



Route to Madain Saleh

By:
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OLD TOWN



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INTRODUCTION



The old town or Adeerah is originated after the disappearance of Al-Mabiat City which is located 20 kilometers to the south of the old town. More than 1,400 years ago, Al-Mabiat was known in Hejaz as economic city and was classified level three after the city of Makkah and Madinah. It was one of the most important Arab markets at that time. Al-Mabiat existence started to disappear when all the inhabitants left the city and moved to the old town of Al-Ula, Al-Mabiat was then abandoned in 12th century. The reason for leaving the area is still unknown, but some people said it is because of security reason. Different stories are also



transmitted by local elders saying that flood and epidemic in the area of Al-Mabiat made the people leave. The old town was inhabited for 750 years before they start to develop the new Al-Ula City in the north and south of the old town. Old town's population was completely relocated in 1983. The name Al-Ula was mentioned in some famous books published by known writers such as Ibn Battuta the Famous Arab Traveller, Doughty and Huber from Britain, Jaussen and Savignac from France.

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LOCATION

The old town is located in the center of new Al-Ula City wherein new zones become north and south of the old town. Al-Judaydah, Saq and Al-Odeb are part of north and south as extensions of the city. Old town can be found in the narrowest point of the wadi beside Musa bin Nussair Castle (Um Nasser or Al-Jubail) which is the higher point of the wadi that passes through the old city. Musa bin Nussair Street also known by Salman is situated to the street going to old town then Madain Saleh. Going to the city can attract visitors due to the town's distinctive natural features built of mud and stones. The old town can also be distinguish by the Main Mosque, As-Sakhras Mosque and Musa bin Nussair Castle.



TOWN PLANNING



Old town is an integrated housing city with 780 terraced houses. Inside the old town have all the basic necessities of dwellers such as markets, mosque and water resources. The community in the old town also provided small areas for wedding celebration and other events which they called howsh. Most of the materials used to build the old town's houses are from Khuraibah. Inside the old town are consists of narrow alley called saqaif and arahabah which is a small



area where people stay to share conversations with neighbors. The town's planning and architectural ingenuity was created for the security of its population in the past during political instability in order to defend them from any attacks. It was also created to protect them from floods during the winter season. The design of the old town as integrated houses made it look like one house, wherein the narrow alley between houses creates good social relations between locals. The old town has two zones; north zone called Ashoqeq and south zone called Al-Helf. Musa bin Nusair Castle located between the two zones can also be found inside the town which is linked by saqaif or roofed open alley. From the book written by Dr. Abdurrahman Al-Ansari and Dr. Hussein Abu Al-Hassan "The Civilization of Two Cities, Al-Ula and Madain Saleh" (P. 35 & 36 - The Old Town of Al-Ula) "Old Al-Ula is a unique example of an Islamic city from the classical period. Its houses were built during the 13th century A.D. 7th century A.H. with

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extensive use of stones retrieved from the ruins of Al-Khuraibah. Many of these stone bore inscriptions and decorations. These houses had no openings on the ground floor other than a fortified entrance. The ceilings were made of palm trunks and then covered with palm fronds and mud.”

Jaussen and Savignac, two French travellers who visited Al-Ula during the first decade of the 20th century said that the streets of the town were narrow and winding. The town itself was divided into two identical quarters: Ashoqeq on the north side led by Sheikh Ali Abu Al-Gheith and Al-Helf on the south side led by Sheikh Ahmad Bin Musa.





