

# Preservation Survey and Situation Assessment

## Acre's El-Jazzar Mosque

Dr. Abdel Razeq Matani

February 2023





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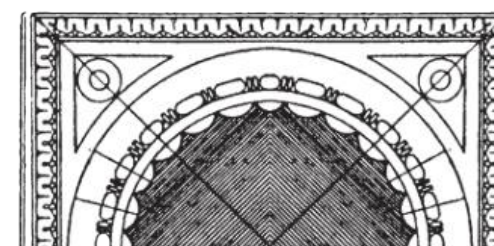
### Commissioned by:

El-Jazzar Islamic Waqf Board of Trustees

### Prepared by:

Dr. Abdel Razeq Matani

Expert on Islamic Archeology and Architecture



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February 2023



Selim Najm,  
Chairman of the  
Board of Trustees

## Al-Jazzar Mosque: A World Heritage Site

Al-Jazzar Mosque ("Nur Ahmadiyya") isn't merely a mosque with religious sanctity. It's also a compound with historical and cultural value and a rare and unique artistic gem that has become emblematic of the old city of Acre, a World Heritage City. The Al-Jazzar Mosque and Compound housed *al-Madrasa al-Ahmadiyya*, what we'd today consider an institute of higher learning. It had been a reputable bastion of knowledge in recent decades. Its rooms served as a warm and embracing haven for knowledge-seeking students hailing from all parts of the country. The compound also hosted the Ahmadiyya Library, with rare and priceless books that were important sources for furthering knowledge, and an Islamic court that promoted justice among the people. *Qanat al-Pasha*, a magnificent aquaduct, supplied the cavernous cisterns contained within the foundations of the Al-Jazzar compound with water from the Al-Kabri region. The water was then channeled to the adjacent Sabil Al-Jazzar, which thirsty visitors would use to quench their thirst.

Aside from the mosque's functional and religious significance, it's also a architectural and artistic masterpiece unparalleled elsewhere in the country or anywhere else in the world. It's the most important mosque in the old city of Acre, a World Heritage City, and it served as a model for other mosques in the city and the region. The mosque is ornately decorated with exquisite carvings and adornments, which, along with its breathtaking and extraordinary architecture, have made it an artistic icon and the foremost landmark of the old city of Acre.

## The Board of Trustees, Projects and Never-Ending Achievements...

Ever since being given the privilege of serving as the board of trustees of Acre's Islamic Waqf, we've spared no efforts in tending to the mosque and other endowments in the Old City. Over the years, we've conducted many projects connected to the many endowments, and particularly to the Al-Jazaar Mosque. Several of Al-Jazaar's renovation and preservation projects stand out: Rehabilitating and sealing the roof and the mosque's main dome, treating the mosque's exterior walls after the fire that broke out nearby, conducting a full overhaul of the roofs of the rooms and corridors of the arcades along the perimeter of the mosque courtyard and insulating them against rainwater, which had caused serious damage in the past several decades, building and renovating a hall used by Acre residents as a house of bereavement, expanding the women's prayer hall, building new restrooms and a new room for purifying the dead, renovating and expanding the library and stocking it with a collection of valuable books and auxiliary equipment, which is made available to students and city residents seeking a quiet and comfortable place to study in the city, installing an electric elevator, and making the mosque accessible to those with special needs.



Dr. Husam Tafesh,  
Member of the  
Board of Trustees



Mazen Habush,  
Member of the  
Board of Trustees

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## Risk and Damage Survey...

Following up on our previous efforts at preserving the mosque and compound in the best and most appropriate way, we ordered this comprehensive survey, carried out by "ATIQ For Antiquities and Heritage", in deference to the mosque's unique religious value and in light of the urgent need for renovating and performing a complete overhaul of the entire structure, given its unique nature, which necessitates specialized professional handywork. This survey followed previous construction and surveys we had carried out, including a comprehensive general survey of all of the elements of the mosque and compound, including its foundations, the shops, and the cisterns. The survey included an assessment of risks and damages in the compound, a plan for a comprehensive overhaul of the mosque, and work priorities.

## Preserving the unique mosque and its heritage...

The results of the damage and risk survey revealed the delapidated state of many of the mosque's elements, which are in great danger, necessitating urgent and immediate intervention to preserve its great heritage and prevent irreversible damage in the future. We note that the structure's architectural and aesthetic uniqueness necessitates specialized professional treatment by accredited professional teams specializing in working with this type of art and architecture, so that the mosque can be preserved properly.

This is a mega-project requiring special expertise, immense resources and combined efforts to ensure that the mosque is properly preserved. We, at the board of trustees, have therefore decided to launch a campaign entitled "Preversing Al-Jazzar Mosque, Together", in order to enlist the resources we need to appropriately preserve and renovate the compound and the structure.

Finally, we would be remiss if we were not to thank Dr. Abdel Razeq Matani from ATIQ For Antiquities and Heritage, an expert in Islamic archaeology and architecture, for his well-appreciated efforts to prepare this report, for identifying the structure's needs, and for preparing and creating a comprehensive intervention plan for the entire compound.

**Salim Najmi**, Chairman

The Board of Trustees of the Islamic Waqf of Acre





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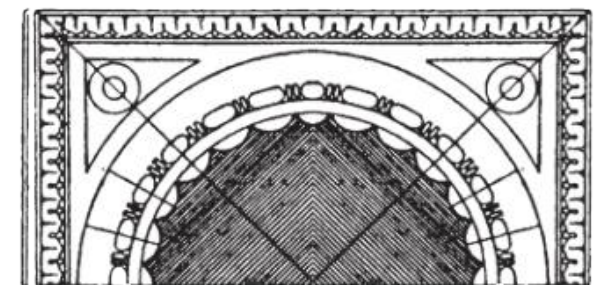
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## About this survey

- This report is a summary of a damage survey and a situation assessment of the El-Jazzar Compound and Mosque, commissioned by the mosque's Islamic Waqf Board of Trustees, and conducted over the course of about a year (2022-2023).
- This survey is a preliminary step ahead of the general development and planning of the compound, as part of the El-Jazzar Islamic Waqf Board of Trustee's vision, which aims to preserve the entire compound and create a long-term action plan involving tourism and heritage for the compound.
- The survey is a program that providing policymaking guidance and recommendations for preserving the compound, given by experts in the field. It will propose stages and lists of priorities, including the selection of short-term objectives that can be implemented in the near future, based on the priorities set by this program.

### The goals of this survey are as follows:

- Gathering multidisciplinary (i.e. historical, archaeological, archival and artistic) data that will form the foundation of the survey.
- Assessing the current state of the various elements of the compound and suggesting recommendations and intervention options, building a general work plan, and determining the stages of the work that is to be done, based on the priority list determined in the survey, in conjunction with the board of trustees and based on the recommendation of subject matter experts.
- Given the high risk level of some of the elements of the compound, as presented in this survey, it is highly urgent that these damages are handled.
- The minaret's uniqueness and complexity necessitates particularly prudent and professional handling.
- The findings of this survey serve as a recommendation and guidance ahead of the determination of an intervention policy. Before the various damages are dealt with, a detailed work plan must be prepared, which should include precise and updated measurements, in consultation with the necessary professional teams and subject matter experts, in order to determine the best possible intervention for preserving the structure and its significant value.



## Previous surveys and records

This survey is a general survey of the entire el-Jazzar Compound, meant to provide an up-to-date snapshot of the current state of the compound, to assess the state of its various elements, and to build a general intervention plan for preserving the compound. At the time the survey was prepared, we referred to previous studies and records of the mosque, and to surveys that were commissioned by the mosque's board of trustees, in conjunction with others. These materials served as a reference that we used to monitor the changes to the compound, particularly the 3-D laser survey conducted in collaboration with the University of Pavia in 2017.

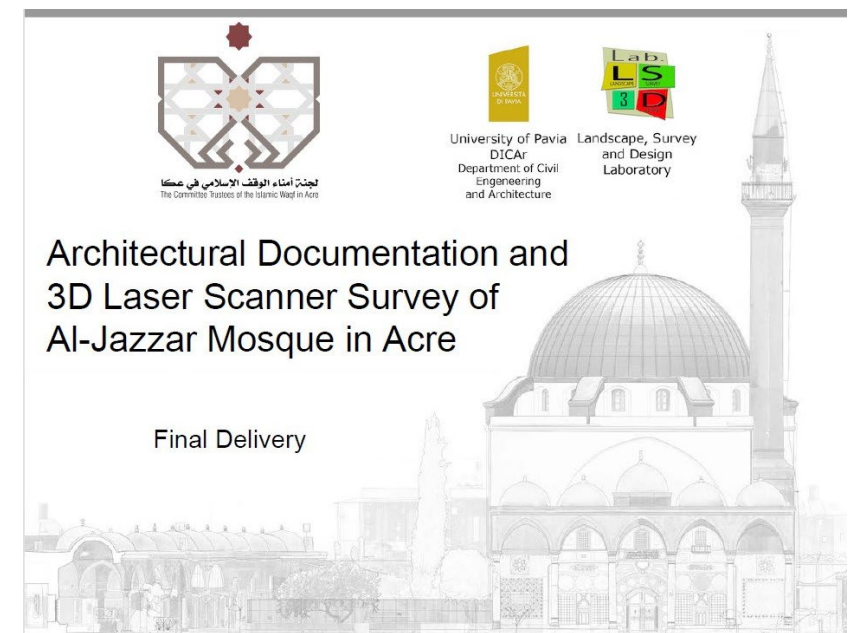
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- **موسوعة المقدسات في فلسطين :المسح الشامل والدليل الكامل لمقدسات اقضية حيفا , عكا , صفد ,طبريا ,بيسان ,الناصره وجنين ( ثلاث مجلدات).** ام

الفحم :مؤسسة الأقصى للوقف والتراث .(2014)

# Site details

**Site name:** The El-Jazzar Compound and Mosque

**Name in Arabic:** مسجد ومجمع الجزار

**Other names:** جامع الأنوار [Jam'i al-Anwar], "the Mosque of Lights",  
نور احمدية [Nur Ahmadiyya]

**Address:** The Old City of Acre.

**Brief site description:**

A mosque and compound build in the late 18 century.

