Bilād al-Shām During the Abbasid Period

Abbasid Period

(132 A.H./750 A.D. − 451 A.H./1059 A.D)

Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference
on the
History of Bilād al-Shām
7−11 Sha'ban 1410 A.H./ 4−8 March, 1990
English and French Section

A Scene From Raqqa

Edited by

Muhammad Adnan al-Bakhit   **Robert Schick**
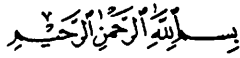
Amman
1412 A. H/1991 A. D.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction

This volume contains fourteen of the English and French papers presented at the Fifth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām: Bilād al-Shām During the Abbasid Period (132/750 - 451/1059) held at the University of Jordan in March, 1990. These papers examine a wide range of topics within the geographical and time limits of Bilād al-Shām in the above mentioned period.

The first paper by Lawrence Conrad of the Wellcome Institute, London, discusses the contribution that Syriac historical sources can make for that period. He describes the surviving chronologies and universal histories and analyses the manner of their composition and use of earlier sources. In addition, he discusses the problem of lost sources, especially the chronicle of Dionysios of Tell Mahre and examines ways of recovering earlier material in later works. Conrad concludes with a discussion of the general attitudes and perspectives of the Syriac writers.

Jean Maurice Fiey of St. Joseph University, Beirut, follows with an examination of the Syriac Christian population of Bilād al-Shām in the border area between Byzantium and the Abbasid caliphate. He investigates whether any Syriac Christian immigrated to the Byzantine Empire in response to an offer by the Emperor Nicephorus in 356/965 by documenting the state of the Syriac ecclesiastical hierarchy in the area.

Edmund Bosworth from the University of Manchester, U.K., describes the course of warfare in the border region of Bilād al-Shām between the Byzantine Empire and the Abbasids. He observes that in spite of numerous raids, the situation stayed in rough equilibrium.

Robert Schick from Case Western Reserve University, U.S.A., records the events that affected the Christians in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the early Abbasid period. He also proposes to redate the damaged mosaic inscription at Umm al-Raṣaṣ to 718/1318 rather than 785/1383.

Three other papers by Axel Havemann from the Free University of Berlin, Thierry Bianquis from the University Lumière, Lyon II, and Hugh Kennedy from St. Andrews University, U.K., deal with the social and economic aspects of the history of Bilād al-Shām during the period under discussion.

Havemann investigates the role that individuals and gangs of a non-urban origin played in resisting the imposition of Fatimid rule in Damascus in the second half of the fourth/ninth century, and points to the high degree of urban and rural integration.

Bianquis discusses the social history of Bilād al-Shām in the tenth and eleventh centuries by focusing on types of individuals, in particular villagers, tribal leaders, and Turkish professional soldiers, indicating the social roles they played.

Kennedy explores generally the nature of settlement throughout Bilād al-Shām and sees a decline in settlements in favor of nomads in the course of the period.

The following papers presented the results of recent archaeological excavations of Bilād al-Shām sites:

Ali Zeyadeh assesses the archaeological evidence for the early Islamic period at Baysan. He shows how the major occupational phases of the city can be bracketed around earthquake damage in 633/1235 and 747/1346, and not political events. He concludes that the city continued to thrive throughout the Abbasid period.

In the same region, Alan Walmsley from the University of Sydney, Australia, presents the recent identification evidence for Fiḥl with a focus on ceramic typologies where he investigates historical geography in that area.

Similarly, Cherie Lenzen from Yarmouk University, Jordan, produces the results of her excavations at Bayt Ras while emphasizing the value of intergrating archaeological and historical evidence.

Alastair Northedge from the University of Tübingen, Germany, moves from the basin of the Jordan Valley and gives us the resumé of his research on the citadel of 'Amman.

Moving north, Dorothee Sack from Frankfurt, reports comprehensively on the Friday Mosque of Ruṣāfat Hishām.

Madinat al-Far and Hiṣn Maslama are the subjects of the intensive research carried out by Dr. Claus - Peter Haase from the University of Kiel.

Likewise, al-Raqqa from the artistic point of view and stucco decoration benefited from Michael Meinecke's research in that region.

These research papers were first submitted to the History of Bilād al-Shām Conference and were then evaluated and assessed in the usual academic procedures. We present them here for the benefit of a wider readership.

Acknowledgment

Table of Contents

Syriac Perspectives on Bilâd al-Shâm During the Abbasid Period

Lawrence I. Conrad*

It has long been acknowledged that the historical and other literature left to us by the Syriac-speaking Christian communities of the Near East comprise an important corpus of information relevant to a wide range of historical events and developments associated with the rise of Islam, the Arab conquests, and the Umayyad caliphate[1]. Less attention, however, has been devoted to these sources where the history of the Abbasids is concerned, despite the fact that the Syriac evidence is of considerable importance and covers events from the Abbasid revolution until the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 656/1258. Very few studies of Abbasid history take the Syriac sources into account[2]; and indeed, where Arabists are concerned,

---

·* (Wellcome Institute)

1. For surveys of the Syriac literary material, see William Wright, *A Short History of Syriac Literature* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1894); Rubens Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque,* 3rd edition (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1907); Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur,* 2nd edition (Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Webers Verlag, 1922); J.-B. Chabot, *La Littérature Syriaque* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1934); Ignatius Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca* (Vatican City: Pontificio istituto per gli studi orientali, 1965); Albert Abouna, Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya (Beirut: Matba'at Starco, 1970); Ignatius Aphram Barsaum, Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr fî Ta'rîkh al-'Ulûm wa al-Adâb al-Suryânîa, 3rd edition (Baghdad: Majma' al-Lugha al-Suryânîya, 1976). The massive work of Cyril Moss), *Catalogue of Syriac Printed Books and Related Literature in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1962), is an excellent overall reference work that surveys the rich collections of the British Museum and scholarly literature up to about 1960. Sebastian Brock has been continuing the work of Moss in an invaluable series of bibliographical essays published in *Parole de L'Orient* 4 (1973): 393-465, covering scholarship on Syriac studies published in the period 1961-1970; 10 (1981-1982): 291-412, for 1971-1980; and 14 (1987): 287-360, for 1981-1985. For Syriac historical writing, the best surveys are Sebastian Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing: A Survey of the Main Sources", and Yûsuf Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya", both in *Majallat al-Majma' al-'Ilmî al-'Irâqî, Hay'at al-Lugha al-Suryânîya* 5 (1979-1980): 1-30 (Brock); 6 (1981-1982): 29-92, and 7 (1983): 307-309 (Habbî).

2. The most notable exception is the work of Jean Maurice Fiey, especially, where the Abbasids are concerned, his *Chrétiens Syriaques sous les Abbassides, surtout à Bagdad (749-1258)* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1980; *CSCO* 420, *Subsidia* 59). Among Arabists, Hugh Kennedy has made use of the *Zûqnîn Chronicle* and Michael the Syrian in two works on early Islamic history: *The Early Abbasid Caliphate* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London and New York: Longman, 1986), cf. especially 378.

the insights on Abbasid history that may be gained from these sources have been pursued in a major way in only a single study to date[3]. It would thus seem appropriate to survey this material and to discuss the various issues that must inevitably arise in efforts by modern historians to use it for the study of Abbasid Bilâd al-Shâm. The extant literature that might in principle be considered is of both varied content and considerable bulk, and within the limited scope of this study it will be possible to consider only historical writing in detail. That other types of literature are also important is to be conceded as a matter of course, and on such matters there will be occasion to comment below. Works of a purely ecclesiastical character or those that have no (or only inconsequential) bearing on the history of Bilâd al-Shâm in Abbasid times, however, cannot be considered at length here. Nor will it be possible to consider the eastern Christian works relevant to the history of Abbasid Bilâd al-Shâm which were written in Arabic. Though these texts are obviously important, and emanate from the same intellectual tradition that produced historical writing in Syriac, the Arabic Christian works raise problematic issues that merit discussion in their own right and would draw us far afield from the concerns of most immediate interest to us here. On the other hand, the following remarks will consider Syriac material relevant to history well beyond 451/1059, the end of the period defined for this conference, and continue to 685/1286, the death date of Bar Hebraeus, and thus, a more suitable terminal point for a study of the Syriac sources pertaining to the history of Abbasid Bilâd al-Shâm.

Syriac Historical Sources on Abbasid Bilâd al-Shâm

Among Syriac authors whose works on Bilâd al-Shâm in Abbasid times have survived, the genre of historical writing on Bilâd al-Shâm in Abbasid times which had survived is represented by two forms: the chronicle/chronology and the universal history. The former type was typical of work done in the great monasteries of the Near East and consisted of a year-by-year chronology, calculated according to the Seleucid era, that for each year mentioned gave details on one or two (seldom more) historical events relevant to the concerns of the local community. These chronologies could

---

3. See Claude Cahen, "Fiscalité, propriété, antagonismes sociaux en Haute-Mésopotamie au temps des premiers Abbasides d'après Denys de Tell-Mahré", *Arabica*, 1 (1954): 136-152. It should be noted, however, that this important study is based not on the chronicle of Dionysios of Tell Mahrê, but on the earlier anonymous *Zûqnîn Chronicle* which in the nineteenth century was erroneously identified as the work of Dionysios. Cf. n. 5 below.

be very full in the detail they provided, but characteristically they were rather more terse, sometimes specifying nothing more than the death of a ruler or church leader and how long he had been in power.

Of these chronologies, five Jacobite or West Syrian examples have survived, the most important one being the *Zûqnîn Chronicle,* a work from the monastery of Zûqnîn, located in the village of the same name, slightly to the north of 'Amid in Tûr 'Abdîn[4]. Also known as the "pseudo-Dionysios" due to an old controversy over whether or not it was to be identified as the history of Dionysios of Tell Mahrê (it is not)[5], it consists of a history from Creation to Justin II (r. 565-578), based largely on Eusebios, Socrates,

---

4. The *Zûqnîn Chronicle* has recently been studied by Witold Witakowski in his *The Syriac Chronicle of Pseudo-Dionysius of Tell-Mahrê: A Study in the History of Historiography* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1987). See also Wright, *Syriac Literature:* 200-203; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque:* 136, 182, 190, 194-196; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur:* 274; Rudolf Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre, jakobitischer Patriarch von 818-845. Zur Geschichte der Kirche unter dem Islam* (Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1940; *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes,* 25.2): 22-23; Moss, *Cataloge of Syriac Books:* 297-298; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca:* 211-212; Nina Pigulevskaja, "Theophanes' *Chronographia* and the Syrian Chronicles", *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 16 (1967): 55-60; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya:* 379-381 no. 9; Ann S. Proudfoot, "The Sources of Theophanes for the Heraclian Dynasty", *Byzantion* 44 (1974): 384, 390; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr:* 129 no. 13, 320-321 no. 136; Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 10-13 no. 11; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 76-78 no. 17; Eva Riad, *Studies in the Syriac Preface* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1988): 74, 90, 106-107.

   EDITION − *Chronicon anonymum pseudo-Dionysianum vulgo dicto,* edited by J.B. Chabot (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1927-1933; *CSCO* 91, 104, *Scriptores Syri* 43, 53.

   TRANSLATIONS − none complete. The first half of the text was translated into Latin in the *CSCO* by Chabot, who had earlier rendered the most important section, Part IV (including the section on the Abbasids), into French in his *Chronique de Denys de Tell-Mahrê, Quatrième partie* (Paris: Emile Bouillon, 1895). This translation lacks the final pages of the text, which survive only in a British Museum Ms. not known to Chabot in 1895, but used by him later for the *CSCO* edition. The latter half of the text has been translated into French by Robert Hespel for the *CSCO* (Louvain: E. Peeters, 1989; *CSCO* 507, *Scriptures Syri* 213). For other translated sections, see Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius:* 13-14. Witakowski is currently preparing an English translation of Part III.

5. See the review of this debate and related issues in Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre:* 23; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius:* 30-38.

and John of Ephesus, as well as other sources[6], followed by a chronology of events in the Near East up to 158/775. This last part the author implicitly claims as his own work, as he had found nothing, "i.e. no earlier history", upon which he could rely for an account, rendered as accurately as had been done for earlier periods, of the sufferings he and his people had to endure in these times[7]. This work, about which more will be said below, is highly erratic, but provides extremely important information not only on the Abbasid revolution, but also on fiscal affairs, social developments, and everyday life in rural Mesopotamia under the early Abbasids. It further serves to highlight, as few other sources for the period do, the highly destructive effects of social unrest and natural disasters.

