

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

NEA PSHSS 14 001

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 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

<sup>1</sup> 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 <sup>١٠</sup> ~~١١~~ 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 and <sup>١٠</sup> Incident artillery B of on the c

<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

([Arabic](#)) 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-only>

([Chinese](#)) 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>

([English](#)) published a blog post titled "**Are ancient buildings as important as human lives?**"

<http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-20150613-ancient-buildings>

[Arabic](#) [Chinese](#) [English](#) [French](#) [German](#) [Hebrew](#) [Hindi](#) [Indonesian](#) [Italian](#) [Japanese](#) [Korean](#) [Portuguese](#) [Russian](#) [Spanish](#) [Telugu](#) [Thai](#) [Turkish](#) [Vietnamese](#)



( " i<sup>3</sup> - « ( i published an article titled "**Airstrikes Destroy Part of Yemen's UNESCO Heritage Site**" (by the Associated Press).

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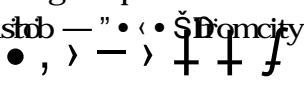


## Military and Political Context

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.<sup>2</sup> 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 territories cutting the Turkish — "••ŠDmcity



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5. Mosul, Ninawa Governorate

During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Mosul.<sup>14</sup>

6. Makhmour Area, Erbil Governorate

During the reporting period, several coalition airstrikes hit ISIL positions around Makhmour.<sup>15</sup>

7. Baghdad Area

During the reporting period, bomb attacks killed more than a dozen civilians in and around Baghdad.<sup>16</sup>

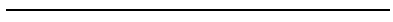
Other key points:

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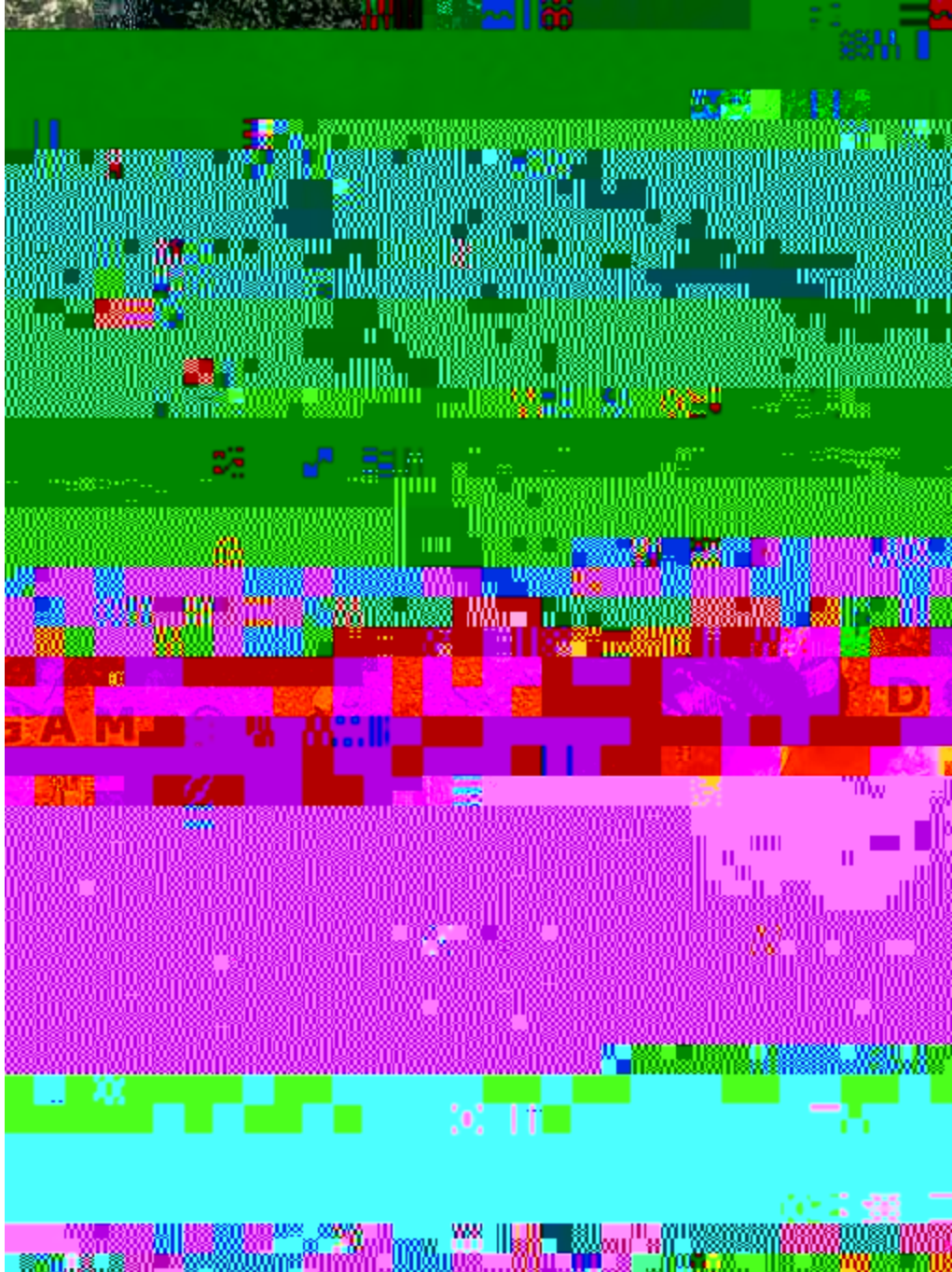
