

DEUTSCHES ARCHÄOLOGISCHES INSTITUT · ISTANBUL
ALMAN ARKEOLOJİ ENSTİTÜSÜ · İSTANBUL

Research Report



Al-Ahmadiyyah School in Aleppo

Restoration and Rehabilitation as

“Museum of Aleppo during the Ottoman Period”

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Istanbul, 2018

1. Project information

| | |
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| Project Title | Al-Ahmadiyyah School in Aleppo Restoration and Rehabilitation as "Museum of Aleppo during the Ottoman Period" |
| Date of award and expected date of completion | 01/10/2016 – 30/09/2018 |
| Location | Istanbul, Turkey |
| Reporting period | 01/10/2016 - 30/09/2018 |
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| Name of the researcher | Ahmad Masri |
| Supervisor | Dr. Ruba Kasmó |

2. General perspective about the project

2.1 Reasons for choosing this project:

The city of Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously populated cities in history, and is known for its hundreds of historic, religious and scholarly landmarks that testify to the heritage left behind by various empires and dominions that ruled the city; which date back to a couple of thousands of years. The last empire before the modern era was the Ottoman Empire, which left behind scores of mosques, madrasas (schools), khans (hostels) and other historic buildings.

Aleppo is also considered the economic capital of old and modern Syria. Moreover, Old Aleppo itself is a masterpiece of rare and iconic value as it holds hundreds of buildings representing various civilizations and historic eras, which made gain its place on UNESCO's World Heritage Site List in 1986.

With the unfortunate events in Syria since 2011, and with the war breaking out in Aleppo in 2012, especially in the heart of the city, i.e., Old Aleppo, bullets, missiles, and bombs rained the old city. The result is that most buildings and archaeological remains suffered between partial and complete destruction. In the statistics for 2014, 90% of the historical buildings in The Old City Of Aleppo have suffered different levels of damages, whereas only 10% are considered in a good situation (SAPAH). The following are the main reasons for choosing Ahmadiyyah School in Old Aleppo to be the topic of this research:

1. The importance of the building, as it holds many values (historical, religious, social, artistic, architectural, scientific, aesthetic, spiritual and symbolic) within its walls. It is also considered a unique example of the Ottoman architecture, distinguished for its design, splendour and beauty.
2. The uniqueness of its location within the fabric of the walled city, as it is located in the area of Jalum, which is one of the most important and architecturally richest neighbourhoods in Aleppo, as well as its central position in the old markets.
3. The damage caused to the building due to the recent events, the negligence, deterioration and the encroachments that have taken place in it.
4. The school went through restoration works and was closed before the completion of the restoration work. Therefore, it was necessary to re-do the restoration study and to take into account what has been achieved during restoration.

2.2 The objective of the study

- a. To evaluate the status of the school, document the damage, analyse it and establish the causes of damage.
- b. To develop an action plan that includes the preparation of a comprehensive rehabilitation study and the determination of the methods of maintenance, restoration and preservation. The study will conclude in a rehabilitation plan of the school in accordance with the original function, spaces and architectural elements and its use as a museum of Aleppo during the Ottoman era. Here, modern techniques will be used to display the museum objects, supported by a specialized library and a center for the Levant in the Ottoman era, and the necessary tools and places for researchers.

2.3 Research questions

Question 1: What is the current state of the building and what is the extent of damage it suffers from?

Question 2: What are the best methods to be used in the restoration of the building?

Question 3: What is suitable new function of the building, which is compatible to its cultural and historical values?

2.4 Methodology

To reach the expected goal of the study, the work started by collecting all the available information on the school from books, articles, old studies and old archival photos and then an analytical study has been done for it. In this phase, the archive of the Waqf library in Aleppo has heavily been relied on, as the Ahmadiyyah school was supposed to be affiliated with Waqf library in Aleppo.

Then there was a detailed historical study of the school, its history, location, importance and then a comparison with the schools of the same era in Aleppo. After that, the conditions of this school and its endowments and how it was built and why and the architectural study and the characteristics of this school are included.

In addition, recent images over the last five years showing all phases of the damage to the building were collected. That was done by contacting persons who had the ability to access to the school. Hence, a clear visualization was achieved. A detailed analytical study was required to determine the extent of the damage, its causes, and magnitude. The following step was to come up with proposals for urgent interventions, renovations, restoration, an adaptation plan of the school in line with its original function, the needs of the neighborhood and the future needs of the place.

Thus, the phases of the research were prepared as follows:

Phase 1: Data collection:

At this phase, all available relevant information from books, references, articles, and published studies was collected. In addition, all the available historical and archaeological studies, the history of restoration, especially the last one, details and old photos are collected. Developing a database for the school during this process was done.

Next, the collected information was evaluated; the status of the building, its history, changes in it, its ownership and function and architectural and technical additions were tracked.

Phase 2: Documenting the current situation:

In this phase, drawings and photographic documentation were prepared. Unfortunately, because of the current situation of Aleppo, the field surveys couldn't be done. Instead, the study relied on the drawings which were done in 2008 by Dr. Ruba Kasmó, old photographs documenting which was done before and during the restoration of the school in 2009, photograph documenting that was done by "The Syrian Association for Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage" in 2013/2014, and the photograph documenting the state in 2017.

The previous information helped with knowing the current situation of the school and knowing the damage that has occurred during the last 7 years.

After that, the drawing of the school was updated to the current situation and other drawings and analysis were done to prepare a complete restoration project.

Phase 3: Restoration Study:

This study consisted of several sub-phases, the first was the identification of the damage, classifying them as to their magnitude and type, as well as preparing a list of the damaged items in need of urgent repair, data processing, data entry and indexing along with damage description. Then proposal for restoration and proper treatment of each element was done in addition to an implementation plan that describes the interventions and the treatment works of reinforcement, restoration, and cleaning etc.

Phase 4: Rehabilitation Study:

This phase aims to reuse the school for a purpose close to its original function, without changing the original layout of the building. Such reuse/adaptation has many advantages, the most important of which is the preservation of the building and not deserting it (as many other buildings in Old Aleppo that lost their original function), which has negative outcomes.

In this phase, a study of the rehabilitation of the school as a museum of Aleppo during the Ottoman period was prepared, where modern techniques will be used to display information related to the museum's objects, as well as establishing a museum, library containing the most important sources and references related to the Ottoman era and establishing a center for Ottoman studies dedicated to the Levant and supporting this center with the tools and resources needed, the most important of which is the acquisition of the Ottoman archive of Levant from Istanbul and allocating suitable places for full-time researchers in the center, and for external visiting researchers who would frequent it.

3. Completed Phases:

Completed work in the first phase:

The study started, as mentioned earlier, with the first phase, which is the collection of historical data and information. This helped to reach clearer and more accurate solutions for the purpose of the restoration study on the one hand and to restore the building to its original function, which will be suitable for the present time, on the other hand. Based on this, this phase was implemented in the following sub-phases:

Firstly, the author relied on the historic and architectural resources documenting the city of Aleppo in general. The relevant scientific material was collected, which were later analysed and reformulated in a more suitable way for the purpose of this study.

The historical study conducted did not focus much on the history and description of the school and the changes in it before 2008 and was only mentioned briefly, because of the existence of a previous study of the school in 2008, which was done by Dr. Ruba Kasmó and explained these changes in detail and those interested can see it for more detail.

On the other hand, this study is based on details and the changes that have taken place in the school from 2008 until the current time.

Secondly, the author searched for the available researches, reports and recent photos related to the school, which were collected, analysed and added to the previous results.

Thirdly, the structural elements of the building and the materials used in it were studied. The places of unique decoration, textures and writings were identified and the results were reflected on drawings.

Fourthly, the author reviewed the documentation of the building that took place in 2008, before the start of the restoration project at that time.