The other Jacobite chronologies are of lesser interest for their historical content, though they do illustrate the form such works generally seem to have taken. The *Expositions on the Nature of Generations, Peoples, and Years, from Adam up until Now*[8], also referred to as the *Chronicle of 775*, is a brief chronicle beginning with Creation that provides cursory annual entries (with many years omitted). It ends with two pages on the Arab rulers up to the accession of al-Mahdî in 158/775; but only the last four entries concern the Abbasids and these are extremely curt and offer nothing new. The author of the work is unknown, though it has been suggested that he may have been Lazarus of Bêth Qandasâ. Of only slightly greater

---

6. Witakowski (*Pseudo-Dionysius*: 124-136) considers in detail the question of this work's sources.

7. See *Zûqnîn Chronicle*, II: 146.

8. See Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 192; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 274; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 209; Brock, "Syrian Historical Writing": 9 no. 10; Habbî "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 75 no. 16; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 81; Riad, *Studies*: 100-102.

    EDITION — *Expositio quomodo se habeant generationes et familiae et anni ab Adamo usque hunc diem*, edited by E.W. Brooks in *Chronica Minora*, III (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1905; *CSCO* 5, *Scriptores Syri* 5): 337-349.

    TRANSLATION — Latin by Brooks in *Chronica Minora*, III (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1905; *CSCO* 6, *Scriptores Syri* 6): 265-275.

import for present purposes is the *Chronicle of 813* [9], another Jacobite chronicle of which only part survives, this in a unique Ms. that is both badly damaged and rendered in a poor hand. The extant section of the work covers the period from 137/755 to 199/813 and so falls directly into the period of interest to us here, but the text deals primarily with ecclesiastical events, in particular disputes among church leaders. In the midst of all this, one does, however, find important details on the rising importance of caliphal diplomas of investiture, references to several disasters (earthquakes, hailstorms, famines), the building of Baghdad and al-Raqqa ("beside Kallinikos"), and the disorder in the Near East, especially Mesopotamia, after the death of Hârûn al-Rashîd in 193/809.

---

9. See Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque:* 192; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur:* 276; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books:* 248, 1048; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca:* 208; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr.* 130 no. 14; Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 13 no. 12; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 78-79 no. 18.

EDITION — *Fragmenta chronici anonymi auctoris ad annum Domini 813 pertinentia*, edited by E. W. Brooks in *Chronica Minora*, III (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1905; *CSCO* 5, *Scriptores Syri* 5): 243-260.

TRANSLATIONS – English by Brooks in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 54 (1900): 195-230; Latin by Brooks in *Chronica Minora*, III (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1905; *CSCO* 6, *Scriptores Syri* 6): 185-196.

. · The *Chronicle of 819*[10] and the *Chronicle of 846*[11] are more informative ˙
for Abbasid history. These two Jacobite chronologies are textually related,
both betraying use of what this writer has called the Qartamîn Chronology,
an earlier source based on the archives of the monastery of Qartamîn, the
famous Monophysite center on Mt. 'Izla in Tûr 'Abdîn near Nisibis.[12] The
Chronicle of 819, a brief work which begins with the Incarnation and
proceeds quickly through Roman and early Byzantine history, becomes
fuller when it reaches the sixth century and devotes more than half of its
space to Umayyad and Abbasid times. It follows the Qartamîn Chronology
very closely, occasionally abbreviating it but doing so significantly in only
one place, that apparently because the copyist could not make out the text
at that point[13]. On the Abbasids, the *Chronicle of 819* is of interest in
several respects. It knows nothing (or at least says nothing) about the
Abbasid revolution or the reign of the first Abbasid caliph, Abû 'Abbâs
al-Saffâh (r. 132-136/749-754): 'Abd Allâh b. 'Alî (!) simply follows Marwân

---

10. See Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*: 14-15; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*:
249–250; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 208; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*:
130 no. 15, 331-332 no. 146; Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 13 no. 13; Habbî,
"Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 79 no. 19; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 81-82.

   EDITION – *Chronicon anonymum ad annum Domini 819 pertinens,* edited by
Ephraim Barsaum in *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens*, I (Paris: L. Durbecq,
1916; *CSCO* 81, *Scriptores Syri* 36): 3-22.

   TRANSLATION – Latin by J.–B. Chabot in *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234
pertinens*, I (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1920; *CSCO* 82, *Scriptores Syri* 37): 1-16.

11. See Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 192; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*:
273; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*: 14-15; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*:
248, 1048; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 208; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*:
78-79, 81-82; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 130 no. 14; Brock, "Syriac Historical
Writing": 14 no. 14; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 79-80 no. 20.

   EDITION – *Chronicon ad annum Domini 846 pertinens*, edited by E. W. Brooks
in *Chronica Minora*, II (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1904; *CSCO* 3, *Scriptores Syri* 3): 157-238.

   TRANSLATIONS – English (latter half of Syriac text) by Brocks in *Zeitschrift
der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 51 (1897): 569-588; Latin (complete
text) by J.-B. Chabot in *Chronica Minora*, II (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1904; *CSCO* 4, *Scrip-
tores Syri* 4): 121-180.

12. See *The Qartamîn Chronology: A Syriac Source for the History of the Near East in
Late Byzantine and Early Islamic Times*, edited and translated by Lawrence I. Conrad
(Princeton: Darwin Press, forthcoming).

13. *Chronicon 819*: 14 (A. S. 1018), the curious reference to the Biblical exegete Mar Jacob;
cf. the passage as correctly rendered in *Chronicon 846*: 233.

b. Muhammad as caliph upon the latter's death, and proceeds to raze the walls of the towns of Syria[14]. The text also describes anti-Abbasid rebellions in Syria, refers to the Abbasids' "court" in al-Kûfa in 755, gives an account of the activities of a religious "imposter" and miracle-worker named Mârûthâ, and describes problems in al-Jazîra and Mosul under the rule of the *amîr* Mûsa b. Mus'âb[15].

The *Chronicle of 846* is a longer work, but survives in only a single Ms. with several major gaps. Though its author used sources other than the Qartamîn Chronology, for Islamic times it follows this latter work exclusively. Its only variations are several places where it condenses the Qartamîn Chronology (while the *Chronicle of 819* gives the source text in full) and an entry a copyist has added at the end to state that John, from the monastery of Zakkhai, became patriarch in 846. The *Chronicle of 846* is thus of value for Abbasid times only for the few passages where it has the full text for an entry from the Qartamîn Chronology that the chronicler of 819 has either abbreviated or omitted.

---

14. *Chronicon 819: 18.*

15. *Ibid.* : 18-21. On the *amîr* Mûsâ b. Mus'ab al-Khath'âmî (d. 168/785), see al-Azdî (d. 334/945), *Ta'rîkh al-Mawsil,* edited by 'Alî Habîba (Cairo: Lajnat Ihyâ' al-Turâth al-Islâmî, 1387/1967): 126, 226-228, 232, 236, 247, 248-249, 253; al-Kindî (d. 350/961), *Kitâb al-Wulât,* edited by Rhuvon Guest (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1912): 124-128; P. G. Forand, "The Governors of Mosul According to al-Azdî's *Ta'rîkh al-Mawsil*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969): 94-95; and on the Syriac sources, Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 100.

Standing in stark contrast to these works of Jacobite provenance is a final chronology, that of Elias bar Shînâyâ (d. 440/1049).[16] A native of Nisibis, Elias was ordained into the Nestorian priesthood at the age of 19 and for a time took up the monastic life at the Monasteries of Saint Michael near Mosul and Saint Simeon at Shennâ (in Arabic, al-Sin).[17] He rose quickly through the ecclesiastical hierarchy and in 399/1008, aged only 33, he was made metropolitan of Nisibis, a position he held to the end of his life.

By way of literary endeavors, Elias composed hymns and wrote numerous religious works, as well as a Syriac grammar and an Arabic-Syriac vocabulary. In 409/1018, he began to compile a chronology of historical events up to his own time. The final product, referred to as his *Opus Chronologicum,* marks the high point of Syriac chronology and is in several ways unique. This is the only known example of a Nestorian work of this kind; and while the Jacobite texts were the work of anonymous monks and

---

16. See Wright, *Syriac Literature:* 235-239; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque:* 201-202, 395; Louis Cheikho, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Nasrâniya fî al-'Arabîya", *Al-Mashriq* 12 (1909): 489-490; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur:* 287-288; Chabot, *La Littérature Syriaque:* 118-119; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre:* 14; Georg Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944-1953), II: 177-189; Emmanuel-Karim Delly, "La Théologie de Elie Bar-Sénaya", *Studia Urbaniana* 1 (1957): 9-17; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books:* 323-325; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca:* 218; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al Arâmîya:* 419-424 no. 8; Khalîl Sâmir, "Hayât Ilîyâ al-Nasîbîn, *Risâlat al-Kanîsa* 6 (1974): 11-17; Jean Maurice Fiey, *Nisibe: Métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO 1977; CSCO 388, *Subsidia* 54): 91-93; Robert Caspar, Abdelmajid Charfi, and Khalîl Sâmir, "Bibliographie du dialogue islamo-chrétien", *Islamochristiana* 3 (1977): 257-284, esp. 283-284 no. 21; Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 26-27 no. 26; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 52-53 no. 30; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius:* 82-83, 165.

    EDITION — *Opus Chronologicum,* edited by E. W. Brooks and J.-B. Chabot (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1905-1909; *CSCO* 62, *Scriptores Syri* 21-22).

    TRANSLATIONS — German (partial) by Friedrich Baethgen, *Fragmente Syrischer und Arabischer Historiker* (Leipzig: Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 1888; *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes,* 8.3); French by L. J. Delaporte, *La Chronographie d'Elie Bar-Shinaya, métropolitain de Nisibe* (Paris: Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 1910); Arabic (first volume only) by Yûsuf Habbî, *Ta'rîkh Iliyâ Bar Shînâyâ* (Baghdad: Majma' al-Lugha al-Suryânîya, 1975).

17. Shennâ was located about 75 km. north of Takrît, near the junction of the Tigris and the Lesser Zâb. On the town and its local monasteries, see Jean Maurice Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965-1968), III: 93-103.

all survive in derivative form, Elias was the Nestorian metropolitan of Nisibis for more than 40 years and for his chronology we have a nearly complete text, written in 410/1019, that may be his autograph copy.

The contrasts continue in other repects. Most of the works discussed above are brief texts, but Elias composed a work of nearly 400 pages in two parts, the first tabulating Biblical and ancient chronology and then giving annalistic entries in both Syriac and Arabic,[18] and the second comprising a complex discourse, with a vast array of calendrical tables, on other problems of chronology. While the earlier Jacobite chronologies seldom name their sources, (the Zûqnîn chronicler is the only one who says a word about the matter, and this only once, as discussed above), Elias habitually does so, the exception being the end of the first part where he is apparently writing from his own first-hand knowledge of events[19]. From his citations of sources, it becomes clear that more than 60 works were used to compile this book, including many Nestorian, Jacobite, and Islamic works now lost. The entries are often short and many years are left out, but there is often information of considerable importance. For Abbasid Syria we are told much about political and military events, relations between the caliphate and the church, social unrest, taxation, and such other matters as natural disasters.

In addition to the chronologies, there survive vitally important examples of universal history[20]. Such works largely adhere to the annalistic

---

18. A long-standing disagreement has centered on the question of which column — the Syriac or the Arabic — was the primary text and the basis for the translation of the other, but on this there can be no doubt. The fact that the Arabic column is frequently left blank can only mean that it is secondary to the Syriac. This is also suggested (if one takes the surviving Ms. to be the author's autograph) by the fact that through the text the Arabic is written in about five different hands, while the Syriac is written in only one. That is, the Syriac of this Ms. was all set down by Elias himself, who had different assistants helping him with the Arabic entries.

19. The last entry citing a source is A.H. 360, immediately following which there is a folio missing from the Ms. The text resumes with an entry for A.H. 385, and from here to the end of the chronology in A.H. 409 he names a source in none of the 25 entries comprising this concluding section of the text.

20. Though the issue cannot be pursued here, I should note that my own views on Syriac historical forms differ radically from those of Witakowski, whose opinion is that "there was hardly any perception of the distinctive character of historiographic genres on the part of the Syriac historians". See his *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 147-169.

framework of the chronology; and indeed, their authors still label their texts as *maktevânûth zavnê* or some similar approximation of the Greek *chronographía,* literally a "narrative of times [past]", but in the sense of a chronology or chronicle (Greek *chronikón*). But while the chronology aimed primarily to fix matters of temporal sequence and spacing, and hence was organized on the principle of strictly year-by-year entries ("And in the year X there occurred..."), the universal history was written with the aim of elaborating content and thus, while taking the chronological framework and temporal order as its general starting point, contained material arranged into books, chapters, or topical sections that in and of themselves were not annual entries. Freed from the restrictive obligation of placing all of his material under one annual heading or another, the author could discuss far broader topics in more detail and with far greater sophistication. He could draw in subjects that would not have been suited to an annalistic framework, for example, broad historical trends or events that did not belong to any single year. He could more easily introduce tangential discussions on culture or other matters that, again, did not refer to a particular year; and most importantly, he could pursue the causes and effects of events.

