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Ministry of Culture
State Board of Antiquities & Heritage



World Heritage Sites in Iraq
Hatra-Ashur – Samarra
State of Conservation Reports

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1.Excutive Summary

Works of conservation and restoration in the World Heritage Sites in Iraq ceased for the third year consecutively due to military incidents where the forces of terror (ISIL) occupied Ashur and Hatra sites while the city of Samarra has become an advance line for military operations between the forces of the Iraqi army and the forces of terrorism so the World Heritage Sites in Iraq have been greatly affected by these situations. The case is therefore the worst cultural devastation since the second world war ,the world has been exposed in his heritage, which was included in Iraqi civilization. So this year's conservation report will be report on damage assessment special report, more than a description of the fully stopped for state of conservation in those sites . The report is also subject to international initiatives for the protection and preservation of the Iraqi heritage and the role of the international community and international organizations for the protection of the Iraqi heritage and its head of UNESCO where those sites belong to her.

As a result of the occupation of Hatra and Ashur by the ISIL terrorist, Hatra site inscribed on the of World Heritage in Danger.

but after liberation all the sites from the grip of terrorism increased national and international commitments have increased to reform the acts of destruction done by terrorism but unfortunately despite passing year for liberation of those sites we did not see any restoration and conservation work matching with the magnitude of the destruction caused by the forces of terrorism ,not even sending assessment missions to prepare a central report of damage.

Thus, the State party , reference to those undertakings demanding that the international community must fulfil his obligations to protect and preserve the Iraqi heritage, which is in a very difficult situation after 2003.

In this regard, we do not forget the central role of UNESCO and her organizations and her participation must be effective and particularly magnitude of the disaster was great.

2 -General Background

Throughout her long history, humanity has suffered from the scourge of war and other forms of armed conflict, and that suffering has not stopped at the damage limits of human and his public and private property, but extended to the cultural heritage of peoples, for which it represents an invaluable civilizational symbol, often deliberately the aggressors pour their anger over the cultural property of their opponents in order to erase the pillars of their civilization and to work for their retardation.

The importance of cultural property is for the sublime meanings of peoples and their consciences as an indivisible part of the memory and cultural history of the nation and an indicator of her ability to maintain continuity and communicate between different generations.

The assault on the cultural property also constitutes a crime against the human and a violation of the historical identity of the people who owns it, and even more so in sometimes attacks on the privacy of a people are an assault on human inheritance in general, since many historical sites are more important than local sites , many of which inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Throughout his long history, the international community has tried to reduce attacks on cultural property during armed conflicts and to impose protection obligations and respect for the parties to the conflict, the traditional protection of international humanitarian law, as was the case until the middle of the twentieth century, is no longer insists on protecting the victims of war and alleviating their suffering, but extends its scope to ensure the international protection of public and private cultural property in times of war armed conflicts as a natural consequence of the devastating effects witnessed by humanity

of armed conflict, this protection represented in the first place in the annexed regulations to the Hague Convention of 1988 and 1907 .

The emergence of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had the greatest impact on the elaboration and drafting of many international conventions in the area of the protection the cultural heritage, including the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of cultural property in time of armed conflict and its Protocols, and the UNESCO Convention on the 1970 on the prevention of the import and export of cultural Property and the 1972 World Heritage Convention, where the World Heritage List appeared.

Since the adoption of the World Heritage Convention 1972, the World Heritage List has been evolving continuously and continues to grow steadily. With this growth, there is an urgent need to guide the States Parties to implementing the Convention .

In view of the extreme importance of cultural property, it considered one of the most important areas of concern of human society after all his attention was to the protection of the human being and further expanded the scope of international humanitarian law to include the protection of cultural property is the extension of the war damage to affect the individual's own cultural property .

According to the concept of World heritage, the international community today faces a fierce and systematic attack of destruction of his common heritage, we believe that this destruction has not even been handed over religious monuments.

