



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



AHRC GCRF Area-Focused Network + Annual Reporting

Annual Report to AHRC from October 2019 to October 2020

AHRC GCRF Network + Title: The Nahrein Network

AHRC GCRF Network + PI: Professor Eleanor Robson

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Lead Institution: University College London

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Date report was shared/is to be shared with relevant board or management groups:

- Nahrein Network Management Committee, 1 December 2020 (preliminary draft)
- Nahrein Network core team, January 2021 (final draft)
- Nahrein Network Management Committee, March 2021 (submitted version)

Approved by (AHRC staff):

Section 1: Summary of achievements

Please highlight any major achievements over the course of the reporting period. In particular, please highlight any successes or milestones from your programme

(Max. 750 words)

The third year of the project was marked by significant areas of consolidation and recognition, despite major challenges resulting from ongoing political protest and instability in Iraq, and a fragile security situation, even before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Strand 1 (capacity building): In October 2019 we held a 2-day workshop with the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and the Iraq-British Business Council in Baghdad to explore ways to strengthen Iraqi universities' research collaboration capacities, with each other and internationally. Two further British Academy-funded Iraq Publishing Workshops were also held that autumn.

In late 2019 and first quarter of 2020, we held 2 more rounds of applications to our Visiting Scholarships programme, which resulted in the offer of 7 further placements. Scholars who undertook their placements during this reporting period were:

- Prof Nasser Jassem (University of Mosul, Iraq), hosted at UCL History, researched the history of British orientalism (August-October 2019)
- Mr Dihad A Mutalb Mustafa (Directorate of Antiquities, Soran, Iraqi Kurdistan), hosted by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, researched museum displays and looked into models for outreach activities which can be implemented at the Shanidar Cave site in Iraqi Kurdistan (October-December 2019)
- Dr Mustafa Dogan (Batman University, Turkey), hosted by the Archaeology Department, Reading University, worked on the role of eco-museums in cultural heritage and sustainable development (November-December 2019)
- Mr Sadiq Khalil (Prime Minister's Office, Iraq), hosted by the Visual and Material Culture Research Centre, Kingston Schools of Arts, Kingston University, looked into ways to build effective advocacy through case-studies of endangered Iraqi heritage history and civilization (February 2020)
- Dr Ali Naji Attiya (University of Kufa, Iraq), hosted by the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, examined the relationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage and ways to increase awareness of its importance in the Iraqi holy city of Najaf (February-March 2020)

In the Network's devolved Research Grants scheme (Strand 2), We awarded funding to four more small projects. They investigate:

- the Shrine of the prophet Uzayr (Ezra) in southern Iraq as a site for diversity and cohesion, led by Prof. Abdulrahim H. Atia, University of Misan, Iraq (January 2020–June 2021)
- ways of developing the Iraqi Marshland tourist experience, led by Dr Raheem Hameed Abed Al-Abdan, University of Thi Qar, Iraq (January 2020–June 2021)
- documenting and analysing local archives, especially from the British colonial period, at the Zheen Center, led by Dr Shenah Abdullah, Kurdistan Institution for Strategic Studies, Sulaimani, Iraqi Kurdistan (January–December 2020)

- historical memory, heritage and cultural identification among displaced communities in eastern Turkey, led by Dr Emre Serifoglu, Sirince Archaeological Association and Koç University, Turkey, January 2020–June 2021.

The small project on Thesiger's Tarada, led by Rashad Salim of Safina Projects, and the large project on the Kurdish Cultural Heritage Network, led by Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin of Sulaimani Polytechnic University (see case studies) came to a successful close, leaving two large and ten small projects ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

In Strand 3 (policy and legacy), the collaboration with Chatham House continued with further round-tables on the role of cultural heritage in state-building in Iraq. A policy paper in English and Arabic will be published in spring 2021. In spring 2020 an unexpected opportunity arose to lead a policy review for the European Union on its role in the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage in conflict and post-conflict contexts in the Middle East, using Iraq as a case study. The resulting report, with lead author Dr Mehiyar Kathem, was published on 1 October 2020.

In the first half of 2020, we successfully negotiated the withdrawal of UKH as a partner university and reconfigured the project and budget to enable two Management Committee members (and former fundees) to become Co-Is: Dr Mohammed-Amin (above) and Dr Jaafar Jotheri of Al-Qadissiyah University, Iraq. Towards the end of the reporting period, UCL secured substantial funding from a private donor which will fund the Network for a further ten years after October 2021.

Section 2: Project Management and Operations

- i) Please provide details of how the operational and management team has delivered on its planned objectives across the project? Please describe how the work of the programme and its approaches have evolved over the funding period, the barriers faced and how the programme has mitigated for and responded to them.

This should include details of any challenges, and how these challenges were addressed to ensure a coherent approach. **Please provide details on how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the programme.**

As noted in last year's report, we had been experiencing challenges with the governance of our partner university in Erbil, University of Kurdistan Hewlêr, since spring 2019. In early 2020 it became necessary to terminate the collaboration agreement with UKH. This meant having to close our research centre at UKH in June (which had been without administrator for over a year by then), letting go of our UKH postdoc, Dr Amani Sulaiman, and accepting that a small project funded at UKH would not be successfully completed.

On 1 July 2021, former grantees and current Management Committee members, Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin of Sulaimani Polytechnic University and Dr Jaafar Jotheri of Al-Qadissiyah University became our Co-Is in Iraq, with the former UKH budget shared equally between them. Contracts are now in place.

The greatest challenge continues to be around payments, with most transfers to Iraq being only partly successful. In early 2020 ER and OB secured a high-level meeting with UCL's Finance Department to discuss possible solutions. As a result, the times for processing devolved projects' invoices reduced from weeks to days. However, there are still considerable challenges involved in ensuring that payments from UCL reach their Iraqi destinations, due to the US financial sanctions regime on neighbouring Iran. Work to mitigate these challenges is ongoing.

