

## The UNESCO Contribution to Safeguarding and Preserving Jordan's Cultural Heritage

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### Abstract

UNESCO seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, sciences, and culture and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined in the 2030 Agenda. The present paper explores how UNESCO, the Jordanian government, and the local communities work together in the design and implementation of plans aimed at developing a knowledge-based economy, protecting Jordan's natural environment and rich cultural heritage, promoting intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, and in strengthening the institutionalization of culture for development. The present contribution is divided into two parts, the first covers the institutional/legislative framework; financial capacities of Jordanian institutions and describes the activities undertaken by UNESCO over the past years for the preservation of Jordan's tangible heritage. The section shows UNESCO's approach towards the conservation of sites from a more resilience-based perspective in an attempt to realize employment opportunities in the heritage sector and heritage as a vehicle for socio-economic resilience and sustainability. The second part of the present paper covers the collaborative efforts by UNESCO and the Jordanian Government in safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in the context of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, including the inscription of ICH elements into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the establishment of certain Jordanian institutions related to ICH safeguarding, and UNESCO's support for Safeguarding ICH in Jordan on the national and international levels. This includes capacity building, raising awareness on the importance of ICH, managing and supporting projects for drawing community-based inventories of ICH elements in Jordan, and integrating ICH into the Jordanian educational arena. Some recommendations towards safeguarding ICH in Jordan on both the governmental and societal levels are given, e.g., involving museums, enhancing media and information channels, developing educational plans, investing in ICH in the sustainable tourism sector, and modifying existing legislation and constitutional provisions to protect ICH and its bearers.

**Keywords:** UNESCO; Cultural Heritage; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Jordan Cultural Heritage.

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### **1. UNESCO: A Brief introduction**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a UN agency founded in 1946. As stated in UNESCO's Constitution, UNESCO's global mandate is to contribute to building a culture of peace, eradicating poverty, and promoting sustainable development and intercultural dialogue. In a post-war context it had become clear that "Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defenses of peace must be constructed"<sup>1</sup>.

As political and economic arrangements of governments are often not enough to secure the lasting and sincere support of the people, peace must be founded upon dialogue and mutual understanding. In this spirit, UNESCO develops educational tools to help people live as global citizens free of hate and intolerance. By promoting cultural heritage and the equal dignity of all cultures, UNESCO strengthens bonds among nations and fosters scientific programmes and policies as platforms for development and cooperation. UNESCO stands up for freedom of expression as a fundamental right and a key condition for democracy and development. Serving as a laboratory of ideas, UNESCO helps countries adopt international standards and manages programmes that foster the free flow of ideas and sharing of knowledge.

UNESCO's founding vision was born in response to a violent world war. Seventy years on and many liberation struggles later, UNESCO's mandate is as relevant as ever. Cultural diversity is under attack, and new forms of intolerance, rejection of scientific information and threats to freedom of expression challenge peace and human rights. In response, UNESCO's duty remains to reaffirm the humanist missions of education, science and culture.

UNESCO Jordan is a country office covering the implementation of activities within the scope of the Organization's mandate and areas of specialization at the national level. The office was established in 1986 as a national office for education and to a lesser extent has always operated also in the field of culture and communication and information.

### **2. UNESCO and the safeguarding and preservation of Jordan's Cultural Heritage**

With more than 15,000 archaeological sites<sup>2</sup>, six UNESCO World Heritage Sites<sup>3</sup>, fourteen sites included in the UNESCO tentative list and vernacular and built heritage dating after 1750 widespread across the country, Jordan's cultural heritage represents a strong asset for the country, a focus of international scientific research and a driver of the country's tourism industry. According to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, tourism contributes up to 13% of Jordan's total GDP, with the highest figures being recorded in 2019<sup>4</sup>.

Living traditions, defined by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, also represent a precious aspect of Jordan's heritage. The diversity of cultural layers and historical backgrounds represents a strong asset for the country and is inherently part of its nature, since Jordan has been located at the crossroads of civilizations and trading routes and thus

1 UNESCO Constitution, accessible at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution>

2 According to MEGA Jordan, the national GIS database to inventory and manage archaeological sites within the country: <http://megajordan.org/>

3 The list and description of Jordan's World Heritage Sites is available at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre website: (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/jo>) and the Department of Antiquities website (<http://doa.gov.jo/Heritage-Sitesen.aspx#:~:text=There%20are%20five%20Jordanian%20sites,sites%20on%20the%20preliminary%20list>).

4 According to MoTA statistics, an unprecedented number of visitors (5.3 million) and revenues (JD 4.1 billion) was registered in 2019.

exposed to a diversity of cultures and traditions since prehistoric times.

As an intergovernmental organization, UNESCO works in partnership with the government of Jordan by assisting in the design and implementation of its national plans aimed at developing a knowledge-based economy and protecting its natural environment and rich cultural heritage. More specifically, the UNESCO Amman Office supports Jordan in the development of enhanced systems that promote and protect the cultural and natural heritage, and an enhanced environment for the promotion of intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity and strengthen the institutionalization of culture for development<sup>5</sup>.

The cultural domain covered by UNESCO is particularly broad and is governed by the UNESCO cultural conventions, normative tools ratified by the Government of Jordan for the development of policies for protecting, safeguarding and preserving tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as promoting the diversity of cultural expressions.

The World Heritage Convention is the best-known among them, having been established in 1972 and linked to the preservation of cultural and natural sites across the world. The other conventions include the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Heritage against Armed Conflict, the 1970 Convention on the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property, the 2001 Convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2005 Convention for the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Expressions. Once a country ratifies a convention, it becomes a member state of that convention and thus needs to fulfill specific obligations to ensure the continued preservation and/or safeguarding of the country's heritage. Jordan ratified all the UNESCO conventions at an early stage and ensures their regular monitoring and implementation through the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and specifically the Department of Antiquities for the conventions related to tangible heritage (1954, 1970, 1972, 2001) while the Ministry of Culture oversees the implementation of the conventions related to intangible heritage and cultural expressions (2001 and 2005).