Fifthly, the reports of the restoration that started in 2008 and was interrupted in 2011 were also reviewed. Accessing these reports and information was very difficult because the Waqf Library was burned down during the conflict along with the 2008 restoration files. The author managed, however, to get to some of the people who worked on the restoration study and some of those who worked on the rehabilitation study, and those who were on the revision committee. Additionally, the author managed to contact some people who knew about the restoration works that was yet to be executed. This work was done in parallel with the examination of some recent pictures, which helped in documenting the completed restoration works and the works yet to be executed. At the end of this phase, the historical and architectural study of the school was completed, in addition to the analysis of the previous restoration study, indicating its weaknesses and strengths, with reference to reasons and solutions.

Completed work in the second phase:

This phase relates to documenting the current state of the building. The study was based on the original plans of the building from the previous studies, and the documentation and pictures of the building taken in late 2014 and in 2017. One problem became apparent in this phase, the documentation was not complete; some areas were not documented because of inaccessibility such as the roof of the building. As for the rooms and external yards, the documentation, although incomplete, was adequate to help assess the damage, estimate the extent of damage and develop plans and solutions for restoration.

At the end of this phase, sufficient information on the damage in the school was collected for analysis and drawing it.

Completed work in the third phase:

In this phase, the process of analysing the damage has started and the damages were classified according to their magnitude, type and cause, then drawing were made using AutoCAD to update the existing original plans, and to show the places of damage.

At the end of this phase, drawings were prepared for the current state of the school, drawings show used materials in the school, and drawings show the places of damage in the school. After that, drawings were prepared for the restitution and then drawings for the interventions that must be made in the school for restoration. Finally, the restoration plans were drawn up which show the function that will be used in the school which will be "Museum of Aleppo during the Ottoman Period".

Completed work in the fourth phase:

In this phase there was a detailed study on the rehabilitation and adaptation of the school, in a way that is compatible with its original function and enhances its inherited values and that will be able to respond to the current situation and needs of the neighbourhood. Also, a detailed study for "Historical Museum of Aleppo in the Ottoman Period" and a drawing with furniture and some 3D models of some rooms in the school were prepared. This proposal was chosen for several reasons; the main reason being that Aleppo was the third largest city in the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Cairo. This is what made Aleppo an important center; and the importance of it was economic, demographic and urban because most of the convoys of land trade towards the Arabian Gulf and Iraq (also the caravan routes from the inner lands towards the Mediterranean) were passing from it. In order to demonstrate the importance of this city in the Ottoman period, the 'Museum of Aleppo during the Ottoman Period' project was proposed.

In addition to a museum, space was allocated to a library related to the topic of the museum and a "Center for Ottoman Studies" specialized in studies of the Levant in the Ottoman Period.

The museum themes will be as follows:

- General historical context.
- Library and center for Ottoman studies (in the place of the old library).
- Display of documents and manuscripts (in the main hall).
- Theology during the Ottoman period.
- Literature.
- Medical, applied and basic sciences.
- Astronomy and its tools.
- Calligraphy and ornamentation.
- Mosques, Schools, Tekkes, Zawayas, Baths, Palaces and Homes: Architecture, infrastructure and transportation.
- Commercial life (khans, markets, crafts, coins).
- Social life (civil and professional organizations, celebrations and home life, clothing and cooking).
- Military life (weapons, military uniforms, insignia, and the army structure).

Moreover, technologies such as different sized display screens along with various projectors will be used in the museum presentations on topics such as the Mosques, Takaya, Schools, Khans, Baths and Houses. Wall paintings (Image, text, tables etc.), maquette, three-dimensional, geometric elements models (minaret, domes, oriel etc.), collectibles (Qur'ans, manuscripts, photographs of manuscripts, endowments, photographs of endowments, astronomical instruments, documents, old coins, carpeting and Ottoman carpets), calligraphy and ornamentation painting will all be included in the museum displays. Lastly, there will be a restoration plan of ancient paintings.

4. Samples on the completed works

In the first phase, some of the completed works are: all the Waqf (endowments) belonging to the school were tallied, after collecting them from all available resources. We can see from the table below (containing most of the endowments) that this school has had a large number of endowments.

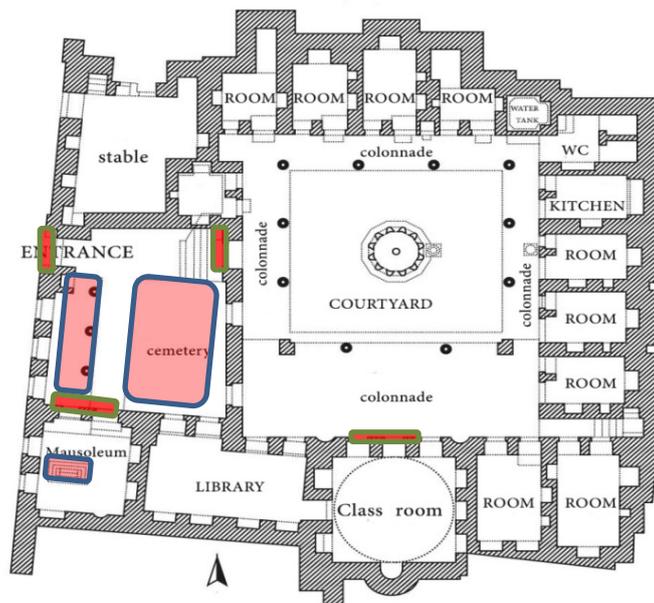
| Type | Name / Number | Location |
|----------------|---|--|
| Houses | Al Sayed Saadi's house | Adjacent to the school and the cemetery |
| | 4 Houses | Adjacent to the school |
| | House in Al Jalum | South of the builder's house |
| | House | West of Khawaja bath |
| | House | Shaheen Bey neighbourhood, north of the oven |
| The shops | 4 shops | Beside the school from north |
| | Several shops | Souq Al Qusabijeh |
| | Three shops | Souq Al Qawajieh |
| | Shop | Souq Al Batayyah |
| | Shop | Souq Al Ballastan |
| | Shops waqf for Mushatiya Mosque | Near the Mushatiya Mosque |
| | Shop | The paved alley |
| | Bitar's shop | Al Jidaydah Square |
| | 5shops | Under Sheikh Taha's Qaysariya |
| | shop | North Sheikh Taha's Qaysariya |
| khans | khan | East of Jouleh School |
| Kervansaray | Caravanserai | Next to the school from the east |
| | Caravanserai | Above Abrak's Khan |
| | Caravanserai | Al-Mashatia near Al-Basal Khan |
| | Parts of Sheikh Taha's Kervansaray | Sulayba neighbourhood |
| | 9 Carat* and 5/3 Carat from Zaki's Caravanserai | North of Esayes Khan |
| groves | 2/3 from Sheikh Taha's groves | Adjacent to Maazii bridge |
| | New groves | North and west of Khan al-Aafs |
| | Cave groves | Nasibi street |
| | Al Kadik groves | Near Al-Ansari Bridge |
| fountains | Al-Ahmadiyyah's fountain | Adjacent to the school |
| Bakeries | Bakery | West of Khawaja bath |
| | Bakery | Shaheen Bey neighbourhood, near Qustal Al Owainah |
| Coffee houses | New coffee house | Adjacent to the school |
| | Coffee House | Mashatiya market |
| | Coffee House | Al Jidaydah Square |
| Stables | Stable | Adjacent to the school from the west |
| soap factories | soap factory | Small Idleb |
| Factories | factory | East Omar Bey Bath |
| Endowments | Ibrahim Khan Waqf | Khan Al-Gomrok, Souq Al-Gomrok, and Soukatiya market |

* Carat: unit of measurement

The locations of some of the endowments adjacent to Ahmadiyah School are shown in the following plan:



At this stage, analytical work was carried out on the plans of the school, including: Identifying the locations of the inscriptions and preparing drawings of them. Hence we see the distribution of these inscriptions on the main doors of the school in addition to the writings on the tombstones.