Most devolved projects adapted well to the Covid pandemic, and have even thrived with the new collaboration and communication mechanisms offered by Zoom. However, two devolved projects were already facing multiple ongoing problems with payments and the logistics of collaboration, which were exacerbated by lockdown. After several attempts at replanning, those projects were terminated. In one case, it was possible to formulate a new project, led by the Iraqi former Co-I of the old one; the unspent funds from the other were returned to the devolved pot, and will be issued in a bonus round of small projects in winter 2020-21.

The pandemic had the greatest impact on the Visiting Scholarships programme. With seven scholars still to undertake placements in the UK, we decided, in collaboration with our partners (BIAA, BISI, CBRL and IHF), to cancel the final funding round which was supposed to run in November 2020. These funds were also vired to the bonus round of devolved funding. Meanwhile, some of the Scholars who have yet to take up their placements still hope to undertake them in person in 2021. However, most are currently in discussions with their hosts and our partners to undertake a virtual placement.

We had also organised a round-table panel discussion with Network members on decolonising Middle Eastern heritage, to be held the British Society of Middle Eastern Studies' summer conference (June 2020), but this too was cancelled. We hope to reschedule it for summer 2021.

ii) What issues relating to due diligence have arisen during the year? Have any changes been made or learning implemented to assurance processes and to mitigate risk? Please also include comments on any safeguarding and EDI policies or procedures.

No changes to our own procedures since the last reporting period.

However, UCL's new, extensive due diligence form is proving a challenge to our Iraqi awardees. Many of the universities we work with cannot release financial statements or annual reports, which are confidential. Nor are they required to have local policies, as they are subordinated to the Ministry of Higher Education and considered to have to abide by Iraqi law and Ministry issued regulations. A third difficulty is to do with language barriers and resources: where requested documentation is in place and can be shared, there is little capacity to translate lengthy documents into English from Arabic.

Safeguarding: the Network does not fund projects on children or vulnerable adults as a matter of policy (clearly stated in our guidance).

Our EDI policy is clearly stated on our website and all funding/scholarship applications. We strive to keep a gender and ethnicity balance across our core team and management committee.

iii) Plans for following year; please provide an updated work plan and budget and your rationale for any changes

In the period October 2020–September 2021 we plan to:

- Continue to be sensitive and reactive to the ever-changing political and security situation in Iraq, as well as the ongoing challenges of the pandemic
- In Strand 1, ensure all awarded Visiting Scholars are funded and hosted either in person or virtually by the end of the Network's life-cycle
- In Strand 2, successfully pay the remaining funds to active projects
- Support currently funded projects to the end of their lifecycle (four have already been completed; the rest are due to finish within the next reporting period)
- Offer a bonus round of funding for devolved projects in winter 2020-21 and support them to deliver successfully by June 2021.
- Evaluate the successes and lessons learned from our devolved projects and visiting scholarships
- In Strand 3, continue the policy collaboration with Chatham House, which currently includes a series of weekly webinars from Oct to Dec 2020, involving many current and former grantees; and publish a policy report in English & Arabic, planned for March 2021
- Collaborate with the American University in Sulaimaniya on a session on cultural heritage policy in Iraq, in the spring 2020 edition of the influential Suli Forum
- Continue to develop influential advocacy relationships with appropriate UK and Iraqi ministries, embassies, charities and NGOs, with further meetings and events as needed
- Support the PRAXIS project's work on shared learning and continue to support our sister Network+ projects as well as the next generation of Network+ projects
- Continue our own research strands, as follows:
 - Dr Mohammed-Amin on the digital heritage experience, strengthening research and technical capacity among ECRs
 - Dr Jaafar Jotheri on documenting the cultural heritage of the Diwaniyah and Samawa governorates in Iraq
 - Dr Mehiyar Kathem on the role of heritage in state-building, examining the internal obstacles and infrastructural barriers to effective development
 - Dr Paul Collins on museum practice, including a temporary exhibition and a major redisplay of the Middle East galleries in the Ashmolean Museum, in the light of his collaborations for the Network
 - Professor Eleanor Robson on decolonising research on Middle Eastern antiquity, through continued development of open access, Arabophone editorial software and the Oracc.org website

- Continue financial and strategic planning for the Network's evolution after the end of the current funding period

BUDGET CHANGES

The following changes/underspends are anticipated in 2020-21:

- The cancellation of the final round of the Visiting Scholarships, plus the termination of a devolved project, has freed up funds to be offered in a Bonus Round of devolved project funding.
- Further underspend is expected in the Visiting Scholarships, as most outstanding placements are expected to be virtual, and thus incur lower costs than budgeted.
- There is currently an underspend in the UK core team's travel and expenses budget line. We are actively discussing how best to redeploy it.

Section 3: Devolved Funding

i) Please provide an overview of how your Network+ programme has deployed its flexible funding pot over the course of the reporting year. **How has devolved funding been affected by Covid-19?**

As planned, we advertised and awarded a further round of devolved funding in November 2019. We funded 4 small projects.

These projects are summarised in section 1, with further details on ResearchFish and our website.

As noted above, due to under-expenditure in the VS scheme and the termination of a small devolved project, we were able to plan a bonus round for small, short-term projects to be implemented and reported on during 2021.

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic has affected some devolved projects more than others. In order develop sensible workarounds, in spring 2020 we surveyed PIs to assess current and future potential impacts on their projects, expected delays and to suggest contingency plans that would allow their projects to continue. As a result, a number of projects requested no-cost extensions and moved to implement remote/virtual ways of working, transferred more of the agency to local partners or reconfigured their approach to allow for safety measures. As noted above, two projects were terminated.

ii) Do you envisage any changes to your use of the flexible funding for the following year e.g. new unanticipated opportunities which have arisen?