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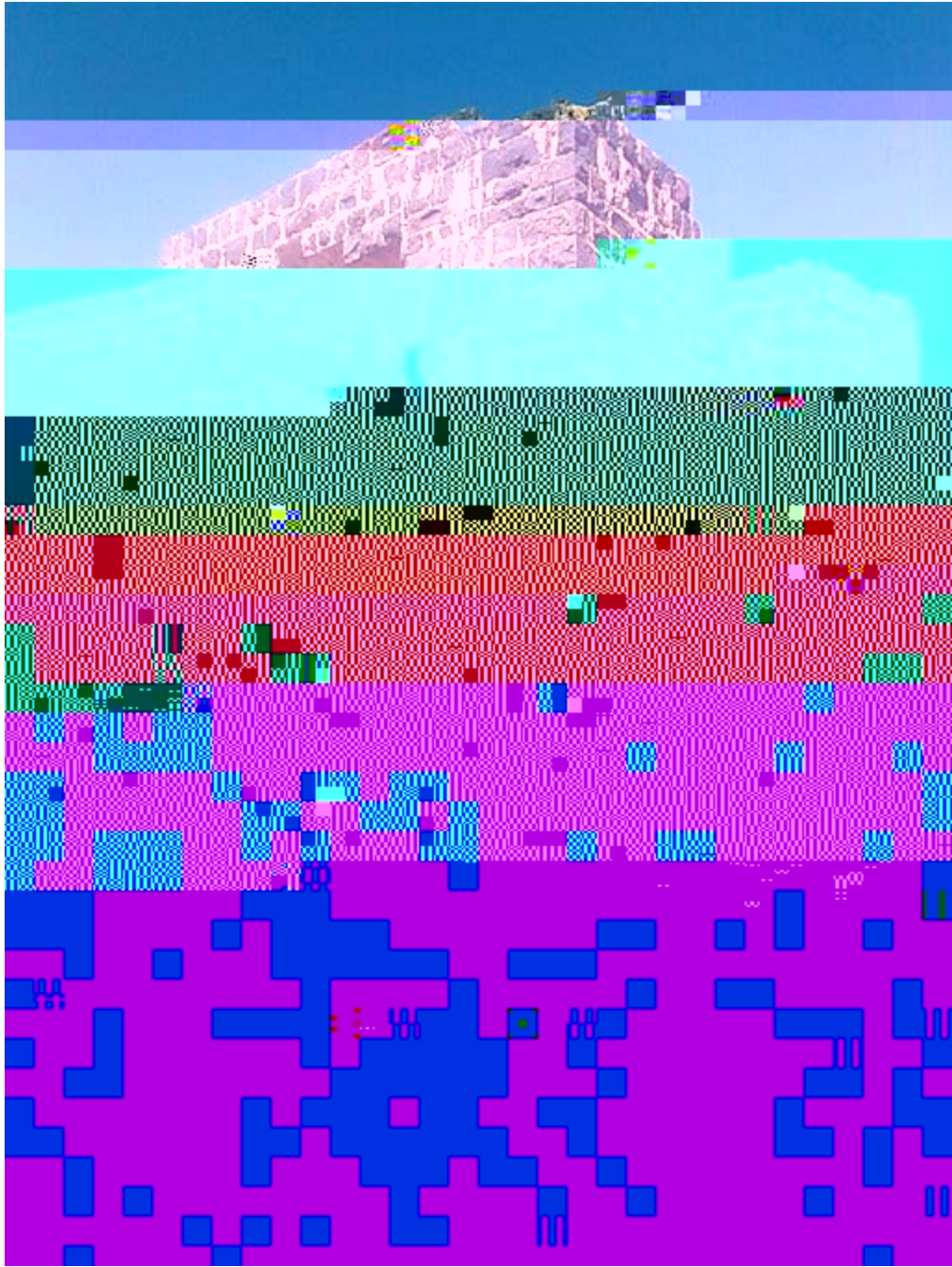