As the organization of the "Islamic State", which controlled one third of Iraq and Syria had destroyed the ancient monuments and statues on the pretext that they called for idolatry, which violates the fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic law. This is the dark strategy that the forces of terrorism believe are opposed to the principles of

religion, where, during the Islamic eras, those monuments and antiquities have not been subjected to destruction , where thoud monuments have reached us and carrying the achievements of previous civilizations. In Iraq, the national heritage has been fully exposed to the largest systematic destruction plan and his great historical sites occupied to extend to the world heritage sites such as Hatra, Ashur, Nimrod and Nineveh.

3-Destruction of Cultural Heritage Sites in Iraq .

The intentional destruction of cultural heritage is a dangerous attack on the values of peace and human rights, whether or not that attack linked to armed conflict or not, where some situations associated with cases of human rights violation.



Fig.1 Explosive barrels set by ISIL to destroy the Northwest Palace in Nimrod(ASOR)

The terrorist forces of ISIL and during their occupation of historical sites in Iraq used various means to destroy and liquidate sites and sell its antiquities it even came to the random excavation of the major archaeological sites as it was in Nineveh city where these terrorist gangs digging tunnels in the process of searching for antiquities and selling them to dealers of antiquities.

In the city of Nimrod, the devastation was significant, as ISIL forces launched a video in April 2015, showing the destruction they caused on the site where the destruction of these historical monuments in the site and the carved slabs has not only been done, but they have prepared barrels of explosive to blow up the Northwest Palace.



Fig.2 An aerial photograph of Nimrod's city, observe the affected areas in red.

(World Heritage Centre,2017)

The British Times newspaper, published on 11/4/2015, described the actions of the "Islamic State" by destroying antiquities of Iraq, entitled "The worst cultural devastation since the Nazis."

The systematic destruction of the ancient city of Nimrod will have a disastrous impact on museums around the world, including: The British Museum, the Louvre museum and many museums that embrace art works for the capital of the Assyrian state-Nimrod.

The writer said that the organization of the Islamic State destroyed these precious antiquities of sculptures and decorations with electric

saws and hammers, blew up the rest of the antiquities and swept the entire city.

As a historical approach to what Daesh had done, "the Nazis also detonated Russian cultural monuments and settled the Polish city of Warsaw in the ground during the Second World War.

4-The Situation of World Heritage Sites after Liberation .

After more than two years of occupation of the world heritage sites by ISIL, those sites were liberated and some of the teams were sent to estimate whether they were of the national side represented by the state board of antiquities and heritage or by international organizations, where UNESCO conducted an assessment mission at World Heritage Sites, the mission was led by a team from the UNESCO Iraq office in Amman, after which there were numerous commitments, whether national (Prime Minister) or International side for repairing and conserving of damage in those sites and more than a year after the liberation of the sites we did not see any significant restoration and preservation work at those sites, despite the magnitude of the disaster and the undertakings and initiatives that related with this matter:

1-On 12 August 2014, as a result of the destruction of the cultural heritage in the state of Mali, Libya, Syria and Iraq and the complexity of the situation in countries it is difficult to identify ways to intervene in the direction of those threats and to protect the heritage of those countries. UNESCO has therefore recalled its conventions and international instruments that legislated in this area such as Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property – import and transfer of Cultural Property (1970), World Heritage Convention 1972 and 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its protocols.

2-On 28/May/2015, the Director-General of UNESCO welcomed with the unanimous vote by the United Nations General Assembly on the resolution entitled (**Save the Iraqi cultural heritage**) where the project submitted by Germany and 91 voted in favor of the resolution was directed against the destruction of the Iraqi heritage Director-General of UNESCO said in this matter(the deliberate destruction of the country's heritage is a war crime, and that the forces of terrorism have taken a strategy for cultural cleansing, and it is necessary to reconsider and renew our means towards those threats to defeat terrorism)

And adopting such a decision is a turning point to bring international public opinion to what is happening in the direction of Iraqi heritage and here the Director-General of UNESCO affirms that the responsibility to be elected is the protection of cultural heritage worldwide and assistance the Member States in their efforts to protect and preserve its cultural heritage.

