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# **QUSAIR AMRA (JORDAN) WORLD HERITAGE SITE: A REVIEW OF CURRENT STATUS OF PRESENTATION AND PROTECTION APPROACHES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In 1985, the monument of Qusair Amra a particularly well-preserved Islamic palace site was afforded UNESCO World Heritage Site status. In turn, a steadily increasing number of cultural tourists have visited the area since that time. However, the topic of presentation of heritage resources is still an emergent notion in Jordan. Moreover, an integrated presentation, approaching the world heritage monuments within their natural setting, is necessary for an enhanced preservation and interpretation of the resources. This study is an exploration of the nature of world heritage monuments presented to the public in Jordan through an analysis of a case study. The presentation and protection of Qusair Amra is the subject of a careful analysis in the research presented here. This paper provides an overview of the issues of risks generated by visitors and of presentation of world heritage monuments. The specific aims of the study were to assess the potential and current risks generated by visitors as well giving a general appraisal of implemented heritage presentation techniques. It examined the achievement of heritage presentation in enhancing heritage tourism development in Qusair Amra. On site visits were used to ascertain presentation tools and site management being operated at Qusair Amra. Conclusions and recommendations have emerged from this analysis. The main outcome is the lack of careful planning for heritage presentation at the attraction level. This lack has led to differences in the management of other issues such as interpretation and knowledge of visitor profiles. This research can be used in future tourism planning, tourist management and future interpretation of Qusair Amra.

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**KEYWORDS:** cultural heritage, visitor risks, conservation, presentation, Qusair Amra, Jordan.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Jordan being signatory of the World Heritage Convention since 1975 has four World Heritage Sites. These vary considerably in size and type and include archaeological sites, major country monuments and natural areas. World Heritage convention encourages and supports the development of protection approaches, presentation materials and UNESCO requires the listed world heritage sites to comply with the policy of sustainable tourism. Tourism in Jordan contributes substantially to the national economy and employment of the local people. It stimulates social and economic development and infrastructure in remote regions. Tourism contributed 2,423 billion Jordanian Dinar (1 JD = 1.408 USD) to the economy of Jordan in 2009 which is equivalent to 12.4% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (NTS 2011). Qusair Amra is a UNESCO World Heritage site and it became a popular heritage resource and this drew international attention to the monument. Qusair Amra has archaeological, historic and natural associations with nearby heritage places such as Al Harranah and Al Azraq castle, all of which are distinguished as "Desert Castles". There are more than thirteen desert castle in total in the eastern desert, varying in size, date, and state of preservation. Since the mid-1980s, Qusair Amra and the wider Desert Castles area has become a major focus of Jordan's heritage tourism development. As a consequence, large scale tourism facilities grew rapidly in the region, particularly around the castles of Al Harraneh, Al Azraq and Al Hallabat. When the Jordanian government started to invest in tourism, these Islamic monuments received great attention and Qusair Amra was one of them for its proximity to Amman. Tourism to Qusair Amra is a growing activity, and the number of tourists visiting the monument according to statistics compiled by the Ministry of Tourism was estimated to be well over 90,000 in the year 2010. The main trend regarding tourism to Qusair Amra in recent years is the increasing number of people visiting the monument during spring and autumn and tour groups and individuals are two types of vis-

itors at the site. The greater part of tourists visits Qusair Amra on cultural organized tours and stay in the large hotels in Amman. According to the tour guides, visitors learn about Qusair Amra from books, television, radio, internet, magazines, newspapers, or recommendations from friends and tour agency.

Presentation refers to the "*carefully planned communication of interpretive content through the arrangement of interpretive information, physical access, and interpretive infrastructure at a cultural heritage site*" (Charter, 2008). Presenting heritage sites to the public is important for several reasons: presentation enhances the meaningful connection between the visitor and the history of the heritage site and its natural environment (Moser, 2003; Copeland, 2004). It also offers the opportunity for site managers to share their efforts and let visitors groups know about their preservation efforts for heritage sites (Lee Davis, 1997). Presentation is the link between protection and viability of heritage resources that depends so much upon a mutual and unbiased approach. Presentation and interpretation are also considered to be a critical part in any policy for heritage protection.

Tourism growth to world heritage sites is now reaching levels where the impact may be just as damaging as other hazard reasons. Presentation with interpretation has been known as an important answer to decrease these impacts (Ballantyne et al., 2007). It is more and more believed to play a role in influencing visitor, attitudes, knowledge and behaviors (Moscardo, 1998; Hughes and Morrison-Saunders, 2005). Ham suggest that when interpretation is carried out in protected areas, it is expected that it will encourage appropriate use, support responsible management and foster long-term conservation goals (Ham, et al., 2005).

