

ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria and Iraq¹

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Weekly Report 45 — June 16, 2015

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Executive Summary

During the reporting period, new details emerged of the ISIL deliberate destruction of the Ottoman-era palace/barracks at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Assur in northern Iraq (see [ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0082 UPDATE](#)). Extensive damage to the structure, which overlies the ancient Temple of Assur, was confirmed through the analysis of DigitalGlobe high-resolution satellite imagery, but other reported damage (corroborated by in-country sources) was not discernable in this recent imagery. ASOR CHI continues to gather new reports of deliberate heritage damage and the reuse of religious structures for military/administrative purposes in the key conflict zones of Iraq — see ASOR CHI Incident Reports herein ([IHI 15-0084 and 0085](#)) — for new information on the alleged destruction of mosques in the Baiji area and the verified ISIL occupation and vandalism of the Church of St. Ephraim in Mosul.

A key development in Syria, YPG forces surrounded the strategic border town of Tell Abyad in northern Syria. They occupy portions of the settlement and seem poised to capture this region. As previously reported by ASOR CHI, Tell Abyad (var. Tell Abiad) and the adjacent Turkish town of Akçakale serve as a key (and well documented) border crossing for ISIL fighters and contraband, including illicit cultural property. The YPG seizure of this region has resulted in a refugee crisis as Arab populations and other groups flee before the approaching Kurdish forces. It is hoped that YPG control will result in a cease in atrocities in this region and a decrease in cross-border trafficking, although ASOR studies strongly suggest Kurdish paramilitary forces have been previously involved and/or complicit in antiquities looting, trafficking, and sales in northeastern and northwestern Syria. Increased YPG control of the Syria-Turkey border will place increasing financial and logistical pressure on ISIL in the Raqqa operational theater. Should the YPG expand and consolidate its gains, ISIL will be dependent on Djerablus for connection with Turkey.

The number of incidents of combat damage to heritage rose during the reporting period, as SARG launched airstrikes against ISIL in Tadmor, allegedly, according to Tadmor sources, resulting in damage to ancient standing architecture at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra ([ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0096 UPDATE](#)). ASOR CHI identified no new damage in the most recent DigitalGlobe satellite image of Palmyra dated June 15, 2015. SARG helicopters dropped between one and two barrel bombs on the Ma'arat al-Nu'man Archaeological Museum (the Khan Murad

¹ This report is based on research conducted by the “Syria Preservation Initiative: Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria.” Weekly reports reflect reporting from a variety of sources and may contain unverified material. As such, they should be treated as preliminary and subject to change.

Pasha) resulting in the near total destruction of a *tekkiye* and mosque at the center of the khan's central courtyard as well as currently undetermined damage to the museum's world-renowned collection of mosaics and other archaeological artifacts (ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0098). Reported combat damage to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo continues to emerge (ASOR CHI Incident Report SHI 15-0097). Sources also reported the ISIL destruction of modern graves in the city of Tadmor.

Key Points

- SARG direct and intentional attacks on heritage places in Syria using airstrikes and artillery continued with the targeting of a museum (Ma'arat al-Nu'man) and allegedly areas within the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Palmyra and Aleppo. The objectives of these attacks are not heritage destruction in and of itself, but rather are conducted to achieve strategic, tactical, and political goals.
- ISIL deliberate destruction at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Assur was confirmed using high-resolution satellite imagery. ISIL has yet to release footage/details of the destruction. At this time, the only identifiable target is the palace/Ottoman Barracks, which on the mound's highpoint over the site of the German excavations of the Assur Temple. ISIL's motivation for targeting this modern structure remain unclear. The building overlies an ancient temple site and reportedly served as a site museum at one time.
- YPG advances on Tell Abyad in northern Syria could result in the severing of important ISIL overland routes to Turkey in the Raqqa strategic theater with broad implications for ISIL logistics, command, and criminal revenue streams.

Heritage Timeline

- June 15, 2015 *Conflict Antiquities* published a blog post titled “**Desecration and demolition of tombs and temples in Syria under Islamic State**” (by Sam Hardy).
<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2015/06/15/syria-damascus-aleppo-homs-tombs-temples-desecration-demolition/>
- June 14, 2015 *Al-Manar* published an article titled “**Statue of Virgin Mary Restored to Syria's Maaloula,**” which celebrates the repatriation of stolen historical artifacts to their original locations. Returned objects were reported to include bells, plates, and a statue of the Virgin Mary. An article published by *I24NEWS* titled “**Ancient Syrian Christian town restores Virgin Mary statue,**” however, describes the unveiling on Saturday of a newly sculpted statue of the Virgin Mary to replace a prominently located original sculpture previously destroyed during fighting several years ago. The article also includes a photograph dated June 13, 2015, which depicts soldiers returning a large icon painting to its original location in Maaloula.

<http://www.almanar.com.lb/english/adetails.php?eid=215400&frid=23&seccatid=20&cid=23&fromval=1>

<http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/74836-150614-ancient-syrian-christian-town-restores-virgin-mary-statue>

June 13, 2015

The Economist published an article titled “**Jihad and vandalism: Save our stones.**”

<http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21654065-well-killing-people-islamic-state-smashing-up-ancient-works-art-ornly>

- *The China Post* published an article titled “**‘Cultural cleansing’ in Iraq and Syria is history’s destruction**” (by John J. Metzler).
<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/commentary/the-china-post/john-metzler/2015/06/13/438293/Cultural-cleansing.htm>
- *BBC News* published a blog post titled “**Are ancient buildings as important as human lives?**”
<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-33111424>

June 12, 2015

The **Syrian Observatory for Human Rights** reported a massive explosion (a probable but unconfirmed tunnel bomb) in the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo**, centered (according to reports) beneath the **Ancient Citadel**.

<http://www.syriaahr.com/en/2015/06/massive-explosion-rocks-aleppo-city-clashes-continue-around-kweres-military-airport/>

- *The Guardian* published an article titled “**Devastation in Yemen: historic district of Sana’a before and after — in pictures**” (by Arnel Hecimovic).
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2015/jun/12/old-town-of-sanaa-after-airstrikes-and-before-in-pictures>
- The *CBC* posted an article titled “**How ISIS funds activities through sale of ancient artifacts**” (by Anik See).
<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/how-isis-funds-activities-through-sale-of-ancient-artifacts-1.3095925>
- *Forbes* published an article titled “**Five Reasons You Shouldn’t Buy That Ancient Artifact**” (by Kristina Killgrove).
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakillgrove/2015/06/12/five-reasons-you-shouldnt-buy-that-ancient-artifact/>
- *The New York Times* published an article titled “**Explosion Destroys Ancient Cultural Heritage in Yemen Capital**” (by Rick Gladstone).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/13/world/middleeast/yemen-sana-explosion-houthis-saudi-arabia.html>

- *The New York Times* published an article titled “**Airstrikes Destroy Part of Yemen’s UNESCO Heritage Site**” (by the Associated Press). <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/06/12/world/middleeast/ap-ml-yemen.html>

June 11, 2015

Heritage for Peace published its newsletter *Damage to Syria’s Heritage — 11 June 2015*, which includes an updated statement clarifying the organization’s position on information sharing and data verification.

