

YEMEN

Yemen has long stood at the crossroads of cultures, with its strategic trading location in the west of the Arabian Peninsula. Since the outbreak of the conflict, UNESCO has been cooperating closely with the General Organization of Antiquities and Museums (GOAM) and the General Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen (GOPHCY) to safeguard Yemen's cultural heritage.

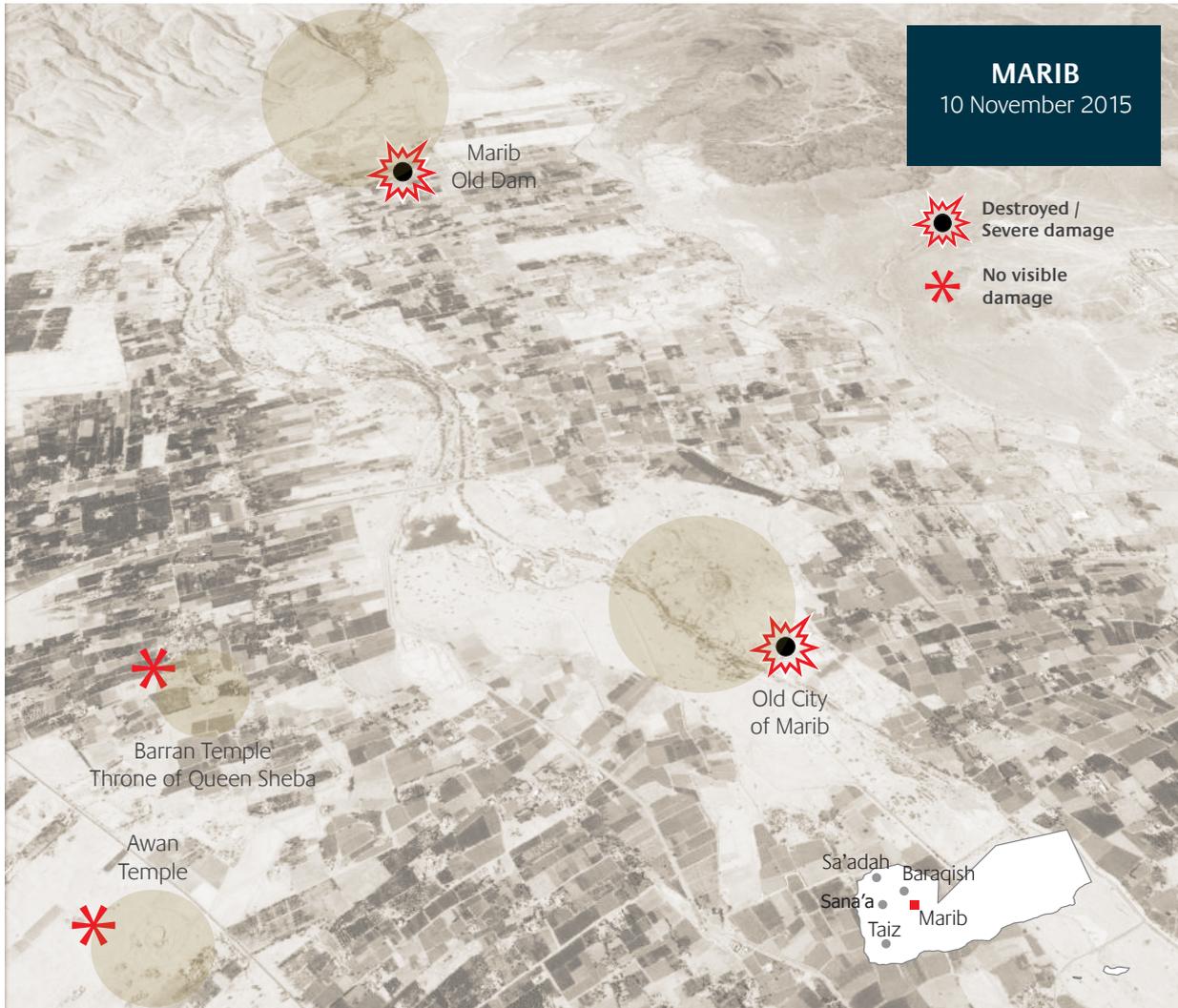


With an expanse of 98 hectares, the Sabaeen capital **Marib** was the largest ancient city in Southern Arabia and is considered one of the most significant historic sites in the Arabian Peninsula. Despite climatically unfavourable conditions, at the end of the 2nd millennium BC, a complex society emerged there, whose economy relied on a highly developed irrigation system. Thanks to its economic prosperity and geographic location, Marib became the most important trading station along the Incense Route. Marib hosts several important cultural sites such as the Bar'an Temple, the Awam Temple with its necropolis, the Wadi Ghufaina settlement and al-Mabna dam, and the Great Dam of Marib, which is considered to be a wonder of technical engineering and also appears in a verse of the Qur'an. Both the Great Dam of Marib as well as the Ancient City, part of the Archaeological site of Marib listed on Yemen's Tentative List of World Heritage since 2002, have been bombed and looted on several occasions over the course of the current conflict, severely damaging the site's historic structures. The Dam of Marib, twice as long as the Hoover Dam, sustained the largest city in ancient southern Arabia for more than a thousand years. Satellite imagery collected on 29 October 2015 confirmed the severe damage sustained by the two remaining sluices in the ancient dam system (see before and after images on page 14). Satellite imagery collected on 29 October 2015 also showed extensive damage to the ruins of the Ancient City of Marib and increased looting activities within the citadel, as well as new construction activities in the immediate vicinity of the area.

