

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

NEA-PSHSS-14-001

Weekly Report 29 — February 23, 2015

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Key Points

- **Turkish Armed Forces** entered northern Syria to “relocate” the **Tomb of Süleyman Şah located in Qara Qozaq, Aleppo Governorate** and rescue Turkish soldiers stationed there. The site and its personnel had been threatened by ISIL militants since March 2014. The action reportedly involved cooperation between Turkish Armed forces, FSA, and YPG forces in the Canton of Kobani. There are varying accounts regarding the extent and nature of cooperation between Turkish forces and the YPG. After exhuming the physical remains and removing three sarcophagi, Turkish forces allegedly destroyed the modern tomb structure and other structures at the site built in 1975. [SHI Incident Report SHI15-0042](#) (pp. 50–56)
- The **Syrian Regime 2015 southern campaign** (“Ali Allahdadi for Quneitra Martyrs”) jeopardizes heritage in southwestern Syria’s Hauran Plain. See the special report contained here for events and the sites involved since the start of the offensive on February 7, 2015. [SHI Incident Report SHI15-0032 to 15-0041](#) (pp. 7–10, 30–49)
- The **British House of Commons** undertook a general debate on the **destruction and looting of historic sites in Syria and Iraq**. (p. 4)

Heritage Timeline

February 22, 2015

APSA posted a report with 30 photographs and a video detailing extensive damage to the Byzantine site of Darqouta (**Dar Qita**) in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syrian (Archaeological Park 7, Jebel Barisha, Harim). [ASOR SHI Incident Report 15-0043](#).

<http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/1135-idlib-limestone-massi-darqouta.html>

February 21–22, 2015

Turkish Armed Forces entered northern Syria to relocate the **Tomb of Süleyman Şah located in Qara Qozaq, Aleppo Governorate**. The tomb and other structures at the site, built in 1975 following an earlier relocation after the completion of the Tabqa Dam, were reportedly demolished. [ASOR SHI Incident Report 15-0042](#).

http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-70_-22-february-2015_-press-release-regarding-the-temporary-relocation-of-the-tomb-of-suleyman-sah-and-memorial-outpost.en.mfa

http://www.todayszaman.com/mobile_detailHeadline.action?newsId=373272

February 21, 2015

The Boston Globe published “A daring plan to rebuild Syria — no matter who wins the war” by **Thanassis Cambanis**.

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2015/02/21/daring-plan-rebuild-syria-matter-who-wins-war/oD5IqhveGjFPQryW6q3OJ/story.html>

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The Times published a commentary by **St. John Simpson** (Senior Curator, Middle East Department, British Museum) titled “**Britain has a vital role in rescuing looted treasures.**”

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/thunderer/article4361089.ece>

February 20, 2015

UNESCO circulated its official Report, titled “Heritage and Cultural Diversity at Risk in Iraq and Syria,” from the International Conference held at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on December 3, 2014. The report will soon be translated into French and Arabic.

February 19, 2015

APSA posted 22 photos and one video showing the state of **Kherbet Kseibjeh**, one of the so-called Dead Cities located within the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria** in Idlib Governorate.

<http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/1132-idlib-kherbet-kseibjeh.html>

- The Times** published an article titled “**Islamists unite to devastate Syria’s ancient treasures.**” The article was accompanied by commentary by **Norman Hammond** titled “**Private collectors will offer rich rewards.**”

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article4358630.html>.
 - National Geographic** published an article, titled “**Surrounded by Conflict, an Ancient Synagogue Crumbles in Iraq,**” by **Peter Schwartzstein** that highlights the difficulty of protecting and conserving cultural heritage sites in Iraq during the current conflict. The article focuses on an **800-year old synagogue**, located in the town of **Alqosh** and believed to house the tomb of the biblical prophet Nahum, as an example of the complexity of the challenges involved.

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2015/02/150219-iraq-tomb-biblical-prophet-collapse/>
 - Heritage for Peace** published its newsletter titled *Damage to Syria’s Heritage – 19 February 2015*.

<http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/damage-syrias-heritage-19-february-2015/>
- February 18, 2015
- The **DGAM** posted four photos showing 88 Abbasid gold **coins** and one Hellenistic silver coin that have been **recovered by authorities** and handed over to the DGAM.
- <http://dgam.gov.sy/?d=314&id=1599>
- APSA** posted a video showing **overhead images** (taken by a drone) of damage to the **UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYlgxBkK0y0&feature=youtu.be>

February 17, 2015

The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC) published an issue of *News in Conservation* dedicated to the theme of **world heritage in times of war and conflict**. The issue includes a number of articles about the state of cultural heritage in Syria.

https://www.iiconservation.org/system/files/publications/journal/2015/b2015_1.pdf.pdf

- The **DGAM** reports that **illegal excavation**, encouraged and taxed by ISIL, is continuing at the sites of **Mari** and **Dura Europos**.
<http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1597>
- The *Monuments of Syria* website (by Ross Burns) has posted an updated report on heritage damage in Syria as of February 17, 2015.
<http://monumentsofsyria.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Syria-damage-list-Feb-2015.pdf>

February 16, 2015

BBC News published an article, titled “**The men who smuggle the loot that funds IS,**” documenting the movement of looted antiquities from Syria through Turkey and Lebanon to destinations in Western Europe. The article is based on interviews with a smuggler working along the border between Syria and Lebanon, a middle-man based in southern Turkey, an antiquities dealer in Beirut, a Lebanese police officer who deals with international theft, the director of excavations for the Directorate General of Antiquities in Beirut, the Director General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria, and a former head of the Metropolitan Police’s art and antiquities squad.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31485439>

February 14, 2015

The **DGAM** launched an **interactive map** (trial version, in Arabic only) showing **damage to archaeological sites across Syria**. An English-language version of the map will be launched at the end of February. <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=314&id=1595>

February 12, 2015

The **British House of Commons** undertook a general debate on the **destruction and looting of historic sites in Syria and Iraq**.
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150212/debtext/150212-0002.htm#15021269000002>

Military and Political Context

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

1. Aleppo
 - On February 15 and 16, the rebel coalitions Sham Front and the Revolutionary Command Council published statements rejecting a UN plan for a ceasefire in the city of Aleppo.¹ On February 17, however, Staffan de Mistura, the UN mediator on Syria, announced that the Syrian government is willing to stop shelling and aerial bombardments of Aleppo for 6 weeks to try out a ceasefire in the city.²
 - On February 17, Syrian government and allied forces seized from various rebel groups the villages of Bashkur, Rityan, and Hardatnin to the north of the city of Aleppo and also several of the city's western neighborhoods; there are, however, unconfirmed reports that Jabhat al-Nusra and other rebel groups retook Rityan, Hardatnin, and other areas to the north of the city.³ Activists say that 32 Syrian government-backed soldiers were captured in Rityan.⁴
2. Kobani Area
 - During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIS targets near Kobani.
3. Al-Hasakah Area
 - During the reporting period, coalition airstrikes hit ISIS targets near the city of Hasakah.

Other key points:

- The military success of Syrian government forces in villages to the north of Aleppo has cut off rebel supply lines from Turkey and has increased the likelihood that Aleppo will fall to the Syrian government, which would likely cause the Turkish border to become the next front to intensify.⁵ An end to fighting in Aleppo would facilitate the monitoring of cultural heritage in the city, but monitoring capabilities would likely deteriorate along the Turkish border if it sees intensified fighting.