**Coordinates:** 758653/206913

**Block/Parcel:** 3\18013



**Figure 2:** Aerial photograph of El-Jazzar Mosque



**Figure 1:** El-Jazzar Mosque (1), compared with the mosques of the Old City of Acre ( Google Earth)

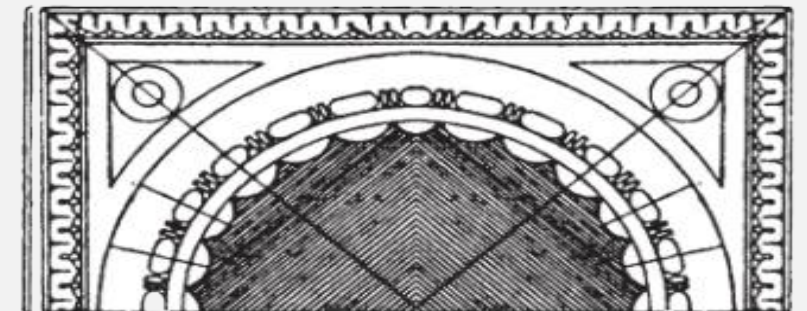


# Chapter 1

- Acre's golden age, during the time of the Ottoman Empire (18th-19th centuries)



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Trustees - Acre



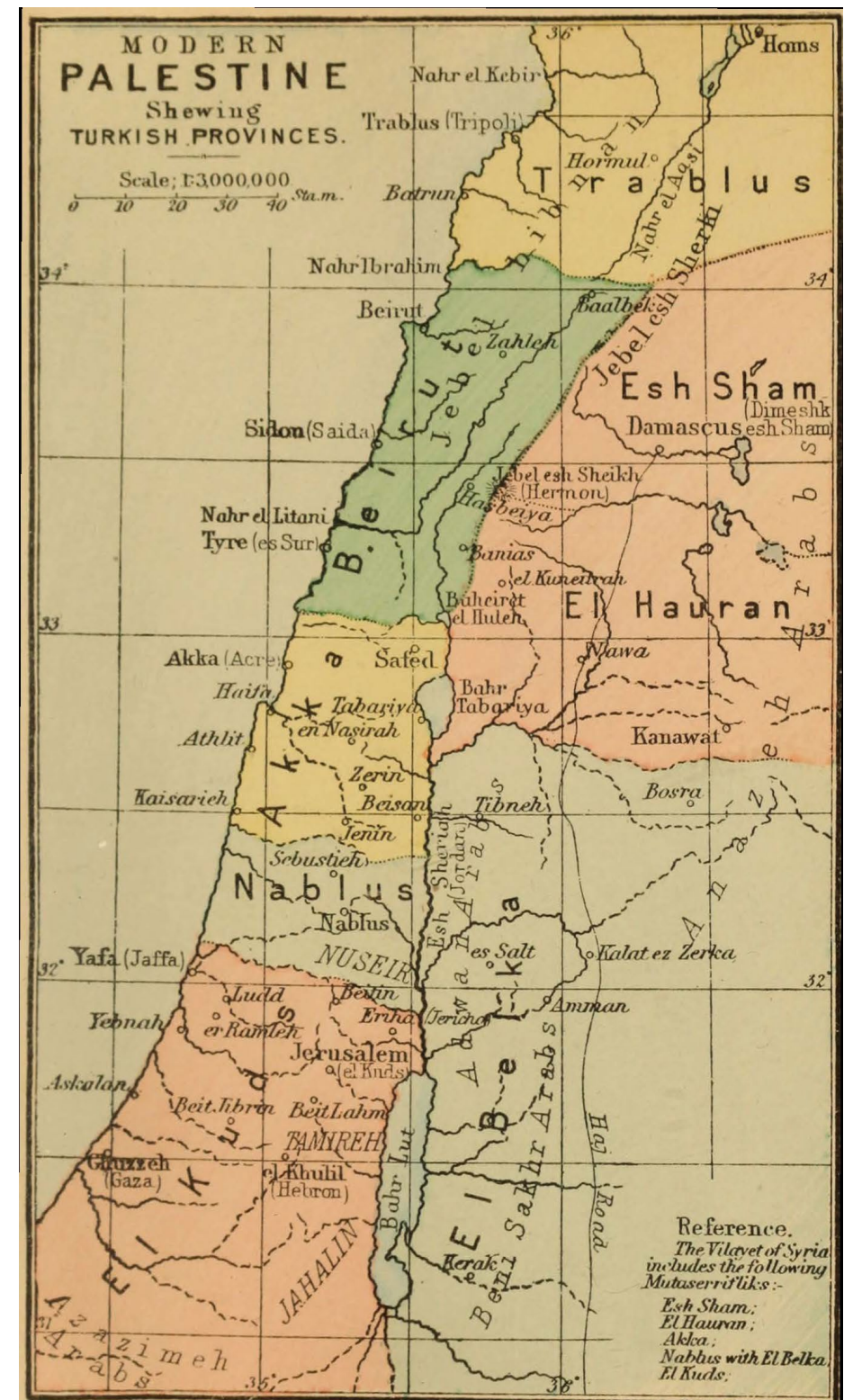
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# The golden age of Acre, the capital of the North

During the second half of the 18th century, when the Ottoman leadership was busy fending off external threats (i.e. the war between the Ottomans and the Russian Empire, 1768–1774), Zahir al-Umar took control of the Galilee region, and established his sovereignty there. At first, al-Umar established his capital in Tiberias, and subsequently, he annexed Acre, giving it the status of a capital city. Al-Umar ruled the Upper and Lower Galilee from Acre, and toward the end of his rule, he ruled over Jaffa as well.

Being a local governor who took power following a revolt, he was constantly wary of the Ottoman Empire's reaction to his revolt. Zahir al-Umar knew that as soon as the empire's central government becomes less preoccupied with the great threats facing the empire, its resources will be diverted to handling domestic affairs, that is, crushing local rebellions. That's why Zahir al-Umar invested a fair amount of resources to build structures that would help strengthen and fortify the cities. He built the Saraya in Acre and in Tiberias, and he restored fortresses.

(Matani 2020: 301-310)



**Figure 3:** The administrative divisions of Palestine and Greater Syria, 1872, according to Claude Reignier

(Courtesy of Kurşun, Steih and Aydın 2020: 187)



In 1774, the Küçük Kaynarca treaty was signed between the Ottoman and Russian empires. The treaty freed up the Ottomans so that they could deal with the empire's domestic affairs, mainly local rebellions. Consequently, Zahir al-Umar ended up being persecuted by the Ottoman leadership, and he was ultimately executed, in 1775. El-Jazzar Pasha replaced Zahir al-Umar as the ruler of the Galilee.

El-Jazzar Pasha made Acre the seat of his government, and continued building and restoring the city. El-Jazzar Pasha restored the city walls, built Khan al-Umdan (the columns), and erected the city's largest mosque, the El-Jazzar Mosque.

The mosque built within the compound is immense and awe-inspiring, and its construction clearly required a great deal of resources. The mosque contains a prayer hall, a massive, elevated, domed structure supported by 4 elephant leg columns. The prayer hall is 24 meters high. The minaret built within the mosque is located in the corner of the prayer hall, and is 33 meters high. El-Jazzar Pasha called the mosque "Nur Ahmadiyya", a common name eponymous with the great mosques in Istanbul, and one

with a symbolic meaning.

El-Jezzar Pasha's reign was seen as Acre's golden age, when Acre served as the capital of the North, remaining a key and central city in the region until its decline as the capital of the North in the early 20th century, when it was eclipsed by nearby Haifa, which developed into a new, industrial city (Matani 2020: 301-310).



**Figure 4:** Khan al-Umdan in William Henry Bartlett’s 1836 drawing

## About the complex

The El-Jazzar Mosque is the largest and most important of the Old City of Acre's mosques, and it's a World Heritage Site. The mosque occupies a unique and central place in the Old City, and is an important regional and city landmark. The compound was built in 1781, and it was named Nur Ahmadiyya (نور احمديّة). It is known as the el-Jazzar Mosque, named for its builder, Ahmad Pasha el-Jazzar, the Ottomon governor of Acre, which was the capital of the *Sidon Ayalet* (province) in the 18th century. The mosque was modelled after the great Ottoman mosques, and it was described as the most beautiful mosque of its time in all of *Balad al-Sham* (Greater Syria).

The mosque is located in the north of the Old City, in the Al-Ramel neighborhood, near the old city walls. The main entrance to the mosque leads into a street named el-Jazzar, which branches off Salah al-Din street, one of the Old City's main thoroughfares. It is adjacent to the southern wall of the Acre Fortress, and the city's markets developed around it.

In addition to the mosque's religious significance, the building has historical, cultural, educational, and asthetic value, and has become emblematic of the Old City of Acre. It is a complete 4-dunam complex that contains a large prayer hall (the mosque),

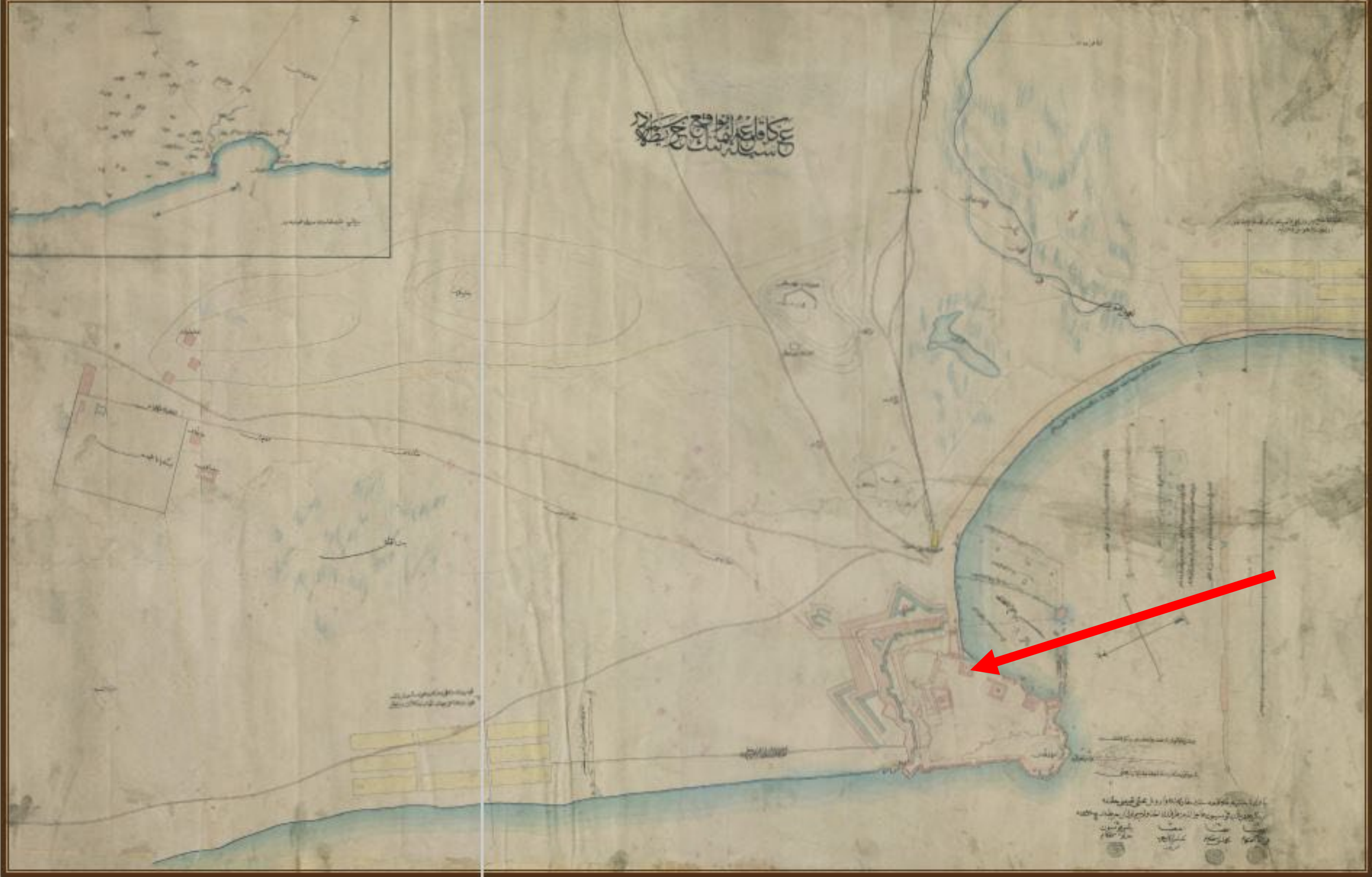
a *madrassah* (study hall), the *al-Ahmadiyya* library, a *sabil* (fountain) for drinking water, and the *mutawada*, used for ritual ablution, also known as the Shadhuran, in addition to the *turba*, the mausoleum of El-Jazzar Pasha, who built the complex.

The complex is roughly rectangular. Its base is elevated above the surrounding streets, and the structure is built on a ramp, partially occupied by shops, which are part of the mosque's *waqf*, and an immense underground cistern, one of the foundations of the complex (For more information, see: Mheibesh 1999; The Encyclopedia of Holy Places, Akka District: 26-34; Radojewski, 2010; Hortig, 2010 ).



