



UMAYYAD MOSQUE IN ALEPPO YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

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The objective of this paper is to show the importance of the architectural and artistic heritage of Aleppo, particularly the Umayyad Mosque. Aleppo is the second largest city in Syria (after the capital Damascus) and is the commercial capital of Syria. Aleppo has a long history, extending from the third millennium BC to the Islamic era. The remains and monuments are evidence from those great civilizations. Many pieces of literature mention that the Amorites were the first inhabitants in Aleppo during the third millennium BC. In 223 BC, the Greek commander (Seleucus Nikator) re-organized and planned the city. Later, Islamic rulers made Aleppo great by re-building its walls, gates, towers and citadel. The Muslims also built mosques, schools, inns, markets, hospitals, bathrooms, and public facilities. Consequently, Aleppo flourished and became a very important station for the Silk Road; the third largest city in the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Cairo. In 1986, UNESCO added Old Aleppo City to the World Heritage List. In 715 Umayyad Caliph Al-Walid built the Great Umayyad Mosque to demonstrate the development of Islamic art and architecture this time period. Until now the Umayyad Mosque has been considered one of Aleppo's main city symbols. Since 2012 the much of Syria's architectural heritage in have been destroyed due to internal war. In Aleppo the losses in both the ancient and modern parts of the city have been tremendous. The Umayyad Mosque has been particularly damaged and many massive parts destroyed such as the Minaret, the arcades, the main hall, and the courtyard. This paper will highlight some recommendations to protect and restore the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo for future use.

Keywords: Aleppo City, Umayyad mosque, Architectural heritage, Islamic art and architecture.

Introduction

Cultural heritage is unique and irreplaceable, placing the responsibility of its preservation on the current generation. Smaller objects such as artwork and other cultural masterpieces have been collected in museums and art galleries. Grassroot organizations and political groups such as the international body, UNESCO, have been successful in gaining the necessary support to preserve the heritage of many nations for the future. This paper will explain the importance of the architectural heritage in Syria. Due to its 2012 internal war, many heritage buildings have been destroyed and damaged.

“There is no culture without people; and no society without culture,” Irina Bokova

Syrian History And Heritage

Syria is an Arab country in Western Asia, bordered by Lebanon, the Mediterranean Sea to the West, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south, and Palestine to the southwest (Figure 1).

The ruins of Ebla, near Idlib in northern Syria, were discovered and excavated in 1975. Ebla appears to have been an East Semitic speaking city-state founded around 3000 BCE. From the third millennium BCE, Syria was occupied successively by Sumerians, Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians and Babylonians. The region was fought over by the rival empires of the Hittites, Egyptians, Assyrians and Mitanni between the 15th and 13th centuries BCE, with the Middle Assyrian Empire eventually left controlling Syria. From the 10th Century BCE the Neo-Assyrian Empire arose and Syria was ruled by Assyria for the next three centuries until the late 7th century BCE. After this empire finally collapsed, Mesopotamian dominance continued for a time with the short lived Neo-Babylonian Empire, which ruled the region for 70 or so years. Eventually, in 539 BCE, the Persians took Syria as part of their empire. This dominion ended with the conquests of the Macedonian Greek king, Alexander the Great in 333-332 BCE. Syria was then incorporated into the Seleucid Empire. The capital of this Empire (founded in 312 BC) was situated at Antioch, then a part of historical Syria, but just inside the Turkish border today. The Roman general Pompey the Great captured Antioch in 64 BCE, turning Syria into a Roman province¹.



Figure 1 Archaeological Syrians sites (National Museum, Damascus).

The largely Aramaic speaking population of Syria during the height of the empire was probably not exceeded again until the 19th century. Syria's large and prosperous population made it one of the most important Roman provinces, particularly during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE. Palmyra, a wealthy and powerful indigenous Aramean state arose in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, and for a short time it was the center of the Palmyrene Empire, briefly rivaled by Rome. With the decline of the empire in the west, Syria became part of the East Roman, or the Byzantine Empire in 395. In 634-640, Syria was conquered by the Muslim Arabs in the form of the Rashidun army led by Khalid ibn al-Walid, resulting in the region becoming part of the Islamic empire. In the mid-7th century the Umayyad dynasty, the ruler of the empire then, designated the capital of the empire to be in Damascus. Syria was divided into four districts: Damascus, Homs, Palestine, and Jordan.

¹Syria: A country Study – Ancient Syria, Library of Congress. Data as of April 1987. Retrieved 5 September 2007.

The Islamic empire expanded rapidly and at its height stretched from Spain to India and parts of Central Asia; thus Syria prospered economically, being the center of the empire. Early Umayyad rulers such as Abd al-Malik and Al-Walid I constructed several splendid palaces and mosques throughout Syria, particularly in Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs².

The Umayyad dynasty was overthrown by the Abbasid dynasty in 750, who moved the capital of empire to Baghdad. For periods, Syria was ruled from Egypt, under the Tulunids (887-905), and then, after a period of anarchy, the Ikhshidids (941-969). Northern Syria then came under the Hamdanids of Aleppo. Syria was then conquered by the Seljuk Turks (1084-1086). After a century of Seljuk rule, Syria was conquered (1175-1185) by Saladin, founder of the Ayyubid dynasty of Egypt³.

During the 12th-13th centuries, parts of Syria were held by Crusaders and in 1260 the Mongols briefly swept through Syria. The withdrawal of the main Mongol army prompted the Mamluks of Egypt to invade and conquer Syria. In addition to the sultanate's capital in Cairo, the Mamluk leader, Baibars, made Damascus a provincial capital, with the cities linked by a mail service that traveled by both horses and carrier pigeons. The Mamluks eliminated the last of the Crusader footholds in Syria and repelled several Mongol invasions. In 1400, TimurLenk, or Tamerlane, invaded Syria, defeated the Mamluk army at Aleppo, and captured Damascus. Many of the city's inhabitants were massacred, except for the artisans, who were deported to Samarkand. At this time the Christian population of Syria suffered persecution. By the end of the 15th century, the discovery of a sea route from Europe to the Far East ended the need for an overland trade route through Syria. In 1516, the Ottoman Empire conquered Syria⁴.

Aleppo Heritage

Aleppo is the largest city in Syria and serves as the capital of Aleppo Governorate (Figure 2), the most populous Syrian governorate. It is located in northwestern Syria 310 kilometres (193 miles) from Damascus. With an official population of 2,132,100 (2004 census), it is also one of the largest cities in the Levant. Consequently, Aleppo flourished and became a very important station for the Silk Road; the third largest city in the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Cairo.

Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world; it has been inhabited since perhaps as early as the 6th millennium BC. Excavations at Tell as-Sawda and Tell al-Ansari, just south of the old city of Aleppo, show that the area was occupied since at least the latter part of the 3rd millennium BC, when Aleppo was first mentioned in cuneiform tablets unearthed in Ebla and Mesopotamia. There Aleppo was noted for its commercial and military proficiency. Such a long history is probably due to its being such a strategic trading point midway between the Mediterranean Sea and Mesopotamia⁵.

² same as last entry.

³ same as last entry.

⁴ Syria: History Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.

⁵ Russell, Alexander. *The Natural History of Aleppo* (1st ed.). London. p. 266.

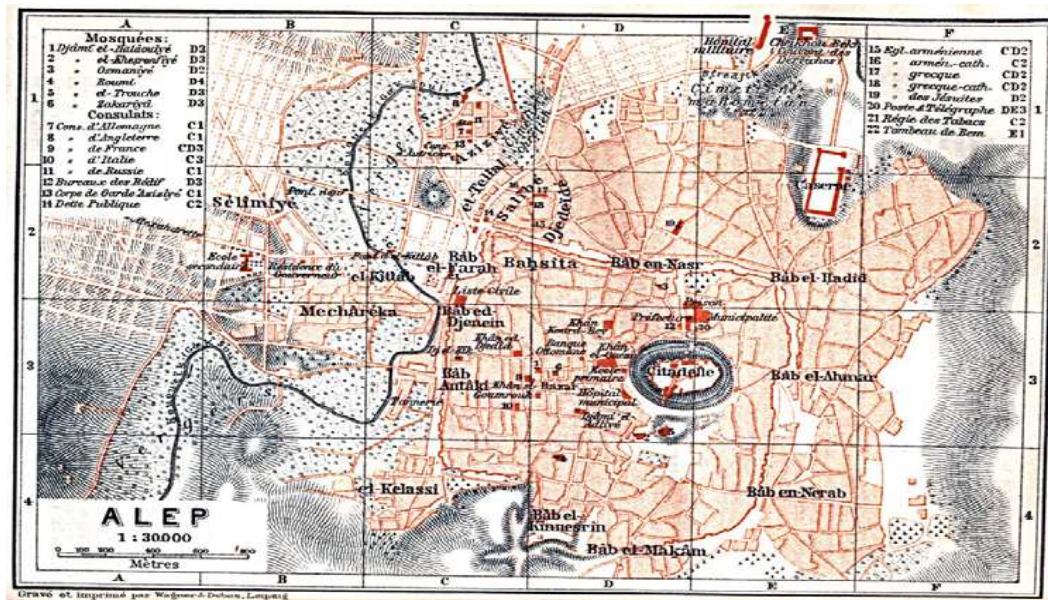


Figure 2 Aleppo Map 1912 (wikipedia.org).

The city's significance in history has been its location at the end of the Silk Road, which passed through central Asia and Mesopotamia. When the Suez Canal was inaugurated in 1869, trade was diverted to sea and Aleppo began its slow decline. At the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Aleppo ceded its northern hinterland to modern Turkey, as well as the important railway connecting it to Mosul. Then in the 1940s it lost its main access to the sea, Antioch and Alexandretta, also to Turkey. Finally, the isolation of Syria in the past few decades further exacerbated the situation, although perhaps it is this very decline that has helped to preserve the old city of Aleppo, its medieval architecture, and traditional heritage. Until recently, Aleppo has experienced a noticeable revival and was slowly returning to the spotlight. It recently won the title of the "Islamic Capital of Culture 2006", and also witnessed a wave of successful restorations of its historic landmarks⁶. In 1986, UNESCO added old Aleppo city in the World Heritage List⁷.

History Of Umayyad Mosque

The Great Mosque of Aleppo or the Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo is the largest and one of the oldest mosques in the city of Aleppo. It is located in al-Jalloum district of the heart of Aleppo Ancient City, a World Heritage Site, near the entrance to al-MadinaSouq. The mosque is purportedly home to the remains of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. It was built in the beginning of the 8th century. However, the current building dates back to the 11th through 14th centuries. The mosque was built on confiscated land that formerly served as the Cathedral's cemetery. According to later traditions, the construction of the earliest mosque on the site commenced in 96AH/715AD by Umayyad Caliph al-Walid I and was completed by his successor Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik in 98AH/717AD. Architectural historian K. A. C. Creswell attributes its construction solely to the latter, quoting 13th century Aleppine

⁶<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo>

⁷<http://www.worldheritagesite.org/sites/aleppo.html>

historian Ibn al-Adim who wrote that Sulayman's intent was "to make it equal to the work of his brother al-Walid in the Great Mosque at Damascus." Another tradition claims al-Walid founded the mosque using materials from the so-called "Church of Cyrrus"⁸.



Figure 3 mosque's courtyard (Rami)

Construction and Architecture(until 2012)

The Umayyad caliph Al-Walid (86AH/705AD-96AH/715AD) wanted to build a great mosque in Damascus to show the greatness of the Islamic state, so he said to the builders: *"I want a unique mosque, unlike anything that has been built, and unlike anything that will be built"*⁹. Then Al-Walid decided to build a similar mosque in Aleppo and was completed by his successor Sulayman ibn Abd al-Malik. Consequently, this design for the Damascus Umayyad Mosque became the first and standard design for all Umayyad mosques.

The general design of Umayyad mosques created by Syrian builders depends on a rectangle plan. This includes a rectangle prayer hall on the southern side (the direction of prayer in Syria is to the south) and a rectangular courtyard to north of this prayer hall which is surrounded by three arcades. For the first time the Muslims used transept with dome for the prayer hall and square minarets. The Umayyad mosques used aesthetic elements as mosaics, polychrome wood, and marble. The Umayyad mosque in Aleppo follows the same design (Figure 4) but with smaller dimensions (105×77.75m)¹⁰.

⁸Tabaa, Yasser. 1997. Constructions of power and piety in medieval Aleppo.

⁹- Bahnasi, Afif. 1988. The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. Damascus. Dar Tlas. Page: 21.

¹⁰- The Engineering Office. 1999. Study project to rehabilitate the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Aleppo University. Page: 7.