See above on the bonus round of devolved funding.

Section 4: Research Project Development and Strategy

i) Capacity Strengthening in relevant DAC listed countries

Please indicate the ways in which your programme has helped to strengthen capacities in DAC listed countries. Has there been unanticipated capacity development? In what ways has your project supported career development?

- Training and capacity building within devolved projects, particularly in large projects, as in the case of the DHC Network based in Sulaimaniyah, the Online Resources training piloted in the Bristol University based OCHRE project, as well as during the initial stage of the Babylon project.
- 'Second-generation' capacity-strengthening events and projects across the Network, such as the Iraq Publishing Workshops and more recent webinars
- Visiting Scholarships and webinars as 'gateways' out of institutional academic isolation

More details will be given in this year's ResearchFish update.

ii) Interdisciplinarity

Have you identified other research areas to include in your programme during the reporting period? Have there been opportunities for unanticipated disciplines to be drawn into the project?

Little change from last year — history, languages, digital humanities, museum and heritage studies, development studies, politics and so on, although Dr Amani Sulaiman's departure we have lost economics. The range of work we carry out and fund is a fair reflection of this disciplinary mix.

iii) Equitable partnerships

Please indicate the progress you have made this year with regards to developing partnerships (academic, non-academic, artists, third sector, non-governmental etc). Please include your approach to forging new partnerships and sustaining existing partnerships? How have these partnerships been supported? How can you demonstrate the fairness and equity within these partnerships?

What opportunities and challenges have you faced in relation to partnerships and networking? How have these influenced how you work with new and existing partners in the future?

Although our main partnership with UKH has ended, we have replaced this two new Co-Is in Iraq, as noted above. They have been with us in different capacities since the start of the project and have been fundamental to its development and success. The project's leadership team is now equally balanced between Iraqis and Europeans, men and women. Much of the day-to-day liaison with PIs of devolved projects can now happen in Arabic/Kurdish, which is much more satisfactory for everyone.

The main challenge in sustaining good relationships with devolved projects has been in paying them, as also noted above. Conversely, the pandemic has opened up Middle Eastern academia via Zoom and other online communication technologies, allowing new forms of conversation and exchange.

Yet another change of government in Iraq, in spring 2020, meant that we lost our relationships with the Ministers of Culture and of Higher Education and it proved challenging to form new relationships with their successors without the possibility of in-country visits. However, strong contacts with senior civil servants in those ministries remain. (Similarly, we have lost direct touch with the ever-changing staff of the British Embassy, British Council and UNESCO Iraq but are reaching that constituency instead via policy work through the EU and Chatham House and, to a lesser extent, via PRAXIS.)

iv) Engagement and Communications

Please provide an overview of the programme's progress over the course the year in relation to its engagement and communications strategy. Please include any opportunities and challenges you faced in delivering this strategy and how you responded to these.

Website and blog

Traffic on the website averaged 600 users a month. In spring 2020 OB began a significant update of the website that will give much greater prominence to the ongoing and finished work of the Network's funded projects and scholars. There is also a new section on the Chatham House and EU collaborations on policy development. Recent blog posts have covered the Zoom-boom in Iraqi academia (by MK), the next phase of the Chatham House collaboration (MK) and ERs' work on Arabophone open-access tools for ancient history teaching and research (by one of ER's students, Fareeha Masood).

Podcasts

MK's podcast series for the Network now comprises 21 episodes. Each typically attracts 30–50 listeners on Soundcloud initially but they have a long shelf life, and there is a direct correlation between date of release and number of listeners. Episodes from 2018 have now racked up many hundreds of listens, on Soundcloud and UCL Media Central combined. Mehiyar's interview with the highly charismatic Professor Nasser Jassem of Mosul University, one of 2019's Visiting Scholars, attracted over 200 listens in the month after its release.

Facebook

Our Facebook page currently has 730 followers. We typically post to FB once a week) and continue to reach 250–750 people with each post. Our most popular Facebook post topics remain events, the VS scheme, and our podcast series.

Twitter

The Network's Twitter account now has nearly 2,350 followers. We typically tweet 10-15 times a month and receive 20,000–35,000 engagements a month. Tweets about our devolved projects and the work of our Iraqi network members are most popular. Twitter remains our most prominent social media platform.

v) Sustainability and legacy development

What measures are you developing to plan for sustainability of the project, beyond the duration of the funding?

As noted above, we are finalising a major gift that will support the network for the coming decade. Focusing exclusively on Iraq and the UK, it will retain the same basic operating principles, practices and governance structure, and build on the considerable successes of the past three years. It will fund:

IN IRAQ

- The continued work of Co-Is in Iraq
- A substantial budget for locally led devolved projects, awarded by competition and peer review, with potential for joint funding schemes with like-minded partners, with an expanded focus on:
 - Integrated approach to cultural and natural heritage
 - Youth-focused solutions, within and outside state
 - Reparative approaches to the past
 - An expanded range of research skills workshops, building on the success of the British Academy Iraq Publishing Workshops in 2019

IN THE UK

- An expanded Visiting Scholarships programme in continued collaboration with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq
- Fully funded studentships (MA and PhD) and short-term visiting studentships at UCL for Iraqi graduate students
- The continued involvement of the existing UK team, plus a part-time comms officer and a two-year postdoc

Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

How have the monitoring and evaluation approaches and methodologies used by the programme been challenged, adapted and deployed over the course of the reporting period?

No change on last year; our procedures remain robust.