What has, perhaps, been understood is that all the activities which constitute archaeological presentation, such as signs, visitor centers, brochures, web sites and guides, are part of the tools of the presentation and protection process, and that understanding the sites context and visitor expe-

rience are the ways to improve it (Moscardo & Ballantyne, 2008). To attain this, presentation needs to include a good quality analysis of the archaeological resource, good plan making and clear understanding of value. Among the important feature that makes presentation of world heritage sites so appealing is its ability to deliberate meaningful messages. The management planning has to allow for a number of interconnected layers of significance to be understood by the different audience. On the one hand, it is essential to protect all the different kinds of significance such aesthetic, spiritual, symbolic or other social values people may associate with the site, and on the other hand, if the significant fabric of the site and the meanings associated is well presented, it could aid attraction managers in the transition to sustainable tourism, then the argument is that high numbers of visitors may coincide with irreversible visitor impacts. According to Fyall, Garrod and Leask (2003) the problem for heritage attractions is that, the greater the exposure of the site to visitors, the greater is the potential for negative visitor impacts to arise. These impacts can be that of overcrowding, looting and vandalism. The negative impacts not only threaten the aesthetic and the fabric viability but also raise serious questions about the authenticity of the attraction. Consequently research on the effects of heritage tourism and tourists are important to the maintenance of sites so that tourists can continue to visit heritage sites.

The rising of public attention is reflected in a rising stream of visitors on-site. For this reason, it has become essential that adequate facilities are provided for the visiting public and sufficient measures are taken to ensure the protection and then the presentation of the monument. A plan has been made to address the management; conservation and presentation process of the site. It was not until the beginning of 2014 that the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) started to have the Qusair Amra Management Plan. This Plan was developed as part of the Qusair 'Amra Conservation Project, jointly designed and implemented by the Department of Antiquities (DoA), the

World Monuments Fund and the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro. The major issues related to conservation of monuments and sustainable tourism management is addressed in the plan. It is considered to be the most comprehensive preservation and management project in the history of Qusair Amra. Among the subprojects, the preservation and utilization of heritage facilities is the most significant project for the site, since it is directly involved with the visitors. This project is considered to be a balanced way of meeting the preservation requirements and the tourist demands at the site through the upgrade of the current visitor center and management strategies. The management plan points to a commitment from the DoA to support "*the policies and strategies for the implementation of conservation, presentation, and management actions conceived to preserve its Outstanding Universal*" (DoA 2014, p. 15). The Qusair Amra Management Plan is a public document which is developed in consultation with the community and local key actors. It identifies some challenges in managing the monument and calls for actions to protect its values. These challenges include visitor management at the site, a lack of interpretation, a lack of group effort between the DoA and relevant stakeholders. The Qusair Amra Management Plan provides the DoA with a consideration of presentation actions which are very important to improve visitor experiences and reduce their negative impacts. Heritage presentation does not only provide information to visitors but also improves their experiences and meets site management visions in terms of visitor behavior and visitor respect of the site (Veverka, 1997; Ham, 2009; Hall & McArthur, 1996; Aplin, 2002). Presently Qusair Amra has a scattering of protection and presentation measures, protection and presentation are limited to traditional on site measures.

Since the inscription of Qusair Amra as a world heritage site, the monument had always a role within heritage management and tourism development and the monument has undergone different presentation approaches and protection measures. How-

ever, underpinning the interpretation of this World Heritage site is a lack of clarity concerning why and how the different features of heritage attraction should be protected and presented to wide public. It is this practice of preservation and presentation which is at the heart of the analysis and critics in the management of this archeological site. Cultural heritage issues studied by the current Jordanian heritage and tourism researchers are limited to the national heritage sites, in addition few addresses the presentation preservation relationships in tourism development and heritage management. The World Heritage sites in Jordan are facing a number of problems owing to poor management and weak legislation issues like almost of the countries of the third world. In Jordan, World Heritage Sites experience a number of problems arising from management and current tourism activity. Qusair Amra is the most intact Umayyad palace in Jordan. This rarity needs to be protected. In order to accomplish this, appropriate presentation is vital.

This research reviews previous and current on site attempts made by cultural heritage managers in working with presentation and site protection approaches. The aim of the study is to bring in some of the major findings of a field work on the presentation and protection of Jordanian World Heritage Site. The study has been characterized by an interdisciplinary approach (tourism, heritage presentation, site management and protection). The research questions are what are the risks of visitors on the site? What is the current presentation service level in Qusair Amra? And how presentation could be improved? The questions are addressed through methods such as field observation, interview and evaluation of available resources. During the fieldwork in World Heritage Site of Qusair Amra, observations and investigations were made and photographs of related areas were taken. Besides, face-to-face interviews were also conducted with different staff and tour guides. This paper analyzes the current presentation methods and the risks from visitors and evaluates the visitor center, the signage and the brochure of the site includ-

ing the good points of each and the potential problems associated with the monument preservation, and visitors' experiences. Using a rubric, the presentation tools were scored on content, appearance, condition, and location. Finally, the paper discusses the overall project and proposes a recommendation for site presentation and developing sustainable tourism at Qusair Amra.