The earliest extant example of Syriac universal history is the *Chronicle* of the Jacobite patriarch Michael I Qîndasî (r. 561-596/1166-1199), better known today as "Michael the Syrian"[21]. A member of the Qîndasî family of Melitene, Michael continued a family tradition of church service and

---

21. See Wright, *Syriac Literature:* 250-254; J.- B. Chabot's superb "Introduction" to his edition and translation of the text in *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 1899-1924), I: i-liii; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque:* 153, 190, 196-198, 401; Baumstark, *Gechichte der Syrischen Literatur:* 298-300; Chabot, *La Littérature Syriaque:* 125-127; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre:* 15-18; Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur,* II: 265-267; Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1952), II: 484; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books:* 746-749, Add. 178; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca:* 221; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya:* 479-487 no. 13; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr:* 130 no. 22, 349-397 no. 214; Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 15-17 no. 16; Fiey, *Chrétiens Syriaques:* 248, 250, 255; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 82-84 no. 29; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius:* 83-85; Riad, *Studies:* 36, 109, 197; Yûsuf Mattâ Ishâq, "Masâdir Abî al-Faraj al-Malatî al-Ta'rîkhîya wa-Atharihâ fî Manâhijihi", *Aram* I (1989): 162-163 no. 16.

   EDITION – Strictly speaking, none. There is a facsimile of the modern transcription used by Chabot in his *Chronique,* IV. cf. n. 23 below.

TRANSLATION – French by Chabot in *Chronique,* I-III.

entered the renowned monastery of Bar Šawmâ, near Melitene, as a young man. His energetic commitment to his work saw him not only rise quickly through the ecclesiastical hierarchy to become patriarch at the age of only 40 (or so we are told), but also produce a large number of books on numerous subjects. Of these, the most impressive is without doubt his *Chronicle*, a massive work and the most ambitious history ever attempted by a Syriac author. Accounts of events were arranged in three columns on the page — the middle column related civil history and was flanked by miscellaneous narratives on the one side and Church history on the other.[22] Relying heavily on the archives and rich library of the Jacobite patriarchate, Michael compiled his materials into 21 massive books, subdivided into 286 chapters, that proceeded from Creation up to 592/1196.

There is hardly a page of Michael's detailed history of the Near East in Islamic times that is not of use and importance, and to the Abbasid period he devotes Books XI.24 to XXI.8, fully a third of his history. In a critical edition this long account would probably fill close to 1000 pages of Syriac text.[23] In it, Michael discusses such topics as the history of the caliphate, its relations with Byzantium and its own Christian communities, tribal and factional unrest, and various aspects of social and economic life — popular customs, agrarian conditions, taxation, prices, natural disasters, and so forth. Numerous documents — letters to caliphs, diplomas, synod records, and the like — are cited, and Michael also makes use of Islamic sources and refers to some events according to the *hijra* reckoning. Of particular importance are his accounts of the early Abbasid caliphate and the Seljuqs, his narratives on the Crusades, and his use of a now-lost Arabic source, known also to Ibn al-Athîr (d. 630/1233), for the years 1107—1119. By way of illustrating the broad scope of his coverage, as well

---

22. The reasons for this particular arrangement are not definitively established. Arguments on the basis of which column was the most important one (was the church history column the most honorable one?) fail to take into account the fact that in the eyes of the ecclesiastical figures who composed *all* works of Syrian historiography, church history and the ways of God were implicit in all historical events, and hence under discussion in all of the columns on the page.

23. Such an edition does not yet exist. Chabot's Syriac text is a transcript, made for him in 1898, that reproduces line-for-line the sole surviving medieval copy, a manuscript of 1598 now preserved in the Church of St. Peter and Paul in Edessa. In the three volumes of his translation, Chabot uses his notes to point out editorial corrections or variants deriving from the Armenian and Arabic (Qarshûnî) translations of Michael or other historical texts. See *Chronique*, I: xxxvii-li.

as the greater freedom of expression that an author enjoyed when writing in the mode of universal history, we might note that as the Turkish element becomes more prominent in the course of events, Michael even provides a book (XIV.1-5) devoted to the land and origins of the Turks and the mores and customs of the Turkish peoples[24]. The geographical foci of the work is of course Bilâd al-Shâm, northern Mesopotamia, and Iraq, but again one can see the flexibility of universal history in the fact that Michael can also present events in Egypt, Arabia, Persia, Khurâsân and Central Asia, Byzantium, North Africa, and Europe. The ecclesiastical section of Michael's history is of lesser interest for present purposes, but does comprise a vital source on relations between the Christian communities of the Near East and the Islamic regimes under which they lived.

No less important than Michael's history is the anonymous *Chronicle of 1234*,[25] an Edessan work, similar to Michael's in its broad scope, that covers both civil and ecclesiastical history. It begins with the seven days of Creation and treats ancient and Biblical events together up until the time of Constantine (r. 324-337), when the work begins to discuss only

---

24. *Chronique*, III: 149-157 (trans.); IV: 566-571 (text).

25. See Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 202; Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*: 302; J.-B. Chabot, "Un Episode de l'Histoire des Croisades", in *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1924), I: 169-179; *idem, La Littérature Syriaque*: 129-130; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*: 19-20; Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, II: 484; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 248-250; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 212; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 487-488 no. 14; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 131 no. 23, 403-404 no. 227; Fiey's Introduction to volume 2 of the translation, as below; Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 17-13 no. 17; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 85-86 no. 30; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 85; Riad, *Studies*: 37, 109.

   EDITION – *Chronicon ad annum Christi 234 pertinens*, edited by J. –B Chabot in two volumes (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1916-1920; *CSCO* 18-82, *Scriptores Syri* 36-37).

   TRANSLATIONS – Latin (first volume, civil history to A.S. 1096 = 169/785) by Chabot in *Chronicon and Annum Christi 1234 pertinens* (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1937; *CSCO* 109, *Scriptores Syri* 56); French (second volume, remainder of civil history and the ecclesiastical history) by Albert Abouna, with introduction, notes, and index by J.M. Fiey, in *Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinens* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 354, *Scriptores Syri* 154); English (extracts – sometimes arbitrarily selected – from the civil history on the Crusades) in A.S. Tritton, "The First and Second Crusades from an Anonymous Syriac Chronicle", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1933: 69-101, 273-305, with historical notes by H.A.R. Gibb.

secular history, leaving church history for a separate part at the end of the book[26]. Though not as systematically organized as the history of Michael, this work too has proceeded far beyond the old restricted framework of the chronology. Material is organized into distinct sections, often beginning with a heading announcing the subject of that section[27].

The civil history, which is four times as extensive as what remains of the ecclesiastical history following it,[28] gives extremely important accounts of the pre-Islamic Near East, the Arab conquests, and the Umayyad caliphate, and it continues to be important for the Abbasids. Topics in every field of inquiry for the history of Bilâd al-Shâm up to 1234 are considered, and of particular note is the fact that while the *Chronicle of 1234* is not as large as the *Chronicle* of Michael, it often has reports that in Michael are either related somewhat differently, condensed, or entirely absent. This work also appears to have made use of an Armenian source not known to Michael; recourse to this source being marked by the spelling of names in their Armenian rather than Syriac forms[29].

---

26. The author announces his specific intention to proceed in this fashion; see *Chronicon 1234*, I: 137-138.

27. These sections are also numbered, but the numbering is in the margin of the Ms. and is discontinued in the middle of the ecclesiastical history (*ibid.*, II: 305). It thus seems not to be the work of the author, but rather of a later copyist or user of the Ms.

28. Here too we have to do with a work that has suffered significant damage; in this case the loss of pages and even entire sections at various places through the text.

29. This point has been drawn to my attention by Jean Maurice Fiey.

The final universal historian, and in fact the last of the great medieval Syriac historical writers, is Bar Hebraeus, maphriân of the East from 662/1264 until his death in 685/1286[30]. A native of Melitene (like Michael) and an accomplished master in numerous fields (poetry, literature, grammar, philology, Biblical exegesis, law, theology, asceticism, philosophy, science, and medicine), Bar Hebraeus' great historical monument was his *Chronicle*. This work separated secular from ecclesiastical history so completely that the two parts were practically distinct works and were often treated as such by later copyists[31].

The civil history, called the *Syriac Chronicle* or the *Chronographia*[32], is divided into 11 epochs, each devoted to a particular sequence of rulers: the patriarchs and judges of the Old Testament, the kings of the Hebrews, Chaldeans, Medes, Persians, and Seleucids, the Roman and Byzantine emperors, the "kings" of the Tayyâyê (including not only the caliphs, but

30. See Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 265-281; Theodor Nöldeke, *Orientalische Skizzen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1892): 251−273; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 198-200, 408-410; Cheikho, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Nasrânîya": 493; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 312-320; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*: 18-19; Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, II: 272-281; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 390-407, Add. 107-109; Oritz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 221-223; *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 493-508 no. 17; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 131 nos. 24−26, 411−430 no. 235; Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 19-21 nos. 18−20; Habbî, *Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya*": 307-309; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 85-87; Riad, *Studies*: 36-37, 110; Suzanne Regina Todt, "Die syrische und die arabische Weltgeschichte des Bar Hebraeus − ein Vergleich", *Der Islam* 65 (1988): 60-80; Ishâq, "Masâdir Abî al-Faraj al-Malatî": 149-172; *idem*, "Khasâ'is Ta'rîkh Mukhtasar al-Duwal li al-Mu'arrikh al-Suryânî al-Mashhûr al-'Allâma Abî al-Faraj Yûhannâ al-Ma'rûf bi-Ibn al-'Ibrî", *Aram* I (1989): 173-198.

31. Cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 318 n. 6.

32. **EDITION** − *Chronicon Syriacum*, edited by Paul Bedjan (Paris: J. P. Maisonneuve, 1890). See also below.

TRANSLATIONS − English in Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Gregory Abû 'l Faraj, ... commonly known as Bar Hebraeus, being the first part of his Political History of the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), I, with the second volume containing facsimiles of the Bodleian Ms. Hunt no 52; Arabic, for the "kings of the Arabs" section, in Isaac Armalet, "Ta'rîkh al-Duwal al-Suryânî", *Al-Mashriq*, 43 (1949): 463−502; 45 (1951): 25−70, 181−199, 351−364; 46(1952): 7−28, 385−400, 515−524; 47 (1953): 3−25, 423−470; 48 (1954): 418-457; 49 (1955): 736−749; 50 (1956): 3−16, 129−152, 257−274, 385−414, the whole now reprinted in a single volume of the same title (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1986). A Turkish translation is noted in Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 404.

also petty dynasts, the Seljuqs, and the Mongols up until their capture of Baghdad), and those of the Mongols ("the Huns") after 656/1258. The pre-Islamic regimes are seen off very quickly, and more than two thirds of the text concerns Islamic times. Very full attention is paid to the period of the Abbasid caliphate, and especially to the customs, laws, religious practices, and military campaigns of the Mongols, all of which are discussed in the epoch of the Arabs. This work continues 11 years past the death date of Bar Hebraeus and ends in 696/1297, the continuator of the text probably being his brother and successor as maphriân, Bar Sawmâ Safi (r. 685-697/1286-1298).[33] This latter's role may have including not only continuing Bar Hebraeus' text, but also revising it, since the part supposedly written by Bar Hebraeus himself sometimes seems anachronistic. For example, at one point, the text gives an account of the laws of Chingis Khân (d. 624/1227) in which it presumes the Mongols to be Muslims, referring to their belief in "the eternal God", to their "trust in the Lord", and to their conversion to Islam "in myriads".[34] Such comments cannot possibly have come from Bar Hebraeus himself, in and after whose lifetime even the early Ilkhânids — Hülegü and his immediate successors (654-694/1256-1295) — were either still Shamanists or adherents of a form of Buddhism heavily influenced by Tibetan Lamaism. If any formal religion was taken seriously by the Mongols in this period, it was Buddhism; and even after the conversion of Ghazan Khân in 694/1295, Islam as understood and practiced among the Mongols, long remained a superficial affair that bore little relation to the faith of the established Muslim communities of the Middle East.[35]

The ecclesiastical history, called the *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*[36], deals with the history of both the Monophysite and Nestorian communities, organized around, for the former, the patriarchs of Antioch and the maphrians of Takrît, and for the latter, their Katholikoi. Like the civil history,

33. See Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*: 560-599. Bedjan notes this obvious problem (*ibid.*: 557) and also attributes the extension of the text to Bar Sawmâ.