**Figure 5:** The Old City of Acre and el-Jazzar Mosque in the early 20th century.

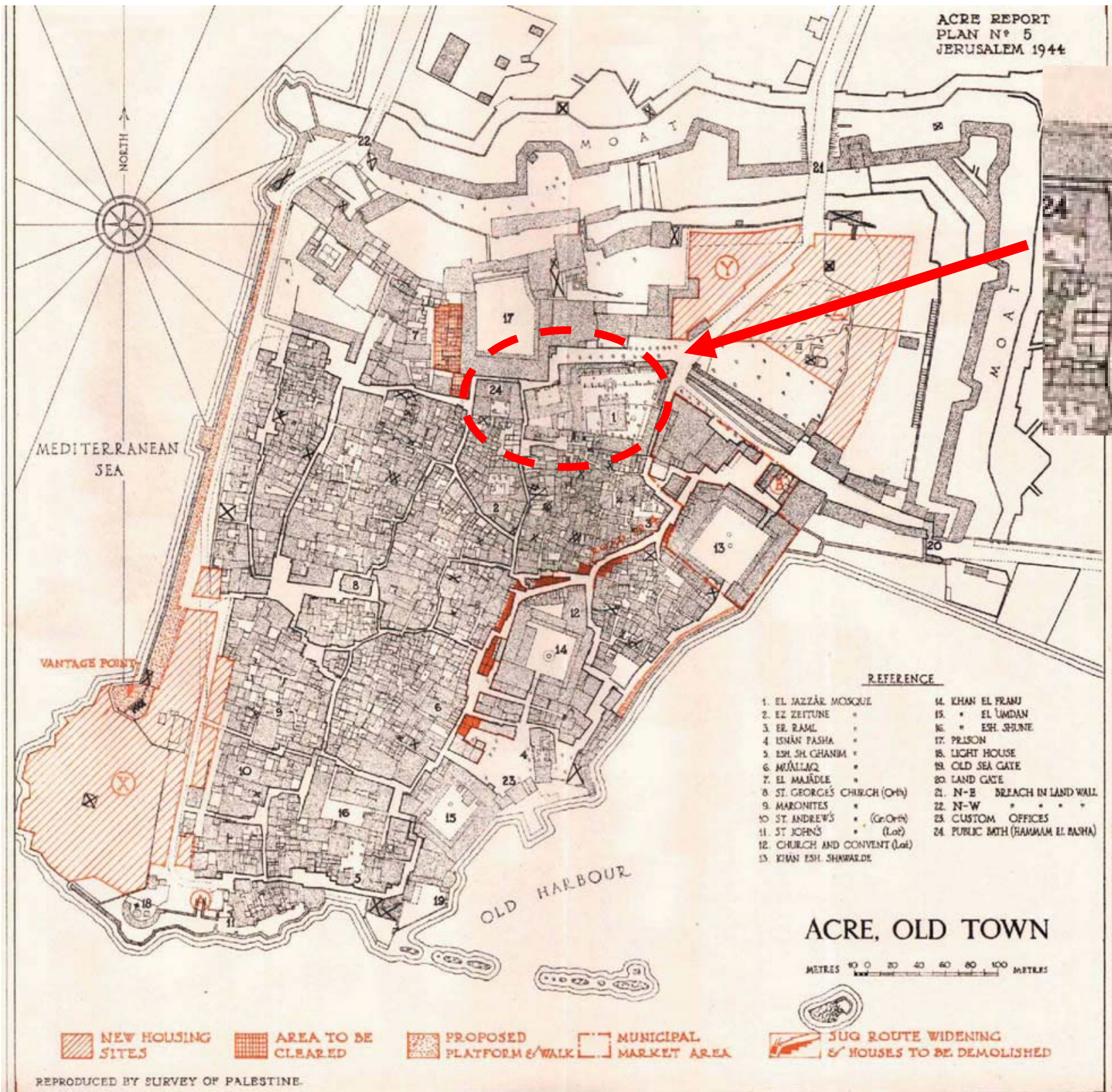




**Figure 6:** El-Jazzar Mosque depicted in an Ottoman map of Acre and its surrounding areas, from 1880

(courtesy of Kurşun, Steih and Aydın, 2020: pp. 174-175. Source: BOA, HRT.H, 525.29 Z 1297.)





**Figure 7:** The el-Jazzar Mosque as it appears in a survey map of Acre from the British Mandatory period (1944)

Winter, Percy H. 1944.  
Acre Report - Preservation and Reconstruction of Acre, Survey and Report.  
Government of Palestine,  
Public Works Department

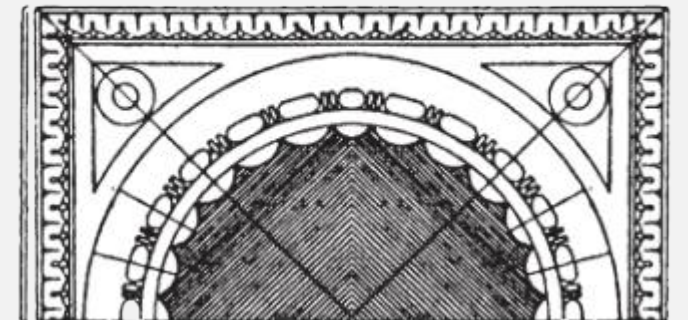


# Chapter 2

- A Physical Description of the el-Jazzar Compound and Mosque



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# A physical description of the complex

This is a complete 4-dunam complex that contains a large prayer hall (the mosque), a madrassah (study hall), the al-Ahmadiyya library, a sabil (fountain) for drinking water, and the *mutawada-mathara*, known as the Shadhuran, in addition to the turba, the tomb of El-Jazzar Pasha, who built the complex.

The complex is roughly rectangular. Its base is elevated above the surrounding streets, and the structure is built on a ramp, partially occupied by shops, which are part of the mosque's *waqf*, and an immense underground cistern, one of the foundations of the complex.

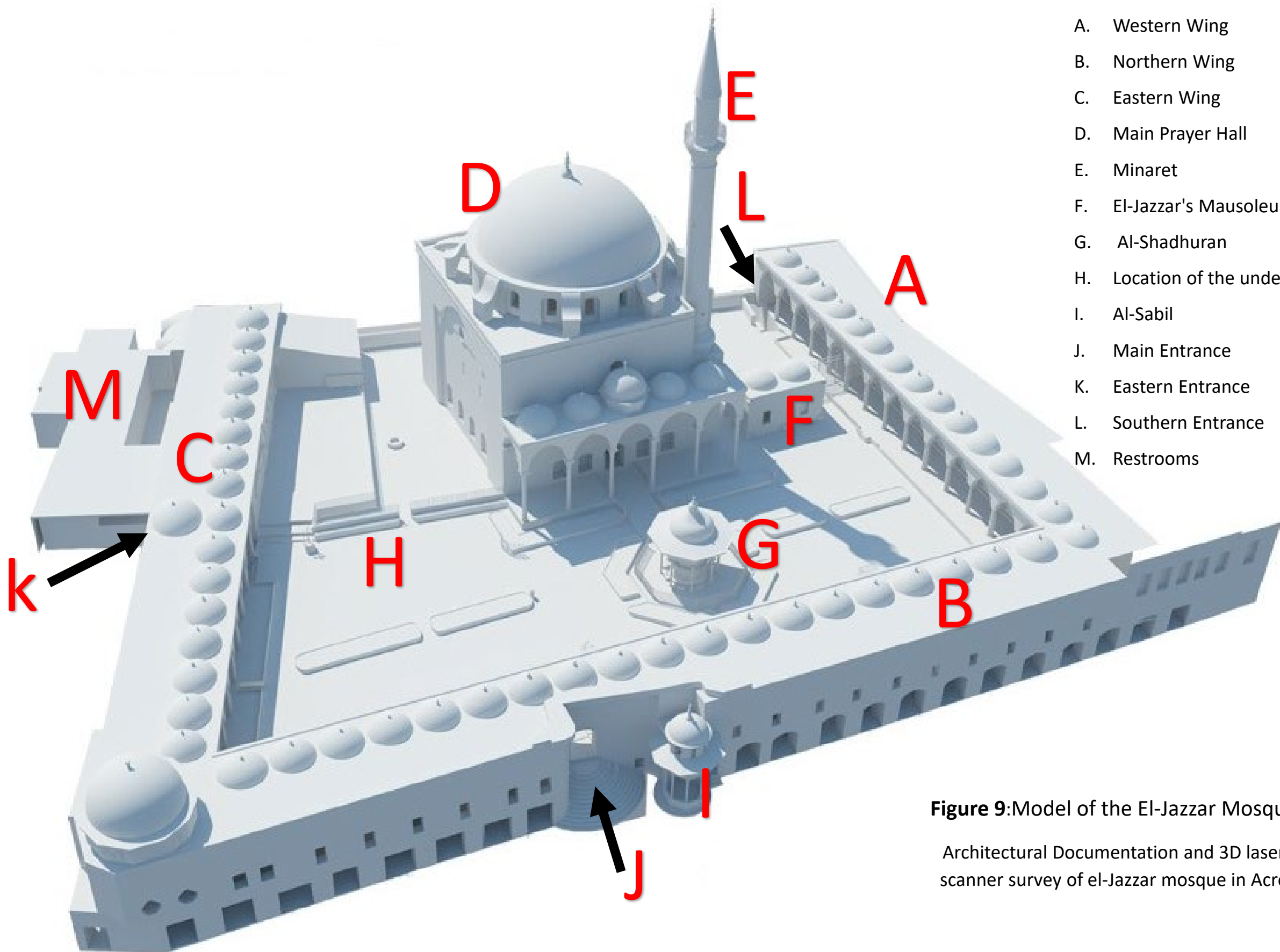
In this chapter, we'll present the various elements of the El-Jazzar Complex and Mosque, and elaborate on what sets these elements apart:

**Figure 8:** The El-Jazzar Mosque, from survey maps of Acre from the British Mandatory period.

Acer, Archive of the Department of Antiquities of Mandatory Palestine (1943)







- A. Western Wing
- B. Northern Wing
- C. Eastern Wing
- D. Main Prayer Hall
- E. Minaret
- F. El-Jazzar's Mausoleum (*turba*)
- G. Al-Shadhuran
- H. Location of the underground cistern
- I. Al-Sabil
- J. Main Entrance
- K. Eastern Entrance
- L. Southern Entrance
- M. Restrooms

**Figure 9:**Model of the El-Jazzar Mosque

Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre



## El-Jazaar Mosque -Entrances

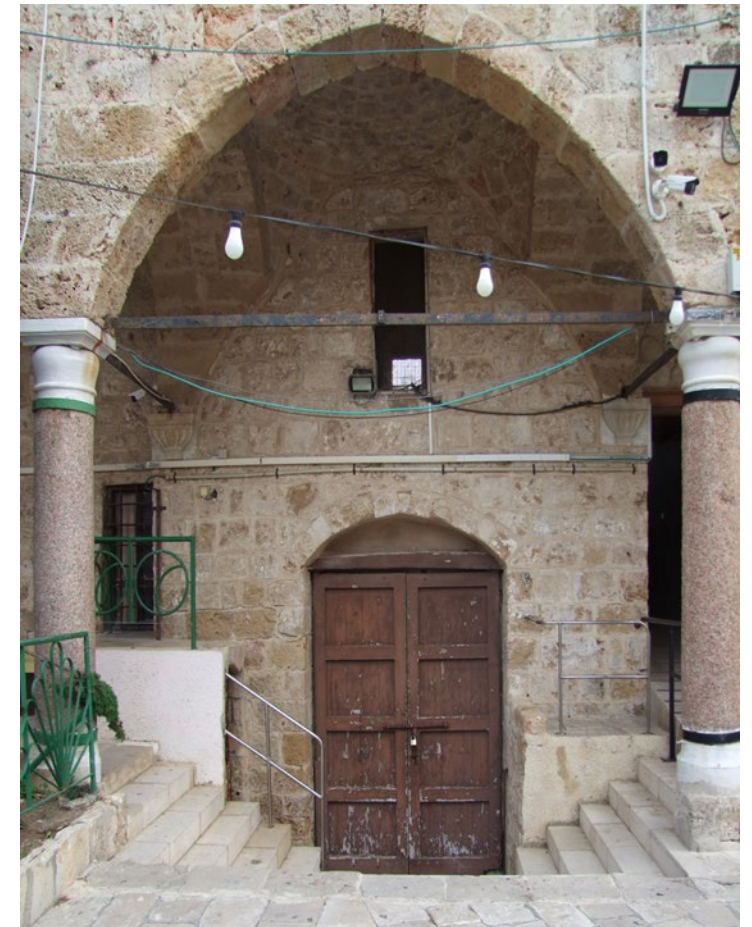
There are three entrances into the complex:

**The main entrance (J):** Located in the compound's northern wall, which is reached by ascending a staircase of 13 semicircular stairs that become smaller toward the top. The entrance is a rectangular opening under a Segmental arch (3 meters high and 1.80 meters wide), connecting to the northern acsadra/colonnade (rawwaq) that forms the perimeter of the esplanade. The entrance is adorned with *ablaqs*, and there is a marble panel on the exterior face, inscribed with four verses of poetry, including praises and blessings for el-Jazzar Pasha for building this mosque.





