

ASOR Syrian Heritage Initiative (SHI): Planning for Safeguarding Heritage Sites in Syria¹

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Weekly Report 1 — August 11, 2014

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Heritage Timeline

- August 10** **DGAM** released a short report entitled *Damages in Damascus old city* on its website detailing mortar damage sustained in the area during the period Jan. 1–Jun. 17, 2014. The accompanying photos show minor structural damage to roofs and upper stories. <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1369>
- August 8** The wooden *Noria* (waterwheel) **al-J'berihe** in **Hama** burned. An electrical fire in an adjoining restaurant is reported to have caused the blaze. Sources: APSA photos and video. SHI Incident Report: **SHI14-006**.
- Syrian Minister of Tourism, Bishr Yazagi, warns against future tunnel bomb attacks on the Aleppo Citadel. *Shanghai Daily*. http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=234362
 - **APSA** released video footage entitled *Sergilla: Everyday life of the refugees amidst the ancient remains where they have found shelter*. Footage is dated July 20, 2014. Sergilla/Serjilla (35.670° N, 36.569°E) is one of the best preserved of the so-called Dead Cities and was founded in the later 5th Century AD. Sergilla forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (2011).
- August 3** **Heritage for Peace** distributed its newsletter/report entitled *Damage to Syria's Heritage 03 August 2014*.
- August 2** Intentional destruction of the **tomb** of the seventh Umayyad **Caliph Sulaymān ibn 'Abd** in the town of **Dabiq**, allegedly by ISIS or Jabhat al-Nusra. Also the destruction of the Sufi *Maqam* (Shrine) of **Abd Allah ibn Mesaf' al-Qoureshi**. Sources: APSA, Aljazeera Aug. 7, 2014, follow-up verification by SHI. SHI Incident Report: **SHI14-002**.
- August 1** **UNESCO** World Heritage Committee commends the **DGAM** for its cultural property protection work. <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1356>
- July 31** Unconfirmed vandalism by JN or IS to the *Maqam Ibrahim al-Salahin* (shrine) in **Aleppo**. Sources: APSA photos, attempted verification by SHI. APSA posted six photos on its website. The first before-and-after photo shows the *Maqam Ibrahim al-*

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.

Salihin or Shrine of Abraham. This story was repeated by other social media sources. The claims of damage are suspect. SHI Incident Report: [SHI14-003](#).

- July 29** **Three (?) tunnel bombs** detonated in the UNESCO World Heritage Site **Ancient City of Aleppo** (2008) by the Islamic Front. The main target was the Grand Serail area, the former seat of the Aleppo Governor, and the police headquarters/Palace of Justice east of it. Numerous historic sites were damaged in the area. Sources: various news media and social media with video and photos, including Aleppo Archaeology, Eyes on Heritage, APSA, DGAM. Sources vary on the extent of the damage and the number of bombs. Fighting following the explosions caused additional damage. Sites that were damaged by the bombs and in recent fighting include:
- al-Otrush Mosque
 - Banqusa Mosque
 - al-Haddadin Mosque
 - al-Maidani Mosque
 - Serail/Governor's Office
 - Hammam Yalbugha
 - Khan as-Shouna
 - Madrasa as-Sahibiyah/Mosque al-Fustuq
 - Madrasa as-Sultaniye
 - Madrasa al-Khusruwiye
- SHI Incident Report: [SHI14-004](#).
- July 27** Aerial bombardment, allegedly by a SARG MIG, in the town of **Kafr Takharim** damaged the **Hammam al-Souk**, an Ottoman bath. Source: APSA, DGAM, follow-up verification by SHI. SHI Incident Report: [SHI14-001](#).
- July 21** **Eyes on Heritage** released a photo showing substantial damage to the **Sahabia Mosque** in the Old City of Aleppo. SHI investigation is ongoing.
- July 20** **Bab al-Nasr neighborhood fire** caused by aerial bombardment in Old City of **Aleppo** in the area of al-Mektabat Street. A fire also swept through parts of this area in October 2012. Sources: Aleppo Archaeology, DGAM, APSA. APSA video footage is dated July 20, 2014. The exact date of fire has yet to be determined. SHI Incident Report: [SHI14-005](#).

Military and Political Context

During the reporting period, IS made substantial territorial gains in northern Syria and northern Iraq and continued to exert pressure on Baghdad and the Aleppo-Damascus corridor. Islamic State (IS formerly ISIS or ISIL) activities in the Tigris watershed sparked a humanitarian crisis as thousands of members of religious minorities fled into the mountains or to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Syrian-Arab Regional Government (SARG) units retreated from, or were defeated in, conflict zones in northern Syria, particularly in the areas of Hassakah and Raqqa following well coordinated attacks by IS forces and its affiliates.² Aleppo and Hama continue to be contested in what has become a three-front conflict between IS and Wahhabi/Salafi affiliates, more secular-leaning opposition forces, and SARG and its allies. IS and other Islamist militias are exhibiting a high degree of coordination in their attempts to capture military bases, seize airbases/airports, and cut off regime access to Lebanon.³ IS captured the 17th Division Base (Raqqa), the 93rd Brigade Base (Ain Aissa), and the 121st Brigade Base (Hassakeh). These significant victories added heavy weaponry to IS's arsenal, already far more sophisticated than its opponents following the capture of munitions in Mosul and Tikrit. IS and affiliates seem poised to capture the strategic Kuweiris Airbase east of Aleppo and the Hama military airport and are putting increasing pressure on regime access to the Damascus International Airport. IS seems resolved to end SARG air attacks in the Aleppo and Mosul theaters. SARG continued air offensives in the Aleppo region and against IS targets in Mosul.

