MUSLIM MILITARY ARCHITECTURE IN GREATER SYRIA

From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period

EDITED BY

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BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON
2006
On the cover: Aleppo castle.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISSN 1385–7827
ISBN 90 04 14713 6

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS
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THE CITADEL OF AL-RAQQ A AND FORTIFICATIONS IN
THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES AREA

STEFAN HEIDEMANN

1. Introduction

One of the almost forgotten and least known buildings in mediaeval al-Raqqa is its citadel. In the 1950s the citadel was completely removed. A citadel however, constitutes an important space defining complex for the historical development of a city. The citadel of al-Raqqa was located on a promontory of an elevated terrace formed by the Euphrates, situated at the southwestern corner of the city wall of al-Rāfiqa.

The cotton boom in the wake of the Korean War and the subsequent growth of al-Raqqa in the fifties of the twentieth century brought the end for the remains of the citadel. Nowadays the so-called Clocktower-Circle (daqūwār al-sa‘ā) completely covers the site of the former citadel. The circle has become one of the main traffic distributors within the growing city. The retrieval of the citadel from literary sources and photographic archives gives us new insights into the development of an important mediaeval city.

Between 1936 and 1950s, a small path went along the southern side of the city wall. It ran towards the west cut through the citadel, south of its northeastern and northwestern tower.² On the ground, only the northeastern and parts of the northwestern tower were then still visible (Fig. 5.a).³ The northwestern tower of the citadel was equally the southwestern tower of the Abbasid city wall. The ruin of this tower is locally still remembered as al-qulla, ‘the citadel tower’ (Fig. 4.b).

Michael Meinecke, the well-known excavator of Abbasid al-Raqqa, knew about the citadel at the southwestern corner of the horse-shoe-shaped city. But he regarded it as a later Ottoman addition. Therefore he did not

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¹ I like to thank Alastair Northedge for his valuable comments and for his thorough reading and correction of the English draft. The contribution presents some results of the ongoing research project “The New Economic Dynamics of the Zangīd and Ayyūbid Period”, supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

² Institut Français d’Archéologie du Proche Orient, reproduction German Archaeological Institute (DAI), Damascus, photo-no. 88/2199 by P. Grunwald.

³ For the northeastern tower see photo from the 1930s in the possession of Kassem Toueir. A copy of it is in the collection of the author.
include it in any of his archaeological maps. However most of the photographic documents presented here go back to his research efforts. The sources for the citadel are therefore not archaeological, but data collected from travel reports, air and surface photos from the early twentieth century and finally mediaeval chronicles.

Firstly, I will give a brief outline of the history of exploration of the citadel; secondly, some early references to a ihsan al-Ra’fiqa; thirdly, some general remarks about the historical development of fortifications within northern Mesopotamia, the Jazeera, and fourthly, I follow the history of the citadel of al-Raqqá according to the literary and photographic sources. The last and fifth point will be the exploration of the possible function of the citadel within the spatial organisation of the city. This point takes the position of the Báb Baghdād at the southeastern corner of the city wall into consideration.

2. The History of Exploration

The earliest view of the citadel is an engraving, added to the report of the Euphrates expedition by F. R. Chesney, from the year 1836. The citadel is visible in the distant background without showing any details except a towerlike structure. Chesney’s companion W. F. Ainsworth and later E. Sachau in the year 1879 refer briefly to the citadel in their travel reports but without any useful description of the ruins. Between October 1907 and March 1908, Sarre and Herzfeld surveyed the region in order to find a prominent Islamic site suitable for a German ex-

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4 Compare the one in the Encyclopaedia of Islam: Michael Meinecke, “al-Rakka”, *EI* II VIII, 410-414.


cavation project. For the publication, Herzfeld recorded the citadel of al-Raqqa in its basic square shape in a rough topographical sketch. In the years 1911 and 1913, the German archaeologist Max von Oppenheim visited al-Raqqa and took several photographs, most prominent in his photos appears the massive northwestern tower of the citadel the “qulla” (Fig. 4.b).

After World War I, in 1922, the French mandatory administration commissioned several aerial photos of Syria, which included the region of al-Raqqa and its citadel (Fig. 3.a). In the early thirties, on a suggestion of Sir Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell, the French administration commissioned new aerial views of the archaeological sites, endangered now by the rapid growth of the modern city (Fig. 3.b, 4.a). However, Creswell drew for his monumental *Early Muslim Architecture* (1940) a new map of the site, in which the citadel figured only as a square elevation without any further explanation. But Creswell’s text and photos recorded the prominent northwestern tower, which he believed to be part of the Abbasid construction.