¹ C. Kozak. "Syria Situation Report: February 10-17, 2015," <http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/18/syria-offers-aleppo-ceasefire-says-un-mediator>; <http://www.wsj.com/articles/syrian-government-forces-attempt-to-cut-off-key-supply-route-for-rebels-1424171616>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31514447>; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/18/world/middleeast/syrian-forces-try-to-cut-supply-route-to-aleppo-as-hezbollahs-role-grows.html?src=xps>

³ C. Kozak. "Syria Situation Report: February 10-17, 2015," <http://iswsyria.blogspot.com/>

⁴ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/02/19/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>

⁵ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/02/turkey-syrian-army-turkish-border.html>

- Turkish Armed Forces conducted military operations in northern Syria on February 21–22, 2015, to relocate the Tomb of Süleyman Şah located in Qara Qozaq, Aleppo Governorate.⁶

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

1. Samarra Area
 - On February 16, an ISIS suicide attack injured 10 members of the Popular Front militia; other clashes in the area killed 4 Popular Front fighters and injured 13 other people.⁷
 - On February 18, according to an anonymous police source, clashes west of Samarra killed 70 ISIS fighters; other anonymous security sources stated that suicide attacks were also involved, killing 6 Popular Front fighters and wounding 19 other people.⁸
2. Southwestern Erbil Province
 - On February 18, Peshmerga forces repelled ISIS fighters from Kurdish frontline defensive positions around Makhmur and Gwer about 30 miles southwest of the city of Erbil.⁹
3. Northwestern Diyala Province
 - On February 17, according to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, government forces and the Popular Mobilization militia secured the western frontline of the Udham Dam, an area which ISIS has used to launch attacks on the dam, with the resulting death of over 20 ISIS fighters.¹⁰
4. Ninawa Province
 - During the reporting period, coalition airstrikes repeatedly hit areas around Mosul, Tel Afar, and Sinjar.¹¹
5. Kirkuk Area
 - During the reporting period, coalition airstrikes repeatedly hit areas around the city of Kirkuk.¹²

Other key points:

- In a February 16 interview with the BBC, Iraqi PM Haider al-Abadi said that Iraqi government forces were “planning an offensive on Mosul in the next few months.”¹³ An anonymous senior US military official then told the BBC in a February 19 interview that a

⁶ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/turkey-launches-military-operation-in-syria-to-evacuate-ottoman-tomb-1424595817?mobile=y>

⁷ <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/02/iraq-situation-report-february-14-16.html>

⁸ <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/02/iraq-situation-report-february-17-18.html>

⁹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/17/middleeast/iraq-irbil-isis-assault/index.html>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31524867>; <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/02/iraq-situation-report-february-17-18.html>

¹⁰ <http://iswiraq.blogspot.com/2015/02/iraq-situation-report-february-17-18.html>

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.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31484732>

joint Kurdish-Iraqi military force of up to 25,000 fighters is being readied to retake Mosul from ISIS in an assault that will probably occur in April or May and that all fighters will have undergone training by the US.¹⁴ The New York Times also quoted an anonymous US military official, and similar information was given.¹⁵ Mosul is the cornerstone of ISIS control in Iraq, and a successful effort by Kurdish and Iraqi forces to retake the city would have devastating consequences for ISIS.

- In a February 18 article, Kurdish media outlet Rûdaw quoted Iraqi Kurdish President Massoud Barzani: “Some people say that we have occupied Kirkuk. This is wrong. The Peshmerga were always in Kirkuk. Kirkuk is a city in Kurdistan and its Kurdish identity is not debatable.”¹⁶ Kirkuk had been under Iraqi government control until government forces retreated in the face of an ISIS advance in June. The Peshmerga moved into the power vacuum, and the oil-rich city has been under KRG (Kurdish Regional Government) control ever since. Although Barzani’s statement reflects a sentiment that has been voiced a great deal over the past several months, it serves as a reminder of a potential point of serious future contention between the central government of Iraq and the KRG.

The major international events during the reporting period that impact the ground situation in Syria and Iraq were:

- On February 19, the US and Turkey signed an agreement to train moderate Syrian rebels.¹⁷ Training could start as soon as next month for hundreds of Syrian fighters.¹⁸
- The US is revamping the State Department’s Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications to counter ISIS online recruiting and propaganda.¹⁹

¹⁴ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31543415>

¹⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/20/world/middleeast/assault-to-retake-iraqi-city-from-islamic-state-is-planned-for-spring.html>

¹⁶ <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/18022015>

¹⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/19/turkey-us-train-syrian-rebels-fight-isis>;
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-31511376>

¹⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/19/turkey-us-train-syrian-rebels-fight-isis>

¹⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/world/middleeast/us-intensifies-effort-to-blunt-isis-message.html>

The Syrian Regime Offensive in Southern Syria: Initial Impact on Heritage Places

The Syrian Regime's recent offensive, code-named "Ali Allahdadi for Quneitra Martyrs,"²⁰ is taking place in a landscape rich in heritage sites southwest of Damascus. This highly significant offensive will likely be sustained by SARG and its allies and bitterly opposed by rebel forces. The overall aims are to retake areas southwest of Damascus in southernmost Rif Dimashq, Daraa, and Quneitra Governorates. The towns of Kafr Shams, Zimreen, and Deir al-Adas have been important early objectives. In tactical terms, the SARG offensive combines units from SARG (SAF and NDF), Hezbollah, and Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (and reportedly some Afghan units). Regime forces are opposed by units of the Free Syrian Army, Jabhat al-Nusra, and Islamic Front.

Important strategic objectives for the campaign include:

- Elimination of the "Israeli buffer zone" — this campaign is taking place along portions of the UNDOF Line "Bravo"
- Relieving pressure on southern Damascus
- Better securing SARG access to Daraa city
- Better securing highly strategic and vulnerable assets south of Damascus, such as the Deir Ali power station and El Rehab–Homs section of the Arab Gas Pipeline, which has a three-way junction at the power station linking Syria (to Damascus and Tishreen power stations), Egypt, and Jordan
- Cutting off rebel supply lines to Jordan and alleged support from Israel
- Positioning SARG and allied forces between the rebels and the Lebanese border and adjacent to sensitive Israeli positions in the Golan

Reports of the first two weeks of fighting make clear the high risk that this offensive will proliferate the conflict in this sensitive, highly militarized border zone, as well as damage cultural heritage. Many of the archaeological mounds here represent strategic high ground and were militarized with earthworks prior to the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011. The earliest satellite imagery available to ASOR CHI dates to 2010. Since the start of the conflict, many of the military earthworks excavated in these mounds have slumped due to erosion and a lack of maintenance — much of the area has been under rebel control for an extended period. Nevertheless, early tactics show the importance of archaeological mounds for defense, positioning of artillery, and fire control.

²⁰ Named for Iranian Quds Force Brigadier General Mohammad Ali Allah-Dadi who was killed in southern Syria by a probable Israeli drone strike in the Quneitra Governorate on January 18, 2015 (the so-called Mazraat Amal/al-Amal Farms Incident). "[Syrian army tears through the south to sweep Iran and Hizballah up to Israel's Golan doorstep](#)". Debkafile. February 11, 2015. Retrieved February 22, 2015.