#### **4.a. Tangible Cultural Heritage Preservation in Jordan**

- Institutional/legislative framework; financial capacities of Jordanian institutions

The preservation of Jordan's archaeological heritage is governed by the Jordanian Law of Antiquities<sup>6</sup>, established in 1988. The Department of Antiquities is the body responsible for the conservation, management and protection of all archaeological sites and antiquities in the country dating before 1750 AD. Law no 5 of the year 2005 on the Protection of Architectural and Urban Built heritage dating after 1750 AD, is under the oversight of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and a committee specifically designated under the provisions of the law. Regrettably both the committee and the fund meant to be established were never activated, thus the protection of more recent built heritage remains a grey area that has not favored its preservation.

Despite the wealth of heritage that characterizes the country, the national authorities often lack the financial resources and to a lesser extent also the technical expertise to take good care of it. For these reasons, financial and technical assistance is required to ensure better preservation of the country's heritage. As part of its mandate, UNESCO provides

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<sup>5</sup> See UNESCO 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Law no 21 for the year 1988.

technical support to the Government of Jordan in preserving its heritage through the provision of capacity development activities to the national authorities or the implementation of *ad-hoc* projects that are in line with UNESCO conventions in the field of culture and government priorities.

- Description of the activities undertaken by UNESCO over the past years for the preservation of Jordan's tangible heritage (institutional support and implementation of *ad-hoc* projects)

In line with the above considerations and the requirements set forth by the World Heritage Committee for Jordanian World Heritage sites, over the past ten years the activities of the office have focused on providing technical support for the conservation and management of Jordanian heritage sites. In 2012 and 2013 capacity building workshops addressed to heritage site managers on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, its Operational Guidelines and management planning guidelines were carried out. Moving from theory to practice, the office supported the development of management plans at the World Heritage sites of Umm er-Rasas and Petra, which represent a mandatory requirement to ensure the better preservation of sites inscribed on the World Heritage list.

In the case of the site of Petra a four-year participatory process led by the Petra Development and Tourism Region Authority and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan under the technical guidance of the UNESCO Amman office was undertaken between 2015 and 2019, leading to the development of the first ever management plan for the site to be officially endorsed by the Government of Jordan<sup>7</sup>. The process brought together experts and stakeholders from the Petra area including members of the local communities to discuss priority topics as part of ten thematic forum group meetings addressing heritage conservation, tourism development, heritage documentation, risk management, site presentation, geology and hydrology, infrastructure development, urban planning, nature conservation, educational programmes and local community participation.

In order to enhance the technical support provided to Jordan as State Party to the World Heritage Convention, funds were raised to implement specific projects targeting the preservation, management and risk mitigation at the World Heritage site of Petra. Specific focus was placed on Petra in light of the complexity of the site and the diversity of problems that characterize it. The site was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985 in light of its historical and archaeological significance as the capital of the Nabataean kingdom, its unique rock-cut architecture and sophisticated water management system that ensured the protection of the site from hazardous events. Due to the special type of stone (Umm-Ishrin sandstone) that comprises its monuments and its geographic location, the site is also particularly exposed to natural hazards such as landslides, rockfalls, flashfloods and earthquakes. This situation, coupled with the risks posed by mass-tourism make the site particularly vulnerable and in need of conservation interventions that would better protect its integrity.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on the Petra Integrated Management Plan, please see Orbaşlı and Cesaro (2020). The plan is accessible at the following link (available also in Arabic): <https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/amman/petra-management-plan>

*The “Siq Stability” Programme (2021-2021)*

The Siq, a naturally formed gorge 1.2 km long serving as the only tourist entrance to the archaeological site is considered a monument of religious and historic significance considerably contributing to the Outstanding Universal Value of the site. It does however also represent one of the most hazardous areas in need of constant protection for the safety of tourists and visitors. In recent years, hazardous natural phenomena were registered as increasingly impacting the site.

These recent events prompted the UNESCO Amman Office, in cooperation with the national authorities, to develop a strategy towards prevention and mitigation of instability phenomena at the Siq and, thus, further contribute to the management and conservation of the site through the implementation of a multi-year programme funded by the government of Italy and titled “Siq Stability”. Over the eight year duration of the project, actions were primarily focused on the analysis of the stability conditions of the Siq slopes through the installation of an integrated monitoring system and the definition and implementation of mitigation measures against rock instability. Several awareness activities on the risk mitigation of natural hazards addressed to children and youth from the local communities were implemented over the years, in addition to training activities on rock climbing for local community members and park rangers. The project was completed in 2021 with the consolidation of five unstable blocks in the upper sections of the Siq through pioneering rock-slope interventions<sup>8</sup> in line with the priorities that had been set forth as part of a feasibility study developed in 2017. Although major risks were mitigated through the project, the monitoring of instability phenomena at the site would need to be continuously pursued in the years to come.

▪ Heritage preservation through livelihood creation

In more recent years, the approach of the UNESCO Amman Office has been shifting towards looking at the conservation of sites from a more resilience-based perspective, where not only communities play an active role in the conservation of their own heritage but also heritage represents a tool to improve the livelihoods and enhance social cohesion within the communities, thus producing a mutual benefit. This has been substantiated through the application of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Cash-for-Work projects in Jordan<sup>9</sup>, a methodology normally applied within the humanitarian context to provide immediate support to people in need. The application of this methodology to the development sector is more recent; it was established in the effort to improve peoples’ livelihoods and shift from emergency cash-based initiatives towards more long-term economic activities and thus also contributing to sustainable development.