The writings and pictures on the tombstones were also collected, and a code was given for each tombstone to facilitate the process of documentation:

| code | Inscription location | Language |
|------|----------------------|----------|
| G 1 | Grave No. 1/ East | Arabic |
| G 2 | Grave No. 2/ East | Arabic |
| G 3 | Grave No. 3/ East | Arabic |
| G 4 | Grave No. 4/ West | Arabic |
| G 5 | Grave No. 5/ East | Arabic |
| G 6 | Grave No. 5/ West | Arabic |
| G 7 | Grave No. 6/ East | Arabic |
| G 8 | Grave No. 6/ West | Arabic |
| G 9 | Grave No. 8/ East | Arabic |
| G 10 | Grave No. 8/ West | Arabic |
| G 11 | Grave No. 9/ West | Arabic |
| G 12 | Grave No. 10/ West B | Arabic |
| G 13 | Grave No. 10/ East B | Arabic |
| G 14 | Grave No. 10/ West A | Arabic |
| G 15 | Grave No. 11/ East A | Arabic |
| G 16 | Grave No. 11/ West B | Arabic |

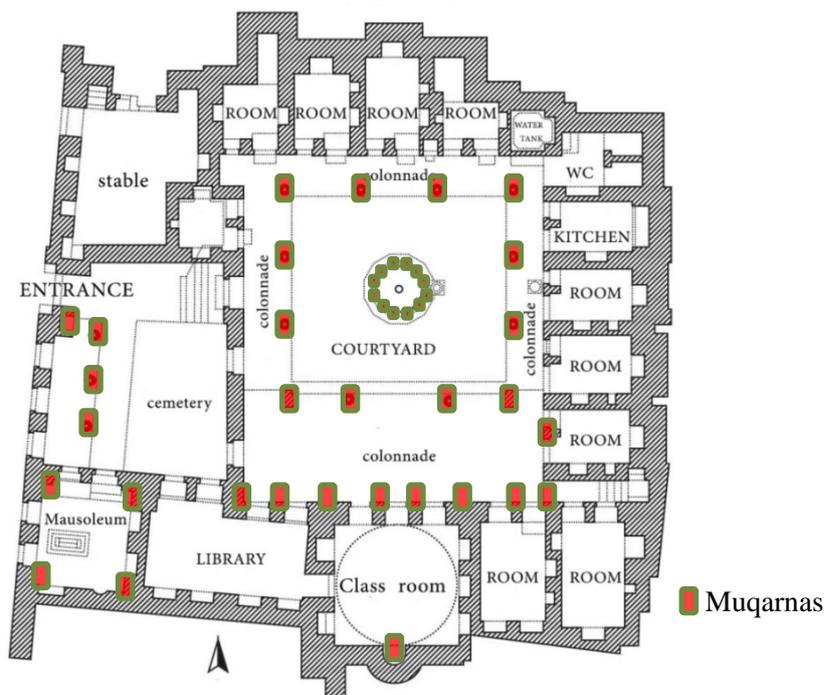
| code | Inscription location | Language |
|------|----------------------|----------|
| IN A | Inscription A | Arabic |
| IN B | Inscription B | Arabic |
| IN C | Inscription C | Arabic |
| IN D | Inscription D | Arabic |



G 15

Image after: *Inscriptions in Ottoman period - Dr.Naiwa Osman* Image after: *Aleppo National Archives*

Analytical plans have been also prepared for the locations of the Muqarnas. As we can see in the plan below, this school is considered to be very rich with Muqarnas:



School's Muqarnas

Also, data about the old restoration of the school has been collected. This data was analysed and its strengths and weaknesses were identified. . The works that were proposed for restoration can be divided into three basic works: restoration work, structural works and extension works. Here we will present some examples for **constructive proposals**:

- Most of the ceilings in the school were covered with cement. It was suggested to remove the cement plaster and replace them with calcareous ones (lime plaster), taking into account manual work to preserve the stone.
- The original mortar of the roofing stones or domes will not be removed unless they are dilapidated.
- Cleaning, pointing and treating the stone dome from inside and outside.
- The work of replacing missing stones in the facades in different places. (White cement + lime + sculptor + old stones of different sizes, types, and shapes).
- Application of insulating materials for the surface and exterior surfaces of domes.
- Removal of concrete mortar from the ceiling.

And here we will present some examples for **destructive proposals**:

- Building rooms on the roof:

The purpose of building these rooms is not mentioned, and this is absolutely unacceptable, since building anything new on the roof will negatively impact the building of the school and is contrary to all the applicable laws of restoration.

- Adding a cornice on the walls overlooking the courtyard:

The walls overlooking the courtyard have a cornice already and it is in good condition, there is no reason to build a new cornice.

- Treatment of cracks in walls and ceilings with stainless bars:

Here, cracks are not distinguished. Not all existing cracks need metal bars to secure. In addition, the stainless steel bars may negatively affect the ancient stone, and there must be another solution to treat the cracks.

- Installation of new wooden doors, windows, and cabinets with paint:

We see that the doors in the school are ancient doors covered with engravings and decorations, and can be restored and reused and don't need to be replaced with new doors. Therefore, this item should be re-examined to determine its feasibility.

These pictures show the status of the water fountain before, during, and after the restoration:



Photo by: Endowment Library – Aleppo - 2008



Photo by: Nidal Yousuf - 2009



Photo by: The Syrian Association for Preservation of Archaeology and Heritage (SAPAH) - 2014

In the previous figure, we see three pictures of the water fountain; the first picture dates back to 2008 before the restoration began, the second to 2009 during the restoration, and the third was taken 2014 during the war in Syria.

In the second phase, Data about the current status of school and pictures of the school were collected and compared to the previous situation and some analysing drawing was prepared to indicate the locations of damage. For example, the main door of the school was severely damaged in 2014, and during the period 2014-2016 a part of the wall was completely lost with the inscription above the entrance.

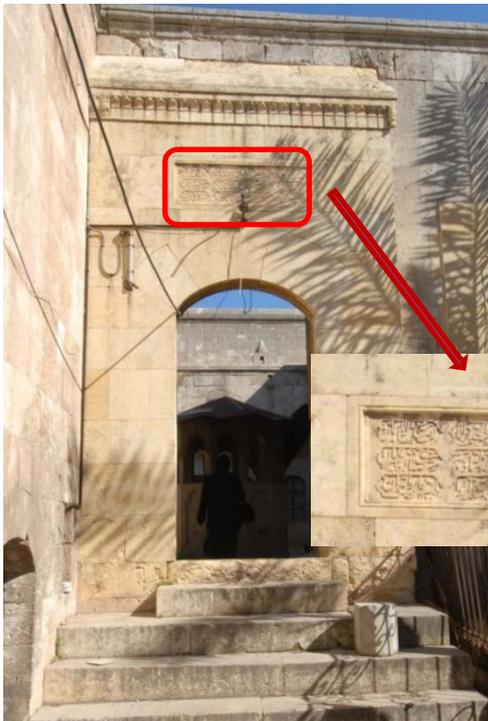


Photo by: Endowment Library –2008

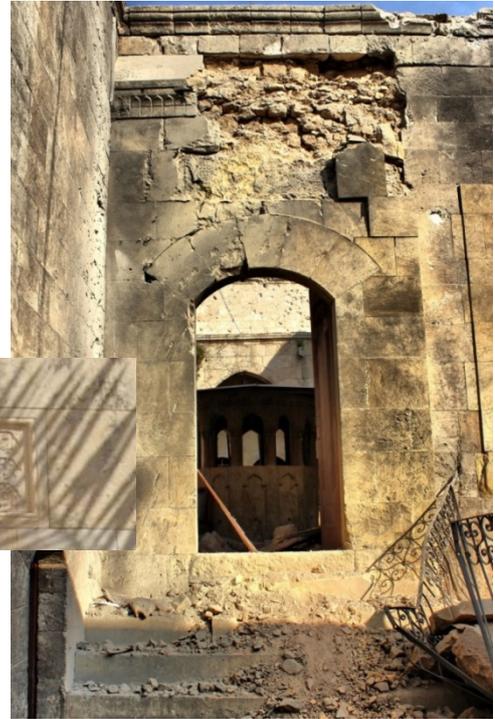


Photo by: (SAPAH) - 2014



2017
The Entrance of the School

Another example, the graveyard also suffered great destruction, the following pictures also illustrate the destruction that took place in it, the first photograph was taken in 2008 and the second in 2014 showing the damage due to war.