The present campaign has involved multiple clashes for control of archaeological mounds and has included airstrikes and heavy bombardments. Archaeological sites are shown in bold text.

- February 7 – The offensive commenced with action primarily around Kafr Shams (for locations see the Gazetteer below).
- February 8 – Heavy clashes occurred in Kafr Shams, Umm Batnah, and Masharah in Quneitra Governorate. SARG forces captured **Tell Mar'i** (SHI Incident Report 15-0032) a militarized mound, probably with archaeological deposits, overlooking a highly strategic crossroads near the town of Deir Makir, cutting a rebel supply line to Damascus.
- February 9 – SARG forces attacked Deir al-Adas and Deir Makir, capturing part of Deir al-Adas and the militarized archaeological site of **Tell Ghasham** (SHI Incident Report 15-0033) near Kafr Shams.
- February 10 – Combat continued in Deir al-Adas, and SARG captured Deir Makir, Habariyeh, and Danaji. Deir al-Adas was eventually captured. SARG bombarded Masharah and Harrah, cutting rebel access to the Golan and a rebel supply line linking Jordan to Damascus. SARG utilized artillery positioned on **Tell Ghurabah** (SHI Incident Report 15-0034) to shell rebel positions on **Tell 'Antar** (SHI Incident Report 15-0035) near Kafr Shams.
- February 11 – SARG and Hezbollah captured the militarized **Tell Arus** (SHI Incident Report 15-0036) and **Tell al-Sarja** (location unknown) near Deir Makir. They then moved on "**Tall Sultana Hill**" (location unknown), likely a prominence near the modern village of Sultaniyeh, supported by a bombardment. There was heavy fighting at the militarized archaeological mound of **Tell Fatima** ("Fatima Hills") (SHI Incident Report 15-0037) and **Tell Hamrit** (SHI Incident Report 15-0038) as well as **Tell 'Antar** and **Tell Alaqiyah** (SHI Incident Report 15-0039).
- February 12 – SARG captured parts of the strategic Kafr Nasrij with its important crossroads. Fighting also occurred in Kafr Shams and the village of Sultaniyeh with SARG forces capturing the militarized archaeological mound of **Tell Fatima**. Rebels fell back to the archaeological mound of **Tell Qareen** (SHI Incident Report 15-0040).
- February 13 – SARG captured the town of Hamrit (var. Himrit)
- February 14 – SARG bombarded Kafr Nasij, Kafr Shams, and **Tell 'Antar**.
- February 17 – A Hezbollah attack on Masharah failed.
- February 18 – Hezbollah reportedly captured "**Tell Hill**" (Tell Masharah, SHI Incident Report 15-0041) in Masharah — probably the militarized archaeological mound with

fortifications located on the west side of the town. Jabhat al-Nusra forces counterattacked in the area of Danaji.

- February 19 – Jabhat al-Nusra captured **Tell Fatima** and moved on Deir Makir.
- February 20 – SARG armor advanced on Hamidiyeh. SARG forces also captured **Tell Fatima**. Hezbollah continued their advance from **Tell Masharah** into the adjacent town of Mashara against Jabhat al-Nusra forces.

Gazetteer

Arus, Tell al-
Danaji
Deir al-Adas
Deir Makir
Fatimah, Tell al-
Ghasham, Tell al-
Ghurabah, Tell al-
Habariyeh
Hamrit
Hamrit Base/Tell al-Hamrit?
Harrah
Kafr Nasij
Kafr Shams
Mar'i, Tell al-
Masharah
Masharah, Tell al-
Qareen, Tell al-
Sabsaba, Tell al-
Sarja, Tell al-
Sultaniye
'Antar, Tell al-
Alaqiyah, Tell al-
Umm Batnah
Zimreen

Key Heritage Recommendations and Actions

- ASOR CHI will continue to monitor southwestern Syria to report on heritage damage linked to the ongoing SARG offensive there.

Incident Reports: Syria

SHI 15-0030

Report Date: February 15, 2015

Site Name: Mosque al-Sarawi (Mosque al-Bayada; Mosque al-Serwi)

Date of Incident: Unspecified

Location: UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient City of Aleppo, Bayada Quarter, northeast of the Citadel (Aleppo Governorate)

Coordinates:

Site Description:

According to Ross Burns:

Following the bend south (Bayada St), you pass on the left the al-Sarawi Mosque just before an intersection with a right T. This mosque was built by Hajj al-Din Muhammad al-Sarawi in 1402. The façade is noteworthy for its two stalactite-decorated entrances. On the southwest side of the T junction lies the Hammam al-Bayada (1450), one of the oldest surviving baths in Aleppo.²¹

Site Date: Mamluk (built in 1402 AD)

Source of Destruction: APSA posted 17 images (including three duplicates) and one video showing damage to the structure. Although no explanation for the damage was provided, the photos and video appear to show a mixture of combat-related damage (bullet holes, collapsed walls and roofs) and lack of upkeep (grass growing through cracks in walls, cracks in dome), as well as large piles of rubble on the interior and exterior of the structure. According to the *Monuments of Syria* website (citing Aleppo Archaeology), the extensive damage to the upper part of the structure was the result of a shell on January 2, 2015.²² On January 4–5, 2015, the Aleppo Archaeology Facebook page published two photos (both also among the photos recently posted by APSA) showing a pile of rubble on the exterior (?) of the structure and shared a video (from the مساجد حلب القديمة or Ancient Aleppo mosques Facebook page) showing damage to the minaret and the almost

²¹ Burn, Ross. 2009. *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. London: I.B. Tauris. p. 55

²² Monuments and sites reported damaged in the Syrian conflict since 2011 (as of 17 Feb 2015). *Monuments of Syria* website. p. 4. <http://monumentsofsyria.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Syria-damage-list-Feb-2015.pdf>

complete destruction of the roof of the structure. The damage was attributed to a targeted missile attack on January 2, 2015.²³

Pattern: Ongoing urban warfare in the Ancient City of Aleppo.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI has already designated Aleppo a high priority for monitoring and remediation efforts.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

APSA Website: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/monuments/1129-aleppo-al-serwi-mosque.html>

Aleppo Archaeology Facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=813345028724020&id=459668177425042