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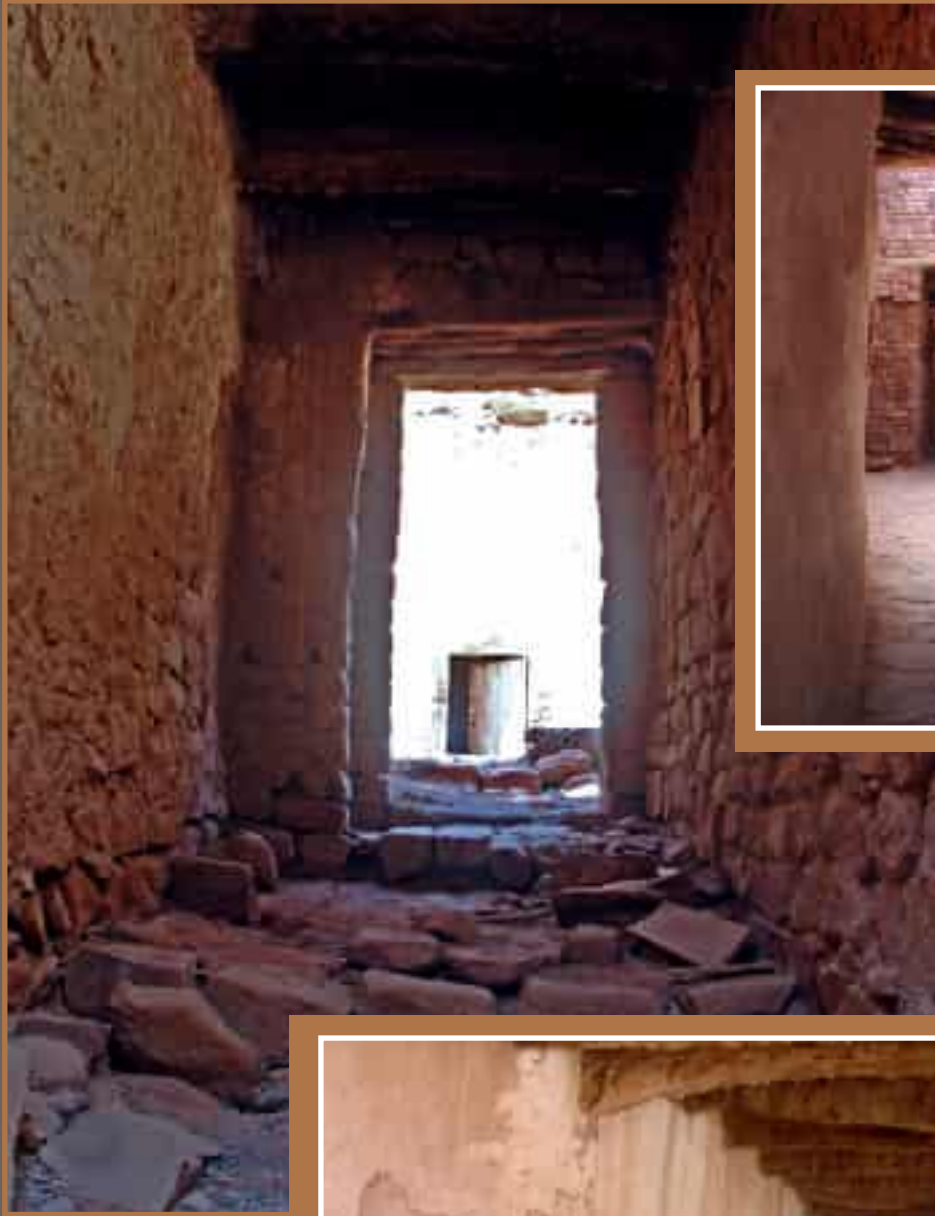
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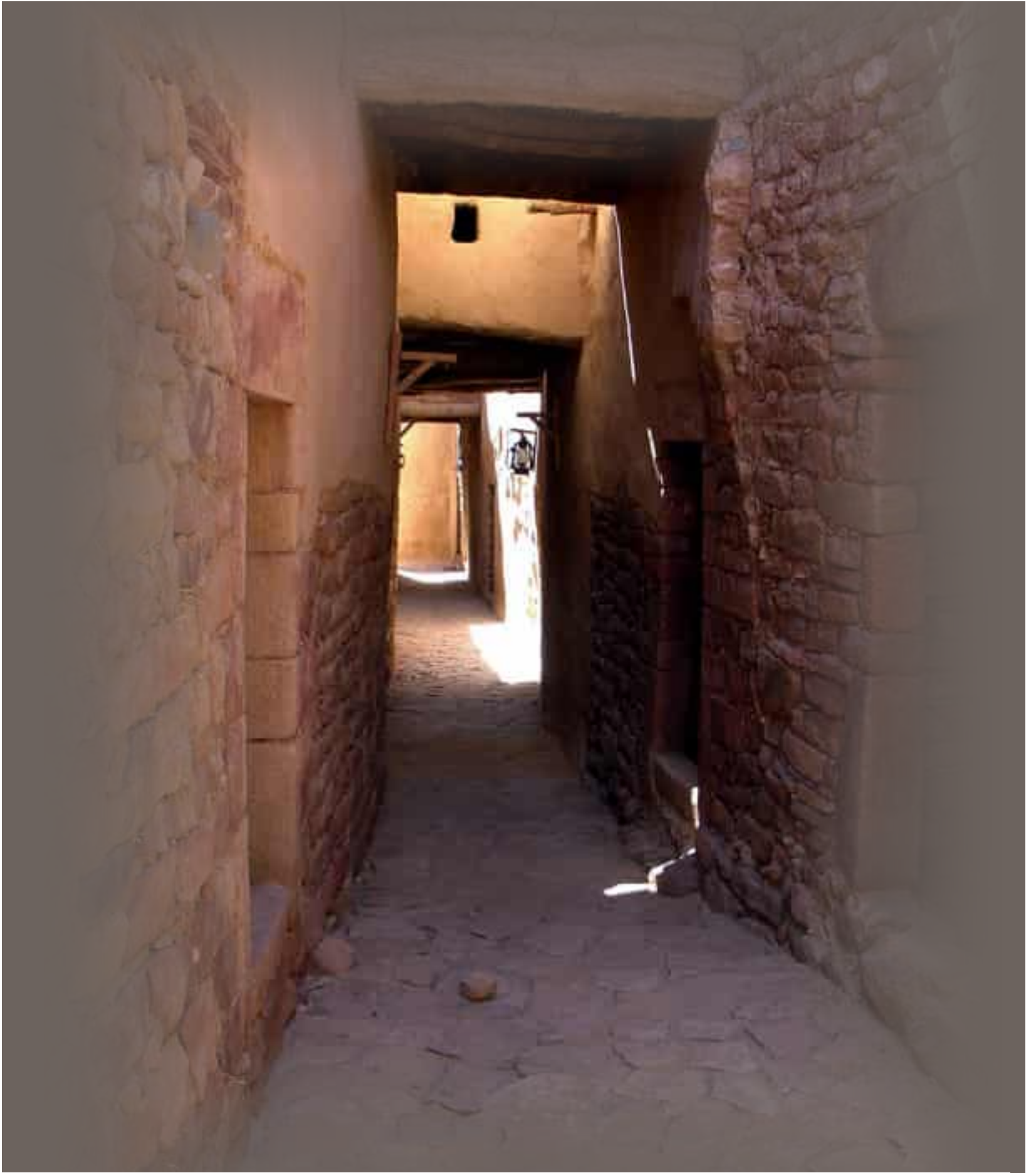
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The old house are consists of two storeys wherein the ground floor have a room called ga'ah used as food depot. A corner under the stairs is used to shelter small animals such as goat, sheep and donkey. People use to tie donkey while inside the house so that it cannot escape and ran outside. All components of the ground floor are called asafal. Second floor has two rooms; one is called atiyarah or bedroom while almerbad is the guest room and sitting area. The acendas or bathroom is in the roof without door.

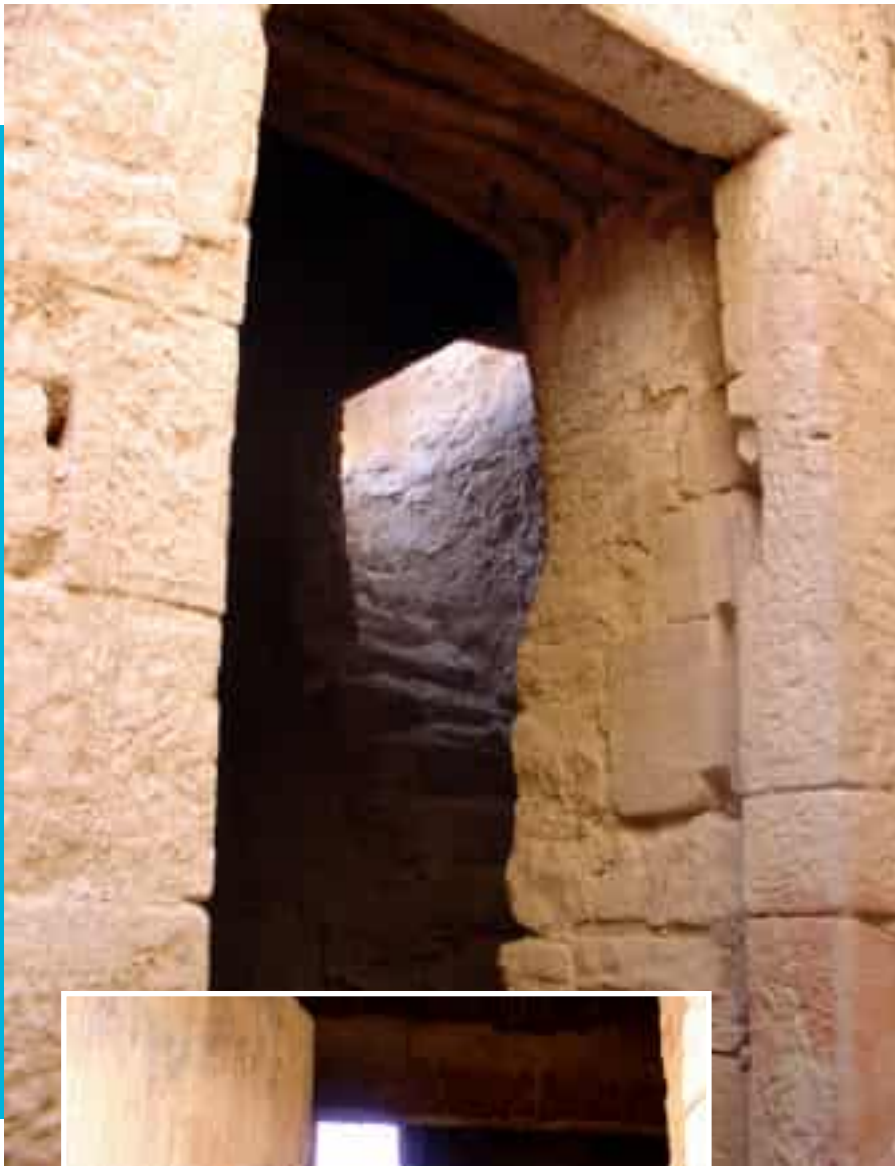
During that period in the old town, old house has no water available inside the bathroom for washing. People went to Al-Geneina, Al-Husseini or to Ad-Dhahery to wash after using the bathroom and for bathing. A small corner beside acendas have kitchen. The