Section 6 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Optional)

Please indicate the number of applications made and awarded in the table below.

Characteristic		PI (applications)	PI (awards)	Co-I (applications)	Co-I (awards)
Gender	Female				
	Male				
	Other				
	Not disclosed				
Age	0 – 29				
	30 – 39				
	40 – 49				
	50 – 59				
	60+				
	Not disclosed	x	x	x	x
Ethnicity	Please describe				
Disability	Known Disability				
	No known disability				
	Not disclosed	x	x	x	x

If you are unable to provide the information as requested above, please use the space below to explain how your data maps onto the categories above.

In Iraq, identity politics has been violently weaponised since the 2003 war, to the point of death. As a result, even anonymised requests to reveal ethnicity and religious affiliation (which do not map on to these categories in any case) are met with hostility and suspicion. As a matter of principle, in order to maintain the trust of our partners, we therefore do not request information about protected characteristics for monitoring purposes.

For round 5 of our Strand 1 Visiting Scholars scheme we kept monitoring data as follows:

	Applicants	Awardees	Success rate
Male	12	3	25%
Female	11	1	8%
Academic	13	2	15%
Of which ECR	9	1	11%
Non-academics	10	2	20%

Section 7: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Please provide an update on how the programme is addressing and encouraging gender equality and wider issues of equalities, diversity and inclusion? Please state if you have experienced any challenges during the reporting year and how you responded to these.

The Network has a clear equalities and inclusion policy, which is prominent on the website and all grant applications materials. The leadership team itself is gender balanced (3:3) and ethnically diverse, as are our Management Committee (where white British members are in a small minority) and our Visiting Scholarships committee. Peer reviewers are assigned to large grant applications with EDI in mind.

The Visiting Scholarships scheme continues to be male-dominated. Given the challenges for women with caring responsibilities to travel abroad for any length of time, there was little we could do about that, given the budget available. Virtual scholarships (would) have made the scheme more accessible: a lesson learned for the future.

Given the sensitivities around ethnicity and religious affiliation, we use geography as a proxy for intrusive questions of diversity. Within Iraq, we ensure that we fund good projects and visiting scholars from across Iraqi Kurdistan, the predominantly Shi'a south and the predominantly Sunni north.

This year we have funded 4 diverse projects, each concentrating on a different area: the conservation of a religious site of importance in both the Muslim and the Jewish traditions, research into ways that local cultural and natural heritage can boost tourism, documenting and analysing local archives on the history of colonial occupation; and the history, memory and cultural heritage of internally displaced people.

Section 8: Impact of Network Plus project and ODA compliance

i) Please provide an update on progress in relation to the ODA Compliance Statement and Pathways to Impact plan you provided in your application.

The Network's focus remains on Iraq, as a DAC-listed Middle Income Country and a Fragile State. In our original ODA compliance statement we aimed to improve the lot of five groups that have been identified as at risk of being 'left behind': youth; women and girls; rural dwellers; those living in conflict-affected areas; and cultural, ethnic and religious minorities.

- improved employability for young humanities graduates (SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 6: Decent Work and Economic Growth) — tackled by three inter-university curriculum development projects (one large, two small) across Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan and one Visiting Scholarship

- improved inclusion and representation of women and minorities in education, society and the economy (SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities) — tackled by a variety of small research projects on Baghdad, Kufa, Mosul and Najaf, and by two Visiting Scholarships
- increased local tourism and knowledge economies around rural cultural heritage sites (SDG 14: Life Below Water; SDG 15: Life on Land) — tackled by the large research projects on Babylon and on Heritage Recovery in Erbil's rural periphery, two small projects on the Iraqi marshlands, and by five Visiting Scholarships
- better social cohesion in war-damaged communities (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) — addressed by projects on the history, cultural heritage and memory of displaced groups in Cilicia and around Mosul, as well as two Visiting Scholarships.
- We also consider Iraq itself to have been 'left behind' and excluded from economic and social development, by the effects of the past 30 years. A major aim of the Network to help Iraq's academic reintegration into the region. For instance the Beirut-Erbil based *Rural Heritage Recovery* large project has been organising online citizen science workshops, which blurs the line between the producers and consumers of knowledge and encourages wider public participation in the social research process.

ii) Please provide a brief overview of the progress made to date towards achieving impact. How is the programme promoting the social and economic development and welfare of the DAC listed country/countries? This can include impact at community, practice and policy level. *(summary of information submitted into Researchfish)*

Covid has dramatically slowed the pace of life (and our projects) on the ground, and hampered projects' reporting abilities. We are preparing a comprehensive evaluation of impact for spring-summer 2021.

Meanwhile, there are some notable second-order impacts to report, in that our ethos and methods have been driving major shifts in the ways in which international funders conceptualise their responsibilities towards heritage in Iraq. ALIPH, the Kaplan Fund, and the Bibliotheque Nationale Francaise, for instance, have all shifted towards people/expertise-centred projects rather than site- or object- focused ones led by outsiders. We expect further impacts from the EU and Chatham House reports, as well as more informal consultancies.

Section 9: Further and Leveraged Funding

Please provide an overview of any additional funding leveraged in the reporting period to support this programme? Please provide the total amount and the sources of funding.

Details of further funding for related research or development projects which have been stimulated by your Network + award should be including within your Researchfish submission and should not be included here.

During this reporting period, we have not received any additional funding.