Overall, IS expanded its multi-front offensive, most notably moving east from Mosul into the Nineveh Plain challenging Erbil and Dohuk Provinces in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (August 6–10), and increased engagement with Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria and northern Iraq following IS territorial gains in Sinjar. This has been interpreted as an attempt by IS to create a single northern front stretching along the Zagros-Taurus piedmont.⁴

Local Sunni tribal groups are not supportive of IS, but IS has recently made the consequences of armed resistance quite clear through their brutal reprisals against the al-She'tat tribe in the Deir ez-Zor region.

IS continued its policy of establishing a government, infrastructure, and services in areas under its control.⁵ IS launched the glossy magazine *Dabiq* during the month of Ramadan.⁶ The magazine's first two installments (released July 5, 2014 and July 27, 2014) contain frequent uses of cultural heritage, history, and archaeology to legitimize the caliphate, justify its actions, and further its agenda. The DGAM remains active in monitoring cultural

² Darouni, Carlo. *Syria Update: July 26–August 7, 2014*. (Institute for the Study of War. August 7, 2014). Hereafter ISW. Cafarella, Jennifer. *Syria Update: July 17–25, 2014*. (ISW. July 25, 2014).

³ Brog, Logan. *The Battle for Arsal*. (ISW. August 7, 2014).

⁴ Cafarella, Jennifer. *ISIS Works to Merge its Northern Front across Iraq and Syria*. (ISW. August 8, 2014).

⁵ Caris, Charles C. and Samuel Reynolds. 2014. *ISIS Governance in Syria*. (ISW).

⁶ Anonymous. 2014a. *Dabiq 1* (al-Hayat Media Center) Ramadan 1435 = June 28–July 28, 2014. Anonymous. 2014b. *Dabiq 2* (al-Hayat Media Center) Ramadan 1435 = June 28–July 28, 2014.

heritage and in its attempts to mitigate damage; however, recent official reports make clear the diminishing area in which DGAM employees can operate — Damascus, Deraa, Suwieda, and Homs Governates in the south and Latakia in the northwest. Independent reporting and reporting by opposition forces is concentrated along the Turkish border and around the city of Aleppo. Little new information on the heritage situation is currently available from the Euphrates Valley and the Khabur region since recent IS territorial gains and consolidations have hampered communication.

Key Heritage Recommendations and Actions

1) As IS forces and related Wahhabi/Salafi extremist groups expand their territorial holdings in northern Syria and Iraq, they systematically target shrines and tombs for destruction, particularly sites significant to Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Yezidis, Sufis, and Shiites, although certain Sunni monuments have occasionally been targeted (most notably in Raqqa and Mosul). IS boasts an explicit policy regarding the destruction of such sites in Nineveh Province in a recent photo report in *Dabiq* 2.⁷ Not all incidents reviewed by SHI are immediately or definitively attributable to IS, Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), and related groups, and some recent destruction of Sunni holy sites may constitute retaliations by other sectarian groups and then speciously attributed to IS, JN, etc. in social media and the mainstream press.

*SHI will prioritize compiling lists of endangered religious sites in northern Syria with accompanying locational and descriptive data, particularly in the area of Aleppo, which is now under immediate threat of falling to extremist forces and is witnessing a spike in incidents of destruction (see below). *SHI will scrutinize specific attributions of destruction to various sectarian entities gleaned from online and traditional media.

2) SHI noted cases of unsubstantiated accusations and intentionally falsified information regarding vandalism and destruction to Islamic religious sites in the Aleppo region that had been posted on popular heritage websites and subsequently distributed by mainstream media groups such as *Aljazeera*.

*SHI will work with its partners and contacts to verify web postings and suggest edits and corrections as necessary.

3) The ongoing practice of Syrian opposition forces, mainly the Islamic Front and its affiliates, detonating tunnel bombs represents another major concern in the UNESCO World Heritage Site The Ancient City of Aleppo given the scale of destruction caused by this tactic and the high concentration of significant historic remains in this area. SARG's use of barrel bombs and incendiaries in urban areas represents another key area of concern.

⁷ Anonymous. 2014b: 14–17. The photos show the destruction of sites in Nineveh Province in Iraq, including the Husayniyyatul Qubbah “Temple” in Mosul, the “Grave of the Girl” in Mosul, the Tomb of Ahmad ar-Rifa’i in al-Mahlabiyyah District, the Husayniyyat Jawwad “Temple” in Tal ‘Afar, and the Tomb of Arna’ut in Tal ‘Afar. This list covers only a few of the known IS destructions — the most notable exception being their destruction of Nebi Yunas/the Tomb of Jonah in Mosul.