**The Eastern Entrance(K):** Located at the center of the complex's eastern arch, facing the *Al-Qaysariyya* Market, which is now known as the El-Jazzar Market. The mosque is reached from the eastern entrance by climbing a stairwell (8 stairs), which leads to a small, rectangular courtyard (3 meters long and 2 meters wide). The courtyard is covered by a vault, which connects to the eastern arcade. This entrance is adjacent to the underground cistern, and it is generally kept closed, except for Fridays and holidays.



**The Southern Entrance(L):** Located at the western edge of the complex's southern wall, connecting the mosque complex to the Al-Qaysariyya Market, from which stairs can be climbed to reach the mosque. This is a rather modest and unadorned entrance, and it is currently closed and unused.





## The courtyard and the arcade

The complex is surrounded, on three sides (to the east, north and west), by rows of rooms, and there are arcades running along the facades of the rooms that form the perimeter of the inner courtyard. The arcades are topped with small domes (one dome above each room) set atop pendentives built into the exterior walls of the rooms, set atop pendentives built into the exterior walls of the rooms, and supported on the opposite side by ornate marble pillars. The complex's eastern wing (Eastern Wing - C) is 65 meters long, the northern wing (Northern Wing - B) is 80 meters long, and the western wing (Western Wing - A) is 53 meters long. The size of the rooms varies between the arcades, but their structure is uniform, keeping the facade uniform all along the arcades.





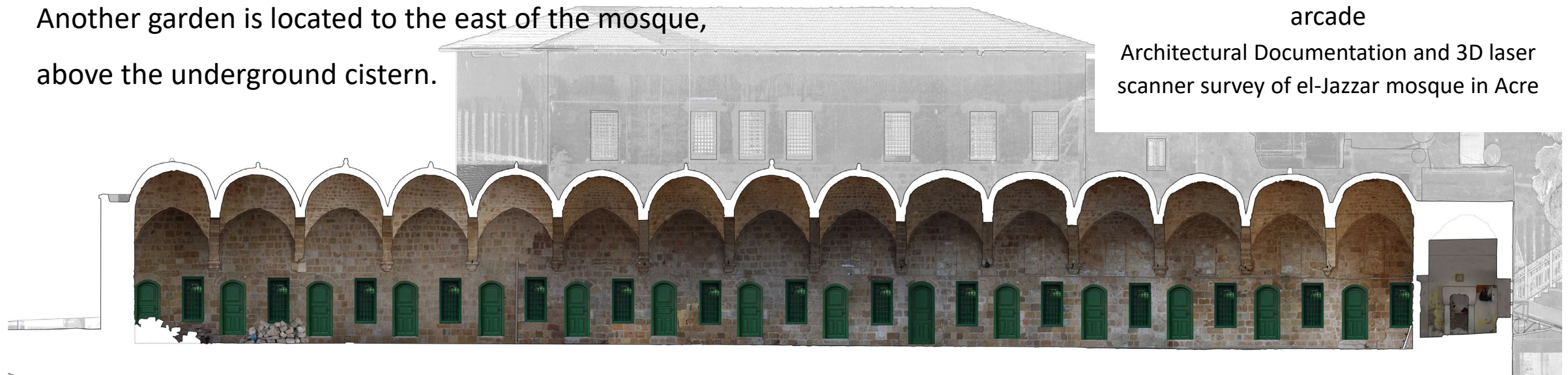
The entrances to the rooms are of the exact same size (1.80 meters long and 0.80 meters wide), and each room has a rectangular window (1.20 meters long and 0.80 meters wide) facing the courtyard of the mosque, and another window facing toward the exterior side of the complex. The rooms served as study rooms for Al-Madrassa Al-Ahmadiyya, and contained a library, as well. Some of the rooms were used as living quarters for students.

**The complex's courtyard contains:** the prayer hall, the complex's main structure, the ablution fountain, and the two *turba* rooms in which the governors of Acre, Pasha el-Jazzar and his successor, Suleiman Pasha, were buried. There is a small garden and mausoleum behind the *turba*. Another garden is located to the east of the mosque, above the underground cistern.



**Figure 10:** The facade of the western arcade

Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre





# El-Jazzar Mausoleum

## *(al-Turba – F)*

The tombs are in the northwestern part of the courtyard, to the west of the prayer hall structure. There are two granite-covered tombs in the complex, in which Ahmad Pasha el-Jazzar (d. 1804) and Suleiman Pasha (d. 1819) are buried (Mheibesh 1999:108).

They were built at a later stage by his son, Suleiman Pasha, in accordance with el-Jazzar's will, in which he stated that he wished to be buried in the complex. The mausoleum complex is rectangular (6 meters long and 4 meters wide), and it contains two open rooms covered with two hemispherical domes.





## Al-Mazwala (sundial)

A sundial used to determine the prayer times for each day (*al-dhahr* and *al-aser*), located in the northwestern part of the courtyard, with a protective railing around it.

The *mazwala* is made of a granite slab lying atop a granite pillar whose base is comprised of two steps, a round step on the top, and a square step on the bottom. A small metal rod used to tell the time stands at the center of the stone slab, and a dedication is engraved into the lower part of the slab, with the heading *al-Waqfiyya*. The dedication states that it was build by al-Wazir Ahmad Pasha el-Jazzar in the year 1201 of the Islamic calendar (corresponding to the year 1786 of the common era).





## Al-Mutawada: Al-Shaduran (G)

### "الشاذوران-المیضاء"

A pool used for ablution and washing (وضوء - wudu), known as al-Shaduran. The pool is located at the center of the courtyard, opposite the prayer hall, and it has marble tiles around it. In the past, it was connected to ceramic pipes that transported water from the aqueduct that led from the Kabri region, to the north of Acre. Today, the pool is connected to the city's local infrastructure.

The pool is 1.40 meters high, its interior is circular, and it is covered in blue ceramic slabs called *qashan*. It is octagonal on the exterior, and it's covered in ornamented marble slabs. There are eight benches around the pool that worshippers used to sit on when performing ablution. The water flowed from the pool through metal pipes in front of each bench, and drained into a gutter. There is an decorative railing above the walls of the pool, and above the pool is a metal dome, which is probably relatively new, from which the water pour out and into the pool.

The entire structure is capped with a dome propped above eight marble pillars (each pillar is 2.20 meters high and has a 0.50-meter diameter). Each pillar has a capital adorned with plant motifs, above which is a marble band (0.50 meters high), with the dome directly overhead.

The interior of the dome is made of wood, and it is currently painted blue. In the past, it was painted in lighter colors as well – mainly yellows, whites and blues (Mheibesh 105:1999), and the dome's exterior is coated in lead helmet-shaped slabs, giving it an onion shape.





**Figure 11 (from below):** A 1880 drawing of Acre, (Wilson, 1880).

The siphon towers that were connected to the ceramic pipes that led the water from the aquaduct to the city of Acre, which were used to increase the water flow, can be seen in this drawing.



A section of the aquaduct





## Al-Sabil (I)

A elegant decorative basin can be found outside the complex's main entranceway, adjacent to the northern wall and to the left of the main entranceway. It is considered part of the complex. This beautiful *sabil* is adorned with geometric shapes and a marble finish, in addition to the dedications. The *sabil's* water was pumped from the complex's underground cisterns.

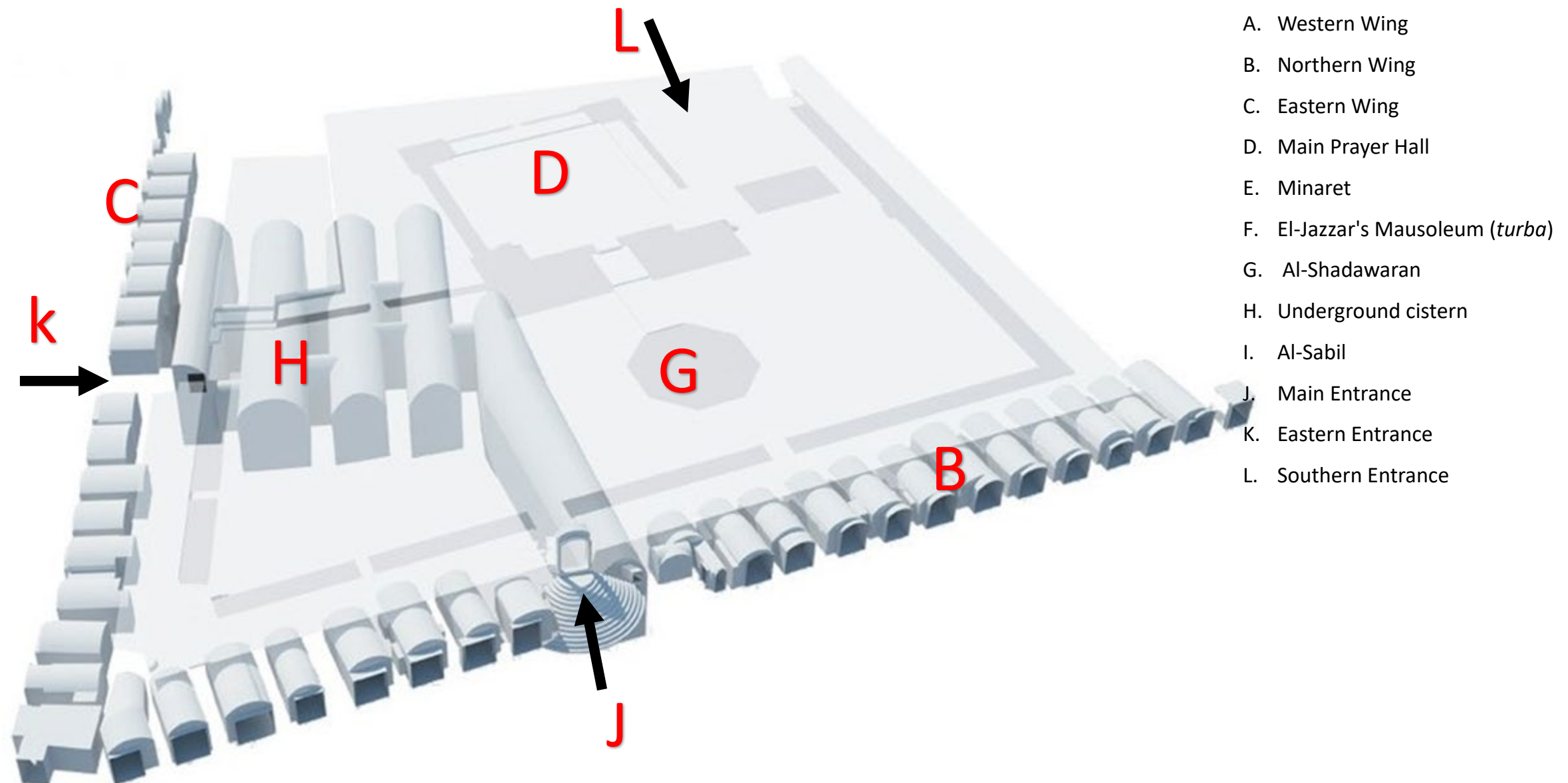
In the El-Jazzar's endowment letter, *sabil* was called *al-Silsabil* (السلسيل), the name of spring in the Garden of Eden that is mentioned in the Quran. Elsewhere, it is called *El-Tasat* (الطاسات), named for the metal cups used for drinking (Mheibesh 1999: 115; for expansion see: Hortig 2010).





