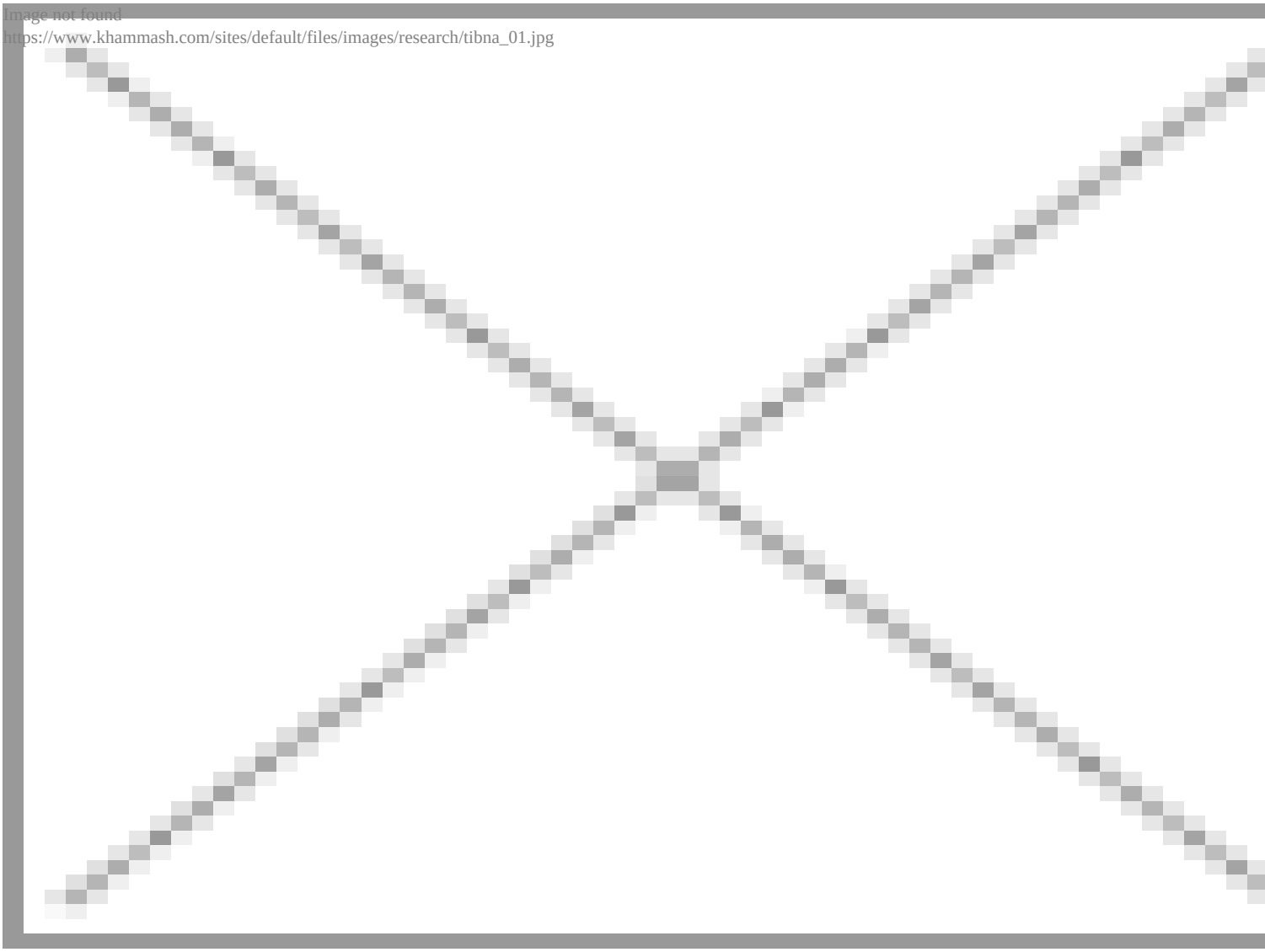
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Pasha Palace