<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-to-syrias-heritage-11-june-2015/>

- *Fox News* published a report titled “**Facebook purges pages offering priceless ISIS plunder for sale**” (by Lisa Daftari). <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/06/11/facebook-purges-pages-offering-priceless-isis-plunder-for-sale/>

- *The Daily Mail* published an article titled “**ISIL sells priceless ancient artifacts on FACEBOOK: Gold statues, scrolls written in Aramaic and coins up to 10,000 years old being peddled online by terror group**” (by Chris Spargo). <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3120941/Facebook-purges-pages-offering-priceless-ISIS-plunders-sale-including-gold-statues-ancient-coins-Hebrew-scrolls-clay-tablets.html>

June 10, 2015

The Guardian published an article titled “**Life in Mosul one year on: Isis with all its brutality is more honest than the Shia government**” (by Mona Mahmood), which includes interviews with Mosul residents. One interview stated, “I disagree with Isis practices against Christians, Yazidis and other minorities in Mosul. I’m still in touch with our Christian neighbours and wish they would come back shortly. **All people in Mosul are in disagreement with the demolition of ancient sites in Mosul, and some Isis militants are not happy either.** I discussed that with some of the young men of Mosul who joined Isis, and they said: ‘We did not know where these orders were coming from, the sharia court in Mosul was in astonishment too.’ **Amazingly enough, they told me that Isis is on its way to set up an archaeology department to excavate ancient sites in Mosul.**”

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/10/mosul-residents-one-year-on-isis-brutality>

- *Reuters* published an article titled “**‘Blood antiquities’: a wound the world struggles to staunch**” (by Mark John). <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/10/us-mideast-crisis-antiquities-analysis-idUSKBN00Q16320150610>

- *Co.Exist* published an article titled “**In the Wake of ISIS, 3-D Scans Are Saving Iraq’s Cultural Heritage**” (by Jay Cassano).
<http://www.fastcoexist.com/3047045/in-the-wake-of-isis-3-d-scans-are-saving-iraqs-cultural-heritage>
 - *The New York Times* published an article titled “**Conflicts in Syria and Region Take Toll on Jordan’s Tourism**” (by Rana F. Sweis).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/11/world/middleeast/jordan-syria-tourism-conflict.html>
 - *ICCROM-ATHAR* published a press release titled “**Follow-up course on ‘First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Syria’ concludes.**”
<http://athar-centre.org/?p=5274>
 - *BBC World Service* posted an audio recording of an **interview with Ma’amoun Abdul-karim** (Director-General of Antiquities and Museums, Syria) titled “**The Man Saving Syria’s Antiquities.**”
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02sr29n>
 - *The U.S. Department of State Official Blog* published a blog post titled “**Cultural Heritage: A Powerful Unifying Force at Risk Like Never Before**” (by Sheba Crocker).
<https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2015/06/10/cultural-heritage-powerful-unifying-force-risk-never>
 - *The Telegraph* published an article titled “**Suicide bomber attacks Egypt’s Luxor temple tourist site**” (by Louisa Loveluck and Magdy Samaan).
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/egypt/11664436/Suicide-bomber-attacks-Egypt-s-Luxor-temple-tourist-site.html>
 - CNN published an article titled “**The Church of Saint Ephraim in Mosul has been officially converted to the ‘Mosque of the Mujahideen’.**”
http://cnn-iraq-news.blogspot.com/2015/06/blog-post_969.html
- June 9, 2015
- *Middle East Eye* published an article titled “**Violence ravaging Yemen’s heritage as UNESCO sites damaged**” (by Charlene Rodrigues).
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/yemen-s-heritage-lost-war-2131096364>
 - **Protect Syrian Archaeology (APSA)** published footage to YouTube showing the aerial bombardment of the **Ayyubid Citadel** at the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Bosra**.
<https://youtu.be/AtsXCH9xlpU>

- In recognition of her work to protect Syria's cultural heritage, *National Geographic* selected **Salam Al Kuntar** (Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University; Penn Cultural Heritage Center) as one its **2015 Emerging Explorers**.
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/bios/2015/salam-al-kuntar/>
 - *BBC News* published an article titled "**Inside Mosul: What's life like under Islamic State?**" that includes a series of videos documenting everyday life in Mosul, Iraq.
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32831854>
- June 8, 2015
- Al Quds* published an article **alleging that Hezbollah and "The Popular Mobilization" Shi'a militant group attacked mosques in Baiji, Iraq**. *ASOR CHI Incident Report IHI 15-0084*.
<http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=353659>
- *BBC News* posted a video titled "**Inside Mosul: Intimidation and punishment.**"
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33021086>
- June 7, 2015
- BBC World Service* published an interview with **Dr. Maamoun Abdulkarim**, the Director General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria entitled "**The Man Saving Syria's Antiquities.**" Dr. Abdulkarim stated that "ninety-nine percent" of the artifacts in Syria's museums had been saved because they had all been moved to secret, safe places. This claim has also been made in numerous other interviews and DGAM publications, including a recent presentation on April 14th, 2015 at the Culture in Crisis conference sponsored by Yale and the Victoria and Albert Museum where Dr. Abdulkarim claimed that, "**99% of the artifacts in the museums are safe and unscathed**" (written across the bottom of his slide as well as verbal reassurance).
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02sr29n>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vvfXBhO9Yk>
- June 6, 2015
- The *Monuments of Syria* website (by **Ross Burns**) released an updated list of "**Monuments and sites reported damaged in the Syrian conflict since 2011 (as of 6 Jun 2015).**"
<http://monumentsofsyria.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Syria-damage-list-6-Jun-20151.pdf>
- June 2, 2015
- History Today* published an article titled "**Trafficking Culture: Archaeologists and criminologists are looking for ways to combat the illicit trade in antiquities**" (by Donna Yates).
<http://www.historytoday.com/donna-yates/trafficking-culture>