*SHI will prioritize the documentation of Aleppo since this area will require substantial mitigation and preservation projects for the foreseeable future. We will monitor the use of such tactics, which may be spreading to other areas: at least one tunnel bomb has been documented near Maarat al-Numaan dating to May 6, 2014.⁸

⁸ Reuters. May 6, 2014. *Bomb in Syria's Idlib kills 30 government fighters: monitoring group*. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/06/us-syria-crisis-blast-idUSBREA4505X20140506>

Incident Reports

SHI 14-001

Report Date: August 6, 2014

Site Name: Hammam al-Souk, Kefr Takharim (var. Kafar Takhareem, Kfar Takharam)

Date of Incident: July 27

Location: Idlib Governate, Harem District, Kafr Takharim Subdistrict, 23.25 km northwest of Idlib

Coordinates: 36° 6'60"N, 36°30'54"E [exact location of bathhouse not yet determined]

Site Description: These standing masonry *hammam* (bathhouse) buildings of the old town quarter of Kafr Takharim were heavily damaged by SARG aerial bombardment.

Site Date: Ottoman Period (1853 AD, 1270 AH)

Source of Destruction: Alleged SARG aerial bombardment.

Pattern: Destruction in vicinity of major routes linking Latakia to Aleppo. Central, naturally fortified historic architecture at old town center. FSA controlled area. Town is the capital of the subdistrict.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: Steel reinforced concrete in photos suggests recent renovation/restoration work on some parts of the structure.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

APSA Report. 20 accompanying photographs.

<http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites.html>

APSA Youtube Video posted July 28, 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApD7t9yUmp4>

Radio Free Syria July 30, July 27

DGAM Report.

<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1322>



Airstrike damage to Kafr Takharim Hammam al-Souk (APSA).

SHI 14-002

Report Date: August 6, 2014

Site Name: Tomb of Umayyad caliph Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd, Dabiq and the Sufi *Maqam* (shrine) of Abd Allah ibn Mesaf’ al-Qoureshi.

Date of Incident: August 2, 2014

Location: Aleppo Governate, A’zaz District, Akhtari Nahia, Dabiq

Coordinates: 36°32'22.77"N, 37°16'7.06"E

Site Description: Dabiq is located northeast of Aleppo. The so-called tomb of Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd (c. 674 – 22 September 717), the 7th Umayyad caliph, is located here. He ruled from 715 until 717. His father was Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, and he was a younger brother of the previous caliph, al-Walid I. A large *tell* (mound) appears on the north side of modern Dabiq on Google Earth (36°32'24.24"N, 37°16'7.69"E). There is a concrete water tower on the mound. The tomb lies on the mound’s south slope. The APSA online photos (before-and-after) of the destruction seem to match the satellite imagery — note the position of trees inside the shrine’s enclosure wall. Several APSA photos bear the logo of the Turkish news agency Anadolu Agency headquartered in Ankara. According to the geographer Yaqut al-Hamawi, Umayyad forces led by Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd encamped here in their expedition against al-Massisah (Mopsuestia, Mamistra).

Site Date: Sulayman bin Abd al-Malik (c. 674 – 22 September 717)

Source of Destruction: Allegedly IS intentional destruction, but see below.

Pattern: IS destruction of standing monuments deemed inappropriate to Islam. Possible SARG reprisal (or other group) fingering IS. Destruction seems somewhat counter to IS ideology and strategy.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:

Notably, *Dabiq* is the title of the official publication of IS. According to *Dabiq*, the title is

...taken from the area named Dabiq in the northern countryside of Halab (Aleppo) in Sham. The place was mentioned in hadith describing some of the events of the Malahim (what is sometimes referred to as Armageddon in English). One of the greatest battles between the Muslims and the crusaders will take place near Dabiq⁹.

In addition, The Battle of Marj Dabiq was fought near this site on August 24, 1516 in which Ottoman forces defeated the Mamluk Sultanate. In his analysis of the embedded meanings within *Dabiq*, Michael W. S. Ryan notes,

This area, at the time of publication under the control of Syrian forces loyal to Bashar al-Assad, is a symbol of the great clash-to-come between the forces of the new caliphate and the West in which the forces of Islam will be triumphant. This prophecy is traced to a classic hadith and was used by Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi to the effect that the promised victory in Dabiq will be the first step in the conquest of the world as symbolized by the anticipated defeats of “Constantinople” and then “Rome.” In the apocalyptic tradition, Issa ibn Maryam (the Christian Jesus) will descend near Damascus to lead the army arriving from “al-Madinah of the best people.” “Al-Madinah” can mean simply “city” as well as the city of that name in Saudi Arabia. By featuring this eschatology in such a prominent place,

⁹ Anonymous. 2014a: 4.

the magazine attempts to connect Islamic State and its new caliph to a cosmic purpose, obviously meant to have a romantic appeal to recruit young men looking for a cause.¹⁰