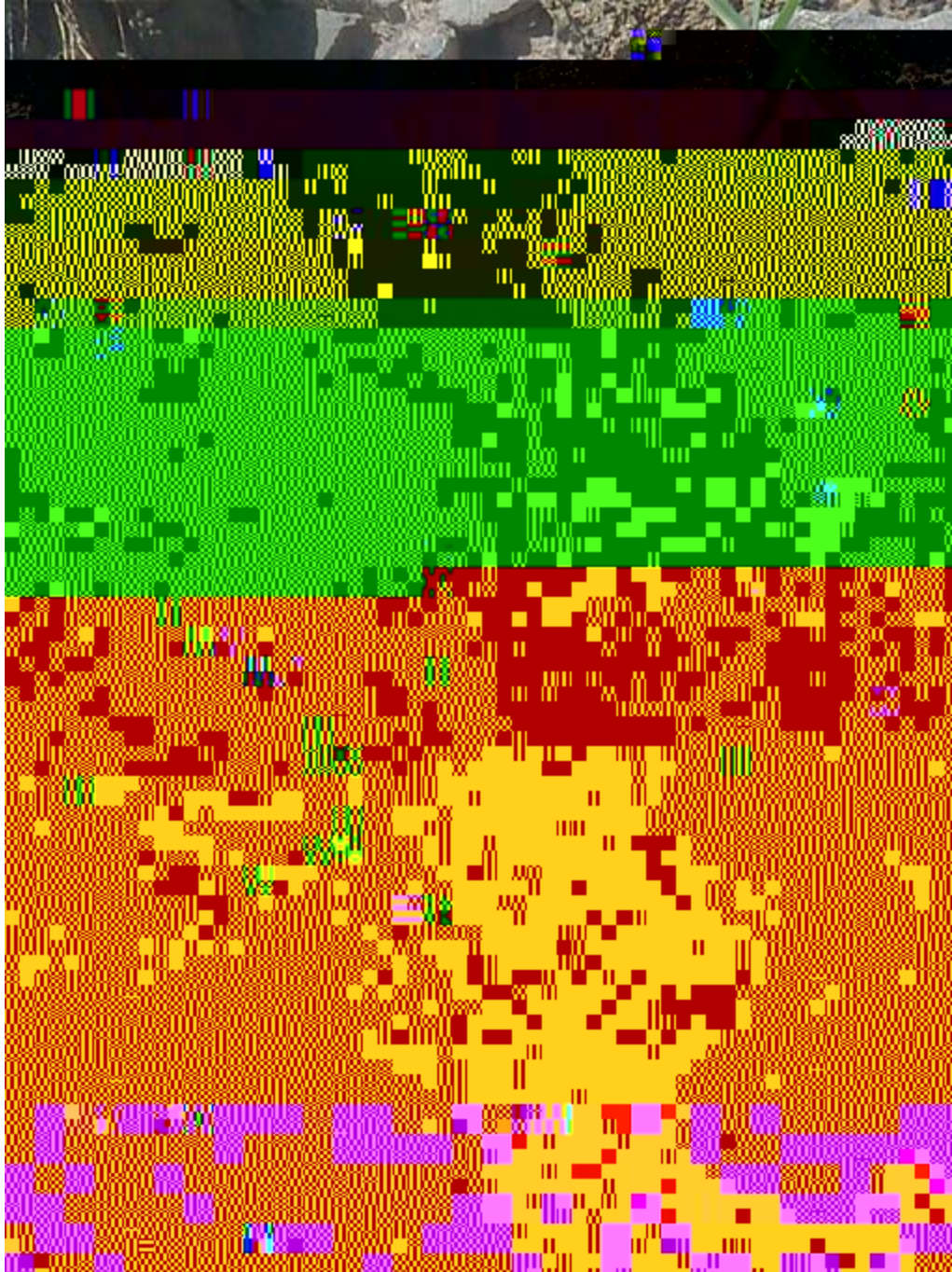


Ottoman Water Mill at Tell'Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



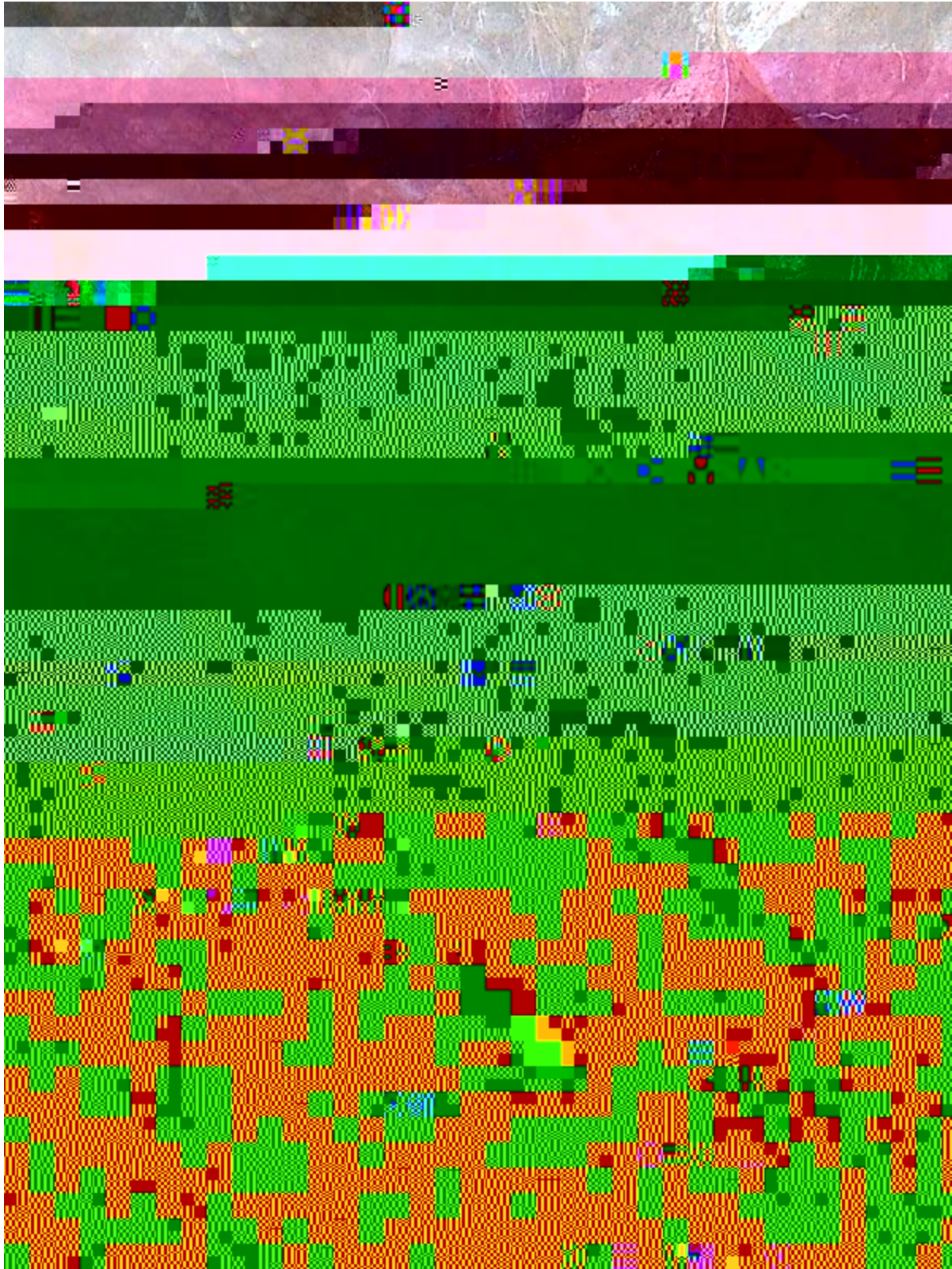


Ottoman Water Mill at