Military and Political Context

The main theaters of military operations during the reporting period in Syria were:

1. Tel Abyad Area, Raqqa Governorate
 - During the reporting period, Kurdish YPG fighters, with the support of coalition airstrikes, advanced against ISIL fighters around Tel Abyad on the Turkish border and took control of parts of the town on June 15.² In addition to cutting off ISIL's main supply line from Turkey to its de facto capital in the city of Raqqa, YPG control of Tel Abyad would also be a large step closer to the YPG goal of having contiguous territorial control along the Turkish border from Kobani Canton to Hasakah Governorate.
2. Al-Hrak Area, Daraa Governorate
 - On June 9, the moderate Southern Front rebel alliance reportedly seized Brigade 52, the largest Syrian military base in Daraa Governorate, and the nearby village of Mleiha al-Sharqiyeh.³
3. Qalb Lawzah, Idlib Governorate
 - On June 10, the al-Qaeda affiliated al-Nusra Front killed at least twenty Druze civilians in the village of Qalb Lawzah; the incident was reportedly the result of an argument between an al-Nusra commander and local Druze citizens concerning al-Nusra's seizure of a house in the village.⁴
4. Suwayda Area, Suwayda Governorate
 - During the reporting period, clashes reportedly took place between rebels, including the moderate Southern Front rebel alliance, and Syrian government forces around al-Thaala airport, which is used by government military aircraft.⁵

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33132809>;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/16/world/middleeast/kurds-and-syrian-rebels-push-to-evict-isis-from-border-town.html>;
http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2015/06/15/les-combattants-kurdes-a-l-assaut-du-fief-djiha-diste-de-tal-abyad_4654284_3218.html;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/14/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0OU0LI20150614>;
<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/ypg-backed-by-rebels-and-u-s-led-coalition-airstrikes-advance-and-take-control-on-a-new-area-in-tal-abiad-countryside/>;

http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

³ AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/06/09/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>;
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/09/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKBN0OP0Z320150609>;
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/moderate-rebels-take-key-southern-base-in-syria-dealing-blow-to-assad/2015/06/09/9d6ff9c2-0ea5-11e5-a0fe-dccfea4653ee_story.html;

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33064320>;
<http://www.france24.com/fr/20150609-syrie-rebellion-rebelles-capture-base-strategique-sud-deraa-assad-ei-al-nusra>; <http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/the-regime-loses-the-largest-stronghold-in-dara/>

⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33092902>;
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/11/us-mideast-crisis-druze-idUSKBN0OR0NV20150611>; AP,
<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/06/11/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>;
<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/20-civilians-killed-in-qalb-al-loza-village-which-is-inhabited-by-druze/>

⁵ AFP, <http://news.yahoo.com/syria-rebels-seize-most-sweida-military-airport-spokesman-114623190.html>;
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/11/us-mideast-crisis-syria-airbase-idUSKBN0OR17P20150611>;

5. Homs, Homs Governorate
 - On June 14, two bombs reportedly killed at least two-dozen civilians in Homs.⁶
6. Kobani Area, Aleppo Governorate
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Kobani.⁷
7. Deir ez-Zor, Deir ez-Zor Governorate
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Deir ez-Zor.⁸

The main theaters of military operations during the reporting period in Iraq were:

1. Amiriyat al-Fallujah, Al Anbar Governorate
 - On June 9, three ISIL fighters attacked Amiriyat al-Fallujah, one of the last areas in Al Anbar Governorate under Iraqi government control; one fighter detonated a suicide bomb in a government building, killing at least eight and injuring seventeen, while the other two were shot before they could detonate their bombs.⁹
2. Baiji Area, Salah ad Din Governorate
 - During the reporting period, Iraqi security forces and allied Shiite Popular Mobilization militias clashed with ISIL fighters in and around the city of Baiji.¹⁰
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Baiji.¹¹
3. Kirkuk Area, Kirkuk Governorate
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Kirkuk.¹²
4. Tal Afar, Ninawa Governorate
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Tal Afar.¹³

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/shells-land-on-the-airbase-of-al-thala-and-clashes-take-place-in-the-countryside-of-al-hasakah-city/>;

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/clashes-take-place-in-north-of-homs-and-the-islamic-battalions-target-al-thala-airbase/>

⁶ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/14/us-mideast-crisis-homs-idUSKBN00U0R820150614>; AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/06/14/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>;

<http://www.syriahr.com/en/2015/06/a-2nd-explosion-rocks-the-city-of-homs-since-this-morning/>

⁷ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

⁸ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

⁹ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/09/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-violence-idUSKBN00P16E20150609>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/10/world/middleeast/isis-proves-its-persistence-with-attacks-in-libya-and-iraq.html>; T. Bell, P. Martin, and ISW Iraq Team, "Iraq Situation Report: June 9-10, 2015,"

<http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-9-10-2015.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/15/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-baiji-idUSKBN00V0YQ20150615>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/13/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN00T0BA20150613>;

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/09/middleeast/iraq-forces-baiji/>

¹¹ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

¹² http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

¹³ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

5. Mosul, Ninawa Governorate
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Mosul.¹⁴
6. Makhmour Area, Erbil Governorate
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Makhmour.¹⁵
7. Baghdad Area
 - During the reporting period, bomb attacks killed more than a dozen civilians in and around Baghdad.¹⁶

Other key points:

- On June 10, the Obama administration announced the deployment of 450 U.S. military advisors to the Taqaddum military base near Ramadi in Al Anbar Governorate to “train, advise, and assist” the Iraqi security forces in retaking Ramadi.¹⁷

Key Heritage Recommendations and Actions

- Outreach efforts should be implemented/increased aimed at the prevention of cultural property looting, trafficking, and sales in areas controlled by Kurdish paramilitary forces across northern Syria and Iraq. While multiple datasets suggest such cultural property crimes are ubiquitous in Kurdish-controlled Syria, the expansion of YPG control there may herald amelioration in cultural property protection efforts given the potentials for negotiation and increased security, particularly through efforts led by/mediated by the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq and its cultural affairs officials.