The ancient walled town of **Baraqish** once had more than fifty towers and two gates, and its walls reached a height of up to 14 m. Located in the

wide Wadi Fardha, it was previously known as Yathil, the dominant town in the Minean Kingdom and an important centre on the Incense Route. The Minean Temple of Nakrah, part of the ancient city, dates from the 1st millennium BC. The ancient city, and specifically the Temple of Nakrah, have suffered substantial damage as a result of bombing on several occasions. Satellite imagery collected on 29 October 2015 shows the extent of the damage to the Temple of Nakrah and numerous impact craters in the immediate vicinity of the Old City of Baraqish.

Taiz is the third largest city in Yemen, after Sana'a and Aden. Taiz, also written Ta'izz, dates back to at least the 11th century AD. It served as a dynasty capital during the late medieval period and as a capital of Yemen from 1948 to 1962, during the rule of Imam Ahmed. The city has many old and beautiful quarters, with houses built in the typical Yemeni burnt brick style. The historic Cairo Citadel, located on top of a mountain spur 450 metres above the city centre, was severely damaged in airstrikes. Satellite imagery from 26 June 2015 shows extensive damage to the main building in the centre of the castle mount. Built in the 5th century, it used to play an important military and political role throughout the history of the region, owing to its strategic position overlooking the city as well as the latter's location along the caravan routes.



Source: Marib, Yemen, 10 November 2015. © US Department of State, Humanitarian Information Unit, Next-View license. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT.

Sallah palace, built in the 20th century and used as a museum until the beginning of the conflict, was also targeted and severely damaged. Satellite imagery from 1 November, 2015 shows severe damage to the north-eastern corner of the main museum buildings.

Sa'adah is one of the oldest medieval cities in Yemen, of great importance for its historic, architectural, urban and spiritual value. Founded in the 9th century, it became the cradle of Zaydism, an influent school of thought in Yemeni Islam. Continuously inhabited, it is constructed in the typical Yemeni burnt brick style, and surrounded by an exceptional earthen wall, 3,000 metres long and 4 metres large, enriched with 52 towers and 16 gates. Houses and palaces are built of mud and brick and are several stories high. Fourteen mosques in the city dated back to the 10th to 16th centuries. The Great Mosque, which houses the

final resting places of the eleven successors of the first Zaydite Imam, as well as the An-Nisari Mosque, are considered high places of spiritual education and are of undeniable architectural value, their minaret and domes being of rare beauty.



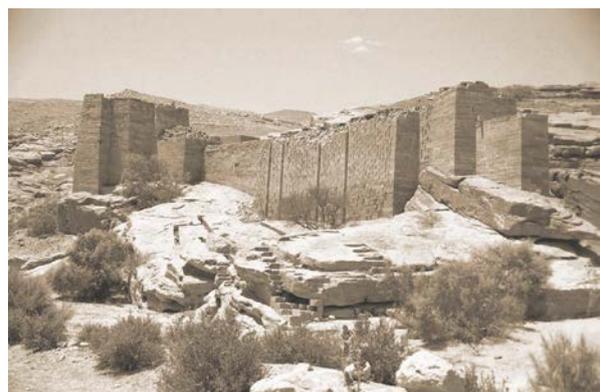
Source: Marib, Yemen, 29 October 2015. © US Department of State, Humanitarian Information Unit, NextView license. Satellite imagery analysis by UNITAR-UNOSAT.

The Historic city of Sa'adah, listed on Yemen's Tentative List for potential nomination for World Heritage inscription since 2002, has suffered extensive damage as a result of the ongoing conflict, with many historic buildings, including the Imam al-Hadi mosque, severely affected. UNOSAT's satellite imagery, based damage assessment identified a total of 136 affected structures. Approximately 31 structures were destroyed, 38 were severely damaged, and 67 were moderately damaged within the Old City of Sa'adah limits.

Situated in a mountain valley at an altitude of 2,200 m. the Yemeni capital, **Sana'a**, has been inhabited for more than 2,500 years and bears witness to the wealth and beauty of Islamic civilization. This religious and political heritage can be seen in the 103 mosques, 14 hammams and over 6,000 houses, all built before the 11th century. By the first century AD, it emerged as the centre of the inland trade route and its houses and public buildings are an outstanding example of a traditional, Islamic human settlement. Sana'a's dense rammed earth and burnt brick towers, strikingly decorated, are famous around the world and are an integral part of Yemenis's identity and pride. The Old City of Sana'a was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1986. In 2015, it was added to the List of World Heritage in Danger, owing to the ongoing conflict that has severely damaged many of the historic buildings of the city. Satellite imagery collected 8 July and 23 September, 2015 identify several 11th century houses which were completely destroyed.



Marid Old Dam before and after image. Photo credit: Hussain Bukhaiti. Satellite imagery collected on 29 October 2015 shows one of the retention towers severely damaged with visible debris in the middle section of the Southern Dam sluice.



Marib Old Dam before destruction. Photo credit: Jordi Zaragoza Anglès, Mikaku planet, 1995(www.mikakuplanet.com).