Section 10: Sharing learning

Please highlight any learning that you are happy and comfortable for us to share with other GCRF and Network + award holders:

The main issue remains getting payments to Iraq, but the team managed to secure a high-level meeting with UCL's Finance Senior Management and, as a result, the procedure was sped up via a couple of workarounds:

- although payments are still very much influenced by international banking regulations, we were advised to submit the details for pre-payment approval with UCL's bank, a process which was thought to increase our chances of making a successful transfer to Iraq
- the PIs of the devolved project were also asked to confirm awareness and acceptance of any discrepancies in received sums due to exchange rate fluctuations, especially as they require the payments to be made in US dollars.
- considering the Nahrein administrator has oversight of invoices, contracts, budget and the due diligence process, Research Finance has agreed to allow Purchase Orders to be raised by us, not them. This reduced the waiting time for a PO from 10+ working days to 48 hours and reduced the number of instances in which the invoice was not matched with the relevant PO
- as a result, a monthly report of payments made is shared with the Research Finance grant officer, so they are kept up to date and can intervene and advise as needed.

This way of working has helped us to identify failed transactions faster and to address any errors in POs much more easily.

We have continued to participate in the GCRF N+ manager's network, led by Isobel Templer of (now) Edinburgh University's *Rising from the Depths*. The project managers meet regularly and also share lessons learned via the website and the MS Teams group. The managers and administrators of the second round of GCRF Network+ awardees have also been invited to engage.

Case studies

Case studies are an important evidence resource for AHRC and GCRF. We use them to understand the contribution research can make and to provide important evidence to external bodies about the value of funding in the arts and humanities. We also use them to offer a compelling narrative for those who want to learn more about the AHRC, GCRF and the role of research (especially the arts and humanities) towards international development.

Please provide any updates to case studies presented in the last annual report

Please provide 2-4 new case studies (400 words maximum word limit for each case study). The case studies can highlight progress and achievements relating to building capacity, creating and sustaining networks and partnerships, exchanging knowledge or effecting change.



Update of 2017-2018 Case Study 1

Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin's progress following her Visiting Scholarship (Round 1 awardee)

Academic hosts: ENMOTIVE project at the University of Glasgow

Scholarship Dates: 24/09-23/11/2018

Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin of Sulaimani Polytechnic University was awarded a Visiting Scholarship, which she undertook during September-November 2018 at the University of Glasgow, by joining the EMOTIVE project.

Following her return from the UK, she aimed to evaluate the impact of the EMOTIVE approach in users' experience, perception, and long-term interest and connection to the Slemani Museum and its collections. The tools and support that the EMOTIVE team provided during and after her placement enabled her to expand her research in this area. EMOTIVE approaches and tools such as the StoryBoard Editor (SBE) supported a pilot implementation in Slemani Museum, being the first of its kind in any Iraqi museum. As a result, Dr Mohammed-Amin was invited to the public demo of the EMOTIVE project in October 2019 where she got the opportunity to see and experience the outputs of the project and connect to more researchers around the world. She is currently actively expanding her research collaboration with the University of Glasgow.

In addition to expanding the projects for Slemani Museum, the EMOTIVE tools and research findings have enabled Dr Mohammed-Amin to explore other ways of transferring knowledge to the academic world and beyond, to community partners, including government and NGOs. Most recently, her research group was delegated by the Director of the Planning Unit at the Sulaimani Governorate to help with developing a cultural heritage project for Sulaimaniya National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) for the "Cities Without Borders" programme. As part of that, they are planning a city-wide location-based mobile guide that connects the city's iconic historic buildings together. Her involvement with such a large multi-disciplinary and multi-partner project like EMOTIVE also transferred into the effort of coordinating and managing large grants, via the means of the management and communications processes and tools she became familiar with during her time as a visiting scholar and set the grounds for continuing to expand her work during the coming years.

2020 update:

The networks and collaborations developed during Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin's involvement with EMOTIVE project continue to thrive, over two years after the completion of her Visiting Scholarship. Most recently, she started to collaborate with two EMOTIVE team members on evaluating the impact of the Nobody's Listening (NL) Virtual Reality (VR) experience, on raising awareness about the Yazidis' genocide under ISIS, and changing perceptions and behaviours of ordinary Iraqis towards the marginalized Yazidi community. The immersive NL experience from Yazda (a Global Yazidi Organization) recently received funding from the UN International Organisation for Migration, for public display and



evaluation in different cities in Iraq. For the December 2020 launch and evaluation of the NL experience in Baghdad, co-organized by the UNESCO Chair on Genocide Prevention Studies in the Islamic World, in addition to developing the evaluation tools and data collection procedures, Dr Mohammed-Amin also trained volunteers from the University of Baghdad to carry out the data collection.

NB Dr Mohammed-Amin is also the PI of the Kurdish Cultural Heritage Network, funded by a Nahrein Network large grant. In this update to her Visiting Scholarship case study we have endeavoured to separate that work from this focus on the outcomes and updates of her Scholarship placement in Glasgow.

Update of 2017-2018 Case Study 2

Thesiger's *Tarada*: Using art to reconnect the archival, local, and archaeological strata of memory of Iraq's vernacular watercraft heritage

PI: Dr Rashad Salim, Safina Projects

Duration: 18/06/2018 - 30/11/2019

Led by renowned Iraqi artist Rashad Salim of Safina Projects, this 9-month project examined the relationship between recent Iraqi marshland boats like the *tarada* canoe made for the British explorer Wilfrid Thesiger in 1952 and ancient boats of comparable form, known from the archaeological record. Current and recent information about Iraq's marsh canoes was gathered through oral history work with today's marsh communities, and through studies of Thesiger's photographic archive in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. This evidence was analysed together with available archaeological data on similar boats, to shed new light on the development of a boat form and craft tradition that endured for millennia but is now endangered.