The link between cultural heritage and sustainable development has been part of the UNESCO discourse since the 1980s (Han 2018), reflecting the emergence of the concept of community involvement in heritage management within the broader discipline of public archaeology in the late 1970s (Okamura and Matsuda 2011).

Although the 1972 Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural

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<sup>8</sup> More information on this project can be found in Cesaro et al. (2017).

<sup>9</sup> “Standard Operating Procedures: Cash-for-Work and Employment-Based projects in Jordan”, July 2022. Internal working document developed by the Cash-for-Work working group headed by the International Labour Organization and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH.

Heritage highlighted that State Parties to the convention are invited to “give heritage a role in the life of the communities” (UNESCO 1972, Article 5), the concept was not institutionalized until much later when the crucial role that communities can play in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention was recognized at the 31st session of the World Heritage Committee in 2007 by integrating the so-called ‘fifth C’ for ‘Communities’ to the strategic objectives of the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage (Budapest 2002) .

The international community officially acknowledged the role of local communities and indigenous people in the management of heritage sites through the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro – Rio + 20, June 2012) in its outcome document “The Future We Want”, in which it is mentioned how “many people [...] depend directly on ecosystems for their livelihoods, their economic, social and physical well-being, and their cultural heritage” (General Assembly 2012, Art. II, B, 30).

This approach was further reaffirmed in 2012 when ‘Local Community and Sustainable Development’ became the main theme of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention which was included in the ‘Kyoto Vision’, a document formulated to orient the implementation of the World Heritage Convention going forward. According to the ‘Kyoto Vision’, people-centred conservation of World Heritage is crucial to contribute to sustainable development and guarantee a harmonious relationship between communities and the environment, so as to ensure long-term protection of the outstanding universal value of World Heritage sites (UNESCO 2012).

Since then, pilot projects linking local communities, sustainable development and heritage conservation have started to be implemented in different countries (Han 2018) but it has become apparent that turning the theory into practice can be a complex matter often requiring trial and error approaches. Unlike the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), which strongly emphasizes the role that communities shall play in the safeguarding of their oral and intangible heritage, the participation of indigenous communities in tangible heritage preservation has represented a real “paradigm shift” in the approach to heritage conservation and management, which will inevitably require sufficient time to become common practice.

As a way to move forward and “ensure long-term protection of the outstanding universal value of World Heritage sites” (UNESCO 2012) communities shall be engaged in all types of initiatives, to further reaffirm their crucial role in the preservation of their heritage in support of their identity and enhance social cohesion. Initiatives that address both heritage conservation and risk prevention are part of this domain as the involvement of local communities can be particularly beneficial in achieving the successful application of risk prevention and mitigation measures<sup>10</sup>.

In line with this approach, the UNESCO Amman office implemented the following initiatives between the years 2018 and 2022:

*Project: “Employment Opportunities for Cultural Heritage safeguarding in Jordan”*

As a first pilot project that applied a Cash-for-Work approach to heritage conservation, this initiative aimed at carrying out heritage rehabilitation and site presentation interventions at two heritage sites, notably one archaeological site in the Mafraq Governorate (Rihab) and one UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Ma’an Governorate

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on this approach, see Cesaro and Delmonaco 2020.

(Petra). The activities undertaken included basic site maintenance and conservation, improved presentation of three tourist trails in Petra, the implementation of disaster risk mitigation interventions against rock fall hazard in the Petra upper Siq, and the restoration of mosaic floors of three churches at Rihab.

In advance of the implementation of the interventions, Site Maintenance and Tourism Development Plans for the respective sites were developed, which included site documentation, condition assessment and identification of priorities for intervention.

Over a one-year period (June 2020-May 2021) and despite the Covid-19 pandemic the project led to the creation of 263 short-term job opportunities for vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees across the two sites. The project was also timely in responding to the increased demand for employment opportunities derived from the pandemic and at a time in which the tourism sector experienced hard times.

*Project: "Youth for Heritage Conservation and Risk Prevention at Petra, Jordan"*

Although the project, implemented between 2019 and 2021, aimed primarily to complete the rock slope mitigation works in the Petra Siq the same approach towards employment generation was adopted and 82 skilled and unskilled Jordanian youth were engaged in the preservation of the World Heritage Site of Petra, including risk prevention works along some of the Petra tourist trails leading to religious high-places located on the Petra plateaus and the top of the Siq. The works aimed also at preventing soil erosion along the Petra wadis through landscaping interventions (rebuilding traditional dams and soil conservation).

*Project: "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development"*

The project "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development" is supported through the European Union Madad Trust fund in response to the Syria crisis and applies, on a larger scale, an approach similar to the one of the pilot project "Employment Opportunities for Cultural Heritage Safeguarding in Jordan", with the objective of ensuring more sustainable and longer-term job opportunities in the heritage sector. Specifically, the project aims to ensure dignified, sustainable livelihoods and create economic opportunities for vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees through the rehabilitation of six heritage sites for tourism purposes in the northern regions of Jordan. In the short term, the project will provide 2,457 employment opportunities and generate a total of 209,880 working days for Syrians and Jordanians in the proportion of 70% Jordanians and 30% Syrians. In the long term, the project aims at setting the basis for an enabling environment for the development of Public-Private Partnerships in the cultural heritage sector in Jordan and Syria. The project is implemented in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and adopts a decent work approach for the conservation and interpretation of heritage sites in line with the ILO Employment Intensive Investment Programme which aims at utilizing local expertise, local materials and labour to generate project outputs.