3. *Hısn al-Raġqa*

When was the citadel built? Who built it? What was its purpose—defence or representation of royal power? Before going into details, I will give briefly

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8 Archive of the Bank Sal. Oppenheim jr., Cologne. I am very grateful to Gabriele Teichmann and Dominik Zier for the kind permission to reproduce the photos of Max von Oppenheim.


some basic information about the citadel. The visible construction goes back mostly to the Ayyūbid period in the first half of the 7th/13th century. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the aerial views point to the importance of the Ayyūbid citadel and the enclosure east of it, along the southern front of the city wall for the development and the history of the city. The enclosure ended in the east at the Baghdad Gate. In the south, it stretched 100 metres into the meadows of the flood-plain of the Euphrates (maps Fig. 1 and 2).

The citadel at the southwestern corner did not belong to the original plan of the city laid out under the Caliph al-Manṣūr in 154/770-1 (Map Fig. 1). The fortified city of al-Rāfiqa was built as a stronghold and garrison for a detachment of the Abbasid Khurāsānī army.\(^\text{12}\) The plan of the city was almost a parallelogram with a pointed semi-circle added in the north.\(^\text{13}\) The southern wall was set on the brink of the rubble and loess-terrace formed by the Euphrates in order to get a solid foundation. Below this terrace lay the swampy marshes of the river, the literal meaning of \textit{raqqa}. On the eastern and western ends of the southern wall two massive towers were erected. Smaller projecting half-round towers were built along the entire curtain wall.\(^\text{14}\) East of al-Rāfiqa lay the rectangular Hellenistic, mostly Christian-Jewish, city of Kallinikos/al-Raqqa. The name al-Raqqa was used for the entire urban complex. With the decline of the Hellenistic city early in the 5th/11th century the name was transferred to the much prosperous city of al-Rāfiqa, which was subsequently only called al-Raqqa in the sources.\(^\text{15}\) Hārūn al-Rashīd (reigned 170-193/786-809) might have added—according to much later sources—a second somewhat weaker wall (Fig. 6.a).\(^\text{16}\) However, a separate citadel for the city...
Fig. 1. Map of al-Raqqa/al-Rafiqa, German Archaeological Institute.
Fig. 2. Reconstruction of the citadel (33) and the enclosure south of the city wall (9).
Execution of power was not necessary, because the whole city served as garrison and the country was almost secure. The Abbasid palace complexes in the north of al-Raqqa and al-Rāfiqā were built during Ḥārūn al-Rashīd’s residence. They were planned as an open area without any fortifications. Also during the middle-Abbasid period in the 3rd/9th century al-Raqqa served much of the time as capital for the western provinces including Egypt. It was also sometimes a border-fortress—alternately for the Abbasids and for the Tūlūnīds. The sources however do not point to any fortification in the south-west of the city-enclosure.

Only later, during the period of the Hamādānīds and of the Bedouin domination in the 4th/10th and 5th/11th century, a “fortress of al-Rāfiqā” is mentioned briefly twice in the literary sources: firstly, during the rebellion of the amīr Abū l-Fāris al-Baqjūrī in al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqā. After the defeat of Baqjūr in 381/991, the “fortress of al-Rāfiqā”, ḥisn al-Rāfiqā, was

le Syrien, 3 vols., Paris (1905), here book XI.XXVI; trans. vol. II, p. 526, mentions Ḥārūn al-Rashīd as the builder of the second wall; cited also in Khalaf—Kohlmeyer, “Untersuchungen”, 148. Yaqtū al-Hamawi (d. 626/1229), Kitāb Muḥjam al-buldān ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, Jacut’s geographisches Wörterbuch, 6 vols., Leipzig (1866-1870), at vol. II, p. 734, reports also two distinct city walls. ʿIzz al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285), Al-Xāṣiq al-khattārā fī ḥāki m usurārī il-Shīm wa-l-Jazīra vol. III (al-Jazīra), ed. Yahya Ibbara, Damascus (1978), 71: “Ḥārūn al-Rashīd built the city wall”. Al-Khalaf, “Stadtmauer”, 127, knows only the passage by Ibn Shaddād and not the one from Michael Syrus. He does not connect this citation with the second city wall, which he believed to be constructed under al-Manṣūr. He argues that the passage from Ibn Shaddād refers to the coating of the first wall with baked bricks. The information provided by Michael the Syrian speaks against the argument of al-Khalaf. Furthermore the brick work of the congregational mosque of al-Manṣūr is the same as the one of the first main wall of the city. Both were built probably at the same time. About the brick work see N. Hagen in Khalaf, “Stadtmauer”, 131.