During 2018-2019 the project concentrated on furthering efforts to revive the ancient boatbuilding practices and spreading awareness about their importance. The team presented images from Wilfred Thesiger's archive at the official launch of the project in the traditional boatbuilding centre of Huwair, during a community feast in October 2018. More than 40 attendants, including current and retired boatbuilders, local sheikhs and elders, participated in the launch. The success of the event prompted subsequent sessions of oral history recording and informed the team's research on the *tarada* and related types of *meshouf* canoe. The Nahrein Network grant enabled the reconstruction of one version, while a second grant, with CPF support, enabled the building of a second prototype. The extensive practical skills employed and occasion to practice traditional techniques (since the builders no longer use them in their regular work) enabled the construction of a third boat. The builders completed this third reconstruction in early 2019 and proved the most accurate and elegant replica of Thesiger's *tarada*. All 3 were tarred and decorated during the first part of 2019, in preparation for their maiden voyage.



Consequently, the replicas were the central focus of the Chibayish Festival of Heritage, organised by Nature Iraq. This highly popular event was attended by Dr Abdulameer al-Hamdani (former Co-I on the project and by then Minister of Culture) and other public figures and covered by five satellite TV channels. A social media frenzy followed with very positive publicity results for the event. Two more events were dedicated to documenting the use of the three taradas during the rest of the year and their progress was extensively presented to the public and specialist audiences in Iraq and the UK but also the US and Sweden.

2020 update:

Images and information from the Thesiger's Tarada project were published online, as part of Safina Projects' wider research project An Ark for Iraq. See

<https://arkforiraq.org/en/meshouf-history/> and <https://arkforiraq.org/en/meshouf-making/>

(note: the Tarada is one boat type within the broader category of Meshouf canoes). Footage from the project was incorporated into a 3-minute film published on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/KEpqnJxIHW0>

As part of a short follow-on project funded by ALIPH Foundation (June-September 2020) the Taradas built during the project were relocated to a waterfront site near the archaeological site of Babylon, where a youth boat club is being established in partnership with the local football club Lion of Babylon. Boat club members and representatives of Humat Dijlah (Tigris Protectors Association) also took part in Baghdad Salute, a socially distanced river event using the Taradas and other traditional boats, held on the Tigris in Baghdad (18 August) in honour of the frontline staff at Medical City battling Covid-19. This project demonstrated Safina Projects' ability to coordinate work remotely (from the UK) via our Iraqi partners during the Covid period.

From July 2020, Rashad Salim was engaged as a consultant by Un Ponte Per (UPP), an Italian NGO, to advise on their project Sumereen, an initiative funded by UNDP to create jobs through eco-tourism in Thi Qar governorate's Marshlands and the site of Ur (<https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/08/launch-of-sumereen--socio-economic-growth-through-eco-tourism-in.html>). He is contributing to the planning of an eco-village, a boat workshop and boat club.

In October 2020 ALIPH Foundation announced their decision to award a major grant to Safina Projects. This will support a Maritime Heritage programme (including the establishment of a network of boat clubs and further boat reconstruction workshops) and an Open Academy for Vernacular Cultural Heritage where students will engage with the vernacular architecture and crafts of the Iraqi Marshlands. It will also contribute to the production of the Ark Re-imagined as Iraq's first National Pavilion at the 17th Venice Biennale Architettura (rescheduled from 2020 to 2021 due to Covid).

Rashad Salim presented findings from his research, including the Thesiger's Tarada project, at online events including a UN75 Moderated Dialogue on 'Rising Waters / Resilient Cultures' (11 June) and two events within the Nahrein Network - Chatham House webinar programme: 'Intangible cultural heritage in Iraq. What relevance for policy and practice?' (15 October) and 'Cultural heritage, the environment and sustainability' (22 October).

Rashad Salim is now Co-investigator on a team led by Dr Jaafar Jotheri (University of al-Qadissiya), awarded in December 2020 a grant from the AFAC/ACSS Research on the Arts



Program to develop a Maritime Heritage university curriculum unit including a case study on the Meshouf / Tarada, and contributing towards a publication to be launched at the Biennale Architettura 2021.

Blog post, “Building ancient boats for today’s Iraq”, by Hannah Lewis of Safina Projects:
<https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/2019/06/11/building-ancient-boats-for-todays-iraq/>

2018-2019 Case Study 1

The Centre on Culture, History and Humanities for Sustainable Development (CCHH)

Co-I: Dr Anwar Anaid, University of Kurdistan Hewler

The Centre on Culture, History and Humanities for Sustainable Development (CCHH) started its activities in September 2018 as part of the Nahrein Network. Based at the University of Kurdistan Hewler (UKH) in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, the Centre is an essential element in the implementation of the Nahrein Network’s aims and has a vital role in promoting networking and collaboration at the regional level in Iraq. The Centre operates in two streams: research on one side and activities directed at fostering sustainable development of antiquity, cultural heritage and humanities in Iraq, on the other.

Dr Anwar Anaid, one of the Network’s co-investigators, directs the Centre, which also employs a full-time post-doctoral researcher, Dr Amani Suleiman, and a part-time administrator. Dr Amani Suleiman’s research aims to provide policymakers with the economic data and analysis necessary for understanding the drivers and significance of cultural tourism in the region. By the end of the reporting period she had written two articles on the subject, one in peer-review and another ready for submission.

The centre was officially launched in November 2018. The event provided a great opportunity for Dr Anwar and Professor Robson to introduce the Network to academics, heritage professionals and the media. Mr Lolan Sipan of the Kurdish Textile Museum in Erbil spoke about his work with the Network-funded Post-Conflict Textile Crafts project (PI Dr Neelam Raina of Middlesex University). Speakers particularly encouraged Kurdish and female scholars to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Network. Since then, the Network has funded 4 projects working in the Kurdistan region (2 large and 2 small grants) — all led by female researchers.