- Employment opportunities in the heritage sector and heritage as a vehicle for socio-economic resilience and sustainability

These initiatives have proven that heritage can be a source of development and a support to the livelihoods of the communities living in the vicinity of heritage sites. Conversely,

heritage sites can benefit from conservation and tourism presentation activities and even more so when similar initiatives are spearheaded by the communities living in the vicinity of the sites and can thus also ensure longer term sustainability of the interventions through regular maintenance activities.

According to the recent projects carried out, it is possible to transfer basic conservation skills to unskilled labour not acquainted with the heritage conservation sector. There will normally be only a limited number of activities that would suit the purpose, but if mastered well by the local labour they can be extremely beneficial for the preservation of the sites in the long run. For instance, a skill like making lime-based mortar can be easily acquired and can be easily applied to several Jordanian heritage sites. According to the science of conservation, the use of lime is much more compatible with the stone that comprises the monuments, rather than cement which regrettably was utilized for earlier repairs at most heritage sites. A similar skill alone could generate a range of job opportunities across Jordan. Similarly, other skills like stone masonry and site landscaping would do. Needless to say, training by competent experts in the those areas is crucial to ensure that the skills are acquired in the correct way. A sufficient number of hours of practice is also required to ensure adequate skill acquisition and transfer. In the case of the projects previously described, workers were hired for a minimum of two months up to a maximum of eight months, which ensured the full acquisition of the those skills. Among the workers, those considered 'skilled' due to their previous knowledge in the heritage and/or construction sector would lead teams of unskilled labour themselves and thus support intra-community knowledge transmission, which normally represents a more solid foundation towards sustainability.

At the same time, young graduates in the heritage (a majority of architects and archaeologists) or culture resource management sectors were employed to supervise, under the guidance of the same experts in charge of the training, local labour with the objective of acquiring first-hand experience of field coordination as well as field implementation of the notions learned during the university courses. It is hoped that these same young experts would be able to lead the heritage sector in the future by establishing local companies that could support the Government in country-wide preservation of heritage sites. Certainly, some adjustments to the current legal framework would be necessary to make the presence of the private sector in the heritage conservation field stronger through the establishment of public-private partnerships for better preservation of the country's heritage.

Overall, the experiences just concluded or currently being implemented widely confirm the economic potential of the heritage sector in a country like Jordan, where heritage preservation can be a leverage to tourism development, a priority area of intervention to boost Jordan's economy at large, in line with the latest development vision promoted by the Government.

#### **4.b. Synopsis of Jordan's efforts for safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in the context of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>11</sup>**

It has been reported elsewhere (Hayajneh 2019) that Jordan tried to mobilize institutional work through the call to establish a Jordanian Higher National Committee for the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) headed by the Minister of Culture to draw policies

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11 See UNESCO-1, and 2.



and set strategies related to this sector, which aims at promoting awareness of the significance of safeguarding ICH with the participation of communities, groups and individuals. It can help in the realization of a classification system for ICH on the basis of a shared methodology among the stakeholders by taking into account both UNESCO's well-defined cultural policy and its orientation in this field. Certain governmental and non-governmental institutions have accomplished some work on ICH, though much of this work is not organized and is known under different generic names and titles, i.e. folklore, popular heritage, etc. Different ICH lists, studies, and treatises on the subject were traced in the history of research on ICH in Jordan that will remain valuable sources of the country's ICH and a basis for any future inventory that complies with the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (= 2003 Convention)<sup>12</sup> and its Operational Directives<sup>13</sup>. Jordanian universities have established a small number of academic programmes related to cultural heritage; none, however, devote special attention to ICH. Rather, almost all focus on the management, conservation and restoration of tangible cultural heritage.

#### **4.b. 1: Inscription of ICH elements on the *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity***

Jordan succeeded in inscribing four elements on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as follows:

##### ***i. Cultural space of the Bedu in Petra and Wadi Ram***<sup>14</sup>

The main purpose of inscribing this element is showing its role in ensuring a better view of Jordan's ICH awareness of its significance, and encouraging dialogue that respects cultural diversity. The cultural space of the Bedouins in Petra and Wadi Rum comprises the living relationship Bedouins communities maintain with the spaces they inhabit, and from which they derive resources as mobile pastoralists and as agriculturalists, as people engaged in tourism-related activities.

##### ***ii. As-Samer in Jordan***<sup>15</sup>

As-Samer, as a performing art, is spread over wide areas in Jordan including its northern, central, and southern districts. As-Samer is considered one of the inherent art forms in Jordan practiced in different occasions specially at weddings. As-Samer is transmitted from generation to generation; it encourages the public to spontaneously participate as it encourages all attendees of all ages to take part. Inscribing As-Samer into the Representative List will encourage groups that practice it to dialogue, communicate, and engage with other parties since performing it entails collective participation. Therefore it encourages groups to hold more heritage ceremonies in their areas.

##### ***iii. Date palm, knowledge, skills, traditions and practices***<sup>16</sup>

The inscription succeeded as a joint nomination that included 15 countries (Bahrain,

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<sup>12</sup> UNESCO (2003-a)

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO (2003-b)

<sup>14</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/cultural-space-of-the-bedu-in-petra-and-wadi-rum-00122>

<sup>15</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/as-samer-in-jordan-01301>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/date-palm-knowledge-skills-traditions-and-practices-01509>

Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen). The date palm has been connected to the regional population of the submitting States for centuries, serving both as the source of numerous associated crafts, professions and social and cultural traditions, customs and practices, and as a key form of nutrition. The knowledge, skills, traditions and practices about the date palm have played a pivotal role in strengthening the connection between people and the land in the Arab region, helping them face the challenges of the harsh desert environment. The cultural relevance and proliferation of the element over the centuries prove how committed the local communities are to sustaining it; this is achieved through collective participation in multiple date-palm related activities and numerous festive rituals, traditions and customs.