## B – The foundations and the lower level

As commonly done in mosques built in the classic Ottoman style, El-Jazzar Mosque is built atop elevated foundations, resulting in an enormous ramp, which contains the shops under the mosque and the immense underground cistern.



**Figure 12:** A model of the lower level of El-Jazzar Mosque.

Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre

## The underground cistern (H)

An underground cistern in the northeastern part of the courtyard of the mosque. The water was channeled into the cistern through an aquaduct that supplied water from the el-Kabri area, supplementing the rainwater that had drained into the cistern from the openings in the courtyard of the complex. The water was used for both ablution and for the *sabil* located adjacent to the complex's main entrance. The entrance to the cistern is close to the complex's eastern entrance. It is accessed through a small door, which leads to a staircase leading to the bottom of the cistern. The cistern has four central pointed barrel-vaults, in addition to the vault at the entrance, and a small vault that drained the water entering the cistern (For more information, see: Radojewski 2010).

In the past, the cistern was a tourist site. It is currently closed because of the restoration work that needs to be done there.

Main Prayer Hall

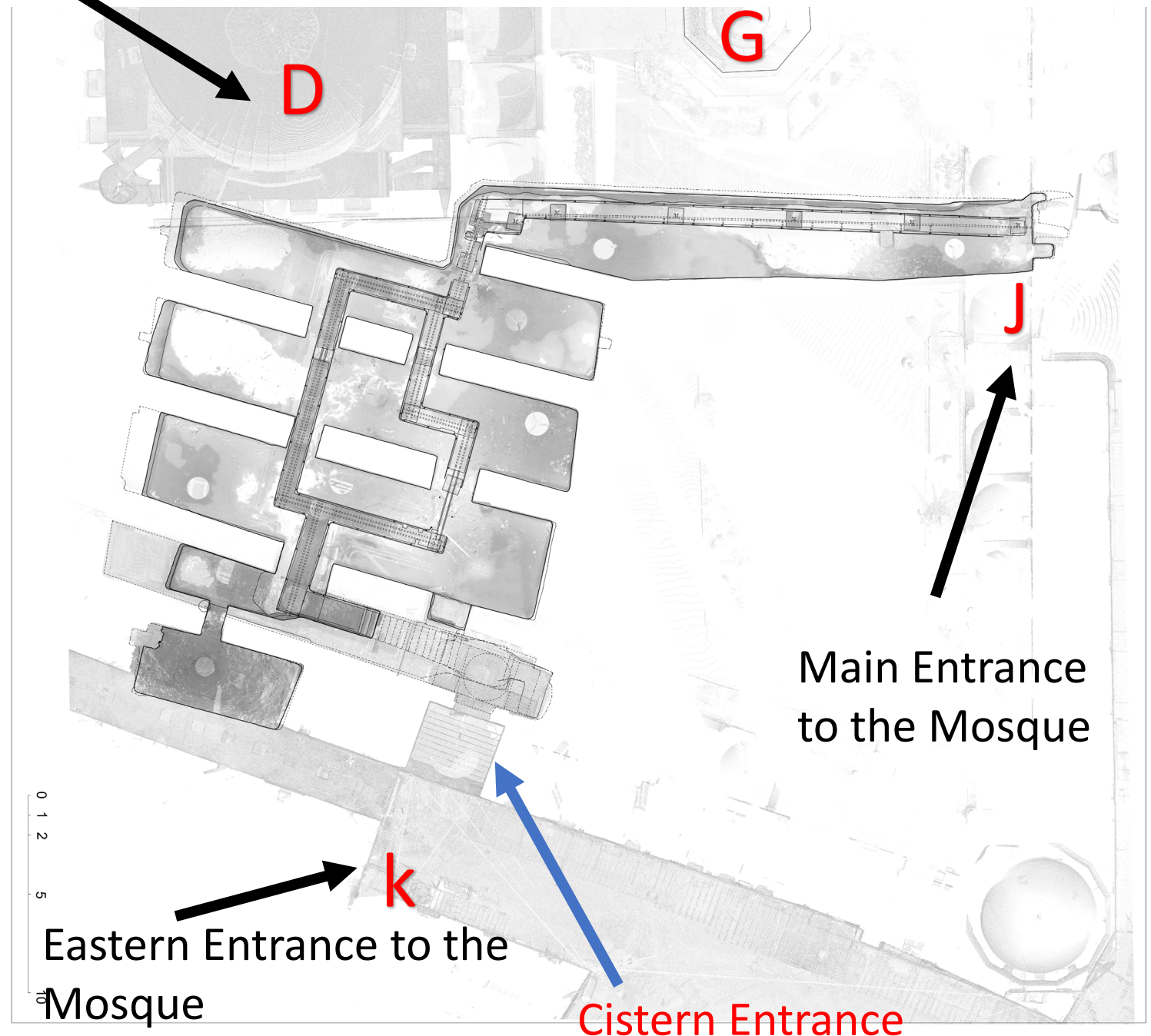


Figure 13: A schematic of the cistern.

Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre



## The shops in the northwest wing

The shops are part of the complex's base and foundations. They are comprised of a series of barreled vaults.

The rooms and arcades (the northern and western wings) are above the shops.



**Figure 14:** The shops in the lower level and the complex's northern facade.  
Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre

## C - Prayer Hall (D)

The prayer hall area can be divided into two parts:

The acsadra (Ac).

The prayer hall (D).

The mosque has one minaret (*Al-Madhana* - E), located in the northwestern corner of the prayer hall.

### The Acsadra (colonnade)

The acsadra (which is 4 meters long and 20 meters long) is capped with five domes, which are supported on the outside by granite pillars with decorative capitals . The front wall of the acsadra (i.e. the exterior wall of the prayer hall) divides into two symetric areas, with an entrance to the prayer hall at their centers. This wall is adorned with panels containing and geometric motifs with intriguing juxtaposed colors. There are two windows on either side of the entrance to the prayer hall, and an external *mihrab* between them (height: 1.80 meters, width: 0.75 meters, depth: 0.30 meters).

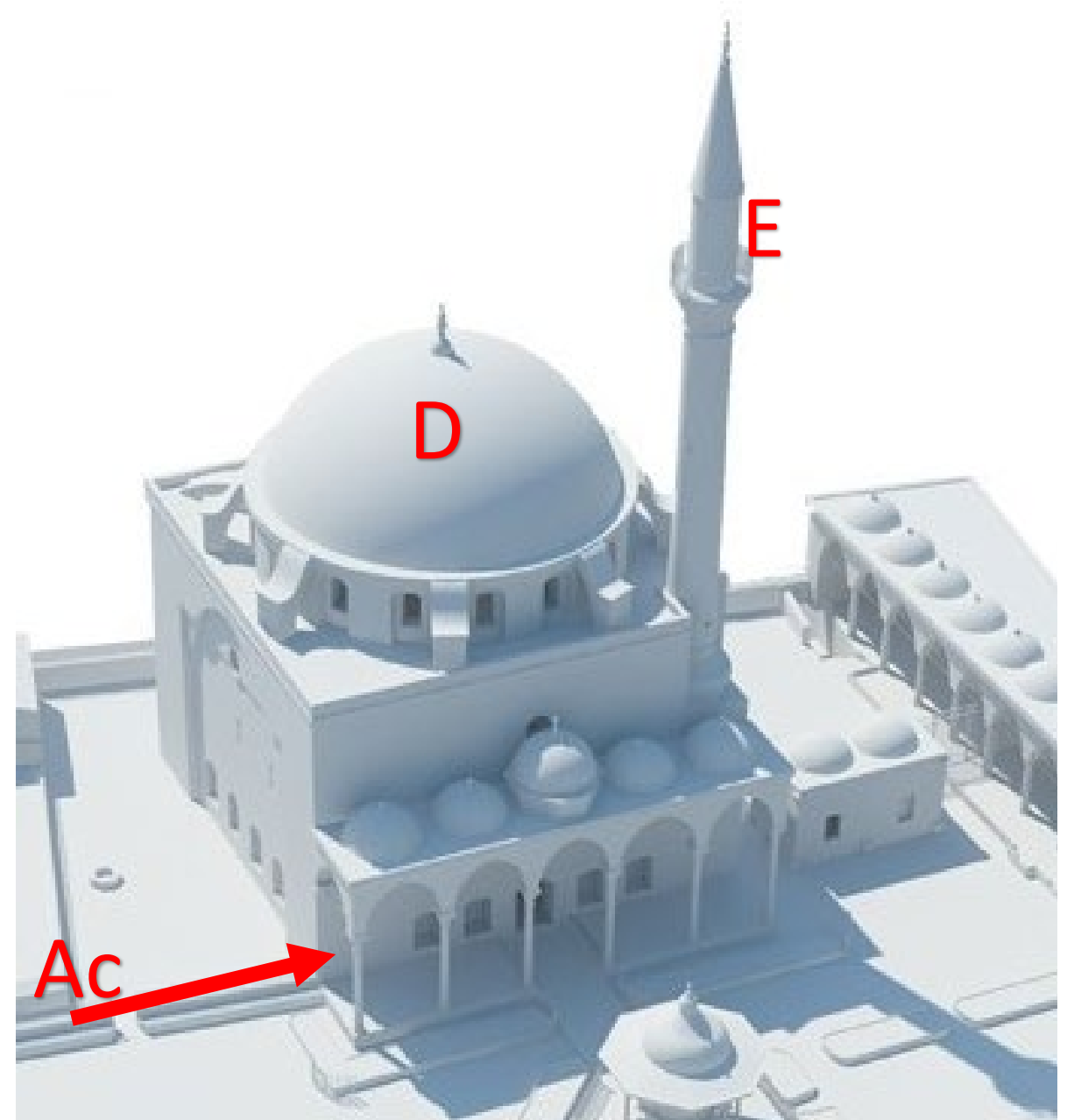


Figure 15: A model of the El-Jazzar Mosque – The Prayer Hall.

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Three decorative windows are embedded into the arches in the upper part of the acsadra's facade wall. The floor of the acsadra is comprised of two levels: The lower level is a passageway through which the entrance to the prayer hall can be accessed (elevated another 0.10 meters). It is located in the center, and creates two raised surfaces on either side of the passageway. The raised surfaces emerge from a wide step located along the passageway.