kitchen was very simple; no shelves, no kitchen cabinets, no chairs and tables. Each house have small window of one or two and one is in atiyarah.

People used woods from dates and al-athel to make roofs, doors and gates. Old houses' main door has two locks made of wood installed inside and outside the door, suqata is the lock outside and daba is the lock inside. There is an opening hole on the wall of the house which is use to unlock the door called ad-dagher and food storage also have one. Walls are built of mud and stones, natural dyes are used to paint the wall and wood ceiling. Each house consists only of simple furniture.

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Floor mats used as carpets called khasafah are made from dates' leaves while the other called saha are made from animal hair such as goat, camel and sheep. Carpets made up of animal hair are being sold by Bedouins. Pillow stuffed with dates leaves are used in sitting area. Stove made of mud and stone are placed in almerbad to make coffee and to warm the food. The mehras and raha are used to process the seeds and grains to turn it into flour before making bread and other kinds of food. Container made from animal skin called sa'een is use as water storage and also serves as water cooler.



ARTS ON THE WALLS

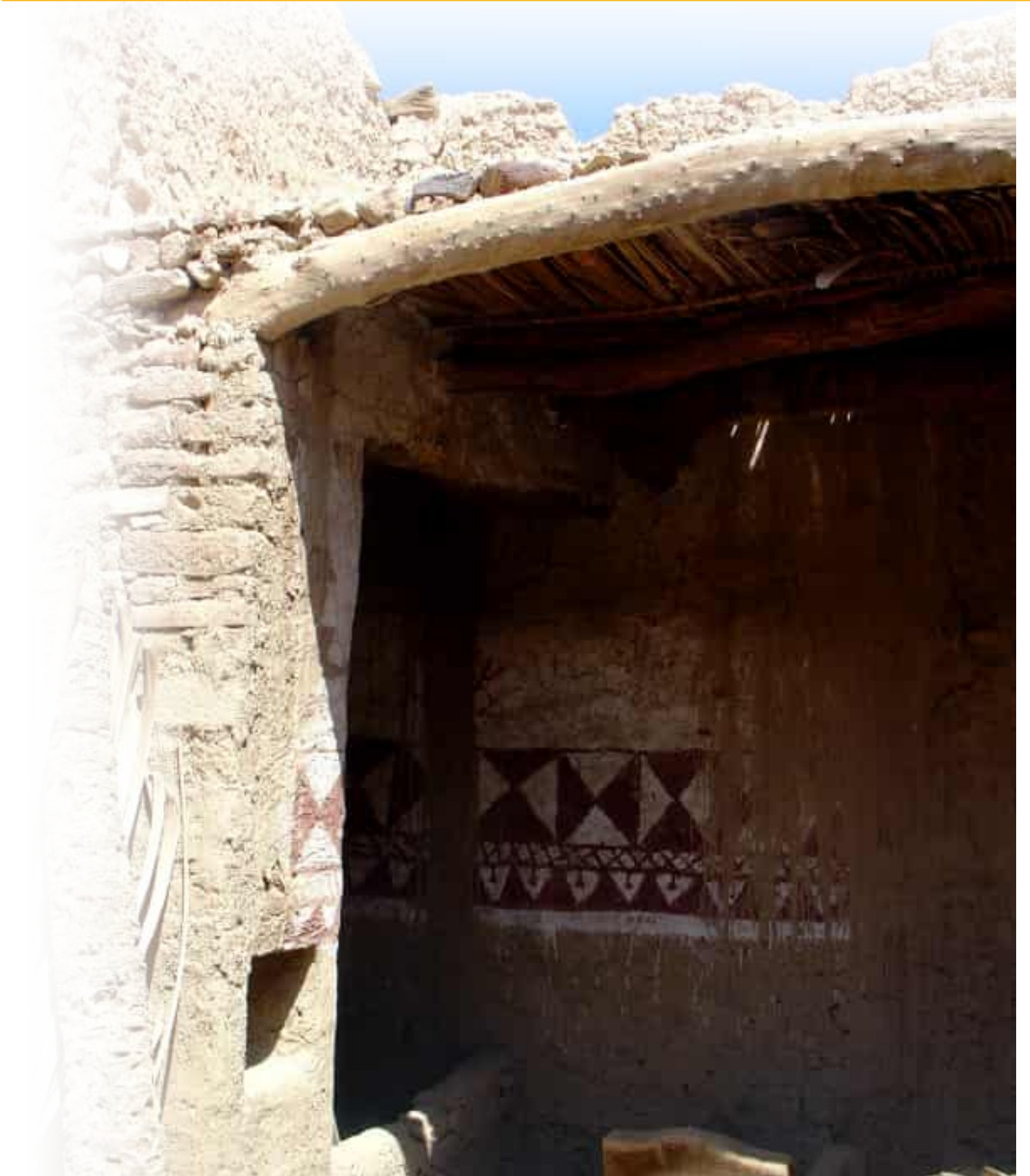


Local people in the old town are creative and artistic. Their houses and walls were adorned by hand painted drawings using natural dyes which they extracted from trees and sandstone. Upon visiting the old towns' houses drawings of flower, date trees, verses from Qur'an and memories of people who lived in the house are written around the windows and doors. Most of these drawings and writings were done to celebrate marriage and other occasions which indicated that people from the old town are artist, romantic and music lovers.