Photo by: Endowment Library –2008

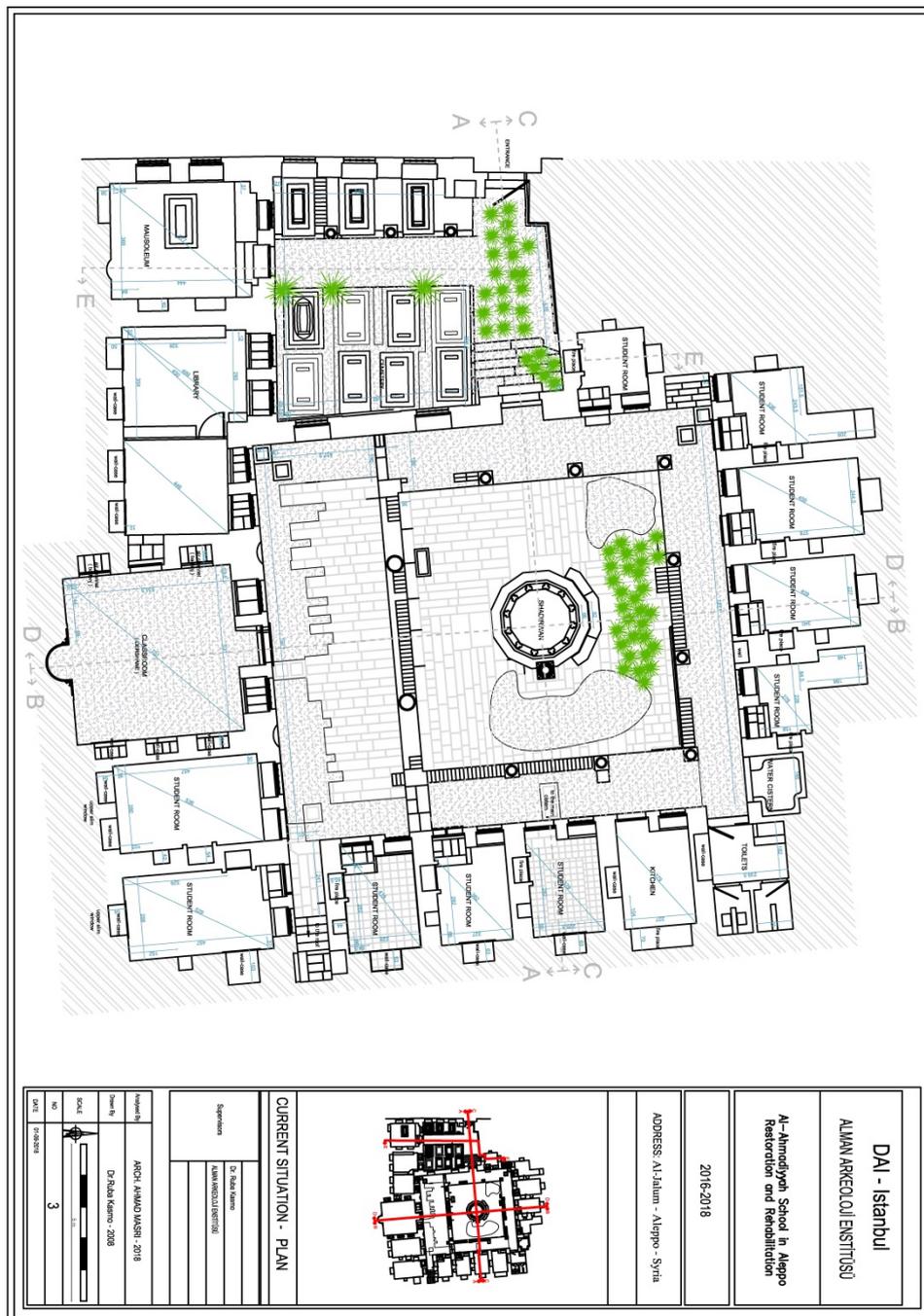


Photo by: (SAPAH) - 2014

In the third phase, detailed plans have been completed to help to start the restoration of the school, and the work at this phase has been done based on the pictures and information available about the school. More than 50 plans have been prepared, only some of them will be presented below. All other plans can be found in the study.

Current situation plans: These drawings aim to show the current situation of the school by plans, sections, and facades.

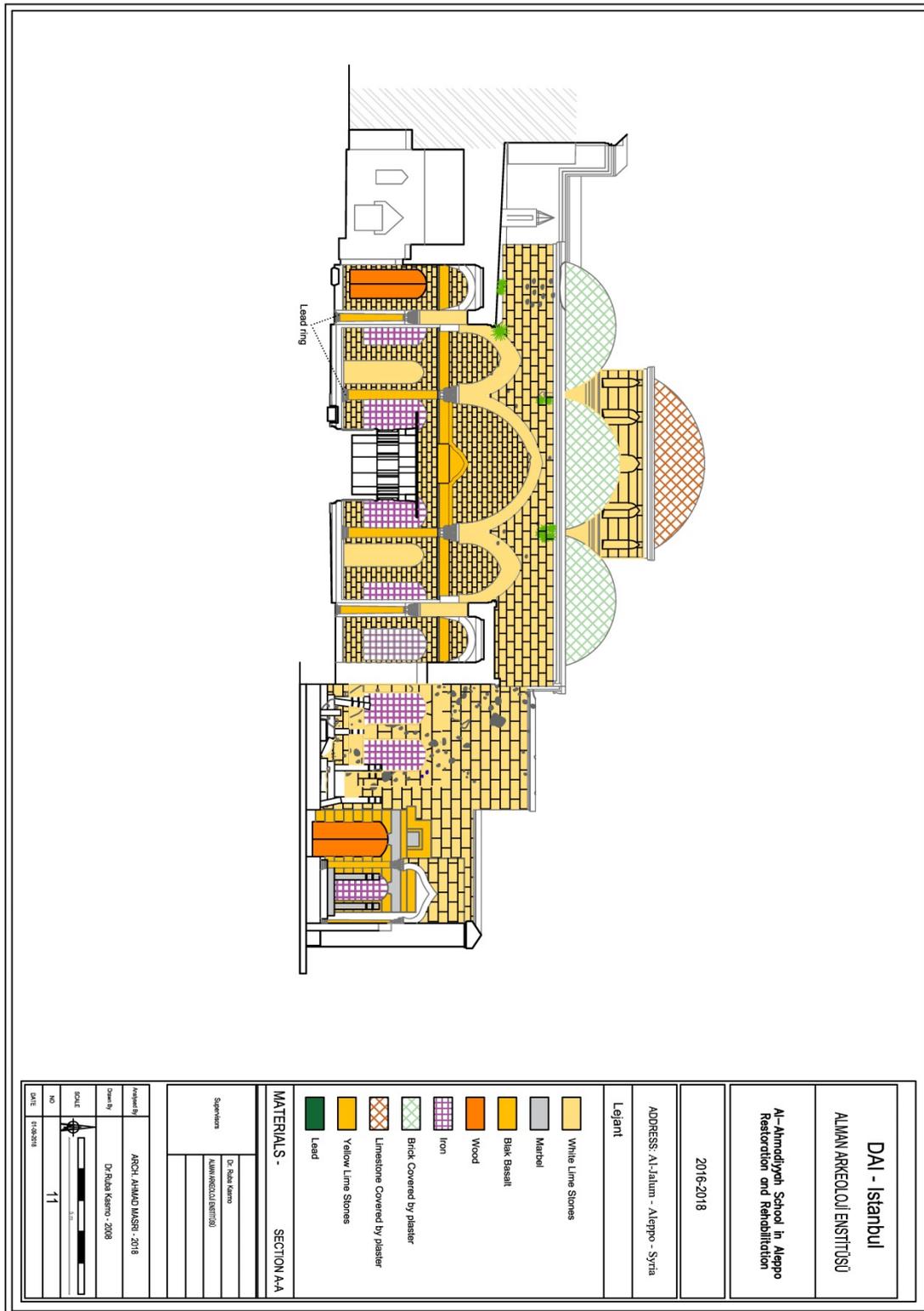
For example, in the following figure, we find a plan showing the current situation of the school with names of spaces and dimensions.



