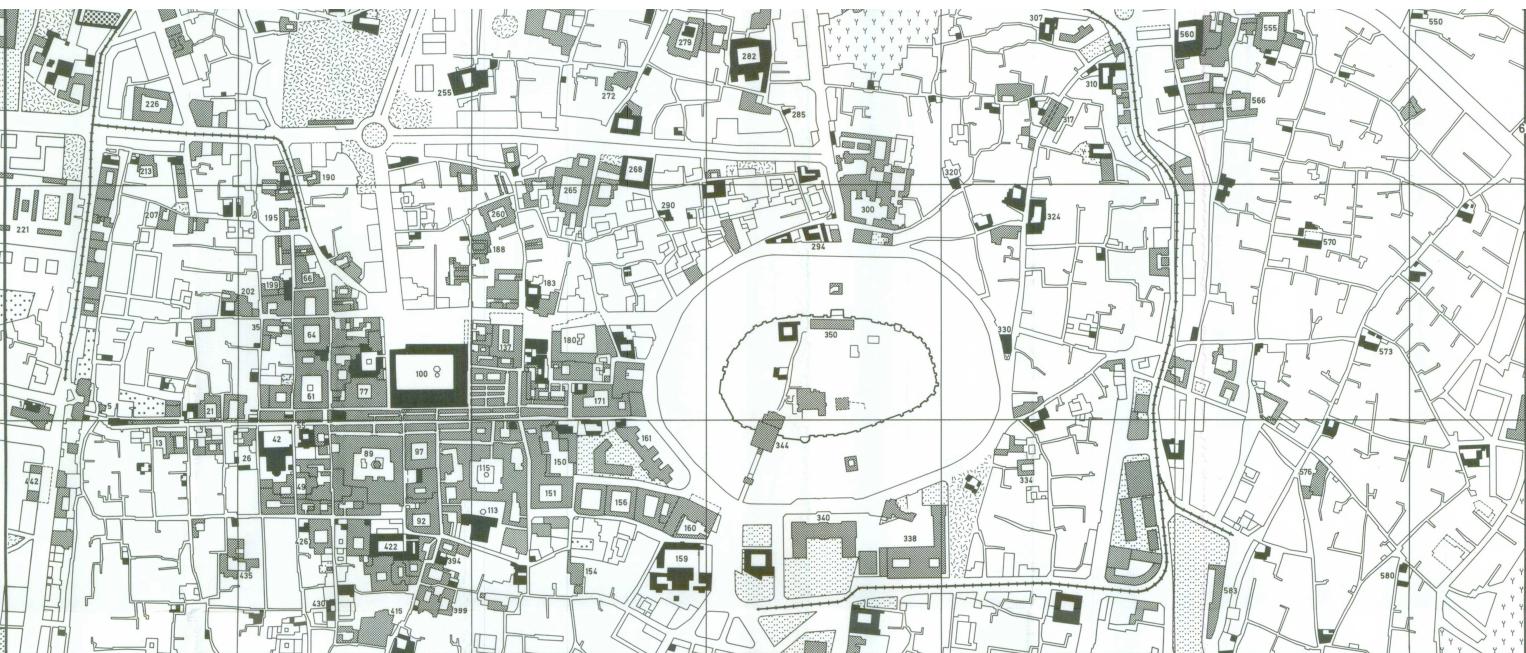


MA Architecture and Urbanism



Abstract

Aleppo, a city torn by civil war, was once Syria's largest economic and trade centre, with a rich history dating back to the Bronze Age. It had a unique urban fabric with traces that go back to the Hellenistic times.

Long before the war started, Aleppo, like any other city, had its problems: some fundamental changes took place in some of the Old City's fabric, including the destruction of buildings, and the development of tall new buildings and widening of some roads, as well as other challenges that faced the city like over population and informal growth.

So far no one knows the exact extent of the damage in the city, as fighting still goes on. Once the war stops it will be time to rebuild the city and therefore I will give a brief idea about Aleppo and how it was before the war, then look at ways to conserve what might be left of the city after the war ends and end with a number of recommendations for the future of the city.

A Future for Aleppo

Meisoon Jumah

MA Architecture and Urbanism

Manchester School of Architecture

2014

For Aleppo...

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Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Eamonn Canniffe for his great support and guidance. This project would not be possible without his constant encouragement and advice. Thank you

Thank you my family for your patience

Thank you to all my friends for sharing your knowledge and helping out throughout the year



Figure 1

The Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo before and after the war

Introduction

Now

The shadow of destruction and death is looming over Aleppo. Major monuments and historical areas have been destroyed, lots of lives lost and many people displaced by a civil war that started in Syria on the 15th of March 2011.

Knowing that nothing there is still the same as it was before the current conflict leaves me in pain and agony beyond description. It saddens me hear or watch what is happening, so the least that I can do is choose to research Aleppo as my dissertation topic. However, hope always remains for a peaceful ending to the current situation in Syria, and for that I would like to keep alive the memories and document Aleppo as it used to be, a documentation that might be useful for the reconstruction of Aleppo and rebuilding of a city that has so far never died...An immortal city.

Then

Aleppo (Halab in Arabic) is an ancient city in the north of Syria and one of the longest continuously inhabited cities in the world; it is also Syria's second largest city. A prominent metropolis, it was once one of the great urban centres of the Middle East and a centre of business and learning, as well as a renowned station of regional and East-West trade, pilgrimage trails, and caravan routes.

Aleppo was ruled by the Hittites, Assyrians, Akkadians, Greeks, Romans, Umayyads, Ayyubids, Mameluks and Ottomans who all left their influence on its urban fabric. Lots of the urban fabric in the Old City survived till recent days; today there are few examples of very well preserved historic cities such as Aleppo which led to it being declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986.

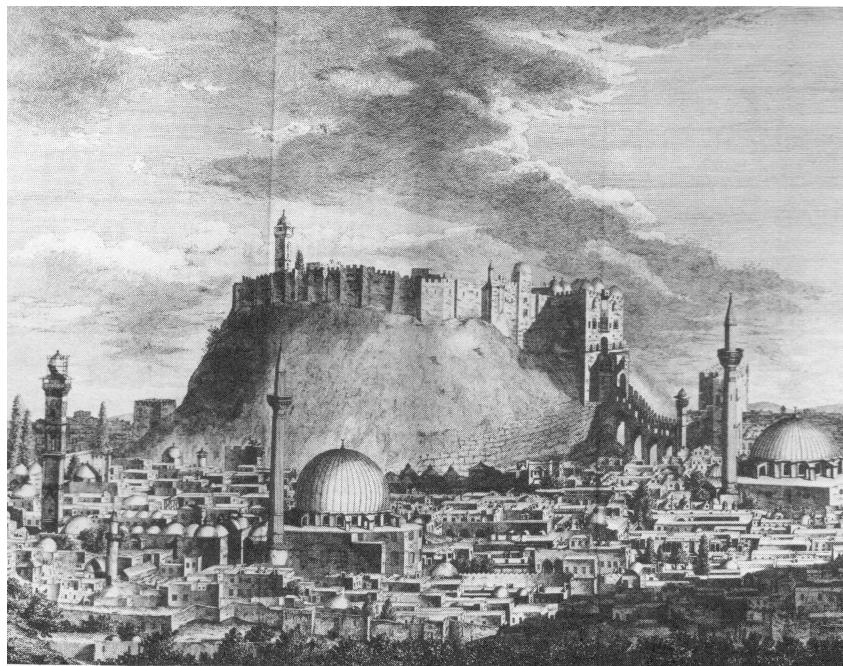


Figure 2
A View of Aleppo in the mid-eighteenth century

The day will come when one must part from you, city of Aleppo
It is most appropriate that there will be no joy then
For the truth is, beauty can be found here
In her well-built grandeur
There are all sorts of merchandise to be found here
The grace of wealth and goods is beyond counting
But more than this , her water and air are enchanting
as are her river and her buildings

Nâbî,eighteenth century Ottoman divani poet 1

1 Mene Mengi,Divan Siirinde Hikemi Tarzin Buyuk Temsilcisi, Nâbî, (Ankara,1987), p.24

Part One

Brief Description of the Urban Form of the Old City

Trade Routes

Historical Background

Becoming a World Heritage Site



22 Figure 3 Side view of the Citadel's entrance block and ramp



Brief Description of the Urban Form of the Old City

The city of Aleppo is located halfway between the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea in a fertile valley to the west of the plains of Northern Syria. A small river (Quwayq), which flows south from Taurus Mountain guaranteed a basic water supply to the city while a rocky mound on the east side of the river offered protection from attacks and raids. Its location in the northern part of Syria with its fertile land created welcoming conditions for a city that has thrived for thousands of years. Unlike Cairo, Aleppo is not a river city, nor an oasis city like Damascus. From early days its success as a city was based on a combination of topography, agriculture, trade and industry (Tabbaa: 1997).

Aleppo is dominated by its Citadel which rises above the Old City on a partly man-made elliptical hill base that is approximately 325 by 450 metres, with a slanting foundation, that rises to a height of about 50 metres above the surrounding city (Tabbaa: 1997).



Figure 4
Location of Syria

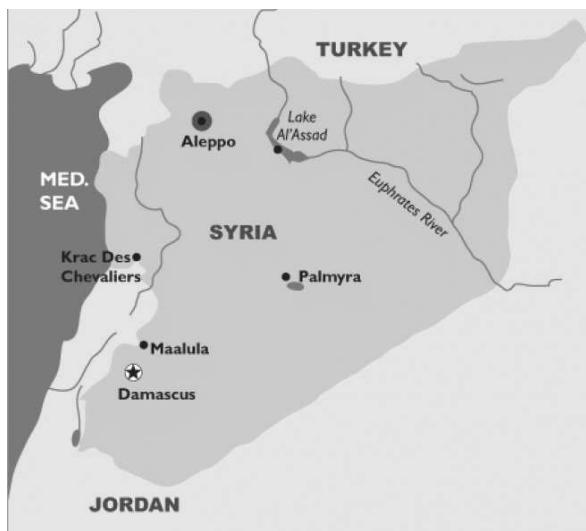


Figure 5
Location of Aleppo



Figure 6
Governorate of Aleppo

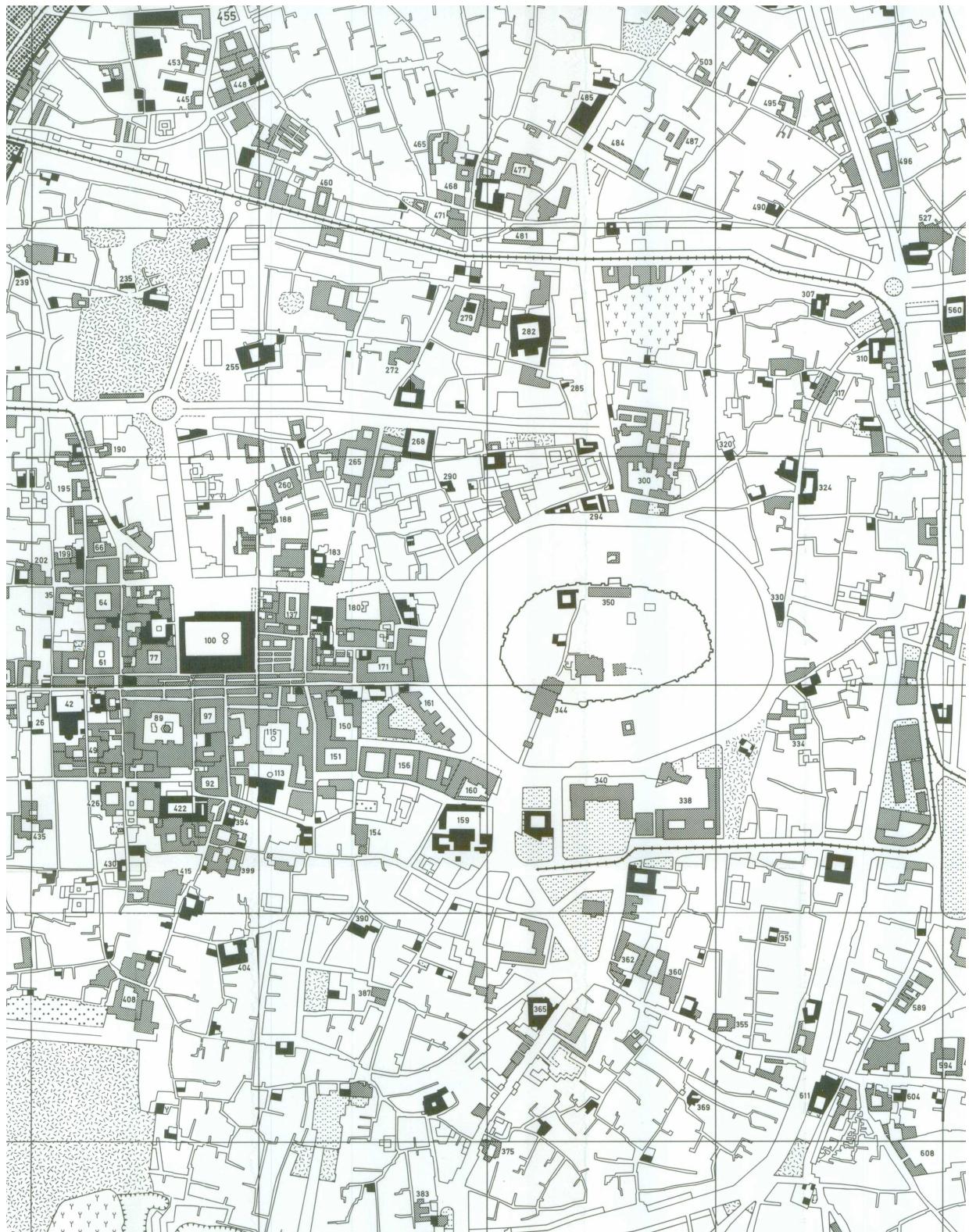


Figure 7
Plan of Old Aleppo

The old walled city beneath the citadel has kept many traces of the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods, which can be seen in the grid layout of the streets, which gradually transformed into a network of alleys in the Islamic period.