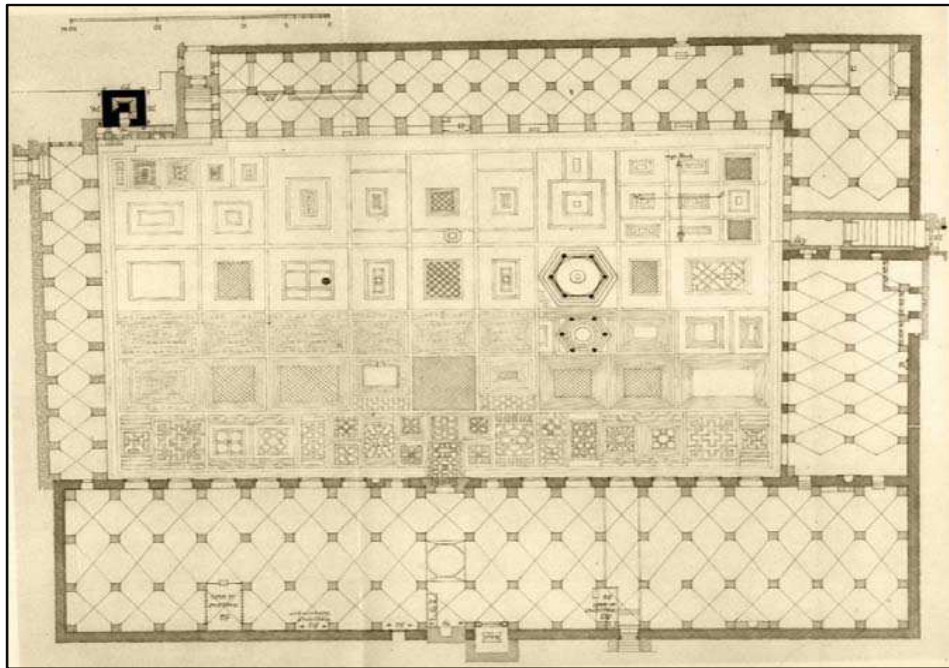


Figure 4 mosque's plan (Herzfeld).

The Main Prayer Hall

Located along the southern side of the courtyard is a rectangular lounge (101.00m×19.55m) canopied by cross vaults with limestone pillars as their base. There are 80 columns (Figure 5) divided into four rows, two in the middle and two adjacent to the southern and northern walls. The hall contains three corridors stretching from East to West, and the transept (Figure 6) is roofed by a high circular dome surrounded by wooden windows¹¹.



Figure 5. The columns in Prayer hall (Rami 2007).

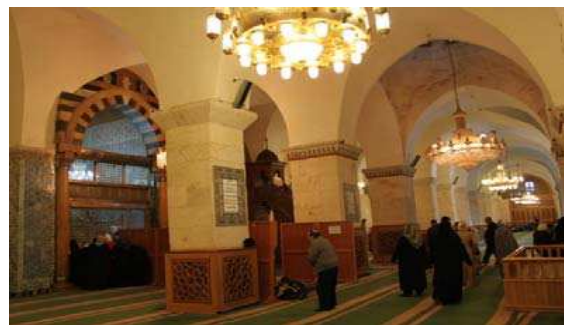


Figure 6. The transept of Prayer hall (Rami 2007).

¹¹- The Engineering Office. 1999. Study project to rehabilitate the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo University. Page: 9.



Figure 7 The façade of Prayer hall (Rami 2007) .

The main prayer hall has a decorated façade (Figure 7) with 15 pointed arches. The middle arch is the entrance of transept, decorated by black and white overlapping marble stones, includes a small three-centered arch forming the entrance. The two arches on each side of the entrance arch have been modified to be windows are decorated by black and white stones. The other arches have been closed by wooden doors. This façade was modified in 1039AH/1630AD by the Sultan Murad Khan as mentioned in the poetic inscription above the entrance¹².



Figure 8.The middle niche (Rami 2007).

Prayer Niches:This hall includes three niches; two simple ones and the middle one (Figure 8), which is the largest and widest, built of yellow polished stones by the deputy of Aleppo Aqasenker Jawkendar year 684AH/1285AD.

¹²- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page: 25.



Figure 9. The miber (Rami 2010).



Figure 10. Minber's entrance (Rami 2010).

Above the middle niche is the inscription in the Thuluth Mamluk font (4.50×0.40M): "*In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, and the Especially Merciful. Decreed to be build it after burned by Maulana, the greatest Sultan Malik Al-Mansur¹³ Saief Adlounia w Aldien Qalawoon, the victorious*" Below and to the left side is another smaller inscription that reads: "*Guarded Aleppo Kingdom, God reward and guard him in Rajab¹⁴, six hundred and eighty four¹⁵.*"

Minber (Pulpit): On the right side of the middle prayer niche is one of the oldest minbers of Aleppo (Figure 9) made by Nour Aldien Zanki, modeled after Jerusalem's minber (also made in Aleppo). Ultimately the Aleppo's minber became the only existing one of two minbers after Jerusalem's minber was burnt down by Zionists in 1969. Aleppo's minber is one of the most rare and unique pieces of art, crafted from oak and ebony. The minber's height is 3.75M, the depth is 3.65M, and the width is 1.08M. The minber's entrance (measuring 2.90M in height) consists of a door with two shutters (Figure 10) and a lintel above, crested by Muqarnas on one row, and topped by a frilly leafed crown¹⁶.

Under the Muqarnas is the engraved inscription, "*made in the days of Maulana Sultan King Nasser Abu Alfateh Mohamed, the victorious*", and under it another inscription reads,

¹³- Al-Mansur Saief Aldien Qalawoon: he is the Mamluk ruler between (678AH/1279AD- 689AH/1290AD). Timeline of Muslim rulers, Albabtien Association.

¹⁴- Rajab six hundred and eighty four= Rajab, 684AH = September, 1285AD

¹⁵- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page: 54.

¹⁶- The Engineering Office. 1999. Study project to rehabilitate the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Aleppo University. Page: 18

"made by a poor slave to Allah, Mohammad bin Ali Musli". On the two shutters there are two engraved the Quran. On the right side it reads, "inscriptions from And [recall] when We said Enter", on left side, "This city and eat from it"¹⁷, and above it, "Decreed by the poor slave to Allah, Mohammed bin Osman Alhadad". The two shutters are made by interlocking and overlapping wooden fillings¹⁸.

The two sides of the minber (Figure 11) are right triangles and above them is a stair-rod which contains wooden cones. The motifs are similar to the Atabeg and Ayyubid style which includes polygons and geometrical shapes that are inlaid with ivory, seashell, silver and copper.

On the top of the minber is an orator seat with a small dome and under the orator seat is a crossing (Figure 12) that has internal interface decorated by beautiful geometrical motifs with the inscription in the Thuluth font: "Decreed by Almouz Al Ali Alamiri Alshamsi Aqasenker Jawkendar Almalki Almndourithe victorious"¹⁹.



Figure 11. The two sides of the minber (Rami 2010)



Figure 12. The crossing (Rami 2010)

Orator Room: The Orator Room is a small, empty, square room (measuring 1.06_M by 1.06_M) located on the right side of the minber (Figure 13). Although it doesn't have any decorations inside, on the outside the door is a masterpiece of motifs and inscriptions. This wooden door has one shutter that is filled with geometric motifs, and is framed by bars of verses inscribed in the Mamluk Thuluth font²⁰.