3-On 29 July 2015, UNESCO and Iraq announce the launch of the project managing and preserving of the Samarra Archaeological City, where the project starts with the preserving the Great Mosque and its minaret of the site is inscribed on the World Heritage List, on danger since 2007. The agreement signed at UNESCO headquarters by Iraqi minister, Ahmed Abdullah Abd, minister of governorates , and UNESCO, signed by the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova.

At the signing ceremony, everyone stressed the strong commitment to protect the Iraqi heritage in the face of the threats posed by terrorism, but the project did not begin.

4-On 24 February, 2017, the meeting of the International Coordination Conference on the Protection of the Iraqi heritage in the liberated areas, which ended its meeting at UNESCO headquarters for two days. The conference laid the foundations and rules for an

emergency plan and to work within a medium-and long-term protection and preservation plan and rehabilitation for the recently liberated historical sites from the hands of ISIS, Director-General of UNESCO said during the conference that the damage to the Iraqi heritage was greater than we imagined, and this meeting is the starting point for the project of preservation and rehabilitation of the Iraqi heritage and may require work for decades.

This is a set of international initiatives and commitments made by UNESCO to address the issue and to deal with it ,and what happened to the the Iraqi heritage, but unfortunately we see nothing on the ground to translate those undertakings into reality.

5-World Heritage Sites in Iraq .

The World Heritage sites in Iraq are in a difficult situation as a result of military conditions, most of them being occupied by the forces of terror (ISIL), and restoration and preservation work has ceased and for years.

Iraq is one of the first regional signatories to the World Heritage Convention, in 1974, and was honored to have five of his sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, such as Hatra, Ashur ,Samarra Erbil Citadel and the southern marshes

Iraq still maintains a long list of sites listed on the Tentative List.

World Heritage Sites in Iraq continue to suffer from problems of protection, management and land use, including inefficient management, shortages to put a management policy and each sites has its identified problems due to its nature, so to be an effective management it necessary to deal with matter on the basis of priorities such as the lack of management plans of the sites and the lack of coordination between the local departments and related parties, lack of funding, foreign investment and inadequate social

awareness towards world Heritage sites and promotion and the advertisement of the concept of World heritage.

World heritage sites greatly affected by the emergence of the Islamic State forces (ISIL), which destroyed those sites during a period of two years of occupation.

5-1. Hatra

Hatra locates south-west of the city of Mosul, about 110 km from the city of Ashur (the capital of the Assyrians), about 70 km and east of it, the Wadi al-Tharthar valley is located approximately 4 km. The name of Hatra mentioned in the Aramaic Hatra Writings (Hatra) and its name inscribed in the same style (Hatra Adi Shmesh), Hatra , Sun City on its coins , and named as Hatra in old sources. The city surrounded by a semi-circular wall , its width is about 3 meters, with about (163) towers , 2 meters high and the wall surrounded by trench, its depth between (4-5) m and a width of about (7-8) m, and there is a dirt wall that is about (500) m away from the main wall, surrounded by all sides to be an initial impediment in front of advancing the invading armies , Hatra city has four gates open in the four natural directions, with two high towers for each gate.

Hatra is a historical site of major importance not only for Iraq but for the whole world, and it is one of the first historical sites in Iraq inscribed in World Heritage List (1985). The city has been of interest of the State party since the middle of the last century and it has carried out many acts of excavation and preservation since the 1950s and had been preceded by work of German expedition led by (Walter Andrea) the director of the excavations in the city of Ashur, and those projects increased in the city after the site inscribed on the World Heritage List.

However, the instability in Iraq after 2003 and the absence of planning in the city have adversely affected the completion of infrastructure facilities for world Heritage sites in the city.