34. *Ibid.*: 411.

35. See David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986): 158-163.

36. **EDITION** — *Chronicon ecclesiasticum*, edited and translated by Jean-Baptiste Abbeloos and Thomas Joseph Lamy in three volumes (Paris: J. P. Maisonneuve, and Louvain: Peeters, (1872–1877).
    TRANSLATION — Latin, as above.

this part was extended after Bar Hebraeus' death. In a first stage, Bar Sawmâ addressed himself to the section on the maphriâns and completed his brother's autobiography, gave an account of his death, listed his works, and began an account of his own tenure as maphriân.[37] Several centuries later, an anonymous continuator brought the entire ecclesiastical history up to date with a rather sparse account to 901/1496.[38]

In using both of these texts, it must be recalled that Bar Hebraeus relied heavily on Michael, hence his *Chronicle* is of somewhat limited independent value until after 592/1196, when Michael's work ends. Bar Hebraeus also acknowledges that when he discusses matters concerning the chronology of the Seljuqs, Khâwarizmshâhs, Ismâ'îlîs, and Mongols, he had used the Persian history of 'Alâ al-Dîn al-Juwaynî (wr. 658/1260), which covered events to 654/1256.[39] For much of the first half and all of the second half of the seventh/thirteenth century, however, Bar Hebraeus is an independent and often contemporary witness, and in the civil history this period accounts for the entire last third of the book[40]. Even for earlier periods it may be noted that his reliance on Michael was not exclusive, since it is clear that he had direct access to some of the authorities cited by Michael. The early author Theophilos of Edessa (d. 169/785), for example, is mentioned by name in only one passing reference in Michael's *Chronicle*,[41] but Bar Hebraeus speaks of Theophilos' chronicle as "a fine work on chronology", if unfortunately used by its Maronite author to revile "the orthodox folk", i.e. the Monophysites,[42] and on one occasion he cites it directly for information not to be found in Michael.[43] Bar Hebraeus also knows that some of the reports cited by Michael from Dionysios bar Salîbî come not from the latter's chronicle, as Michael's citations would certainly seem to imply, but from several poems by Dionysios on the fall of Edessa to Zengî in 539/1144.[45] It is thus to be concluded that Bar Hebraeus had

---

37. *Ibid.*, III: 467-491.
38. *Ibid.*, II: 781-845; III: 493-563.
39. *Chronicon Syriacum*: 555.
40. *Ibid.*: 401−599.
41. Michael, *Chronique*, II: 358 (trans); IV: 378 (text).
42. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*: 127.
43. Ibid.: 37.
44. See Michael, *Chronique*, III: 265-267, 272-274, 300-303 (trans.); IV: 631−633, 634−636, 651-653 (text).
45. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*: 308.

on hand works by a number of earlier authorities in addition to Michael, and that he used them to check and supplement Michael's account. It would therefore be a valuable contribution to our knowledge — if also a formidable research task — to identify those parts of Bar Hebraeus' *Chronicle* that represent citations from lost works not extant in Michael or other earlier sources.

Also of interest for present purposes is Bar Hebraeus' *Ta'rîkh Mukhtasar al-Duwal*,[46] written in the last year of his life in response to a request by Muslim friends in Marâgha (in Adharbayjân) for an Arabic recension of his civil history. This new Arabic version follows the arrangement of the earlier Syriac text, but in preparing the Arabic work Bar Hebraeus not only made numerous revisions, but also added much new information, including material from Arabic and Persian sources, some of which are now lost. Hence, while it is impossible to predict the places where one might find such revisions and additions, the *Ta'rîkh* is a work that should be taken into greater account for Abbasid history than is presently the case, in much the same way that the well-known reliance of the Muslim Damascene historian Ibn Kathîr (d. 774/1373) on extant sources for much history before his own time should not be allowed to obscure the fact that he also quotes important material that is otherwise lost. Bar Hebraeus' *Ta'rîkh* represents a major Arabic adaptation of his Syriac *Chronicon*, rather than a mere translation of it.

The Problem of Lost Sources

Reviewing the above survey, the impression that at first emerges, in historiographical terms, is that the Christian communities of the Near East under Abbasid rule were for some time but little interested in their own history. Historical writing seems to have been limited to curt chronologies that, for the most part, severely curtained the modes and scope of discussion; and even this historiographical form was limited, with the exception of the Nestorian work of Elias, the metropolitan of Nisibis, to Monophysite works produced in the rural milieu of the community's northern Mesopotamian monasteries. Against this background, the sudden appearance of the

---

46. **EDITION** — *Ta'rîkh Mukhtasar al-Duwal*, edited by Antoine Sâlihânî (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1890).

   TRANSLATION — Latin by Edward Pococke, *Historia Compendiosa Dynastiarum* (Oxford: H. Hall, 1663), accompanying his own edition of the Arabic text.

massive and highly developed universal history of Michael the Syrian is a spectacular development that seems well nigh impossible to explain.

Perhaps even more extraordinary is the lack of any representation of the genre of ecclesiastical history, which in the final days before the rise of Islam had found an extremely important and very influential exponent in John of Ephesus (d. ca. A.D. 585)[47]. This form of historical writing, in Syriac called *eqlesyastiqê*, from the Greek *ekklêsiastikê*, had as its focus neither the fixing of chronology, as was the case with the Monophysite chronologies and Elias bar Shînâyâ, nor the elaboration of broad visions of history, as with Michael, the chronicler of 1234, and Bar Hebraeus, but rather concentrated on the theme of the Christian heritage, specifically Old and New Testament history and subsequent events insofar as they served to relate the history of the church and those who suffered for their faith, illustrate the fulfillment of divine will and the words of the Prophets and Christ, or fill the need for explanations of events in religious terms. If this genre, so highly developed at the time of John of Ephesus, did in fact fade out or drastically decline in subsequent times, when the rise of Islam confronted Christian writers with one of the most pressing problems in justification they had ever faced, this would comprise a historiographical phenomenon of considerable importance.

Such anomalies as these highlight the fact that the impression conveyed by the extant works is inaccurate and incomplete; the reason for this being that much of what was once written has since been lost. It is the modern medievalist's perpetual lament that much of incalculable value has failed to survive to our times, and this certainly applies as much to Syriac historiography as to other traditions of historical writing. It is well worth bearing in mind that of all the works mentioned so far above, only those of Bar Hebraeus survive in more than a single Syriac manuscript. At the same time, however, it must be said that the extent of this loss requires investigation and assessment, insofar as this is possible, and should not be taken *a priori* as a factor which explains away features in the extant

---

47. See J.P.N. Land, *Joannes Bischof von Ephesos, der erste syrische Kirchenhistoriker* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1856); Wright, *Syriac Literature* : 102–107; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 150–151, 178, 181–184, 362–363; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 181-182; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 549-552, Add. 139; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 166–167; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 248–254 no. 15; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 127-128 no. 3, 264-268 no. 69; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 70 no. 3; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 34–36, 105–106, 132–135, 166; Riad, *Studies*: 105, 134–136, 223.

literature which may, in reality, represent genuine historiographical trends which were characteristic of the tradition during the course of its development and transmission in medieval times.

The extent of the historical literature that has been entirely lost can be gauged from two key sources: the *Opus Chronologicum* of Elias bar Shînâyâ, who, as mentioned above, cites the sources from which he has taken material, and the *Chronicle* of Michael, who in two places names his sources for the Islamic period. From these passages, we find that the tradition of ecclesiastical history in Syriac historiography had indeed been pursued into the Islamic era, and that in Abbasid times Syriac historians were still producing such histories, or at least works entitled *eqlesyastiqê* or something similar. These included works by such scholars as the Nestorian historian and physician Pethyôn (fl. ca. 164/780),[48] Ishô'denah, Nestorian metropolitan of al-Basra (fl. ca. 236/850)[49] and Elias, Nestorian

---

48. Cited in Elias Bar Shînâyâ, *Opus Chronologicum*, A.H. 148, 151; Ibn Abî Usaybi'a (wr. 643/1245), *'Uyûn al-Anbâ fî Tabaqât al-Atibbâ'*, edited by August Müller (Cairo: Al-Matba'a al-Wahbîya, 1299/1882; Königsberg: A. Müller, 1884), I: 123-125, 126–127, 127–129, 135–136, 138. See Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 194-195; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 203; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 214; Claire Baudoux, "A propos de la lettre du Patriarche Timothée au prêtre et docteur Péthion", *Annuaire de l'Institut de P'hilologie et d'Histoire Orientale* 3 (1935): 37–40; Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, II: 120-121; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*, Add. 187; Fiey, *Chrétiens Syriaques*: 43.

49. Elias cites him for A. S. 561, 695, and 721, then 14 times between A.H. 3-95. While there are no Abbasid citations from him, it is unlikely that his *Ecclesiastical History* failed to carry on into post-Umayyad times. Nautin has argued, on the basis of rather slim evidence, that Ishô'denah is the author of the Arabic Nestorian *Chronicle of Seert*. See Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 195; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 203, 205–206; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 234, 236, Chabot, *La Littérature Syriaque* 113; Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Syrischen Literatur* II: 121; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books* 506; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 217; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 354–355 no. 29; Jean-Maurice Fiey, "Ishô'denah, métropolite de Basra et son oeuvre", *L'Orient Syrien*, 11 (1966): 431-540; *idem*, "Ishô'dnah et la Chronique de Seert", *Parole de l'Orient*, 6–7 (1975): 447–459; Proudfoot, "Sources of Theophanes": 406–407; Pierre Nautin, "L'Auteur de la Chronique de Séert: Ishô'denah de Basra", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religion* 186 (1974): 113–126; *idem*, "L'Auteur de la 'Chronique anonyme de Guidi': Elie de Merw", *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 199 (1982): 313–314; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al–Suryânîya": 51 no. 27.

metropolitan of al-Anbâr (fl. ca. 310/922)[50]. There were also other anonymous chronologies based on the Jacobite patriarchs[51], the Nestorian metropolitans of Nisibis[52] and katholikoi[53], and even the "kings of the Tayyâyê"[54], as well as chronicles by the late eighth-century Jacobite authors Daniel bar Moses[55] and John bar Samuel,[56] a certain Aaron (fl. ca. 287/900)[57], Theodosios, Jacobite metropolitan of Edessa (fl. early 9th c.)[58], this Theodosios' famous younger brother Dionysios of Tell Mahrê (d. 230/845), on whom more will be said below, an obscure tenth-century historian from Nisibis known to us only as Simeon the Jacobite[59], Ignatios, Jacobite bishop

50. Cited by Elias Bar Shînâyâ for A. H. 287. See Wright, *Syriac Liltérature*: 228, 230; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 204; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 404–405 no. 2; Fiey, *Chrétiens Syriaques*: 143–144.

51. Cited by Elias for A.H. 89, 106, 265, 274, 297, 298, 311, 324, and 354.

52. Cited by Elias for A. H. 141, 281, and 301.

53. Cited by Elias for A. H. 111, 159, 163, 270, 271, 279, 280, 292, 326, 350, and 352.

54. Cited by Elias 40 times between A.H. 1 and 90, then again for 317.

55. Named as a source in Michael, *Chronique*, II: 358, 477 (trans.); IV: 378, 449 (text); cited by Elias for A.H. 122, 127, 131. On him, see Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 163; Chabot, "Introduction": xxxii; E.W. Brooks, "The Sources of Theophanes and the Syriac Chroniclers", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 15 (1906): 583; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 203, 383; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 273; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 379; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 129 no. 11, 316 no. 128; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 75 no. 14.

56. Also named as a source in Michael (*loc. cit.*). See Chabot, "Introduction": xxxii; Brooks, "Sources of Theophanes": 578-587; Proudfoot, "Sources of Theophanes": 405; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 273; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 379; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 129 no. 12, 316 no. 129; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 75 no. 15.

57. Cited by Elias once for A.H. 273. This figure is extremely obscure and not even his full name is known. See Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 204.

58: Named by Michael as a source in *Chronique*, II: 358 (trans.); IV: 378 (text), and described in the *Chronicle of 1234* (II, 16) as a savant of philosophy and fluent in Syriac, Greek, and Arabic. See also Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 203; Chabot, "Introduction": xxxiii; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 389; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 312; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca* 208; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya* 389–390 no. 15; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 333-334 no. 149; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 81 no. 22; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 78 n. 11, 164 n. 22.