Prophet's Room: Located on the left side of niche, the Prophet's Room is square, its walls are covered by beautiful blue ceramic tiles, and the entrance is an arch of black and

¹⁷- The Quran, Chapter: Al-Baqarah, verse: 58.

¹⁸- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page:46.

¹⁹- Same as last entry, page: 48.

²⁰- The Engineering Office. 1999. Study project to rehabilitate the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Aleppo University. Page: 22

white stones, based on two pillars. The room is enclosed by abuckled copper lattice(Figure 14). It is believed that the shrine was for theProphet Zechariah²¹.

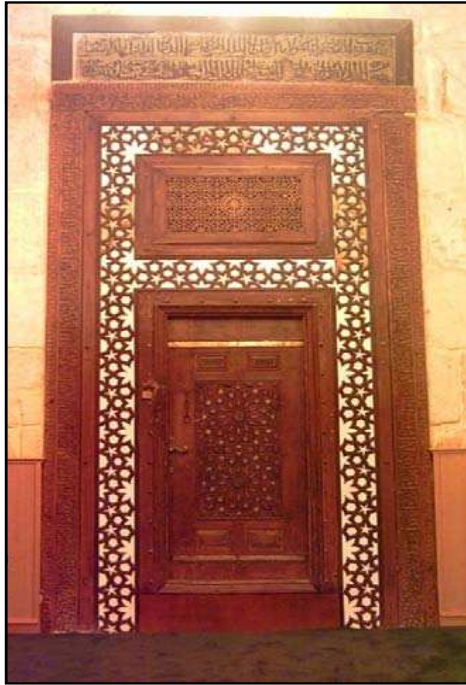


Figure 13 Orator Room (Rami 2007).



Figure 14 Prophet's Room (Rami 2010).

Wooden balcony: Located above the main entrance and in front of the main niche, the Wooden Balcony sits on two wooden pillars (Figure 15). The left pillar has a door opening to a spiral staircase leading back to the wooden balcony (built in 1923)²².

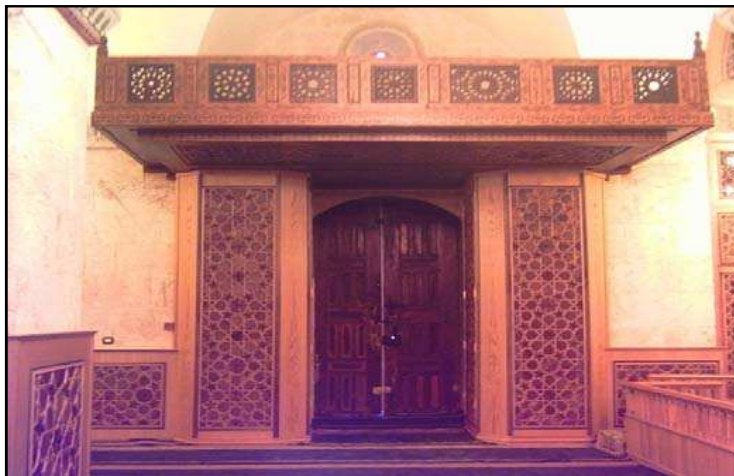


Figure 15. Wooden balcony (Rami 2007).

²¹- Same as last entry.

²²- Same as last entry, Page: 23.

The Gates

There are four gates that appear from the mosque's plan (Figure 4):

The northern gate: Main gate, located in the northern arcade (Figure 16).

The southern gate: Known as the copper gate, located in the southern wall of the main prayer hall, leading directly to the main prayer hall (Figure 17).

The western gate: Specified for women, located in the western arcade (Figure 18).

The eastern gate: located in the eastern arcade.



Figure 16 The northern gate (Rami 2010).



Figure 17 The southern gate (Rami 2007).

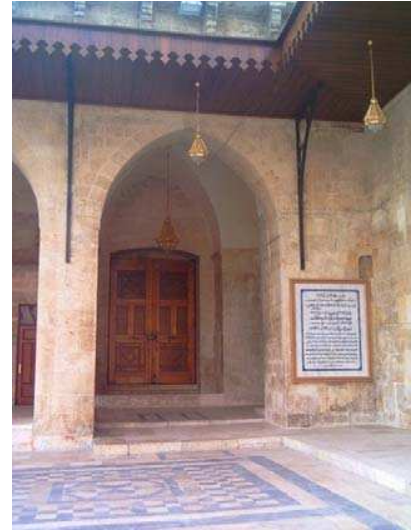


Figure 18 The western gate (Rami 2007).

The Courtyard

The courtyard (Figure 19) is a rectangular space ($80.73 \times 48.44_M$), paved with yellow and black polished stone tiles overlapping white marble tiles to form geometric shapes. The courtyard's ground (Figure 20) was paved in 1042AH/1632AD after the previous one was destroyed²³.

²³ - Same as last entry, Page: 25.



Figure 5 The courtyard (Rami 2010).



Figure 20. The courtyard's ground (Rami 2007).

The Ablution Domes

The courtyard has two ablution domes, a big one and a small one (Figure 21, 22). The big one consists of a hexagonal basin with six polished, yellow limestone pillars supporting a lead dome on top. The small dome consists of a twelve-sided basin surrounded by six pillars also supporting a lead dome²⁴.



Figure 21. The ablution domes (Rami 2007).



Figure 22. The ablution domes (Rami 2007).

The Sundials

There are two sundials in the courtyard; the horizontal and vertical sundials.

The horizontal sundial

The horizontal disc (53_{cm} diameter) is made of white marble covered by a copper dome and sits on short stone pillar (Figure 23). It is a complicated sundial used to tell the time and make

astronomical calculations. It was designed and made by Abd Al-Hamed Dadah Bin Hasan Al-Biramin 1297AH/1881AD as inscribed on the sundial's circumference²⁵.



Figure 23. The horizontal sundials (Rami 2007).

The vertical sundial

The vertical sundial is a rectangle of white marble and hangs on a pillar in northern arcade (Figure 24). It is simpler than the horizontal one, used to tell the time by the shadow of nail²⁶.

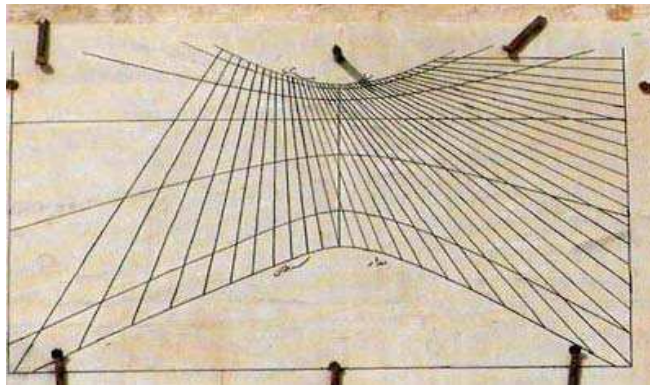


Figure 24. The vertical sundials (Rami 2007).