¹⁴ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

¹⁵ http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/Airstrikes6.html

¹⁶ AP, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/06/09/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>;

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33072095>;

<http://www.dw.de/baghdad-targeted-by-deadly-bomb-blasts/a-18506121>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/09/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-bomb-idUSKBN00P29V20150609>; AP,

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/06/10/world/middleeast/ap-ml-iraq.html>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/10/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-idUSKBN00Q1TB20150610>

¹⁷

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/10/statement-press-secretary-additional-us-steps-counter-isil-effort>;

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-to-send-400-additional-troops-to-help-iraqs-fight-islamic-state/2015/06/10/54bec65c-0f7e-11e5-a0dc-2b6f404ff5cf_story.html;

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/11/world/middleeast/us-embracing-a-new-approach-on-battling-isis-in-iraq.html>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/12/us-mideast-crisis-usa-taqaddum-idUSKBN00S1DI20150612>;

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-33083359>;

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-obama-sending-450-troops-iraq/story?id=31660805>

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0095

Report Date: June 12, 2015

Site Name: Ottoman Water Mill at Asha'ari

Date of Incident: Ongoing

Location: Tell Asha'ari, north of Wadi al-Yarmouk, Daraa Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Ottoman-period mill ruin along the Wadi al-Yarmouk canyon, south of the town of Asha'ari.

Site Date: Ottoman

Source of Destruction: On June 12, 2015, the DGAM published a set of images showing the effects of “illegal excavation and vandalism acts” as well as deterioration due to weather exposure to the standing remains of an Ottoman water mill along the Wadi al-Yarmouk, south of Tell Asha'ari.¹⁸ The images show digging around the foundations of the mill structure, as well as erosion and general neglect of the ruin.

Pattern: Damage to heritage landscape of the Daraa countryside due to militarization, neglect, and a long-term lack of monitoring/enforcement.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is continuing to collect updated data on the condition of the heritage landscape of Daraa Governorate.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1720>

¹⁸ <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1720>



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



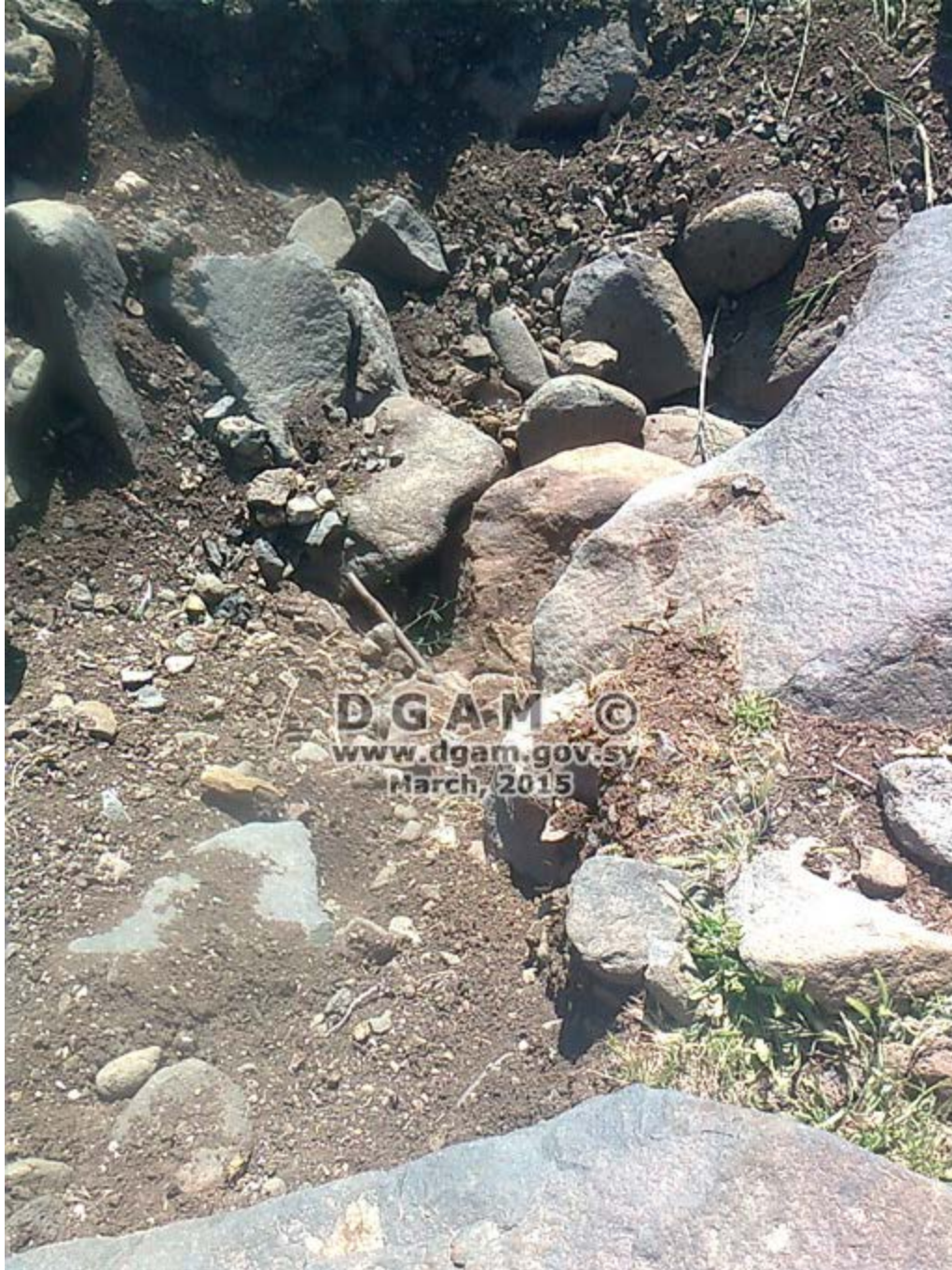
Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



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Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)

SHI 15-0096

Report Date: June 14, 2015

Site Name: UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra, including the Camp of Diocletian, the Temple of Baal-Shamin, and the Theater

Date of Incident: June 13, 2015

Location: UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra, Homs Governorate, Syria

Site Description:

According to UNESCO,

First mentioned in the archives of Mari in the 2nd millennium BC, Palmyra was an established caravan oasis when it came under Roman control in the mid-first century AD as part of the Roman province of Syria. It grew steadily in importance as a city on the trade route linking Persia, India and China with the Roman Empire, marking the crossroads of several civilisations in the ancient world. A grand, colonnaded street of 1100 metres' length forms the monumental axis of the city, which together with secondary colonnaded cross streets links the major public monuments including the Temple of Ba'al, Diocletian's Camp, the Agora, Theatre, other temples and urban quarters. Architectural ornament including unique examples of funerary sculpture unites the forms of Greco-roman art with indigenous elements and Persian influences in a strongly original style. Outside the city's walls are remains of a Roman aqueduct and immense necropolises.¹⁹

Site Date: Primarily Hellenistic (Palmyrene), Roman, and Islamic

Source of Destruction: On June 13, 2015, ASOR CHI sources in Syria reported that the Syrian military had bombarded the archaeological precinct of Palmyra and adjacent palm fields. According to sources, a part of the north wall (of Diocletian's Camp) was damaged, and the Temple of Baal-Shamin and the Theater were bombarded.