Tell'Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



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





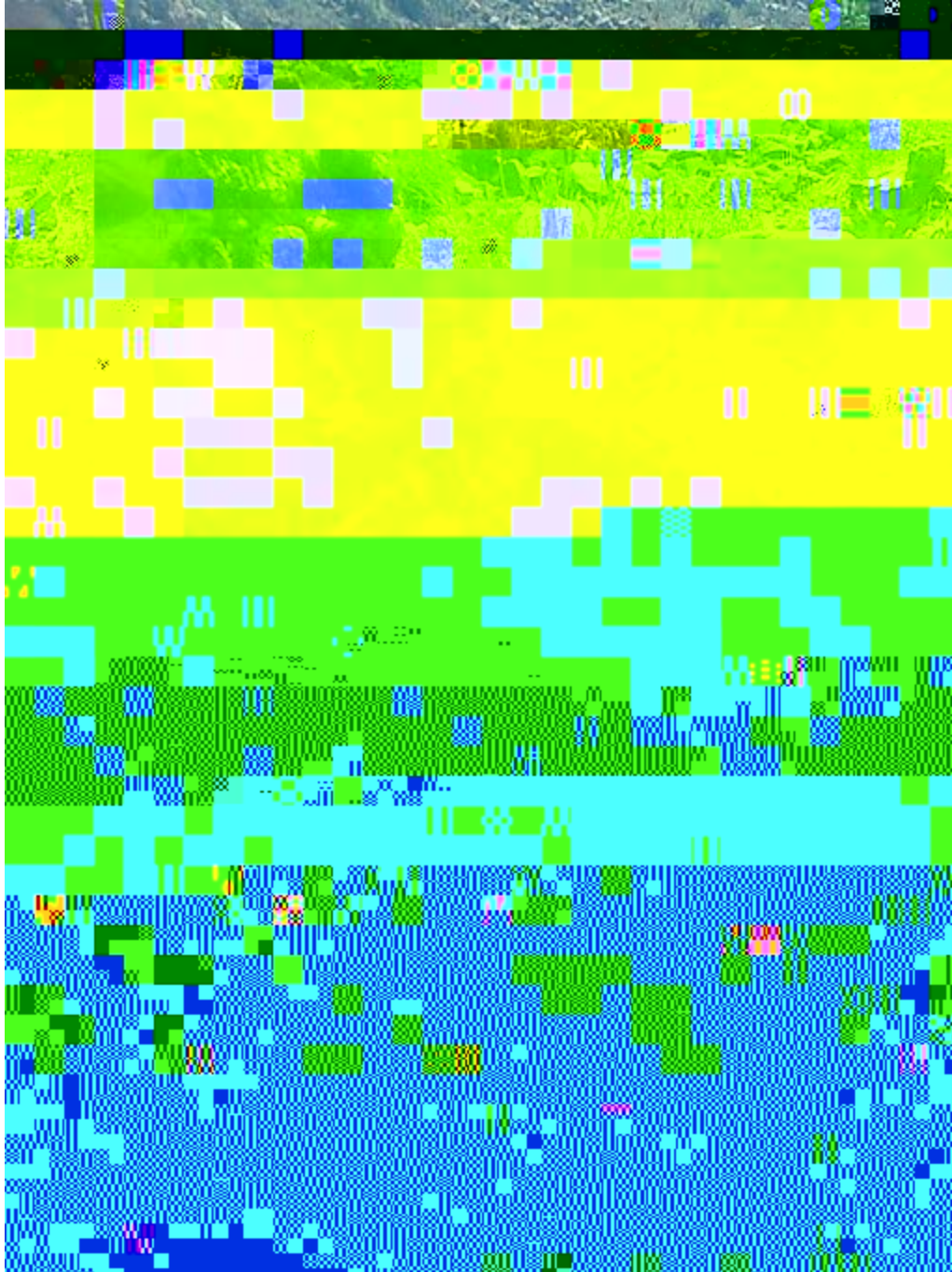
Ottoman Water Mill at Tell Asha'ari (DGAM; posted June 12, 2015)