*iv. Arabic calligraphy: knowledge, skills and practices*<sup>17</sup>

The inscription succeeded as a joint nomination that included 16 countries (Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen) Arabic calligraphy is the artistic practice of writing Arabic script by hand in a fluid manner to convey harmony, grace and beauty. The practice, which can be passed down through formal and informal education, uses the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet, written in cursive from right to left. Originally intended to make writing clear and legible, it gradually became an Islamic Arab art for traditional and modern works. Modern calligraphy commonly uses markers and synthetic paint, and spray paint is used for calligraffiti on walls, signs and buildings. Artisans and designers also use Arabic calligraphy for artistic enhancement, such as for marble and wood carving, embroidery and metal etching. Arabic calligraphy is widespread in Arab and non-Arab countries and is practised by men and women of all ages. Skills are transmitted informally or through formal schools or apprenticeships.

**4.b. 2: Establishment of the UNESCO Chair for Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Tourism – Al-Hussein Bin Talal University– Ma'an,**

In cooperation with the UNESCO Amman Office, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University established under the guidance of the present author a UNESCO Chair of Heritage and Sustainable Tourism at the premises of Petra College of Tourism and Archaeology in Wadi Mousa. It is anticipated that the Chair would be a dynamic national and regional Chair concerned with the promotion and safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It is based on the UNESCO philosophy that strives to complement efforts to preserve cultural heritage, with special emphasis on diverse fields such as intangible cultural heritage and movable cultural property. The long-term objective of the UNESCO Chair is to study, interpret and protect Jordan's cultural heritage as well as to provide a foundation for the study of cultural heritage through research, training, and archiving as well as information and documentation initiatives in the fields of heritage and sustainable tourism.

**4.b. 3: Establishment of the Princess Basma Bint Talal Centre for ICH – Al-Hussein Bin Talal University– Ma'an,**

Al-Hussein Bin Talal University established under the guidance of the present author the Princess Basma Bint Talal Centre for ICH at the the Petra College of Tourism and

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<sup>17</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/arabic-calligraphy-knowledge-skills-and-practices-01718>

Archaeology, which is expected to support the process of identification and documentation of ICH in southern Jordan, disseminate technical knowledge and provide equipment and necessary infrastructure, carry out conservation, and restoration and conversion of digital multimedia data on ICH, and create inventories for the preparation of nominations and operation of programmes and educational resources to ensure the continued transfer of Intangible Heritage.

#### **4.c. UNESCO's support for Safeguarding ICH in Jordan on the national and international levels:**

Since the ratification of the UNESCO 2003 Convention, the UNESCO Amman office has made great efforts to support the government towards implementing the 2003 Convention, including the following activities and initiatives:

##### ***4.c.1. Awareness campaigns about the importance of ICH***

The UNESCO Amman office in cooperation with the Jordanian National Commission and the present author, as an accredited UNESCO facilitator for the UNESCO 2003 Convention, launched in 2010 a four-month awareness campaign in a form of series of lectures and workshops that have been held in different places in Jordan. It contributed in strengthening the national capacities for implementing the 2003 Convention at the stakeholder level, involved a wide spectrum of the Jordanian community in safeguarding ICH, created a public discussion among Jordanians on ICH, stimulated dialogue on social, educational aspects of safeguarding, promoting the importance of ICH in sustainable development and creating methods of applying information and networking for developing strategies for safeguarding ICH. Respective ministries in the country, i.e. the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and Jordanian universities, were involved in this campaign, as they deal with a large sector of the Jordanian population on different levels. As there are several different levels of understanding about ICH in Jordan, different stakeholder groups were provided with targeted information, e.g. NGOs and CBOs (with a focus on cultural activities), media, secondary school teachers, university faculties and educators, and the public.<sup>18</sup>

##### **4.c.2. Mediterranean Living Heritage (*MedLiHer*) Project as a first pioneering step towards capacity building in Jordan**

Together with Egypt, Lebanon, Maison des Cultures des Monde (Paris) and the UNESCO ICH Section in Paris, Jordan participated in 2010 in Mediterranean Living Heritage (= *MedLiHer*), which is co-funded by UNESCO and the European Union within the Euromed Heritage IV. It aimed at supporting the implementation of the 2003 Convention and strengthening the institutional capacities in the respective countries in order to facilitate their effective participation in the international mechanisms for safeguarding ICH and to elaborate and develop safeguarding measures and projects with the participation of communities and relevant groups. The *MedLiHer* project contributed in improving regional cooperation and exchange of skills/experiences by establishing a network of institutions and developing a web portal that will serve as the interface of a database developed to this end. It constituted an ideal

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<sup>18</sup> See Hayajneh (2019: 101f.). For detailed information on raising awareness concerning the 2003 Convention and safeguarding measures of ICH, see Hayajneh (2009, 2011b, c, d).

venue for setting up safeguarding projects that will take due account of Jordan's needs, priorities and constraints. The three following phases were implemented:

- Assessment of the current situation concerning the state of safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Mediterranean partners States;
- Development of national safeguarding projects and setting up of a regional network;
- Implementation of the national safeguarding projects identified and developed in phase II.