Aleppo has an almost intact historic urban fabric with its residential and commercial areas still inhabited. It has classical characteristics of a Middle Eastern city built in the Islamic tradition including an organic form; with minimum open public space; residential areas divided according to different tribes, clans, and religious groups; and hierarchies of narrow streets and cul-de-sacs. A typical residential quarter in Aleppo consists of a main street, with smaller streets leading to the quieter and more private residential cul-de-sacs. All economic activities once took place in the *souk* (Market), where shops were grouped according to crafts or goods that they sold.



Figure 8
Aerial view of Aleppo

The Old City occupies 400 hectares and is full of courtyard houses, *souk* (Market), mosques, churches, *madrasas* (schools) and tight passageways that limit the access of vehicular traffic; it is a dense urban fabric that evolved organically over many centuries in response to climate and society. The Medina is at the heart of the old city: it is a large covered-souk market established along the traditional east-west axis of the Hellenistic town, with the Umayyad mosque occupying the former Agora (Bianca 1989).

This commercial centre has a total length of approximately 750 metres, stretching from the Antioch Gate (Bab Antakya) to the foot of the Citadel and extending to a width of approximately 300 metres near the Great Mosque. Khans, usually double or triple floor structures with an open space were also integrated into the urban fabric behind the lines of shops which served as storage, wholesale, production and accommodation for travellers. They provided an essential backup for the shops. The residential districts are made of clusters of self-contained courtyard houses that share the exterior walls and wrap around dead-end alleyways and are flat roofed and built of stone.

The network of alleys are based on a sophisticated hierarchical system, gradually leading from public to private areas. Other buildings that are part of the urban form include mosques with their high rising minarets and courtyards, *Madrasas* (schools), *Maristans* (hospitals) and *Hammams* (so called Turkish baths) with their domes that were sometimes integrated into residential districts.

Aleppo is famous for the use of natural locally quarried stone in most of the city's houses, churches, mosques and markets. The use of stone in Aleppo created a unique city that differed architecturally from its closest rival Damascus (Bianca:2000).

Figure 9
Old City of Aleppo
Boundaries at 1986



N37 10 37.92



E37 10 50.88

E37 10 50.88

N36 12 44.64



Figure 10
The Silk Roads

Trade Routes

The strategic geographical location halfway between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates River marked Aleppo on a crossroads of several old trade and pilgrimage routes including the Silk Road linking Europe with Asia and the caravan route through the Levant to Africa.

The ‘Silk Road’, or “Seidenstrasse” as called by the German explorer and geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833–1905), was a network of routes both on land and water connecting East Asia with Europe; Aleppo was one of the cities along that route and silk was just one of many the commodities traded on it. The Silk Road went through phases of prosperity and decline and changes to its routes depending on the political situation in China and the West.

"Along the Silk Roads, technology traveled, ideas were exchanged, and friendship and understanding between East and West were experienced for the first time on a large scale. Easterners were exposed to Western ideas and life-styles, and Westerners too, learned about Eastern culture and its spirituality-oriented cosmology. Buddhism as an Eastern religion received international attention through the Silk Roads."

(Vadime Elisseeff:2000)

After Islamic rulers conquered Aleppo in 637 AD, Aleppo succeeded Antioch as the most important Western destination for Silk Road caravans. Aleppo was a major trading centre of caravan traffic trading soaps, silks, spices, precious metals, ceramics and textiles, and a powerful centre of urban culture (UNESCO.org). Aleppo's craftsmen made soap and silk and the quality of their work gained a regional reputation of excellence (Masters:1999)

After the Mongol control in 1260 trade was diverted from Aleppo to the north via Antioch and the south through Palmyra, and did not resume through Aleppo until the Mongol Empire broke up .

The Crusades did not affect commercial relations and Aleppo's importance as a point of exchange was increased. Commercial activities reached their peak in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: by then Aleppo was the third most important city in the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Cairo. It was during this period that the city started to grow beyond the old city's walls and new suburbs were added to it; such as Judayda on the north and Banqusa on the east (Gaube:2007)

Ottomans took over power and by this time Europe redirected the trade routes through sea routes to the East. Just after the seventeenth century commerce declined in the area after the gradual replacement of the traditional caravan routes with new sea connections and with that a slowing of the rate of urban development was seen. Aleppo never fully regained its major trading role in the area.

(Dumper : 2007)

Historical Background

Aleppo in the Early Bronze Age (c3100-2150 BC)

There is evidence of human presence in Aleppo since the third millennium B.C and It appeared by the name Halam in the archives of Mari on the Euphrates, and Ebla a city fifty-five kilometres south of Aleppo at the time. According to their archives the kings of Ebla restored the temple of the Storm God Haddad in Aleppo and made him offerings. The remains of a Bronze Age temple devoted to the Weather God Haddad were discovered during excavations beneath Aleppo's citadel. Led by the German Prof Kay Kohlmeyer in 1996. Lots of objects were uncovered, including 26 relief blocks with Neo Hittite characteristics like the Weather God clasping thunderbolts (Burney:2004). In the early Bronze Age the settlement in Aleppo was probably limited to the high ground where the temple was situated, a few religious buildings were added later around the temple and it became a pilgrimage destination (Kohlmeyer:2009).

Aleppo in the Middle Bronze Age (c2150-1600 BC)

During the Middle Bronze Age the Amorite Kingdom (Syria) was divided into a dozen major city-states that were in a state of military competition with each other. Aleppo was the capital of the Kingdom of Yamkhad and it was the strongest military power in the area at that time, with Mari the second. That was the first political and economic peak for Aleppo and a time of urban growth for the city. There is limited archaeological data that remains from this period because of wars on the ancient site, but there is enough to know that Aleppo, like other Middle Bronze Age city-states, was surrounded by a wall which had fortified gates and circular towers. There was also an inner citadel which is now the magnificent medieval Islamic citadel. It remained a powerful city for a century and a half until it was defeated and destroyed by the Hittites around 1600 BC (Hamblin: 2006).

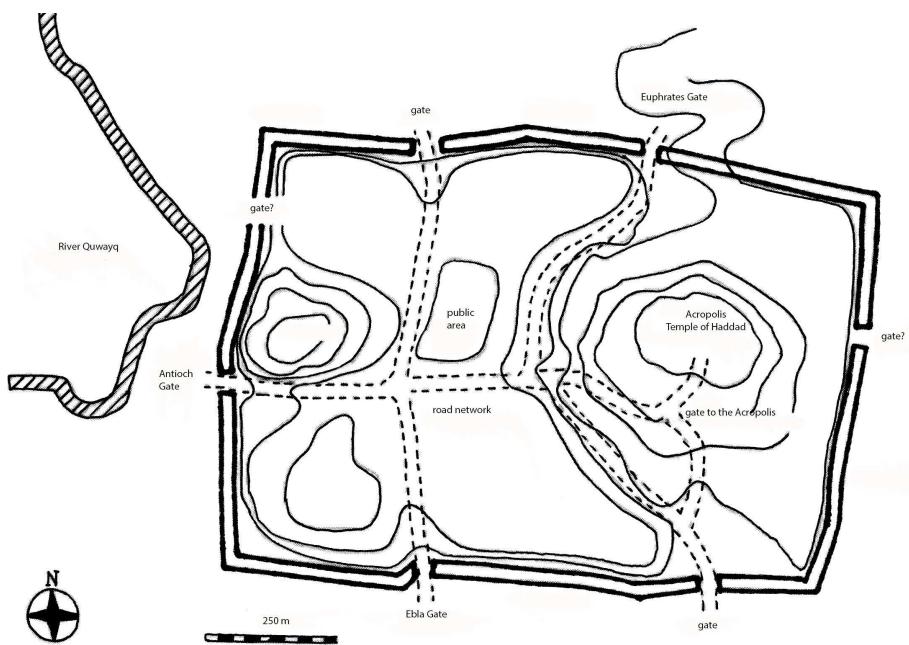


Figure 11
Reconstructed plan of the town of Aleppo during the Middle Bronze Age
(CA 2000-1600 B.C.)



Figure 12
A relief showing the Storm God with King Taita



Figure 13
The Storm God shouldering a pointed club

Aleppo in the Late Bronze Age (c1600-1200 BC)

The Hittites control was a major change of the power in the region and it eliminated Yamkhad political power, under the rule of Mursilis I (c 1620-1590 BC) who took Aleppo. When internal turmoil hit the Hittites, the neighbouring Hurrians formed the new state of Mitanni, a Hurri confederation that controlled northern Syria and much of Assyria after the collapse of the Amorite power in Mesopotamia. As means to strengthening their power, they created instability in Aleppo to stop it from going under the Hittites power again. That kept the Hittites preoccupied by a series of wars against Mitanni (Sicker:2000).

Aleppo in the Iron Age (1200-539 BC)

A number of local Aramaean states attempted to control Syria after the decline of Mitanni and the sudden fall of the Hittite Empire. None was strong enough to dominate, which made the area an easy target for Assyria, which was re-emerging as a major power. Aleppo became a part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, before coming under control of the Neo-Babylonians and the Achaemenid Persians (Sicker:2000).

Aleppo in the Persian Period (539-333 BC)

The Achaemenid Persians took much of Syria as they moved west and defeated the Neo-Babylonians and captured Babylon. Syria was made their fifth province beyond the river with its capital Damascus (Burns:2009).

The Achaemenid rule respected local traditions and had minimal impact on the history of Aleppo (Bianca:2007).

Aleppo in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods

After the battle of Issos in 333 BC, Alexander the Great, trying to expand his Mediterranean empire to the East, conquered the Persian Achaemenid empire including Aleppo. After his death in 323 BC Aleppo was ruled by Seleucus Nicator (312-280 BC) and that marked the start of Syria's Hellenistic age mixing Western with Eastern religious values.

The city of Aleppo was renamed "Beroea". It stayed part of the Seleucid Empire for 300 years and was an important trading city linking the Euphrates and Antioch. Under Nicator's rule the appearance of Aleppo, "Beroea", changed remarkably and part of the city was rebuilt following Hellenistic principles of planning, with a regular Hippodamean plan, and surrounded by a squarish wall with its eastern side intercepted at its exact middle by the citadel mound. This was an important point in the history of Aleppo, as that is when it formed its urban character which lasted for centuries to come.

(Tabbaa:1997)