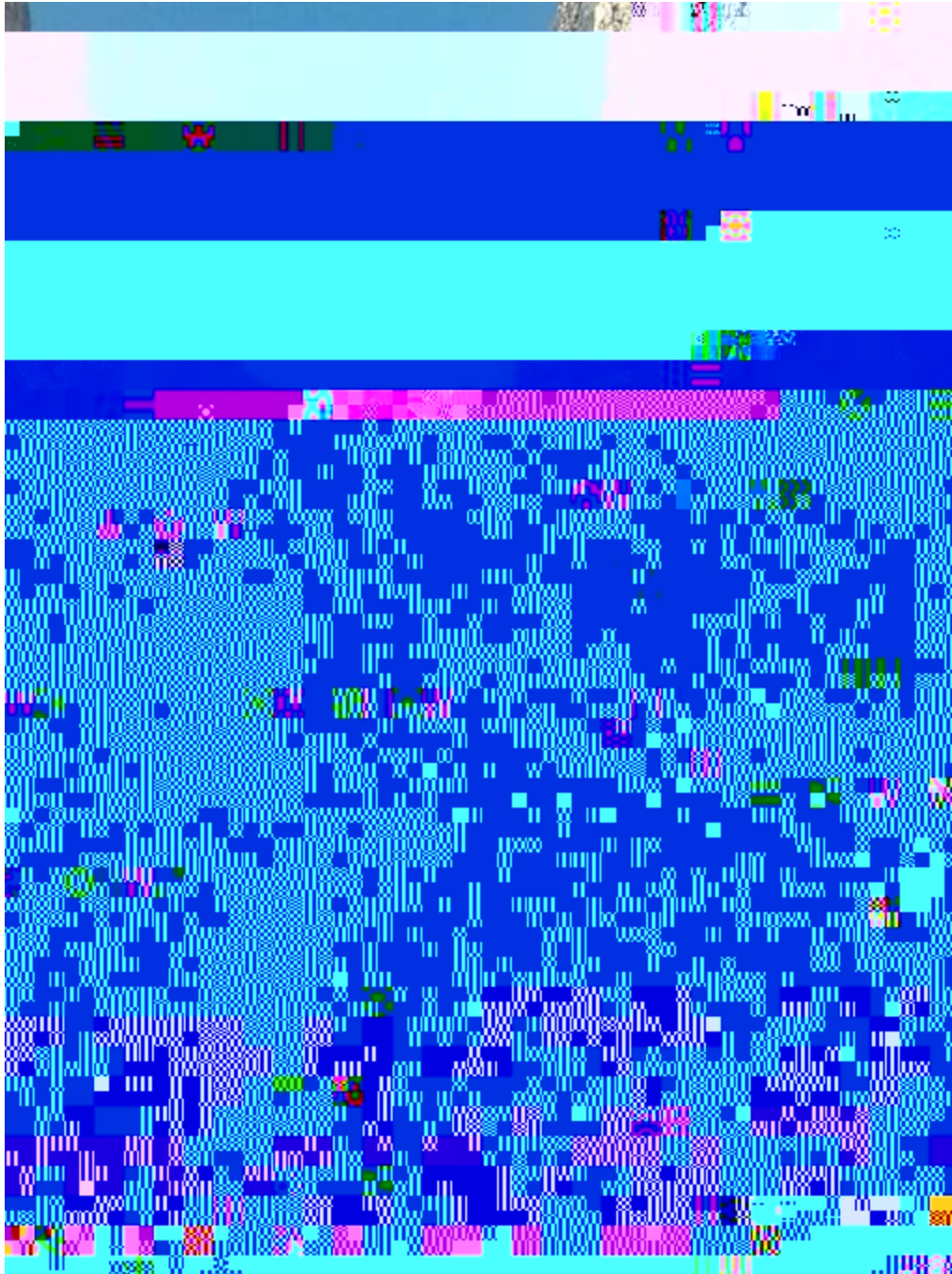
Ottoman Water Mill at



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)

**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. UNESCO World Heritage Site #190

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**Sources:**

Online Reporting:

YouTube (June 16, 2015): <https://youtu.be/7Nx9QXIrVPU>



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)







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'

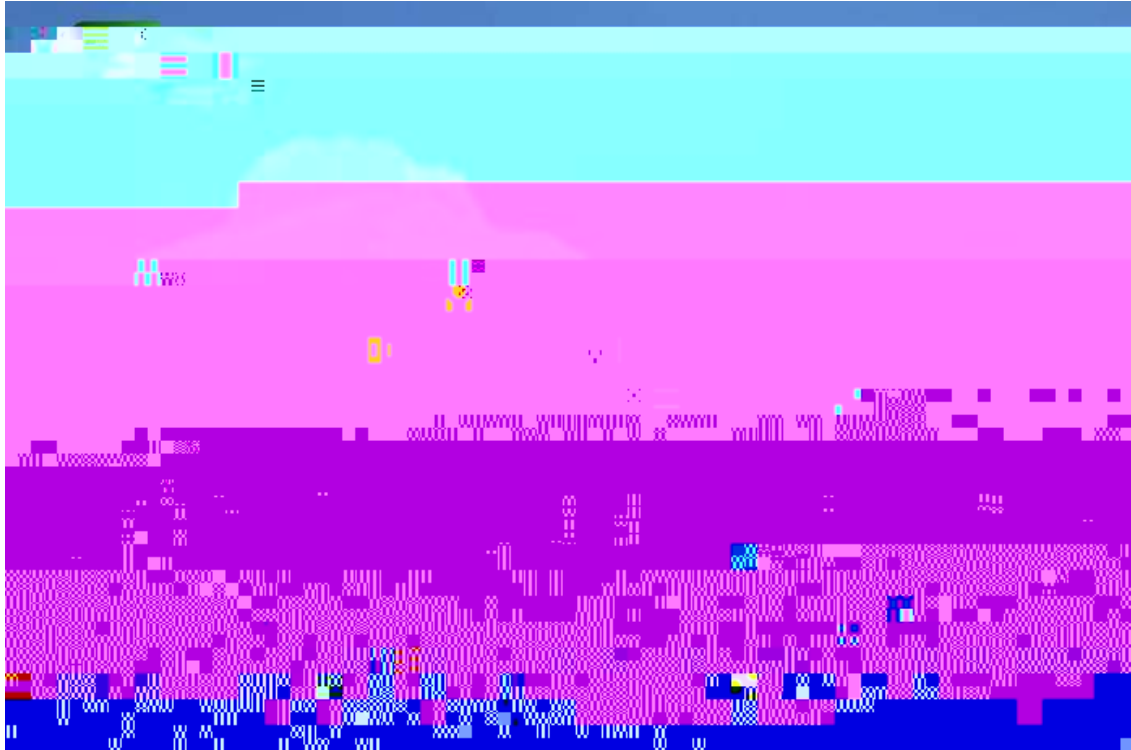
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Scholarly:

Abdulkarim, Maamoun. 2013. "Ma'arat al Nu'man: A Pre-Islamic Site in the Eastern Desert of Syria." *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 41: 1-12. Damascus: Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.



Ma'arat al Nu'man Museum (Khan Murad Pasha) (Sirajpress; 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 majhu A divc city (I Acity which part parts: "Yœ ¶ Q "µµ whicÜ divc a 1 of Y

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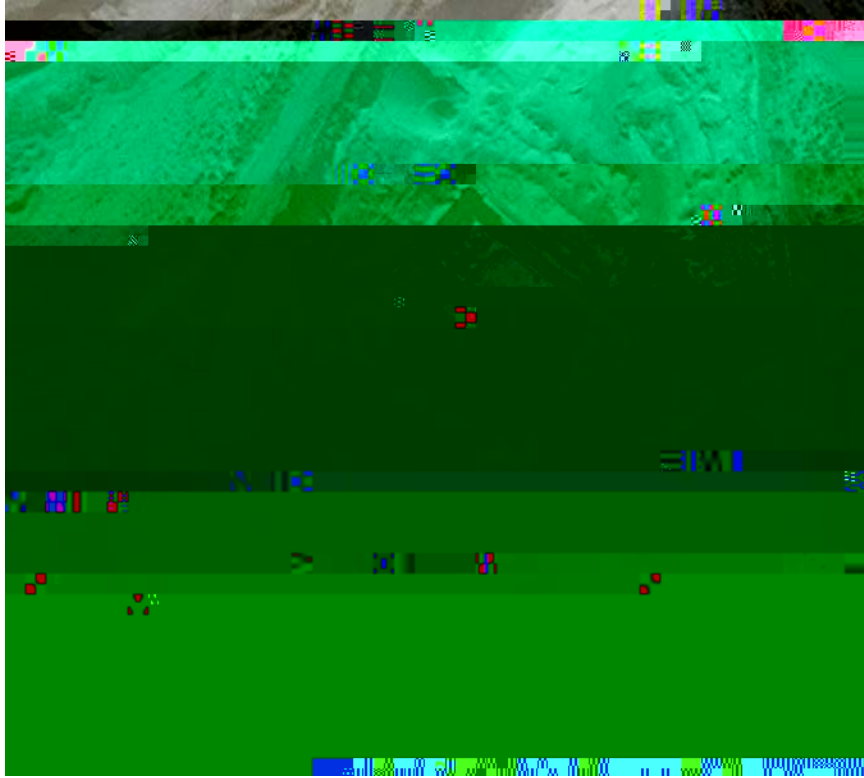
Farhan Pasha, Sheikh of the Shammar in the late 19th

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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)

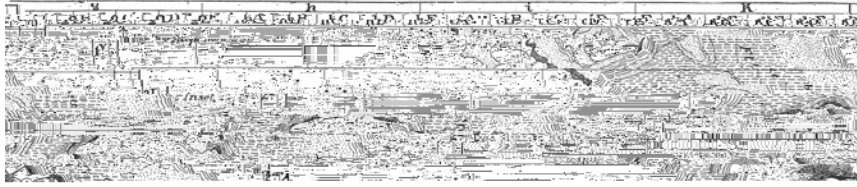


Satellite image showing the Farhan Pasha Palace (Ottoman Barracks) and the area around the Temple of Assur, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken May 9, 2015)



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 v



Aerial image of Assur with Ottoman barracks in the foreground (Georg Gerster, Georg and Charlotte Trümpler (2007) *Assur*. Malibu: Getty Publications, pp. 69)