The worst thing happened to the city its occupation by the Islamic State forces (ISIL) in mid-2014 and damaging the city and destruction of many antiquities , the city liberated on 26 April 2017.



Fig.3 Hatra City damage by ISIL (26 April 2016)(UNITAR)

-World Heritage Committee Decision

41 COM 7A.34

Hatra (Iraq) (C 277rev)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7A.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **40 COM 7A.11**, adopted at its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016),
3. Expresses its great concern about the state of conservation of the property, following intentional destructive acts, and about the continuing lack of detailed information on the state of conservation

- of the property, and requests the State Party to keep the World Heritage Centre informed about the situation on the ground;
4. Encourages the State Party to continue to pursue its efforts to ensure the protection of the property, despite the difficult prevailing situation, and in particular to start implementing urgently the priority actions outlined at the February 2017 International Coordination Conference on the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in Liberated Areas of Iraq, with the support of UNESCO and the international community;
 5. Also encourages the State Party to carry out a rapid emergency assessment of the damages incurred, in close collaboration with UNESCO, before undertaking emergency actions and as soon as the situation allows;
 6. Urges all parties associated with the situation in Iraq to refrain from any action that would cause further damage to cultural heritage of the country and to fulfil their obligations under international law by taking all possible measures to protect such heritage;
 7. Launches an appeal to all Member States of UNESCO to cooperate in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage coming from Iraq as per the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2199 of February 2015, 2253 of December 2015 and 2347 of March 2017;
 8. Calls on all UNESCO Member States to support emergency safeguarding measures, including through the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund;
 9. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2018**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018;
 10. **Decides to retain Hatra (Iraq) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

-The location and importance of the city through the World heritage.

1	Name of the World Heritage Property	Hatra
2	Governorate	Ninawa
3	Geographical coordinates to the nearest second	N35 35 17.016 E 42 43 5.988
4-	Date of Inscription	1985 , on the World Heritage List in danger/2015
5	Criteria	(ii)(iii)(iv)(vi)
6	Property	323.75 ha
7	Ref:	277 rev

Source: World Heritage Centre (Access Date 25/12/2017)

5-2-Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat)

City of Ashur locates on the right bank of the Tigris River is known its ruins is known today Qal'at Sherqat and has a special sacredness for the Assyrian kings, the home of the national God Ashur, the Kings are crowned and buried in it. Ashur remained as the capital of the Assyrian state, at the beginning of the modern Assyrian era (911- 612 BC) when Ashur-nasir-pal II (883-859 BC) transferred the seat of government to Nimrod then to Khorsabad, and Nineveh despite the transferring the seat of government to the new capitals, Ashur remained the most sacred of its temples, namely the Temple of God Ashur.

The first scientific excavations in the city were initiated by German expedition (1903 – 1913), led by Walter Andre. The first concerns about the site have been launched by the state board of antiquities and heritage since the 1950s and have done a lot of work.

The site's role was highlighted on the day of its inscription on the World Heritage List in 2003, where many international protection and management demands were not implemented as a result of the fragile security of Iraq ,till was attacked by the greater danger (ISIL), which was destroyed and vandalized the site , so the contact was lost with the site , Until it's completely liberated in the middle of Dec. 2016 ,and preliminary and rapid damage assessment was made on the site and it became clear that many monuments of the city it became subject to fall , especially Tabira gate and the Royal Cemetery, after two years of occupation of the site by the Islamic State forces.

-The location and importance of the city through the World heritage.

1	Name of the World Heritage Property	Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat)
2	Governorate	Salah Ed Din
3	Geographical coordinates to the nearest second	N35 27 32.004 E43 15 34.992
4-	Date of Inscription	2003 ,on the World Heritage List in danger
5	Criteria	(iii)(iv)
6	Property	100 ha
7	Ref:	1130

Source: World Heritage Centre (Access date 25/12/2017)

-World Heritage Committee Decision

Through reviewing of state conservation reports of the city of Ashur which the State party has submitted to the World Heritage Committee since its inscription on the world heritage list the Committee recommends that the city of Ashur be retained on the list of danger that many international protection and management requirements have not been implemented on the site.

from the recent decisions adopted at the 41th session of the World Heritage Committee.