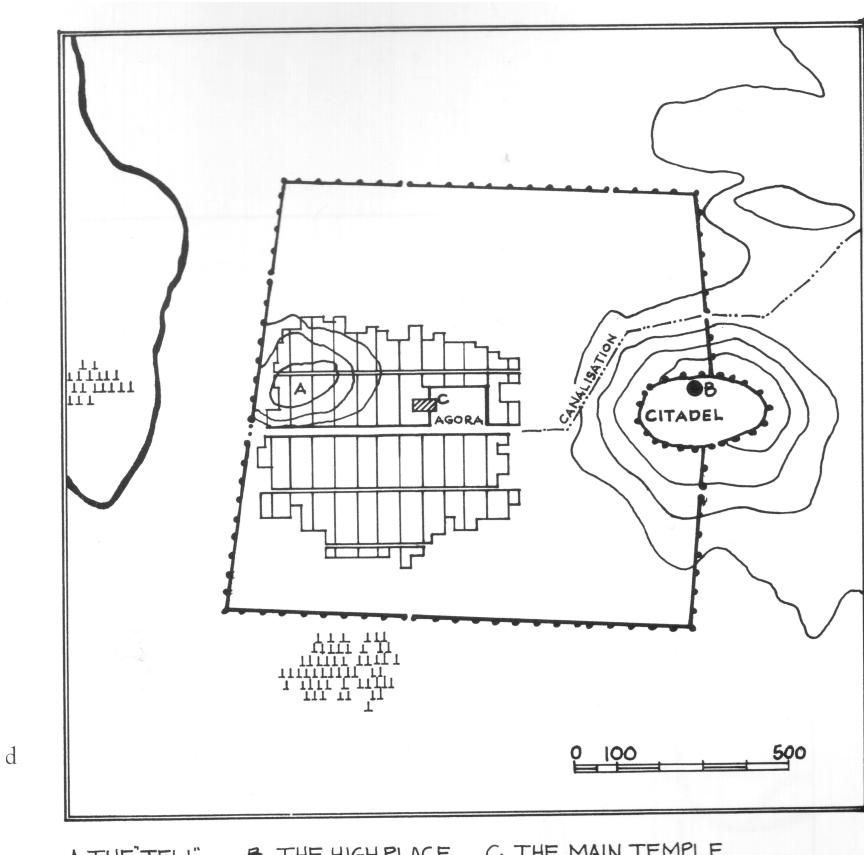


Figure 14
Roman Aleppo (Beroea) reconstructed plan

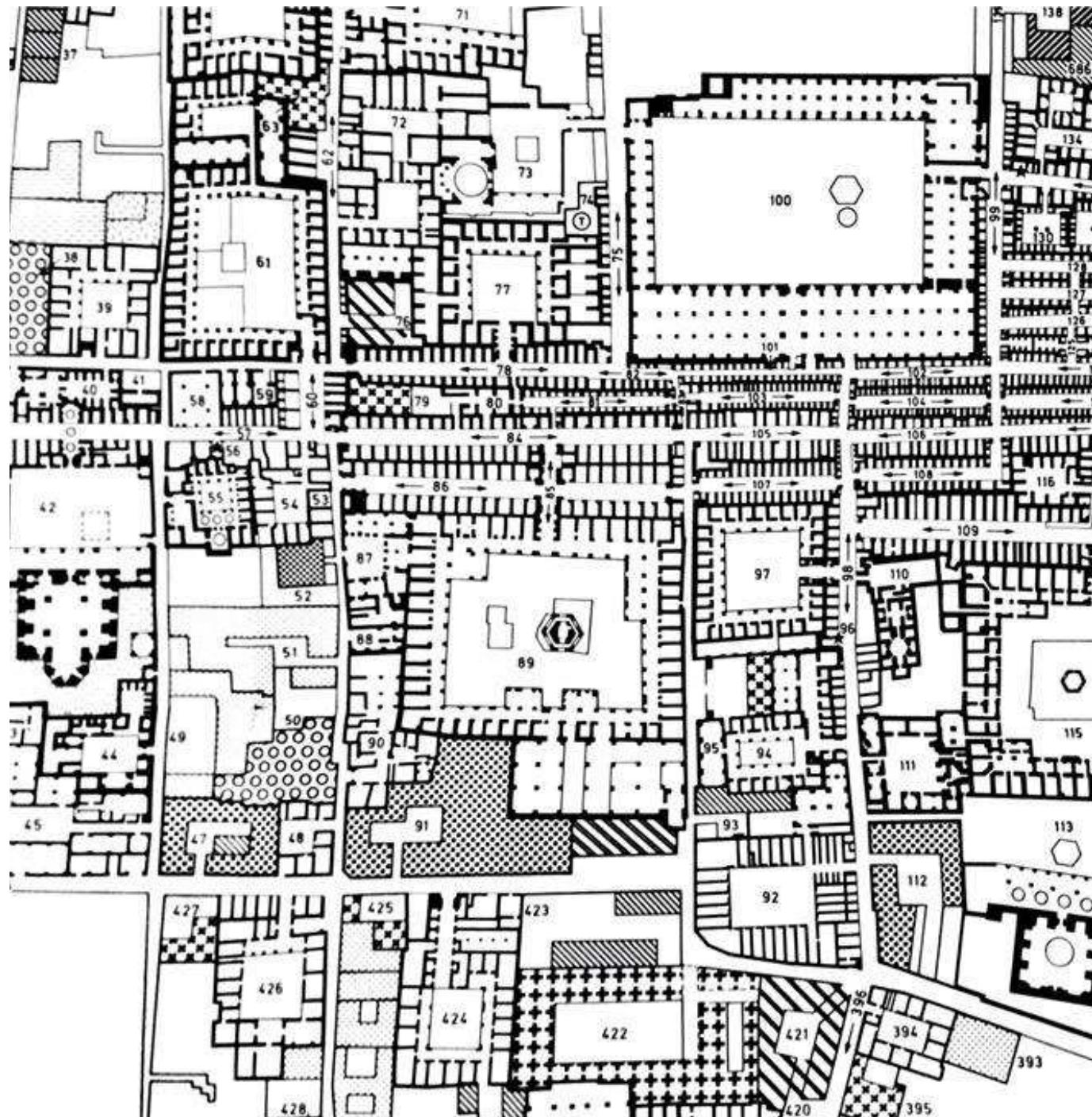
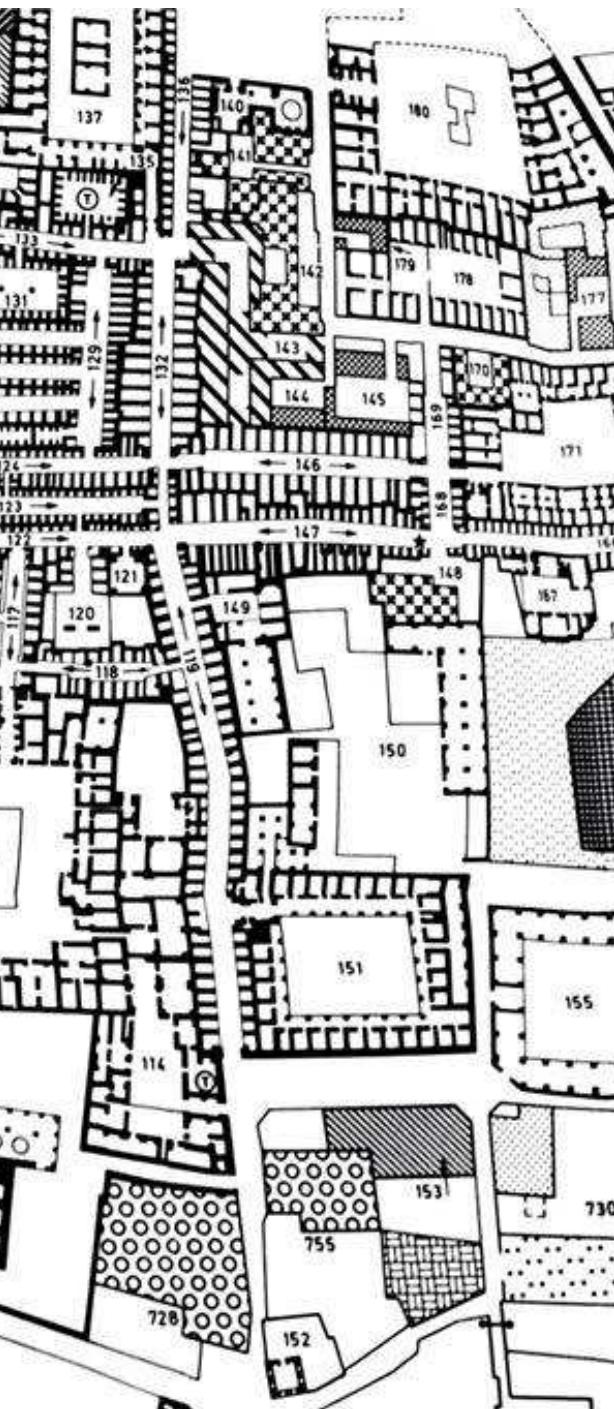


Figure 15
Part of Old Aleppo showing the Umayyad Mosque and the Souk



In 64 BC Aleppo became part of the Roman Empire after Pompey brought Syria under Roman domination, and when the Roman Empire was divided in 395 AD into Western and Eastern Empires Aleppo was part of the Eastern Roman Empire that was later known as the Byzantine Empire. Aleppo was overshadowed by Antioch during the Roman period, but it still benefited from general prosperity due to the long period of Roman rule. The Romans introduced the water system which served Aleppo until the early decades of the twentieth century .

The Hellenistic-Roman colonnaded street might have survived up to the end of the Roman Empire, then some structural changes within the city centre started to take place in the Byzantine period, when oriental concepts of urban form gradually replaced the former Hellenistic and Roman pattern (Tabbaa: 1997).

Roman market shops lining a colonnaded road → Time of Justinian → 7th century → Plan of the traditional souk as seen today in the Islamic old town

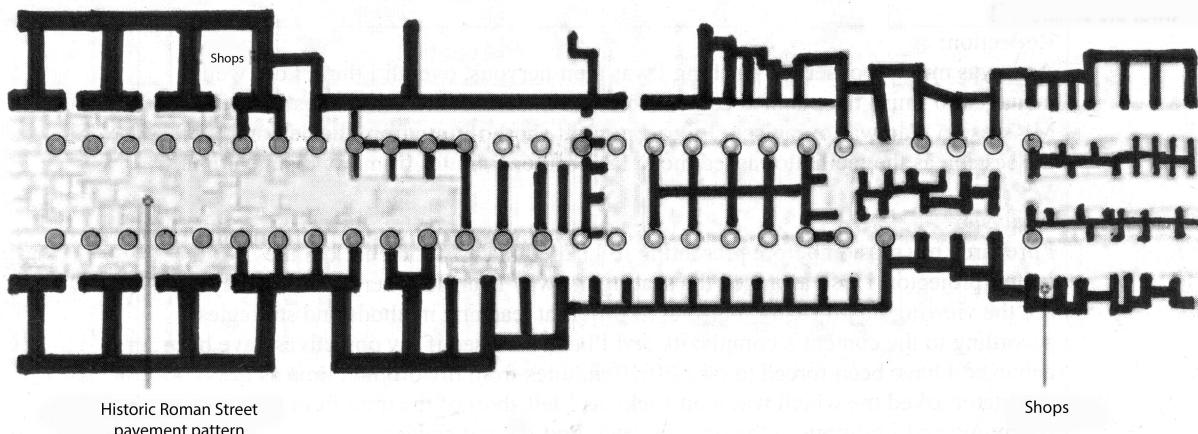


Figure 16
The progressive transformation of the colonnaded street in the *Souk*

Wide streets that were introduced in the Roman times to allow for large horse carriages were not part of the oriental tradition of urban form. Wide colonnaded streets were split into parallel narrow alleys, which are much more suitable to the oriental transportation habits such as camels and mules and much better adapted to the climate than the wide streets of the Hellenistic-Roman period. This process transformed the once 'Western' cities of Syria like Aleppo and returned them to what they had been in the pre-Hellenistic period: oriental cities with narrow winding lanes and cul-de-sacs. There are not enough written sources to determine which of these changes had already taken place in the later Byzantine period and which took place in early Islamic times. (Bianca, Gaube 2007)

Aleppo and its surrounding villages were destroyed and burned during the war between the Byzantine Empire and the Persians in 625 AD. Most of the residents fled to nearby safer areas. Aleppo's surrounding villages now are what is known as the Forgotten Cities and their ruins remain till the present time in Syria (Osman : 2009). The layout of the villages show the transition from the ancient atheistic world of the Roman Empire to Byzantine Christianity. The protective walls, hydraulic techniques and Roman agricultural plans also show the villages' inhabitants expertise in agricultural production (UNESCO.org).

Aleppo under Islamic Rule

In AD 637 Aleppo surrendered peacefully to the Muslims: the troops did not need to breach the walls of the city and Beroea was called Halab again. They signed an agreement that guaranteed the inhabitants' lives, processions and places of worship. They also built the first mosque in the west of Aleppo, where it was easily accessible to the Arab troops, who had set up camp outside the Bab Antakya Gate (Osman:2009). In 661 AD it was ruled by the Umayyads under the Umayyad dynasty, who built the Great Umayyad mosque of Aleppo which still serves as Aleppo's main place of worship; it was built on the site of the Hellenistic Agora and for some time it stayed next to the Christian cathedral that used to be to the west of it.

(Tabbaa:1997)

Aleppo was then ruled by the Abbasid dynasty, who shifted the region's political centre to the east with the founding of their new capital Baghdad, which led to a period of decline in the area. Neither the Umayyads nor the Abbasids were interested in the citadel and the wall of the city leaving them to deteriorate.



Figure 17

The Minaret of the Umayyad Mosque of Aleppo

In the tenth century the Hamadanids ruled Aleppo and until then, historical information about the city is minimal. This changed in the time of the Hamdanid ruler Sayf al-Dawla (944-967) AD. Aleppo was made an independent city and a capital for Sayf al-Dawla, attracting leading artists and intellectuals of his time to his court, as well as beautifying the city and building a large palace outside the city to the west. Wars with the Byzantines eventually led to his downfall and in 962 AD Aleppo was reconquered by the Byzantine Empire and heavily damaged. Nothing has remained of the Hamdanid architecture, not even Sayf al-Dawla's famous palace by the river.

(Bianca, Gaube 2007)

Aleppo was in its darkest times after the Byzantine invasion of 962 AD, which was followed by other Byzantine attacks, Bedouin raids and repeated assaults by the Fatimids. The Fatimids occupied Aleppo in 1015 AD, but that did not bring any stability because of the challenges by the Arab tribes with one of them, the Mirdasids, actually controlling Aleppo in the second and third quarter of the eleventh century. This period of instability heavily damaged the city's infrastructure, and the only architectural contribution that remains from that period is a single domed water fountain in the court yard of the Great Mosque. (Tabbaa:1997)

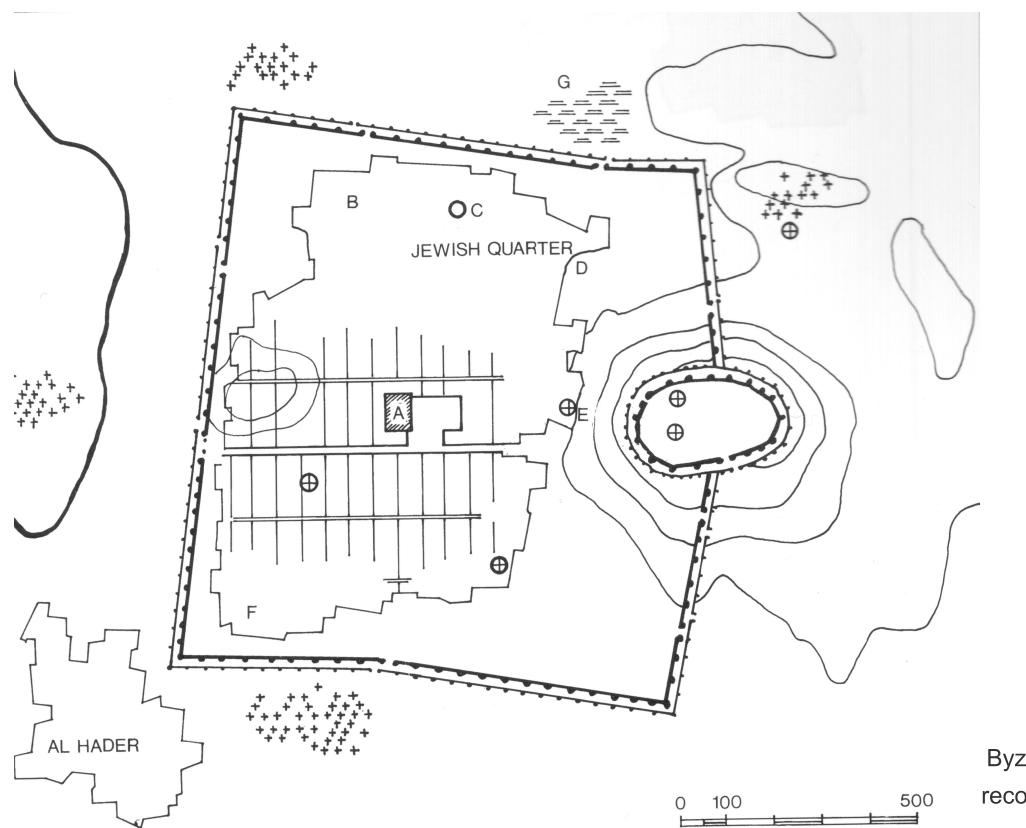


Figure 18
Byzantine Aleppo
reconstructed plan

Aleppo was conquered by the Seljuqs in 1078 AD and remained under their control for a little more than three decades (Tabbaa :1997). A lot of Islamic monuments from the Seljucq Dynasty survived including three tombs engraved with Islamic calligraphy, two of which can be found in the Aleppo national museum and the third is in Damascus national museum, along with the minaret of the Umayyad mosque of Aleppo. (Osman : 2009) With the downfall of the Seljuqs in 1113 AD Aleppo entered another critical period and was contested among various Turkish princes and plagued by the Crusaders until it was freed in 1129 AD by Imad al Din Zangi, a famous warrior against the Crusaders and his son Nur al Din. Aleppo could finally start repairing its damaged infrastructure and repopulating its abandoned quarters (Tabbaa :1997). The Zengids built lots of new schools and mosques in the city and enhanced the citadel's fortification, as well as adding a bath, a palace and a mosque to it. They also expanded the Great Mosque. The remains of the *Madrasa al-Muqaddamiya*, the *Madrasa al-Shuaibiya*, and the *Madrasa al-Hallawiya* can still be seen in Aleppo. The *Madrasa al-Hallawiya* is a former cathedral converted into a mosque (Osman :2009).

