of Syrian Opposition and its supporting regional and international parties, claim a “popular revolution” to overthrow the totalitarian regime in order to build a democratic and pluralistic one, and that the use of excessive force by government to suppress peaceful protestors has led a significant part of them to take up arms and defend themselves at the beginning, and then accomplish the objectives of the revolution after the regime’s intransigence and insistence on adopting violence methods. The reading also go further to suggest that the regime deliberately to provoke sectarian sedition within its attempts to abort the revolution.

In spite of the obvious difference and contradiction of the aforementioned readings in explaining the scene, it still possible to pinpoint an essential common point between the two, that is the need \ desire to move from the existing ruling regime into a democratic one, which requires the search into the possibility of achieving this.

Accordingly, the research hypothesis can be summarized that – in the case of Syria – there are causative factors driving toward the democratic change, as well as numerous challenges and impediments hindering such change.

In viewing the data and information necessary to discuss the research hypothesis, neither of the two reading previously referred to is adopted by the researcher, on the basis of full commitment of neutrality and objectivity required for scientific research. In concluding the summaries and results of the research, the researcher depended on documented date relating to the ongoing developments at the current stage or those dating back to earlier stages in history through published literary pieces relating the Syrian issue.

The researcher tried to prove the hypothesis and reach a conclusion of identifying the causative factors as well as the impediments through viewing and analysis of the contents of the following axes and paragraphs:

- Introduction: the general conditions in which the research was conducted, its objectives and the topics dealt.
- Overview of historical and political brief: dealing with the milestones of modern history of Syria and development of political regime. Paragraphs were distributed as follows: from the Ottoman occupation to the French mandate, Syria under the

Mandate, independence and Syrian-Egyptian unity (the research dealt with the era expanding from March 1963 until the present time including a subsequent independent axis, due to its importance and overlap with the main axis in the research)

- The national, religious and sectarian structure\makeup of Syrian society: an explanation of the diversified structure of Syrian society and the proportion of each component in light of overall population.

- The totalitarian political regime and the authoritarian structure of the state: this axis complements the historical and political brief, and deals with the formation of current ruling regime in Syria, its developments and structure, and the role of different security and partisan organs of power, this topic is divided into two paragraphs: Baathist military rule and power struggle, Assad era

- Popular movement & democratic challenge: an overview of protest movement prevailed in Syria since March 2011, its developments and transformations. This axis included the following paragraphs:

The peaceful popular uprising, from peaceful protests to militarization, Islamic character and Salafi Jihadists, features of civil war.

- Abroad & at-home debate about Syrian situation: discussing the interest and discrepancies between international and regional powers related to Syrian crisis, both who support the regime or opposition in the light of Syria`s geopolitical location.

- Summaries and results: the researcher concludes that the analysis of historical experience of Syrian people reveals that – in addition to motivating and restraining factors of the democratic change included in the research – there is a controversial overlap in other factors whereby one factor becomes a causative and restraining at the same time, i.e. while some factors are restraining because they entail a contradiction with democracy, others are causative and contribute in themselves in stimulating and supporting the democratic change the third category, on the other hand, is hybrid \ mixed, in the sense that getting over the resultant problems makes the democratic change an urgent need as much as a stumbling block. It should be noted that this research is in no way claiming a full coverage of the factors, rather only pointing to the most important.

Among the restraining factors mentioned by the researcher was the Islamic character and Salafi Jihadists (the domination of political Islamism over the movement, and the rise of Salafist Jihadism). Example of causative factors is: the precursors and features of a renewed civil society.

Among the hybrid \ mixed factors mentioned is the national, religious and sectarian (ethnic & denominational) structure (makeup) of Syrian society. The researcher explained the reasons of classifying each of the factors according to its summary.

- Final statement: contains the following extract “it is definitely as arduous process, but not impossible. Democracy is not a system that exclusively fits nations among others, rather a civilized accomplishment achieved and developed by all humanity through long pursuit to create a balance between political authority as a necessity to organize society, and freedom as a basic requirement for all individuals”

- Sources & references: in getting access to the information, the researcher relied on dozens of sources (books, reports, studies, newspapers and magazines, the internet) and has all been referred to at the end of the research.



Wesam Asali

Rural housing in Syria: the culture of traditional architecture and its role in the re-construction phase

**Architect
Founder of IWlab,**

Wesam is an Architecture graduate from the University of Damascus. He started his career working as an architect for the HAK group, a Saudi firm based in Jeddah that has a satellite office in Damascus. In 2008, he became an Assistant Professor at the University of Damascus, teaching architectural design.

In January 2010, Wesam founded IWlab with his partner Iyass Shahin. IWlab is a 'laboratory' that brings architecture and educational practice together. IWlab ran several projects like Mábar (Passages) an educational project to encourage children's involvement in architectural and urban heritage planning. Moment, an installation took place in Sarouja (Damascus). IWlab developed its children educational program and ran another educational workshop for children (This is my city), in cooperation with the Finnish Institute in Damascus and Helsinki's Arkki School of Architecture for Children and Youth.

In April 2011, Wesam was selected to undertake a placement at the international architectural firm Henning Larsen in Copenhagen. He moved recently to be part of Vismo as visual artist and an architect in Copenhagen. Wesam was also a part of Cultural leadership program 2011 - British Council in which he is now working as an independent research visitor in Cambridge University- Department of Architecture on a research project concerning the traditional architecture in rural areas of Syrian as part of the futuristic vision of housing in Syria, particularly in post-war reconstruction phase.