By Ammar Khammash, The Jordan Times Weekender - January 2003



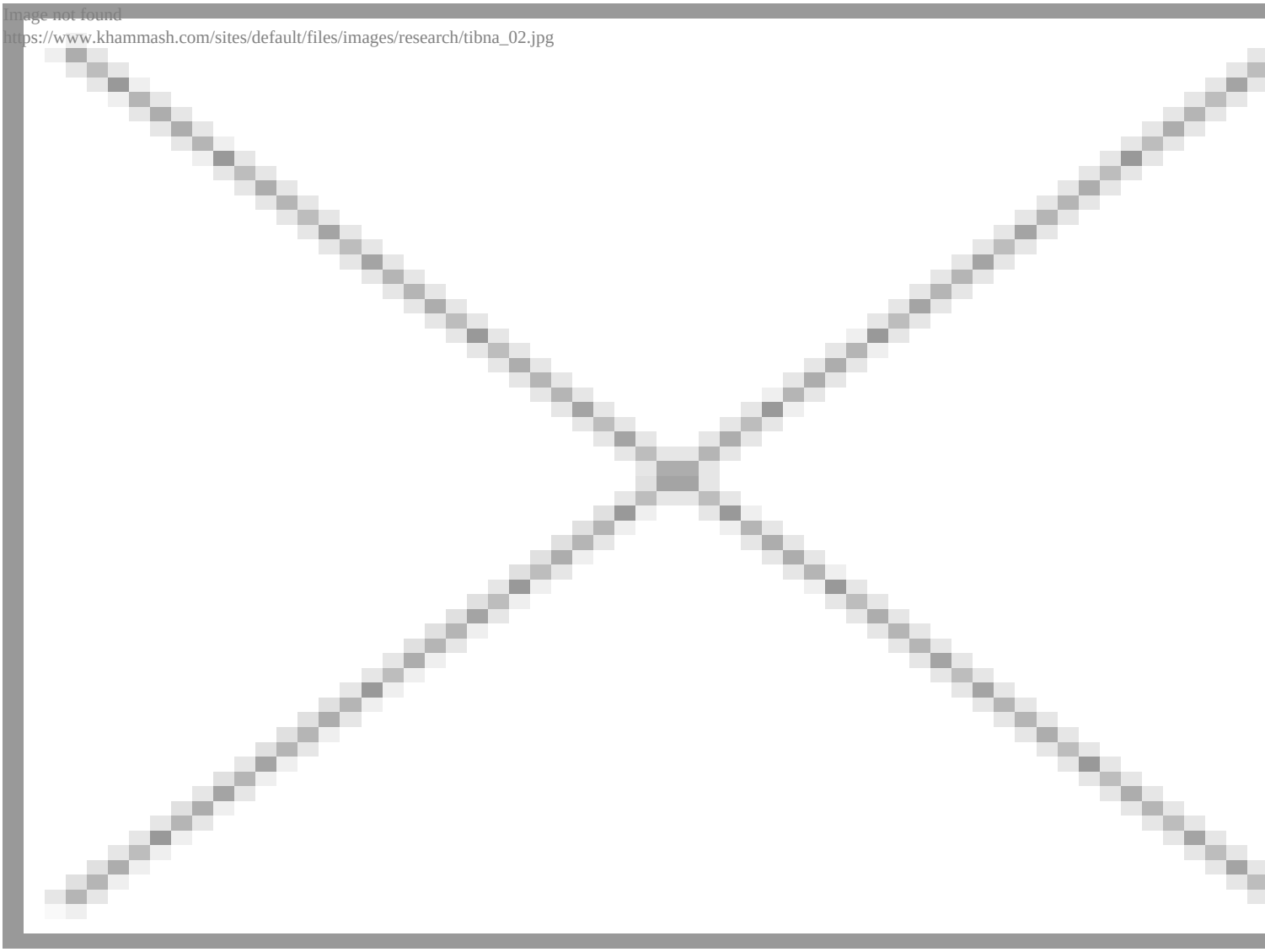
The car meanders upwards through a valley, revealing the overspilling modern growth of the village at its northern and eastern ends. From a distance, Tibna might appear disappointing nowadays. As in many of the Jordanian villages, the construction of the last 20 years has engulfed the historic core, and often replaced most of its buildings. As a result, all that is left of the traditional architectural fabric is fragmented, dilapidated and rapidly diminishing.