The project was able to identify inventories of the Jordanian ICH, by investigating, interviewing, collecting and compiling information. Two local workshops were conducted within this project with strong participation by relevant institutions in Jordan, e.g. the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, and the local community (see Hayajneh 2012). These activities assessed national capacities for implementing the Convention. As a pilot ICH inventorying project, the Madaba Governorate was selected to apply the first community based inventorying rules of ICH in the line of the UNESCO 2003 Convention. The project was then called "Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Madaba Governorate". It enabled us to manage and support ICH according to the guidelines of the 2003 Convention to build cultural enterprise and encourage the responsible investment of ICH in sustainable development.<sup>19</sup>

#### **4.c.3. Capacity Building**

##### ***i. Capacity building workshop: Jordan to enhance its action for the implementation of the 2003 Convention 29.5 – 01.06.2016***

The workshop is considered the first implementation workshop of the 2003 Convention designed for Jordanians. The participants of the workshop were mainly selected by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the UNESCO Amman Office represented by Ms. Sabrina Salis and the present author. The workshop was attended by members of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education (curricula department), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Planning, Department of Antiquities of Jordan, Jordan TV, Department of National Library, universities, Petra National Trust, Petra Park, and JoNatCom. Representatives of NGOs working on traditional knowledge and most of the Jordanian social and ethnic and religious spectra were represented. The workshop paved the way for a better understanding of ICH among the governmental and community stakeholders, as there is no way to have ICH safeguarded without the common involvement of both parties. The next step is giving the community representatives and ICH bearers more weight in training and capacity building, as we believe it is now important to have the ICH inventoried in the country by applying the snow-ball technique.<sup>20</sup>

##### ***ii. Capacity building workshop Inventorying Intangible Cultural Heritage of Al-Mafraq Governorate – Northern Jordan - 18, 20 – 23 May 2017***

The participants of this CBI workshop were mainly selected by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the UNESCO Office in Amman (represented by Ms. Sabrina Salis) and two UNESCO facilitators (Ms. Annie Tohme-Tabet and Mr. Hani Hayajneh). The participants

<sup>19</sup> For details on the background of the project, its objectives and aims see the project documents under the link <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00233> and Hayajneh (2012, 2019: 93ff.) for more details on the results of the inventorying phase.

<sup>20</sup> See UNESCO (2016)

represented the cultural diversity of Al-Mafraq Governorate: Bedouins, semi-nomads, peasants, teachers, officials, artists, poets, and social workers. The workshop furnished a solid background among the participants to realize the importance and the role of communities for ICH, as bearers, in general, and for the inventorying activities in particular and became aware that inventorying, in addition to other safeguarding activities, is the principal objective of the 2003 Convention. The workshop established a good basis for new methods of safeguarding that can be applied by the MoC itself in close collaboration with the communities and local NGOs. Participants perceived that ICH is always under constant change, modifications, evolutions and development or disappearance. Participants realized the logic and rationale behind the inventorying process of ICH.<sup>21</sup>

#### ***4.c.4. Establishing an educational module for ICH in Jordan***

Recognizing the value of ICH is vital for the establishment of an educational model in Jordan. This requires a legal basis to create ideal conditions for children and young people to immerse in their ICH and accordingly transmit it, as well as the cooperation and coordination between different ministries, such as education, culture, social development, municipalities, and other stakeholders to lead at the end to an institutionalized system. Given this background, the UNESCO Amman Office initiated in cooperation with the present author an “Educational Module on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Jordan with Lesson Plans on Traditional Children Games”, which aims to design in-class teaching aids within the framework of non-formal education that can be delivered after school or during extracurricular activities. It is expected to introduce students to the concept of ICH and present traditional children’s games in Jordan in a fun, creative and effective manner. Through the module, teachers, students and communities, as well as policy and decision makers, will be engaged in appreciating the relevance of their ICH as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a commitment to sustainable development.<sup>22</sup>

#### ***4.c.5. UNESCO involvement in academic activities:***

##### ***The International Alexander von Humboldt Foundation: Cultural Heritage: At the Intersection of the Humanities and the Sciences***

The UNESCO Amman Office was involved in supporting the international conference *Cultural Heritage: At the Intersection of the Humanities and the Sciences* held between 16-19 April 2019 in Jordan in cooperation with the present author<sup>23</sup> as an Ambassador Scientist of the German Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to Jordan. The devastation of cultural heritage at the present time invited the present author to invest the opportunities offered by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and other stakeholders, e.g. DAAD and Yarmouk University, to consider organizing a Humboldt Conference on cultural heritage issues with special focus on West Asia, as well as other parts of the World, e.g. Europe and South America. Conceptually, the Conference is based on the notion that a deep and full understanding of cultural heritage<sup>24</sup> requires an interdisciplinary approach encompassing several fundamental, human and applied scientific fields, because interdisciplinary research brings technologies

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21 See UNESCO (2017)

22 See Hayajneh (2022a).

23 See Hayajneh (2022b), in press) for an overview of the conference and its proceedings.

24 For elaboration on the concept and definition of cultural heritage, see Borowiecki et al. (2016: 299).

(physical, chemical, biological, biotechnology, nanotechnology, etc.) and expertise from closely related fields to examine the problems of Cultural Heritage conservation and sustainability.<sup>25</sup> The Conference enabled scholars to address the complex issues surrounding cultural heritage with the objective of promoting innovative national, regional and international approaches towards conservation, preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible). A panel on heritage education was led by Chrisoph Wulf (FU-Berlin), Sabrina Salis, Giorgia Cesaro (UNESCO Amman Office) and the present author. Christoph Wulf discussed in his intervention the development of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a concept. Both Sabrina Salis and Giorgia Cesaro tackled this issue from the UNESCO point of view, while Hani Hayajneh addressed the role of formal and non-formal education in raising awareness about the importance of Intangible Cultural Heritage and what kind of educational materials could be developed for that purpose. Based on the work of the UNESCO Amman Office in the design and development of non-formal cultural heritage education activities in Jordan, Sabrina Salis and Giorgia Cesaro submitted a paper for publication in the proceedings of the conference under the title “Heritage education for the sustainable preservation of intangible and tangible cultural heritage: UNESCO’s experience in Jordan” (Salis and Cesaro 2022, in print), in which they argue that cultural heritage education can be strengthened by the design of specific curricula and teaching tools, and that the development of non-formal cultural heritage education resources and programmes can more broadly enhance the preservation of cultural heritage.