Research interests: Post-war studies, cities on conflicts, Architectural Education, Architecture for Children, Traditional housing, Vernacular architecture.

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The term “re-construction” has been increasingly circulated in scientific literature as well as members of society particularly during the recent decade, fluctuating between a prospective hope and delayed responsibility concealed in terms such as “post-war” and “post-crisis”. This widespread circulation indicates our need to renovate and derive better images to replace those of devastation dominating the region. However, it seems we lack – through multiple proposals – a lot of research and a little of prudence to realize the term “re-construction”. What is it then? Where does it take us? And how do we lead it?

Unfortunately, most of Arabic sources and references do not cover the term “re-construction” in terms of definition or objectives. This can be attributed to many reasons, most importantly is that experiences or war-devastated countries relating “re-construction” were not launched from a local and subjective perspective, rather revolved in the orbit of international community, foreign investment companies and internationally-structured NGOs, whereas the war-torn society were seen as victims, and not dealt with as a basis for a positive and reviving project.

Therefore, the basic implications of the concept of “re-construction” must be referred to, which seem deeply-rooted in the regional culture as well as inclusive to build up the land and human beings alike, and apparent in the linguistic root of the term: re-construct as the opposite of deconstruct. Such definition is closely related to what is being addressed by recent studies, since the term “re-construction” has turned – having emerged out of its historical space – into a specialization and science that teaches the determinants and qualifications of this kind of development. This term has become a method in human development and the surrounding space with all its relationships.

Those studies have called for the prioritization of human development, focusing on the role of housing and settlement, and searching for the possibility of building houses derived from the culture of society and meet the requirements of self-development and ensure future sustainability. Hence, it becomes extremely important to understand the mechanisms of traditional architecture and potential activation of its social and environmental role as well as going beyond its symbolic and cultural significance. The obvious resemblance of the aforementioned characteristics with those of traditional architecture seems to stimulate the following question: does the traditional architecture contribute in building up society and post-war reconstruction? How?

One of those proposals was provided by researcher Sultan Barakat’s article (Seven pillars of post-war reconstruction), which consists the last part of a book edited by Sultan himself: (Reconstructions and Redevelopment in the Aftermath of War) to extract all the experiences reported in the book and present them as a strategy to develop countries and societies.

The following seven points: Vision, Participation, Security, Reconciliation, Equality, Development and Capability, seems to be closely connected with the realization of the role and capability of man to production, the transience of foreign assistance as

well as the differentiation between the outside observer and those who witnessed and survived the crisis and were capable of converting the details of their lives into a positive impetus for themselves and their surroundings. Although the proposals of those points are general, but they involve architectural and urban projections which allow us initially conclude that the architecture of the war-torn society is the complementary key to develop land and humans alike, and applying the concept of re-construction in terms of definition and lifestyle.

In the case of geographically-diversified Syrian countryside which depends on agriculture and relevant activities, the role of human is framed with social structure through the importance of family and its role in identifying relationships. The social factor is also considered an important factor in rural architecture along with natural factors like the various building materials and geographical nature. Accordingly, the urban and architectural patterns of rural housing style become diversified, where villages are – at the urban level – categorized into three key groups: (integrated, scattered linear), depending on the concept of dispersion and congregation according to the geographical nature and the changing concepts of ownership and the relationship between the workplace and housing. Rural housing is architecturally varied into five models in terms of the position and nature of common and open space regarding the external world and its relation with the workplace, breeding animals and food supply. The house then is named on behalf of this space, be it a courtyard, hall, in-yard, portico or only the terrace outside the house in the case of simple houses.

This rural architecture – briefly listing its properties – can play plenty of positive roles in the re-construction process as its pillars stated in the aforementioned article, and assumes an architectural and urban role represented in the flexibility and response of its buildings to locals conditions and organic growth which is undefined with prior planning network, and consequently leading to a subjective and deeper understanding to recognize the requirements of next post-war stage, in addition to the spaces of social and environmental interaction deeply-inherited within its fabric. Such urban role intersects with the pillars of vision, participation and capability.

The countryside as well has a social role as an architectural model that embraces cultural identity and memory and dependent on family structure in distribution, development and encouragement of spaces to share experiences through restoring the status of handicraft at the social and professional level, and thus partially fulfilling the requirements of conciliation and safety. The economical role, on the other hand, lies in the stability and independence of a housing property apart from full economic dependency, in addition to its composition based on (adequate) and (available) architecture within its local environment using local resources and intersecting with the pillars of equality and development.

Finally, it goes beyond doubt that identifying pre-made prescriptions for post-war development processes is not an option, given the peculiarity and uniqueness of each case. However, there are general determinants which almost act as guidance for ethics and regulations to be followed derived from former experiences of similar

processes. Personally, I do not think the answer for “Where are we heading to with the process of re-construction?” can be answered through the controversial debate between those calling for a return to the past and others who look forward to the future. Neither viewpoint can summarize the answer, due to the composite nature of post-war reconstruction cases. However, there is too much to learn outside (other nations’ experiences) which most researches focus on, since it is more adequate to study the experiences of war-torn countries as a key indicator closely connected to the profundity of the phase from historical and futuristic perspectives alike. Based on the above, this study releases an open call to re-consider the importance of traditional architecture not only as a heritage inventory, but also a main source for future development processes.