On June 16, 2015, footage was posted to YouTube showing damage to the northern wall, attributed also to the aerial bombardment.²⁰

A DigitalGlobe satellite image taken on June 15, 2015, does not show any clear evidence for the reported damage, but the exposed and subsurface archaeological remains could have sustained damage that is not visible in the satellite imagery.

Pattern: Intensive military activity centered on the ancient site of Palmyra, the adjacent city of Tadmur, and the surrounding countryside since the invasion of the area by ISIL on May 13, 2015. Reports of bombardments have been ongoing, but reports of impact damage to areas of the Palmyra site (other than the citadel of Qalaat Shirkuh) have not yet been definitively confirmed.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is developing all possible modes of assessing the condition of the archaeological landscape within the site and environs of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Palmyra.

¹⁹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/23>

²⁰ <https://youtu.be/7Nx9QXTrVPU>

Sources:

Online Reporting:

YouTube (June 16, 2015): <https://youtu.be/7Nx9QXTrVPU>



Satellite image showing the site of Palmyra, Syria (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 15, 2015)



Satellite image showing the Temple of Baal-Shamin at the site of Palmyra, Syria (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 15, 2015)



Satellite image showing the theater and colonnade at the site of Palmyra, Syria (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 15, 2015)

SHI 15-0097

Report Date: June 16, 2015

Site Name: Mosque of Abdullah Akhal (Al-Akhal Mosque), UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate

Date of Incident: Multiple: most recent May 1, 2015

Location: Aghyol District, north of Bab al-Hadid, Old City of Aleppo, Aleppo Governorate, Syria

Site Description: Small courtyard mosque in the neighborhood of Aghyol, containing the tomb of Abdullah Akhal.

Site Date: Ottoman

Source of Destruction: On June 14, 2015, Halab News published a report on damage to the Abdullah Akhal Mosque in Aleppo. According to the report, the mosque dates to AD 1485 (with repairs done in the 1880s). The Halab News report states that the mosque was bombarded numerous times, with the most recent incident being May 1, 2015.²¹

The damage report is corroborated by video footage published to YouTube on May 1, 2015.²² The footage was taken by Shahba Press Agency and shows damage to the courtyard and interior of the mosque as well as to the exterior and to nearby buildings (see images below). In particular, the external wall of the mosque has been demolished, and there is a large crack in the dome.

Pattern: Ongoing damage to the Aghyol District due to militarization, urban combat, and regime bombardment (see for example [ASOR CHI Weekly Report 26–27](#), [Incident Report 15-0022](#)).

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is continuing to monitor the condition of the urban heritage landscape of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo using all available resources.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

HalabNewsReport: <http://halabnews.net/news/66933>

Shahba Press Agency Footage on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/8GmpyVu2WHk>

²¹ <http://halabnews.net/news/66933>

²² <https://youtu.be/8GmpyVu2WHk>



Mosque of Abdullah Akhal, Aleppo (Halab News Network; published June 14, 2015)



Mosque of Abdullah Akhal, Aleppo, still image from video (Shahba Press; published May 1, 2015)



Mosque of Abdullah Akhal, Aleppo, still image from video (Shahba Press; published May 1, 2015)



Mosque of Abdullah Akhal, Aleppo, still image from video (Shahba Press; published May 1, 2015)



Mosque of Abdullah Akhal, Aleppo, still image from video (Shahba Press; published May 1, 2015)



Mosque of Abdullah Akhal, Aleppo, still image from video (Shahba Press; published May 1, 2015)



Mosque of Abdullah Akhal, Aleppo, still image from video (Shahba Press; published May 1, 2015)

SHI 15-0098 UPDATE

Report Date: June 16, 2015

Site Name: Ma'arat al-Nu'man Archaeological Museum (Khan Murad Pasha)

Date of Incident: June 15, 2015

Location: Ma'arat al-Numan, Idlib Governorate, Syria

Site Description:

According to Ross Burns,

[The Maarat al-Numan Museum] contains an interesting collection of objects including mosaics and pottery from many periods...The mosaics have been transferred from nearby sites including a fifth century mosaic from as far as Homs... In the centre of the courtyard is a *tekkiye* or foundation for the instruction of initiates to the Dervish sect. A doorway to the left once led to the hammam and suq attached to the khan (now managed separately). Opposite the museum is another Ottoman khan, the Khan Assad Pasha al-Azem.

[The Khan Murad Pasha] has been converted to a museum with striking effect. It contains an interesting collection of objects including mosaics and pottery from many periods, a tribute to the late curator Kamel Chéhadé. The mosaics have been transferred from nearby sites including a fifth century mosaic from as far as Homs. Note especially the mosaic depicting Romulus and Remus found at al-Firkiye (north of Maarat) and dated to 510. A second mosaic of the same date from al-Firkiye animals in a field bordered by vines....²³

Site Date: Historic Khan Murad Pasha 1565 CE

Source of Destruction: ASOR CHI sources reported on June 16, 2015, that the archaeological museum of Ma'arat al- Nu'man (formerly Khan Murad Pasha) suffered massive destruction due to two (some sources report one) TNT barrel bombs dropped by a Syrian Army helicopter(s) on the evening of Monday, June 15, 2015.

Images were posted to social media²⁴ and to the APSA website²⁵ on June 16, 2015, showing substantial destruction to the small building complex, a mosque and tekkiye, at the center of the courtyard of the museum complex (a 16th century Ottoman khan). The damage includes collapsed domes, ceilings, and walls. The photographs also indicate that there is structural damage to a small area of an upper section of an adjacent wall of the khan. CHI sources say that no artifacts were stored in the building complex at the center of the courtyard. Mosaics were, however, previously displayed on the floor adjacent to the courtyard structure and on the south wall of the structure; it is unclear at this time whether these mosaics had been removed prior to the recent damage. In addition, architectural fragments such as column capitals and mosaics are displayed or stored

²³ Burns, Ross. 2010. *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide* (I.B. Tauris), p. 195.

²⁴

<https://www.facebook.com/808286192587259/photos/a.808332109249334.1073741828.808286192587259/845974475485097/?type=1&theater>

²⁵

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-maaret-al-numan-the-archaeological-museum-is-damaged-with-a-tnt-barrel-06152015/>

throughout the portico of the courtyard (as seen in the images), and it is likely that there has been some damage to some of these artifacts.