The revival of urban life in the Seljuc-Zangid period only focused on a small number of areas that were considered important for different religious, political or economic reasons. These areas were the Great Mosque, the *maqaam* (shrine) of Ibrahim outside the walls, and the citadel. The minaret of the great mosque was built during the late eleventh century making it the first important architectural monument in more than three centuries. In 1123, Ibn al Khashshab, who was controlling Aleppo during a chaotic period, ordered the conversion of the Byzantine cathedral near the great mosque into a mosque. Nur al Din also restored and expanded the Great Mosque as well as the markets surrounding it. Due to the importance of the *maqaam* Ibrahim, an area about one kilometre south of the wall with a shrine that was a pilgrims' destination long before Islamic times, it received attention from the Seljuqs and the Zangids and later the Ayyubids.

The area around the citadel was also important: the development of this area started during the days of Nur al Din who refortified it, rebuilt the shrine of Ibrahim within it and also built the royal palace. (Tabbaa:1997)

In the thirteenth century under Ayyubid rule Aleppo was one of the most beautiful and dynamic cities of the Middle East; it was the golden age for the city.

Ayyubid architectural achievements were focused on four areas: the water works, the citadel, the fortifications and developments outside of the gates. The Ayyubid ruler al-Malik al-Zahir Ghazi (1186-1216) strengthened Aleppo's citadel, which transformed it into one of the best fortified military bases in Syria. A deep moat was dug around the hill and filled with water. He also built a new entrance, which was defined by two massive rectangular towers and could only be reached over a multiple-arch bridge .

The citadel evolved into a palatial city with residential areas, mosque, bath, shrines, cisterns, an arsenal, military training grounds with defence towers and a large protected entrance gate.

The water network was greatly expanded, providing the streets with baths and fountains, which led to populating the suburbs and building lots of new shrines, mosques and *madrasas* throughout the city. Ayyubid architecture had a lasting impression on Aleppo and returned it to most of its splendour that was known during the Seleucids and the Romans. Sadly that did not last, and at the beginning of 1260 AD Aleppo was under Mongol attack. The Mongols lighted vast fires and killed a vast percentage of the population, which weakened Aleppo and left it struggling to regain its status, until the fifteenth century when Aleppo came under a long period of Mamluk rule. The Citadel was massively renovated during the Mamluk period. The most significant addition to the citadel was a grand ceremonial hall, which the Mamluk governor Jakam bin Iwad had built above the Ayyubid gate in 1406-1407 AD. (Gonnella:2012)

The city re-emerged again as a spiritual centre with a stronger economy, Aleppo became a major exporter of lots of goods including cotton, silk, pistachios and spices .

Many Khans were built to accommodate Aleppo's expanding trade and visiting merchants.

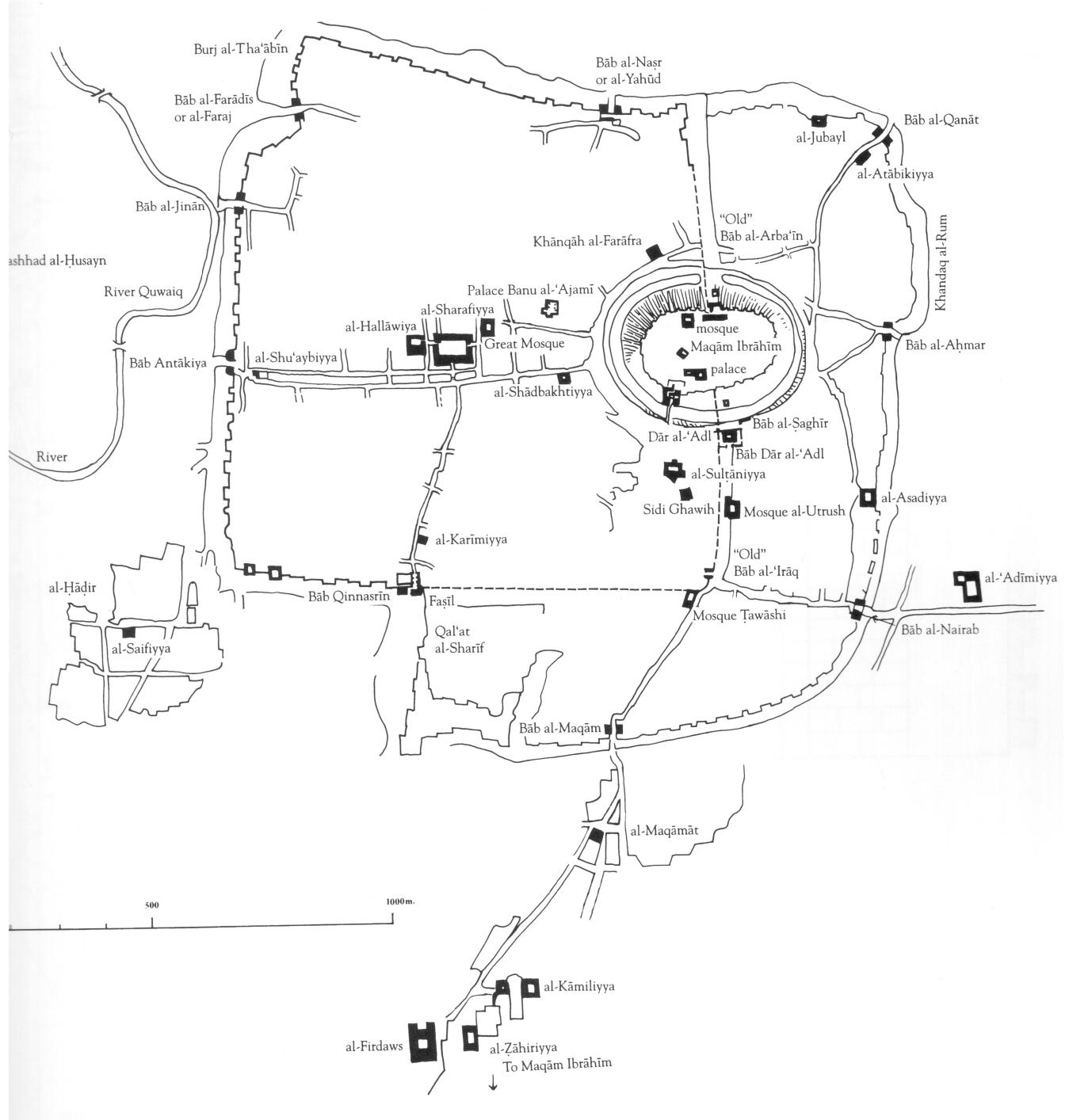


Figure 19
Aleppo in the thirteenth century: plan with gates and major monuments



Figure 20
A view of the Citadel



Figure 21
Aerial View



Figure 22
Aerial view inside the Citadel

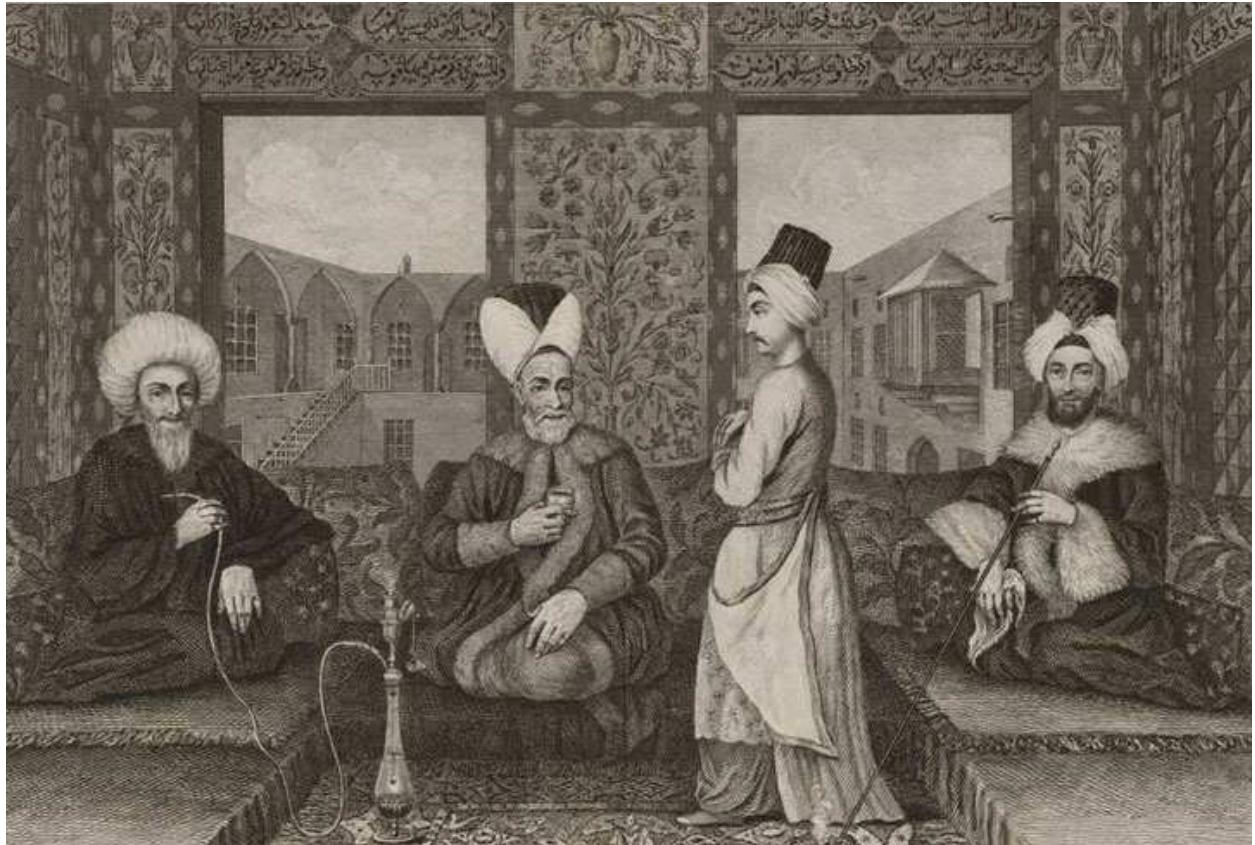


Figure 23
A portrait of the leading Ottoman officials in the city.

Aleppo under The Ottoman Rule

“Aleppo, the present metropolis of Syria, is deemed, in importance, the third city in the Ottoman dominions. In situation, magnitude, population and opulence, it is much inferior to Constantinople and Cairo; nor can it presume to emulate the courtly splendour of either of those cities. But in the salubrity of air, in the solidity and elegance of its private buildings, as well as the convenience and neatness of its streets, Aleppo may be reckoned superior to both...” Alexander Russell, eighteenth-century English resident²

² Alexander Russell, *The natural History of Aleppo* (London, 1794), vol. 1, pp. 1-2

During the period of Ottoman rule in Syria (1516- 1918) Aleppo was the third most important city in the Ottoman empire after Constantinople and Cairo (Dumper : 2007). Aleppo became part of the Ottoman Empire at a relatively late point of its expansion. The Ottoman Empire's rise to power started from a small Turkish principality in Anatolia as early as the thirteen century. In 1453 they took Constantinople and took over the Byzantine Empire, and by the sixteenth century the Ottomans started acquiring Arab lands including Aleppo, as the Ottomans recognised the importance of the city of Aleppo. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Aleppo was one of the most successful trade cities in the Middle East, the Ottoman rulers establishing larger Khans and souks, and they also added their slender and tall minarets to Aleppo's mosques which were built around the citadel (Eldem:1999)

After almost two centuries, Aleppo started to expand again under Ottoman rule. New residential districts started to emerge on its outskirts outside the walls which had nothing in common with the Old City. A grid pattern lined with multi-storey buildings replaced traditional courtyard houses and wide streets replaced the narrow, winding alleys, ending a period where the citadel was needed as a military defence fortress (Marcus:1989). Notable Ottoman sites include , *al Ottoman Ahmadiyyah Madrasa*, *al Adiliyyah Mosque*, *al Othmaniyya Mosque* and *Khan al-Gumruk*.