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MAIN GATES

People of the old town called mains gates as Asswar or Sur.

Below are lists of main gates in different parts of the old town.

EASTERN GATE OF THE TOWN

1. Ad-Darb Gate
2. Al-Husseini Gate
3. Al-Khosaisah Gate



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WESTERN GATE OF THE TOWN

1. Abu Howeiyah Gate
2. Abu Theyab Gate
3. Ibn Ameer Gate
4. Ibn Abdul Kareem Gate
5. Ashawakin Gate
6. Ibn Eid Gate
7. Ibn Homed Gate

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NORHTERN GATE OF THE TOWN

1. Ashariah Gate
2. Adherah Gate
3. Al-Geneina Gate

SOUTHERN GATE OF THE TOWN

1. Hassna Gate



TRIBAL COUNCILS

The population in the old town are consists of 15 clans. These clans are divided into two, Al-Helf clan and Ashoqeq clan which are both called Al-Alawnah. Each clan is governed by Sheikh and they also have their own chairman; chairman for Al Helf clans and chairman for Ashoqeq clans. Each Sheikh of council had their own reception to receive guests, visitors and during consultation with people wherein they drink Arabic coffee. They called this reception area Qahawat Asheikh. Dr. Ibrahim Almanfud identified locations and names of Qahawat in his book «Councils of Clans in Al-Ula «.

LOCATION	CHIEF OF THE TRIBE	NAME OF COUNCIL
Al-Boder Square	Sheikh Rabia Omar Boder	Al-Boder Council
Bin Saleh Street	Sheikh Ali Mohammed Bin Saleh	Atiyannah Council
Bin Saleh Street	Sheikh Saleh Ahmed Bin Saleh	Al-Gooroog Council
Ad-Dohrah Street	Sheikh Mohammed Ahmed Atiq	Al-Awad Council
Beside Az-Zawyah Mosque	Sheikh Bakheet Mohammed Bin Howeiyah	Al-Yasarah Council
Al-Badanah street	Sheikh Mosa Suleiman Najdi	Al-Badanah Council
Arafah Street	Sheikh Saeed Ahmed Bin Abduldayem	Al-Hammad Council
Al-Ameer Square	Sheikh Ali Mosa Suwairy	Al-Ali Council
Abu Al-Hassan Street	Sheikh Dakhilallah Abu Al-Hassan	Asalamah Council
Bin Issa Street	Sheikh Abdulrahman Bin Hussein	Azhoof Council
Bin Issa Street	Sheikh Ahmed Bin Mosa	Al-Mahfud Council
Al-Arab Street	Sheikh Mohammed Mosa Bin Mansour	A-Wahibah Council
Al-Mohammed Street	Sheikh Salem Ibrahim Bin Noah	Al-Mohammed Council



THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM IN AL-ULA

From the book written by Dr. Abdurrahman Al-Ansari and Dr. Hussein Abu Al-Hassan “The Civilization of Two Cities, Al-Ula and Madain Saleh” (Pages 22 & 23 – The Irrigation System in Al-Ula) “The ancient water distribution system at Al-Ula was unique in the ancient world. It consisted of a canal which was constructed to link the town to its principal well. The canal was laid at an incline to allow for the gentle flow of water, it was also lined to minimize water loss through ground seepage. In addition, a network of smaller channels linked the canal to farms.”



“The public baths at Al-Ula, known as “Hammam Al-Juneinah” were supplied by another canal known as Tid’el, whose well was situated the northwest of Al-Ula. This canal network is more than two thousand years old and Jaussen and Savignac found it still in use when they visited the town in the beginning of 20th century. They also observed that hollow palm trunks were used to transport water from one side of a grove to another.”

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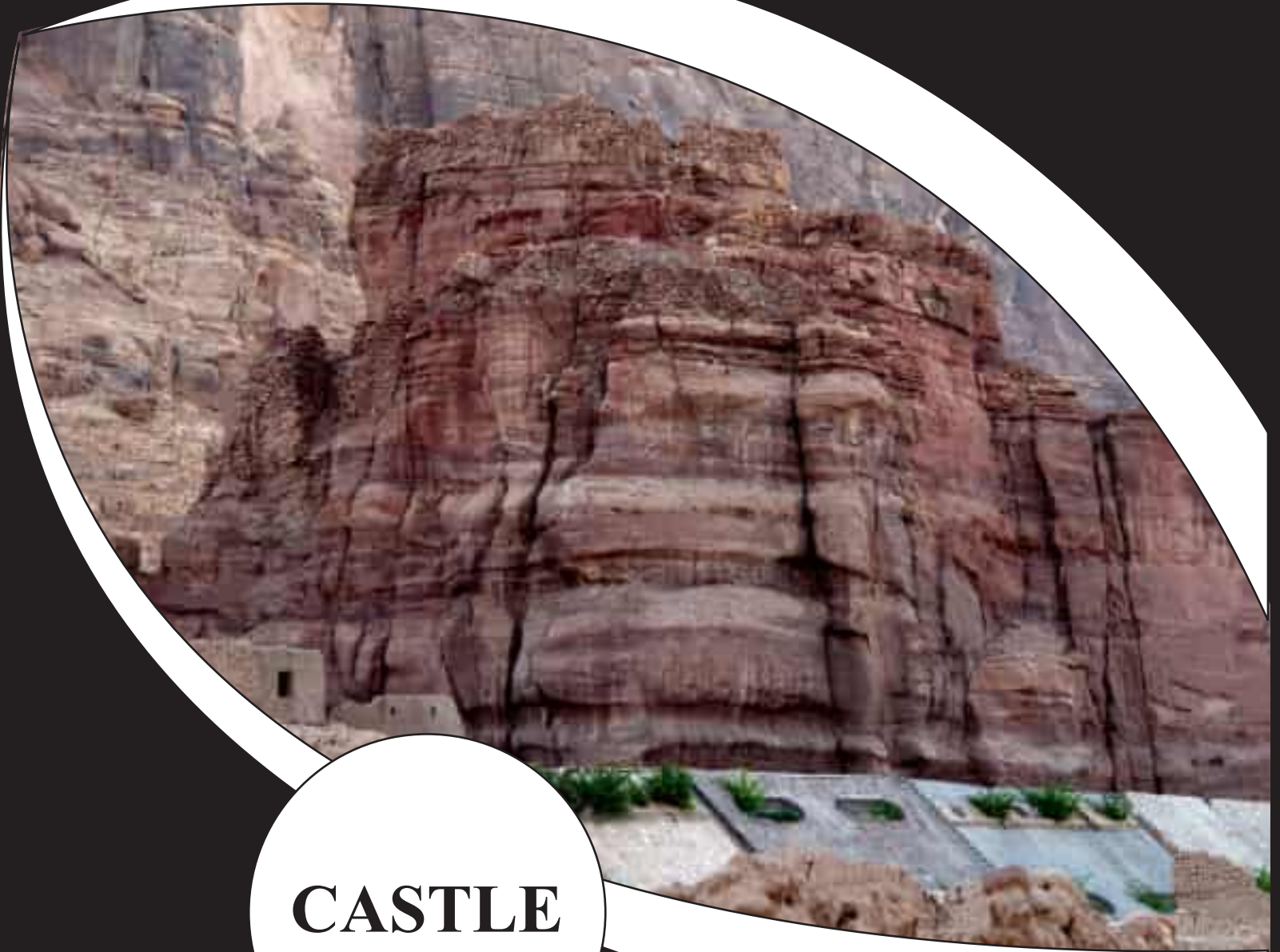