The Arcades

The courtyard is surrounded by three arcades on the west, east and north sides.

The Northern Arcade

The northern arcade is located on northern side of the courtyard and contains double corridors with 13 pointed arches looking out to the courtyard (Figure 25). The arcades are formed by

²⁵- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. *The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo*. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page:27-28.

²⁶- The Engineering Office. 1999. *Study project to rehabilitate the Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo*. Aleppo. Aleppo University. Page: 34.

huge pillars roofed by cross vaults (Figure 26). This arcade contains the northern gate which is considered the main gate of the mosque²⁷.



Figure 25. The northern arcade (Rami 2007).



Figure 26. cross vaults (Rami 2007).

The Western Arcade

The western arcade is located on western side of the courtyard and consists of ten pointed arches (Figure 27), roofed with cross vaults (Figure 28). The first arch from the north is western gate. This arcade was rebuilt by Jameel Pasha Alderman of Aleppo in 1300AH/1883AD²⁸.



Figure 27. The western arcade (Rami 2007).



Figure 28. cross vaults (Rami 2007).

²⁷- Same as last entry, Page:35.

²⁸- Same as last entry, Page:36.



Figure 29. The eastern arcade (Rami 2007).



Figure 30. The minaret (Rami 2010).

The Eastern Arcade

The eastern arcade is located on eastern side of the courtyard roofed with cross vaults (Figure 29), consisting of double corridors and seven pointed arches looking out to the courtyard. The first arch from the north is the eastern gate²⁹.

The Minaret

The minaret was built during the early Islamic period. It is located in the northwestern corner of the courtyard and reaches five levels above the arcade's roof (Figure 30). Between each level there is a cornice and an inscription. The second, fourth, and fifth levels are decorated with trefoils and multi-lobed arches. The terrace above the fifth level is decorated with Muqarnas and roofed with a wooden sunshade topped by a small dome and a crescent moon³⁰.

²⁹ - Same as last entry, Page:38.

³⁰ - Same as last entry, Page:50.

The minaret is the oldest structure of the Umayyad mosque and has survived nine centuries, "but it isn't the original one built by the Umayyad caliph SulaymanibnAbd al-Malik because it has gone through several disasters" (Abu Zar, Golden Treasures of Aleppo History).

The minaret has five inscription panels in the foliate Kofi font and in the middle there is an inscription panel in the Thuluth font with floral motifs. It is a square minaret in the style of the minarets from the Umayyad dynasty to the end of Ayyubid dynasty. The minaret's height is 45M, reaches the porch's floor, has 174 stairs, and the length of its rib is the same from base to top (4.95M). The minaret was built by stones connected by iron clamps and molten lead, allowing it to exist from 1089AD to 2012AD, through earthquakes, wars, fires, and crises³¹. From *Biography of the Zangid(vol1, page32)*"In 482AH/1089AD *AqSunqur*, the ruler of Aleppo ordered that minaret which was destroyed be rebuilt and that his name be inscribed on the minaret". Many references mention this event but the minaret's inscription actually states the year 483AH/1090AD. Therefore, the order to rebuild was in 482AH/1089AD, but the reconstruction didn't start until 483AH/1090AD. As for the minaret's completion, the references never mention the date but the minaret's inscriptions include some of the rulers' names from which the dates can be determined.

The Inscriptions Panels And The Date Analysis Of Minaret

In 1999, the Engineering Office of Aleppo University documented the minaret's facades and their corresponding seven inscriptions (they drew all the facades and sections of the minaret by AutoCAD and Photogrammetry). Also there are two previous documentations of the minaret and its inscriptions; the first, by Ernst Herzfeld in 1938 and the second, by Mohammed Kamel Fares in 1995.

The first level has three inscriptions (Figure 32), the upper one written in the Kofi font, and includes one of the names of the rulers (Figure 31, 1/C):

*In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. The minaret was rebuilt during the rule of Maoulana/ Alsultan Shan Nshah the greatest master of nations, leader of Arabs and Ajam, The Sultan/ God's land, supporter Islam and Muslims, **Muizz ad-Dunyawa ad-Din Jalal ad-Dawlah/ AbiAlfteh Malik-Shah ibn Muhammad**, the right of hand leader of the faithful the victorious.*³²

The lower inscription, also written in the Kofi font, includes two names of rulers (Figure 31, 1/B):

*The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah³³/ it was established by the **judge IbnAlkhishab Muhammad Bin Muhammad Alkhishab** may Allah have mercy on him/ in days of AlaminAlagelAlmozafer **Qasim ad-Dawla W NasirAlmelh Abu Said AqSunqur** deputy of leader of the faithful the victorious with his Supporters.*³⁴

Under these two inscriptions is the seal of builder of the minaret with the year they began construction (Figure 31, 1/A):

*Hasan bin MufrehAlsirmani made it in **483AH** [1090AD]*³⁵

³¹- Same as last entry, Page:51.

³²- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar AlqalamAlarabi. Page:33

³³- The Quran, chapter: At-Tawbah, Verse: 18

³⁴- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar AlqalamAlarabi. Page:33

³⁵- Same as last entry.

The second level has one inscription panel and was also written in the Kofī font but does not include any names of the rulers (Figure 31, 2):

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. And show us our rites and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful" 36. And peace be upon Mohammed and his immaculate family. 37

The third level has one inscription panel (Figure 33) written in the Thuluth font but does not include the names of any ruler (Figure 31, 3):

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]./ O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him 38. May Allah blessing upon Mohammed Almostfa, Ali Almourtada/, Fatima Alzahraa, Alhasan, Alhousien, Ali, Mohammed, Jafer, Mousa, Ali/ Alreda, Mohammed, Ali, Alhasan and AlhoujahAlqaem. May Allah raise their positions and merciful them. 39

The fourth level has an inscription panel written in the Kofī font and also does not include the names of any rulers (Figure 31, 4):

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger/ and those who have believed - those who establish prayer/ and give zakah, and they bow [in worship]. And whoever is an ally/ of Allah and His Messenger and those who have believed - indeed, the party of Allah 40,41

The fifth level has one inscription panel written in the Kofī font and includes the name of one ruler (Figure 31, 5):

*In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. Allah who blessed is witnessed the completion of this construction during the ruling of Al Sultan Almouazem Shahn Shah Alazeem **Taj ad-Dawlah Alqahira W Said Aluma Albahira Abu Sa'id Tutush Bin Mohammed Naseer**, the leader of the faithful. 42*

³⁶- The Quran, chapter: Al-Baqarah, Verse: 127-128

³⁷- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page:34

³⁸- The Quran, chapter: Al-'Ahzab, Verse: 56

³⁹- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page:35.