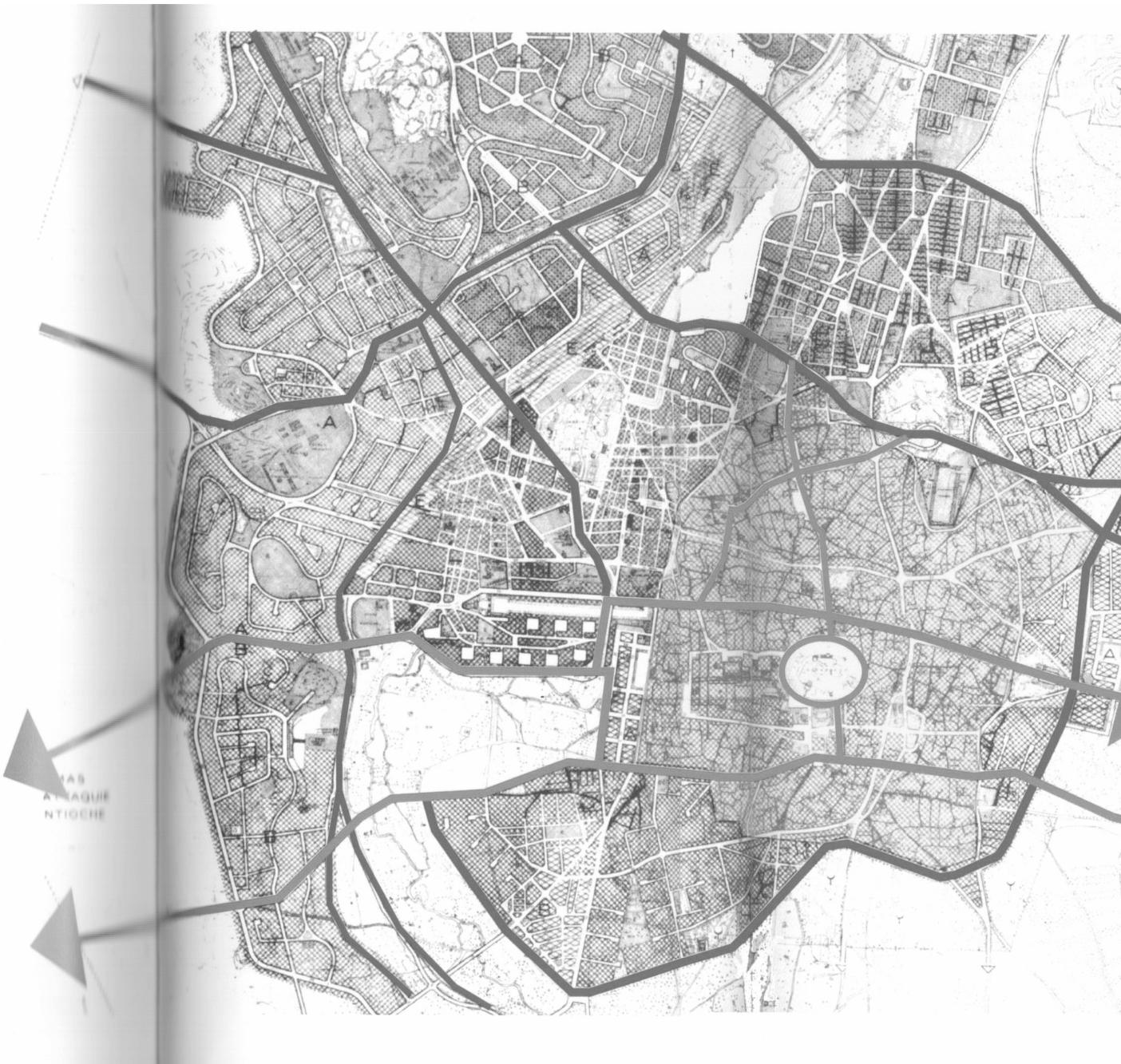
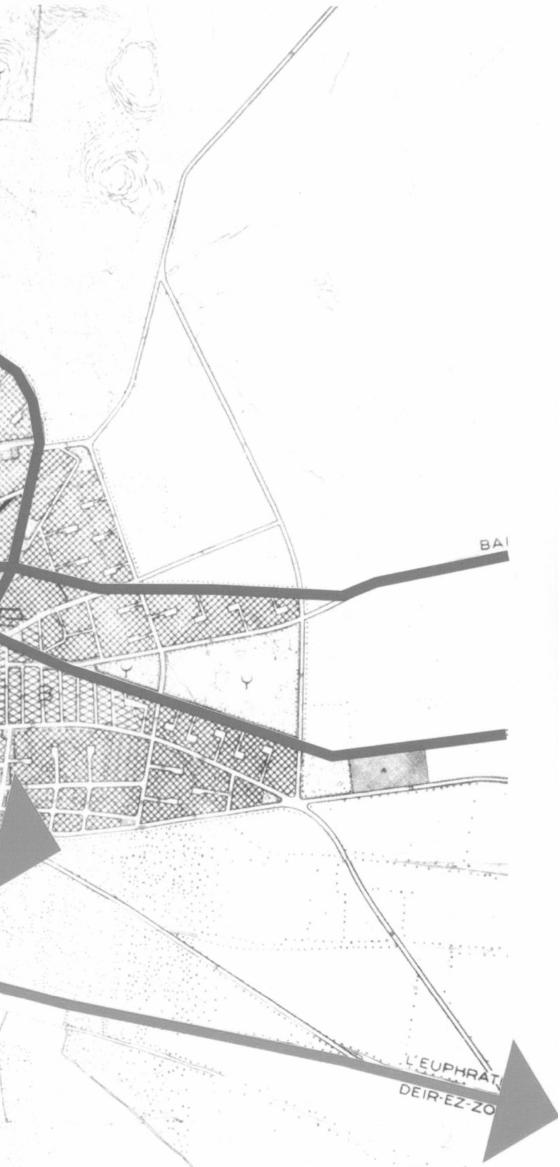


Figure 24
City map adapted from Andre Gutton, 1952

The Old City of Aleppo in the 20th century



The French Mandate over Syria (1922–1945) ended without significant changes to the urban form of the old historic centre of Aleppo, as the colonisers focused on developing newer districts, hence leaving the historic fabric nearly intact.

Modern town planning in Aleppo started in 1925 after establishing a western style city administration and creating a planning department (The Service D'Urbanisme). Michel Ecochard, a French planner who also worked on the reconstruction of monuments in Syria, proposed a plan in 1936 where he focused on redirecting growth towards the perimeter and maintaining the old centre. During this period, the city began to expand beyond its walls and new neighbourhoods were established in the west such as Aziziya and Jamiliyya with a distinct French style. As well as major streets that connect the Old City with its outskirts, Aleppo's two major parks were also created, thus making the historic core a centre for a much larger city (Busquets,Sergie:2005).

Affluent residents started to leave their traditional houses in the old centre to live in the new residential neighbourhoods outside the wall which provided them with more modern amenities leaving the poorer, less educated and rural migrants in the old districts and creating significant demographic changes.

Old houses were abandoned, rented out to poorer families or divided into smaller units then sold; many houses lost their character by making changes to courtyards to accommodate more than one family, or furthermore by adding extra floors to the house. Gradually, the residential quarters of the Old City became overcrowded, and houses were subdivided into smaller units to accommodate extended families. More recently, historical houses started being used as storage for commercial shops.

According to Khirfan, many private homes in the old city suffered from cracked foundations and inadequate water and sewage infrastructure. The increase in commercial activity in the old centre also meant an increase in noise levels and air and water pollution. With all these factors the old urban fabric of old Aleppo was at great risk. The new residents of Aleppo have often been unable to maintain their houses in their original condition because of their limited economic means. They also used contemporary materials such as reinforced concrete when they subdivided their properties or added to their historic structure and that interacted negatively with traditional stone construction of Aleppo.

The local authority's neglect contributed to the structural and the social decline of the historic district. The municipality guided most of its spending towards the newer parts of the city ignoring the infrastructure in the Old City. They also failed to spend on social infrastructure and the residents noticed a lack of clinics, public libraries, playgrounds, nurseries and schools. (Khirfan :2010)

In 1952, the French architect Andre Gutton submitted a proposal for a Master plan to regulate the growth of the old city. Wide new roads were to be cut through the ancient pedestrian network with no consideration to the organic fabric of the historic quarters. The plan imposed two east-west main roads running through the old fabric, a ring road around the old quarters, and another around the traditional market. Although Gutton's plan was only partially implemented, one tenth of the old historic fabric inside the city's walls was destroyed; new multi-story buildings were built on both sides of the new wide roads which divided the organic fabric into isolated islands.

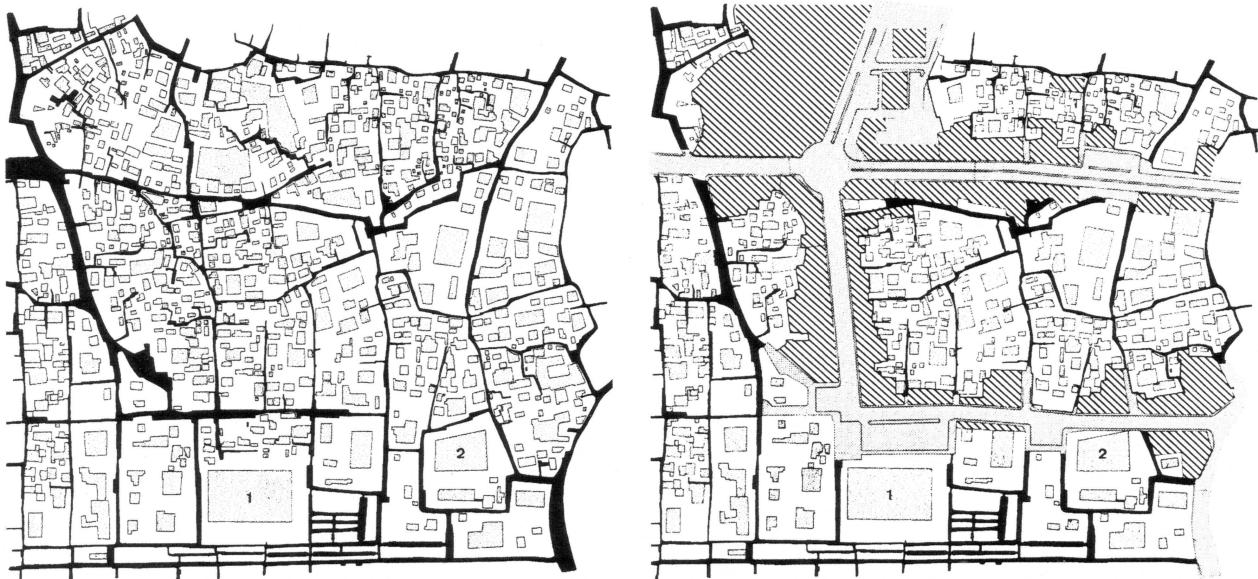


Figure 25

Changes in the urban fabric caused by the partial implementation of Gutton's Proposal

Another plan that applied foreign models without considering the richness of the urban form was the Japanese Gyoji Banshoya's plan in 1974. His plan, under supervision from the central government, called for more transportation roads to cut through to the Old City and aimed to connect the main ways to the east and west of Aleppo through the Old City's fabric, demolishing more monuments and continuing to separate historic quarters from each other. (Busquets,Sergie:2005)

Lots of public and private parties in Aleppo jointly opposed the Banshoya Plan. Architects, geographers, engineers and historians campaigned against the plan and urged the municipality to prevent it. By 1979 the strong opposition stimulated the General Directorate of the Antiquities to convince the Syrian Ministry of Culture to register the whole Old City within the walls as historic fabric: this move effectively stopped the demolition on the one hand but imposed strict rules and regulations for any restoration and development in the area on the other hand. Later, the Syrian government requested UNESCO's help to arrange appropriate plans for the Old City, and Dr. Stefano Bianca, a UNESCO expert, undertook lengthy research, including detailed documentation of the historic city and produced a report in 1983. The combined efforts of the local activists and the international experts resulted in Aleppo being listed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1986 (Khirfan:2010).

Becoming a World Heritage Site

In 1964, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) with the Venice Charter promoted the establishment of the conservation approach for historic monuments. In 1972, many developing countries signed up for UNESCO's Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, and by 1977 the listing of world heritage sites had begun. While the Venice Charter was still only concerned with single monuments, the UNESCO Convention introduced for the first time the concept of cultural heritage, which is the basis for area conservation and rehabilitation concepts. UNESCO also promoted the establishment of a fund for the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage. (UNESCO.org)

Until the 1940s few countries in the world appreciated the value of their old cities and it was not until after the destruction caused by the Second World War and the attempts to rebuild that countries started to realise the unique character of the old areas and the need to preserve and protect them (Steinberg:1996).

The World Heritage Convention concerning the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage was adopted in 1972 by UNESCO and since then the committee's mission has been to "identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit to future generations of cultural and natural heritage that is of outstanding universal value" (UNESCO: 2005).

UNESCO's general definition of "cultural heritage" refers to heritage as "to monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value" (UNESCO:2008). Cultural heritage is a very valuable asset not just for the site declared as heritage but for humanity; becoming a World Heritage site comes with a number of international standards and conventions for intervention and that has its physical, morphological and social effects on a historic city like Aleppo.

The World Heritage List is a listing of worldwide cultural and natural heritage properties, updated annually by the World Heritage Intergovernmental Committee at UNESCO (UNESCO, 2003). The List was founded on the principles of the World Heritage Convention of 1972 (UNESCO, 2003). This convention declared that there are certain sites across the globe whose survival is precious to the world community as part of our shared common heritage. These sites are of "outstanding universal value." Old Aleppo was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List based on the third of its six inscription criteria—that it is unique testimony to cultural traditions or civilisations (Khirfan : 2010).