#### ***4.c.6. Community-Based Inventorying of Urban Living Heritage in Relation to Income-Generation in Irbid City***

Recently, the UNESCO Amman Office facilitated a new project on “Community-Based Inventorying of Urban Living Heritage in Relation to Income-Generation in Irbid”. The project is part of a wider UNESCO programme generously funded by the Chinese company, Yong Xin Hua Yun, that aims to explore how living traditions are evolving in urban contexts in times of rapid social change. This programme, entitled “Intangible Heritage and Creativity for Sustainable Cities,” has been carried out so far in six cities worldwide, including Ayachucho (Peru), Georgetown (Malaysia), Harare (Zimbabwe) Kingston (Jamaica), and Tbilisi (Georgia). In each city, the focus of the project has been on living traditions linked in some way to income-generation, whether they are crafts, festivals and events, traditional occupations, or others. As a pilot project, the training and the practicum itself are exploratory, and aimed at encouraging local communities, youth in particular, to take a greater interest in participating in safeguarding their own heritage, through documentation approaches such as questionnaires, photography, video and audio-recordings. The project ‘Intangible heritage and creativity for sustainable cities’ aims to promote the role of culture in sustainable urban development, and more specifically, address the role that living heritage and creativity can play in building sustainable cities<sup>26</sup>. A community-based inventorying workshop was organized to specifically develop the capacity of national facilitators on inventorying ICH elements that exist in an urban context. This is one of the key safeguarding measures encouraged under the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which Jordan ratified in 2006, as it brings community members together, to reflect on actively taking part in

<sup>25</sup> See Artioli (2010).

<sup>26</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/news/irbid-jordan-is-the-next-pilot-city-for-a-project-on-safeguarding-intangible-heritage-in-urban-areas-13342>

discussions and documenting their own culture.

### **5. UNESCO and the future of Cultural Heritage in Jordan at the threshold of the second centenary : Recommendations and concluding remarks**

The challenges that Jordanian heritage sites face remain considerable. Nonetheless, several steps have been taken towards their enhanced preservation both through the application of national strategies and plans and the implementation of initiatives led by foreign institutions or international organizations, among which are those of the UNESCO Amman office.

On the other hand, the contribution that communities can bring to heritage preservation and safeguarding is enormous and insufficient steps have been taken so far for their adequate involvement and integration in the management and conservation of heritage sites. While the Department of Antiquities employs a certain number of local workers on a yearly basis for ordinary maintenance of heritage sites, normally no training is provided to the labourers nor incentives that would support their involvement in the longer term. Similarly, initiatives led by foreign actors have a limited duration to succeed in addressing all relevant needs and often their sustainability relies on local expertise or local institutions that are normally unable to cope with competing demands.

At the same time, the lack of a national certification system for heritage professionals does not allow them to access the labour market and effectively support the government in the management of the sites. As a first step, heritage conservation profiles should be legally acknowledged within the Civil Service bureau database, so that specialized training centers or local companies can start operating and delivering accredited certifications for those working in the sector.

Certainly none of these actions could become operational or could be considered implementable without the necessary adjustments to the national legal framework, with specific reference to the Antiquities Law, which should allow more flexibility in the management of the sites by allowing a selected pool of specialized local private companies to operate under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Department of Antiquities.

Concurrently efforts shall be made to ensure that tourism development is managed in an environmentally sustainable and sensitive manner without impacting negatively on the heritage sites, which in fact represent the core cultural and economic assets tourism relies upon. The national tourism strategy 2021-2025<sup>27</sup> seems to go in this direction, by placing emphasis on sustainability and in reducing the environmental impact of the interventions.

Building on the solid achievements of the past years, the above are to be considered some of the most relevant priorities to focus on for the years to come, leading to the better sustainable preservation of Jordan's exceptional heritage sites.

#### **5.b. Intangible Cultural Heritage**

On the basis of what has been accomplished during the last two decades, Jordan might be in the position to explore and apply specific tailored measures and initiatives with full involvement of communities, groups and individuals to continue safeguarding its ICH that

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<sup>27</sup> Jordan National Tourism Strategy 2021-2025:

[https://www.mota.gov.jo/ebv4.0/root\\_storage/en/eb\\_list\\_page/national\\_tourism\\_strategy\\_en\\_\(release\\_1.0\)\\_20.12.2021.pdf](https://www.mota.gov.jo/ebv4.0/root_storage/en/eb_list_page/national_tourism_strategy_en_(release_1.0)_20.12.2021.pdf)



look at the same time to fulfill the requirements of *Sustainable Development Goals*<sup>28</sup>, for example, but not limited to:

***5.b.1: Building capacities of communities, groups and individuals for safeguarding ICH and raising their awareness about its importance***

Initiating programmes of training, communication, promotion and dissemination that aim at providing guidelines for the handling of ICH by means of focuses, principles and operational proposals that will allow for the implementation of actions for the purpose of training, transmission, promotion and dissemination of expressions of ICH. Potential agents for the development of safeguarding actions would include cultural organizations and communities at the local, regional, national and transnational levels.