Decision : 41 COM 7A.33

Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat) (Iraq) (C 1130)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7A.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **40 COM 7A.10**, adopted at its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016),
3. Commends the State Party for undertaking a rapid emergency assessment of the property, and requests it to submit a copy of this assessment for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
4. Expresses its great concern about the state of conservation of the property following intentional destructive acts, and about the continuing lack of detailed information on the state of conservation of the property, and also requests the State Party to keep the World Heritage Centre informed about the situation on the ground;
5. Encourages the State Party to continue to pursue efforts to ensure the protection of the property, despite the difficult prevailing situation, and in particular to start implementing urgently the priority actions outlined at the International Coordination Conference on the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage in Liberated Areas of Iraq (UNESCO, February 2017), with the support of UNESCO and the international community;
6. Urges all parties associated with the situation in Iraq to refrain from any action that would cause further damage to cultural and natural heritage of the country and to fulfil their obligations under international law by taking all possible measures to protect such heritage;
7. Launches an appeal to all Member States of UNESCO to cooperate in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage coming from Iraq as per the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2199 of February 2015, 2253 of December 2015 and 2347 of March 2017;
8. Calls on all UNESCO Member States to support emergency safeguarding measures, including through the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund;

9. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2018**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018;
10. **Decides to retain Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat) (Iraq) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

5-3 Samarra Archaeological City

Samarra archaeological city is one of the most powerful Islamic capitals of the Abbasid state, extending from Tunisia to Central Asia for more than a century. The city located on the banks of the River Tigris, 130 km north of Baghdad, and it extends from the north-south of 41.5 km long, and the width varies between 4 and 8 km. The city is a witness to the advanced architectural and artistic creativity in that region, which has spread to several regions of the Muslim world and beyond. The Great Mosque of the ninth century and its spiral minaret is one of the unique monuments of the city, and the Abbasid capital of the Year (836 – 892) have provided distinctive evidence of the Abbasid Caliphate, the only remaining Islamic capital that maintains its original constructional plan, its architecture and its art. Samarra was the second capital of the Abbasid caliphate after Baghdad.

The city of Samarra built to replace Baghdad as the capital of the Abbasids . As the monuments and landmarks of Baghdad have been lost and destroyed over the ages, Samarra is the only physical witness to the greatness of the Abbasid Caliphate at its height and prosperity.

The city retains two of the largest mosques (Malwiya and Abu Dulf) and most of the distinctive minarets, in addition to the largest palaces in the Muslim world (the palace of caliphate , Al Mashooq palace and others). The carved and engraved decoration od stucco developed in the city , known as the Samarra pattern, and later spread to all parts of the Islamic world during that period.

Also, a new type of pottery , known as Luster Pottery has been developed in the city of Samarra, simulating metal-made pots such as gold and silver.

Samarra is a distinct architectural stage in the Abbasid period by virtue of its mosques, its evolution, the planning of its streets , gardens, its architectural design and its ceramic industries and is the best architectural example for that period.

The Samarra buildings represent a new concept in Islamic architectural art in the mosques of al-Malawyya and Abu Dulf, which is reflected in their planning, and building the Islamic mosques, in addition to the large dimensions of its minarets, to represent the political and religious power of the state in that period.

For its outstanding universal values(OUV), the site inscribed on the World Heritage List in danger in 2007 and remained in danger till now , and the city's monuments have been affected by a lot of events such as the 2003 war, where the minaret bombed and some locations were shelled by the massive military presence of the Allied Coalition Forces.

In 2014, with the advent of the Islamic State forces as a regional force, many parts of Iraq and Syria have occupied, the city of Samarra affected with military actions, most affected sites the Great Mosque, Ashnas wall and Al Sulibyya dome.