Pattern: Ongoing polarization of Ma'arat al-Nu'man within the civil conflict and explicit militarization of the archaeological mosaic museum (See ASOR CHI Weekly Report 9, Incident Report 14-0041 and Weekly Report 2, Incident Report 14-0016). The museum is a prominent landmark located within the center of an intensely disputed town strategically located upon highway routes making up the Aleppo-Damascus corridor. The DGAM reported that 30 artifacts, including clay figurines, pottery, and amulets, were stolen from the museum in 2012.²⁶ According to an APSA report published on October 1, 2014, the museum at that time suffered daily and massive aerial bombardments (ASOR CHI Weekly Report 9, Incident Report 14-0041). The same APSA report stated that a MIG dropped a bomb near the museum in early October 2012, resulting in shattered doors, windows, display cases, and earthenware objects, compounding the bullet damage and more severe forms of destruction to the mosaic panels.

In February 2015, the results of an emergency project carried out by a local group to safeguard collection materials at the Al-Ma'arra Museum, Idlib, were announced through a series of public announcements and news articles. Project activities included repairs to the facility and facing of numerous (possibly all) of the mosaic fragments on site; an article states that "some 1600 square feet of mosaics were protected."²⁷

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is directing critical attention to the condition of the Ma'arat al-Nu'man Archaeological Museum, given its significance as a cultural repository.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Image posted to social media (June 16, 2015):

<https://www.facebook.com/808286192587259/photos/a.808332109249334.1073741828.808286192587259/845974475485097/?type=1&theater>

Siraj Press: <http://sirajpress.com/8558/مقال-براميل-الزسد-تدمر-متحف-مدينة-أبي-العالء-العربي/>

The Day After. 2015. "Emergency Preservation Activities Completed at Syria's Ma'arra Mosaic Museum," February 18. <http://tda-sy.org/بيان-مشترك-إتمام-أنشطة-الطوارئ-المتعل/?.lang=en>.

DGAM: <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1722>

APSA (June 16, 2015):

<http://apsa2011.com/apsanew/idlib-maaret-al-numan-the-archaeological-museum-is-damaged-with-a-tnt-barrel-06152015/>

²⁶ Abdulkarim, Maamoun. 2013. *Archaeological Heritage in Syria During the Crisis 2011-2013: Le Patrimoine Archéologique Syrien Durant La Crise*. Damascus: Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.

²⁷ The Day After. 2015. "Emergency Preservation Activities Completed at Syria's Ma'arra Mosaic Museum," February 18. <http://tda-sy.org/بيان-مشترك-إتمام-أنشطة-الطوارئ-المتعل/?.lang=en>.

Scholarly:

Abdulkarim, Maamoun. 2013. *Archaeological Heritage in Syria During the Crisis 2011-2013: Le Patrimoine Archéologique Syrien Durant La Crise*. Damascus: Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (Sirajpress; published June 16, 2015)



Ma'arat al-Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (APSA; published June 16, 2015)

Incident Reports: Iraq

IHI 15-0082 UPDATE

Report Date: June 11, 2015

Site Name: Assur (Ashur; Qal'at Sherqat; Kalah Shergat)

Date of Incident: May 28, 2015

Location: Shirqat, Salahaddin Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: According to UNESCO,

Founded in the 3rd millennium BC, the most important role of Ashur was from the 14th to 9th centuries BC when it was the first capital of the Assyrian empire. Ashur was also the Assyrian religious capital and the place for crowning and burial of its kings. The excavated remains of the public and residential buildings of Ashur provide an outstanding record of the evolution of building practice from the Sumerian and Akkadian period through the Assyrian empire, as well as including the short revival during the Parthian period.

The ancient city of Ashur (Assur, modern Qal'at Sherqat) is located 390 km north of Baghdad. The settlement was founded on the western bank of the Tigris. The excavated remains consist of superimposed archaeological deposits, the earliest from the Sumerian Early Dynastic period (early 3rd millennium BC), then the Akkadian and Ur III periods, followed by the Old, Middle and Neo-Assyrian (ending mid-1st millennium BC) periods, and finally, the Hellenistic period and that of the Arab kings of Hatra.

Structurally, the city of Ashur was divided into two parts: the old city (Akkadian libbi-ali, the heart of the city), which is the northern and largest part of Ashur, and the new city (Akk. alu-ishshu), which was constructed around the mid-2nd millennium BC. The major features of the city now visible on-site consist of architectural remains: the ziggurat and the great temple of the god Ashur, the double temple of Anu and Adad, the temple of Ishtar, the Sumerian goddess of love and war, the Old Palace with its royal tombs and several living quarters in many parts of the city. The city was surrounded by a double wall with several gates and a big moat. The majority of the buildings of the city were built with sun-dried mud-bricks with foundations of quarried stones or dressed stone, depending on the period. Artistic objects and parts of architectural remains of the city are at present on display in the major museums of the world.²⁸

In 2003 Assur was inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List and was simultaneously listed as a World Heritage Site in Danger; it has remained on the endangered list since.²⁹

²⁸ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1130>

²⁹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1130/threats/>

Farhan Pasha, Sheikh of the Shammar in the late 19th century, built a palace on the northeastern corner of the Assyrian site to serve as a personal country house. By the first German expedition at Assur in the early 20th century this building had been converted to police barracks. This Ottoman structure covered the main courtyard of the Assur Temple and extended to the southeast of the southeast entrance into the temple courtyard. Excavation director Walter Andrae asked permission from Hamdi Bey in 1909 to excavate the interior courtyard of the barracks knowing that part of the Temple of Assur extended below the modern structure. Permission to excavate was officially granted by Constantinople and Mosul's authorities in late March 1910 on condition that the German expedition repair any part of the building that was damaged and return it to its original condition.³⁰ Between 1979 and 2003, the Ottoman barracks housed a small museum that was looted in the mid-1990s. It is currently being used as an archive for the Assur archaeological reports, the earliest dating from Walter Andrae's excavations starting in 1903 and the most recent from the 2013 reconstruction of the Tabira Gate and the roofing of the royal graves by SBAH.

Site Date: 3rd millennium BCE – 9th century BCE (Assyrian remains); Palace of Farhan Pasha constructed 1850–1860 CE.

Source of Destruction: ISIL deliberate destruction.

Pattern: On May 28, 2015, the Radio Free Iraq Twitter account stated that local informants had witnessed ISIL militants attacking the citadel of Assur, and additional media outlets repeated the claims.