Not to create much expectation, today many of Tibna?s important historical buildings might be in total ruin or still standing but in meaningless context of never-finished cement expansions.

The village had many attractions; a pool at the lower eastern side, the charming "Old Mosque", the Alali mansion of the Shraydeh family, the Zayadneh castle, the Ajami holy tree on a mountaintop across the village to the east, a village wall, and other features that were no longer visible when I lived in the village in 1984.

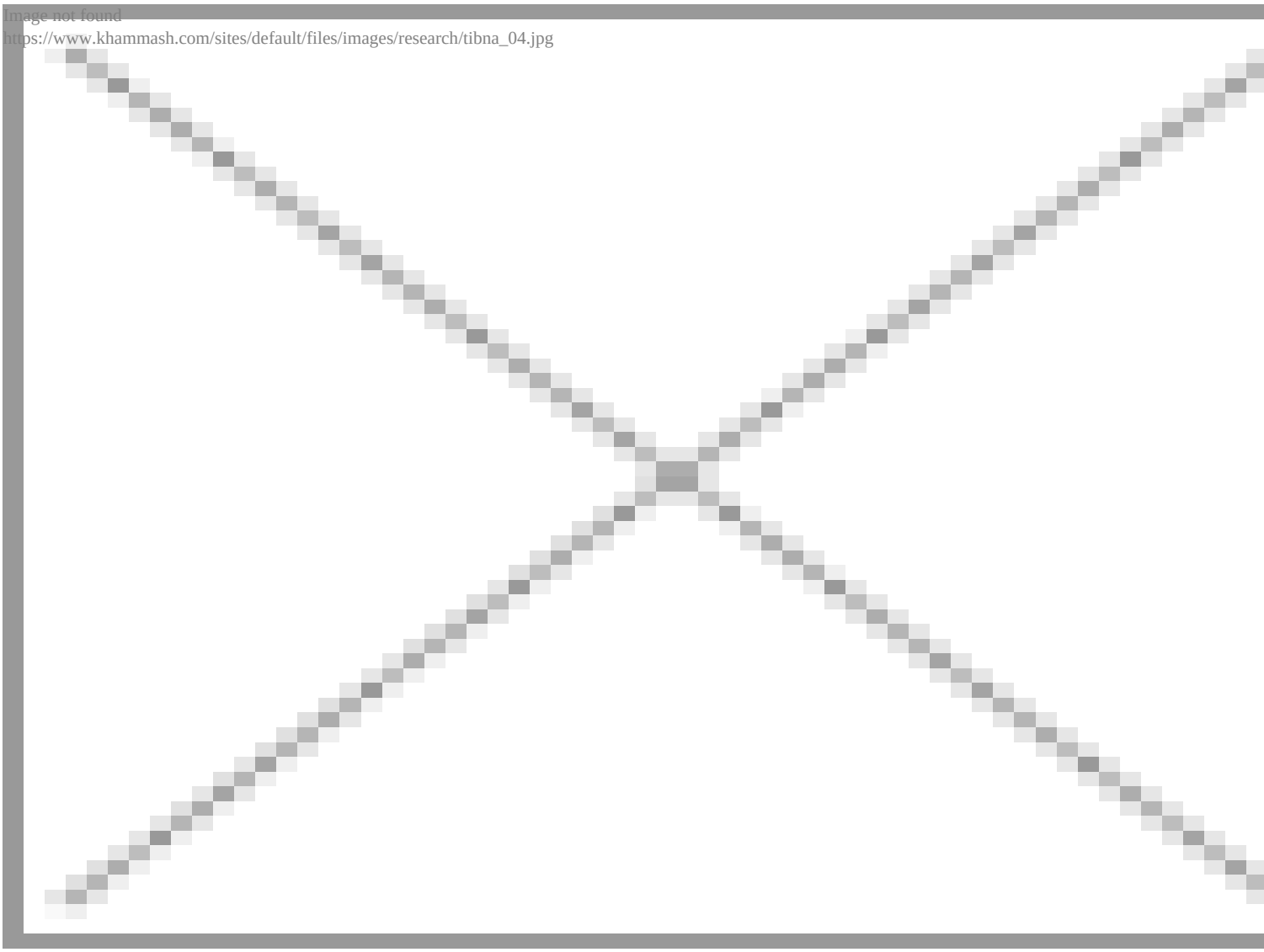
The mansion of the Shraydeh family is visibly different from the rest of the village. It occupies the highest