## 2. AMRA PALACE. BACKGROUND

Qusair Amra (literally; small palace of Amra) is located in the eastern desert of Jordan, The World heritage Site of Qusair Amra is 85 km far from the capital of Jordan (Amman) along the Sahab -Azraq highway (see Fig. 1). The site is stretched along the banks of Wadi al-Butum (Pistacia tree), a watercourse running northwest to southeast and hosting an extraordinary population of *Pistacia atlantica* trees (Holt, Holt et al., 1977). In the seventh century AD, Jordan became under the rule of Arabs and during the eight century AD, the Umayyad built famous palaces in the eastern desert of Jordan. Qusair Amra is one of the most important early Islamic monuments in Jordan built in Umayyad period, the first Islamic dynasty, between 724 and 743 AD (Almagro et al., 2002; Fowden, 2004). The construction of Qusayr Amra is apparently attributed to prince al-Walid Ibn Yazid (705-715 AD); this attribution is based primarily on an inscription discovered in spring 2012 and the study of the painting of the Six Kings. Qusair Amra is a reception hall and bathhouse; a close examination and evaluation toward its architectural, physical features and paintings imply that it was used as a hunting and pleasure place (Cresswell, 1969; Hillenbrand, 1982; Bisheh, 1985, 1998). There are still different monuments (Palace, watch tower, defensive walls) on the settlements today. One group of them is the bath complex which is the subject of this study. Identification of this monument was made possible by Alois Musil who visited the site in 1808 and mentioned the site and made a reference to its paintings (Fowden, 2004).

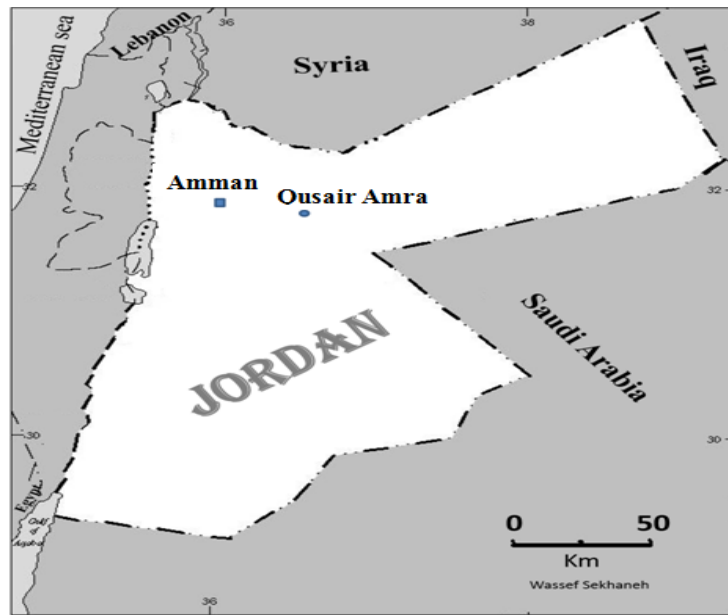


Figure 1: The location of the world heritage site of Qusair Amra -source: Author based on Sekhaneh

The monument was built in the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD and triggered the urbanization of the area. This palace has been inscribed on the World Heritage List since 1985. It was listed as World heritage site under criteria i, iii and iv of UNESCO’s Operational Guidelines to the World Heritage Convention (2011); because:

- *Criteria 1:* Its paintings “constitute a unique achievement in the Umayyad period” and represent “a masterpiece of human creative genius”
- *Criteria 3:* With its exceptional paintings and iconography, it bears “a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural

tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared”

- *Criteria 4:* Being the best conserved of the Umayyad palaces and castles in Jordan and Syria, it provides “an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history” The monument which is built up from irregular lime stone was brought to the attention of the international public towards the end of 1800 through the report of the Czech explorer Alois Musil (see, Fig. 1).



Figure 2: Qusair Amra

### 3. A VISUAL DESCRIPTION OF QUSAIR AMRA OF TODAY

The following is a brief description of the main features of the site (from Fowden, 2004; Vibert-Guigue et al., 2007). Qusayr 'Amra is composed of a mixture of archaeological ruins over an area of around 2 km<sup>2</sup>. It consists of three principal structures:

- i. A rectangular audience hall with a throne alcove in the middle of the south side
- ii. A bath (Hammam) complex which comprises three rooms corresponding to the frigidarium (cold), tepidarium (warm) and calidarium (hot)
- iii. The hydraulic structure, which includes:
  - An elevated water tank
  - A masonry lined deep well
  - The apparatus for drawing water from the well into water tank

The audience hall and the Hammam are highly-decorated containing a considerable number of examples of fresco wall paintings. These unique paintings were factors for which the site has been inscribed in the

world heritage list. The heritage site consists of approximately 450 square meters of wall paintings. This monument represents the largest and richest existing example of wall painting in Jordan; the site as a whole is also one of the masterpieces of Islamic art. The monuments' architectural styles and wall paintings represent an innovation in Islamic art. Various aspects of people's social life were depicted in the wall paintings; the visitor could find evidence of the historical, political and environmental resources of the area during the Omayyad period. The extensive fresco paintings portray a diverse compilation of themes, hunting and bathing scenes (nude or scantily dressed women), ordinary craftsmen at work (blacksmiths, carpenters) animal images, dance, acrobats and wrestlers, music instruments (lute), royal life (painting of the six kings, painting of the owner prince) and astronomical representations (signs of the Zodiac, Great Bear, Little Bear) particularly in the bath complex (see, Fig.3).