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GETTING AROUND THE TOWN



CASTLE

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The castle in the center of the old town is called Um Nasser or Al-Jubail. This castle had been built date back 600 B.C. and has undergone many restorations and the latest restoration was made by the Commission of Tourism. This castle was built at the summit of Um Nasser Mountain in east of the town. Many travellers wrote about this in their books calling it “a castle built by stones on top of the mountain at the center of the town”. It was used for protection and to warn people for any attacks before the enemy arrives to the town. There are some reports that the grave of famous Muslim leader Musa bin Nussair is been buried under this castle.



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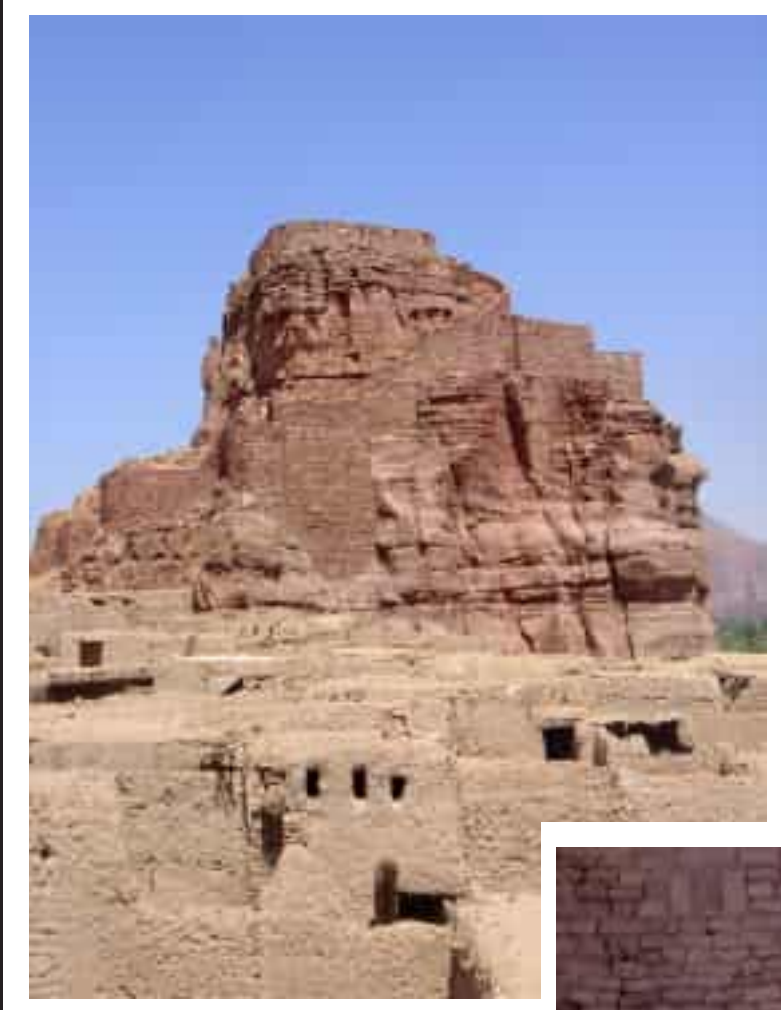
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MAIN MOSQUE (AL-EZAM MOSQUE)

The main mosque which is the central mosque for residents of the town is in the south-eastern part in a nearby tantourah. It is the venue for Friday congregational prayers and has three gates, one opens to the town from inside to the west. The main mosque is built of mud and stone and has minara or beacon and the Imam use a platform called mehrab for his speech and minbar to lead the prayer. Dating back to the stage of Islamic conquests, the mosque does not contain sessions of water nor place for ablution. People perform their ablution in Al-Geneina (spring water system) and Ad-Dahri or Al-Husseini irrigation. During the ages of the Islamic succession, the mosque has passed several expansions and restorations. The latest restoration was done under Sheikh Saleh Al-Imam. The mosque has dimensions of 63 x 16 square meters and can accommodate up to 500 people for every congregation.

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AS-SAKHRAH MOSQUE

As-Sakhrah mosque is located near Musa bin Nussair Castle, where it lies between northern and southern parts of the town opposite to Al-Khokha gate. The old mosque belongs to Noble Aliah, the wife of Sheikh Ahmed bin Yusra. It's been built more than 630 years ago and being restored at the expense of His Royal Highness Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud. During that period, there is no minara or beacon to call for congregational prayer and no platform for Imam. The mosque is part of the old town but after the opening of Musa bin Nussair Street in the reign of King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, the mosque become outside of the old town. The building from the south and north of the mosque has been removed and now a beautiful architectural masterpiece centerfield.





ATANTORAH

Atantorah is the local name for solar clock in the form of obelisk lies on south-eastern entrance of the old town near to the main mosque beside the gateway called Souq Ad-Darb. The main function of Atantorah is determining the seasons of the year and the distribution of water for irrigation.