To further the development of local and regional partnerships, the Centre’s researchers participate in and organise workshops and seminars. In April 2019 Dr Anwar took part in a workshop organised by the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH). The workshop was an opportunity to encourage interdisciplinary research and increase networking efforts. During the same month, CCHH organised a seminar for Nahrein Research Grant awardees to present their progress. This event prompted UKH faculty and staff in attendance to discuss future research projects aimed at promoting sustainable development of cultural heritage in the region.



The Centre also provides important online support for the Network. It currently has a website, Facebook and Twitter pages, all aimed at widening access to information and disseminating calls for applications and Network related news. It currently reaches audiences from Erbil, Baghdad and Sulaimaniya in English, Kurdish and Arabic.

2020 update:

The Centre closed in June 2020. See section 2 for more details.

2018-2019 Case Study 2

Postgraduate Teaching Programme: A Scientific, Historical and Intercultural Dialogue

PI: Dr Olga Babenko, University of Kurdistan Hewler

Duration: 02/02/2019 - 31/01/2020

The project aimed to develop an internationally competitive, contextually adapted and culturally aware, best practice postgraduate teaching programme to promote the historical, cultural and artistic heritage of the Kurdistan Region. The programme was developed from data collected from academic and administrative staff of the University of Kurdistan Hewlêr, American Stratford University-Erbil Campus, Lebanese French University, Koya University, University of Zakho and Soran University. Based on the findings, the team developed two versions of a Postgraduate Teaching Certificate – a 60-credit programme for Kurdish educators and a 30-credit cultural programme for international staff employed in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Permission to offer the programme in the UKH in the second semester of academic year 2019-2020 is currently being sought from The Ministry of Higher Education of the Kurdistan Region. The last phase of the project will involve the delivery of the two programmes, and teacher training workshops (up to 6 workshops in different locations in the Kurdistan Region, with internal and external participants).

In April 2019, the team delivered a seminar on the opportunities for funding via the Nahrein Network. Dr Babenko presented a paper titled *Intercultural Competence of a Foreign Language and Literature Instructor: Insights of Teaching in a Multicultural Classroom in Various Cultural Settings* at the International Visible Conference on Education and Applied Linguistics (VESAL), at Tishk International University, Erbil. The paper was also published in the conference proceedings volume.

The next steps will be to deliver workshops on the main themes, *Building up Intercultural Competence of Educators in the Kurdistan Region*, *Kurdish Heritage: History from Economic and Artistic Perspectives*, and *Intellectual Property*, in 6 different universities in the Kurdistan region. Following that the 2 modules of the teaching programmes will be offered as part of the UKH curriculum during 2020. Findings will be published in an academic paper towards the end of the project.

The project ended early, without completion, in June 2020. See section 2 for more details.

2018-2019 Case Study 3

Museum managers' workshop held at the Imam Hussein Holy Shrine, Karbala (26 November 2018)

Organized by Dr Paul Collins (Nahrein Network), Dr Alaa Ahmed (Imam Hussein Museum), and Dr Jaafar Jotheri (Qadisiyah University), the workshop brought together 23 representatives of 17 museums from across Iraq, along with interested parties from the Prime Minister's Office, Mosul University, and Najaf University. Although the majority of the museums represented at the workshop are run by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, a small number are linked to universities or religious institutions with different organisational structures and resources.

The principal aim of the workshop was to bring together museum professionals from across Iraq to assess the current situation and explore opportunities for knowledge exchange, especially around best practice. This was the first occasion that such a meeting has been taken place in Iraq, certainly within the last three decades. This meeting was successful in attracting a large number of Iraq's museum professionals; there was a clear sense that they valued the opportunity not only to meet collectively but to contribute personally. Participants were also keen to be part of an Iraq museums association, which would provide a means for developing future workshops/gatherings.

Although plans for an association have yet to be realised, the meeting helped to establish an informal network: for example, a number of workshop attendees participated in the 'Museums and Cultural Heritage' session of The 2nd International Conference for Research and Protection on the Archaeological Heritage of Iraq at Kufa University (28-29 April 2019); and there has been collaboration between Samawah, Nasiriya and Basrah museum in training and engagement with local universities.

2020 update:

The informal museums network has proved to be the basis for ongoing conversations and collaborations. Work on developing the displays of the Basrah Museum supported by the UK charity The Friends of Basrah Museum through the Cultural Protection Fund included the production of case labels in Arabic and English by curators from several museums across southern Iraq (29 September – 5 October 2019). Throughout 2020 such connections shifted online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic but have included webinars, organised by the universities of Kufa, Qadisiyah and Mustansiriyah, delivered by colleagues from across the museum sector along with other heritage professionals.

Blog post at <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/2019/01/15/report-on-a-workshop-for-managers-of-iraqi-museums/>



2018-2019 Case Study 4

Dr Alaa Hamdon – Round 2 Visiting Scholarships Scheme awardee

Academic hosts: EAMENA project at the University of Oxford

Scholarship Dates: 4/02-29/03/2019

Dr Alaa Hamdon is a lecturer and researcher at the Remote Sensing Unit of the University of Mosul, Iraq. He was awarded a Nahrein Network Visiting Scholarship at the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa project (EAMENA, <http://eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk>), which he took up in February and March 2019. This two-month placement at the University of Oxford was primarily to help him develop a project on the remote sensing of Hatra, a Roman-period Arab city in the desert south of Mosul that was occupied and badly damaged by ISIS. It also provided ample opportunities for networking, learning and research.

Dr Hamdon visited and participated in several important activities, including a meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Iraq in the House of Commons, where he spoke about cultural heritage destruction in Mosul. Hamdon also spoke at a major fundraising event at the British Library, organised by Book Aid International for rehabilitating and restocking Mosul University Central Library, which was destroyed in the war against the Islamic State. Dr Hamdon is founder of Mosul Book Bridge (<https://mosulbookbridge.org/>) which is working closely with UK based Book Aid International.