⁴⁰- The Quran, chapter: Al-Mā'idah, Verse: 55-56

⁴¹- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page:35.

⁴²- Fares, Mohammed Kamel. 1995. The Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo. Aleppo. Dar Alqalam Alarabi. Page:36.

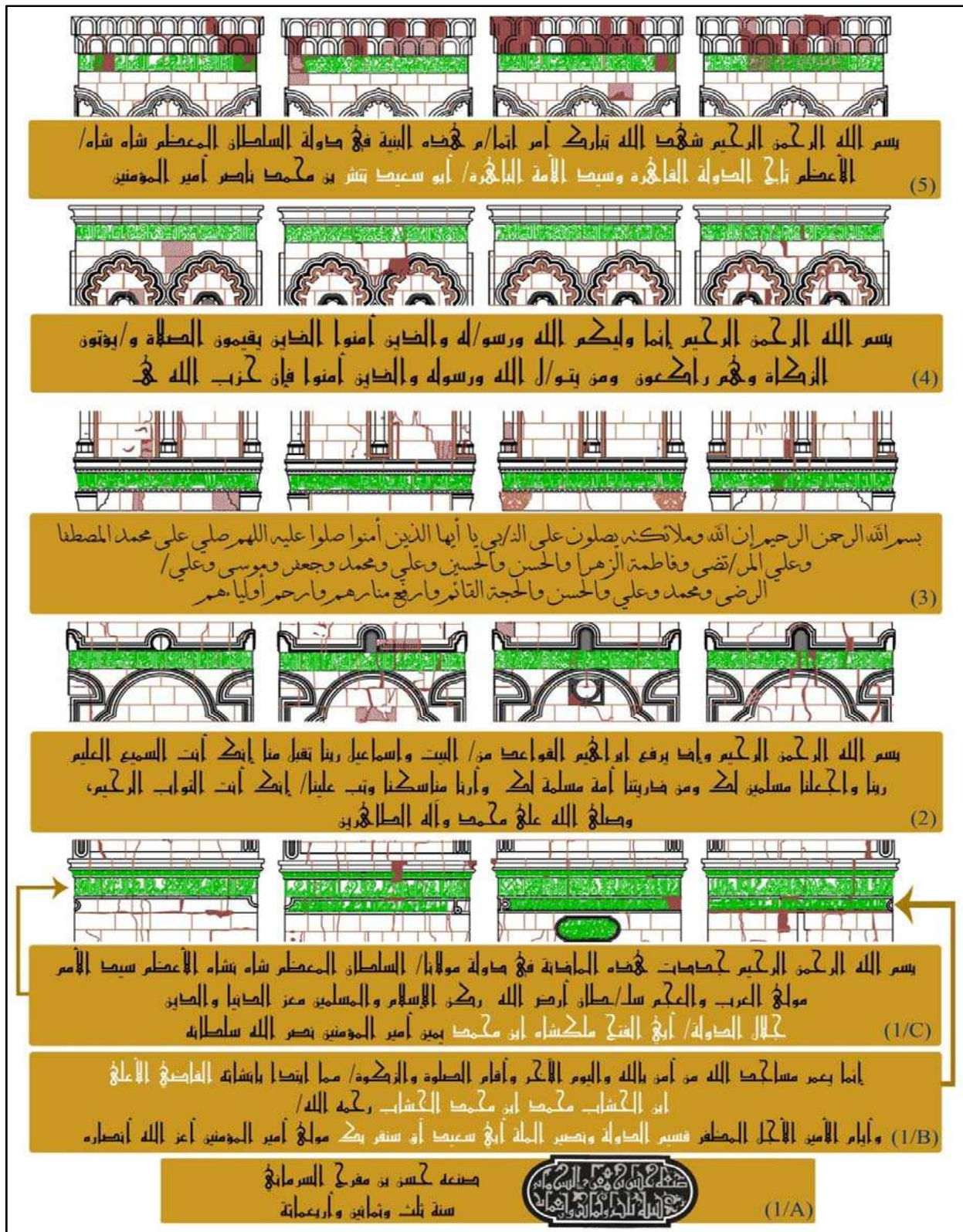


Figure 31 Analyzing the inscriptions depends on the documentation of Aleppo University, Ernst Herzfeld, and Mohammed Kamel Fares (Rami).

The analysis of the inscription panels reveals the names of four rulers and one builder. Subsequently, from these names it can be determined how long it took to build the minaret. Listed below are names of these four rulers:

- The judge IbnAlkhishab Muhammad Bin Muhammad Alkhishab
- Qasim ad-Dawla Abu Said AqSunqur
- Jalal ad-DawlahHasan Malik-Shah ibn Muhammad
- Abu Sa'idTaj ad-DawlaTutush I

The judge IbnAlkhishabMuhammad Bin Muhammad Alkhishab: He was the judge of Aleppo during the ruling of Qasimad-DawlaAqSunqur who chose him to be the construction supervisor of the minaret in 482AH/1089AD⁴³.

In 513AH/1119AD IbnAlkhishab became very famous for his great efforts to protect the city when the crusaders attacked Aleppo⁴⁴. The references did not mention when the judge IbnAlkhishab died, but his name was mentioned after the death of Qasim ad-DawlaAqSunqur.

Qasim ad-Dawla Abu Said AqSunqur: He was the ruler of Aleppo beginning in 479AH/1086AD by the order of Sultan Jalal ad-Dawlah Malik-Shah⁴⁵. After Malik-Shah died AqSunqur formed an alliance with Barkiyaruq the son of Malik-Shah to fight against Taj ad-DawlaTutush⁴⁶. During a battle in 487AH/1094AD Taj ad-DawlaTutush killed AqSunqur and became the ruler of Aleppo⁴⁷.

Jalal ad-DawlahHasan Malik-Shah ibn Muhammad: He belonged to the Seljuk dynasty that ruled Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia Eyalet from 447AH/1055AD to 552AH/1157AD⁴⁸. He was the third Seljuk Sultan until he was succeeded by his father in 465AH/1072AD when he died in 485AH/1092AD.⁴⁹ After his death the state was divided between his son Mahmud in Anatolia Eyalet and his brother Taj ad-DawlaTutush in Syria⁵⁰.

Abu Sa'idTaj ad-DawlaTutush I: He was the brother of Seljuk Sultan Jalal ad-Dawlah Malik-Shah and the ruler of Damascus. When he took Aleppo by killing AqSunqur in 487AH/1094AD he became the Seljuk Sultan of Syria⁵¹. In the same year Taj ad-DawlaTutush was killed by Barkiyaruq, the son of Malik-Shah, while trying to take the authority for himself⁵².