ASOR CHI in-country sources report that the plexiglass panels covering the Assyrian royal tombs, which were installed by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities two years ago, had been vandalized by ISIL militants approximately two months earlier. ASOR CHI sources also report that on May 28, 2015, the old and new expedition houses, the Tabira Gate, and the palace of Farhan Pasha were attacked. Archives stored in the Farhan Pasha palace were reportedly burned during the attack on May 28, 2015. According to in-country sources, ISIL militants also attempted to destroy the ziggurat but failed. On the following day, May 29, 2015, ISIL militants reportedly leveled the damaged buildings with a bulldozer.

DigitalGlobe satellite imagery obtained by ASOR CHI shows that parts of the archaeological site, particularly the Ottoman Barracks and the area around the Temple of Assur in the northeastern corner, were leveled between May 9, 2015, and June 10, 2015. While the May 9 and June 10 imagery of the Tabira Gate, Assyrian Royal Tombs, and Expedition House do not show any clear evidence of damage, the exposed and subsurface archaeological remains could have sustained damage that would not be visible in the satellite imagery.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm the recent reports of damage at the site through remote imaging and local reporting.

³⁰ Walter Andrae (1910) "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabung des Assur-Tempels." *Mitteilungen der Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft* 44, pp. 40.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Al Arabiya:

<http://www.alarabiya.net/ar/arab-and-world/iraq/2015/05/28/جريمة-جديدة-يرتكبها-داعش-بحق-آثار-العراق.html>

Anwaka: <http://english.ankawa.com/?p=14964>

International Business Times:

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-blows-unesco-world-heritage-assyrian-site-ashur-near-tikrit-1503367>

Radio Free Iraq: https://twitter.com/iraqhurr_eng/status/603894431402582016

Scholarly:

Andraes, Walter (1905) "Zum Plan von Assur-Nord." *Mitteilungen der Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft* 28, pp. 39.

Andraes, Walter (1908) "Aus den Berichten W. Andraes aus Assur von Mai 1907," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft*, pp. 16.

Andraes, Walter (1910) "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabung des Assur-Tempels." *Mitteilungen der Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft* 44, pp. 40.

Dittmann, Robert. (1990) *Ausgrabungen der Freien Universität Berlin in Ashur und Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta in den Jahren 1986-1989*. MDOG, vol. 122, pp. 157-171.

UNESCO: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1130/>



Satellite image showing the site of Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 10, 2015)



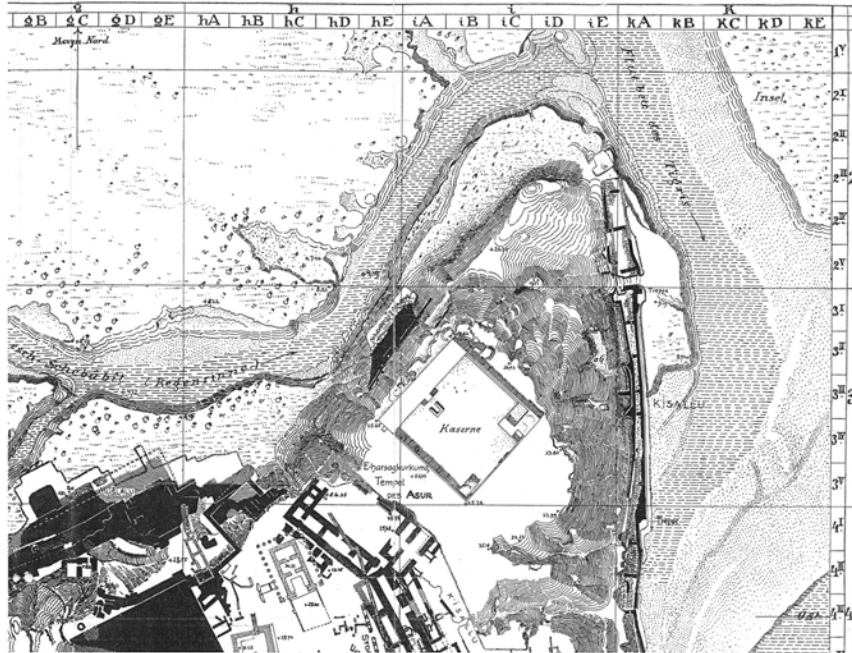
Satellite image showing the Farhan Pasha Palace (Ottoman Barracks) and the area around the Temple of Assur, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken November 7, 2011)



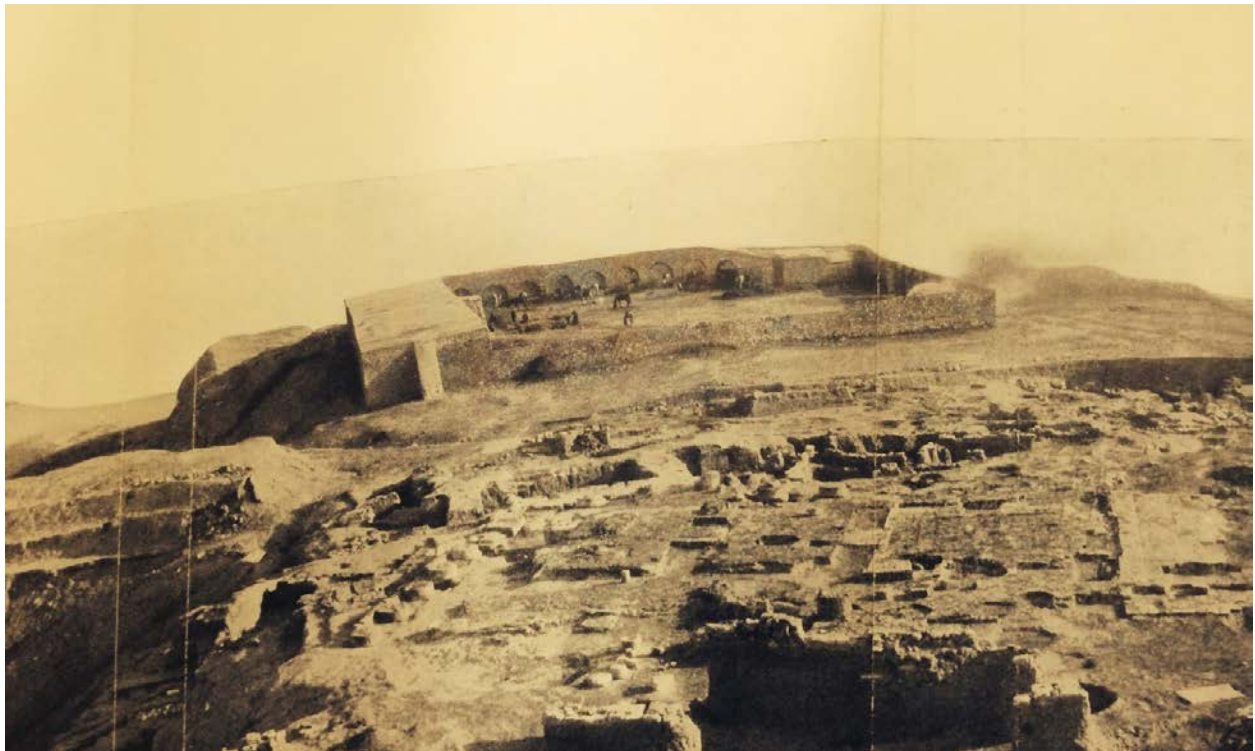
Satellite image showing the Farhan Pasha Palace (Ottoman Barracks) and the area around the Temple of Assur, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken May 9, 2015)