Note that this area was outside IS control at the time of the publication of *Dabiq* 1. *Dabiq* declares “May Allah purify Dabiq from the treachery of sahwah and raise the flag of the Khalifah over its land”¹¹. Given the importance of this shrine to Sunni Islam, the area’s eschatological symbolism to Wahhabi/Salafi groups, and putative SARG control of this area at the time of the incident, there seems a high likelihood that online sources attributing the destruction to IS may be incorrect or intentionally falsified. Any statements attributing blame for this act of destruction must be highly scrutinized pending further investigation. Conversely, in its most extreme interpretation Salafis condemn as heretical (*bid’ah*) intercession (*tawassul*) through deceased religious figures, for example, the veneration of the graves of prophets and saints. Salafis maintain this leads to *shirk* (polytheism). In contrast, Shia Islam supports and advises the practice of *tawassul*. Hence Muslim shrines and tombs are frequently targeted for vandalism and destruction throughout the Middle East and the destruction of shrines and tombs is used for propagandistic purposes by all sides in the current Syrian conflict (viz. the destruction of the Sunni shrine and mausolea of Khalid bin al-Walid in Homs in July 2013 and the destruction of shrines and tombs in Raqqa and Mosul).

The personage associated with the putative Sufi *maqam* of Abd Allah ibn Mesaf’ al-Qoureshi and the structure’s location have not as yet been determined.

SHI will continue to gather data on tombs and shrines in key conflict zones and closely monitor data sources on sectarian motivated destructions of such sites.

Sources:

Online Reporting

APSA <http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/892-aleppo-dabiq-destructionsepulche.html>

Anonymous. 2014a. *Dabiq: The Return of the Khilafah* 1 (al-Hayat Media Center). Ramadan 2014 = June 28–July 28, 2014.

_____. 2014b. *Dabiq: The Return of the Khilafah* 2. (al-Hayat Media Center). Ramadan 2014 = June 28–July 28, 2014.

Ryan, Michael W. S. 2014. “Dabiq: What Islamic State’s New Magazine Tells Us about Their Strategic Direction, Recruitment Patterns and Guerrilla Doctrine.” Jamestown Foundation — Terrorism Monitor website. (August 1, 2013).
http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42702&cHash=0efbd71af77fb92c064b9403dc8ea838#.U-FboFY2yoM

¹⁰ Ryan 2014.

¹¹ Anonymous. 2014a: 3.

Scholarly Sources:

le Strange, Guy. 1890. *Palestine under the Moslems: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500*, p. 426. [PDF Available online]

DABIK — 'A village of the 'Azaz District lying 4 leagues from Halab (Aleppo). Near it is a green and pleasant meadow, where Omayyad troops encamped, when they made the celebrated expedition against Al-Massissah, which was to have been continued even to the walls of Constantinople. There is here the tomb of the Khalif Sulaiman ibn 'Abd al Malik who led the above expedition. (Yak., ii 513; Mar., i. 381).



Before-and-after views of the destruction at Dabiq (APSA).



The destroyed tomb of Caliph Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd in Dabiq (APSA).

SHI 14-003

Report Date: August 6, 2014

Site Name: *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* in Aleppo.

Date of Incident: July 31, 2014

Location: Aleppo

Coordinates: *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* (36°11'2.20"N, 37° 9'35.70"E)

Site Description: The APSA internet report on this alleged vandalism provides five photos without a description. SHI has verified the first before-and-after photo to be the *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* in Aleppo. Ross Burns¹² describes the site thusly,

Thread through the lanes to the major street to the south, Hawl al-Balda St, and proceed east to al-Salihin Square. The road south from here leads (100 m on the left) to one of the Aleppo shrines commemorating the legend of Abraham and his transit from Ur to the Hebron. The *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* (like the two mosques of the Citadel with Abrahamic associations) was apparently a Zengid-Ayyubid project though the site was first honoured by the Seljuk sultan, Malik Shah, in 1086. The 1106 inscription over the entrance to the prayer hall claims that the rock honoured in the room dates from Abraham's visit. The minaret above the portal may be part of the work attributed to al-Ghazi. The surrounding graveyard contains 12th century tombs.

Zainab Shaikh¹³ provides the following overview for the monuments of this part of Aleppo,

The expansion of the city on all sides, but to a greater extent on the southern and western sides resulted in an overall expansion such that previously extramural parts of the city were now incorporated within. By the mid-12th century, al-Hadir, a region southwest of Aleppo, which was previously settled by Turkoman armies brought to Aleppo by the Zangids had transformed from an encampment like the early Islamic *amsaars* into a more or less permanent settlement. Approximately one kilometer south of the city wall, the pre-Islamic shrine of Abraham (*Maqam Ibrahim*) attracted pilgrims and eventually became a burial site for Muslims who wished to be buried close to an ancient prophet (*Maqrabath al-Salihin*; Cemetery of the Meritorious). During the Ayyubid era, this became a sanctified region, known as The Shrines (*al-Maqamat*), and continued to grow and attract pilgrims.

It is my opinion that at least the first photo in this series is fabricated to falsely convey a destruction: the "after" half of the main photo of the shrine showing the Stone of Abraham appears to be a record shot taken during renovation work and is of much lower resolution than the other photographs. Note the "after shot" shows no paint whatsoever on the walls or a pedestal below the stone. The seeming "hole" in the wall is for mounting the stone.

Site Date: *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* — Zengid/Ayyubid Period; first hist. ref. in Saljuq Period in reign of Sultan Malik Shah (1086 AD).

Source of Destruction: Targeted vandalism allegedly by JN or IS.