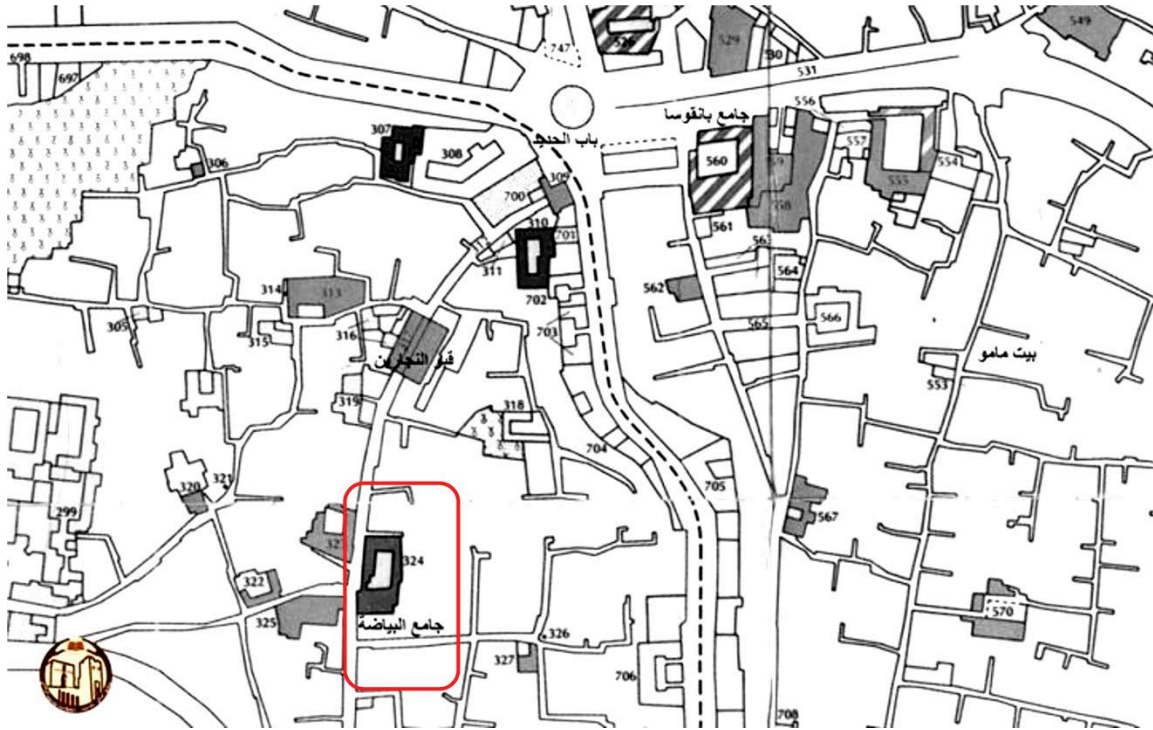
مساجد حلب القديمة (Ancient Aleppo mosques) Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=312739128916038>

Scholarly:

Burn, Ross. 2009. *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. London: I.B. Tauris. p. 55.

²³ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=813345028724020&id=459668177425042;
<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=312739128916038>



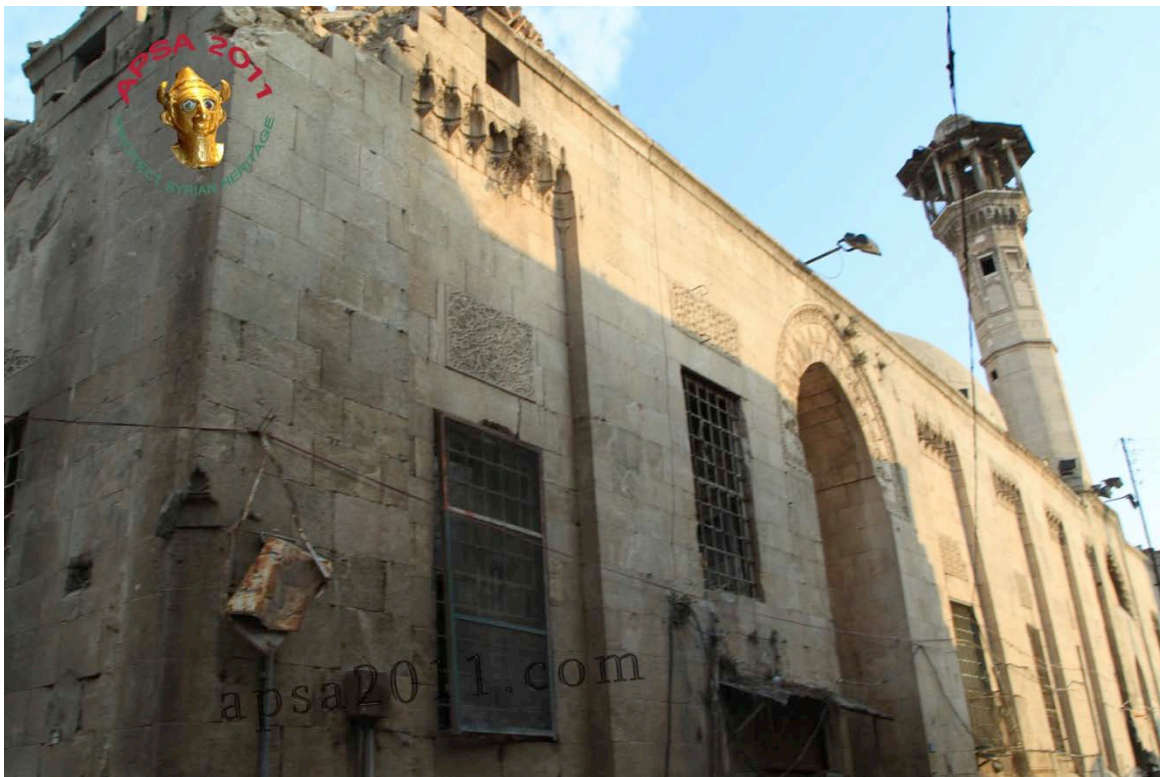
Map showing location of Mosque al-Sarawi, Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



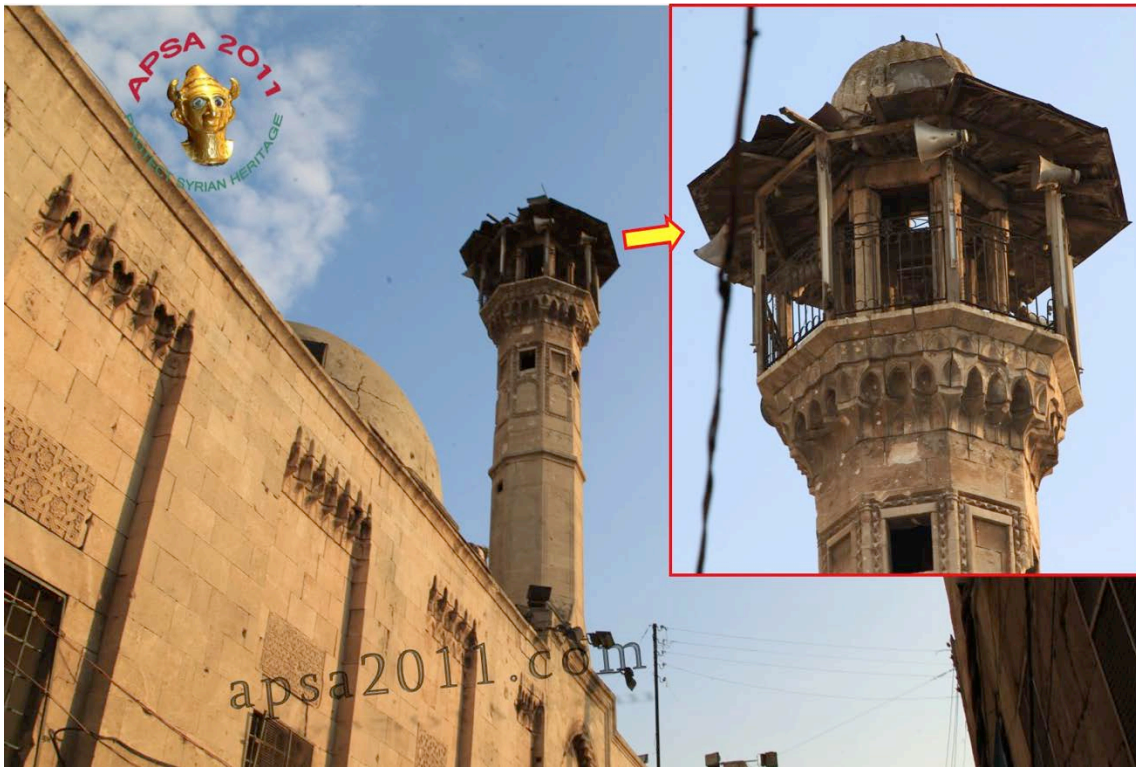
Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Area adjacent to Mosque al-Sarawi, Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Area adjacent to Mosque al-Sarawi, Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Street leading to Mosque al-Sarawi, Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)