Current situation / plan of the school

Materials drawings: These drawings aim to clarify the materials used to build the school, by means of color and hatches.

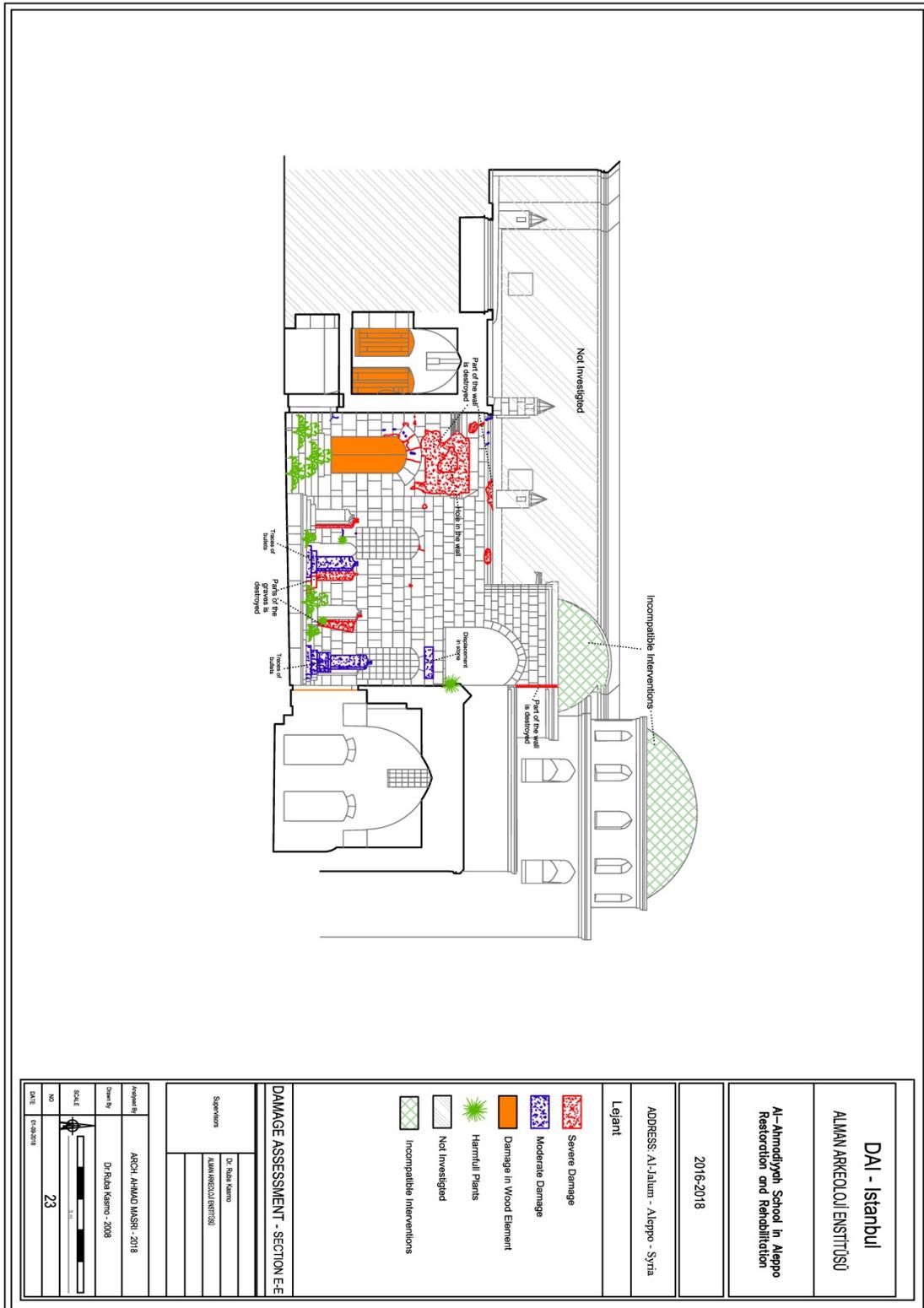
For example, in the following figure, we find a section showing the materials of the school.



Materials / Section A-A

Damage assessment drawings: These drawings aim to identify the places of damage in the school, by means of colors, hatches and writings.

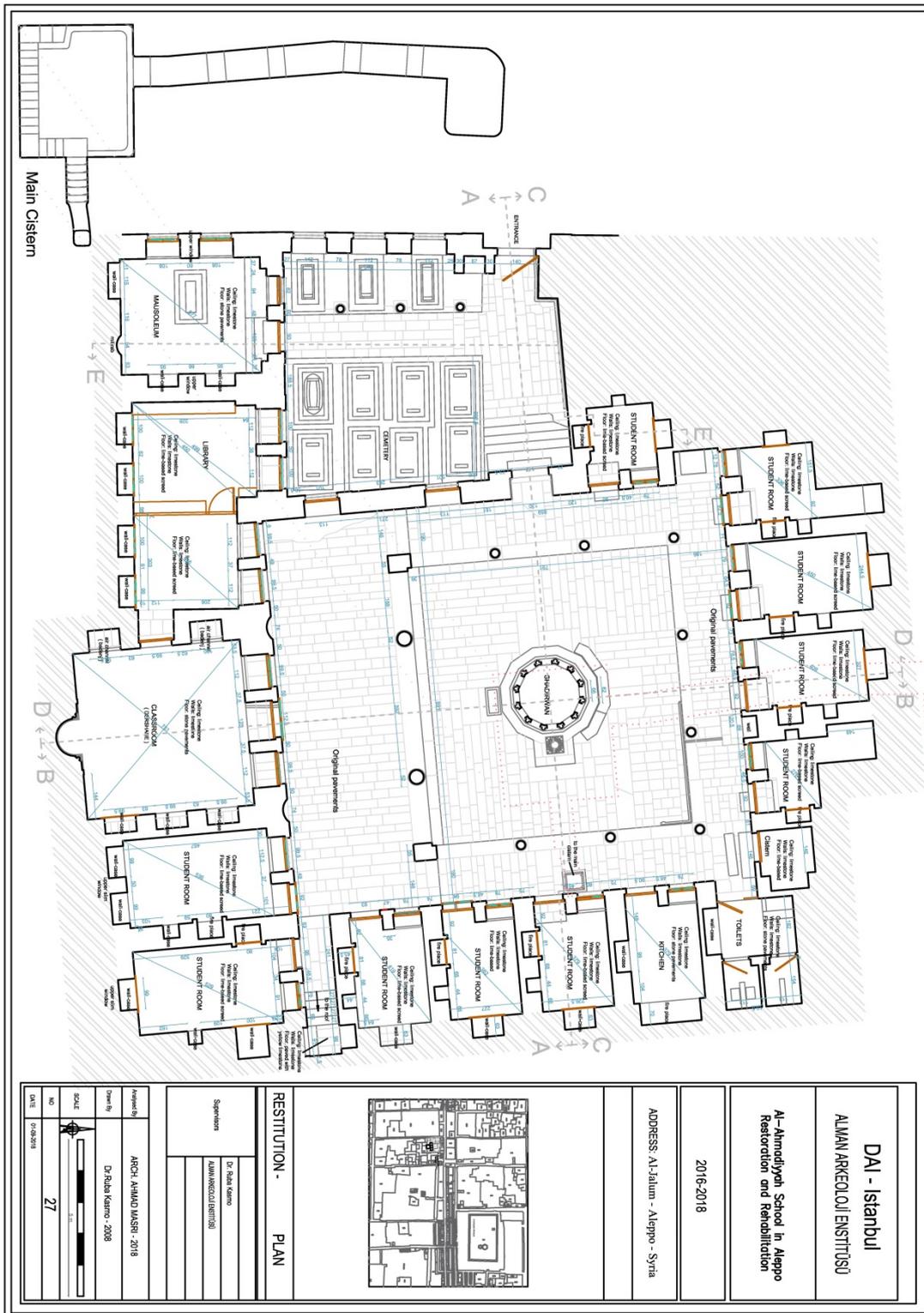
For example, in the following figure, we find a section showing the damaged on the school.