Hasan bin MufrehAlsirmani: He was the builder of the minaret starting construction in 483AH/1090AD as that mentioned in his imprint on the minaret.

⁴³- Biography of the Zangid, vol1, page32.

⁴⁴- Salabey, Ali Mohammed. 2006. Seljuk. Cairo. Iqraa. Page: 330.

⁴⁵-AbiGradeh, Kamal Adien. 1997. ZubdehAlhaleeb in the history of Aleppo.S.Zakar (Investigator).Damascus. Dar AlkeetabAlarabi. Vol: 1. Page: 67.

⁴⁶-IbnAlaadem, Kamal Aldien.1988. In Order To Demand In History OfAleppo.S.Zakar (Investigator).Beirut. Dar Alfker. Vol: 2. Page:234.

⁴⁷-Alzahbi, Abu Abed Allah.1996. Biography of Nobles.Arnaout, Shoaib (Investigator). Beirut. Alresalh.Vol: 19. Page:399.

⁴⁸- Al-Babtain Foundation, Timeline of Muslim rulers, Saudi Arabia.

⁴⁹-Alzahbi, Abu Abed Allah.1996. Biography of Nobles.Arnaout, Shoaib (Investigator). Beirut. Alresalh.Vol: 9. Page:85.

⁵⁰- same as last entry. Vol: 19. Page:400.

⁵¹- IbnAlaadem, Kamal Aldien.1988. In Order To Demand In History OfAleppo.S.Zakar (Investigator).Beirut. Dar Alfker. Vol: 2. Page:234.

⁵²- Alzahbi, Abu Abed Allah.1996. Biography of Nobles.Arnaout, Shoaib (Investigator). Beirut. Alresalh.Vol: 19. Page:400.

In summary, Malik-Shah was the Seljuk Sultan of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia Eyalet. He made Qasim ad-Dawla AqSunqur the ruler of Aleppo who ordered the judge Ibn Alkhashab to rebuild the minaret in 483AH/1090AD. Two years later Malik-Shah died in 485AH/1092AD and was succeeded by his brother Taj ad-Dawla Tutush. AqSunqur continued the construction of the minaret and in 487AH/1094AD was killed by Taj ad-Dawla Tutush who became the ruler of Aleppo. In that same year Taj ad-Dawla Tutush was killed by Barkiyaruq, the son of Malik-Shah.

The name of Taj ad-Dawla Tutush, who ruled Aleppo for almost one year in 487AH/1094AD, was mentioned in the last inscription panel of minaret when the construction is completed, thus proving that the minaret was completed in 487AH/1094AD and that the entire construction took 5 years (from 483AH/1090AD to 487AH/1094AD).



Figure 32. The inscriptions of the first level (Rami 2010).



Figure 33. The inscription of the third level (Rami 2010).

Disasters And Restorations Through The Ages

*Gold River in History of Aleppo*⁵³ mentions many disasters that have impacted the Umayyad Mosque through the ages. It also mentions the restorations, as summarized in the table below:

DATE		SABOTEUR	DAMAGE	RESTORER	DATE	
AH	AD				AH	AD
2 th century	8 th century	Abbasid	The decoration elements were stolen and taken to the Alanbar mosque			
351	962	Nikephoros II Phokas	Burned and destroyed	Sayf Al-Dawla Al-hamdani, his son Saad Al-Dawla and Qaraaweh	351-354	962-965
564	1169	Assassin & Earthquake	Burned	Nour Al-dien Zanki	564	1169
575	1179	Earthquake	The minaret became cracked			
				Alzaher Gazison Saladin Alyoubi	582	1186
658	1260	Tatars (Hulagu Khan) & Ruler of Sis (Qouzan, Adana Province, Turkey)	Burned	Nour Aldien Yousef bin abi Baker Alsilmasi Alsoufi	658	1260
679	1280	Ruler of Sis (Qouzan, Adana Province, Turkey)	Burned	Qrasenker Aljoukndar during the rule of Saif Aldien Qallown Alalfi Alalani Alsalhi	679-684	1280-1285
824	1421		Western arcade fell down	Alderman: Yashbik Al-yousfi	824	1421
			Prayer hall façade was restored	Sultan Murad Khan/Khsrou Pasha	1039	1630
			Prayer hall	volunteers	1110	1698
			Zechariah's shrine was restored	volunteers	1120	1708
				Osman Pasha	1152	1739
				Volunteers (Pray hall)	1170	1757
1237	1822	Earthquake	Southern façade of northern arcade was destroyed	Ahmed Bek Ibrahim Pasha Qataragasi	1237	1822
			Eastern arcade and small ablution domes were restored	Abed Alhamied Khan II/Housien Jamel Pasha	1302	1885
			Comprehensive restoration and renovation project for the foundation and construction	Syrian Government	1420-1427	1999-2006

1433	2012	Internal Syrian war	A lot of sections were burned and the minaret was completely destroyed			
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The Restoration And Renovation Project (1999-2006)

In the nineties, the mosque has been affected by time and other activities surrounding it. One of the biggest problems was the car wash located on the north side of the mosque. The water from this business seeped under the mosque's construction affecting its foundation and ultimately resulted in the leaning of the minaret (93CM toward the northwest).

In November 1999, in an effort to stop these harmful effects, the Military Constructions Foundation implemented a project to restore and renovate the Umayyad mosque by specialist committee. Before executing this tremendous project the Engineering Office of Aleppo University studied the condition of the mosque and made architectural plans with complete descriptions of the all its parts (documenting it with Photogrammetry). In 2006 the project was completed.

The objective of this project was to assess the situation of the mosque (its pillars, walls, foundation, minaret, etc.) and repair it (Figure 34, 35). The greatest challenge was the leaning of the minaret. After studying and consulting they decided to consolidate the foundation and renovate the minaret to prevent leaning in the future. The minaret was reinforced using horizontal and vertical steel links inside the walls and the walls' interior surface were further strengthened with the application of wide aramid and epoxy tape (Figure 36).

The restoration of the Umayyad mosque was not solely for purpose of restoring an important monument, but also for the sake of religious functionality. Therefore, additional facilities and decorations were added, fulfilling international policy for historical restoration (Figure 37).



Figure 34 The restoration of the ground (Restoration committee 2002).



Figure 35The restoration of pillars, walls, and cross vaults (Restoration committee 2002).