¹² Burns 2009: 50.

¹³ n.d., p. 6.

Pattern: If the APSA story is legitimate, it may represent another example of sectarian-inspired destruction of shrines and tombs.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: Lists of Sufi sites are readily available in a number of sources and include *maqamat* (mausolea), *zawiyahs*, *khanaqahs*, and *tekke*. SHI will prioritize these sites in its documentation. Heightened monitoring of Sufi and Shiite monuments is recommended. ROI of particular concern are areas under the control of IS, JN, and other Sunni fundamentalist groups. SHI will continue to proceed cautiously with regard to alleged cases of site damage posted on the internet. SHI is investigating the renovation history of the *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* to verify whether there has been recent restoration, and we are searching for possible evidence that the site has in fact been vandalized.

Sources:

Online reporting:

Images posted by APSA.

<http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/890-alep-mosquee-al-salihin-2.html>

On international alarm over the destruction of Sufi shrines generally see *Destruction of Sufi Shrines*:

<http://themuslim500.com/2013-2/issues-of-the-day/destruction-of-sufi-shrines>

The past two years have seen a disturbing trend of systematic grave desecration done by various Wahhabi groups in Libya, Mali, and Egypt. With the fall of ruling powers resulting from the Arab Spring many Wahhabis have decided to utilise power vacuums that opened up in Libya and subsequently Mali to ravage these lands by destroying all signs of their holy sites, which according to their puritanical view are heretical, pagan-like and akin to grave worship, despite the fact that the vast majority of Sunni scholars throughout history have held them to be valid and even praiseworthy to maintain. Spurred on by some popular scholars in Saudi Arabia the trend continues to happen although their destruction of centuries-old heritage has been condemned by all other Muslims as sacrilege (Ibid.).

Since the outbreak of the Syrian revolution, many mosques and Islamic sites have been witnessing a new type of terrorism, the blowing up and desecration of shrines and graves of saints, whether by the Syrian Armed forces or the revolutionists. The destruction of the Sufi shrines came under the spotlight as tens have been blown up all over the Islamic world. Some famous shrines have been under the threats of being vandalised, such as the shrine of Sakina bint Ali, Roqaya bin Al Hussine and the shrine of the famous Sayeda Zeinab Bint Ali. Further examples of desecrated shrines in Aleppo and Damascus are those of: Mohsen bin Imam Hussein, Sheikh Mohammed Ejrabh, Sheikh Mohammed Hassoun, and the near-demolition of the shrine of Sheikh Ahmed Al-Muslli before the residents of his city saved it from the vandals (Ibid.).

Scholarly Sources

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Talmon-Heller, Daniella. 2008. *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons Under the Zangids and Ayyubids (1146-1260).* (Brill).

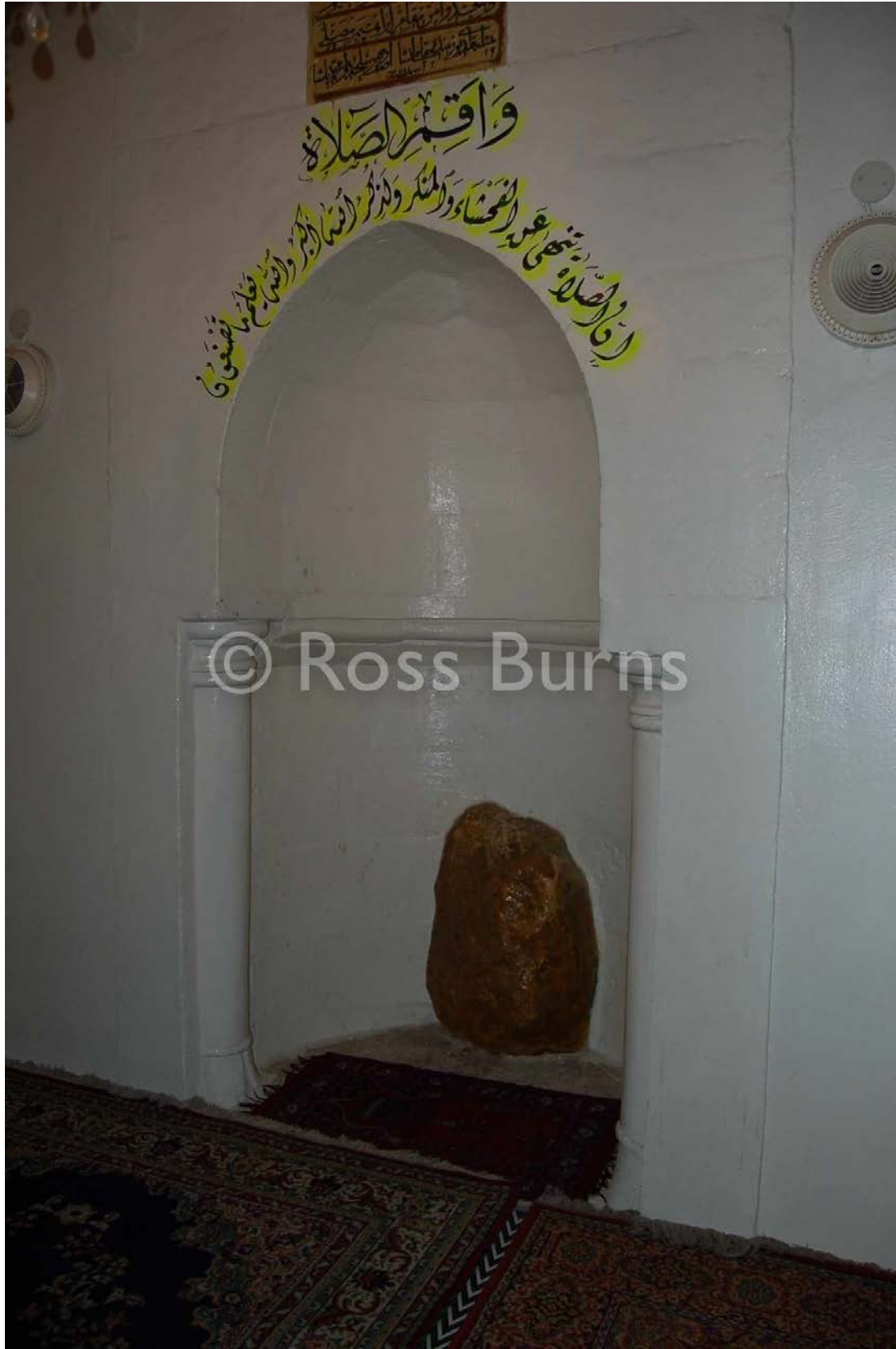
Watenpaugh, Heghnar Z. 2004. *The Image Of An Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture And Urban Experience In Aleppo In The 16th And 17th Centuries (Ottoman Empire and It's Heritage).* (Brill).