Damage assessment / Section E-E

Restitution drawings: These drawings illustrates the original design of the school, the drawings were done by using old photos and available information about the school.

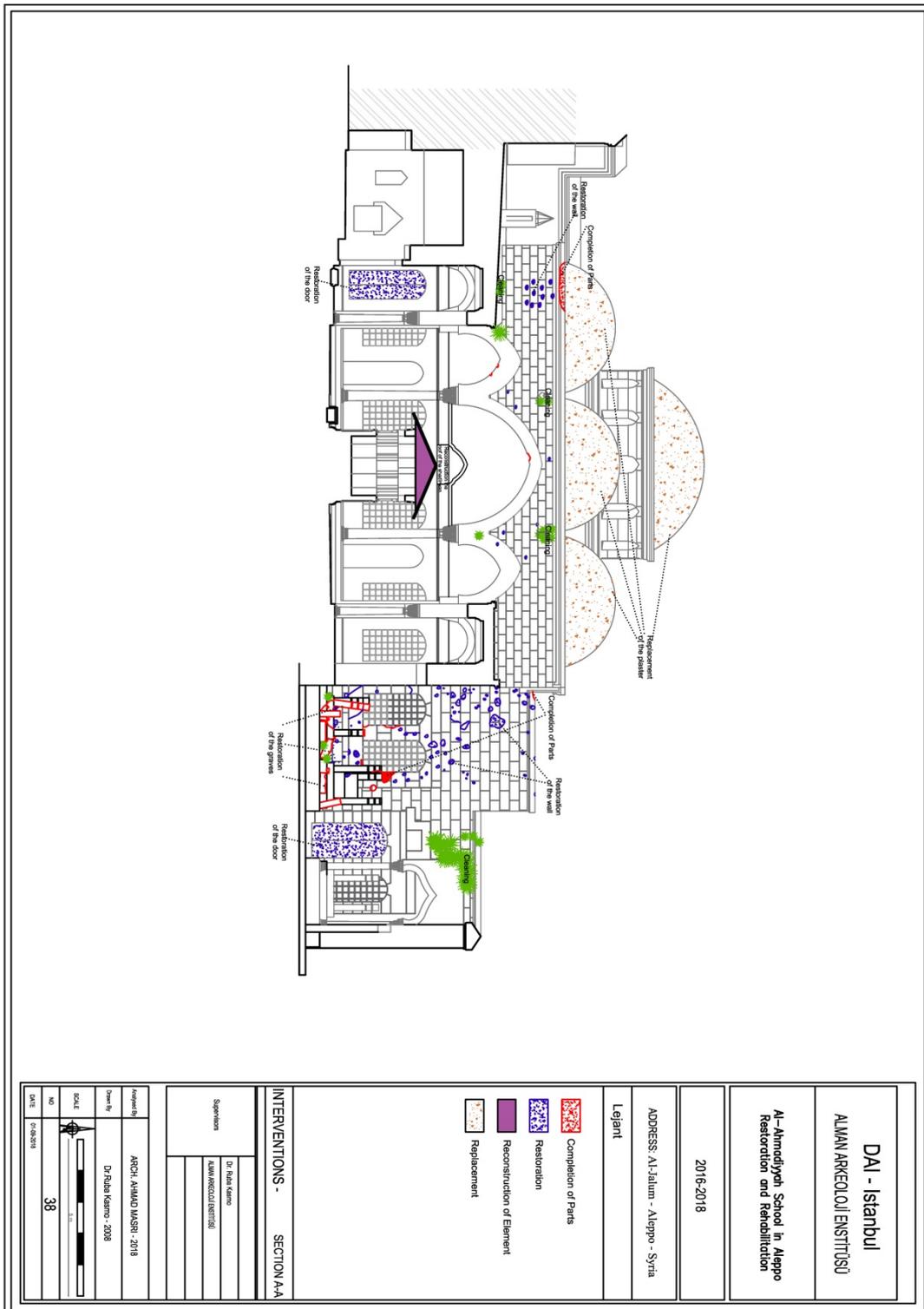
For example, in the following figure, we find an original plan of the school with writing illustrate the use of every space in the school and the used materials.



Restitution / The plan of the school

Interventions drawings: These drawings aim to clarify the necessary interventions that will be implemented in the school, which are mentioned in detail in the restoration study.