point on the center of Tibna mountain. Here was the palace of Kulayb al-Shraydeh, who was one of the most powerful figures till the early 1920s. He led the Kura rebellion, then, in protest to placing his strong group of villages under the government of Ajloun in Irbid. He was demanding for his traditionally powerful Kura to be established as a separate administrative district on its own, directly connected to the central government in Amman. This mansion was such a sophisticated address that it was mentioned in the writings of one of the western travelers who visited Tibna in the late 19th century. The traveler boasted of being offered lemonade in Bohemian glasses.



The architecture is of a distinctly sophisticated style, using shaped stone for all exterior elevations, vaults and cross vaults for the roofing of both floors, and large ?urban? windows that were only found in big cities in those days. The overall style is typically ?Late Ottoman? of the eastern Mediterranean, specifically related to towns and cities of northern Palestine such as Nazareth or Nablus. An attempt to date the building using architectural style and building methods would place it in between 1880s and 1910s. It is also important to note that different parts of the structure were built in different times. Like for almost every stone structures of this period, the lower floor, or part of it, is older than the additions above. The Alali mansion has, on the ground floor, a Madafa and a mosque. The shift in stone texture, and the position of meeting lines between walls, indicates different construction dates and additional enlargements that produced the final building.

When this building was documented, in 1984, the eastern part was in ruin. The locals mentioned that this part collapsed in the late 1970s after heavy rain. Today there are more parts missing due to lack of monitoring and lack of needed consolidation intervention. The building might also have been subjected to the usually destructive ?renovation? done to ?beautify? or over-romanticize the past, without following the internationally acceptable norms.



As a witness to the life of this building during the 1980s, I find it hard to visit the site today, fearing that the current condition is not in line with the attention that it should get.

It is frustrating and depressing to live one's life as a self-appointed guardian of natural or cultural heritage sites often situated in the most remote corners of the kingdom and mostly outside the protection of legislations.

The village of Tibna is part of a conglomeration of villages situated on a platform land halfway between the Ajloun heights and the Jordan Valley. Collectively these villages are called Al Kura. From Irbid, on the road to Dair Abu-Said, the path to Tibna branches to the left after about 25km. You can also drive through Jerash-Ajloun or Jerash ? Souf - Sakhra, in both cases take the road to Shtafayna and continue in the direction of Dair Abu-Said. After passing this town, drive some 8km in the direction of Irbid and the exit to Tibna would be on your right. Keep asking for directions. Tibna is a full day destination, and can be combined withvisits to other charming villages of the Kura region and the dense forest of Zubia. If you are an olive oil connoisseur, try to get some oil there, pressed in the Tibna style, which is said to be traditionally different from the rest of the Ajloun villages.

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