***5.b.2. Exploring the potential of Jordanian museums in safeguarding ICH***

Museums can play an important role in raising awareness about ICH. However, the handling of ICH at museums is based on a revision of the concept of Cultural Heritage, which has for some years now been in the process of redefinition at the international level. Since living cultural heritage is closely tied up with the identity and continuity of groups, we need to consider adding ICH elements to the tangible museological collections. Museums could be tested for exploring the possibility of connecting ICH with the artifacts in museums, a method which might lead to the interpretation of those collections for the people whom the museum serves. Story telling is one expressive form that deserves attention in this respect, where a story can be associated with a particular object in the museum. Museums can play an important role in informal education, effectuation of museums' role in pedagogical and educational ways and use of different museum sources.<sup>29</sup>

***5.b.3. Supporting educational institutions to infuse ICH contents into their educational plans***

Formal and non-formal education can of course play an important role in strengthening and raising awareness of ICH and its transmission both within and beyond communities who practice ICH. Collaborative processes in the country can engage all parties working in the field of ICH in conceptualizing, producing, and implementing educational projects to safeguard ICH.<sup>30</sup>

***5.b.4. Enhancing the role of NGOs working in the field of ICH***

NGOs contribute important information and ideas and can be considered complementary to the local communities, as they are supposed to participate in safeguarding ICH in close affinity with them. They can help in implementing programmes on ICH education for children and youth and give advice to UNESCO and governments on how to stimulate and develop ICH policy and strategic planning (Hayajneh 2011a).

***5.b.5. Modifying the existing legislation and constitutional provisions.***

This can succeed in a way to deal with ICH issues to be harmonious with the rights of the communities, groups and individuals, so that they have the freedom to control the manifestations of their ICH, while governmental bodies are there to ensure that the

<sup>28</sup> For more details, see: <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.

<sup>29</sup> For further considerations for ICH and museums see Ferrer-Yulfo (2020).

<sup>30</sup> See Cadaval (2007) for discussion.



community has not been deceived into giving [...] authorization or simply not consulted” (Lixinski 2010: 49f.).

***5.b.6. Enhancing media and information channels for more awareness raising on the importance of ICH.***

Media plays a fundamental role in disseminating and showcasing ICH. Communication strategies via the Internet and social networks can be developed, as the Web represents an inexhaustible source of information and resources for communication and dissemination. However, conditions must be taken into consideration in order to avoid threats of overexposure that could be harmful to the social function of ICH, e.g. by transforming it into another type of expression focused more on tourism or profit.

***5.b.7. Supporting institutions to conduct research on the best practices for safeguarding ICH in cooperation with the communities, groups and individuals***

It is currently noticeable that decreasing research interest makes it difficult to determine the appropriate solutions for the different problems facing the decline of a large sector of ICH in Jordan.

***5.b.8. Investing ICH in the sustainable tourism sector.***

Certain products and expressions are considered within the ICH category, such as craftsmanship, which benefits from tourist development, as their output can be separated from the producers, with regard to its dimension as tangible craft heritage.<sup>31</sup>

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31 For further consideration on the investment of ICH in the sustainable tourism sector, see Kim et al. (2019)

## مساهمة اليونسكو في الحفاظ على التراث الثقافي في الأردن

هاني هيأجنة<sup>1</sup>، جيورجيا شيزارو<sup>2</sup>

### ملخص

تسعى اليونسكو إلى بناء السلام من خلال التعاون الدولي في التعليم والعلوم والثقافة، وتسهم في تحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة المحددة في خطة عام 2030. وعليه، فتستكشف هذه الدراسة كيفية عمل اليونسكو والحكومة الأردنية والمجتمعات المحلية معاً في تصميم/ تنفيذ خطط تهدف إلى تطوير اقتصاد قائم على المعرفة، وحماية البيئة الطبيعية في الأردن وصون تراثها الثقافي الغني وحفظه، علاوة على تعزيز الحوار بين الثقافات والتنوع الثقافي، وتعزيز مأسسة الثقافة من أجل التنمية. وتنقسم الدراسة جزأين، يغطي أولهما الإطار المؤسسي/ التشريعي، والقدرات المالية للمؤسسات الأردنية، ويصف الأنشطة التي اضطلعت بها اليونسكو على مدى السنوات الماضية للحفاظ على التراث المادي الأردني، كما يوضح نهج اليونسكو تجاه الحفاظ على المواقع من منظور أكثر مرونة في محاولة لتحقيق فرص العمل في قطاع التراث بوصفه وسيلة لتحقيق التعافي والاستدامة من النواحي الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، ويغطي الجزء الثاني الجهود التعاونية بين اليونسكو في عمان والحكومة الأردنية في صون التراث الثقافي غير المادي (ICH) في سياق اتفاقية اليونسكو لعام 2003 لحماية التراث الثقافي غير المادي، بما في ذلك إدراج عناصر التراث الثقافي غير المادي في القائمة التمثيلية للتراث الثقافي غير المادي للبشرية، وإنشاء بعض المؤسسات الأردنية ذات الصلة بصون التراث الثقافي غير المادي، ودعم اليونسكو لصون التراث الثقافي غير المادي في الأردن على المستويين الوطني والدولي، ويشمل ذلك بناء القدرات، وزيادة الوعي بأهمية التراث الثقافي غير المادي، وإدارة المشاريع ودعمها لإعداد قوائم حصر مجتمعية لعناصر التراث الثقافي غير المادي في الأردن، ودمج التراث الثقافي غير المادي في الساحة التعليمية الأردنية. واشتملت الدراسة على تقديم بعض التوصيات بشأن صون التراث الثقافي غير المادي في الأردن على المستويين الحكومي والمجتمعي، من مثل: إشراك المتاحف، وتعزيز قنوات الإعلام والمعلومات، وتطوير الخطط التعليمية، واستثمار التراث الثقافي غير المادي في قطاع السياحة المستدامة، وتعديل التشريعات والأحكام الدستورية القائمة الحالية لحماية حقوق المجتمعات في تراثها الثقافي غير المادي.

**الكلمات الدالة:** اليونسكو، التراث الثقافي، الاستدامة، إدارة المشاريع، المتاحف، الخطط التعليمية، استثمار التراث.

<sup>1</sup> قسم النقوش، كلية الآثار والأنثروبولوجيا، جامعة اليرموك، الأردن.

<sup>2</sup> مكتب اليونسكو عمان، الأردن.

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