

Ugarit (Ras Shamra) رأس شمرة

Latakia Governorate



Site Description

The main site within this area is the site of Ugarit (also known as Tell Shamra or Ras Shamra). The site is a property included on the World Heritage Tentative List of Syria, submitted in 1999. Occupied from at least the eighth millennium BC onwards, the site was a particularly important Bronze Age (third millennium BC) city, although it remained prosperous until the thirteenth century BC. Unlike other contemporary sites, many of its features were constructed in stone rather than mud-brick, and so the foundation courses and many walls have survived well.

The site was an important, early, port town and economic centre, and was connected to the harbour, Minet el-Beidha (also covered in this AOI), but it is also notable as the location of the discovery of records of one of the earliest recorded alphabets, leading to its decipherment, as well as the location of the discovery of the earliest surviving, substantial, musical notation and words in the world—the hymn to Nikkal.

“The wealth of the kingdom came from agriculture (vineyards, olive trees, cereals, livestock, forestry), crafts that in some areas seem to have reached an unprecedented mastery (metal work, for example, figurines, tools...), workshops (of faience and ivory) and especially commercial activity: Mediterranean traffic was very active with the Aegean and Crete, Cyprus, and all coastal areas of the Levant: Arwad, Byblos, Sidon, Tyre ... and with Egypt. Landward, Ugarit appears as the intermediary between the Mediterranean, Central Syria and Mesopotamia”.⁽ⁱ⁾

★ UGARIT

Status Overview

In addition to a general examination of the site, a sample of key excavated buildings were analysed. No damage was visible to most of the site on a review of imagery. However, between 18 June 2010 and 04 June 2014, excavations were extended at the building below the south palace, and a small area next to them (approximately 300 m²) was also disturbed. No damage was visible at Minet el-Beidha.

NOTE

This report provides a detailed analysis of significant changes to the cultural heritage of this site resulting from the ongoing conflict in Syria. World View 1 and 2 satellite imagery acquired on 18 June 2010 and 20 September 2014 were used for this report.

Ugarit Damage Level

(Number of Heritage Locations)

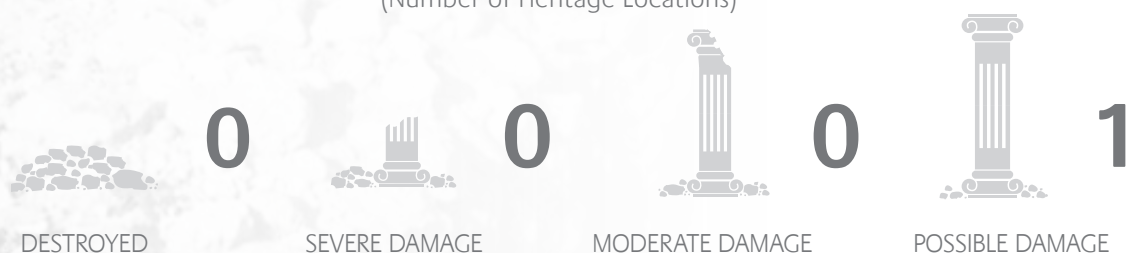




FIGURE 97. Expanded excavations at the structure south of the Royal Palace of Ugarit, 30 September 2014.

EXCAVATED STRUCTURE

Description

Figure 94 shows an excavated structure to the south of the Royal Palace of Ugarit, possibly dating back to the third millennium BC.

Damage Assessment

Excavations of this structure were extended between 18 June 2010 and 04 June 2014. These are likely to be legitimate as the excavated features are clear and the change is confined to a single location. This does not match the profile of illegal excavations seen elsewhere, such as Dura Europos and Apamea. However, a small area of approximately 300 m² near the structure has also been disturbed (see figures 97 and 98). Illegal excavation is therefore a possibility, although the wider area is a secure one.

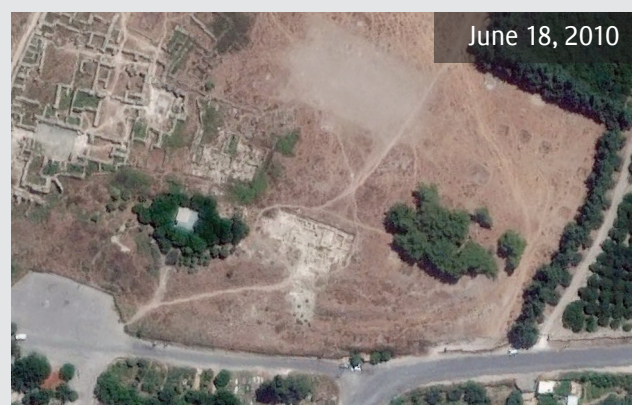


FIGURE 98. Excavation at the structure south of the Royal Palace of Ugarit..

(i) UNESCO Tentative World Heritage Inscription for Ugarit [1] (Translation E. Cunliffe)
Available at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1292/>



Ruins at Ugarit/Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



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