**Figure 16:**The acsadra at the front of the prayer hall. Courtesy of:

Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre





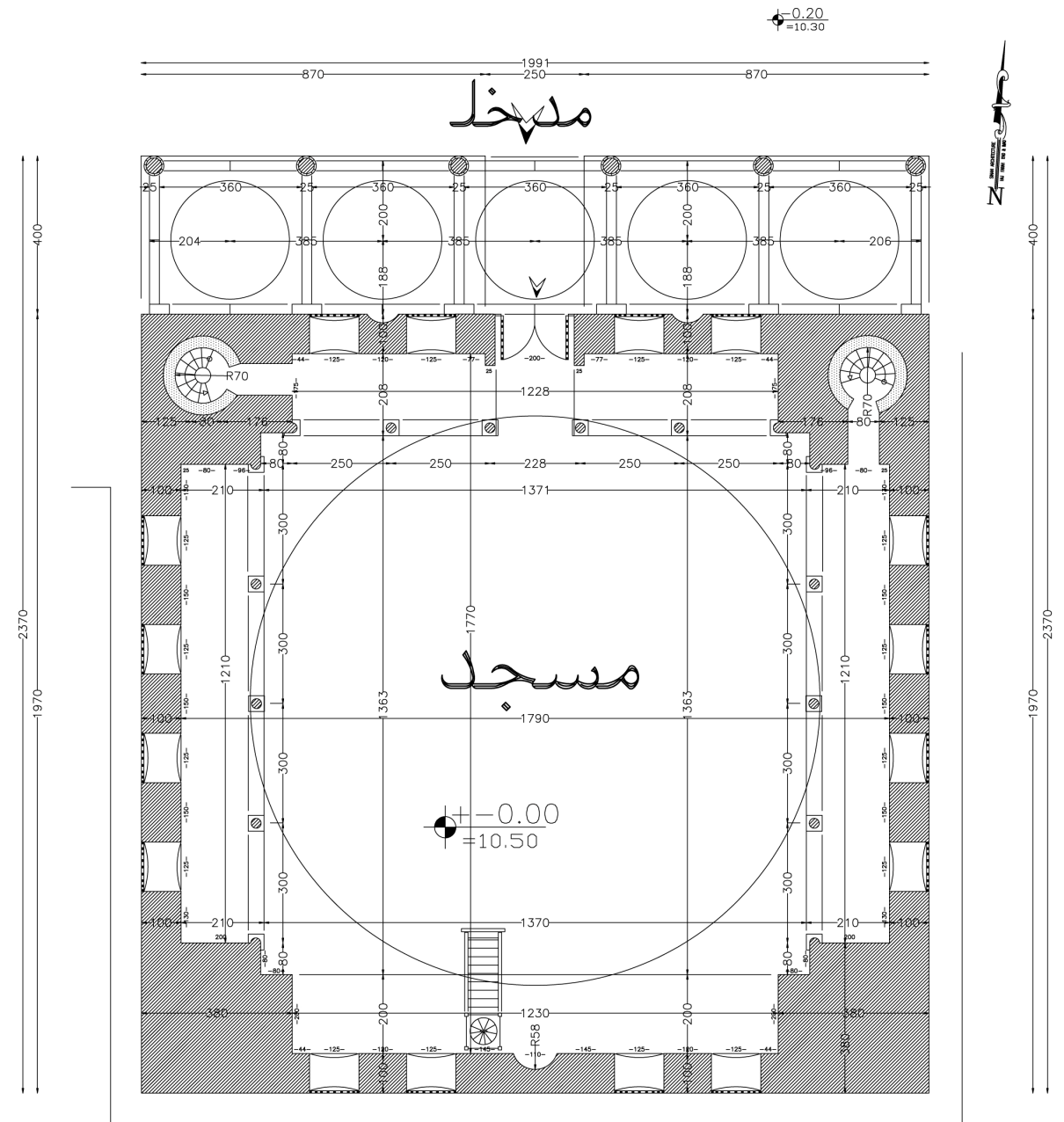
The entrance to the prayer hall (height: 2.85 meters, width: 2 meters, depth: 1 meter) has a doorframe with a Segmental arch , and two decorative marble pillars are on either side of it. Above the arch is a frieze containing lightly-colored circles, below another rectangular frieze in which poetic verses describing the beauty of the mosque and calling on worshippers to ask Allah to have mercy on the builder of the mosque.

باكرا اذا ما ضفت الطف جامع جمع اليها والى غرائبه اغترب  
 فاسأل الهك ان يديم وجود من قد شاده في كل وقت يستجيب  
 ذاك الوزير الشهم احمد من غدا جزار اعناق العداة كما يجب  
 فاعكف لذكر الله في روضاته واعمل لوجه الله في محتسب  
 واملاء صحايف من اقام أساسه دوما بفاتحة الكتاب ولا تغب  
 واذا مررت به تجد تاريخه فاعبد لربك جاء واسجد واقترب سنة ١١٩٦ هـ



# The Prayer Hall

The prayer hall has a square structure, and is capped with one large dome, which covers the entire area of the square. The dome is supported by bulky imposts resting on four elephant leg pillars in the corners of the square (approximately 3X3 m). The intersection between the two arches produces pendentives. The dome is buttressed, on the exterior, by small support arches on its sides. This roof construction method allowed for building a large internal space in the prayer hall, and also made it possible to build a tall and wide dome, ensuring that the mosque would dominate the skyline. The internal prayer area is surrounded by three internal arcades (to the north, east and west). The roof of the arcades was used as a balcony and as an additional prayer area. There are seven windows in the eastern and western walls: four are in the bottom part of the wall (raised 0.45 meters off of the floor), and three are in the upper part of the wall, above the balconies.



**Figure 17:**The Floor Plan of the Prayer Hall.

The Encyclopedia of Holy Places

## ***Al-Qiblah wall***

*Al-Qiblah* is the direction of prayer toward Mecca (which would be southeast, in the Holy Land). The *Qiblah* wall is an important element of all mosques. It's the main wall of the mosque, and the entire plan for the mosque is based on it.

The *Qiblah* wall is adorned with colorful granite slabs interspersed with blue tiles (*qashan*). The *mihrab*, opposite the main entrance to the prayer hall, is at the center of the wall. The *minbar* is to the west of the *mihrab*. There are two windows on either side of the *mihrab* – a total of four windows. The windows are rectangular (length: 2 meters, width: 1.3 meters, depth: 1.15 meters) and are raised above the floor (by 0.45 meters). The window sills are tiled with granite, and capped with a Segmental arch.



**Figure 18:**The *Qiblah* wall.

Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of  
el-Jazzar mosque in Acre



# The Mihrab

The literal meaning of the word *mihrab* is "the highest and central point of the house." This name is given to the prayer niche, where the imam (الإمام) stands and leads the services. The *mihrab* is at the center of the mosque, within the *qiblah* (usually at the center of the wall). The *mihrab* (height: 2.8 meters, width: 1.10 meters, depth: 0.63 meters) is raised 0.10 meters above the prayer hall, and is immaculately decorated and designed with granite panels are varying colors and sizes. The *mihrab* can be divided into two sections: the frame of the *mihrab*, which is comprised of two square pillars (the height of the pillars is 2.30 meters, the height of the base of the pillars is 0.72 meters, and the height of the capital is 0.30 meters), resting on large bases, and they have rectangular capitals. The pillars frame the *mihrab* on both sides. Above the capitals of the pillars is a decorative blue rectangular frieze (1.4 X 0.4), which is also framed by two small pillars. The following Quranic verse is engraved into the frieze: كلما دخل عليها زكريا المحراب. The niche of the *mihrab* is comprised of a semicircular lower section (height: 1.70 meters, depth: 0.63 meters), and a decorative, conch-shaped upper section that tapers toward the top (the width of the upper edge is 0.10).



**Figure 19:** The *Mihrab*, from the records from the 2017 survey.  
Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre



## The Minbar

An elevated area, an elevated platform on which the *imam* stands when he delivers his Friday and holiday sermons ( *الخطبة* – *al-khutba*). The *minbar* is located in the front of mosque, at the center, adjacent to the *qiblah* wall, and between the two windows to the west of the *mihrab*. The *minbar* was built in the shape of a rectangle (length: 3 meters, width: 0.80 meters, height: 3.3 meters), and is raised 0.10 meters above the floor of the hall. The *minbar* is made of decorative granite panels. Two elaborately designed low railings are at the front of the *minbar* (height: 0.50 meters), which are attached to the entrance to the *minbar*, which has two marble pillars along the edges (the height of the pillars: 2.5 meters). A frieze with the engraved words "There is no God aside from Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah" ( لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله ) is above the pillars. A staircase rises from the entrance to the *minbar*, leading to a wider stair (1X0.85 meters), upon which the *imam* sites during the pause between the two sermons. There are nine stairs in the staircase (the height of the stairs is 0.25, and their width is 0.60 meters), and granite railings frame them on either side. The wide stair was built atop four granite pillars. Above it are another four pillars with elaborately designed capitals. A base and a square platform rest on the pillars. The pulpit is capped with a conical green granite canopy.







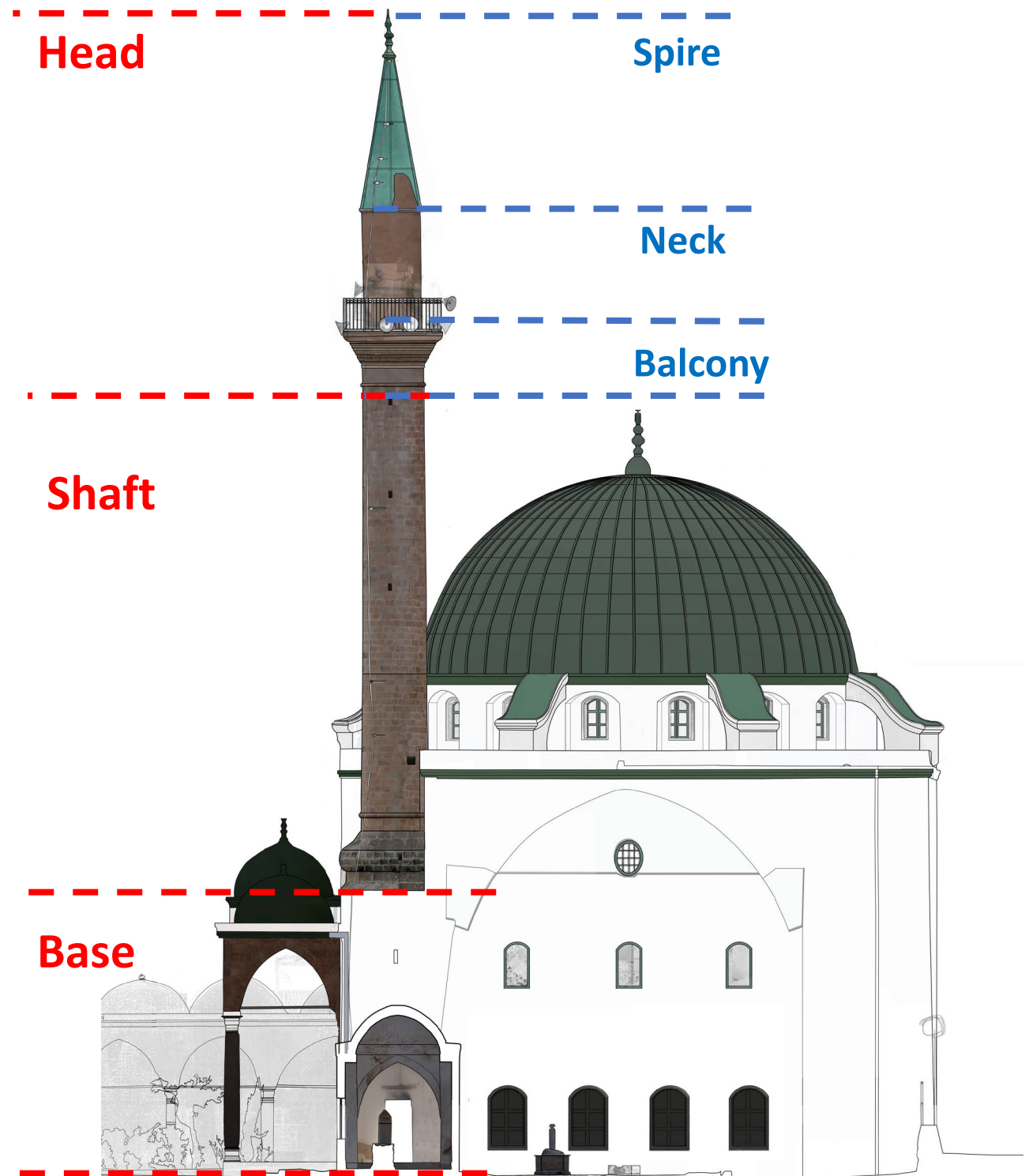
**Figure 20:** The western wall (to the right) and the northern wall (to the left) of the prayer hall

Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre

## The Minaret (Al-Madhana)

The mosque has a minaret (Al-Madhana), located in the northwestern corner of the prayer hall. The minaret is reached via a staircase that emerges from the prayer hall. The minaret reaches a height of 23 meters above the prayer hall, and is topped with a 1-meter high metal crescent. The minaret was apparently damaged several times. In 1812, the main minaret was damaged and developed cracks after being hit by a bolt of lightning. The minaret was rebuilt in 1816, and when it was restored, the minaret's original shape was preserved.