All the literary sources agree for the spelling of the name as Baqjūr. However the correct spelling of the name as Baqjūr. This is evident from a coin as an official document from Aleppo by the year 358/969-70; Ulla S. Linder Welin, “Sayf al-Dawlah’s Reign in Syria and Diyarbekr in the Light of the Numismatic Evidence”, Commentationes de Nummis Saeculorum IX-XI in Suecia Repertis I (Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Handlingar Antikvariska Serien 9), Stockholm (1961), 17-102, at p. 98-99.

handed over to the victorious Hamdānid ruler Sa’d al-Dawla. The second reference to a hisn is found within the context of an event which happened eighty years later. In the years 462/1070 and 463/1070-1 northern Mesopotamia saw the first massive advance of the Seljuqs towards Syria. The population of Harrân sought refuge in the south, within the “fortress of al-Raﬁqa”, hisn al-Raﬁqa. In both cases it can not be decided with certainty, whether hisn means here a separate citadel or named only the fortified city itself. Probably it means the latter.

4. Fortifications Within Northern Mesopotamia

Citadels are instruments for the execution of military power. In periods of political stability with peace in the land and with a sedentary military surveillance over nomads, cities are usually open and there is no need for city walls. When the peace in the land is threatened by nomads or by hostile sedentary powers, the investment in city walls becomes reasonable. The defence of a city wall however requires a considerable number of people experienced in warfare and, at least, the collaboration of the inhabitants. Both conditions were not always present. Separate castles do allow a comparatively small number of warriors to repel the hostile attack of a much larger army, even in the case where the enemy had already forced his entry into the city. A fortress was also necessary, when a city should not only be policed, but militarily controlled by a small number of armed personnel usually foreign to the indigenous population.

The politico-military situation during the second half of the 5th/11th century favoured the construction of fortresses on the middle Euphrates. The silence of the sources about such a complex in al-Raqqa for the Numayrid and ‘Uqaylid period does not rule out the possibility of its existence. During the late 4th/10th and the first half of the 5th/11th cen-

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19 Abū Ya‘lā Ḥamza ibn al-Qalānīst (d. 555/1160), Dhayl tārīkh Dimashq ed. Henry Frederick Amedroz, Leiden, Beirut (1908); reprint w/o place (Baghdad, Maktabat al-muthannā), w/o year (ca. 1970s), 38; ed. Suhayl Zakkār, Damascus (1403/1983), 64. Possibly the writings of Abū Isqāq Ibrāhīm al-‘Sābi’ (d. 384/994) served as a source.

ury, the Bedouin rulers of the Mirdāsids, Numayrids and ‘Uqaylids followed the Hamdānids in their sway over the Jazīra. Their need to present themselves as urban rulers was low at the beginning. Their main seat of power remained usually outside the cities in the camp, the hillā. A fortification would have only served the settled population in order to keep the nomads out. However a growing need of some tribal leaders to represent themselves as urban rulers could not be excluded. This need can be proved for some of the nomadic rulers even before the Seljūq conquest.

The arrival of the Seljūqs induced the building of fortifications. The Seljūq rule was regarded as foreign, in language, culture and in some regards also in religious belief. They were Sunni and a dominating share of the population were Shi’ite. As a professional military minority, the Seljūqs and their successors based their rule on fortifications and fortified cities. The fortress as instrument of power was necessary for the upkeep and security of Seljūq rule in the country. Under the pressure of the Seljūq conquest some of the Bedouin amirs in the Jazīra and northern Syria accommodated themselves quickly to the new form of rule. A fortress allowed them a safe retreat and protection against the Seljūq army. 21

The history of the neighbouring city Harrān in the north of the Diyar Mudar is in many regards comparable to the urban development of al-Raqqa. 22 According to Yahyā of Antioch, in the year 423/1032 or 424/1033 the municipal militia (‘abdādhī) together with the rural, poor and needy Muslim mob took the temple of the pagan religious community of the Sābiān and transformed it into a stronghold (ma’qil). 23 This construc-

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23 Bianquis, Dumou, 489, reads in Yahyā al-Anṭākī (see fn. 24) ma’qgal (?) and emends to ma’taqqal (prison). However during military campaigns captives were only made for commercial sales, therefore the reading as ma’qil, stronghold, seems more probable. About the citadel and the discussion about the location of the Sābiān temple cp. Lloyd—Brice, “Harran”, esp. at p. 96.

tion was or had been integrated into the city walls. 25 In the year 451/1059-60, the amīr of the Banū Numayr, Manṣūr ibn Shabīb, transformed the former temple into a splendid fortified residence. 26 In the year 450/1058-9 some evidence makes building activities by Manṣūr ibn Shabīb in al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa likely too. So far, there are only hints of a restoration of the congregational mosque in al-Rāfiqa. 27

The final turn to fortifications as the residence for Arab rulers—having still their power base in the pasture—was made by the chief of the ‘Uqaylid clan, the amīr Muslim ibn Quraysh (reigned in Mosul 453-478/1061-1085). 28 Under the threat of Seljūq conquest. Muslim ibn Quraysh held sway over the city of al-Raqqa from 464/1071-2 on. 29 In the year 476/1083 during a rebellion of the local Hanbalite population in Harrān against him and his Shi’ite governor, his men entrenched themselves in the fortress (ḥisn) of Harrān—according to the later but detailed chronicle of Ibn al-Ādīm. 30 Ibn al-Ādīm writes, that Muslim ibn Quraysh was


25 It is not yet determined when the city wall of Harrān was constructed; cp. Thomas Alan Sinclair, Eastern Turkey, An Architectural and Archaeological Survey, 4 vols., London (1987-1990), here vol. IV, at p. 41.


30 About the rebellion in Harrān: Ibn al-Ādīm, Żubdat II, 81-83; Ibn Shaddād, Aʿlāq III, 47; Dhahabī, Tārīkh [471-480 h.], 16-17; Ibn al-Ādīm, Kūmil X, 83-84; Zakkar, Emirate, 208-209; Degener, Emirate, 84-85; Banquis, Domus, 602; Ripper, Marșandîden, 206.
the first who fenced Mosul—which was previously undefended—with a wall, that the Seljûq governor Jikirmish (d. 500/1106) reinforced it, and that finally Zangi ibn Åqsunqr (d. 541/1146) walled Mosul with strong fortifications. 31

Also for other tribal leaders and amirs with a nomadic background we find castles and fortresses as the basis of their rule during this period. Groups of the Banû Numayr held sway over the fortress al-Najm (Qal‘at al-Najm)32 and the fortress of Sinn ibn Útayr,33 north of the Euphrates. In the case of the Munqidhids it was the fortress of Shayzar34 and for the Banû Mulâ’ib the fortress of Afâmîyâ.35

After the Seljûq conquest of Syria in the year 479/1086 the Úqaylid commander of the citadel of Aleppo Sâlim ibn Mâlik ibn Badrân al-Úqaylî (d. 519/1125) was compensated with the fortress Ja‘bar, also called Dawsar, and in addition with the fortified al-Raqqa. 36 Although Qal‘at Dawsar had served long before as refuge and retreat for Numayrid-Qushayrid highwaymen, the construction of a real fortress on that promontory at the Euphrates river happened probably first under Sâlim ibn Mâlik.37

The 'Uqaylids preferred as their seat of government the fortress Ja'bar rather than the already fortified al-Raqqa, which lies in the swampy marshes of the mouth of the Balikh river. Al-Raqqa was—according to the literary sources—at the end of the 5th/11th century—much more important as a city, but Qal'at Ja'bar had a much better strategic position on an elevated hill overlooking an important part of the middle Euphrates and controlling it militarily.

Al-Raqqa was governed usually by a son or a brother of the reigning 'Uqaylid amīr of Qal'at Ja'bar. It was still fortified with the Abbasid city walls. Until now, only a single piece of evidence for 'Uqaylid building activities in al-Raqqa remained in the form of an inscription for an endowment, waqf, with a terminus post quem of 500/1106. Although there is no unambiguous evidence in the literature, the beginning of the construction of a fortress at the southwestern corner of al-Rāfqā within the Numayrid and 'Uqaylid period cannot be ruled out either.


A single literary source provides reports about a reinforcement and “The New Citadel”, al-qal' a al-jadida, during the Ayyūbid period in the 7th/13th

ended this situation. The fortress developed into an important city after the hand-over to the 'Uqaylid Sālim ibn Mālik. The archaeological analysis does not contradict the literary evidence. On the basis of her study of the pottery Cristina Tonghini came to the conclusion that a significant settlement on Qal'at Ja'bar started in the second half of the 5th/11th century; Cristina Tonghini, Qal'at Ja'bar Pottery. A Study of a Syrian Fortified Site of the Late 11th-14th Centuries (British Academy Monographs in Archaeology 11), Oxford (1998), 30, 33, 40-41; Cristina Tonghini, “A Recent Excavation at Qal'at Ja'bar. New Data for Classifying Fritware”, Karin Bartl and Stefan R. Hauser (edd.), Continuity and Change in Northern Mesopotamia from the Hellenistic to the Early Islamic Period (Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 17), Berlin (1996), 287-300, here esp. at p. 290; personal letter of 22 March 2000. Tonghini however takes as terminus post quem for the settlement of the citadel and in turn for the beginning of the pottery production the murder of Ja'bar ibn Sāhiq in the year 464/1071-2 (Ibn al-Qalānīṣīf, Dhayl, ed. Amedroz, 100-101; ed. Zakkār, 166). But her findings do not contradict the hypothesis that an enforced settlement on the citadel coincides with the beginning of 'Uqaylid rule in the year 479/1086. The 'Uqaylids had an interest in the development of the fortification into a viable city, whereas the Qushayrids were only characterised as bandits in the sources. Her study of the pottery from the excavations on Qal'at Ja'bar allows the conclusion that the so-called fritware 1 ‘Tell Minis ware’ had already been produced for a certain time, before it reached the citadel in significant numbers. The fritware 1 was probably made in al-Raqqa. Fritware 1 diminishes after 564/1168-9.

century. The choice of the name “The New Citadel” suggests that an earlier construction already existed, probably constructed during the early Ayyūbid or perhaps during the Zangīd, Uqaylid and even the Numayrid period.

In the year 529/1135 Zangī ibn ʿAṣunqur took the city of al-Raqqa from the Uqaylid amīr without force but with the help of a ruse of war. Since then, al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa had continuously a garrison under the command of a Turkoman amīr.39 In the year 578/1182 Saladin (reigned 564-589/1169-1193) conquered the city. Al-Raqqa however, remained for the time being in the hands of the Zangīds, now acknowledging Ayyūbid overlordship. It gained considerable importance as junction between the principalities of Aleppo and Mosul and became, together with Harrān, capital of the Diyar Muḍar. After Saladin passed away in the year 589/1193, his brother al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr, then in Harrān, took the city from the once allied, but now mutinous, Zangīd amīr. After his succession as overlord of the Ayyūbid realm in 596/1199, al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr made his son al-Ashraf Mūsā lord of the Diyar Muḍar. Between the years 597/1201 and 626/1229, al-Ashraf Mūsā resided temporarily in Harrān and in al-Raqqa.40 He took considerable interest in the development of the city. The Ayyūbid chronicler Ibn Naẓīf (d. 637/1240) reports building activities within an existing citadel:

“In this [year 622/1225] al-Ashraf ordered the demolition of five towers of the city wall of al-Raqqa opposite of the palace-complex, which he erected within “The New Citadel””.

This description of “The New Citadel” corresponds to the ruins we see on the photos and aerial views of the early twentieth century. However, an interpretation of the aerial views must take into consideration that, 

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the citadel of al-raqqa

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during the 10th/16th century, an Ottoman restoration or new building of a fortress might have occurred. The latest building phase might be the most visible one on the photographs.

According to Ibn Naṣīf a part of the city walls was torn down in order to connect the palaces within the citadel with the city itself. Because he noticed only a modification of the complex, “The New Citadel” must be built prior to 622/1225. The distance between the projecting half-round towers of the city wall was between 32.65 and 36 metres—measured from their centre. The distance between the five towers corresponds to a square complex of about 140 by 140 metres. The measurement includes the southwestern corner and the fifth tower (seen from the west) of the city wall, which were obviously not entirely teared down. Creswell’s sketch provides a similar measurement. The complex is almost symmetrical to a slightly shifted north-south axis. At all four corners, towers are visible and prominent. The northwestern tower of the citadel, the qulla,—that is the southwestern tower of the city wall—corresponded in its dimensions with the southeastern tower of the city wall, that is the one behind the Bāb Baghdād.

Both towers were massive. In 1908 Herzfeld saw both still with their original coating of burnt bricks. He calculated a diameter of 15.30 m for the southwestern tower of the city wall. The coating had a thickness of about 2.85 m. The southeastern tower had a diameter of 15.60 m and a coating 2.30 m below tapering to about 1 m above. Herzfeld assumed that the coating he saw was a later addition to the Abbāsid construction. After some sondages Creswell confirmed a casing of the south-eastern tower. Creswell later saw only the core of unburnt bricks of the north-western tower. A close-up by Oppenheim from 1913 taken from the south gives an impression of how massive the stump was (Fig. 4.b), although the dismantling was in process. Although the three other towers of the cit-

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43 In S. Heidemann, “Die Zitadelle von ar-Rāfiqa”, Verena Daiber–Andrea Becker (edd.), Raqqā III, 49-55, the measurement of the citadel was erroneously given as 200 by 200 metres.

44 Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture II, 40-41, fig. 2a and 2c.

45 Cp. a photo of this tower taken by Herzfeld in Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture II, fig. 3c.

46 According to some aerial views of 1922 and 1936 a second not very solid outer
adel had the same dimension on the ground, their ruins are much flatter than that of the northwestern tower (qulla) (Fig. 5.a). They seem to have had a weaker wall surrounding them, now perhaps the exterior wall. The flatness ruins mean that they were probably not as massive as the qulla. They might be towers with an inner staircase, comparable to other early Ayyūbid towers, for example the ones at Ḥarrān. Newly erected massive towers were unknown in this period.

South of the northwestern corner the photos (Fig. 2, figs. 3.a, 4.a) show clearly a kind of a ruined construction attached to the western wall of the citadel, which runs up to the middle of the wall. Its use and date is unknown. Within the square complex, an open courtyard seems to be present, comparable to that of the Ayyūbid palace on top of the citadel of Aleppo.47 On all four sides of the courtyard rīwāq-like structures may have stood. At least the northern and southern rīwāq were divided into several rooms. They seem to be three rooms in axial order. On the eastern and western sides a division into compartments seems probable too. A central court with four rīwāns cannot be excluded.

In front of the northern rīwāq there is a nearly square structure. An Ottoman building should be considered a possibility, because such a construction does not seem to belong to a four-rīwān complex. Also a ruined and sunk cistern of the original building cannot be ruled out. On the southern side of the courtyard, a wall or at least an elevation stretches almost all the length of the southern part of the court in front of the rīwāq.

6. Interpretation and Purpose

When was “The New Citadel” built? Huge corner towers are a feature for early Ayyūbid fortifications, especially from the reign of al-ʿĀdīl Abū
THE CITADEL OF AL-RAQQA

Fig. 3.a. The citadel on 27. 6. 1922, detail; Paris, Institut Géographique National, Photothèque Nationale; Esc 56: A92/27. 6. 1922 7h - 3.500 26 ZGC.

Fig. 3.b. The citadel from the south east. Institut Français d'Archéologie du Proche Orient, Rakka, 16. 3. 1936; reproduction DAI, Damascus, no. 1989/39-468 and 473, P. Grunwald.
Fig. 4.a. The citadel from the south east. Rakka, 16. 3. 1936, reproduction DAI, Damascus, no. 1989/39-463, P. Grunwald.

Fig. 4.b. The northwestern tower of the citadel (1913). Max von Oppenheim collection D617. Inv.-Nr. 29/15.9. S. 45a.
Bakr onwards. Preceding al-Ashraf Mūsā’s activities in al-Raqqa were the reinforcement of the Zangī and Numayrid citadel of Harrān. Al-ʿAdil Abū Bakr took residence in Harrān between the years 588/1192 and 596/1199. He rebuilt and reinforced the citadel of Harrān. He laid out four almost round, eleven-sided towers at the corners of the citadel. He seems to envisage a defence line against his eastern and northern allies who had been previously forced into submission and were possibly ready for a revolt, namely the Zangīs in Mosul and the Artuqīds in Mardin. The historical situation suggests that the visible citadel in al-Raqqa was built during al-ʿAdil Abū Bakr’s reign in the Diyār Muḍar too. Hanisch supposed for the elaborated eleven-sided towers in Harrān a more representative than defensive character. This seems to hold true for the layout of the citadel in al-Raqqa as well. However for a military interpretation of the citadels in Harrān and in al-Raqqa, it has to be taken into account that these citadels were not designed in order to resist extensive sieges like the castles in Syria. The menace of the crusaders in this region had disappeared with Zangī’s conquest of al-Ruhā in the year 539/1144. The wars with the eastern allies of the Ayyūbīds—the Zangīs and the Artuqīds—bores more the character of field campaigns. In military terms these citadels served probably as garrisons and occasionally as winter camps.

When Ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285) visited the region on the eve of the Mongol invasion, he recorded the main buildings of al-Raqqa. At first sight, he seems to be silent about a citadel, although this impressive square building existed at the time of his visit. His description of al-Raqqa helps nevertheless with the interpretation of the function of the citadel with particular regard to the spatial order. The riwaqs and the courtyard on the aerial views belong probably to those palace complexes which Ibn Naṣīr calls ḥārān within “The New Citadel (al-qalʿa al-jadida)”. Ibn Shaddād does not mention a qalʿa, however he speaks about palaces, jawāsīq, built by al-

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50 Lloyd–Brice, Harran; Hanisch, Wehranlagen.

51 Hanisch, Wehranlagen, 71.
Ashraf Müsä. Unfortunately Ibn Shaddäd does not localize them within the city of al-Raqqa. These jawāsiq might be identical with the palaces within “The New Citadel”. This would point more to a representative residential complex than to a military fortification. Also Herzfeld questioned, whether the strong brick-coating of the southwestern and southeastern tower of the city wall ever belonged to the original construction. The similarity of the brick-coating suggests that the citadel had a spatial reference to the southeastern corner and the Baghdad-Gate. The dating of the Baghdad-Gate is much disputed. In spite of the recent early dating by Lorenz Korn, many arguments brought forward by John Warren for the 4th-5th/10th-11th century and Robert Hillenbrand for the late 5th/11th and the 6th/12th century are still valid.

The aerial views shows clearly the spatial situation in the southeastern corner (Fig. 2 and figs. 6.a,b). The Baghdad-Gate stands in the extension of the eastern second exterior wall. The northern boundary of the gate stands on the line of the inner side of the southern interior main wall. The east-west axis of the Baghdad-Gate passes the southeastern tower.

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52 Ibn Shaddäd, A’lat III, 72.
53 Herzfeld in Sarre–Herzfeld, Archäologische Reise II, 358-359, points to parallels in the architecture of Samarra, but dates the gate on historical reasons into the period of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Creswell dates the gate into the time of al-Mansūr; Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture II, 42-45; cp. Creswell, Short Account, 244-247. On the basis of the brick decoration, John Warren dates the gate into the 4th-5th/10th-11th century; John Warren, “The Date of the Baghdad Gate at Raqaq”, Art and Archaeology Research Papers, 31 (1978), 22-23. Hillenbrand saw parallels in the Seljūq architecture of the Zangūd period of the 5th/11th or 6th/12th century; Robert Hillenbrand, “Eastern Islamic Influences in Syria: Raqaq and Qal’at Ja’bar in the Later 12th Century”, Julian Raby (ed.), The Art of Syria and the Jazīra 1100-1250 (Oxford Studies in Islamic Art I), Oxford (1985), 21-48, here at p. 27-38. Meinecke agreed to the dating of Warren and Hillenbrand; Meinecke, “Raqaq on the Euphrates”, 21. Lorenz Korn questioned again this dating and saw much more the impact of the architecture of Samarra, especially of the Qasr al-Âšiq, on the architecture and decoration of the gate. He subsequently dates it into the second half of the 3rd/9th century; Lorenz Korn, “Das Bagdad-Tor”, Verena Daiber and Andrea Becker (edt.), Raqqa III—Baudenmäler und Paläste I, Mainz (2004), 11-18. In addition to the arguments presented by Hillenbrand, the row of polylobed arches at the Baghdad Gate has its theirs parallels not only in the Qasr al-Banût, in al-Raqqa itself, but also in the niches of minaret of ’Âna—dated into the late 5th/11th and 6th/12th century—and in the entrance gate of the Bimarstān al-Nūrī in Damascus as well; Alastair Northedge, Andrina Bamber and Michael Roaf, Excavations at ’Âna–Qal’a Island (Iraq Archaeological Reports I), Warminster (1988), 19-20. This underlines the dating by Warren and Hillenbrand.
55 Creswell, Early Muslim Architecture II, map on p. 42 fig. 28; fig. 3a. See also Sarre–Herzfeld, Archäologische Reise II, 356-357.
Fig. 5.a. The citadel from south east (1913). Max von Oppenheim collection D615. Inv.-no. 29/15.9, S. 44a

Fig. 5.b. The Bāb Baghdad (1913). Max von Oppenheim Collection D120.
Fig. 6.a. The enclosure between the citadel and the Baghdad-Gate. Rakka 16. 3. 1936, reproduction DAI, Damascus, no. 1989/39-476, P. Grunwald.

Fig. 6.b. The enclosure south of the Baghdad-Gate. Rakka 16. 3. 1936, reproduction DAI, Damascus, no. 1989/39-467, P. Grunwald.
almost tangential because of its diameter of about 15.60 metres. The Baghdad-Gate has in its design and layout a largely representative, symbolic character and it is militarily weak. But it is strategically placed next to the southeastern tower. From the elevated top of the tower it was easily possible to repel any invader forcing his entry through the Baghdad-Gate (Fig. 6.b). Not the design, but the position of the gate in relation to the tower dictates its possible defence function. This position did not refer immediately to the citadel. Citadel and gate were probably not planned together. Nevertheless they might have stood in a relation to each other. The second early-Abbasid exterior wall had enclosed the city with a space of about 21 metres from the main wall. 56 On the above mentioned aerial view in Creswell’s book it can be seen that the eastern second exterior wall extended a further 100 metres towards the south where it ended in a kind of double tower. From this point a wall or a rampart seems to run westwards towards the citadel (Fig. 2; figs. 6.a,b). Because the area south of the main wall became inhabited already at the beginning of the twentieth century and it was used agriculturally, only the beginning of the wall or rampart can be detected on the photos, but cannot be followed up to the citadel. 57 This wall or rampart enclosed an area which lay in front of the city. It is limited in the north by the old interior wall, in the south by the supposed wall or rampart, in the west by the citadel and in the east by the Baghdad-Gate and the extension of the second eastern city wall. 58

I offer three interpretations for this area.

- First, this area could be easily overseen and controlled. It could harbour and protect temporarily merchant- or pilgrim caravans or passing army units as well as nomads with their live-stock destined for the urban market. For reasons of mutual safety these temporary foreign visitors were kept outside the city proper, and at the same time they were well protected against any peril from outside.

- The second interpretation points to a maydân, a race-course for horses, an area for the sport of polo, or for military exercises. Such places in the vicinity of the citadel are known for the Ayyûbid period in Aleppo, Damascus, Cairo and other cities. Ibn Shaddād however does not give any reference to a maydân in his description of Ayyûbid al-Raqqā. 58

56 Khalaf, Stadtmauer, 125.
58 The Abbasid hippodrome lay within the palace area north of al-Raqqā/al-Rāfīqa. See map on fig. 1 no. 27.
A third much different interpretation is possible too. Ibn Shaddād speaks of precious gardens (baṣrātūn) which the Ayyūbid ruler al-Ashraf Mūsā cultivated:

When al-Malik al-Ashraf took possession of it [ar-Raqqa] he planted many gardens in it and he imported for it seedlings from every country, even palm-trees and bananas.59

The need of watering the tropical plants made it probable that such gardens lay south of the city towards the meadows of the Euphrates. The Baghdad-Gate might look too monumental as a garden entrance (figs. 5.b). However the geographer Yāqūt mentions under its own entry the “Bāb al-Jinān”, the “Gate of the Gardens” of al-Rāfiqa. Assuming the third explanation, then the name “Bāb al-Jinān” might refer to the Baghdad-Gate.60 Also a pair of remarkable iron doors from the gates of al-Raqqa might be—with caution—related to the most significant gate. Their presence was mentioned when they were brought to Aleppo and built into the Bāb Qinnasr in the year 654/1256.61 These gates originally belonged to the booty of al-Mu’tasim billāh when he conquered Amorion or ‘Amūriya in the year 223/838. He transferred them to Samarra, where they were seen by the Khatīb al-Baghdādī, who died 463/1071.62 Later, when

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60 Yāqūt, Buldān I, 443; II, 125.


62 Abū Bakr Ahmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Thābit ibn Ahmad ibn Mahdī al-Shāfī‘, known as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Al-Tārīkh al-Baghdādī ed. Cairo (1349/1931), reprint Cairo (Maktabat al-Khānjūt–Dār al-Fikr) without year, vol. III, 344. Much later in the 8th/14th century the Iraqi chronicler Ibn al-Ṭiqaqa‘ claimed that at his time (al-tn) the gates from Amorion were part of the western main gate of the palace of al-Mu’tasim billāh, the Bāb al-‘Amma. However at the time of Ibn al-Ṭiqaqa‘ the doors were not longer in Samarra and the report of the eyewitness al-Baghdādī must be given preference. Ibn al-Ṭiqaqa‘ (d. after 701/1302), Kitāb al-Fikhr fī ʿidāb al-sultāniyya wa’l-dawal
Samarra lay in ruins (kharibat), they came to al-Raqqa.\textsuperscript{63} It can not be excluded that these pair of iron doors might have belonged to the most representative gate in Ayyūbid al-Raqqa. This is the Bāb Baghdād.

It is evident, that the construction of the Ayyūbid citadel in al-Rāfiqā had more a representative function as a princely residence than a military value for the defence against any military power, which might be rival Ayyūbids, Crusaders, Khwārizmshāhs and so forth. The Mongol wars in the middle of the 7th/13th century prove that the military value of the fortifications of al-Raqqa was estimated as low by all parties. On the one hand, this has something to do with the strategic position of al-Raqqa in a plain which is difficult to defend. On the other hand, the fortifications of al-Raqqa were further weakened in the course of the slow and hesitating Ayyūbid preparations for the defence against the Mongols.

The Ayyūbid citadel in al-Raqqa was at the latest destroyed in the early Mamlūk period in the years around 663/1265. In those years all cities and fortifications in the middle Euphrates region were razed for tactical reasons.\textsuperscript{64} Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir reports in 685/1288 the fate of the last six survivors of the population.\textsuperscript{65}

6. The Ottoman Afterlife

After the Ottoman conquest of the region in 922/1516 a military post was established in the city at the latest in the time of Sulaymān Qāntūr (reigned 926-974/1520-1566).\textsuperscript{66} This is attested by an building inscription,\textsuperscript{67} found at the beginning of the twentieth century in secondary use at the entrance of mausoleum of Uways al-Qaranī. It reports about the restoration or

\textsuperscript{63} Ibn Shaddād, \textit{A‘lāq} I/1, 20. At the end of the 5th/11th century other parts of Samarra were plundered for building material as well. Wood was transported from the mosque of Samarra to Baghdad in the year 484/1091; Sībī’īn al-Jawzī, \textit{Ma‘ā’īt al-zamān fi tārīkh al-dā‘yān}, ed. Misāfīr Ibn ‘Arij al-Ghamīdī, Mecca (1407/1987), 158.


\textsuperscript{67} Khalaf–Kohlmeyer, “Untersuchungen”, 160 and fig. 47b. Haase, “Inschriften”, 106 no. 4.
erection of a citadel and a sanctuary (jaddada ḥādiḥī l-qaʿa wa-l-haram). Ainsworth possibly saw this inscription still in situ within the ruins of the citadel. The mentioned qaʿa may refer to the Ayyūbid citadel or to a new building on top of the ruins in the southwestern corner. However, no structure on the aerial views can be recognised as belonging without doubt to this mentioned building activity. Further answers about the history and function of the citadel of al-Raqqa need archaeological excavations.

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68 According to Max van Berchem, Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicam. Part 2, Syrie de Sud, vol. 1 Jérusalem “Ville”, Paris (1922), 301, jaddada was used also for “to erect new” in the sense of annash’a in the Mamlūk period.

69 Ainsworth, Narrative, 288.

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