Alleged destruction of the *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* in Aleppo. This purported damage seems falsified and must be verified (APSA).



The alleged Sufi shrine/tomb at *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* Aleppo. The specifics of this incident and the remains shown in this photo remain unverified (APSA).



The *Maqam Ibrahim Salihin* (Ross Burns).

SHI 14-004

Report Date: August 8, 2014

Site Name: Ancient City of Aleppo

Date of Incident: July 29, 2014

Location: Aleppo, area immediately south of the Citadel and other damage in the Old City

Coordinates: Various. See "Site Description."

Site Description: A number of historic Islamic structures were severely damaged or destroyed by the detonation of three tunnel bombs by the Islamic Front in the Ancient City of Aleppo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site (see Maps 1–2, 4), and damage was reported in other areas of the Old City (Maps 2–3).¹⁴ The intended target of the tunnel bombs, the Grand Serail/Palace of Justice area lies at the south edge of the Aleppo Citadel amid a clustering of other historic structures. DGAM responded on August 5 with a report on their website entitled "History and the historical City Fade Away." The following is a brief assessment of the damage caused by the bombing and related fighting:

- **al-Otrush Mosque** (36°11'47.14"N, 37° 9'47.87"E): This mosque was impacted by the tunnel bomb blasts and damaged by falling debris. Ross Burns describes the mosque as follows,

Immediately south of the post-war Justice Ministry complex behind the baths is an intersection, to the left of which stands the al-Otrush Mosque, a small funerary mosque commissioned to serve as his mausoleum by Emir Aq-Bogha al-Otrushi in 1403 (and completed by his successor, Emir Damir Dash). The tall entrance portal is richly decorated. Under the minaret, left of the portal, the inscription reads: *'This is the work of God's slave, the famed Aq-Bogha al Zahiri. God grant him mercy.'* The façade is one of the finest of any Mameluke building in Aleppo. From the courtyard inside, a corridor to the north west gives access to the burial chamber, a small square room covered with a dome resting on four honey-combed corners. The prayer hall is divided into five broken-vaulted segments supported by a row of four columns.¹⁵

Photographs posted on the APSA website and a number of other online sites show severe damage to the roof, dome, façade, and minaret.

- **Banqusa Mosque** (36°12'12.94"N, 37°10'5.88"E), **Haddadin Mosque** (36°12'15.35"N, 37°10'3.54"E), **Maidani Mosque** (36°12'23.09"N, 37° 9'46.26"E), and **Madrasa as-Sahibiya/al-Fustuq Mosque** (36°11'59.11"N, 37°

¹⁴ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/21>

¹⁵ Ross Burns 1992:39; see also Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 337, p. 381.

9'30.73"E): Damage occurred in the northern Old City at the Banqusa, Mosque, Haddadin Mosque, and Maidani Mosque related to recent fighting. In the western Old City, the Madrasa as-Sahibiya/al-Fustuq Mosque was also damaged (Maps 2–3).

Gaube and Wirth provide the following information on these structures:

Banqusa Mosque: “Möglicherweise ist der Vorgängerbau der jetzigen Moschee die schon für das 13. Jahrhundert bei Ibn aš-Šaddad belegte Moschee ‘Isa al-Kurdi. Bauinschrift von 1386.”¹⁶

Haddadin Mosque: “Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts errichtet, der Gründer war der Hagg ‘Ali b. Ma‘tuq ad-Dunaisiri (gest. 1341), trug auch den Namen ‘alte’ Moschee von Banqusa; 1841 wurde sie teilweise erneuert, 1887 erhielt sie im Zuge der Straßenerweiterung eine neue Westseite, 1893 eine neue Südmauer.”¹⁷

Maidani Mosque: “Mit altem Minarett und sekundär eingesetzten alten Fenstergittern, der Gründer Husain b. Muhammad al-Galabi ist 1536 gestorben. Überdem Portal findet sich eine Inschrift von 1722.”¹⁸ According to the website of Ross Burns¹⁹, the APSA photo posted July 2014 documenting damage to the Maidani Mosque shows damage from 2011.