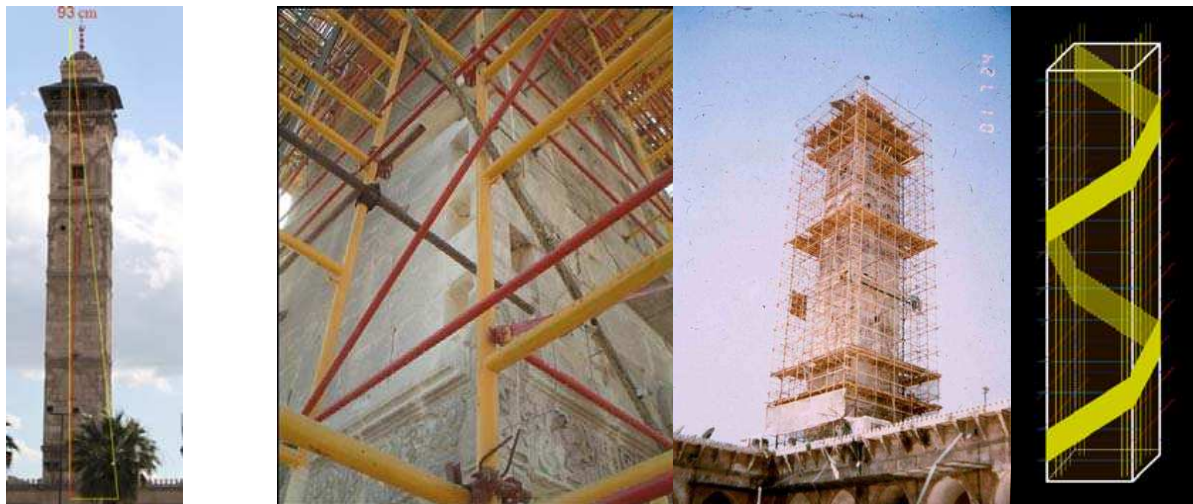


Figure 36The restoration of minaret (Restoration committee 2002).



Figure 37The mosque after restoration and renovation (Rami 2010).

The Last Destruction (2012)

On 13 October 2012 the mosque was seriously damaged during clashes between the armed groups of the Free Syrian Army and the Syrian Army forces during Syria's ongoing internal war. The mosque was seized by rebel forces in early 2013, and, as of April 2013, has been within an area of heavy fighting with government forces stationed 200 meters from the mosque. On 24 April 2013 the minaret of the mosque was reduced to rubble during an exchange of heavy weapons fire between government forces and rebels⁵⁴. The photos and videos from several local and international websites⁵⁵ show the damages of Umayyad mosque:

1. The biggest loss of Umayyad mosque is the minaret, it is completely destroyed (Figure 38).
2. Many wooden doors burned (Figure 39, 40).
3. Many parts of arcades are burned (Figure 41, 43).
4. The main prayer hall is damaged and burned (Figure 44-48).
5. North gate (main gate) is destroyed
6. South gate (for main prayer hall) is destroyed (Figure 49).
7. Alhijaziha (women prayer hall) is destroyed.
8. The door of wooden minber is lost (Figure 50).
9. The eastern floor of courtyard is uprooted.

These exclusive pictures for this research were taken by photographer Peyman Hasan in January 2014:

⁵⁴ - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Mosque_of_Aleppo

⁵⁵ - for more videos and photos check: <http://www.apsa2011.com/index.php/en/provinces/aleppo/great-umayyad-mosque.html>



Figure 38. The courtyard with rubbles of minaret (2014).



Figure 39. The courtyard (2014).



Figure 40. The façade of Prayer hall (2014).



Figure 41. The courtyard with western arcade (2014).



Figure 42. The ablution domes (2014).



Figure 43. The northern Arcade (2014).



Figure 44. The Prayer hall (2014).



Figure 45. The Prayer hall (2014).



Figure 46. The prophet's room (2014).



Figure 47. The prayer hall (2014).



Figure 48. The shrine inside prophet's room (2014).



Figure 49 The southern gate (APSA 2013)



Figure 50 The minber (Al Jazeera 21 March 2013)

Protection Efforts To Protect The Umayyad Mosque

- UNESCO: Aleppo old city is one of the six Syrian sites recorded by UNESCO in the world heritage list since 1986. Though UNESCO has intended to protect Syrian heritage the only results are reports and theoretical projects. The last meeting by UNESCO in 29 August 2013, "Stop the destruction!", the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, called on all parties involved in Syria's conflict to safeguard the country's cultural heritage and take all possible measures to avoid further destruction.
- The Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA) has started a Facebook page, YouTube and a website in order to facilitate browsing and list a greater number of news items. It publishes news about the current threats and damages to Syrian archaeological and historical heritage sites. It is also designed to alert the scientific community and international authorities, either cultural or political.
- Syrian Association for Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage is a Syrian civil society foundation. This independent, non-profit organization includes a variety of support resolutions to protect their heritage and monuments. This association is the most active one for protecting the heritage and monuments, especially in old Aleppo city. They have implemented several projects in Umayyad Mosque:
 1. Disassembled and transferred minber to safe place in 19 September 2013 (Figure 51).
 2. Covered the shrine of Prophet Zechariah, niche, and the door of orator in the prayer hall (Figure 52).
 3. Covered the unique sundial in the courtyard.



Figure 51. Disassembled the minber.



Figure 52. Covered the shrine and niche.

The Future Of Umayyad Mosque

The efforts of restoration and renovation cannot succeed if the fighting does not stop. However, some of the efforts have been done even in dangerous situations. In the meantime a plan for restoration and renovation can be prepared. This requires doing the following:

1. Approximate monitoring for all the physical, social, and economic damages to estimate the cost of the restoration and renovation.
2. Determine who will finance this project and how much funding will be needed
3. Find competent consultants and experts who will participate.
4. Learn from the previous local and global experiences.
 - Suggested below are actions for restoration and renovation:
 1. Preserve of the rubble and ruins of the ancient buildings, deport and clean all the debris that hinders movement.
 2. Activate media campaigns in Syria and out of Syria.
 3. Invite all the local and international institutions to visit and view the project's progress.
 4. Repair the infrastructure.
 5. Involve the community with governmental authority to secure and protect the population and their activities.
 6. Sort and classify the minaret stones, choosing the ones suited for rebuilding (with the same original stones if possible).
 7. Utilize documented resources. Fortunately, there is a comprehensive document of the mosque and particularly its minaret that can be used to restore the mosque and the minaret with all the motifs and inscriptions.

Conclusion

The Umayyad mosque in Aleppo is an architectural masterpiece. It has been damaged several times through the ages, but it has recovered again and again. The last destruction is tragic and the loss is enormous. However, restoration and renovation can recover it (yet not entirely with its original elements). This will be a great responsibility for Syrians, to restore their heritage, something only Syria's inhabitants can fully appreciate.

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