59. Cited by Elias for A.S. 879, and then A.H. 6, 306, and 310. Cf. also Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 357; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 81 no. 24.

of Melitene (d. 498/1104),[60] and two late authors. Dionysios bar Salîbî, Jacobite bishop of 'Amid (d. 567/1171)[61], and Iwannîs, Jacobite bishop of Kayshûm, near Samosata (d. 567/1171)[62]. Michael seems to have used the works of these last two chroniclers as sources of information for events just prior to his own time.

As our extant sources not only know of this lost historical scholarship, but are also in greater or lesser degrees based upon it, there arises the crucial question of whether or not one can trace individual reports back to sources now lost, or, indeed, reconstruct any of these texts, if only in part and on a tentative basis. In Syriac historiography, research of this kind faces an enormous obstacle in that, unlike the situation in Arab-Islamic historical writing, it was exceptional for an author to name his sources for individual reports. Even Elias bar Shînâyâ poses problems in this respect: he often places more than one report in an annual entry and names his

---

60. Named as a source by Michael in his *Chronique*, I: 2, 239, 240, 266; II: 357; III: 112, 167 (trans.); IV: 121-122, 136, 377, 544, 576 (text). Michael also copies out the full text of Ignatios' preface in *Chronique*, III: 114-116 (trans.); 545-457 (text). See also Chabot, "Introduction": xxxiv-xxxv; Brooks, "Sources of Theophanes": 583; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 198; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 291; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*: 17, Abouna, *Adab al-lugha al-Arâmîya*: 463-464 no. 4; Proudfoot, "Sources of Theophanes": 406; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 130 no. 19, 369-370 no. 195; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 81 no. 25; Riad, *Studies*: 35-36, 100, 108-109, 185.

61. Michael copies out Dionysios' preface to his own chronicle and later speaks of the latter's career more generally; Michael, *Chronique*, III: 257, 344-345 (trans.); IV: 628-629 (text). As we have already seen, however, the citations from Dionysios concerning the fall of Edessa do not come from this history. See also Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 246-250; Chabot, "Introduction": xxxv-xxxvi; idem"Discours de Jacques Denys Bar Salîbî à l'Intronisation du Partriarche Michel le Syrien", *Journal Asiatique*, 10ᵉ Série, 11 (1908): 87-115; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 399-400; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literature*: 295-297; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 301-304; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 220-221; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 470-479 no. 11; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 130 no. 21, 382-391 no. 209; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 82 no. 28; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysios*: 85; Ishâq, "Masâdir Abî al-Faraj al-Malatî": 162 no. 15.

62. Michael does not cite Iwannîs for any report in his *Chronicle*, but refers to the latter's history in his own preface and copies out that of Iwannîs; *Chronique*, I: 2; III: 256-257 (trans.); IV: 626 (text). See also Chabot, "Introduction": xxxvi; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 294; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 470 no. 10; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 130 no. 20, 382 no. 208; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 82 no. 27; Witakowski, *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 85.

authorities for these accounts, but without indicating who has contributed what.

There are, however, means by which old layers of material can be identified and recovered from both the chronologies and the more elaborate universal histories[63]. In the case of the early Jacobite chronologies, two crucial aspects of the monks' working method must be borne in mind: first, that such authors seldom used more than a single source for any given period, especially for events after early Byzantine times; and second, that in writing their own works the monks did not consider it their task to intrude into already existing texts with additions or corrections so substantial as to create a new work which would be uniquely theirs. Most of the extant chronologies, and here again Elias bar Shînâyâ is an exception, reflect a method in which a monk, either reading or copying an old chronology, would notice that the work was now out of date and so proceed to add entries of his own. The older text could be abbreviated here and there, especially if the Ms. of the work being copied had suffered damage or was in some places unclear,[64] and the continuator could also introduce cosmetic editorial notes (e.g. "as we have said above"). If he did have more than one source for a given period, he might use one as a supplement to the other; but for the most part the result of his work was to add a new "layer" to an already existing text, rather than to create a new history. Later on, another reader or copyist would again make additional entries, thus creating a further layer, and so on. This "layering" phenomenon is, in fact, typical of the early Syriac chronologies.

In critiquing these chronologies, then, the task at hand for the historian is largely one of determining where the various layers of material begin and end. This is of course an endeavor to be undertaken cautiously, but usually there are clear indications of where these junction points are. The indicators can be summarized as follows:

---

63. Some preliminary remarks on this subject have been made in my "*Tâ'un* and *Wabâ'*: Conceptions of Plague and Pestilence in Early Islam", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 25 (1982): 303-304.

64. Our extant Syriac historical sources bear eloquent testimony to the gravity of such problems. With the exception of some of the Bar Hebraeus Mss., every single Ms. of the works discussed above suffers from some significant loss or damage.

1. *A sudden shift in scope or emphasis:* If a pattern of short concise year-by-year entries suddenly expands into detailed narrative no longer faithful to the annalistic form, or if a chronology suddenly degenerates into a mere king list, this signals the hand of a new author. This continuator may wish to elaborate matters in greater detail, or may have access to fuller or lesser information.

2. *A sudden break in the theme or focus of the work:* For example, a text may reveal intense interest in the affairs of a certain monastery or city, only to allow this place suddenly to drop entirely out of consideration after a certain point in the text. Or the work may show interest in the affairs of the caliphate for a time, and then abandon that subject entirely in favor of some other concern.

3. *Major chronological gaps or significant backtracking to an earlier date:* The first of these indicates that the author of a new layer had no material with which he could fill the gap between his own time and that of his predecessor, and in the second case a continuator may have been dissatisfied with the treatment of certain events discussed by his predecessor. This latter case is highly illustrative of the overall method: if one sees that a predecessor's coverage of an event is inadequate, or that something important has been missed, he does not change the received text; rather, starting where the old text leaves off, he backtracks chronologically and gives his own version of events.

4. *Nuances of language:* This indicator must be regarded with extreme caution, but if, for example, one encounters references to the period under consideration as "today" *(yawmânâ),* "this current year" *(Shantâ hâdê),* and so forth, while the passage in question stands long before the end of the work, it may be that this material belongs to a layer of the text that predates the final section of the text.

The Qartamîn Chronology, as presented in the *Chronicles* of 819 and 846, is an illuminating example. Taking as its starting point the Incarnation of Christ, it covers various points of ecclesiastical, Byzantine, and Islamic history, with special attention being paid to the founding of the monastery of Qartamîn and its subsequent history — the bishops of Karrhai, other ecclesiastical figures, regional events, and so forth[65]. But in 728 the monastery disappears from consideration, nothing further is said of Byzantium,

---

65. This section corresponds to *Chronicon 819*: 3–12 (A. S. 308-1039).

and fewer details concerning the caliphate are given, indicating that after this point, a continuator is at work and is proceeding on the basis of either different interests or different materials. This continuator carries the narrative forward to 785[66], when the narrative suddenly shifts to a series of brief entries dealing only with the chronology of the Abbasid caliphs to 198/813, when the accession of al-Ma'mûn is announced[67]. After this there is a more subtle change to a series of four entries on the ordination and death dates of Jacobite patriarchs, up until 819[68]. To this work, the chronicler of 846, in keeping with the agenda of this final stage in the text's development, added an entry of his own announcing the accession of the patriarch John III in 846. The *Chronicle of 819* is thus a series of separate chronicle layers comprising, for the most part, four distinct sources:

1. the Qartamîn Chronology, covering ecclesiastical, Byzantine, and Islamic events to 728;
2. a chronology of largely ecclesiastical events, with some Arab details, to 785;
3. an Abbasid king list to 813; and
4. a list of Jacobite patriarchs to 819.

The crucially important Zûqnîn Chronicle can be analyzed in the same way. As mentioned above, this is a four-part north Mesopotamian chronicle from early Abbasid times and it ıs of course the last part, covering the period 578-775, that is of interest to us here. This section at first appears to be an array of disparate materials badly cobbled together into an erratic mélange set before the reader in the most glorious confusion. Thus, despite the undoubted importance of the information contained in this section, as a historical work it has been heavily criticized and its author excoriated as, to quote but one representative verdict, "completely devoid of historical sense"[69]. But while not wishing to claim any erudition for our author, I would propose that many of the problems disappear if two points are borne in mind. First, the colophon in which the author ostensibly explains how and why he has written this part is a platform upon which he poses as a discerning historian and a conscientious moralist, but it has little relation

---

66. I. e. *ibid.*: 12-14 (A.S. 1045– [1096]).

67. *Ibid.*: 14 (A.S. 10[96]–1100).

68. *Ibid.*: 15 (A.S. 1101-1130).

69. F. Nau, "Note sur la chronique attribuée par Assémani à Denys de Tell-Mahrê, Patriarch d'Antioche", *Journal Asiatique*, 9ᵉ Série, 8 (1896): 347.

to how this part was actually assembled[70]. As Riad has clearly demonstrated, such prefatory sections — in Syriac historical literature generally and in the pseudo-Dionysios in particular — often reflect what the author thought a preface should say, though the *topoi* and literary motifs included on that basis may have had nothing to do with the author's actual method or the content of his work.[71] Second, the part is not and cannot be the work of one author. So again, we may turn to the text to see where old layers of narrative end and new ones begin.

This last part of the *Zûqnîn Chronicle* opens with a chronology relating events in usually very brief terms and ending in 713, indicating that as first compiled, it was a very sparse and simple chronology[72]. An illustrative entry is this one for A.S. 1023: "Walîd, King of the Tayyâyê, died, and after him Sulaymân ruled for two and a half years"[73]. Aside from this, the chronicler has nothing to say for this year, and this hardly reflects the author's desire, as expressed in the colophon, to relate the sufferings of the Christian community of Mesopotamia. But after 713, the style and scope suddenly change. Long elaborate accounts without chronological reference points replace the short annalistic entries, and there are even three stories of the wondrous deeds of certain bishops of Edessa and 'Amid. The shift to such discourse marks an extension of the work by a different hand[74]. This in turn ends in 732 with an account of Hishâm b. 'Abd al-Malik's compaigns against the Turks, after which the narrative suddenly jumps back to 718 and proceeds to the Abbasid revolution, where the author begins to speak of "us" and refers to "the present day"[75]. This is both interesting and important. As noted above, a monk wishing to update the chronology as it stood in 732 has noticed that events of the previous two decades were not treated to his satisfaction. He does not change what his predecessor has said; rather, he simply copies all the older material, then backtracks and begins his own account in 718 rather than in 732, where the earlier work ended. This continuator ends his account with the Abbasid revolution, and suddenly the text backtracks again, on this occasion to 742, from which time a final layer carries the narrative to 775[76].

---

70. See *Zûqnîn Chronicle*, II: 145-147.
71. Riad, *Studies*: 90, 218-230.
72. *Zûqnîn Chronicle*, II: 147-156 (A.S. 898-1024).
73. *Ibid.*, II: 156.
74. *Ibid.*, II: 156-170 (A.S. 102[5]–1043).
75. *Ibid.*, II: 170-195 (A.S. 1029–1060).
76. *Ibid.*, II: 195-378 (A.S. 1054-1086).

The last part of the *Zûqnîn Chronicle* is therefore not one history but four:

1. a sparse chronology from 586 to 713;
2. an elaborate chronicle of events from 714 to 732;
3. another elaborate chronicle for the period 718 to the 740s; and
4. a final chronicle covering the 740s until 775.

In light of the fact that the period concerned is that of the last half of the Umayyad caliphate and the early Abbasids, the existence of material of this kind, a succession of four contemporary accounts, is clearly of very great importance. And while such a division of the text does not account for all of the confusion and discongruity of this work, it does render such phenomena more comprehensible. In a report on the Abbasid movement, for example, the text explains that the term *musawwada* in Arabic can be translated into Syriac as *aûkâmê*, a word which can mean either "black clothing" or "blacks" in the sense of persons with black skin.[77] But *musawwada* in fact means "wearers of black", as any speaker of Arabic would know, and an error on such a simple matter would not seem possible for a writer who some pages later speaks of conversations with Arab warriors that could hardly have been in any language other than Arabic.[78] This dilemma disappears, however, if one observes that the reference to the *musawwada* falls in the third layer of the text, while the account of the conversation with the Arab warriors occurrs in the fourth and final layer: the passages are by two different persons: one who probably did not know Arabic, followed by another who did.