Madrasa as-Sahibiya/al-Fustuq Mosque: “Ehemalige Madrasa as-Sahibiye, Bauinschrift von 1364.”²⁰

- **Governor’s Office/Serail** (36°11'50.86"N, 37° 9'46.10"E): This Mandate-period building is one of the major landmarks south of the citadel and has been hotly contested by SARG and opposition forces given its view shed and fortified character. The east wing of the structure was destroyed in the tunnel bomb blasts the Palace of Justice/police facilities to the east, which postdate WWII, were damaged. The Serail building was historic, dating to the 1930s and was an example of the neo-Saracenic style.
- **Hammam Yalbugha** (36°11'51.71"N, 37° 9'50.30"E): These baths, also known as the Hammam al-Lababidiya, were damaged by the tunnel bomb and during the fighting following the detonation. DGAM claims the attack was intentional.²¹

¹⁶ Gaube and Wirth 1984: no.560, p.403.

¹⁷ Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 526, p. 400.

¹⁸ Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 486, p. 396.

¹⁹ Burns, Ross. 2014. *Monuments and sites reported damaged in the Syrian conflict since 2011 (as of 3/08/2014)*. <http://monumentsofsyria.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Syria-damage-report-Aug-20141.pdf>

²⁰ Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 140, p. 361.

²¹ DGAM. August 5, 2014. *Aleppo old city Bombing is a Crime against the History and the historical City Fade Away*. <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1360>

The eastern parts of the building were leveled. According to Ross Burns, they are,

...the grandest baths in Syria, which since 1985 have been reconstructed and revived for their original purpose by the tourism authorities, having been rescued from service as a felt factory. The *hammam* was built in the 14th century. The restoration has been done in a sober style and the two domed warm rooms achieve a striking impact.²²

Gaube and Wirth provide the following description, “Mamlukisches Bad, vor 1488 errichtet. Es handelt sich um das bei Ibn aš-Šihna erwähnte Bad an-Nasiri, dessen alten Namen auch Gazzi nennt.”²³ A photograph obtained by APSA shows at least the eastern half of the complex (36°11'51.50"N, 37° 9'50.98"E) has been leveled by the blasts, presumably from falling debris.

- **Khan al-Shouna** (36°11'51.06"N, 37° 9'39.62"E): This marketplace²⁴ was partially destroyed in the tunnel bomb explosions. The complex lies immediately southwest of the main entrance to the citadel. The 16th century “*khan*” (1546 CE) is more properly a *qaisariye* or a gated, covered market with vaulted ceilings along a main nave. The structure was restored in the 1990s, primarily for tourist traffic.
- **Madrasa Khusruwiye** (36°11'49.33"N, 37° 9'38.51"E): This madrasa and mosque faces the south side of the citadel. It was completed in 1547 CE. Satellite imagery (Map 4) shows the majority of the building has been destroyed by a bomb planted beneath the structure. According to Ross Burns,

...initiated in 1537 by Khusruv Pasha, governor of Aleppo. Perhaps constructed under the supervision of the famous Turkish architect, Sinan, then at the beginning of his remarkable career this is the first of the Ottoman-style monuments built in Aleppo. Note that the portico, covered by five domes, is wider than the prayer hall. The minaret is distinctly Turkish in style.²⁵

Gaube and Wirth describe the complex in some detail, “Aus Moschee, Madrasa, und weiteren Bauten bestehender Komplex, war zu Beginn dieses Jahrhunderts stark zerfallen, und sein großer Waqf war fast vollständig verloren. Bauinschrift von 1546.”²⁶

- **Madrasa Sultaniye** (36°11'50.05"N, 37° 9'42.73"E): This madrasa and mosque (1225 CE) lies immediately south of the citadel’s main entrance and was badly damaged in the detonations. It contains the tomb of Sultan Malik al-Zaher. Gaube

²² Burns 1992: 39.

²³ Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 339, p. 382.

²⁴ See Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 160, pp. 363–4 for a detailed description and additional sources.

²⁵ Burns 2009: 47.

²⁶ Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 159, p. 363.

and Wirth provide the following dating details, “Von Gazi begonnen und im Jahre 1225 vollendet.”²⁷ According to Ross Burns,

Across the road and a little to the left as you look from the entrance of the citadel lies the Madrasa Sultaniye completed in 1223–1225 by Governor (Sultan) al-Aziz, a son of Sultan al-Zaher Ghazi, the project having begun under his father. The *mihrab* of the prayer room is particularly commended. To the left lies a modest room which contained the cenotaphs of Sultan al-Zaher Ghazi and his family.²⁸

Site Date: See “Site Description” above.