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IBN AMER MOSQUE



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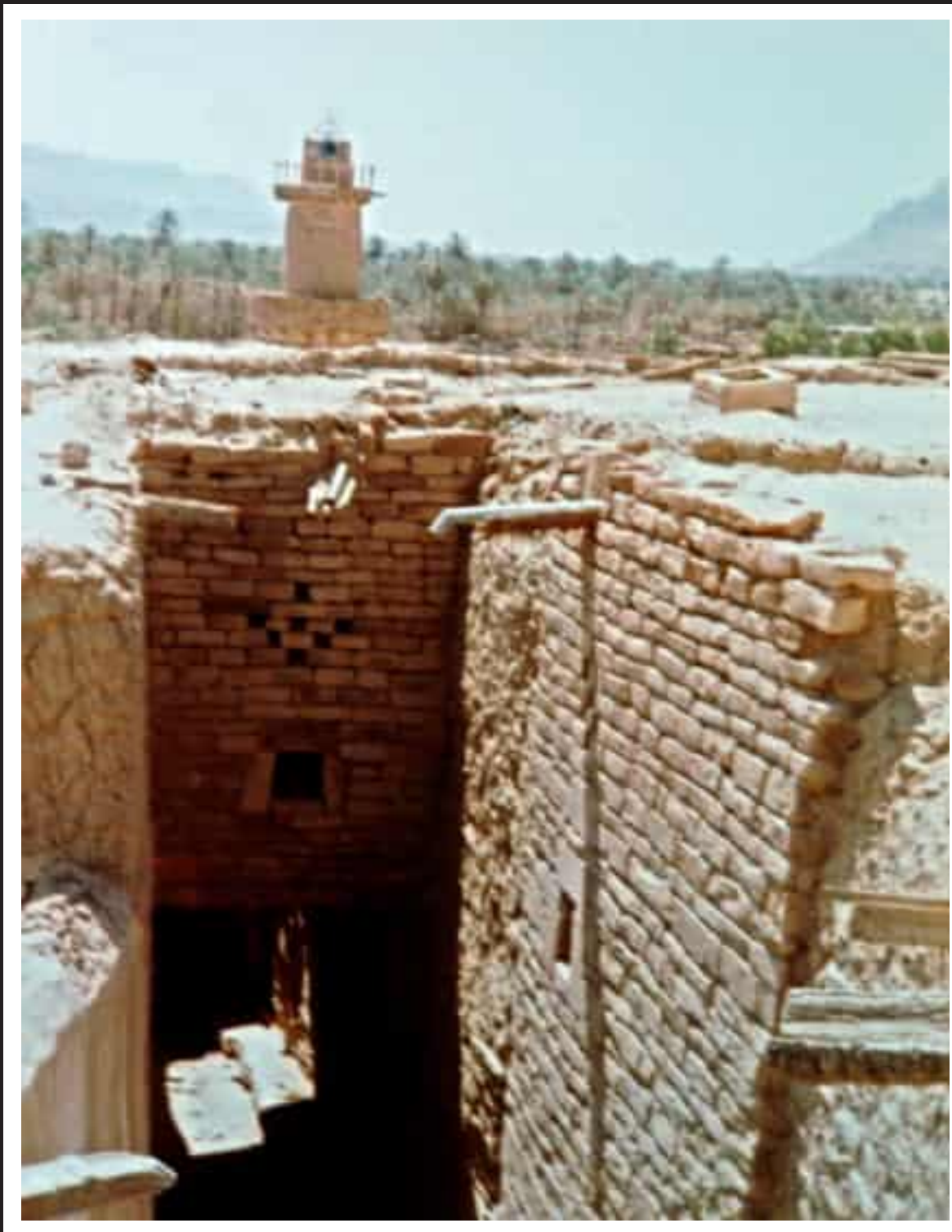
It is a small mosque opens on the eastern park. This mosque has no beacon or podium and has two entrances, one in the east and another in the west. A small room attached to it which is used as shop.



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AZ-ZAWYAH MOSQUE

It is a small mosque near Ibn Amer Mosque. The entrance opens on interior corridors of the town. A small house attached to it where dead bodies were sent for washing and cleaning before sending them for prayer inside the mosque.





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AD-DOHRAH MOSQUE



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It is located in northern part of the town. It does not contain beacon and also opens on interior corridors of the town. This mosque has been restored 50 years ago.



SCHOOLS



In the past, school were called katatib and there are several public schools in the town. Some local schools are managed by donors where schools have no building constructed but houses serve as the school. Education in the past includes teaching on how to read and write, Arabic language, basics of mathematics, reading and reciting Holy Qur'an with some other religious activities. All of these subjects are taught by one teacher only for every class and the student spends a year or two before graduation. At that time there is only one building constructed school and it was in the south of the town established by Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Noah.





AL-AHWASH (Celebration Area)