Satellite image showing damage to the Farhan Pasha Palace (Ottoman Barracks) and the area around the Temple of Assur, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 10, 2015)



Archaeological plan of Farhan Pasha's palace, also known as the Ottoman barracks labeled as "Kaserne" (Andrae, Walter (1905) "Zum Plan von Assur-Nord." *Mitteilungen der Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft* 28, pp. 39)



Panorama photograph of the Temple of Assur excavations and Ottoman Barracks in the background (Andrae, Walter (1908) "Aus den Berichten W. Andrae aus Assur von Mai 1907," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft*, pp. 16)



Aerial image of Assur with Ottoman barracks in the foreground (Georg Gerster, Georg and Charlotte Trümple (2007) *The Past from Above: Aerial Photographs of Archaeological Sites*. Malibu: Getty Publications, pp. 69)



Abb. 10 und 11: Überblick über die Grabung im *Karakol-Hof*, von der Nordecke aus (oben) und aus Südosten (unten).

Photographs of Temple of Assur excavations inside the courtyard of the Ottoman barracks (Andrae, Walter (1910) "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabung des Assur-Tempels." *Mitteilungen der Deutschen-Orient Gesellschaft* 44, pp. 40)



Satellite image showing the Tabira Gate, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken May 9, 2015)



Satellite image showing the Tabira Gate, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 10, 2015)



Satellite image showing the Expedition House, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken May 9, 2015)



Satellite image showing the Expedition House, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 10, 2015)



Satellite image showing the Ziggurat and the Assyrian Royal Tombs (before the protective roof was built), Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken November 9, 2011)



Satellite image showing the Ziggurat and the Assyrian Royal Tombs (after the protective roof was built), Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken May 9, 2015)



Satellite image showing the Ziggurat and the Assyrian Royal Tombs (after the protective roof was built), Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken June 10, 2015)

IHI 15-0084

Report Date: June 9, 2015

Site Name: Mosques in Baiji

Date of Incident: June 8, 2015

Location: Baiji, Salahaddin Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Mosques located in and around Baiji.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Alleged deliberate destruction by Shi'a militias.

Pattern: On June 8, 2015, Al-Quds Al-Arabiya published an article alleging that Hezbollah and "The Popular Mobilization" Shi'a militia (al-Hashd al-Shaabi) intentionally burned multiple mosques in Baiji and burned orchards in the neighborhoods of Al-But'ma and Alhajaj south of Baiji. This media report did not provide information about the number of mosques targeted, their locations, or their names.³¹ The Joint Operations Command denied reports that Iraqi Security Forces were targeting mosques.³² No further details about the extent of the damage and no photo/video documentation were provided. These reports have not yet been independently verified at the time of publication.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports through remote imaging and local reporting and will continue to monitor the condition of religious cultural heritage in Iraq.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Al Quds: <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=353659>

Institute for the Study of War:

<http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-9-10-2015.html>

³¹ <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=353659>

³² <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/06/iraq-situation-report-june-9-10-2015.html>

IHI 15-0085

Report Date: June 15, 2015

Site Name: Church of St. Ephraim (Church of St. Ephrem, Mar Ephraim)

Date of Incident: June 9, 2015

Location: Ashurta Quarter, Mosul, Ninawa Governorate, Iraq

Site Description: Seat of the Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of Mosul, one of the largest places of worship for Christians in Mosul.

Site Date: Historic.

Source of Destruction: ISIL vandalism

Pattern: In July 2014, soon after the ISIL invasion of Mosul, there were reports that the church had been destroyed by ISIL militants, but these reports proved to be unfounded.³³ At the same time, there were reports that the church had been selected as the seat of the State Council of the mujahideen and that the cross and its furnishings had been removed from the building.³⁴ Other reports suggested that ISIL was preparing to defend against a military offensive to expel them from Mosul and were, therefore, occupying public and private buildings to prepare for resistance.³⁵ In September 2014, airstrikes targeting ISIL militants damaged the buildings adjacent to St. Ephraim and the Syrian Catholic church dedicated to St. Paul.³⁶ In November 2014, posts on social media suggested that ISIL militants were planning to convert the church into a mosque,³⁷ and ASOR CHI in-country sources report that church property was stolen on January 14, 2015. On June 9, 2015, reports from ISIL social media accounts indicated that the church had been converted into the “Mosque of the Mujahideen” and included pictures of the ISIL flag over the church dome.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI will attempt to confirm reports via in-country sources and is continuing to monitor the condition of religious cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq.

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<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/07/20/syria-iraq-mosul-burned-syriac-catholic-cathedral-propaganda/> ;

<https://conflictantiquities.wordpress.com/2014/07/21/syria-iraq-mosul-burned-syriac-catholic-cathedral-more-false-evidence/>

³⁴ <http://www.aina.org/news/20140714203128.htm>

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http://www.fides.org/en/news/36686-ASIA_IRAQ_The_Church_of_St_Ephrem_in_Mosul_could_soon_be_transformed_into_a_mosque

³⁶ http://cnn-iraq-news.blogspot.com/2015/06/blog-post_969.html

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http://www.fides.org/en/news/36686-ASIA_IRAQ_The_Church_of_St_Ephrem_in_Mosul_could_soon_be_transformed_into_a_mosque

Sources:

Online Reporting:

CNN: http://cnn-iraq-news.blogspot.com/2015/06/blog-post_969.html?m=1

Al Sumaria: <http://www.alsumaria.tv/mobile/news/136771/iraq-news>



Church of St. Ephraim, with ISIL flag on the outside (Al Sumaria)