Source of Destruction: Three tunnel bombs; damage from two previous tunnel bombs.

Pattern: The Islamist opposition group Liwa al-Tawhid (part of the Islamic Front) reportedly utilized the first tunnel bombs in the Aleppo Citadel area to destroy the Carlton Hotel (36°11'53.84"N, 37° 9'36.95"E) on May 8 — an historic hospital. The Al-Qalam building was subsequently destroyed. At this time, the neighboring Khan al-Hannadi to the south was likely also destroyed (Map 4). A similar tactic has been used near Maarat al-Numaan and elsewhere in recent months.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: The locations and extent of damage from these tunnel bombings were determined using satellite imagery (Map 4). Sources²⁹ indicate that many tunnels have been prepared in this area and there is a high likelihood more bombs will be detonated and the highly destructive practice may continue to spread to other urban conflict zones. Most shocking is the destruction of the Madrasa Khusruwiye, which has received relatively little attention thus far.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

- DGAM. August 5, 2014. *Aleppo old city Bombing is a Crime against the History and the historical City Fade Away*.
 - <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1360>
- *The Guardian* May 20, 2014 “Aleppo’s most wanted man — the rebel leader behind tunnel bombs.”
 - <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/20/aleppos-most-wanted-man-rebel-leader-tunnel-bombs>

Scholarly Sources:

²⁷ Gaube and Wirth 1984: No. 342, p. 382.

²⁸ Burns 1992: 38–39.

²⁹ *The Guardian*. May 20, 2014 “Aleppo’s most wanted man — the rebel leader behind tunnel bombs.”
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/20/aleppos-most-wanted-man-rebel-leader-tunnel-bombs>

Gaube, Heinz and Eugen Wirth. 1984. *Aleppo: historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole*. Two Volumes. (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert).



Damage to the al-Otrush Mosque (APSA).



Damage to the al-Otrush Mosque (APSA).



Damage to the al-Otrush Mosque (APSA).



Damage to the Yalbugha Bath. The eastern portion of the bath (left) has been destroyed by the detonation of tunnel bombs nearby (APSA).

SHI 14-005

Report Date: August 7, 2014

Site Name: Bab al-Nasri area fire

Date of Incident: July 20

Location: Aleppo Old City

Coordinates: Gate vicinity 36°12'14.64"N, 37° 9'44.94"E

Site Description: This Bab al-Nasri gate provided access into the northern Old City along its central north-south access.

Site Date: Gate — Ayyubid, reign of al-Malik az-Zaher Ghazi (1172–Oct. 8, 1216; ruled 1186–1216 AD)

Source of Destruction: Fire caused by fighting

Pattern: The area north of the citadel has seen heavy fighting. The major damage in this area has been caused by aerial bombardment by SARG.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: Sources on damage in the areas north and east of the citadel tend to gloss over details, particularly with regard to site locations. SHI is acquiring more accurate maps of this area that list the names of the historic structures.

Sources:

Online Sources:

[Cawley, Charles \(2007\) "Rulers of Aleppo, Damascus, Hamah, Homs, Khelat \(Ayubids\)" *Medieval Lands Project*.](#)

Scholarly Sources:

Gabrieli, Francesco. 1984. *Arab Historians of the Crusades*. Costello, E.J. (trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul.



The Bab al-Nasri area fires in Aleppo (Eyes on Heritage).



The Bab al-Nasri area fires in Aleppo (Eyes on Heritage).



The Bab al-Nasri area fires in Aleppo (Eyes on Heritage).

SHI 14-006

Report Date: August 9, 2014
Site Name: Noria al-J'berihe, Hama
Date of Incident: August 8, 2014
Location: Central City Hama
Coordinates: Ca. 35° 7'54.00"N, 36°45'16.94"E
Site Description:

There are 17 original *norias* (waterwheels) located in Hama along the Orontes River. They were submitted as a tentative World Heritage Site in June 1999.³⁰ On August 8, one of the larger waterwheels, the *Noria al-J'berihe* burned, allegedly due to an electrical fire in the adjoining al-Sultan restaurant. The earliest waterwheels in Hama likely date to the Byzantine era. The current structures do not predate the Ayyubid period. The majority of the constructions date from the Mamluk period. Ross Burns³¹ writes,

[at the] N[orth] end of the citadel ... you can continue downstream to a further grouping of *norias*. The largest of all is located 250 m west of the citadel and is known popularly as *al-Muhammediye*. It dates back to the 14th century (inscription on the aqueduct) and has been restored since 1977. About 1 km in the other direction from the central park (to the east) is another cluster of *norias* which you can take in at your leisure from a group of outdoor restaurants.

Site Date: Various, mainly Mamluk Period and modern restorations.

Source of Destruction: Electrical fire.

Pattern: Neglect due to political upheaval and lack of capacity.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: This incident may be a deliberate act of arson. SHI will continue to monitor the situation in Hama, which has seen an upsurge in fighting since the spring and the struggle to control routes to Aleppo and Idlib.

Sources:

Scholarly

De Miranda, Adriana. 2007. *Water Architecture in the Lands of Syria: The Water-wheels*. (Rome: L'erma di Bretschneider).

³⁰ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1291>

³¹ Burns 1992: 125.