So far, discussion of the recovery of lost sources has been limited to the assignment of provenance and date to blocks or layers of narrative that still survive in or close to their original form. The question thus arises of whether the same or some similar method can be applied to the *Chronicle* of Michael and the *Chronicle of 1234*, the universal histories that undoubtedly comprise the greatest achievements of medieval Syriac historiography. Though vital to the study of the medieval history of the Near East through much of the period they cover, for the early Abbasid period, the era prior to the appearance of the great Arab-Islamic historical works and thus the era for which external testimony would be most useful, they seem rather

---

77. *Ibid.*, II: 194.

78. *Ibid.*, II: 237-238. The significance of this account was first noticed by Witakowski; see his *Pseudo-Dionysius*: 94.

late. But while the Jacobite chronologies tended to be mere continuations of one older source, these two Syriac histories were definitely compiled by combining material from a variety of older sources. Thus, were it to prove possible to use these two extant works to identify and recover older materials, historians would gain access to evidence of very great importance indeed.

To take Michael first, this historian fortunately has much to say about his sources. In Book X.20 of his *Chronicle*[79], he explains that now, having reached the reign of the emperor Maurice (r. 582-602), the sources he has been using so far are no longer of assistance. For subsequent events he will make use of the chronicles of Jacob of Edessa (wr. 73/692),[80] John of

79. See Chronique, II: 355-357 (trans.); IV: 377 (text).

80. Cf. Michael, *Chronique*, I: 2; II: 482-483 (trans.); IV: 452 (text); there are frequent citations on ancient history, up to Roman times but not later, in *Chronique*, I: 5-291; III: 150, 278 (trans.); IV: 3-147, 567, 639 (text). See also Wright, *Syriac Literature:* 141-154; Chabot, "Introduction": xxvii, xxxii; Brooks, "Sources of Theophanes": 583; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque:* 190, 192, 278-279; 374-377; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur:* 248-256; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre:* 16-17; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books:* 514-521, Add. 134; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca:* 177-183, 208-209; Arthur Vööbus, "The Discovery of New Cycles of Canons and Resolutions Composed by Ja'cob of Edessa", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 34 (1968): 412-419; *idem, Syrische Kanonessammlungen. Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde,* I: *West Syrische Originalurkunden* (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1970; *CSCO* 307, 317, *Subsidia* 35, 38), IA, 202-216; IB, 273-298; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya:* 367-373 no. 5; *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, edited and translated by Arthur Vööbus (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1975-1976; *CSCO* 367-368, 375-376, *Scriptores Syri* 161-164), I: 221-272; Proudfoot, "Sources of Theophanes"; Barsaum, *Al-Lu'lu' al-Manthûr:* 129 no. 8, 291-306 no. 109; Zakkâ 'Iwâs, "Mâr Ya'qûb al-Ruhâwî (633-708 m): al-Lâhûtî, al-Mu'arrikh, al-Mutarjim al-Lughawî al-Suryânî, Mustanbit al-Harakât al-Suryânîya", *Majallat Majma' al-Lugha al-Suryânîya* 2 (1976): 31-45; Karl-Erick Rignell, *A Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite Concerning Ecclesiastical Canons* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1979); Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing": 8 no. 6; Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981): 145-152; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 72-73 no. 8; Riad, *Studies:* 29, 106, 167, 200, 218; Ishâq, "Masâdir Abî al-Faraj al-Malatî": 160 no. 9.

Of the chronicle or chronological canon of Jacob of Edessa, only parts of a later recension survive:

EDITION — *Chronicon*, edited by E.W. Brooks in *Chronica Minora*, III (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1905; *CSCO* 5, *Scriptores Syri*, 5): 261-330.

TRANSLATIONS — Latin by Brooks in *Chronica Minora*, III (Paris: L. Durbecq, 1905; *CSCO* 6, *Scriptores Syri*, 6): 197-258; English in E.W. Brooks, "The Chronological Canon of James of Edessa", *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 53: (1899): 261-327; cf. also 54 (1900): 100-102.

Litarba (wr. 118/736),[81] and Ignatios of Melitene (d. 498/1104).[82] As the first two of these both died in Umayyad times, they can be eliminated as sources for Abbasid Bilâd al-Shâm; this leaves Ignatios, author of a chronicle extending from 325 (Constantine) to Ignatios' own time, ie. covering about 350 years of Abbasid history.[83] But Michael continues his discussion of sources with a new section announcing: "At this point begins the patriarch Dionysios, surnamed of Tell Mahrê, of whose writings I first give here the Preface (perômiôn, from the Greek prooímion) as follows...", followed by the complete text of this long preface As this preface is of considerable importance for present purposes, it may be cited here in full:

> O my spiritual son Iwannîs, metropolitan of Dara, who is dearer to me than any other: because your soul applies itself insatiably and with irresistable zeal to the acquisition of learning; because [the study of] neither the religious sciences nor the doctrines of Orthodoxy, in which you have been instructed from the tender years of your youth[84] until [now, with] the greying of your hair, is sufficient for you, such that one could say, without straying from the truth, that you, like a river, cause the waters of life to flow, and that you bring rejoicing to the City of God, the Holy Church; [for all these reasons] I see you so enflamed by the desire

---

81. Cf. Michael, *Chronique*, II: 358, 500 (trans.); IV: 378, 461 (text); there are no citations from John in Michael for any events after the reign of Justinian, though John's work continued into the reigns of Leo III (r. 100-123/717-741) and Hishâm ibn 'Abd al-Malik (r. 105-125/724-743). See also Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 158-159; Chabot, "Introduction": xxvii-xxviii; Brooks, "Sources of Theophanes": 583; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 198, 289, 376, 377; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 258-259; Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*: 16-17; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 561; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 185; Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, IB, 286-295; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 378-379 no. 8; Vööbus *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition*, I: 233-254; Barsaum, *Al-Lu' lu' al-Manthûr*: 129 no.9, 315-316 no. 127; Rignell, *Letter from Jacob of Edessa*; Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*: 145-152; Habbî, "Al-Tâwârîkh al-Suryânîya": 74 no. 12; Ishâq, "Masâdir Abî al-Faraj al-Malatî": 160 no. 10. Nothing from John's *Chronicle* survives today. Litarba was once thought to be an error for Yathrib, i.e. Medina; but in fact it is to be identified with the village of al-Athârib, near Aleppo.

82. See n. 60 above.

83. See Michael, *Chronique*: I: 239, 240; III: 112, 115, 116 (trans.); IV: 121-122, 544, 546, 547 (text).

84. Lit. "from the softness of your fingernails".

to gain knowledge that you also reflect upon and are fascinated by historical accounts of events which have occurred in the world. But is it not incumbent upon you yourself to take up the task of gathering the treasure required to satisfy your desire, rather than impose this heavy task upon my feeble shoulders? You have not stopped to consider that sometimes my old grey head is quite hopeless a such tasks, nor that my poor soul is beset by vexations, church troubles which do not even allow me to take pleasure in the air I breathe, nor that I do not enjoy the tranquility and repose [of staying] in any one place, but rather must pass from village to village and travel from one country to another, [submitting] to long and burdensome journeys, to waiting and grovelling at the gates of those in authority, and to all the humiliation and degradation that accompanies this.

Nevertheless, I am compelled by the ardor of your enthusiasm to recall that I too used to feel drawn in that direction. To tell the truth, at one time or another, I have urged many people to set down in writing, for the generations which are to come, the events which have occurred [in the past] and which are occurring in our own time. They have declined to do so, however, and in the end I have therefore decided to shoulder this burden myself, irrespective of the great extent to which it exceeds my feeble ability. So placing my hopes on God, I set out upon the task of formulating a systematic historical treatise (*pragmáteia*).

Wise men have written about earlier times, from the beginning of Creation up until the time of Constantine, the believing emperor, and have discussed the creation of the world, the engendering of creatures, the successive generations since Adam and the number of their years, and the kings who have ruled and the extent of their empires. Nevertheless, their works are not what one would call "ecclesiastical histories", but rather are "chronographies", that is, "writings about [past] times", such as those authored by Josephos, Andronicos, Africanos, Anianos, George of al-Raqqa, John of Antioch, and finally Eusebios of Pamphilos. This same Eusebios was likewise the first to write ecclesiastical history, followed later by Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoritos, Zacharias, Elias, John of Asia, and most recently of all, Cyrus, the priest from Batnae. Others — to wit, James of Edessa and John, the stylite of Litarba — set forth the chronology of the years.

Accounts after the fashion of ecclesiastical history have been
composed by Daniel Bar Moses of Tûr 'Abdîn, another [author]
called John bar Samuel, of the west country, another called
Theophilos, and Theodosios, metropolitan of Edessa. But those
whom we have mentioned here set forth their accounts in a seg-
mented and discontinuous fashion, without paying strict heed to
chronology or bringing out the connections among the various
events. One such author was Theophilos of Edessa, a Chalcedo-
nian who considered that he had inherited the right to vilify the
Orthodox and so gave a false accounting of all events with which
one of us has some connection.

Hence, we shall adhere to the usual custom and begin where
Cyrus of Batnae left off, and we shall borrow [material] from the
Chronicle of this author,[85] [but] only those parts which are accu-
rate and do not depart from the truth.[86]

Thereafter, one finds in this part of Michael's *Chronicle* no references
to Ignatios of Melitene, but frequent statements like "Dionysios of Tell
Mahrê said", "as the Patriarch Mar Dionysios wrote it himself in exactly
these terms", "I have been informed, said the Patriarch Dionysios", or
"here Dionysios spoke in these words", most such references relating to
the Abbasid period.[87] A further comment by Dionysios is recorded in which
the patriarch states that he has sought to write a history which gives both
a complete account of events and offers an accurate chronology. In order
to do this, he will even make use of the works of the corrupt Chalcedonians.[88]
Then at the end of the concluding chapter of Book XII, having just discussed
events of A.S. 1154 (= 228/842), Michael states:

The wise Dionysios, the patriarch surnamed of Tell Mahrê, here
ended his *Chronicle*. He composed it in two parts and in 16
books, each part containing eight books divided into chapters.
He wrote it at the request of Iwannîs, metropolitan of Dârâ. In
this chronicle are included the times, a period of 260 years, from

---

85. That is, from the *Chronicle* of Theophilos of Edessa.

86. Michael, Chronique II: 357-358 (trans.); IV: 378 (text). Cf. Riad, *Studies:* 184-185.

87. *Ibid.* I: 2; II: 124, 371, 411, 429, 477; III: 13, 35, 36, 38, 41, 42, 55-59, 64, 70, 76, 79,
    85-87, 90-93, 104-111, 150, 307 (trans.); IV: 240, 386, 409, 421, 449, 485, 497, 499, 500,
    502, 508-513, 516, 520, 522, 525, 528-530, 530-532, 538-544, 568, 654 (text).

88. *Ibid* II: 487-488 (trans); IV: 452-454 (text).

the beginning of the reign of Maurice — that is, from the year
894 of the Greeks — until the year 1154, in which there died
Theophilos, emperor of the Romans, and Abû Ishâq, king of the
Tayyâyê, and in which there began to reign over them Hârûn,
son of Abû Ishâq,[89] and over the Romans, Michael, son of
Theophilos,[90] a weak child whose mother ruled the Empire.[91]

From all this, it is clear that Dionysios was Michael's main source for the
period from A.D. 582 until 228/842, and was an especially important source
of information for the Abbasid period.

It makes perfect sense that this should have been so, for Dionysios of
Tell Mahrê was a figure of tremendous importance in the eastern church.
Born into an old Edessan family of long-established eminence and consid-
erable intellectual achievement, Dionysios entered the monastery of Qen-
neshrê as a young man, later moved to the monastery of Mar Jacob at
Kayshûm, and devoted his time to historical studies until quarrelling and
maneuvering within the Jacobite leadership resulted in his elevation in
202/818 to the patriarchate, which he held until his death in 230/845.[92] As
both a churchman and a historian, he was a figure of enormous reputation

---

89. I. e. the caliph al-Wâthiq (r. 227-232/842-847), son of the caliph al-Mu'tasim (r. 218-227/
833-842).

90. I. e. the emperor Michael III (r. 227-253/842-867)

91. *Ibid.*, III: 111 (trans.); IV: 544 (text).