**The parts of the minaret:** The base of the minaret is attached to the elephant leg pillar in the corner of the prayer hall, a barrel-shaped element (diameter: 2 meters, height: 14 meters) with a rounded, recessed base attached to the corner of the prayer hall, within which is a spiral staircase. The parapet is comprised of a cylindrical *jawsak*, or neck (height: 4 meters) resembling the shaft of the minaret, rising over a small elliptical balcony (diameter: 3 meters, height: 1 meter) with a balustrade (the height of the balustrade is 1 meter). Above the *jawsak* is a conical canopy (*el-Burnus*, Height: 3 meters), capped with a crescent.



**Figure 21:** The minaret, viewed from the east

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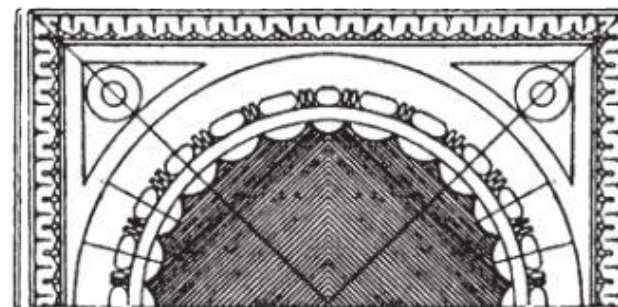


# Chapter 3

- Summary of the safety hazards in El-Jazzar Compound and Mosque



لجنة أمناء الوقف الإسلامي - عكا  
Board of The Islamic Waqf  
Trustees - Acre



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# The state of the site, and the level of preservation

During the preservation survey and situation assessment I conducted in the mosque, and comparing this with previous surveys I've conducted, I have ascertained how severe the state of the mosque is and its deterioration. Many parts of the mosque were heavily damaged, and they are **at a high risk of collapsing. This necessitates preservation and very serious and urgent intervention** to stabilize the structure, preserve it, and prevent any further deterioration or the collapse of its various elements.

**Since the structure has religious, cultural and aesthetic value, the intervention plan for the mosque must be professional and controlled, to preserve the structure's singularity and value.**

## The various fault types:

- A. **Construction-Engineering failures and risks** that threaten the stability of the structure or various elements of the structure, and necessitate urgent intervention.
- B. **Physical faults** within the various elements of the structure, such as dampness, rust, disintegration of rocks, or the erosion and disintegration of bonding materials between interfaces. If these faults aren't handled properly, the structure may deteriorate, and engineering faults may ensue in the future.
- C. **Artistic/aesthetic faults:** Damage to unique (artistic) elements in the structure that necessitate the special and cautious intervention of experts and professionals trained in this type of work, so that the artistic values and the unique forms of these elements can be preserved, and so that they can be dealt with properly.

**This report** is meant to present the scale of the hazards in the building, particularly the physical-construction faults and failures in the compound's various elements, which necessitate urgent and immediate intervention.

**Details of the damage and hazards** in the various elements of the entire complex will be provided in the technical annexes, which are an inseparable part of this report.



## A- Engineering-Construction failures and risks

### The Minaret (the highest risk of collapse)

Located in the northwestern corner of the prayer hall. This is an integral part of the prayer hall, which is reached through a stairwell emerging from the prayer hall. The minaret reaches a height of 23 meters above the prayer hall, and a 1-meter high metal crescent is at the top (the overall height is 33 meters). The minaret was seemingly damaged several times. In 1812, the main minaret was damaged and developed cracks after being hit by a bolt of lightning. When the minaret was restored, the minaret's original shape was preserved.

During the survey, vertical cracks in the minaret's segmented central column were documented, including cracks in the segments at the base of the minaret, which is part of the structure of the central prayer hall (the northwestern corner of the structure). Moreover, a number of the stones in the stairs are crumbling, particularly on the top surface of the stones, and there are vertical cracks in the shaft of the minaret itself.

**Risk level:** The minaret is at a very high risk of collapse, necessitating serious, immediate and controlled intervention to prevent the minaret from collapsing and to prevent any further collateral damage to the prayer hall itself.

### The Acsadra (very high risk of collapse)

Severe cracks in the bases of the massive columns at the front of the prayer hall (the acsadra) and in the platform upon which the bases rest have been documented. These cracks endanger the stability of the massive marble columns at the entrance, and may cause the columns and the entire acsadra to collapse. They may also cause additional damage to the structure, due to the size and nature of the columns.

**Risk level:** A very high level, putting the prayer hall at risk. The damage may affect other elements of the mosque.

### Al-Shadhuran

Construction/physical failures and faults in the Shadawaran, such as cracks in some of the columns that support the Al-Shadawaran's dome, as well as wear and cracks in some of the column capitals and bases.

**Risk level:** The collapse of one of the columns or capitals may lead to the collapse of the other columns and the Al-Shadhuran's dome.

## The foundations and the lower level

As commonly done in mosques built in the classic Ottoman style, El-Jazzar Mosque is built atop elevated foundations, resulting in an enormous ramp, which contains several elements:

### The underground cistern (H)

A massive and enormous underground cistern, part of the foundation of the mosque, located to the northwest of the main prayer hall. The penetration of tree and shrub roots into the walls of the cistern, as well as the disintegration of the sealants that covered the walls of the cistern, have been documented.

**Risk level:** Since these are the foundations of the complex, an extensive and comprehensive survey of the cistern should be conducted, after the physical risks in the cistern are eliminated, to ensure the survivability of the structure.

### The shops in the northern and western wings (very high risk)

The shops are part of the complex's base, and are comprised of a series of barrel vaults. The rooms and arcades are above the shops. Many failures in the shops were documented: the main pier and wall in the northwestern corner of the complex, below the main hall, which connects the northern and eastern wings (B,C), has a massive fissure. Moreover, several openings have been documented between a number of vaults in the northern and eastern wings.

**Risk level:** The formation of openings in the vaults on the foundation level compromises the stability of the vaults (the shops), as well the rooms and arcades on the upper level, and on the mosque's eastern and northern faces. During the survey, many cracks were documented in the upper level rooms and in the mosque's northern and eastern wings, as well as many cracks in the facades of the structure, mainly in the areas in which gaps had formed. This is an extremely high risk that necessitates thorough and professional intervention in order to preserve the shops and the structures above them that they support.



## The rooms and the arcade on the mosque level

The complex is surrounded, on three sides (to the east, north and west), by rows of rooms created with barrel vaults (a total of 50 rooms), and there is an arcade (a passageway covered by a series of arches or vaults, supported by columns), which forms the perimeter of the inner courtyard. The arcade is made up of a series of small domes, (one dome above the entrance to each room), set atop pendentives built into the exterior walls of the rooms, and supported on the opposite side by ornate marble pillars.

### The failures in the rooms:

Many serious cracks were documented in the rooms on the mosque level, particularly in the main hall, in the northwest corner of the arcade, above the pilaster that was cut off on the lower level and in the adjacent rooms. Many cracks were documented along the facades, particularly in the areas in which gaps had formed in the lower level.

A view of the rooms and arcades in the northeast corner of the compound.



## The arcades

### The domes

Wear, weathering, abrasion and cracks were documented in some of the stones in the domes, as well as disintegration of the sealant and gaps that formed between the stones (empty interfaces). Moreover, rust was documented in the iron bands that attach the columns of the arcade to the interior walls, and rust has permeated into the stones, which was documented as well.

### The columns

Considerable fissures and corrosion were documented in some of the columns, as well as cracks and weathering in some of the capitals and bases.

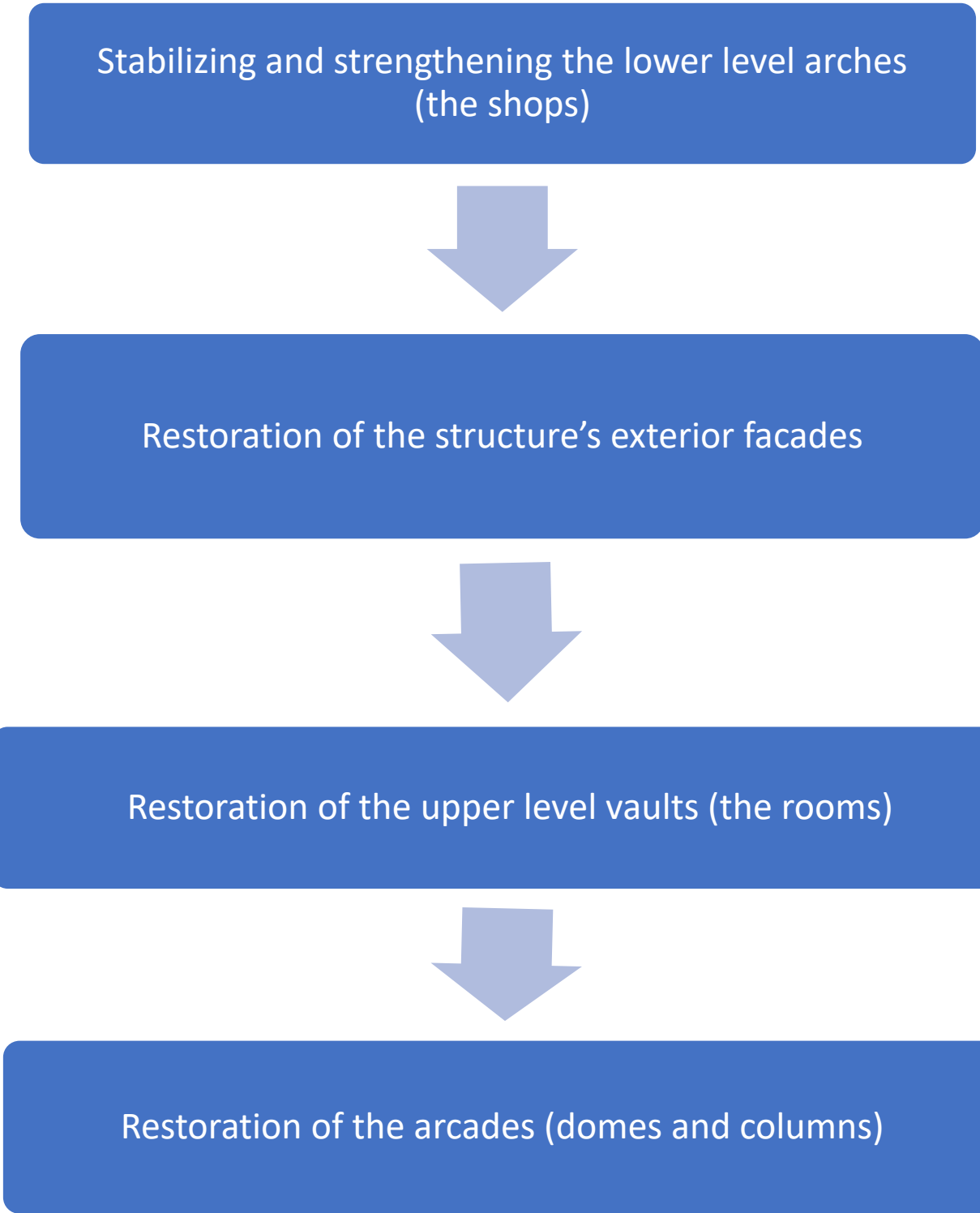


# Risk level: High.

This is a domino effect, and many elements in the mosque compound that are attached to each other are in danger of collapse. Any damage to one element or another, or the collapse of one element or another, particularly those in the compound's foundations, will cause damage to the other elements that they support in the compound .

Heavy damage and failures in the structure's foundations were documented in the survey. The consequences can be seen in the rooms and arcades on the mosque level, and in the facades of the structure.