Mosque al-Sarawi (exterior), Bayada Quarter, Aleppo. (APSA)

SHI 15-0031

Report Date: February 19, 2015

Site Name: Kseijbe (Kseijbeh; Khirbet Kseijbeh; Kherbet Kseibjeh)

Date of Incident: Unspecified (In an earlier report, released April 27, 2013, APSA cited evidence that the site had been looted “once again” during the preceding week.²⁴ The *Monuments of Syria* website also cites “April 2013 reports of looting and damage to the ruins.”²⁵)

Location: UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)

Coordinates:

Site Description:

According to Ross Burns,

The so-called ‘Dead Cities’ are found in the elevated limestone country (the Limestone Massif) between the Orontes and Afrin Rivers to the west and the Aleppo-Hama highway to the east. Approximately 20–40 km in width, the zone spreads over a much greater length, covering most of the 140 km between Cyrrhus in the north and Apamea in the south.²⁶

Site Date: Byzantine

Source of Destruction: APSA posted 22 images (including six duplicates) and one video showing the current (?) state of the site.²⁷ Although no explanation was provided, the images and video appear to show evidence for illegal excavation, stone quarrying, and the breaking-up of stones for use in construction.

Pattern: Illegal excavation, looting, and the use of built heritage for construction materials in the Dead Cities region of Syria.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures:

Sources:

Online Reporting:

²⁴ <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/445-the-limestone-massif-the-site-of-kherbet-kseibjeh-once-again-looted-27-04-2013.html>

²⁵ <http://monumentsofsyria.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Syria-damage-list-Feb-2015.pdf>

²⁶ Burn, Ross. 2009. *The Monuments of Syria: A Guide*. London: I.B. Tauris. p. 141–142

²⁷ <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/1132-idlib-kherbet-kseibjeh.html>

APSA Website: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/1132-idlib-kherbet-kseibjeh.html>

<http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/445-the-limestone-massif-the-site-of-kherbet-kseibjeh-once-again-looted-27-04-2013.html>

Scholarly:



Kseijbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Kseijbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Kseijbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Ksejbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Ksejbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Kseijbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Kseijbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Kseijbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



Kseijbe, UNESCO World Heritage Site Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Idlib Governorate)



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SHI 15-0032

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell al-Mar'i

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Rif Dimashq Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage.

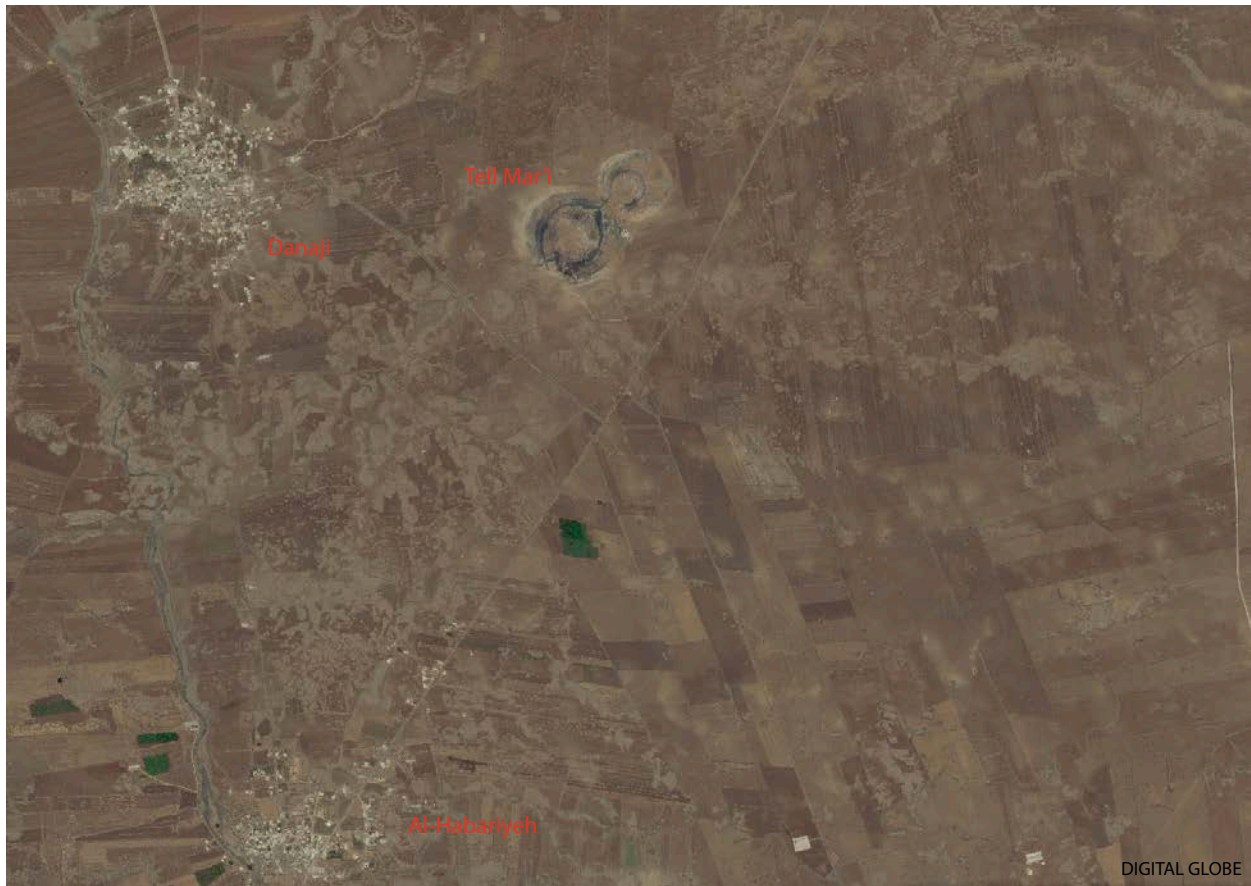
Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell Mar'i in the Hauran Plain of Syria and a neighboring hill/mound to the east on June 6, 2014. The mound is highly strategic as it commands the nearby roads leading to the towns of Danaji and Al-Habariyeh. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0033

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell al-Ghasham

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Daraa Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown.

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage.