Part Two

The GTZ Project in Aleppo: The rehabilitation project of the old city of Aleppo - preserving the past by enhancing the present

Aga Khan Project in Aleppo: The Aga Khan Aleppo Area Programme

The Citadel of Aleppo

The Citadel's Perimeter

Bab Qinessrine's Park



Figure 26
A view of the Citadel and its perimeter

The rehabilitation project of the old city of Aleppo - preserving the past by enhancing the present

“The rehabilitation of historic centres has to be on whole areas, not just individual buildings, and on social communities, not just the physical environment. Human inhabitants are the ones who create the social-cultural and economic systems which give life to the physical environment that they live in. The residential areas which are usually in the inner parts of the city, like the case of Aleppo, are often home for lower-income families and they have physical, social, economic and cultural values that are different from, and beyond the perceptions of, bureaucrats or planners” (Steinberg: 1996).

It is important to have political support from the government for rehabilitation to be successful. In the case of Aleppo, after being listed as a world heritage site, the Syrian government requested support from the German government in preserving the Old City. Consequently, the Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo materialised in 1994. The German government delegated the German Technical Cooperation Agency, known as GTZ (now GIZ : Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH) a non-profit organisation owned by the German government to represent it in the project .

The GTZ worked in coordination with the City Council and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture to establish the Directorate of the Old City, then formulated a team of experts and officials to start the old city's rehabilitation and management activities. In 1999 the team issued a Development Plan that outlines the approach adopted for the rehabilitation of the Old City. The plan included the restoration of hundreds of houses, building a new park, and rebuilding city streets and services.(GTZ)

To start, one corner of the Old City was designated a pilot project. A fund was set up to give out loans to low-income families who needed help rehabilitating their homes. City officials encouraged investment in the Old City from rich families and businesses. The decay in the old water system contributed to the structural damage of the city's historical buildings and sewerage also found its way into the water supply pipes putting the health of the residents in danger. For those reasons a complete renewal of both systems was worked out for the Old City and by 2003 30% of the sewer network and 60% of the water pipes were renewed .

Unregulated traffic caused air pollution and high noise levels in the Old City so plans were made to minimise traffic and improve public transport. To keep the Old City attractive for living, parking spaces were provided for residents and the project ensured good accessibility and safety for pedestrians.

Great care was taken to protect the urban environment with awareness campaigns, waste collection and planting trees in courtyards and public squares backed by studies on noise and air pollution reduction .(GTZ)

The city of Aleppo was the first city in Syria to establish a comprehensive Local Agenda 21 programme which is “a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human beings impact on the environment” (UN).

Social and cultural facilities were also important for a better urban life in the Old City, so health points and children's nurseries and play groups were introduced into action areas. In addition cultural activities such as concerts, lectures and art exhibitions were organised in the Old City. The *Shibani* school was redeveloped into a social and cultural centre .

With more than 5,000 years of history the Old City had a great potential for cultural tourism, and the rehabilitation project carefully developed the tourism sector as tourism is a vital tool for improving the local economy. Care was taken to ensure that tourism activities were in line with the purpose of urban preservation and finding the right balance between marketing the city for tourism and the privacy of the residents and the authenticity of their lives there.

Monument restoration was also part of the rehabilitation project, with more than 240 historical monuments designated in the Old City of Aleppo. Development strategies included proposals for potential use of the monuments, their management and funding. In addition architects and engineers were trained in restoration techniques through special programmes to help with the rehabilitation of historical monuments and residential houses.

The GTZ cooperated with the Arab Fund for Social and Economical Development (AFSED). Their grant allowed for the use of the state-of-the-art Geographic Information System (GIS) and the rehabilitation of the Grand Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo (GTZ: 2004).



Figure 27
GTZ Plans for Aleppo



Figure 28
Typical restoration, courtyard and a private residence

The Aga Khan Aleppo Area Programme

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in cooperation with the Old City directorate and the GTZ undertook the preservation and development of the Citadel of Aleppo, adding a visitor centre as well as upgrading and landscaping the public space around the Citadel's perimeter. Also as part of their programme was the conservation and reuse of a historic *hammam* (bath), transforming a government building into a hotel and creating a sustainable public park (Bab Qinessrine) in close-by neighbourhoods. The Citadel of Aleppo conservation project started in the year 2000 and was completed in 2006. The Citadel's perimeter urban upgrading started in 2007 with the detailed design of Bab Qinessrine park started in 2010 but has not been completed because of the start of the tragic events in Syria.



Aleppo Area Programme

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has made a long-term commitment to working with the people and Government of Syria to support and contribute to the improvement of prospects for economic, social and cultural development. These efforts are undertaken within a Framework for Development in Syria, developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the Government of Syria, which was ratified by the Syrian Parliament in 2003.

AKDN programmes in Syria span six provinces (Aleppo, Damacus, Hama, Lattakia, Sweida and Tariqah), and serve both rural and urban populations. Priority areas include rural economic development, employment and enterprise development, enhancing the quality of services, strengthening civil society organizations, protecting cultural heritage and developing sustainable tourism.

The Aga Khan expressed the interest for AKDN in Syria: "My interest in working with you is to help Syria to move forward in a unique way, so let's start to talk together, let's review our cultures so that we may see what can only be seen in the semiology of the West, but in the intelligent use of our past".

The Historic Cities Programme (HCP) has been active in Syria since 1999, when the Government of the Republic of Syria approached the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) for assistance in the restoration of the three citadels of Aleppo, Masyaf and Saladin. This was followed by a joint agreement with the Syrian General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums in 1999. Consequently, the HCP Development approach developed by AKTC in Egypt, Pakistan and elsewhere, under the agreement AKTC would also work to improve the area around the Citadels. During the early stage of the Citadel restoration projects, HCP expanded the initial scope of pure conservation work to include the contextual dimensions of the three sites. Building on its work on the Citadel of Aleppo, HCP expanded its mandate to include the planning and landscaping of the Citadel Perimeter, the creation of a public park, and social and economic development in the Old City.

One of the oldest cities in the Middle East, Aleppo dominates a crossroads between East and West, straddling important trade routes linking the desert to the sea. Until 1900 the city remained more or less confined within its medieval boundaries, limited by its walls and early suburbs, which were surrounded by pistachio, fig and olive groves.

Today, approximately 100,000 people, or five per cent of the population of the city as a whole, live in the historic Old City. A great many monuments are

281

Figure 29
From the Aga Khan publication



Figure 30
Tower protection works



Figure 31
Interior of Ayyubid Palace in the Citadel



Figure 32
Aga Khan intervention areas

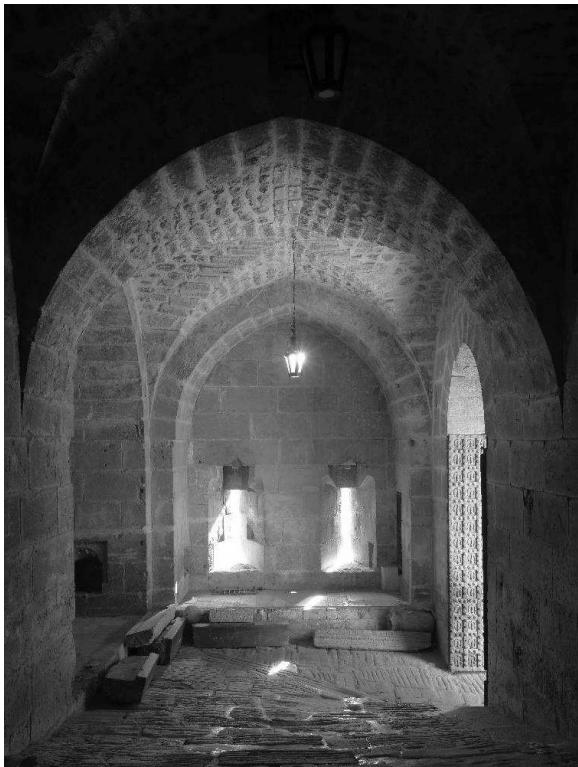


Figure 33
Citadel's Interior



Figure 34
Citadel's Ayyubid Palace portal

The Citadel of Aleppo

The Citadel of Aleppo is a very large complex containing a number of buildings and monuments each with different historical features that require different forms of conservation and maintenance. The main areas are the bridge and the main gateway; the ring walls and the towers; the mosques; the cisterns; the palace complex; the arsenal; the *hammam*; the barracks; the tunnels; and the new theatre.

The Aga Khan's project in the Citadel of Aleppo aimed to train enough local antiquities staff, engineers, contractors and craftsmen in the latest conservation techniques. They also provided guidance on proper environmental protection and management of the completed sites in the citadel to help increase tourists' interest in those neglected areas. They also added a visitor centre that supplied guidebooks and help for visitors and upgraded sanitation facilities in addition to rehabilitating the cafeteria located within the Citadel walls (Jodido:2011).



Figure 35
Aleppo's Grand Serail within the Citadel's perimeter

Citadel Perimeter

According to the strategies for urban regeneration by the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme, before they started their project in 2006 the area around the Citadel was used as an oversized traffic roundabout, with vehicles constantly cutting off access to and from the historic Old City and breaching the urban fabric. Their planning project included major infrastructure improvements, traffic management plans, landscape design and proposals for the reuse of key historic structures.

The Aga Khan Programme conducted traffic, topographical, architectural, land-use and economical surveys as well as historical research of each component of the Citadel of Aleppo's site. Their project included creating a spacious pedestrian area at the foot of the Citadel's entrance, and landscaping the spaces located on its perimeter. The newly created pedestrian space was attractive for both local residents and tourists (Jodido: 2011).

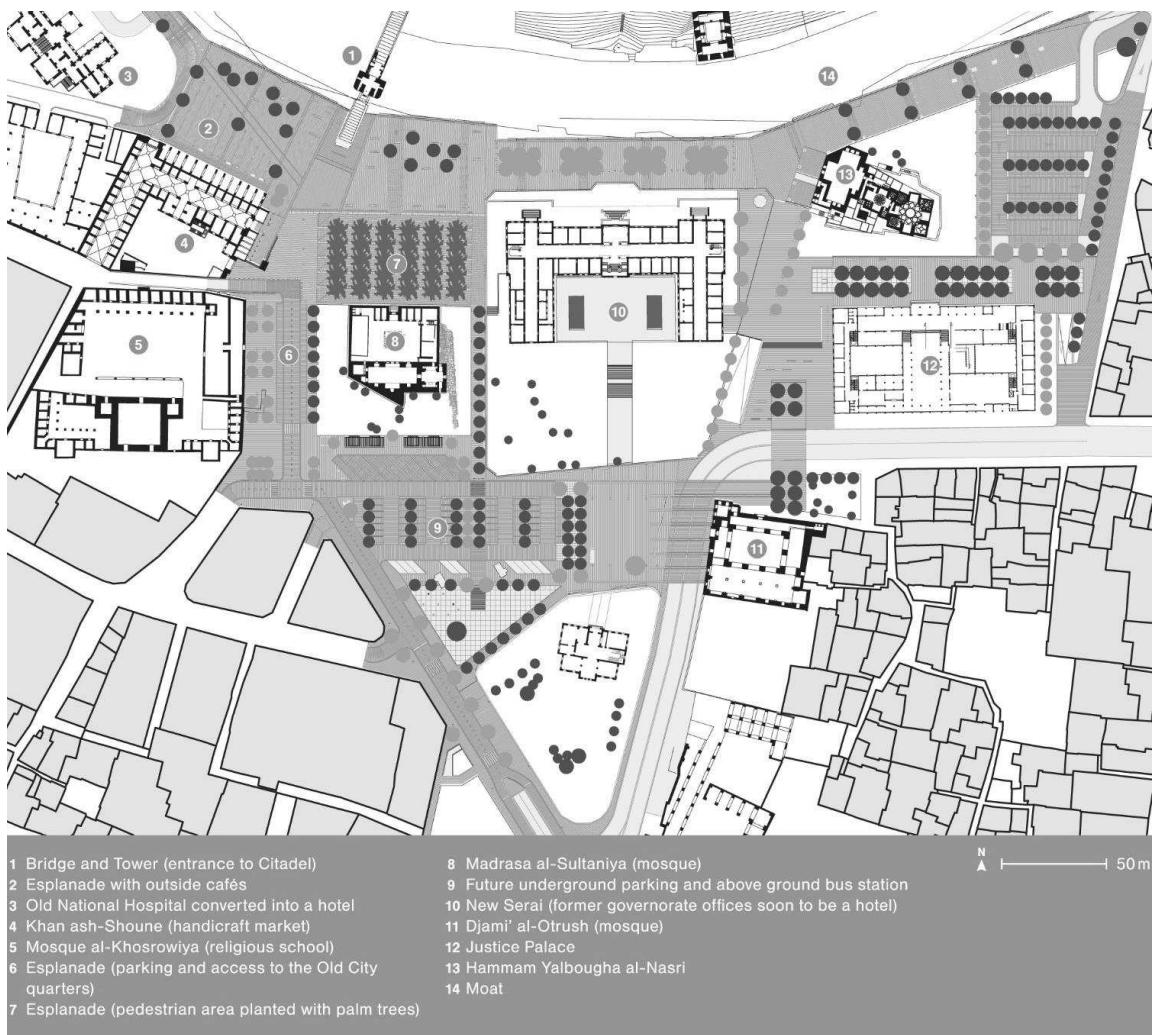


Figure 36
 The Aga Khan's Citadel Perimeter programme

Bab Qinessrine Park

The seventeen-hectare site of the future park lies in a strategic location, just outside the city's historic walls, and takes its name from the south-western gate itself. The site is just a hundred metres from the Grand Mosque and traditional souk and only another forty metres from the Citadel.