Figure 3: Wall paintings at Qusair Amra

The paintings deal with a broad array of subjects, they have been classified in four categories according Taragan (2008, p. 145):

- Scenes of the so-called "princely cycle", such as hunting, wrestling, dancing, etc
- Scantily clad women and variations of bold nudes.
- Female personifications of Poetry, History, and Philosophy.
- Formal or representative scenes, such as the enthroned figure of a prince or a Caliph, "sitting" at the end of the central aisle, fanned by a male figure on either side

The monument has strong historic, cultural, artistic and aesthetic value and a sense of place. It can be a focal point for education, tourism and can support a sense of pride. The site can convey a vast amount of historic values to future generations. Therefore it is necessary to protect the integrity of the place particularly the structural design, the paintings and the surrounding area. Sites' structural design and surrounding area are always at risk. They are at risk in the face of nature's occasional floods and sandy storms; they are even at risk from daily forces generated by tourism development. The negative impacts on the monuments can be classified into two factors, namely natural such as climate, water and dust and human factor such as visits of the tourists. There are different forms of human factor but the one being focused on in this paper is the tourist negative impact (risk from visitors). Many of the changes resulting from tourism development or tourism demand affect the character of the physical built-up appearance of the monument. The growing number of visitors brings more risks to the vulnerable wall paintings accelerating the deterioration of the monument's interior as well as monument's exterior. Based on the observations made throughout this study, it is noted that physical effects can be varied and include:

- (a) Vandalism and graffiti
- (b) Improper Temperatures and Relative Humidity and decay
- (c) Crowding

#### 4. FACILITIES AND CONSERVATION INTERVENTIONS

Facilities at Qusair Amra consist of a car and coach park, booths selling tickets and a visitor center at the entrance to the site and a privately owned Bedouin tent/restaurant beside the parking area. Present facilities for visitors appear to have been created in two principal phases. The original arrangement, which is believed to have been built during the 1980s, included a small parking with an entrance and a pathway linking the parking with the monument. During the 2000s, an extension was added in order to create

some exhibition space as well as basic bathroom facilities. A new visitor centre was erected by DoA and the Institut Français au Proche Orient (IFPO) in 1999 and is situated at the entrance to the archaeological area. At around, the same time, a large, rectangular opening was created to the right of the main entrance in order to provide parking space for visitors to the site. The pathway was remodeled and redeveloped with one seating area and three signs. The visitor center which is of modern creation is strategically located close to the parking lot beside the main entry, and the Qusair amra signs provide information on matters such as the history of the monument, and visitor attractions. There are no regular transport connections between Quair Amra and the neighboring cities which may restrict accessibility for independent individual visitors.

At local level, the DoA is currently the administrator of Qusair Amra. It plays an important role as responsible for spatial planning as well as having important roles in communication, management, protection and visitation. With the support of MOTA, the DoA has been associated with some international organizations and domestic institutes to protect Qusair Amra, such as Spanish mission in Jordan, the Institut Français au Proche Orient the Italian mission and the Hashemite University. Several projects on preserving the structures and documenting and cleaning the mural paintings have been successfully completed, it was in 1960 that the government started to officially protect and manage Qusair Amra. In the 1970s to 1977s, monument repair and extensive reinforcement of the exterior and the interior of the palace had been carried out by the Spanish Museo Arqueológico Nacional. The site was documented by a team from the Institut Français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient (IFAPO) and the DoA between 1989 and 1996, after this, comprehensive studies were published, the most recent by Vibert-Guigue and Bisheh in 2007. During the 1990s, the site encountered a major tourism infrastructure enhancement targeting site presentation including the visitor center as a result

of coordinated actions by the IFPO, the French Embassy, UNESCO and the DoA. The latest preservation activities initiated by several national and international organizations such as World Monuments Fund (WMF), the Italian Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro (ISCR) and the DoA involved the rehabilitation of the palace so that they may be understood, preserved and valued by present and future generations. The tourism figures for the previous ten years shows a dramatic rise in the number of visitors coming to Qusair Amra, it has witnessed a sharp rise in the number of visitors; number of visit in the site was more than 40,000 visitors in 2004 (MOTA 2005) and more than 90,000 visitors in 2010. Visitor numbers slowed after 2001, 2003, and 2011, visitation number has encountered major fluctuations in these years concerning major incidents in the world, Middle East and Jordan. According to the statistics of MOTA a large proportion of visitors to the site comprised international tourists (88, 246 visitor in 2010), including visitors from France, Spain, Italy, Germany and England. According to observations and interview with tour guides, there is no major difference between domestic and foreigners in term of activity. Both domestic and foreigners enjoy the exterior architectural features and the interior mural paintings. Most domestic visitors come with big group of friends, school, company, family or couple and alone. Foreigners comprise pre - organized small groups (up to 9 persons), big group (30 - 43 persons), couple or alone. Arranged-tours from Amman generally offer Qusair Amra with other desert castles. Visits to the world heritage site are very short and only take a few hours on average; 95 % of the visitors are day trip visitors. There are two peak seasons each year: spring (March- May) and autumn (September- November). April and October are usually the months with the highest number of visitors.