During his scholarship, Dr Hamdon gave a presentation on the destruction of Hatra and existing plans for its rehabilitation at the annual conference of the British Association for Near East Archaeology, held at the University of Liverpool in February 2019. Hamdon also participated in Newcastle University's conference on 'Cultural Heritage Protection in Armed Conflict' in March 2019.

Actively participating in such events during Dr Hamdon's scholarship facilitated numerous contacts which were then pursued with a view to supporting Mosul University's efforts to engage internationally. He visited the UK twice after his scholarship to promote UK-Iraq university partnerships. In October 2019, along with the Chancellor of Mosul University, Dr Qusay al Ahmedi – who was invited by the Nahrein Network to speak at Chatham House on cultural policy and heritage in Mosul – Hamdon organised meetings with Liverpool, Newcastle and Bradford Universities. The aim of these meetings was to secure institutional agreements to further strengthen the partnership with Mosul University in the much-needed fields of digital heritage, remote sensing and documentation.

Since his scholarship, Dr Hamdon has been promoted to Director of Mosul University's Remote Sensing Centre.

2020 update:

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that many of the activities planned by Dr Hamdon had to be suspended or moved online. Despite this he has been participating in online



conferences, such as one organised in Spain on the subject of cultural heritage in March 2020. Moreover he was also invited to present in webinars organised by ICORP, ICCORM and ICOMOS. Dr Hamdon also delivered a presentation at one of the Chatham House – Nahrein Network webinars in December 2020. He is working to establish collaborations between Mosul University and European universities and cultural heritage institutions, efforts which will continue into 2021.

In April 2019, Dr Hamdon wrote a short piece about his scholarship, EAMENA and the Nahrein Network, and Hatra, which can be found here: <http://eamena.arch.ox.ac.uk/hatra-iraq-and-eamena/>

2019-2020 Case Study 1

Informing EU policy on cultural heritage and conflict

Dr Mehiyar Kathem of the Nahrein Network was lead researcher for the EU assignment on a new initiative to develop the basis for a strategy for the EU on conflict and cultural heritage. Mehiyar with three other colleagues worked on the conceptual framing of the report as well as the case-study, which focused on Iraq. Over 40 interviews were conducted with EU officials, the EU delegation in Iraq and researchers and other key stakeholders.

The project was a key milestone as the EU is working to devise a new framework that combines both conflict analysis as well as cultural heritage. The report culminated in a two-day conference on 12 and 13 November 2020.

The report, for the EU External Action Service (EEAS), is now considered to constitute an important point of reference for the delivery of a new framework, which is being discussed and will most likely evolve into an operational policy for the EU and Member States in 2021/2022.

See further:

<https://www.cultureinexternalrelations.eu/2020/10/06/the-role-of-the-eu-in-the-protection-enhancement-of-cultural-heritage-in-conflict-post-conflict-contexts-in-the-middle-east-region/>

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2019-2020 Case Study 2

Dr Ali Naji Attiyah Diebil – Visiting Scholarships Scheme awardee

Academic host: the [Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL](#)

Scholarship dates: 10/02/2020 -27/03/2020

[Dr Ali Naji Attiyah Diebil](#) is an Assistant Professor at the Civil Engineering Department of the [University of Kufa](#). With support from [BISI](#), he was awarded a Visiting Scholarship at the [Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL](#), between February and March 2020.



His research centres on at the relationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage and ways to increase awareness of its importance. The focus of his studies is the historic city of Najaf, whose centre harbours a wealth of tangible heritage, and ways in which it can be revived in a meaningful and inclusive way for the community.

Dr Ali Naji first presented his work at the University College London, in a seminar organised by The Nahrein Network in partnership with the Embassy of Iraq, on the 13th of February 2020. During the vent, Dr Sadiq Khalil (another Nahrein Visiting Scholar) spoke on heritage management in Iraq, while Dr Ali Naji expanded on the role of cultural heritage in Najaf. The presentation occasioned meeting other heritage specialists as well as others from different disciplines.

Following the seminar, Dr Ali Naji went on to attend an interdisciplinary conference and exhibition organised by the Bartlett School of Architecture. The conference featured a presentation by Amr El-Husseiny, who explored heritage boundaries. These boundaries were understood to contain abstract concepts of cultural identity, symbolism, socio-economic effects *et co.*, which provided a novel approach to researchers of tangible heritage such as Dr Ali.

During March 2020, Dr Ali attended the conference organised by Heritage of Peace, International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) and the Spanish Research Council, in Barcelona, Spain. During the conference, Dr Ali was part of the Empowerment of Civil Society Workshop. This group brought together representatives of NGOs from Syria, Libia, Yemen and Iraq, including members of the State Board of Antiquities. Dr Ali discussed the role of local communities and NGOs in protecting cultural heritage, though his presentation, titled "*Holistic View of Cultural Heritage in Historic Centre of Najaf City*".

The event concluded with the launch of the [Arab Network of Civil Society to Safeguard Cultural Heritage \(ANSCH\)](#), of which Dr Ali is a founding member.

By March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was starting to affect life in London, and the next events took place virtually. Dr Ali discussed establishing ICOMOS Iraq with the chair of [ICOMOS UK](#), Clara Arokiasamy and participated in an [EAMENA](#) webinar during which he spoke on the subject of a case study on tangible and intangible heritage interactions.

Following his activities during his visiting scholarship, Dr Ali will contribute, alongside Dr Caroline Sandes to the Routledge/CRC Press "*Handbook on Sustainable Heritage*", with a chapter titled "*Najaf, Iraq: developing a sustainable approach to threatened heritage*".