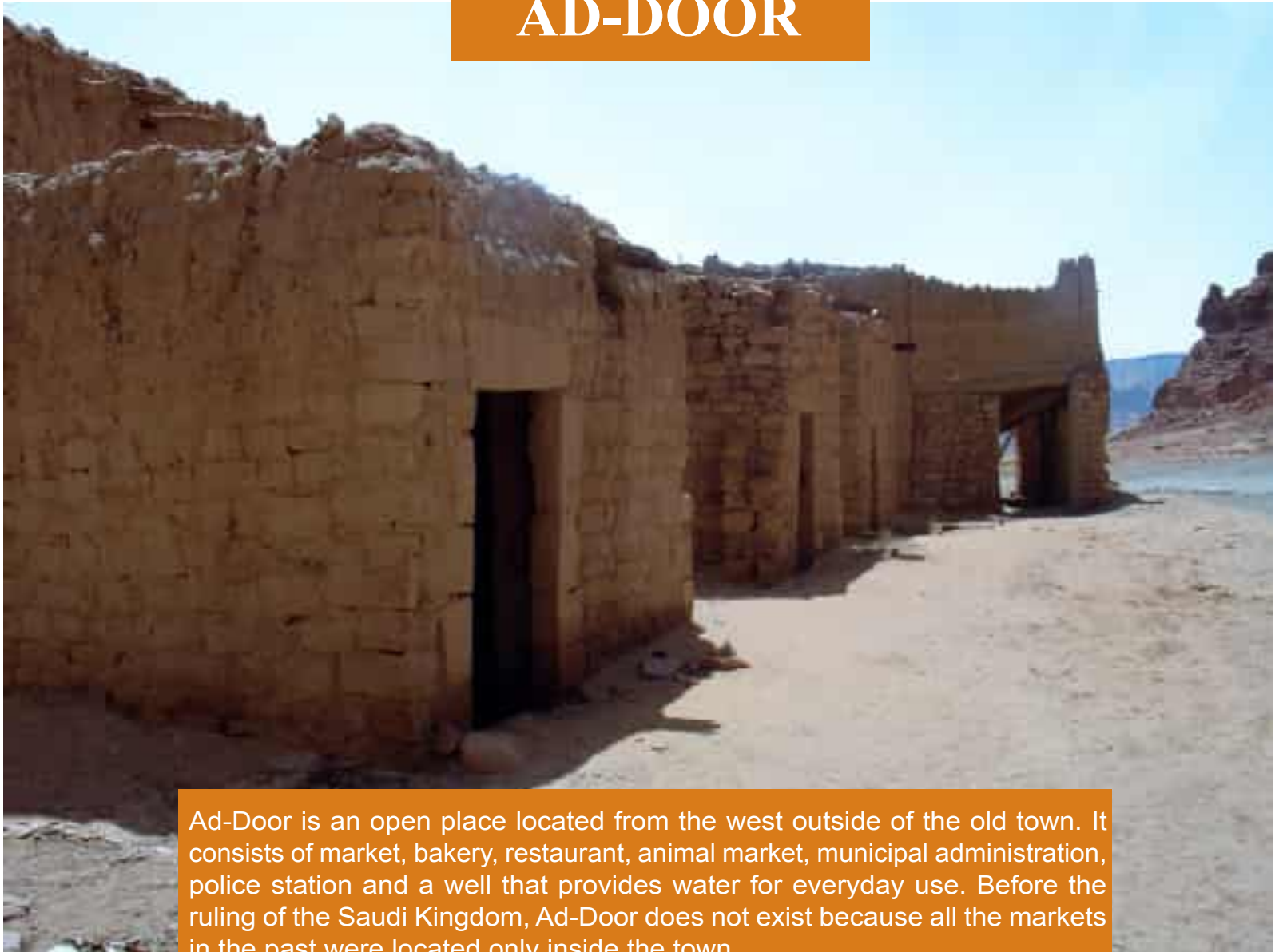


Open areas called al-ahwash are surrounded by wall built of stones and mud. In most cases, it has only one entrance. The area is estimated 10 x 15 square meters. Al-ahwash is used as venue to celebrate different occasions such as wedding, parties and other social events. Some of these were also used to keep animals in evening. These areas are owned by some families which are rented by people who wanted to use it for their occasions.



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AD-DOOR



Ad-Door is an open place located from the west outside of the old town. It consists of market, bakery, restaurant, animal market, municipal administration, police station and a well that provides water for everyday use. Before the ruling of the Saudi Kingdom, Ad-Door does not exist because all the markets in the past were located only inside the town.





AL-HAJAJ WELL

Al-Hajaj Well is in the western side of the old town. Sheikh Saleh Al-Hajaj provided in digging the well with all the expenses paid on his own. In 1951, it was created outside the walls of the town by carving into stones with 15 meters depth. Being a generous man, Sheikh Saleh donated this well in the town for the benefits of all people.





EIN TID'EL

The famous spring water in Al-Ula called by local people Al-Geneina or Ein Tid'el. Ein Tid'el water system had been built long before the time of Christ. People in the old town consider Ein Tid'el as “compassionate mother” because it gives water for drinking, cooking, for ablution, bathing, for animals, for laundry and irrigation. More than thirty years ago, Ein Tid'el is still being used by local population as source for distribution of water. As a result of digging deep wells around the vicinity of Ein Tid'el, the spring water dried. Al-Geneina is divided into three parts; First part is for drinking and cooking, second part for ablution, bathing and drinking water for animals and third part for women and laundry. Tourists can see this distribution of water at the time of their visit in the old town.



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Extending Ein Tid'el canal amid the farms and orchards to irrigate town's orchards through open irrigation channels and some covered under the ground. Through regulations, laws and customs of agreed-upon written document which is respected by everyone, Chairman of Ein Tid'el oversee the division of water and timeframes as well as the distribution of work



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between the beneficiaries of the maintenance. Cleaning of the waterways for irrigation is being done in accordance with the laws and customs also managed by Chairman of Ein Ted El known to the local population as Mo Alem. There is one installation of atantorah (solar clock in the form of obelisk) used in dividing the timeframes for distribution of water and work among farmers.



ASABA'AH WALL



Asaba'ah Wall is located to the north of old town at a distance of about 3 kilometers from the direction of Madain Saleh. The wall has been built of stone and mud by local people to prevent attacks of Ibn Rashed, governor of Hail 116 years ago. It was constructed with urgency that is why it doesn't have any architectural design or any carvings. It is extended from the western mountain to the eastern mountain of Al-Ula. The wall has opening holes for guns which is being used to shoot enemies through the wall. The wall have gate before but had been destroyed due to flooding. There is Abu Najdi Castle is located north of the Asabaah wall owned by Al-Badanah clan.



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SOUTHERN WALL

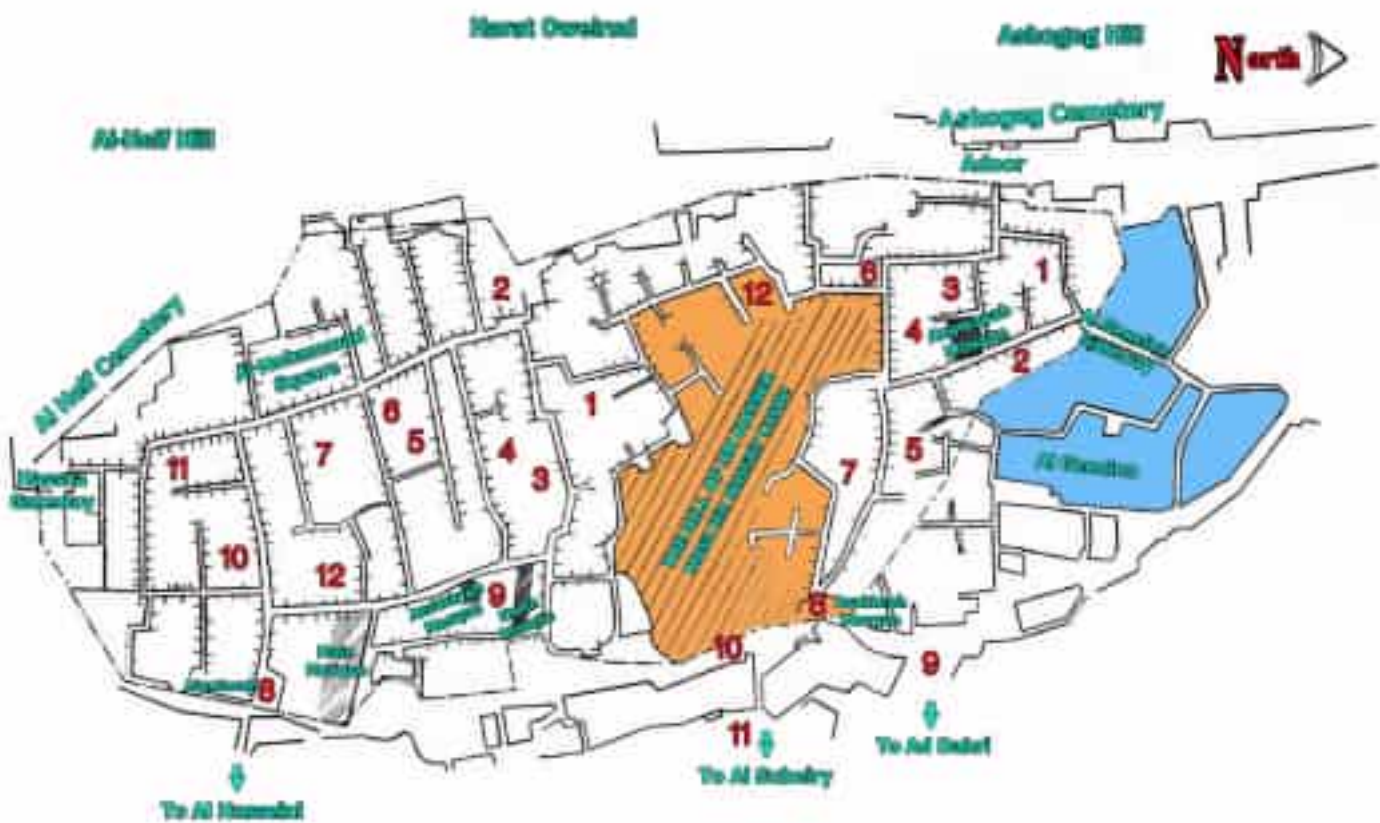
It is located at one kilometer south of the town. Southern wall is built by mud and an estimated height of about 3.5 meters. There are several small forts and gateways for checkpoints and purpose of security and control in the area. These forts are named after those families of the town who managed it. The history of the construction of this wall is not known precisely, but there are indications saying that the one who built this wall was Ottoman Governor of Damascus Issa Pasha in 1639 as requested by local people. There is Jofeylah Castle is at the southern wall of the west beside Al-Helf Hill. It was built to prevent attacks from enemies and to control the entry and exit of the town. And Al-Ali Castle is located along the southern wall of the town beside Al-Khalos Valley. It's been built during eras of political instability before the ruling of Saudi Kingdom. Al-Ali Family and clan of Bani Sakhar are the owners of this castle.