## 5. SITE ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS AND PROTECTION ISSUES

According to Getz (1983), accelerated levels of visitation or development would lead

to an unacceptable deterioration in the physical environment and of the visitor's experience. Protection is a very imperative factor for heritage sites as it encompasses aspects such as heritage resources management, facilities required for tourism activities, educational facilities and activities, visitor management and presentation and interpretation of the site. Although the physical structure and setting of Qusair seem moderately unaltered by modern development, two main subjects affect the sites both on an aesthetic and practical basis. Large wire security fences affect the aesthetic appearance of the site and their setting. The second issue has a more serious impact on the conservation of this site and its setting. Directly beside the monument is a substantial highway for heavy trucks. The highway has threatened the monument for many years, not only affecting their setting within the landscape but also damaging them structurally through the vibration of the vehicles and the wagons. A major purpose and deliberation in this research has been to examine and recognize possible issues or problems relating to the impacts of visitation and use at Qusair Amra. The monument and its surrounding are subject to two types of deterioration: structural decay and surface decay. Structural decay manifests itself as cracks or fissures as well as the instability of lime stones elements, as a result of the leak of infill material from between the lime stones. Surface decay on the other hand, is generally manifest as graffiti and vandalism of the mural paintings. Some threats to the monument's condition include:

### 5.1 VANDALISM AND GRAFFITI

Qusair Amra, in general, is in good condition, but items were noticed throughout the field research that guide to some concerns in regard to the state of the monument. A great amount of the interior paintings are full of carvings of names, date of visit, birth place or origin of visitors and or scratching the wall paintings mostly in Arabic with some in other languages, as shown in Fig.4.





**Figure 4: Vandalism and graffiti at Qusair Amra**

It is observed that important segments of the mural paintings are vandalized and damaged causing negative physical impact to the site and misunderstanding of the function and the meaning of different portrayals. During the field work, no tourist was seen carving on the wall, signifying that the graffiti were maybe carved in past decades when policy were not as strict and visitors had not been well-informed concerning suitable activities. However, the carvings, as a kind of visitor-induced harm, unhelpfully affect the image of the monument. The unlimited number of visitors may raise the risk to the physical fragileness of the monument, although the field work found that there were not any illegal activities by visitors such as excavation, serious lack of monitoring system has been found in the site. This situation creates various threats to site keeping in view the vandalism and graffiti activities are most important. It cannot however insure that the improper behavior from the excessive tourists could be controlled in the future, in the same time it is noted that there were not any plan to cope with the increased number of visitors and the guardian states that the more visitors enter the audience hall and

the bath rooms, the higher the risk of getting damaged would occur.

## 5.2 CROWDING

Nowadays, Qusair Amra also facing problems with overcrowding and overdevelopment and with growing tourism, cultural environment and the architectural and historical assets are disturbed and many site features are endangered positions. Qusair Amra is the busiest monument among the desert castles in Jordan and overcrowding can be a major problem, especially during peak seasons where tourist coaches' traffic congestion is common. Overcrowding can be a major concern especially during high season months such as April and October where the number of visitors was 12,845 and 15,103 in 2010 respectively (MOTA, 2011). Tour guides and site ticket office reported that most of the organized visits occur in a limited time in the morning period between nine and twelve o'clock. Ticket clerk reported that overcrowding can distract from the peacefulness and can substantially reduce the appeal of the monument. Daily high numbers of visitors also direct to an increase in all other tourist-related negative problems, such as in-

creased litter and increased footpath erosion. The major source of litter is mainly from cigarette stubs and used drinks from day visitor's snacks. Footpath erosion is a common problem along the pathway and around the monument with paths becoming artificially widened from the constant abrasion of visitors. Visitors also walk on plants and can inhibit their growth. The heavy movement of tourist on the unique pathway (this path is both the entrance and exit to the site) may cause concentrated impacts upon soil structure and further its composition.

### **5.3 IMPROPER TEMPERATURES AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY AND DECAY**

The increased number of visitors may change the rate of variation in the microclimatic condition inside the audience hall and the different rooms of the bath. Internal microclimatic conditions may change in presence of large group of tourists that emit humidity, gasses or radiate heat. The interior painting suffers from daily increase of visitor numbers during the high season which is especially dangerous on exterior surface. The main parts of the monument such as the audience hall and the baths are permanently visited by groups of 20 to 40 visitors during the peak moments; the heat, respiration, and CO<sub>2</sub> emitted by visitors inside the main chamber results in an increase of temperature and concentration of CO<sub>2</sub>. After a high period of visitation during the day and the season, the air can exchange through the entrance previous blocked by visitors, and the relative humidity falls. This repeats many times in a day, causing instability in humidity that is very injurious to the wall paintings. Consequently, the major concern is that the instability of the internal

conditions may lead to the capillary penetration of water solutions of agents beneath the surfaces of paint and cause deterioration and damaging of frescoes. There are other factors increases this risk inside the monument such as low ventilation rate in the bath rooms and the audience hall, massive masonry walls and relatively tight windows.

## **6. PRESENTATION OF THE SITE**

It should be recognized that the presentation and interpretation of the monument is also carried out by several groups who have particular interests in describing and portraying the site to specific audiences. Despite being a site of national and international importance, there is no dedicated website for Qusair Amra. The principal source of information on Qusair Amra is the website of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre ([whc.unesco.org](http://whc.unesco.org)). Information on Qusair Amra in Jordan is dispersed between a number of websites including those of Jordan Tourism Board JTB, Ministry of tourism and antiquities and local travel agencies, it can be observed that there are presentations of factual information about the site, these presentation tools can be classified into five principal categories as follows:

### **6.1 Signage, panels and information boards**

The monument is presented through the use of a number of different levels of presentation panel, from name plaques, to small and larger information boards. There are different signs and panels scattered between the entry to the visitor center and along the pathway informing in different subjects varied between information signs, warning signs directional signs (see Fig.5).



Figure 5: Panels at the site

MOTA provides two kind of signage one is printed on an aluminum sheet with a blue background and the other one in a maroon background with white littering. There are four behavioral signs (warning sign) found at the site, tow signs inside the audience

hall warning for prohibiting visitors from littering and smoking inside the audience hall, and tow in front of the gate of the visitors center telling people how to behave during the visit (see Fig. 6).



Figure 6: Warning sign at the audience hall

Inside the visitor center there are eleven information boards (see Fig. 7), all are in English, Arabic and French and their design is simple yet elegant. They provide information on the archaeology and history of

the site combining text with images, maps and a description and reconstruction drawing for the wall paintings. However, they are not free jargon text.

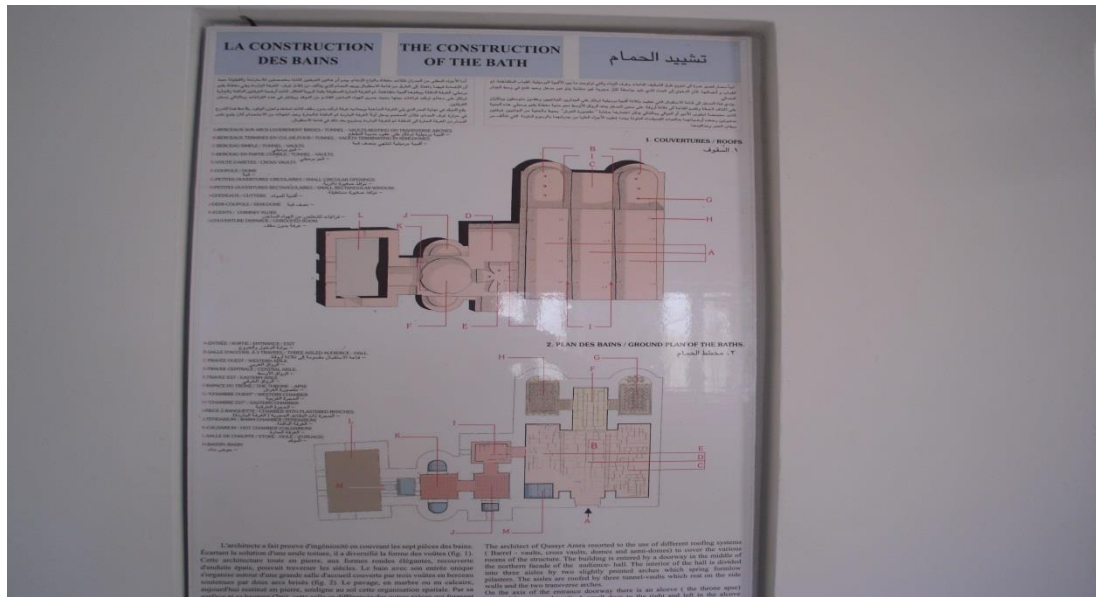


Figure 7: Panel at the visitor center

Along the pathway there is one directional sign orienting visitors to the monument followed by severely damaged signs, one due climatic environment, the other is by man-made reasons (Fig.8).



Figure 8: Damaged sign along the pathway

Outside the gate, there are three information panels bearing the UNESCO World Heritage symbol indicates the monument's WHS status. Most visitors enter the site via entry gate, usually walking directly past the panel which indicates its UNESCO WHS. It is noted that there are not any signs for the interpretation and explanation of the natural features and environment while moving through the pathway. According the guardian disinterest in signs and their written information is a common factor among visi-

tors and they are often discouraged since they are faded and collapsed. The sign survey found that many signs paid for, designed, and installed by MOTA, DoA and IFPO. There is some collaboration, but no standard course of action outlining the role of site management or others concerning signage. Some signs do not match the minimal standards for materials, design or content, this can result in lower-quality signs that may be inconsistent all through the site or that are not clear to the public. Sign

maintenance tasks are often not determined or funded.

### 6.2 Pathway

There is one whole short and easy pathway connecting and experiencing the monuments and the visitor center. On the other hand, the pathway in area of the monument is right next to the visitor center. The original pathway was created by MOTA and functioned until 1999s. The pathway has subsequently undergone cosmetic and functional change within the last fifteen years, with the original deemed to be short as its traces still observed. The redesign introduced a new full pathway, including resurfacing of the access pathway, better signage,

and an information board and car park at the start of the pathway. The pathway itself is marked on the ground by a series of stone way markers, however, acknowledging its separation from the landscape as a 'track' to be followed, experienced and respected (see Fig. 8). This counteracts any doubt that walkers may have of not being on the correct pathway as well as it will also make sure they do not wander off the path. The pathway is not wheelchair accessible, nor it is suitable for people with physical problems and during raining periods some of the trail is flooded. When this happens, walkers must negotiate mud-covered surface, flooded areas and stepping stones.



Figure 8: New pathway beside the old one

### 6.3 Visitor Center

The visitor center of the site has been opened in 1999 with the aim of educating tourists of the importance of conserving and preserving the precious site and its values. The centre was intended as the starting point for visitors who want to find out more about the area. Most people enter the site through the visitor centre, which is served by a large car park to accommodate several coaches and cars at a time; the centre has displays on how the monument was formed, why it is so unique and why it deserves to be preserved. Thirteen boards are displayed covering different topics about the site (Table 1).

A physical architectural model has been developed in order to provide visitors with an excellent tool for describing the overall landscape and individual elements within the monument. Many visitors (groups and individuals) are not aware of the exhibition hall and proceed directly to the monument complex after paying the entrance fee at the ticket office located at the main gate. In order to draw more visitors to the exhibition hall there is a need for effective signage before the ticket office which would introduce and encourage people to visit the visitor center.

Table 1 Themes of the displayed boards at the visitor center (source: author)

Board Number	Theme
1	The exploration of Qusair Amra
2	The Umayyads in the near east
3	The Umayyads in North Jordan
4	The site of Qusair Amra
5	The construction of the bath
6	Water and fire
7	The skill of the painters
8	The prince in the throne alcove
9	The audience hall: technical and cultural aspects
10	Two types of pictorial organization in the audience hall
11	The warm and the hot rooms
12	Chronology and interpretation
13	A bibliographical summary

#### 6.4 Brochures

The fully colored brochure is printed by MOTa and JTB for distribution to visitors at different tourist sites. The brochure focuses on the desert castles with details which identify nine desert castles and provides brief information about Qusair Amra in different languages such as English, French and Spanish. The brochure also included tourist activities, contacts and map. Many weaknesses can be noted in the brochure, for example the heading of the brochure is the "Desert Castles". The concept of "Desert Castles" still appears on the cover page of the brochure although it is contested and debated in regard of the real functions of these monuments throughout the Jordanian desert. For this reason it may cause confusion for visitors about the function of Qusair Amra. The text dedicated for Qusair Amra does not contain enough detail, the text presents highlights of the most important parts of the palace with four small photographs to illustrate and explain the highlights. A number of on-site staff acknowledged that the brochure is disappointing and view that it may be 'unfair' to treat a world heritage site of Qusair Amra as the rest of the national monuments.

#### 6.5 Guides

At the moment of the field work for this study there was no local guide at the site, and visitors on group tours usually bring

their own guides. Tourist Guides are able to give tourists an understanding of the cultural context of the site and the way of life of its inhabitants. It is noted that they help to protect surrounding cultural and natural heritage of the site by making visitors conscious of its significance and vulnerability. According to the ticket office, domestic visitors rarely hire a tour guide who may avoid for financial reasons and favor a free independent tour. In contrast it is common that international tourists go to Qusair Amra in a group and they usually hire a tour guide from a tour company because the service of on-site guide is not available. There are several tour guides who can speak diverse languages such as English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian. Some tour guides can speak more than one language.

### 7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An important objective and consideration in this research project has been to investigate and identify potential issues or problems relating to the impacts of visitation and presentation at Qusair Amra. An important finding which is essential to Qusair Amra presentation and protection is that a number of particularly salient protection and presentation problems to be current issues in the site. Protection problems include littering, vandalism, graffiti and crowding within the protected area of the site. Other problems in terms of presenta-

tion are clearly present, such as illegibility of the site meaning and signage issues, general ignoring of some regulatory and warning communications at specific sites, and the use of non-designated trails. One of the most unusual findings suggests that the majority of visitors do not know that the site they are visiting is a World Heritage site – or indeed just what such a designation of World heritage emblem means. This is due firstly to the proportion of tour guides accompanying groups that does not guarantee a high awareness of the World Heritage Status of the site and secondly to the very little presented information available relating to the World Heritage status and values of the site

Much of the initiated preservation and restoration work, such as retouching the interior frescoes and filling cracks between the lime stone to prevent rain water from further weakening the lime structures, is focused on Qusair Amra itself, and is funded by MOTA, at the same time as, the importance placed on the surrounding landscape is de-emphasized. There are other measures for the protection of the monument such as, fences around the remains, or warning signage. There are no limitations and restrictions that control visitor mobility. In fact, visitors are encouraged to go inside the remains and walk around the monument. The case study analysis essentially divides protection practices into one basic approach. This is based upon direct approach involving a direct physical action or intervention at upstanding remains of the monument for some time, this approach has been less widely used on other remains and assets such as the small castle with rooms arranged around a courtyard, the watchtower, the second watering system and the landscape of the site. The Physical intervention is part of the policy used by archaeological heritage conservators to appraise a site in order to determine its significance. This, however, can have a harmful result on the monument's integrity and authenticity.

The field work provides an extremely valuable window on the presentation of Qusair Amra and the protection effective-

ness. The presentation and information through the available tools provide a very valuable perspective on site planning and design, and the relative priorities of management. Much of this information and signage is not relevant to how visitors use and traverse this site and of course to their negative impacts. In term of presentation there is no provision for visitors who prefer a more active engagement when visiting world heritage sites. Instead, passive-based experience dominates. There are no onsite presentation methods that are dedicated to children. Examination of the types of information available, and its relative frequency and distribution across the sites, suggests a low level of information at particular sites, and that the site overall was only moderately legible. Generally speaking, the presentation condition simply permits visitors some understanding of what they are watching and walking across. What was, however, clearly recognized in this analysis is that presentation about, for example, the structure of the monument, its purpose, date and composition, has been determined, but a significant portion of the site such as its values and environmental context remain unexplored. Interestingly the protection measures seem to be underdeveloped in the presentation of the site. The current poor state of knowledge and information at the site means that it is not possible to determine the viability of the protection and presentation context across the site, however, not well-organized enough to enhance a protective message and some form of presentation intervention was required. It is clear that, to a large extent, existing presentation and protection methods are serving very different objectives and addressing very different target populations and audiences. This is because the approaches do not necessitate analysis or threat and value assessment, nor do they seek to look holistically at specific visitor needs. This leads one to conclude that the concept of protection and presentation of Qusair Amra has only been examined in separation, without a full evaluation of the sites' context or importance. In order to affect positive protec-

tion and presentation, there is a greater need to address the monument with its integrity, furthermore the presentation is to be used as a tool for protecting and managing the use of the world heritage site. Observations and interviews frequently showed that the site is weakly planned as a World Heritage Site and that it is run from the top without much consultation with or consideration to site staff, tourist guides, and visitors.

A few years ago there was nothing and however, the existing presentation should be seen as being only a base to build upon. More is needed to increase the level of appreciation and comprehension visitors have for this world heritage site. During any future conservation and presentation work, different public communication actions should take place. The following is a list of suggestions:

- More studies about the profile of visitors in heritage sites should be carried out to allow managers to address, in the best way, tourists.
- Presentation tools should include digital technology; advanced digital technology can assist visitors to be active during their visit.
- Development of guidelines and code of conduct on the sustainable use of Qusair Amra and its resources.
- Employment of a permanent local guide who would like to study the site in depth. The guide and visitors will walk and visit the monument following the pathway. The guide will describe the history and the significance of the site and sustainable cultural behavioral practice are educated to visitors.
- Development of an effective signage system considering their adequate location, material, content and physical appearance; they should be installed at many points along the pathway and the entrance.
- Development of a brochure dedicated uniquely for the world heritage site of Qusair Amra and made available at the site on free basis. The message of the brochure will comprise of a brief history,

background and significance of the world heritage site of Qusair Amra, details of architectural elements and wall paintings are include. Beautiful photos of Qusair Amra are shown to attract visitors; the brochure includes a site map and practical information necessary for visitors.

- Upgrade of the current visitor center including employment of trained permanent staff. Visitors can find basic information of Qusair Amra by asking the staff or searching the information from a computer kiosk which will be installed at the visitor center
- Basic orientation such as site maps and directions, distances, facilities, attractive places and how to access the site comfortably should be included in the presentation system.

## 8. CONCLUSION

It is clear that the case studies concern significant archaeological site in its own right. The World heritage status can be seen to add value. Evaluation of presentation tools and the effects of tourism within Qusair Amra World Heritage Site have not previously been carried out. For the main conclusions to be drawn from this research, it is important to know that, in relationship to this analysis, heritage presentation is considered one of the theoretical principles of heritage protection. One objective of this study is to introduce an analytical perspective into these issues. Qusair Amra has a reputation as a famous tourist site in Jordan. It accumulates much significant artistic and architectural values and provides cultural meanings to the Jordanian community which has transferred through generations. This status means that Qusair Amra must maintain its tangible and intangible heritage that plays an important role to raise the public awareness of its values as a world heritage site. Presentation tools should deliver interpretive themes and key messages that can help visitors get important information about Qusair Amra, in this case visitors will be aware of the importance of the monument and of its artistic values, therefore the interpretive themes and key mes-



sages can be an incentive for the visitors to have the desire to protect the monument as being an icon of national and international history. A dedicated interpretative panel should be given over to the conservation work that has taken place in and those in process at the site. The panel should explain the significance of the site, the reasons for the conservation work, and the main actions that have taken place. The central role of the DoA should be acknowledged. Charge a short publication explaining the significance

of the wall paintings, the reasons for the conservation work, and the main actions taking place. The publication should be distributed to local schools, library, tourist office(s), etc. The document should be uploaded to the relevant local authority website. Other tools that may strengthen the communication of the site's values and its presentation may include awareness programs, lectures, and hands-on activities for children, workshops for adults, and guided tours.

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