With the stability of the security situation in the city, international commitments increased by UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre to preserve the city's monuments .

A report on the damage assessment of the site prepared and included in the previous state of conservation report and no further damage assessment was carried out.

-The location and importance of the city through the World heritage.

1	Name of the World Heritage Property	Samarra Archaeological City
2	Governorate	Salah Ed Din
3	Geographical coordinates to the nearest second	N 34 20 27 .562 E 43 49 24.75
4-	Date of Inscription	2007 ,on the World Heritage List in danger
5	Criteria	(ii)(iii)(iv)
6	Property	15,058 ha
7	Ref:	276 rev

Source: World Heritage Centre (Access Date 25/12/2017)

-World Heritage Committee Decision

Decision: 41 COM 7A.35

Samarra Archaeological City (Iraq) (C 276 rev)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7A.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **40 COM 7A.12**, adopted at its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016),
3. Commends the State Party for documenting the damage done to the affected monuments, and requests the State Party to submit a copy of this documentation for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
4. Encourages the State Party to continue to pursue efforts to ensure the protection of the property, despite the difficult prevailing situation;
5. Expresses its great concern about the continuing lack of information on the state of conservation of the property, and also requests the State Party to keep the World Heritage Centre informed about the situation on the ground;

6. Urges all parties associated with the situation in Iraq to refrain from any action that would cause further damage to cultural heritage of the country and to fulfil their obligations under international law by taking all possible measures to protect such heritage;
7. Launches an appeal to all UNESCO Member States to cooperate in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural heritage coming from Iraq as per the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2199 of February 2015, 2253 of December 2015 and 2347 of March 2017;
8. Calls on all UNESCO Member States to support emergency safeguarding measures, including through the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund;
9. Further requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2018**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018;
10. **Decides to retain Samarra Archaeological City (Iraq) on the List of World Heritage in Danger.**

6 -Conclusion and Recommendations

In the first half of last year, urban World Heritage Sites, Hatra , Ashur, Nineveh and Nimrod were liberated from the grip of the forces of terror and it became clear how much disaster in those sites some preliminary damage assessments have been developed, with national and international commitments to protect, preserve and upgrade Iraqi heritage but unfortunately we haven't seen anything on the ground despite the stable security situation that allows for major interventions in those sites, one of the proposals and recommendations we see an urgent to include in this report in the direction of the magnitude of the disaster, as follow;

1-The need to dispatch major technical assessment missions from UNESCO to conduct a central assessment of the damage done at those sites, as it did by sending a technical mission to the city of Palmyra in April 2016 after its liberation from ISIL.

2- Convening of an international conference for saving of the Iraqi heritage, to be followed by donor countries and the initiation of long-term excavation and preservation projects at the affected sites .

3-To affirm and compel Iraq's neighbors to emphasize the process of trafficking in cultural property coming from Iraq.

4-According to the World Heritage Convention of 1972, the State party is primarily responsible for the protection of Cultural Property located in its territory, assisted by international community, where there are commitments of the highest authority in the state (Prime Minister) that undertook to protect and preserve the Iraqi heritage so it's time to meet these commitments ,due to the quiet security situation and increasing oil prices.

5-The need for the State party to begin with the assistance of the international community and consulting UNESCO to begin planning in the World Heritage sites for long-term projects in the area of management and protection, particularly the three World heritage sites are on the list of danger and corrective measures are to be taken, and they are many and the World Heritage Committee is still reiterating it every year during its periodic meetings.

6-The need to involve universities and scientific institutions and to initiate with restoration and preservation work in our affected sites and it is possible such Aga Khan organization, World Heritage Fund, Getty Institute for conservation, etc. have many projects all over the world and we can benefit from their experiences, particularly our major historical sites require major interventions from restoration to preservation and even to reconstruction as a result of what the terror forces have done to remove fully the sites, as happened in Nimrod.