Pattern:

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell Mar'i in the Hauran Plain of Syria and neighboring hills/mounds on July 20 6, 2014. The mound is highly strategic as it commands the road to the south linking Kafr Shams in the east to Deir al-Bakht to the west. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0034

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell al-Ghurabah

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Daraa Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage

Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell Ghurabah in the Hauran Plain of Syria and neighboring hills/mounds on March 30, 2010. The mound was militarized prior to the Syrian conflict and has been used recently for artillery emplacements by SARG forces. (Digital Globe)



Tell Ghurabah in the Hauran Plain of Syria and neighboring hills/mounds on March 30, 2010. Military earthworks are visible on and around the mounds. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0035

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell al-'Antar

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Daraa Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage. The mound has been bombarded repeatedly.

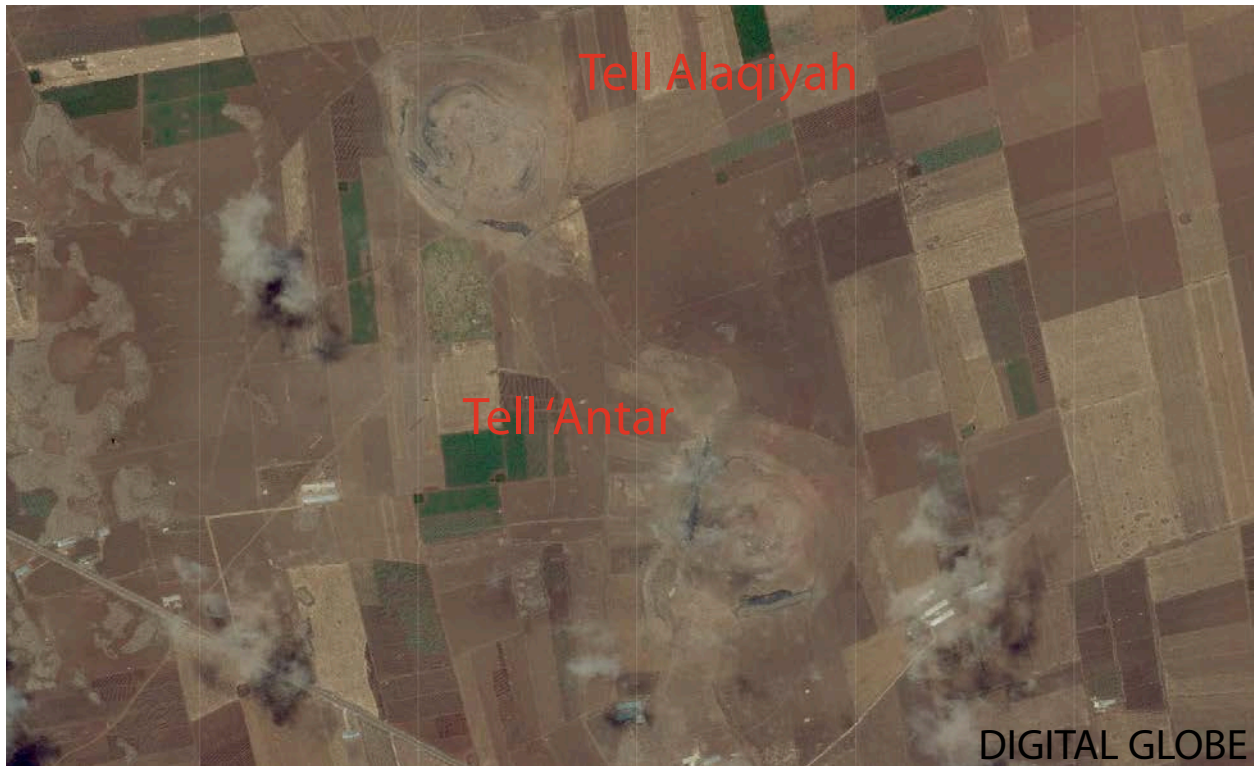
Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell 'Antar and Tell Alaqiyah in the Hauran Plain of Syria on June 6, 2014 — Tell 'Antar has been bombarded repeatedly in the current SARG offensive as rebel forces have taken up positions there. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0036

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell al-Arus

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Rif Dimashq Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage.

Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell al-Arus in the Hauran Plain of Syria on March 20, 2010. The site was militarized prior to the current conflict and commands the southern approach to Deir Makir and the Rahbet Sa'sa' Army Base to the north. (Digital Globe)



Tell al-Arus on March 20, 2010. Military installations are visible on and to the east of the mound. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0037

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell al-Fatimah

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Rif Dimashq Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage.

Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell al-Fatihah in the Hauran Plain of Syria on March 3, 2010. The site was heavily militarized prior to the current conflict and has changed hands in heavy fighting multiple times in the current SARG offensive. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0038

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell Himrit/Hamrit

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Rif Dimashq Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage. This village has been hotly contested during the present SARG offensive, suggesting strategic value disproportionate to the settlement's size and location.

Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell Himrit in the Hauran Plain of Syria on March 20, 2010. The site was militarized prior to the current conflict and has changed hands in heavy fighting multiple times in the current SARG offensive. (Digital Globe)



View of Tell Himrit on March 20, 2010, showing military installations. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0039

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell Alaqiyah

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Daraa Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage.

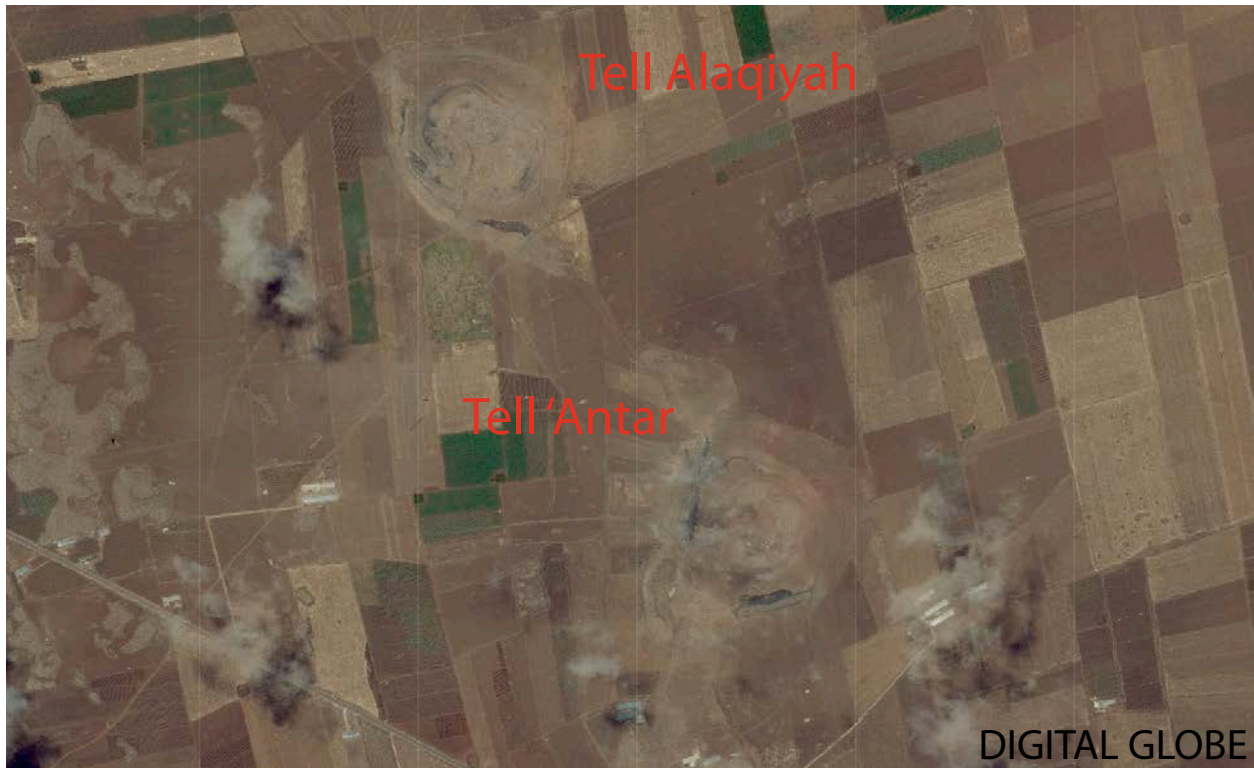
Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell 'Antar and Tell Alaqiyah in the Hauran Plain of Syria on June 6, 2014 — Tell 'Antar has been bombarded repeatedly in the current SARG offensive as rebel forces have taken up positions there. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0040

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell Qareen

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Daraa Governorate, Hauran Plain

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage.

Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell Qareen in the Hauran Plain of Syria on March 30, 2010. Probable military earthworks are visible on the mound. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0041

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tell Masharah

Date of Incident: February 2015

Location: Quneitra Governorate, Hauran Plain just west of modern Masharah (district capital)

Coordinates:

Site Description: Large mound, almost certainly containing archaeological deposits. We are as yet unaware of reports on this site.

Site Date: Unknown

Source of Destruction: Pre-conflict disturbance to site for militarization. Combat damage.

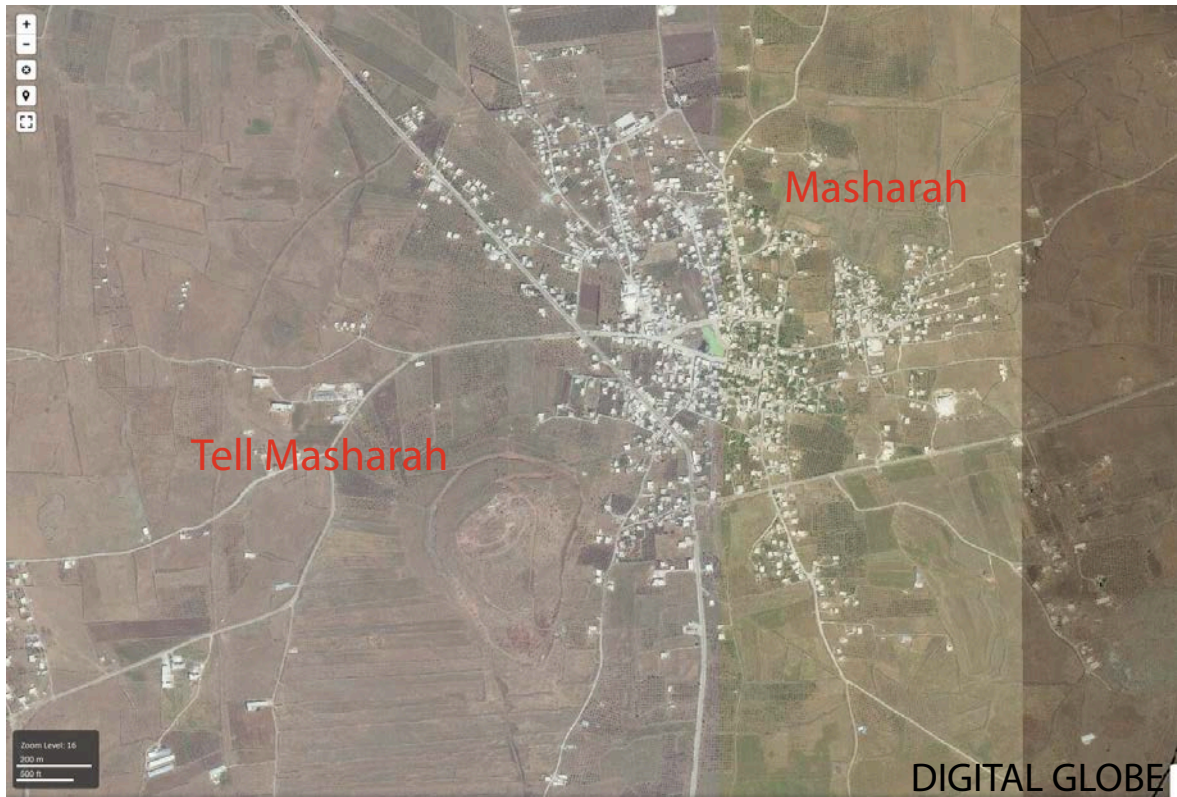
Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI is currently monitoring heritage damage caused by the current SARG campaign in southwestern Syria.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

Scholarly:



Tell Masharah in the Hauran Plain of Syria on November 10, 2010. Military earthworks are visible on the mound. (Digital Globe)



Tell Masharah in the Hauran Plain of Syria on November 10, 2010. Military earthworks are visible on the mound. (Digital Globe)

SHI 15-0042

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Tomb of Süleyman Şah

Date of Incident: February 21–22, 2015

Location: Aleppo Governorate in the modern town of Qara Qozaq on the left bank of the Euphrates

Coordinates:

Site Description: Turkish Armed Forces entered northern Syria to relocate the Tomb of Süleyman Şah located near Qara Qozaq, Aleppo Governorate. The site consisted of the modern tomb, a memorial center, and facilities for the Turkish honor guard and other personnel. Physical remains and three sarcophagi were moved to Turkey until a new site in Syria near the Turkish border can be prepared as a tomb. The reported location will be in Suriye Eşmesi, directly across from the Turkish border from the village of Eşmeler in the Birecik District in Şanlıurfa. Turkish soldiers raised the flag at the new site as the flag was lowered at the old location. The tomb and other structures at the site were built in 1975, following an earlier relocation near Qa'lat Ja'bar in Syria's Raqqa Governorate due to the completion of the Tabqa Dam. Turkish forces reportedly demolished the modern structures to prevent their use by ISIL militants.

Site Date: 1975 AD. Süleyman Şah died in 1230 AD and was the grandfather of Osman I, founder of the Ottoman Empire.

Source of Destruction: Turkish armed forces dismantled the site, removing the physical remains of Süleyman Şah and three sarcophagi, and then reportedly destroyed the buildings within the enclosure.

Pattern: —

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: —

Sources:

Online Reporting:

["Turkey Sends Troops into Syria to Retrieve Ottoman Tomb, Guards."](#) *Wall Street Journal* 22 February 2015.

["Turkey sends military into Syria, evacuate troops and tomb"](#) (in English). *YnetNews*. 22 February 2015.

["Turkish military enters Syria to evacuate soldiers, relocate tomb"](#). *Reuters*.

["Turkey enters Syria to evacuate Suleyman Shah tomb"](#). *BBC*. 22 February 2015.