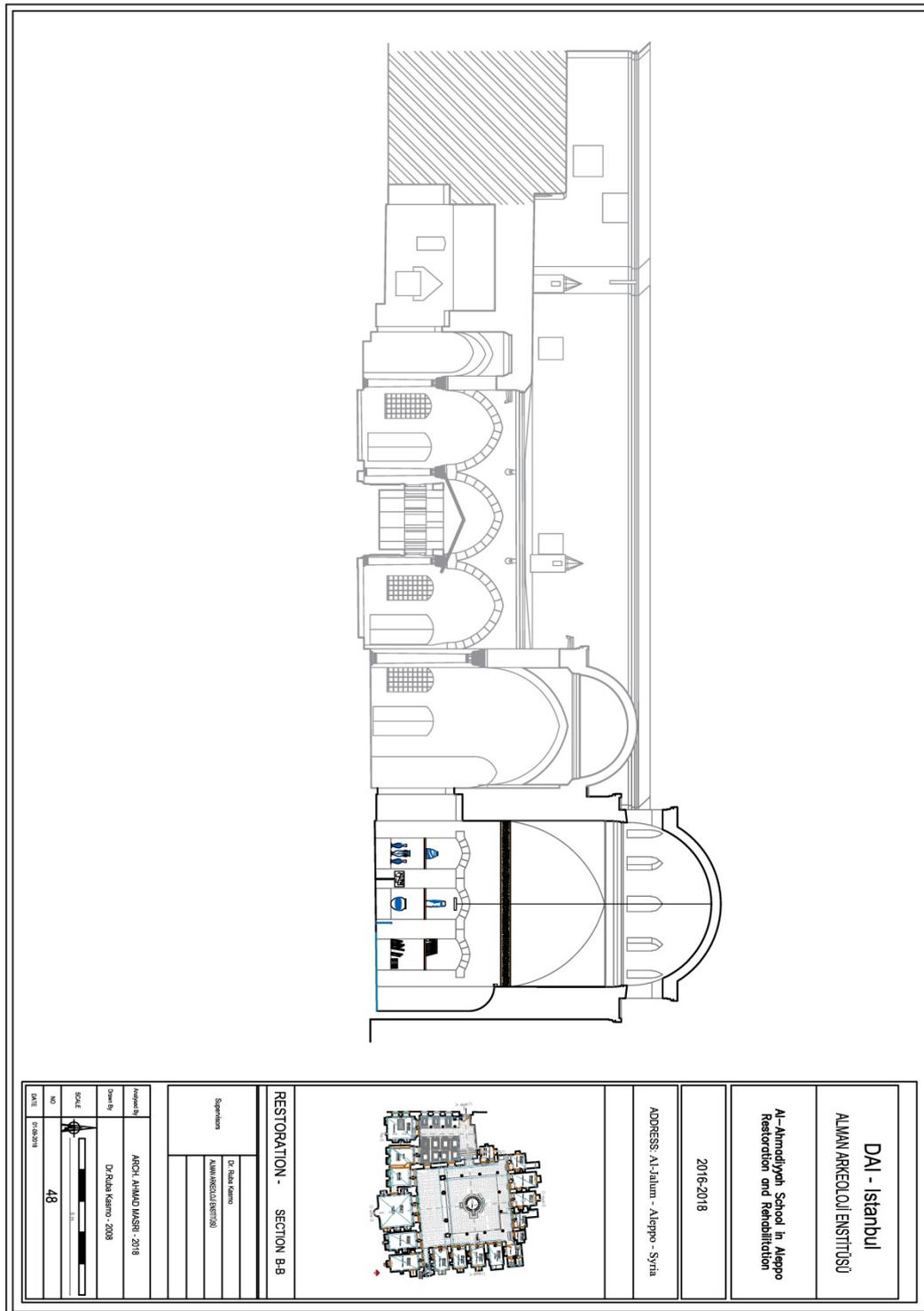
For example, in the following figure, we can see some of the interventions suggested. These interventions were explained in the drawings by colors, hatching and writing.



Interventions / Section A-A

Restoration drawings: These drawings illustrate the design of the school after implementing the necessary interventions; they also illustrate the design that demonstrates the function of the building. This too was mentioned in the study.

For example, in the following figure, we can find a section showing how the school will be with some furniture in it.



Restoration / Section B-B

In the fourth phase, a study was made for rehabilitation of the Ahmadiyyah School as a "Historical Museum of Aleppo in the Ottoman Period".

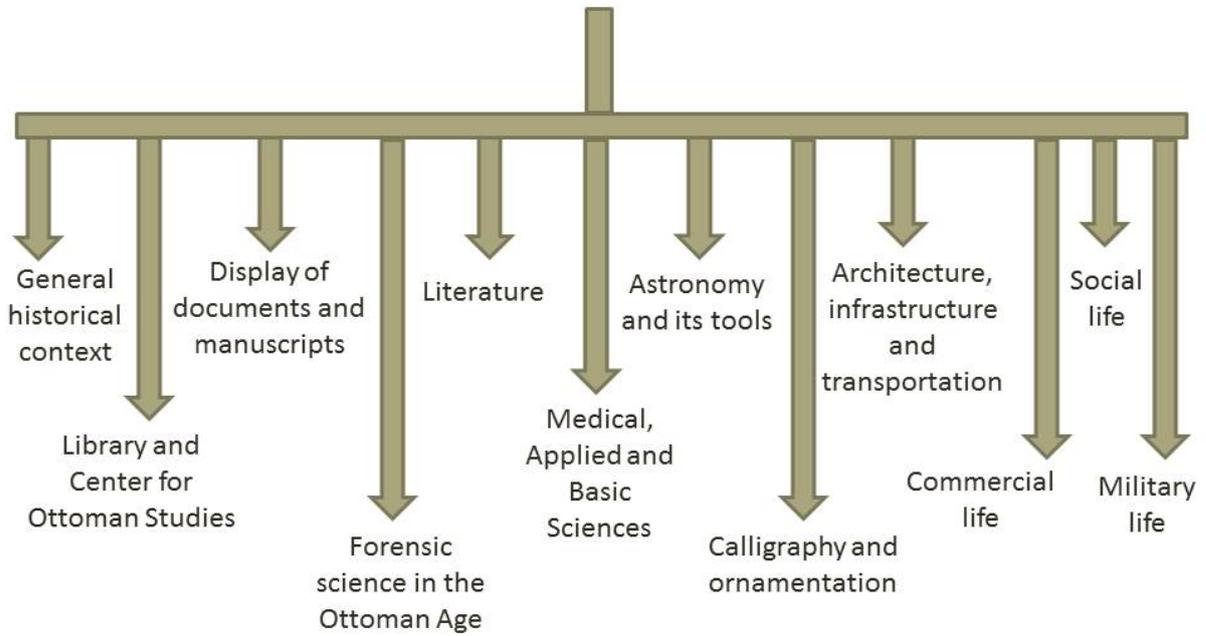
This proposal was chosen for several reasons which we mentioned before. The museum will have space for a library which will contain sources that are related to the topics of the museum itself, and a "Center for Ottoman Studies" especially studies about the Levant in the Ottoman Period.

The museum will include the following subjects:

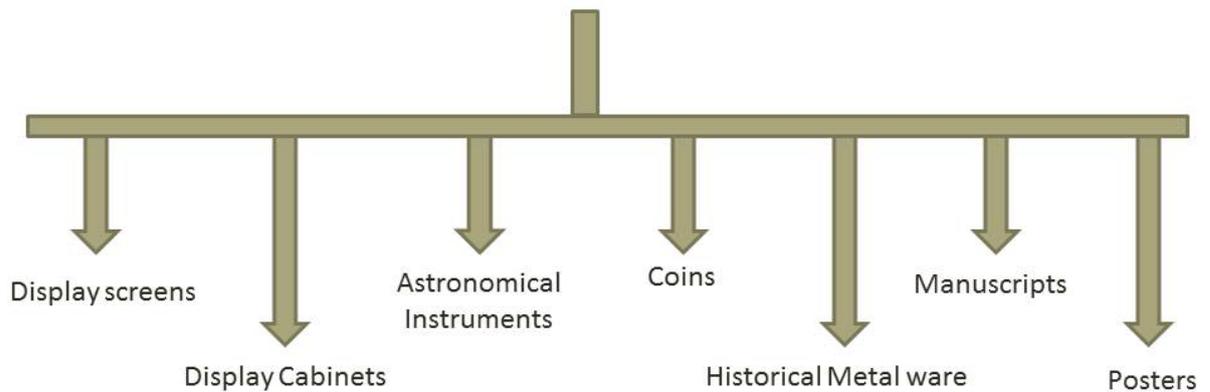
- 1- Historical view of Aleppo from the end of Mamluk period and the beginning of the Ottoman period, and how Aleppo and Levant joined the Ottoman Empire.
- 2- Aleppo's urbanization and its economic evolution under the Ottoman rule.
- 3- Aleppo's scientific change and growth within the Ottoman Empire.
- 4- The origins and growth of education in Aleppo including the concept of the school and the educational system
- 5- The Ahmadiyyah School: History, location, founder, its Endowments, its building structure, founding conditions, teaching System, the library, scientific terms and architecture (architectural elements, decorative components and Inscriptions).
- 6- The museum project: definition of the project and its implementation and axes (photographs before and after restoration).