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Map of Al-Ula Old Town

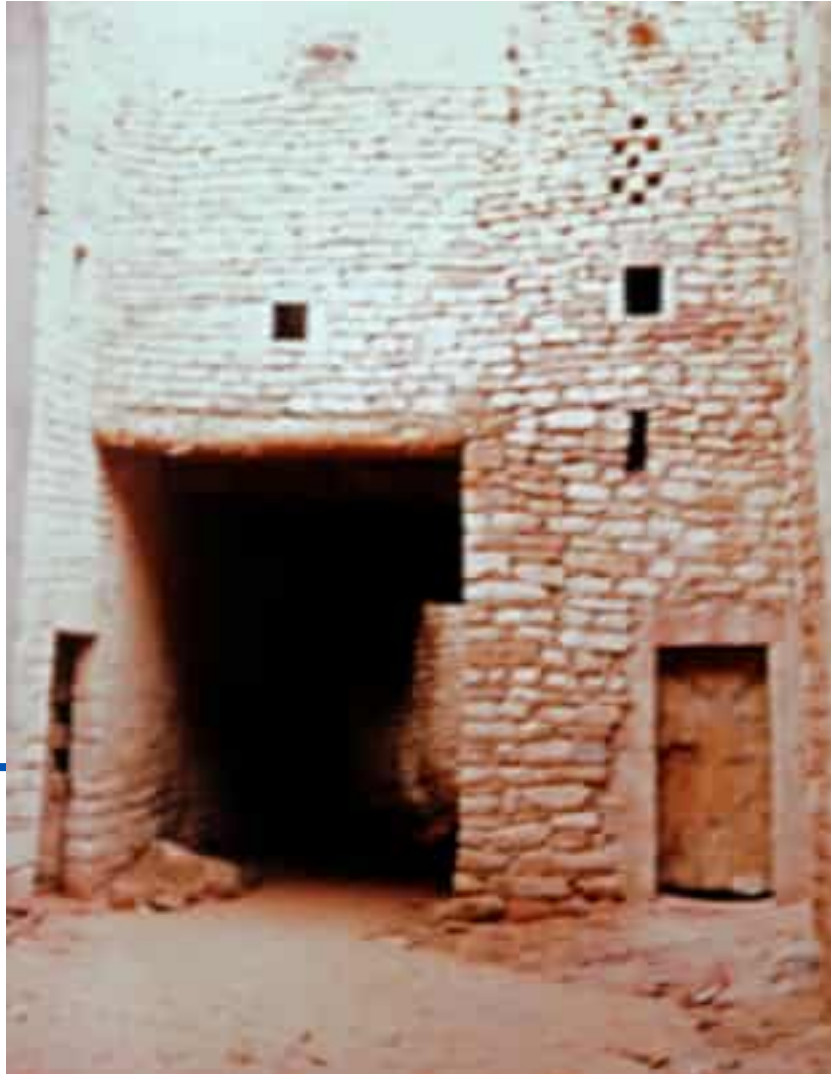
TWO ZONES IN AL-ULA OLD TOWN

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AL-HELFAH ZONE (SOUTH)

1. Arafah Street
2. Ibn Amer Square
3. Abu Al-Hassan Street
4. Al-Arab Street
5. Al-Hajara Street
6. Al-Mohammad Street
7. Al-Qodah Street
8. Ad-Darb Square
9. Al-Khosaysah Zone
10. Ibn Hamdan Street
11. Al-Bolebly Zone
12. Asabrah Street



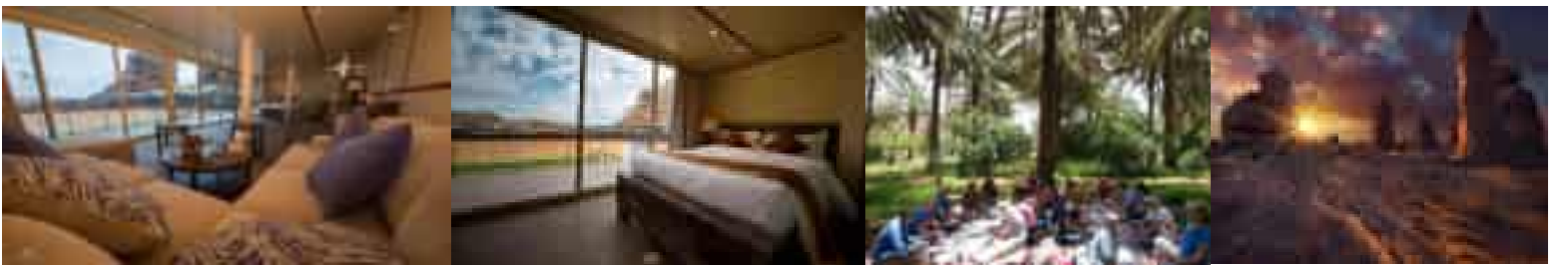
ASHOQQE Q ZONE

1. Kharabah Street
2. Ad-Dohrah Street
3. Ibn Mosaed Street
4. Goten Zone
5. Ibn Saleh Street
6. Asohen Zone
7. Al-Khokha Street
8. Ad-Darb Square
9. Almotery Square
10. Tawus Street
11. Mushraq Street
12. Al-Badanah Street

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