Creating the Qinessrine Park at the edge of the Old City was aimed at attracting both locals and tourists and therefore providing more opportunities for employment and services and formulating a socio-economic project in the surrounding poorer neighbourhoods.

The AKTC decided to develop a park in the Bab Qinessrine area which was a waste ground outside the Old City's walls, to provide green space and to form a visitor circuit through the Old City. The park is the core component of what is expected to become an urban regeneration project in the area through a number of action points, including environmental rehabilitation and economic and social improvements (Jodido:2011).

The combined efforts of all the parties involved in the rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo transformed the historic centre into a hub of cultural activities and made it more desirable for residents.

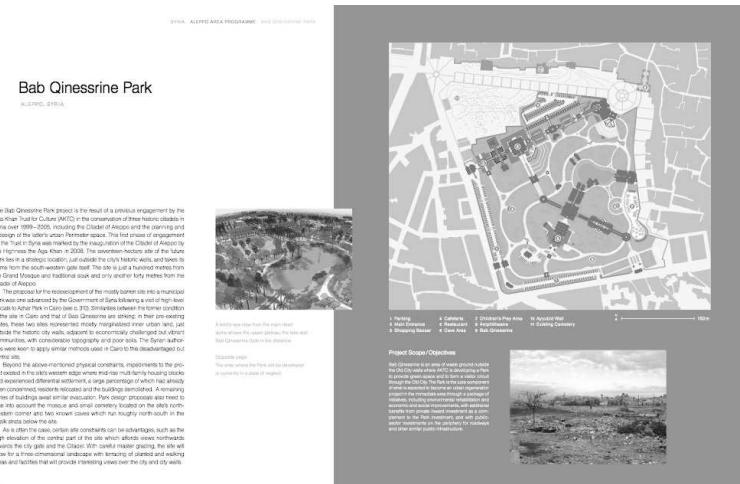


Figure 37
From the Aga Khan publication

Park Concept Drawings: Landscape Layout



Figure 38
Bab Qinessrine park concept plan

Part Three

Conserving Aleppo's cultural heritage

Analysing the Urban Form

Recommendations for the conservation of Aleppo looking at York Historic Core
conservation appraisal

Conclusion

Conserving the Old City of Aleppo's Urban Heritage

"Conservation, on an urban scale, is concerned with the urban fabric as a whole and not with architecture alone" (Cohen:1999).

Conserving what is left of Aleppo's urban fabric after the war will be very important for a historic city like Aleppo. The Old City of Aleppo is a place with a unique character and appearance as a result of many factors including: its historical richness, development and change throughout the years, architectural style and materials used, topography, spaces and landscape. Old Aleppo is a compact city that provides a close relationship between the city inside the walls and outside the walls. The Citadel is the most prominent element of the cityscape as it has been for many centuries: it is the focal point of view from different city streets and surrounding areas and any future conservation should not interfere with that. A successful conservation project will make use of quantitative analyses and will be aided by comparative and economic studies. With proper urban conservation, Old Aleppo could be transferred into a hub of cultural activity that is not just limited to residential areas but extends to the old city as a whole.

It is not possible at the moment to know the level of damage in Old Aleppo with no end in sight of the current conflict. The weapons are becoming heavier and more destructive and it is not just buildings that are being levelled, cultural artefacts that make the city are also being destroyed. Architectural monuments are targeted along with houses in Aleppo and looting is everywhere from museums and archeological sites to private property. Aleppo is undergoing cultural destruction on a very high level.

"Rebuilding can be as symbolic as the destruction that necessitates it. Construction can be used to cement a violent sundering of the built environment or to weave the fabric of a former life back together" (Bevan:2006).

Rebuilding Aleppo might also mean that it might be removed from the list of UNESCO's world heritage sites as the historical value of the city will decrease. In order to conserve Aleppo, it is important to start by analysing its urban form. I will do that by first looking at the Roman presence in Aleppo's fabric then moving to Cohen's analysis of an urban fabric.

Analysing the Urban Form

The Roman Presence in Aleppo's Urban Fabric; reading Aleppo's fabric

Urban Theories by Saverio Muratori and his school (also known as the Italian School of Processual Typology) developed in Italy in the 1960s, suggested that it is possible to “read” the traces of human organisations of a unique urban area from the structure of its building fabric (Neglia:2010).

Aleppo grew from a Hellenistic to a Medieval Islamic city going through a number of different phases including Roman and Byzantine. The form of Aleppo changed with time corresponding to the different phases of urban development and to the different ideas of construction in the city at a given time. Traces of conserved pre-Islamic planning phases are clearly found in Aleppo’s urban fabric.

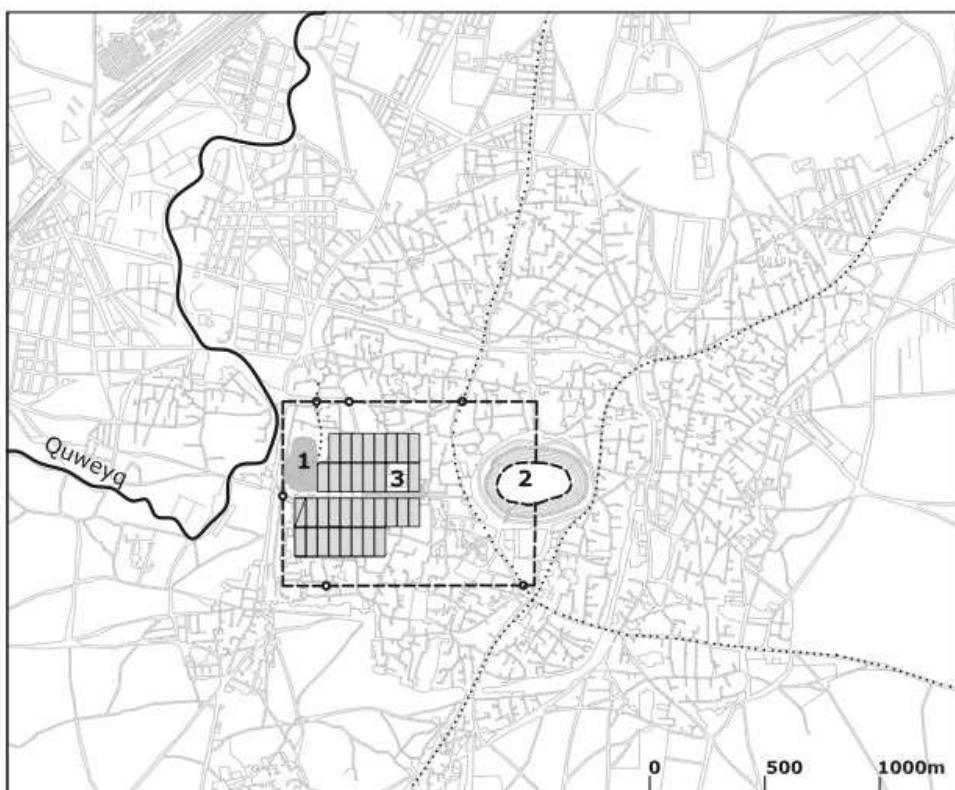


Figure 39
The Hellenistic town 1-Tell 2-Citadel 3-Agora

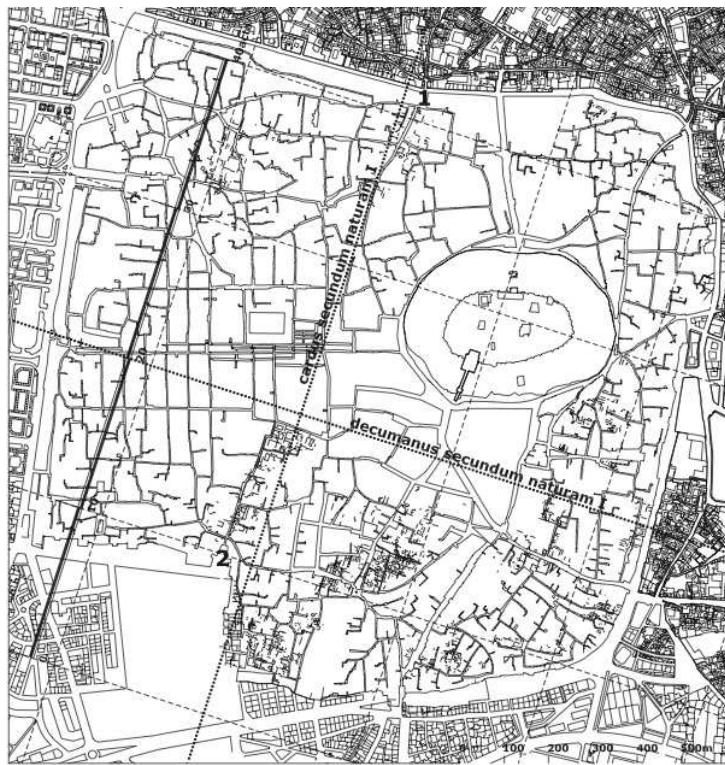


Figure 40
Scheme of the first
Roman plan
secundum naturam
of the city of Aleppo



Figure 41
Scheme of the
second Roman plan
secundum naturam
of the city of Aleppo

In Old Aleppo within the Mamluk walls, the urban form could be analysed by looking at maps of Old Aleppo from the 1930s during French times before any modern plans were introduced onto the city's fabric: they make it possible to read the different phases of human organisation of medieval Aleppo. Using the French cadastral surveys and maps from the 1930's, which showed the form of Aleppo before any modernisation, and comparing them with maps of Aleppo in different scales, thematic maps, historical maps and historical images and photographs; also comparing the results with the historical and archaeological information available and with the forms of different Syrian cities that have a structure similar to Aleppo is a method of reading the urban fabric which is needed in Aleppo, as the historical and the archaeological sources are not enough on their own to document the different stages of evolution in the urban fabric.

The first significant phase in human organisation in Aleppo dates back to the Hellenistic period between 301 and 281 BC with the founding of Beroea by Seleucus I on the site of prehistoric Aleppo. The plan of Beroea was mono-directional, with blocks perpendicular to the main east-west route which linked the acropolis with Tell al Akabe, the site of the pre-historic settlement in Aleppo.

During the Roman period Aleppo was reorganised according to Roman agricultural planning methods. The Romans did not establish new settlements, instead they enlarged and reorganised existing ones (Neglia:2010).

The Romans in their first phase of reorganisation in Aleppo followed the north-south orientation of the Hellenistic city but changed its structure. The urban structure changes suddenly to the east of the Hellenistic *agora* which was transformed into a Roman *forum*. It is not possible to detect any Hellenistic presence beyond this area. The orientation of the urban fabric changes to the south of the great mosque. An axis which leads to Bab Qinessrine rotates in relation to the north-south orientation that is seen in the area. The rotation is visible within districts to the south and to the east of the citadel. In their second phase of reorganising Aleppo the Romans built a road system that connect Aleppo with other Roman cites in Syria. In the third stage, which is a new planning stage, some other axis rotation of the urban form is found and that is a rotation following the axis of the Quwayq River in order to knit the form from the three stages which is the Roman idea of a "defuse city", a city with its borders merged with the surrounding territory (Neglia:2010).

Analysing the form according to Cohen

It is important to understand and analyse the urban form of Aleppo before any conservation is done. According to Cohen in Urban Conservation, four phases of urban formation can be distinguished: the urban web, the district, the block, and the division of the block which also relate to Muratori's four levels (Cohen:1999).

Looking at each of the elements in detail, the urban web would be the general view of Old Aleppo without going into physical details to find out general properties; characteristics of its urban axis. The roads and streets network would be highlighted to have a clearer vision of the urban area and in the case of Aleppo show the dense fabric of the Old City and how it progresses to a more regular pattern outside the Old Centre (Cohen:1999 68-77).



Figure 42

The urban web-Cohen Paris 1990

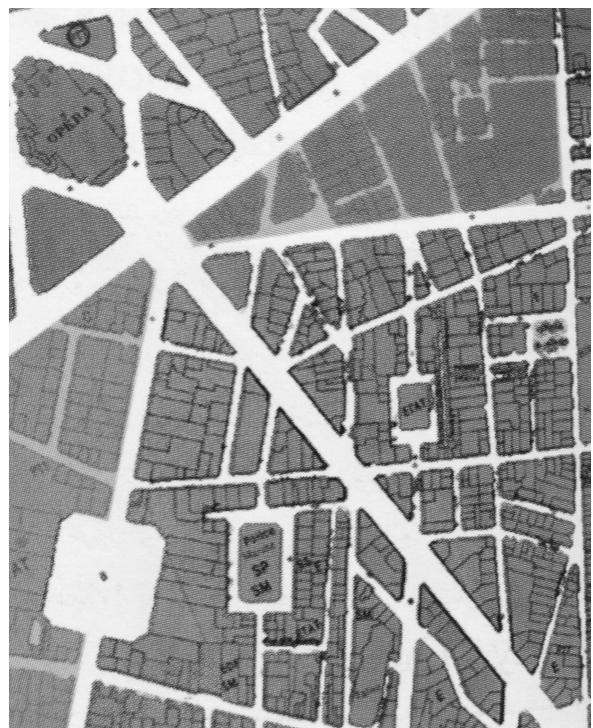


Figure 43

Major districts

Analysing the urban structure as well as mapping and understanding the development of the form over time would be a fundamental part of a future conservation project for Aleppo.

A district, “an uninterrupted accumulation of similarity featured groups (physical, restorable, symbolic, historical) is, in fact, a type of neighbourhood” (Cohen:1999).

Old Aleppo is made up of a number of different districts, each having its own similarities in the structures and patterns with defined borders and limits. It is important to recognise those districts and their links to the surrounding city.

Aspects that define a district's geometrical aspects according to Cohen are, the district's size, extent and border, its adaptation to urban geometry and the web in which it is situated, the width and repetition of streets within it, district's positional system, layout and height as well as the internal division and measurements of the block.