A detailed study of the museum has been prepared showing the function of each space, the materials to be displayed and the equipment required. After that some 3D models were prepared for some spaces in the school in order to clarify the ideas and the design. For further details, you can check the full study.

Museum axes

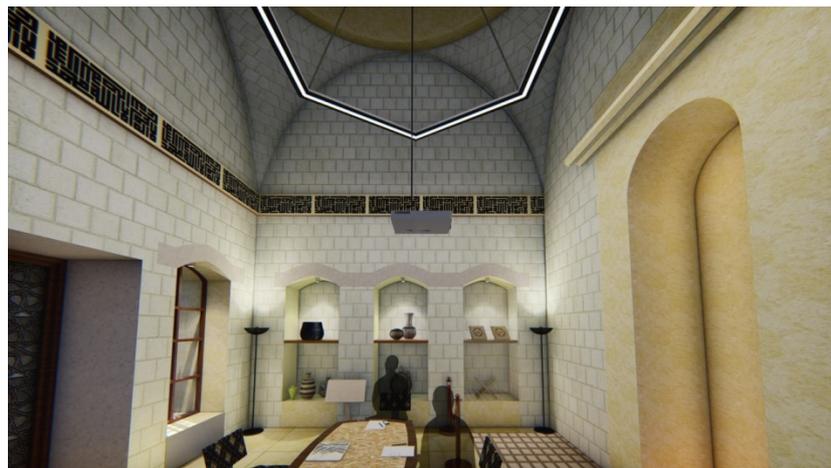
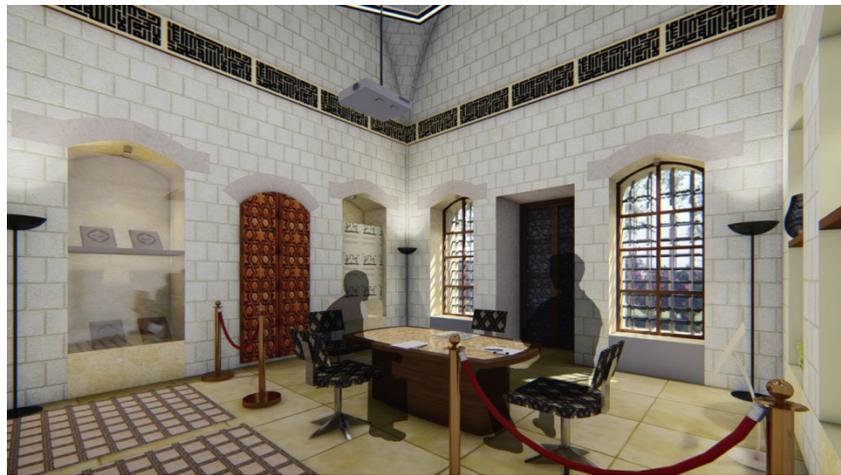


Contents of the museum

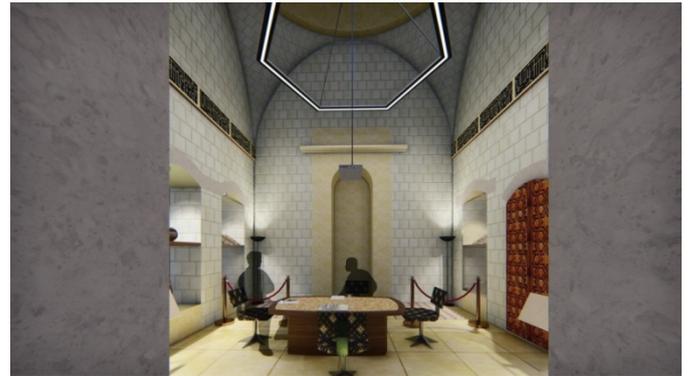


For example, here is the first proposal (3d modeling) of the main hall (the classroom) in the school, showing how it could look. This room (R3) will be a multi function hall (a meeting room with prayer's place or it could be a seminar hall), it will contain the following items:

- Place of prayer: given the previous function of this room, we found that placing a small prayer place next to the mihrab might be appropriate to preserve the historic spirit of the building.
- Movable meeting table.
- 2 cupboards for antique Qurans.
- Historical objects.
- Posters for famous scientists and persons (on stands).
- Poster about ventilation system (In the West cupboard)
- On the upper cornice: paintings with Ottoman calligraphy on the perimeter of the hall.



The Meeting Room



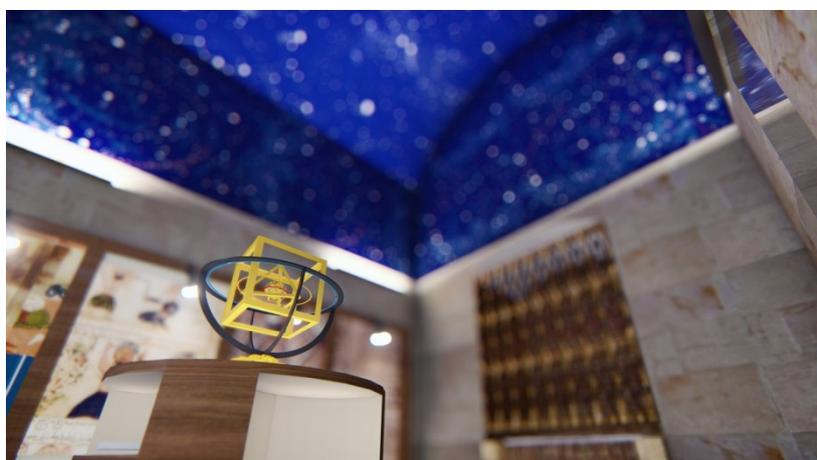
The Meeting Room



The Seminar Hall

Another example, Medicine and Astronomy Showroom (R8), it will contain the following items:

- Two Display Cabinets contain Astrological and medical instruments.
- Poster about Medicine.
- Poster about Astronomy.
- Ceiling poster for Astronomy with variable lighting.
- Fireplace.



Medicine and Astronomy Showroom

5. Results of the research

This work has shown the importance of the school in the distant past as a center for science. It also shows how it suffered from neglect and lack of maintenance. The school has lately regained its importance because of the restoration and adaptation project undertaken by the Waqf Library in Aleppo. However, the restoration work has not been completed.

As to the current state of the school, we see that it has suffered a lot of damage due to various reasons, including non-man-made ones due to the weather factors and negligence as well as man-made effects during the current war. In general, the school has moderate damages.

The school's overall state is relatively good; it is well built and robust. Damage can be divided into two types, ordinary architectural damages, and structural damages requiring rapid intervention and urgent preservation measures.

Dr. Mahmoud Masri, who supervised the renovation and rehabilitation project of Ahmadiyyah School, in his capacity as Director of the Waqf Library in Aleppo, explained that the conservation works were not in line with the required specifications. He demanded several modifications to be executed by the contractor, which the latter could not be completed because of the crisis in Syria. As previously mentioned, an analysis was done for the restoration study to show the constructive and destructive points in it.

As a result of this study we now have a full restoration study with drawings of the Ahmadiyyah School, together with a study to rehabilitate it so that this study is ready to start at any time (full executive file). In addition, the methodology applied in this study can be used and applied to other historical buildings in Syria.

6. Challenges

One of the biggest challenges of this project faces is; the absence of direct access to the building and the lack of reports describing the works done during the last restoration of the school. We can only rely on the visits conducted by the author in 2014, and the available images to make conclusions. Recently we reached for some new images and information showing damages which happened until the end of 2017.

7. Prospects for additional work for this study

- Completion of the 3D drawing for the entire school.
- Preparation of a preliminary memorandum containing the information to be presented, paintings, archaeological artifacts, manuscripts, maps, replicas, models of equipment and tools, which will constitute the historical museum of Aleppo in the Ottoman era.
- Developing an initial plan for the school maintenance program.

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