The tomb of Süleyman Şah on a prominence along the east bank of the Euphrates. (Digital Globe)



The tomb complex of Süleyman Şah on a prominence along the east bank of the Euphrates. (Digital Globe)



The tomb of Süleyman Şah. (World Bulletin)



Honor guard at the tomb of Süleyman Şah. (Today Zaman)



Turkish armed forces raise the flag at the intended new site for the tomb. (The Guardian)



The new site for the tomb, as seen from a nearby YPG outpost. (anonymous)



The new site for the tomb, as seen from a nearby YPG outpost. (anonymous)



The new site for the tomb, as seen from a nearby YPG outpost. (anonymous)



Turkish tanks crossing the border with Syria. (anonymous)

SHI 15-0043

Report Date: February 22, 2015

Site Name: Deir Qita

Date of Incident: Reported February 22, 2015

Location: Idlib Governorate near the Turkish Border

Coordinates:

Site Description: This Byzantine village, located on the northeast side of the Jebel Barisha, is famous for its standing remains and dates back to as early as the 1st century AD. The site contains three churches, baptisteries, and numerous villas. Many of the structures are well preserved.

Site Date: Mainly Byzantine

Source of Destruction: According to a damage assessment by UNITAR, “A review of imagery confirms that most of the ruins on the site have been destroyed or severely damaged.”²⁸ Illegal construction appears on satellite imagery, as does a new road along the west side of the site and areas of heavy disturbance. Ancient stone masonry has been removed from the site, as can be seen in a series of photographs posted by APSA.²⁹ UNITAR also noted that parts of the site have been cleared to create farmland. DGAM reported³⁰ looting at the site in October 2013. Some of the APSA photos may show signs of small-scale looting.

Pattern: Widespread illegal construction, land clearing, and theft of construction material in the Dead Cities region of northwestern Syria.

Monitoring Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: ASOR CHI has designated the Dead Cities region a high priority for monitoring and remediation.

Sources:

Online Reporting:

APSA Website: <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/1135-idlib-limestone-massi-darqouta.html>

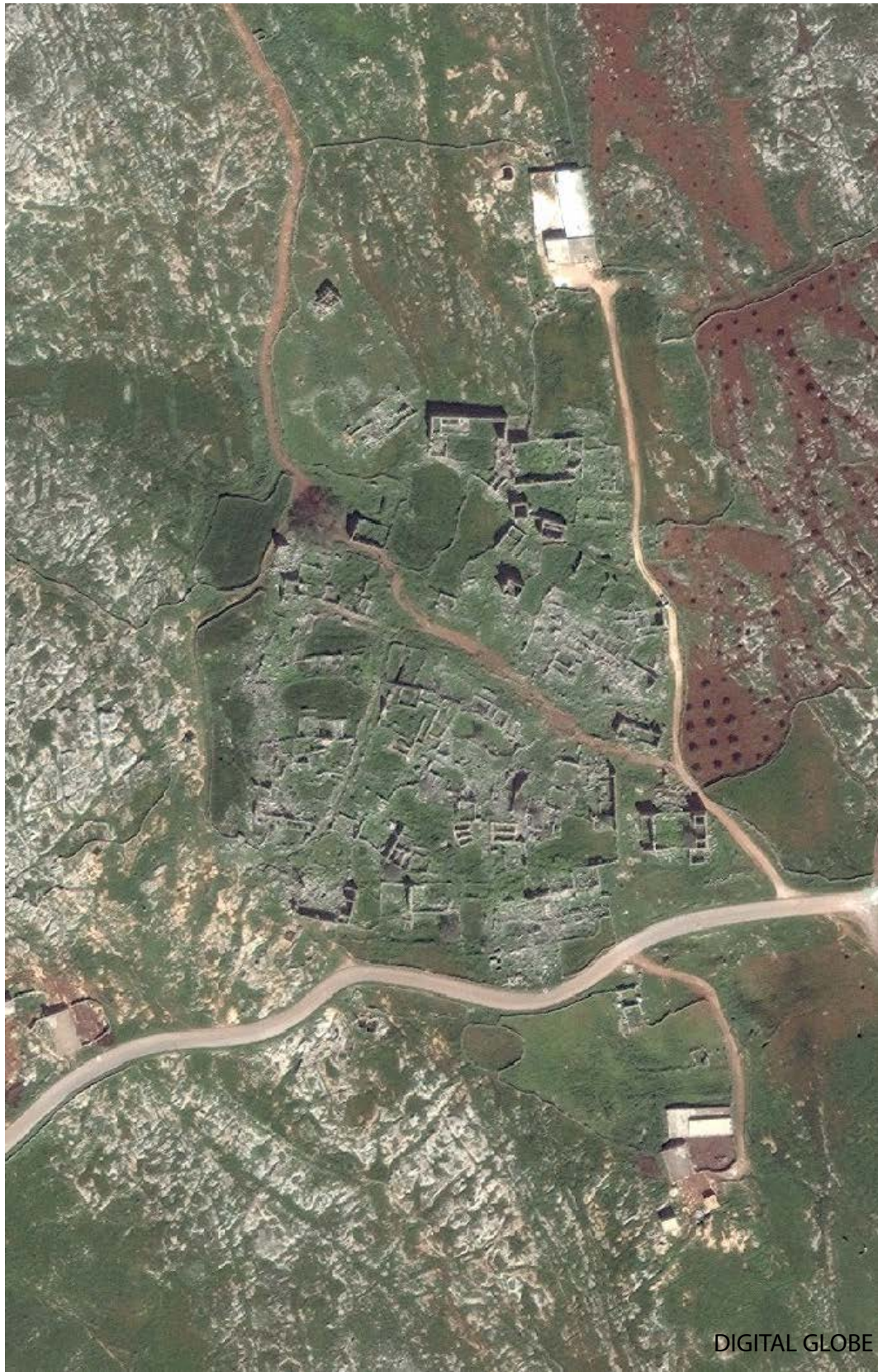
Scholarly:

UNITAR. 2014. Satellite-Based Damage Assessment to Cultural Heritage Sites in Syria.
<http://www.unitar.org/unosat/tbc>.

²⁸ UNITAR 2014, p. 97.

²⁹ <http://apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/idlib/sites/1135-idlib-limestone-massi-darqouta.html>

³⁰ DGAM 2013.



Deir Qita on March 22, 2010, prior to the Syrian conflict. (Digital Globe)



Deir Qita on December 23, 2014. New and modified roads, new walls, new construction, destroyed modern construction, and areas of heavy disturbance to the archaeological deposits are visible. (Digital Globe)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Site disturbance at Deir Qita with freshly broken limestone masonry in an ancient doorway. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



A cistern at Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita — fresh breaks in masonry visible in the foreground. Areas of darker red soil mark site disturbance. (APSA)



Deir Qita — fresh breaks in masonry visible on the right and newly toppled masonry and soil disturbance on the left. (APSA)



Deir Qita — an area of heavy disturbance at mid image. (APSA)



Deir Qita — an area of broken masonry (bright white stones), probably indicating theft of material for modern construction. (APSA)



Deir Qita — an area of heavy disturbance at on the right possibly marking looting. (APSA)



Deir Qita — evidence of looting. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita — a probable cistern or subterranean storage space carved into bedrock. (APSA)



Deir Qita — a recently exposed entry to a probable subterranean space. (APSA)



Deir Qita — a recently exposed entry to a probable subterranean space. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita with modern structure in the right background. (APSA)



Deir Qita — an area of recent clearance, almost certainly using a front-end loader or bulldozer. (APSA)



Deir Qita — a fresh backdirt pile is visible on the left side of the church at mid frame. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)



Deir Qita. (APSA)