Meanwhile aspects that define the district's functionality include zoning and land use within a district, the mixed uses, by-laws and the public services in the district.

Conservation must understand those aspects to decide what should be preserved to save Aleppo's continual flow of life (Cohen:1999 158-164).

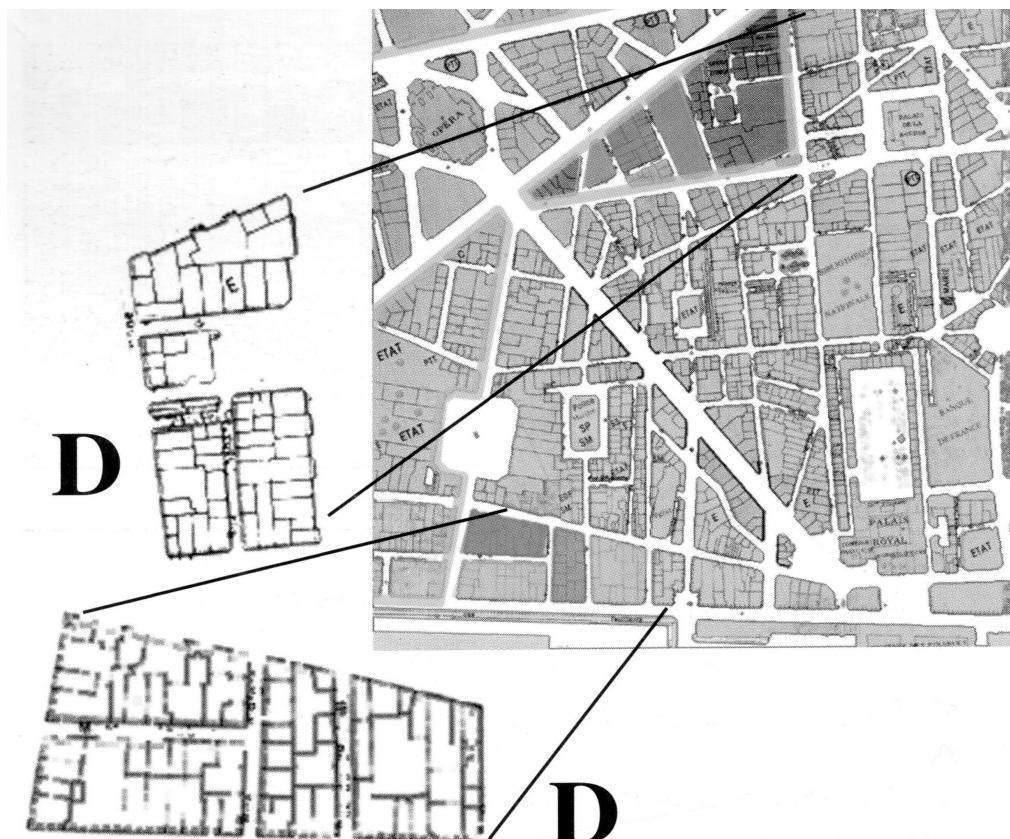


Figure 44

Blocks and D shows the plots

The block, which is a group of buildings surrounded by streets, is more connected than a neighbourhood, containing joint ownership between properties as defined by the law and planning codes. In Old Aleppo blocks of residential properties are part of its rich and dense urban form that need to be understood well before any conservation (Cohen:1999 167-170).

After the block comes the division of the block to arrive at the smallest component of the urban form.

The streets of Old Aleppo are a result of its urban form and they create the blocks. It is therefore important to understand their urban hierarchy, their links and traffic, parking and urban services as well as elements included in them.

Maintaining urban, public and private links is very important in conservation; that is why examples like the old market of Aleppo which is both public owned (the passages) and private owned (the shops) might be a challenge for conservation due to the public interest. Another example would be the Khans in Aleppo, as they could be seen as interior squares generally not intersected by streets and traffic; they are different to city squares as they are a planned part of a building with the buildings defining it integrated into it . This mix of public and private ownership is a challenge to a successful conservation project.

The religious sites and urban monuments are also part of the old city and they turn the district that they are part of into a cultural district. Conserving cultural districts must take into consideration their cultural role.

Aleppo's Citadel, the prominent important site for Aleppo, could be seen as the major tourist attraction for the city and finding a way to link it to the city's web would be part of the conservation of Old Aleppo. However due to its topographical setting it will remain separate from the city's fabric.

Building methods and their development over time is an important factor to look at when starting to conserve Aleppo. As well as topography, nature, the Quwayq river and the urban parks have a role to play.

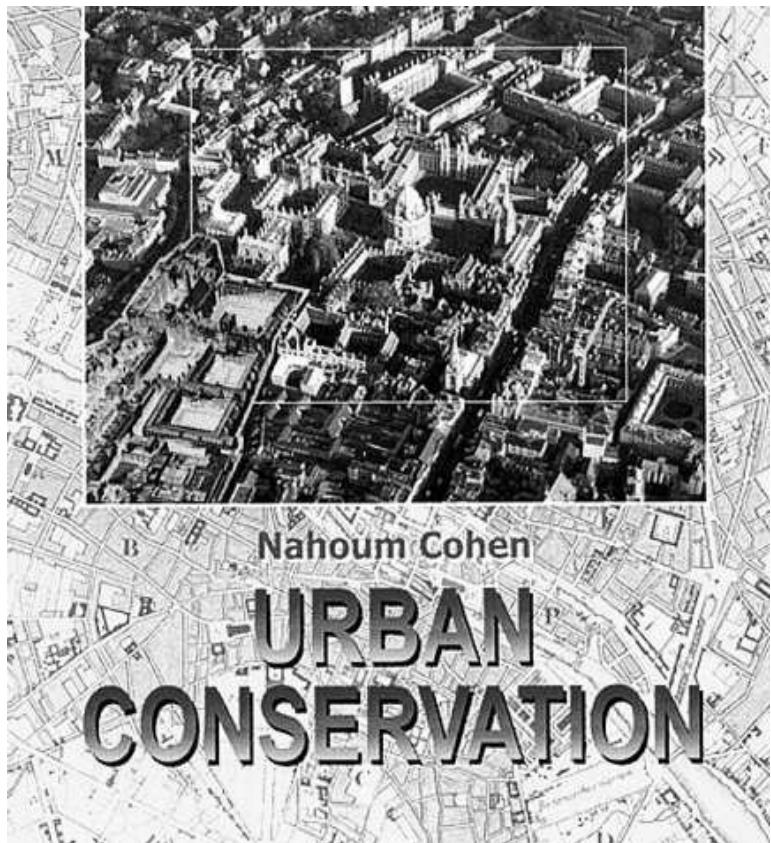


Figure 45
Nahoum Cohen's Urban Conservation



Figure 46
York Central Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal

Conservation in the case of Old Aleppo

After identifying the urban elements and understanding the urban system and the influence of the past on conservation of Old Aleppo, conservation could start by identifying the region of the Old City to be conserved then studying its past and urban structure followed by creating an urban background that accompanies planning. Identifying the urban structure is very important for the conservation process; the web, districts, private property and roads and streets that form the city. Material mainly needed for conservation includes, land ownerships maps, maps showing primary land use, age and condition of the buildings and identifying major urban links, demographics, residential density, as well as major public services and any extraordinary uses of land, level of services and traffic. This mapping ensures the documentation of the basic urban structure and gives a background necessary for the conservation.

Why is Aleppo a good area for conservation

Using the York Central Historic Core Conservation Appraisal, as a model I identified six Principal Characteristics which define the qualities, interest and cultural significance of Old Aleppo. Combined, these six characteristics create an extraordinary conservation area with exceptional variety and richness. It is a richness that is not just limited to the built form, archaeological deposits or monuments but extends to the residential communities and businesses. This is what makes Old Aleppo unique.

Strong Urban Form. Old Aleppo is one of a few places in the world where a five thousand year legacy of urbanism can be seen in such detail. The Hellenistic pattern of the streets in the Old City is combined with the dense organic form that is not much scarred by redevelopment and engineering, as well as having a clear boundary that creates a strong urban form with rich and solid building types

Compactness. Aleppo's Old City is a very compact, densely-populated historic core with its population of 120,000 inhabitants, the Old City is a city within a city, with short walkable distances and modest land consumption.

A compact centre like the Old City of Aleppo leads to affordable public transport as well as reduced use of vehicles which leads to less pollution and congestion and a better environment due to reduced emissions. A dense fabric also leads to lower heating costs and less energy consumption in addition to social mix and concentration of activities that give greater safety and high quality of life and better support for businessmen and services.

Landmark Monuments. Old Aleppo contains historic buildings and structures of the highest architectural and historic interest from the Islamic period and earlier dates, including the Citadel of Aleppo, the Great Mosque, madrasa Halawiye, Souks and Khans, Hammams and other monuments

Architectural Character. Aleppo having being ruled by lots of different dynasties over the years gives the Old City an architectural variety in its buildings and monuments – from Hellenistic and Roman to Ottoman and Islamic styles with a harmony of materials like stone and wood.

Archaeological Complexity. Aleppo is one of the world's richest archeological sites with civilisation dating back to the Bronze Age.

Landscape and Setting. Aleppo is located in a fertile area with a productive landscape and the availability of water from the river (Quwayq)

Threats to the conservation

Having defined the unique character of the Conservation Area, I will now consider the threats to its conservation and opportunities for its enhancement. The threats are those that faced the city before the war. If the city is to be conserved after the war new challenges and threats will emerge after assessing the damage, but as there is no end in sight I will look at some of the difficulties that faced the GTZ in their rehabilitation project.

Spatial Structure. Major road separating the old city from other neighbourhoods.

Density. The dense urban form results in a lack of public space, social tensions, and sometimes low construction quality.

Demography. Poverty, with most of the residents of the Old City coming from a poorer background

Informal Settlements. With their weak infrastructure, lack of communal public space, weak building quality and unclear legal status

Green Space. In the Old City there is an overall lack of green space, with unconnected distribution.

Urban Mobility. The lack of public transport which leads to more individual car use.

Heritage. Lack of services and infrastructure with no integrated tourist concept applied.

Principles for Future Management of Aleppo

From the York Historical Core Conservation Appraisal here are principles for the management or government or whoever might take over the conservation of Aleppo after the war.

- 1-The future economic prosperity and growth of Aleppo relies on conserving, and enhancing the Old City. The government needs to work in partnership with the public and any stakeholders to achieve this.
- 2-The importance of the historic core and the principles and priorities for its conservation and enhancement need to be disseminated to all who work in the city council as well as the residents, workers, developers, businesses and visitors.
- 3-The continued presence of residential communities in the Old City is as important to the historic core's social and economic strength and as essential to its special character as the medieval citadel and monuments and therefore needs to be encouraged and maintained.
- 4-Try to reduce the impact of traffic on the character, condition and human experience of the Old City, whilst supporting its economic growth.
- 5-The government should in the conservation maximise the potential of the historic environment by using existing resources more intelligently, better coordinating its activities, and seeking new sources of funding and partnerships wherever possible.

Action Points for the Future of Aleppo

- 1-Develop a strategy for communicating the remarkable values of the Old City to all relevant parts of the city council, and to the residents, businesses, institutions and landowners of Aleppo.
- 2-Making better use of the council's resources and develop new relationships with the people of Aleppo.
- 3-Develop a public realm strategy, in order to declutter and improve streets for pedestrians, and transform signage and way finding.
- 4-Commission and implement master plans for the buildings within the Citadel's perimeter.
- 5-Reduce the impact of traffic on the most sensitive sections of the main roads that surround the Old City.
- 6-Upgrade the infrastructure to improve the living conditions of the residents.
- 7-Secure homes and historical fabric and restore the residential houses.
- 8-Restore the monuments and revive traditional crafts skills to create new job opportunities which can contribute to the local economy.
- 9>Create new open spaces and rehabilitate the squares to enhance the image of the old town.
- 10-Secure the local economy by attracting small and medium enterprises into the old centre.
- 11-Promote integrated cultural tourism that does not conflict with local needs, behaviours, and preferences.
- 12-Improve environmental conditions by introducing new technical standards for industries and households, adapted waste collection systems, and campaigns to create public awareness about environmental issues.



Conclusion

Aleppo deserves a better future; it deserves to grow again into its previous glory. No matter how long the war takes to end, one day the city will be waiting to be built again. It is then the time to build it right and return it to being a place that gives happiness and safety to its residents while continuing to grow and flourish.

As the urban form of Old Aleppo gives it its unique character, it is important to try and save that form in any conservation that is done, although it will be more difficult to conserve as its form developed and evolved over thousands of years without any intervention on a large scale.

Old Aleppo was an entire urban system with functioning economic, social, and cultural relationships and it is important to try and get that functional mix back by conserving the districts of the Old City as a whole and repairing buildings to facilitate their continued use, especially housing, upgrading the infrastructure and removing any structurally unsafe buildings to provide space for essential services, infrastructure or open space.

This integrated approach, which also includes the conservation of buildings and monuments, improves the conditions of daily life and strengthens the local economy. The conservation could also be a good chance to address any disadvantages that Old Aleppo had such as any informal settlements and traffic congestion within the Old City, as well as enhancing any advantages that were in the city before the war.

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Aleppo, a city torn by civil war was once Syria's largest economic and trade centre, with a rich history dating back to the Bronze Age. It had a unique urban fabric with traces that go back to the Hellenistic times.

Long before the war started, Aleppo, like any other city, had its problems: some fundamental changes took place in some of the Old City's fabric, including the destruction of buildings, and the development of tall new buildings and widening of some roads, as well as other challenges that faced the city like over population and informal growth.

So far no one knows the exact extent of the damage in the city, as fighting still goes on. Once the war stops it will be time to rebuild the city and therefore I will give a brief idea about Aleppo and how it was before the war, then look at ways to conserve what might be left of the city after the war ends and end with a number of recommendations for the future of the city.