92. See Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 196-203; Chabot, "Introduction ": xxxii; Brooks, "Sources
of Theophanes": 578-587; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 193-194, 388-389; Baumstark,
Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur: 275—276; Chabot, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 92-93;
Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 298, 1163,
Add. 78-79; Arthur Vööbus, "Neues Licht über die kirchlichen Reformsbestrebungen
des Patriarchen Dionysios von Tell Mahre", *Oriens Christianus* 48 (1964): 286-300;
Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 220; Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, IA,
35-47; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmî ya*: 390-392 no. 16; Vööbus, *The Synodicon
in the West Syrian Tradition*, II: 25-34; Jean Gribomont, "Documents sur les Origines
de l'Eglise Maronite", *Parole de l'Orient* 5 (1974): 119-123; Proudfoot, "Sources of
Theophanes": 405-408; Barsaum, *Al—Lu'lu' al-Manthûr*: 130 no. 16, 338—340 no. 154;
Fiey, *Chrétiens Syriaques*: 68—71, 76; Zakkâ 'Iwâs, "Al-Batriyark Dayûnisiyûs al-Tal-
mahrî (m. 845)", *Majallat Majma' al-Lugha al Suryânîya*, 3 (1977): 45—77; Brock,
"Syriac Historical Writing": 14—15 no. 15; Habbî, "Al-Tawârîkh al-Suryânîya": 80 no.
21; Sebastian Brock, "Syriac Views on Emergent Islam", in *Studies on the First Century
of Islamic Society*, edited by G.H.A. Juynboll (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois:
Southern Illinois University, 1982): 9—21; Riad, *Studies*: 100, 107—108, 185, 212—213;
Ishâq, "Masâdir Abî al-Faraj al-Malatî": 160-161 no. 11.

and influence; and when Michael later came to the early Islamic period, the work of his eminent predecessor, readily available in the partiarchal archives, would certainly have been a source preferred above all others.

But was this preference exclusive? At one point Michael states that he has incorporated into his own chronicle *all* of the text of Ignatios of Miletene from the time of Constantine (A.D. 325) to the accession of Michael III (228/842),[93] which suggests that for the early Abbasid period an account in Michael could be either from Dionysios or Ignatios, or represent a combination of the two. Were this to prove to be the case, it would of course complicate considerably any effort to identify the earlier materials from Dionysios.

Fortunately, a close reading of Michael makes it possible to resolve this problem. Ignatios himself states in his own preface, as copied out by Michael, that in his history he has given only a condensed account of events, prepared by combining and summarizing his sources "in a manner that will make for easy reading and comprehension by those who love the truth and prefer to have facts set forth in brief". But for this period, prior to his own day, he also denies that he has added anything of his own; and so far as early Abbasid times are concerned, he not only indicates that he had no source other than Dionysios, but further states in no uncertain terms that "in our Syrian nation" there had been *no* historical writing *since* Dionysios.[94] Michael states that he too had failed to find any Syriac historical writing between Dionysios and Ignatios, and adds the important information that Ignatios' summary account dealt only with the Byzantine Empire and the church, excluding the affairs of the Arabs and the Turks.[95] That is, Ignatios' account of the early Abbasid period was simply a drastic summary of Dionysios from which much of importance was dropped: his aim was to condense, not to expand, and in any case he had no source from which he could have derived material for such elaborations.

The implication of this is that 228/842 should mark a kind of watershed date in Michael's *Chronicle*. Prior to this date he had both Dionysios and Ignatios as sources; but the latter says himself that all he did was to summarize Dionysios, and Michael comments that Ignatios dealt only with

---

93. See Michael, *Chronique*, III: 116 (trans.); IV: 547 (text).

94. *Ibid.*, III: 114-116 (trans.); IV: 545–547 (text).

95. *Ibid.*, III: 112 (trans.); IV: 544–545 (text).

Byzantium and the Church. We should thus expect Michael, with his ambitious conception of the broad horizons historical writing could and should attain, to opt for the fuller and more detailed text of Dionysios, leaving the derivative and scanty work of Ignatios largely aside. Michael's comment that his work includes all of the text of Ignatios to 228/842 would, in this case, mean that up to this point there was nothing in Ignatios that was not also set forth, probably in greater detail, in Dionysios. After 228/842, however, Michael had only Ignatios as a source; hence Michael's history after this date should manifest a definite change — i.e. a drastic restriction in scope and a sharp decline in detail as Michael moves into an era covered only by the cursory and summary account of Ignatios.

This shift is exactly what one finds in the transition in Michael's *Chronnicle* from Book XII to Book XIII. Book XII covers the 67-year period from 158/775 to 228/842 in 67 pages of Syriac text full of valuable detailed information on the Abbasids.[96] This book bears most of Michael's frequent citations of Dionysios by name and ends with Michael's description (cited above) of Dionysios' *Chronicle*; there can be little doubt that here Dionysios is the primary and probably only source. Book XIII, on the other hand, rushes through the next two centuries from 228/842 to the days just prior to the rise of the Seljuqs and the accession of Toghrîl I as sultan of Nîshâpûr in 429/1038 in only 23 pages of Syriac text that report almost nothing about the Abbasids beyond the regional dates of the caliphs and occasional clashes with Byzantium.[97] Even the rise of regional principalities is for the most part ignored, and the text really has nothing of substance to say, as Michael had noted apropos of Ignatios, about anything beyond Byzantine and ecclesiastical affairs.

The change is so sharp and so sudden that one can only conclude that it reflects the shift from complete or nearly complete reliance upon a detailed and broadly conceived history — that of Dionysios — to similar reliance on another far more limited work — that of Ignatios. This also explains why, as Kennedy has noticed,[98] Michael has so little to say about the period from 228/842 up until the rise of the Seljuqs: his only source was Ignatios, who wanted only to give a summary account and had no good material with which to fill the gap between Dionysios and his own times.

---

96. *Ibid.*, III: 1-111 (trans.); IV: 478—544 (text).
97. *Ibid.*, III: 112-148 (trans.); IV: 544-566 (text).
98. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*: 378.

As we might expect, Michael seems uncomfortable with this state of affairs. He cites Ignatios by name for a number of reports for events outside the period covered by Dionysios, i.e. prior to 582 and after 228/842,[99] but he *never* cites Ignatios within this period. And once the history of Dionysios is no longer of any assistance to him, he advises the reader that henceforth he will be obliged to rely entirely on Ignatios and refers to the latter's methods of abridgement in rather negative terms.[100]

For present purposes, this situation divides Michael's history of the Abbasid caliphate into two parts. The latter part is the post-228/842 period covered so thinly by Ignatios on the basis of very limited information, and with this we can do nothing further beyond suggesting that it probably approximates Ignatios' original text, with some obvious additions where Michael felt able to make them.[101] The former part, however, is the period prior to 228/842 that is covered so thoroughly on the basis of Dionysios. It may be that reliance upon Dionysios is not exclusive. But deviations from this single source text are probably only minor ones, if only because the materials required for elaboration of Dionysios — as opposed to abridgment of him — were simply not to hand. It is therefore worth looking in further detail at this important material.

The prospects for recovering demonstrably Dionysian narratives are rendered even brighter by the fact that parallel sources are available for verifying possible quotations from him by Michael. Elias bar Shînâyâ quotes Dionysios by name for certain Abbasid events, but not frequently enough to be of much assistance.[102] Of far greater importance in this regard is the *Chronicle of 1234*, the other great Syriac universal history.

On the *Chronicle of 1234*, it must first be pointed out that this work is actually a history completed in 600/1203-1204 and then continued by

---

99. Michael, *Chronique*, I: 2, 239, 240, 266; III: 167 (trans.); IV: 121-122, 136, 576 (text).

100. *Ibid.*, III: 112 (trans.); IV: 544-545 (text).

101. Book XIV.1-5, for example, is a detailed excursus on the origins, homeland, mores, and customs of the Turks and seeks to set into a proper historical and social context the events with which Book XV will begin — the rise of the Seljuqs. See Michael, *Chronique*, III: 149-157 (trans.); IV: 566-571 (text). Though utterly foreign to the scrappy method and limited perspectives of Ignatios, such a digression is typical of the approach of Michael and so should probably be assigned to his authorship rather than to that of Ignatios.

102. Elias bar Shînâyâ, *Opus Chronologicum*, A.H. 138, 142, 146, 152, 153.

another chronicler, who did not bother to drop the terminal colophons in which the original author stated that he finished the civil history in A.S. 1514 (= A.D. 1203) and the ecclesiastical history on 1 February 1515 (= A.D. 1204).[103] The preface discusses a few authorities used by the original chronicler, including, for the Islamic period, Jacob of Edessa and Georgios, bishop to the Tayyâyê (d. 105/742),[104] both of whom are too early to be sources on Abbasid events. Dionysios is not mentioned in the preface; but he is named as an authority in several places, all concerning Abbasid times,[105] and comparison with Michael demonstrates that for the chronicler of 1234 (actually 1204) too the *Chronicle* of Dionysios was his main source for the Umayyads and the Abbasids to 228/842. As in the case of Michael, this is precisely what one would expect: the *Chronicle of 1234* is Edessan, and a historian from that city would hardly fail to prefer, as a source on events in early Islamic times, a great work by one of Edessa's most famous sons.

By marshalling the parallel quotations in Michael, the *Chronicle of 1234*, and the chronology of Elias bar Shînâyâ, a great deal of the *Chronicle* of Dionysios can be recovered.[106] As there is no evidence to suggest that Michael and the chronicler of 1234 (1204) had any other common source, all cases of textual parallelism for the period 582-842 must necessarily

---

103. *Chronicon 1234, II: 213-214, 340.*

104. *Ibid.,* I: 17. Georgios was based in al-Kûfa and was in charge of church activities there and among the Arab tribes in the surrounding area. Nothing of any historical work by Georgios survives, though some letters and canons are extant. See Victor Ryssel, *Georgs des Araberbischofs Gedichte und Briefe* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1891); Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 156-159; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 171, 278−279, 377−378; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 257−258; Moss, *Catalogue of Syriac Books*: 386−388, Add. 106−107; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*: 183−184; Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen*, IA, 216-219; Abouna, *Adab al-Lugha al-Arâmîya*: 370−377 no. 6; Barsaum, *Al−Lu'lu' al−Manthûr*: 309−313 no. 118; Riad, *Studies*: 29, 52, 184, 200, 206, 210, 227; Ishâq, "Masâdir Abî al-Faraj al-Malatî": 161 no. 13.

105. *Chronicon 1234*, II: 17, 18, 19, 20, 257, 267.

106. For a first attempt in this direction, see Abramowski, *Dionysius von Tellmahre*, esp. 14-29, 126-129.

signal the presence of material taken by both authors independently from Dionysios.[107] And given the veneration and reverence shown toward him in his own and later times, it could probably be taken as a general (if not universal) rule that where citations from the same passage of his differ, the longer and/or more detailed one is to be preferred as closer to the original text. Indeed, the chronicler of 1234 (1204) specifically denies himself any credit for additions: all he has sought to do, he says, has been to record what he has from his sources.[108] And as for Michael, we have already seen that for the early Abbasid period he had no source to use with Dionysios other than the history of Ignatios, which was itself nothing but a severe summary of Dionysios for this period.

The importance of the Dionysios materials can of course be fully appreciated only when the task of recovering the extant passages is complete, but some preliminary points illustrative of the magnitude of this importance may nevertheless be of interest here.

1) It should be noted that in terms of historians for Abbasid history, Dionysios is very early: he was a contemporary of such eminent Muslim historians as Ibn al-Kalbî (d. 204/819), al-Haytham ibn ʿAdî (d. 206/821), al-Wâqidî (d. 207/823), and al-Madâʾinî (d. 225/839). In this connection, it is worth emphasizing that as a Christian, and hence an outsider, Dionysios was not interested in the factional polemics that cloud our picture of the early Abbasids as presented by the Islamic sources, though of course these latter works remain of central importance. And as Dionysios is not distracted by such matters, it often proves that he offers details and vignettes on aspects of personal and everyday life which are found nowhere else.

2) In the prefaces to his *Chronicle,* as copied out by Michael and translated above, Dionysios lists the works of some earlier writers who, we may surmise, comprise at least a part of his source material for his own work. If we eliminate those who are too early to have been informants on early Abbasid times, there remain only John Bar Samuel, Theodosios of Edessa, and Daniel bar Moses of Tûr ʿAbdîn. John bar Samuel is, as we have seen above,[109] practically unknown and too obscure to be a

---

107. The consensus of scholary opinion is that while the *Chronicle of 1234* and the *Chronicle* of Michael have much common material, it is clear that the Chronicler of 1234 (1204) did not make use of Michael's text in compiling his own work. See F. Nau, "Traduction de la Chronique Syriaque Anonyme éditée par... Mgr. Rahmani", *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 12 (1907): 429; also Fiey's Introduction to vol. II of the translation, vii-viii.

108. *Chronicon 1234,* I: 27.