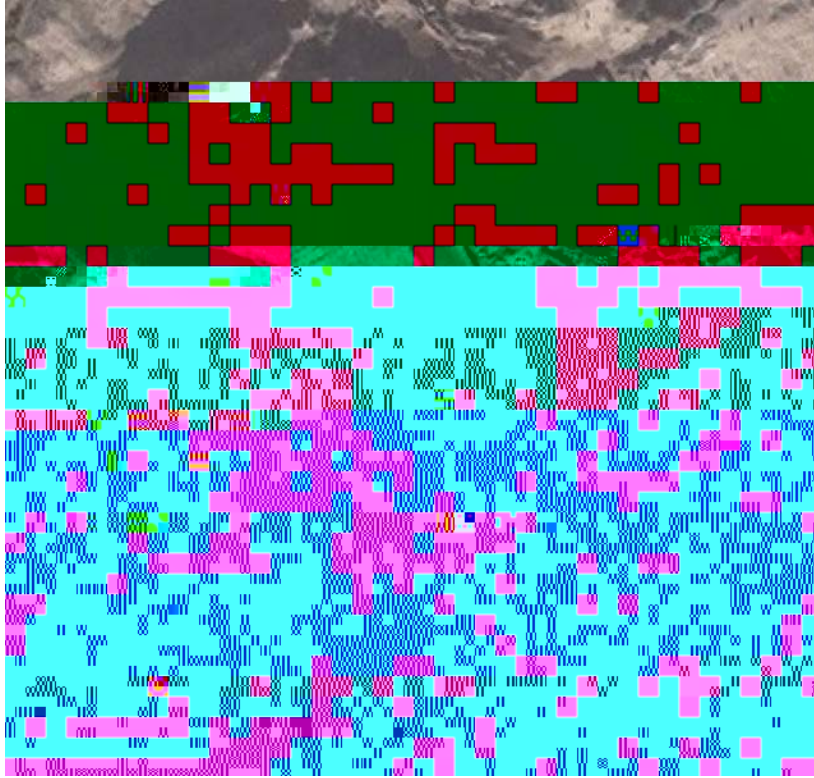


Photographs of Temple of Assur excavations inside the courtyard of the Ottoman barracks (Andrae, Walter (1910) "Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabung des Assur Tempels." *Jahrbuch der Assyriologie* 44, pp. 40)





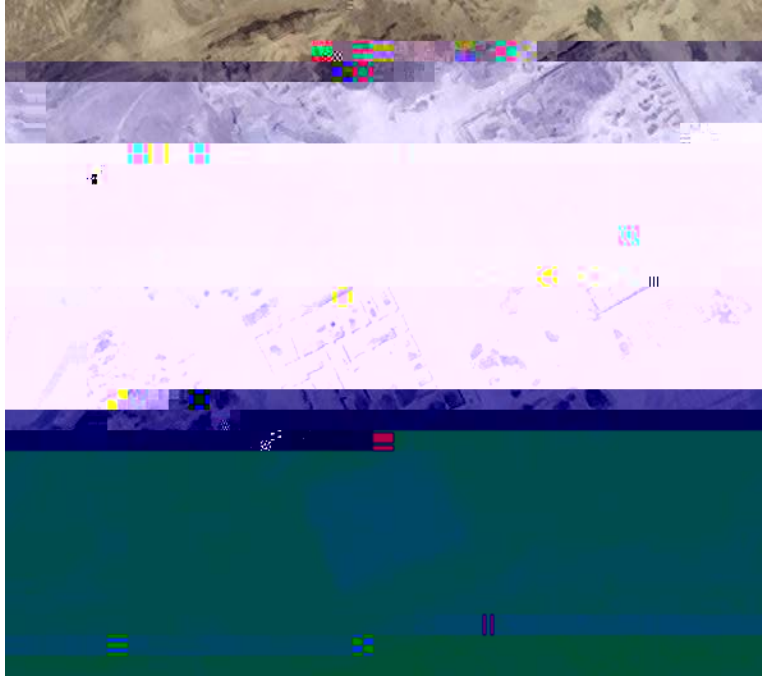
Satellite image showing the Expedition House, Assur, Iraq (DigitalGlobe; ASOR CHI; taken May 9, 2003)



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.<sup>31</sup> The Joint Operations Command denied reports that Iraqi Security Forces were targeting mosques.<sup>32</sup> No further details about the extent of the damage and no photo/video documentation.  
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**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, ISIL destroyed the Church of St. Ephraim, one of the largest places of worship for Christians in Mosul.

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**Sources:**

Online Reporting: