

Archaeologists to Reconstruct Syrian Heritage Using 3D Cameras



Following reports that the Islamic State (IS) terror group has begun destroying the historic ruins in Syria's ancient city of Palmyra, a group of archaeologists have come up with the idea of installing thousands of 3D cameras in conflict regions in the Middle East. Capturing digital images of cultural heritage sites will enable historic monuments to be reconstructed if they are destroyed by IS.

The plan is to place the 3D cameras close to Roman ruins and other ancient relics so that the recorded data can later be used to recreate them precisely. The academics from Oxford University in the UK and Harvard in the US intend to install 5,000 cameras in 2015 and to have captured a million images by the end of 2016.

According to the academics, the required level of investment is acceptable; the cameras cost around EUR30 each and will take photos from various angles. The images will subsequently be uploaded to a central database. To maximise the chance of the project being a success, the cameras will be operable by inexperienced users. In other words, military personnel and volunteers will also be able to contribute to the project.

Palmyra, also known as the City of a Thousand Pillars, is an important archaeological site situated in the heart of a war-torn region. Up until the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, it was one of the country's most-visited attractions. In 2013 Palmyra was added to UNESCO's Emergency Red List of Cultural Objects at Risk. In May 2015 Palmyra fell into the hands of IS, which has since started destroying religiously meaningful buildings and objects because it regards them as being idolatry. The city has become a symbol of IS's cultural iconoclasm.