**Due to the severity and type of failures, urgent and immediate restoration is required here, and this work must be thorough and controlled.** First, the arches (the shops), which are the foundation of the structure, must be stabilized. Then, the facades of the structure and the upper vaults should be dealt with, and finally, the arcades (the domes and columns).





## B. Physical failures

Physical failures were identified in the various elements of the structure. If these faults aren't handled properly, the situation may deteriorate, and severe engineering/construction failures may ensue in the future.

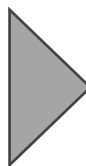
These failures include, among others:

- **Weathering of the stones**, including cracks, hollowing, erosion, fractures, and the formation of hollow voids and holes in the stones, in various parts of the compound.
- **Disintegration of the sealants** between interfaces.
- **Dampness**: This was documented in many rooms and in the underground cistern.
- **Damage from insects**: Insects that built their nests in the stones of the mosque, causing weathering, erosion, and the disintegration of the masonry.

The mosque is built of kurkar (aeolian quartz sandstone), a very soft stone that isn't insect-resistant, it must be given routine and delicate treatment.

- **Corrosion and rust**: Corrosion in much of the mosque's mineral materials was documented, particularly rusty metal throughout the mosque, in objects like metal nails, the beam girders that attach the columns with the wall in the arcades, and the bars in the various parts of the mosque. Notably, this mosque is more susceptible to corrosion and rust, given its location at the center of a very humid coastal city.

Cracks in one of the capitals that supports a dome in the arcade, and rust in the girder



## C – Artistic/aesthetic faults

El-Jazzar Mosque is a magnificent masterpiece, considered one of the most beautiful mosques in the Holy Land and in the entire region. Aside from the impressive size and scale of the mosque, unique adornments and ornaments were carved into the main entrance, the prayer hall (including the wall at the entrance to the prayer hall, or the *acsadra*), which is decorated with special *qashan* (a type of tile) and marble cladding with colorful geometric motifs, and the interior of the hall and the *qibla* (southern) wall is clad with colorful granite panels, interspersed with blue tiles (*qashan*).

The *mihrab* (prayer niche) is located in the middle of the wall, opposite the main entrance to the prayer hall, and it is ornately designed and ornamented with granite panels of various shades and sizes. The *minbar*, also made of ornate granite panels, is located to the west of the *mihrab*. Al-Shadhuran and al-Sabil were also fortunate enough to have a unique design, with marble and metal marquetry.

Aside from the physical and construction faults in the various elements of the mosque, aesthetic/artistic faults and damage were documented in the ornaments and adornments, such as dirt, stains, patina, spalling, disintegration, and the formation of cavities in the marble and in the *qashan* panels (tiles).

**Comparing** the survey's findings with previous surveys and records reveals that the state of the various elements has worsened and deteriorated, necessitating urgent intervention to preserve these ornaments and adornments.

**The intervention** must be prudent, and it must be carried out by experts and professionals trained in this type of work, so that the artistic values of these elements can be preserved, and so that they can be given the proper treatment.



The weathering in the marble and *qashan* inlay, in the western corner, along the facade of the prayer hall (the arcade)



# Summary of the risks

The physical survey conducted in the El-Jazzar Compound and Mosque, which was compared against the findings of the survey that the *waqf* conducted in 2017, in collaboration with the University of Pavia (Architectural Documentation and 3D laser scanner survey of el-Jazzar mosque in Acre)

revealed that the state of the various elements of the mosque had deteriorated and worsened. Certain elements of the mosque are in a dire state and are at a very high risk of collapse. Cracks and weathering of the mosque's minaret, the bases of the columns in the acsadra (the prayer hall atrium), the foundations of the mosque (the shops), the underground cistern, and the row of rooms in the arcade and upper level were documented. Extreme weathering of many of the stones in all parts of the structure, including erosion or disintegration of many of the stones and the disintegration of sealants between the stones and the interfaces was documented.

## Risk level and the domino effect

The El-Jazzar Mosque is a unique mosque built in the classical Ottoman style, and the core of the structure is one raised entity atop a massive platform. In this case, a domino effect could ensue, that is, if one element or another collapse, it would cause other parts of the structure to collapse as well. This is a risk of collapse affecting the main elements of the structure. If the minaret collapses, it could impact the entire prayer hall, and if one of the columns in the acsadra collapses, the entire acsadra could collapse and damage the prayer hall. If the state of the foundation worsens, the upper-level arcades

(the rooms and the row of domes) may be greatly damaged, and if the state of the underground cistern worsens, that could adversely affect the entire building.

**Summary: The El-Jazzar Mosque is at a very high risk. Key elements of the mosque are at great risk of collapse, necessitating immediate intervention in order to preserve the building and remove the danger. Aside from the building's religious significance, as a mosque and house of worship, it's a rarity in the Holy Land and the region, and it has become emblematic of the Old City of Acre, with its historical, social, cultural and asthetic value.**

**This mosque's importance necessitates prudent, controlled and professional intervention by teams of experts in the field, to stabilize the structure and properly preserve it.**

**At this point, its important to emphasize that te mosque needs to be handled professionally and in a controlled manner, by professional teams experienced in handling this type of construction, so that the building's value and uniqueness can be maintained.**

# The order and stages of the work process

The El-Jazzar Compound and Mosque needs a great deal of work. It's one of the largest and most complex projects in the Holy Land, necessitating controlled, professional, and prudent intervention. We'll now specify the project's order of preference and urgency

## A. Handling construction failures and stabilizing the mosque's various elements

1. The minaret
2. The columns of the arcade
3. The structure's foundations (the shops), the buiding's exterior facades, the rooms along the perimeter, the arcades, and the collumns in Shadhuran.
4. The underground cistern
5. Stabilizing the Shadhuran

## B. Handling and correcting the physical failures

Erosion and weathering of the stones, disintegration of interfaces and sealants, rust

## C. Artistic restoration of the various elements of the mosque:

The main entrance, the prayer hall and all of its elements, the *Shadhuran, Al-Sabil, Al-Turba*

Initial cost estimate (in US dollars \$)*	
A. Handling the construction failures and stabilizing the mosque's various elements	
The minaret	
The columns and the arcade	
The structure's foundations (the shops), the buiding's exterior facades, the rooms along the perimeter	
The underground cistern	
The rooms and the arcades in the Upper floor	
Stabilizing the Shadhuran	
Al-Sabil	
Total	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not including unexpected damages</li> <li>• including physical failures</li> </ul>	



Initial cost estimate(ın US dollars \$)*	
C. Artistic restoration of the various elements of the mosque	
The main entrance	
the prayer hall and all of its elements	
the Shadhuran	
Al-Sabil	
Al-Turba	
<b>Total</b>	
*Not including unanticipated damage	

Initial the total cost estimate(ın US dollars \$)*	
Handling the construction failures and stabilizing the mosque's various elements (including physical failures)	
Artistic restoration of the various elements of the mosque	
<b>Total</b>	
*Not including unanticipated damage	

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**Preservation Survey  
and Situation Assessment**

**The El-Jazaar Mosque in Acre**

• **Commissioned by:**

The El-Jazzar Islamic Waqf Board of Trustees

• **This survey was prepared and documented by:**

Abd al-Razek Matani  
Expert on Islamic Archeology and Architecture

• **Photography:**

Photography was done by the researcher, and if other photography was used, this was noted in the body of the report.

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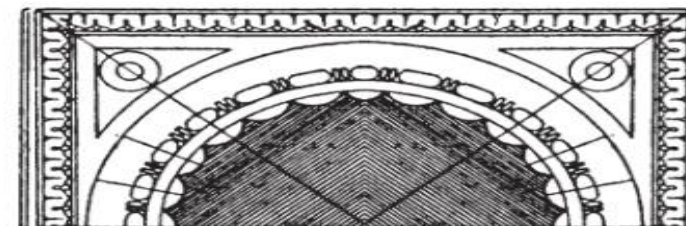
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**The declaration of the author of the document:**

I, the undersigned, **Dr. Abd al-Razek Matani**,  
Israeli national ID no. **032650269**, hereby declare that:

1. I have prepared the survey and situation assessment of the El-Jazzar Compound and Mosque
2. I possess the required training and expertise for authoring this document.
3. I prepared this document on my own and with the assistance of consultants, as specified below.
4. This declaration was made on February 25, 2023

Abd al-Razek Matani  
Registered *Amuta*



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FOR ANTIQUITIES AND HERITAGE

# About the researcher:

## Dr. Abd al-Razek Matani

### Expert in archeology and Islamic architecture

#### ACADEMIC DEGREES

- ❑ **2020. Ph.D., Archaeology.** Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva, The Department of Bible Studies, Archeology and the Ancient Near East.
- ❑ **Ph.D. Research: Chronology and Typology of Muslim Mosques in Jund Al-Urdun and Jund Filastin (638-1917).**
- ❑ **2016. MA., Archaeology.** University of Haifa, Haifa, The Department of Archaeology.
- ❑ **Thesis research: Chronology and Typology of Islamic Burial.**
- ❑ **2009. Anthropology studies,** Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva, Department of Sociology and Anthropology.
- ❑ **2008. Teaching Certificate,** Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva, The Department of Education.
- ❑ **2006. BA., Archeology and Hebrew literature.** Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva.

#### ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- ❑ **2023- Visiting researcher,** İTÜ KONUT ARAŞTIRMA UYG. AR. MERKEZİNE İlgi. İstanbul Teknik Üniversitesi | İTÜ 1773, Istanbul.
- ❑ **2019- 2022. Visiting researcher,** The Center for the Civilizations Studies. Bahçe- Şehir University, Istanbul.
- ❑ **2019-2021. Visiting Researcher,** The Ottoman Archives, Istanbul.
- ❑ **2016. Lecturer,** Teachers' Training College, Jerusalem.
- ❑ **2008-2014. Researcher,** The Center for Contemporary Studies, Umm al- Fahm.
- ❑ **2005-2007. Teaching Assistant in Archeology,** Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva.
- ❑ **2005- 2007. Laboratory Assistant,** Ben-Gurion University, Beer Sheva.

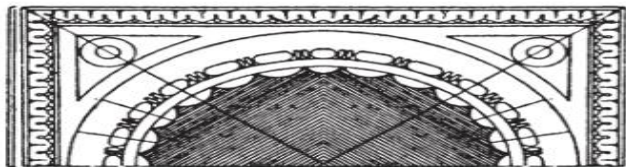
#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- ❑ **2022- Director,** ATIQ For Antiquities and Heritage.
- ❑ **2015-2016.** Educational Director, Youth Promotion Center, Qalansuwa.
- ❑ **2008-2014. Researcher,** The Center for Contemporary Studies, Um al- Fahm.
- ❑ **2009-2016. History teacher –** High school, Qalansuwa.

- ❑ **2007-2008. Youth and Heritage Coordinator.** Qalansuwa community Center

#### Archaeological surveys and excavations

- ❑ **Participation in excavations and archeological surveys:**
- ❑ **Survey of Mosques and Maqamat in Jund Al- Urdun and Jund Filastin** (150 sites) during the Ph.D. research (2014-2020).
- ❑ **Survey of Islamic Cemeteries in Jund Al- Urdun and Jund Filastin** (150 sites) during the M.A. research (2010-2013).
- ❑ **An archaeological survey of the west of the Dead Sea (Ein- bokek).** Under the supervision of Dr. Yuval Yekutieli, Department of Bible, Archeology and the Ancient Near East, Ben Gurion University.
- ❑ **Excavations near the Beer Sheva market.** Department of Bible, Archeology and the Ancient Near East, Ben Gurion University.
- ❑ **Temna Excavations,** Under the supervision of Dr. Yuval Yekutieli.
- ❑ **Yazur excavations,** Data processing, published by:
- ❑ Yekutieli, Y. and Akus, A. 2011a." Azor, Ha-Melakha Junction (North)". **Hadashot Arkheologiot 123.**



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