109. See n. 56 above.

likely major source. Theodosios, however, as mentioned earlier,[110] was Dionysios' elder brother and author of an earlier chronicle used by Dionysios; it is probably this Theodosios who speaks to us in a passage lamenting how the Chalcedonians, led easily and quickly to falsehood and error at the Sixth Ecumenical Council in 680, continue to display the same failings "even today, 125 years after this evil council (i.e in 805)".[111] Daniel bar Moses, on the other hand, was none other than Dionysios' grandfather,[112] of whom, using a different form of his name,[113] Dionysios later speaks when he says: "I have taken these things from the *Chronicle* of Daniel Bar Samuel of Tûr 'Abdîn, my maternal grandfather,[114] and whom Elias bar Shînâyâ also cites.[115] This grandfather must have been a young man at the time of the Abbasid revolution. Dionysios himself thus figures within a family tradition of historical writing by individuals who were contemporary to every stage of Abbasid history up to Dionysios' own time.

3) This point leads us to the crucial observation that it was within this Telmahrôyô family, in the early Abbasid period of key interest to us here, that Syriac historiography seems to have made its most important advances. That Dionysios' *Chronicle* should have consisted of two parts, each comprising eight books all subdivided into chapters, immediately indicates a methodological sophistication far surpassing that of any other Syriac history of earlier times. And while it has often been taken for granted that in his prefatory remarks Dionysios is providing the reader with a full conspectus of his sources, this is manifestly impossi-

---

110. See n. 58 above.

111. Michael, *Chronique*, II: 453 (trans.); IV: 434—435 (text).

112. See Wright, *Syriac Literature*: 163; Brooks, "Sources of Theophanes": 583; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*: 203, 383; Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur*: 273.

113. This problem arises frequently in Syriac prosopography and springs from the fact that as a man rose from one church position to another, he would take on a new name as part of the ecclesiastical rites of passage. In this case, it is extremely unlikely that Dionysios was referring to two different Daniels, both historians and both from Tûr 'Abdîn.

114. Michael, *Chronique*, II: 477 (trans.); IV: 449 (text).

115. *Opus Chronologicum*, A. H. 122, 127, 131.

ble.[116] A closer reading of the passage clearly reveals that the point at issue is not that of the value or shortcomings of specific texts, but rather that of how to write history when one aspires to both the chronological precision of the chronography, chronological canon, or chronicle, and the opportunity presented by ecclesiastical history to set forth events in detail and explore the causes and connections among events. Dionysios' choice of wording suggests that he is picking his way along very cautiously, as if he anticipates that what he is introducing is a novelty that will provoke rebuke; a hint at the nature of his innovation lies in the fact that he calls his history *pragmáteia*. This is a term used in classical Greek for an argument or treatise which is formulated or composed in a strict methodical way, and classical historians used it in reference to historical writing which took the form of a strict formal treatise. Polybios (wr. ca. 150 B.C.), for example, argued that given the importance of history for instructing the present generation, and the difficulty of offering such instruction when Fortune plays such a major role in the course of historical events, it was *pragmáteia* that was needed to penetrate to the underlying patterns of cause and effect.[117] In his essay *How to Write History*, Lucian (d. after 180 A.D.) complained that when irresponsible historians write to pursue their own whims or seek profit, they render all serious historical writing, *pragmáteia*, suspect in the eyes of posterity.[118] When Dionysios calls his own history an exercise in *pragmáteia,* it seems clear that it was a concern to achieve the methodological rigor bound up in this term that motivated him to divide his work into systematic parts, books, and chapters, and the same concern that led him to attempt something new.

That something new was universal history, expressed in a mode which allowed for the detailed pursuit of both ecclesiastical and civil history in separate sections of the *Chronicle*, while allowing for linkage

---

116. Near the end of the preface, where he discusses authors who wrote "after the fashion of ecclesiastical history", we do indeed have to do with his immediate sources. But Dionysios' account of past histories includes, for example, Josephus (1st cent. A.D.) Eusebios (d. ca. 340), and Sozomen (d. ca. 450), all of whom could obviously have contributed nothing to a work which began in A.D. 582.

117. Polybios, *Histories*, I. i-iv; Loeb ed. and trans. by W. R. Paton (London: Heinemann, 1922-1927), I: 3-13.

118. Lucian, *How to Write History*, xiii; ed. and trans. K. Kilburn in the Loeb *Lucian*, VI (London: Heinemann, 1959): 21.

between the two through cross references. That Dionysios was the first to proceed in this way is suggested by the way he discusses past writers in his preface and identifies a number of authors — most of them from Edessa and including several of his relatives — who had written "after the fashion of ecclesiastical history": the problem for Dionysios, as he goes on to explain, is that in so doing, they have not been able to maintain either the chronological rigor of the chronicle or the pursuit of causes and interrelationships that characterized ecclesiastical history. The implication is thus that he has found some new way which he hopes will allow him to succeed where others have failed — the universal history treating ecclesiastical and civil events simultaneously in separate discussions. At the same time, the dearth of historical writing in Syriac after him poses the problem of postulating any other model for the similar division of material by Michael and the chronicler of 1234, both of whom shared Dionysios — and only Dionysios — as a common source.

Aside from these indirect indications of his pioneering role in introducing this form of Syriac historical writing, there are a number of illustrative passages demonstrating that his text was indeed divided in this way. In the ecclesiastical history of the *Chronicle of 1234*, for example, the text reports the death of Dionysios and goes on to say that "he wrote at length on the ecclesiastical and civil events of the world",[119] which suggests a division between the one and the other. In the civil history section in the same text, one report refers to the discussion of the same topic which has already been given in "the book on ecclesiastical affairs".[120] The narrator here cannot be the chronicler of 1234, whose Church history comes *after*, not *before*, the civil history; the speaker must be his source, Dionysios, who is referring to the other of the two parts of his *Chronicle*, in which the ecclesiastical history seems to have come first.

The point to be emphasized from all this is that the era of the early Abbasids, from their revolution up until the time of Dionysios, was one of tremendous efflorescence and originality in Syriac historiography. While it is certainly true that the "externality" of a source can be a bane as well as a blessing, the fact remains that the era of the early Abbasids is one for which such external sources are particularly rich and fruitful.

---

119. *Chronicon 1234*, II: 274.
120. *Ibid.*, I: 238.

4) This point perhaps makes it necessary to stress that Dionysios was not writing from a position of detachment or isolation from Islamic society or the inner circles of Abbasid power. He travelled widely in Bilâd al-Shâm, Egypt, and Iraq; he knew several leading members of the regime; and he was a travelling companion of the caliph al-Ma'mûn (r. 198-218/813-833), of whose reign he gives a sympathetic, highly personal, and detailed account.[121] His text is sprinkled with letters, decrees, and other documents attesting to the wide range of his activities, and that these texts accurately represent the originals would not seem to be in doubt. Even on the internal aspects of Abbasid history, then, Dionysios is not without bearing and importance.

On the Spirit of Syriac Historiography

Where the history of the medieval Near East is concerned, the usual approach to the Syriac sources has been to peruse the best-known historical works — especially the *Zûqnîn Chronicle* and the *Chronicle* of Michael — in search of historical "facts", details about particular events that can be used to reconstruct those events. While this is a legitimate and important endeavor, it should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Syriac historiography is a neglected field of study, and hence that much remains to be done before we will be able to form a clear picture of the way in which the tradition developed and the pitfalls it places in the path of historical research. But here a few general comments are perhaps appropriate by way of conclusion.

As in all societies, history among the eastern Christians was not pursued for its own sake, but rather because the events and lessons of the past were deemed relevant to current concerns; or, put the other way round, the acceptance, circulation, and survival of an account depended not upon its truth, but rather upon the extent to which it promoted the prevailing attitudes of the society in which it arose. The Syriac sources offer a valauble perspective on the history of the Middle East because they are very frequently (but not always) *independent* of the Islamic historical tradition, not because they offer something better. One does not need to read for too long in Syriac chronicles to realize that these writers were as susceptible to marvelous and curious tales as anyone else, especially when the place

---

121. For the passages from him concerning this caliph and his reign, see Michael, *Chronique*, III: 35—83 (trans.); IV: 497—527 (text); *Chronicon 1234*, II: 10-28. On his relations with al-Ma'mûn, see Fiey, *Chrétiens Syriaques*: 68—71.

in question was one far away, and most particularly when there was an edifying point to be made. These writers too had their own agendas and viewpoints to promote, and viewed history as an important vehicle for such arguments. Note, for example, Dionysios' prevarication at using sources which he recognized for their historical value, but hesitated to cite because they were by Chalcedonian authors.

This is not to say, however, that Syriac historical writing in the Abbasid period was myopic or inward looking. In this respect, we should observe that the development of Syriac historiography in this era displays a definite and easily identifiable trend. The old Jacobite chronologies were primarily local in focus and seem to have died out fairly soon after the Abbasid revolution: after the mid-ninth century, these texts were no longer being extended, and after the tenth century they were not even being copied.[122] In their place there arises not ecclesiastical history or monastic history, as occurred in Nestorian Syriac Literautre, but universal history, as typified by Dionysios, Michael, and the chronicler of 1234 (1204). As observed above, this mode of discourse allowed for broader and more sophisticated discussion, which further implies that such discussions were already underway, that historical writing was responding to the demand for a more sophisticated vehicle for historical discourse, and that there was now an audience for such discourse. That these needs produced universal history, as opposed to ecclesiastical or monastic history, is striking, It indicates that the community was interested in more than, say, the moral lessons to be learned from the torments of martyrs of the pious deeds of saints and ecclesiastical dignitaries. This is not to say that universal history was less mythic, or that the audience to which it was aimed possessed a more rational sense of a historical past — let us note, for example, that in the *Chronicle of 1234* the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are labelled as Homer's "chronographia" (*maktevânûth zavnê*).[123] It does suggest, however, a far broader conception of and interest in the past, as reflected in a wealth of narratives on ancient pagan history, in such accounts of Dionysios' description of the Pharaonic monuments of Egypt,[124] and in Michael's assessment of the character and mores of the Turkish peoples of Central Asia.[125]

---

122. Or so the extant evidence, admittedly incomplete, would suggest. The latest chronology Mss. are BM Add. 14642, the unique Ms. of the *Chronicle of 846*, and BM Add. 14683, the unique exemplar of the *Expositions... from Adam up Until Now*, both of these being Mss. of the tenth century A.D.

123. *Chronicon 1234*, I: 66.

124. See Michael, *Chronique*, III: 79—83 (trans.); IV: 525—527 (text); *Chronicon 1234*, II: 20—21.

Perhaps most interesting of all is the shift in the attitude toward Islamic history. Whereas in earlier times this was brought up for discussion only if of local relevance or in order to argue against Islam, by the time of Dionysios Islamic history had become a legitimate topic for investigation in its own right. Passages on, for example, the precise genealogy of the Prophet back through the north Arabian tribes all the way to Abraham[126] or the precise instructions of Abû Bakr ordering the forces about to invade Bilâd al-Shâm not to be needlessly destructive,[127] do not seem to fit into the usual — i.e. apocalyptic — conceptualization of Islam among eastern Christians of early Islamic times. They indicate not only a more moderate attitude toward a genuine interest in Islam, but also an acquaintance with the emerging Islamic historical scholarship, which — whether in oral or written form is unclear — was the only possible source for such information.[128]

It is tempting to see in this increasingly sophisticated outlook an increasingly urban one. That is, might this be a function of a shift in the socio-economic structure of Christian Bilâd al-Shâm from one of demographic distribution throughout the region to increasing concentration in towns and cities? It would of course be in cities — not in rural villages and monasteries — that exposure to and interest in other cultures, people, and ideas would be fostered and promoted. Al-Muqaddasî, writing in about 375/985, speaks of several distinctly urban professions which he says are, in Bilâd al-Shâm, absolutely dominated by the Christians.[129] By way of comparison, we may note that in Baghdad, a city founded by the Abbasids, the Christian concentration there had risen to such an extent that in the third/ninth century al-Jâhiz (d. 255/868), with characteristic aplomb, grumbles that on certain days of the week their purchases of fish drive the price

---

125. Michael, Chronique, III: 149-157 (trans.); IV: 566-571 (text).
126. *Chronicon 1234*, I: 239.
127. *Ibid.*, I: 240.

128. There can be no doubt that Christian historical scholarship in late Umayyad and early Abbasid Bilâd al-Shâm drew materials from the Arab-Islamic historical tradition emerging in the region. See my "Theophanes and the Arabic Historical Tradition: Some Indications of Intercultural Transmission", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990): 1–44.

129. Al-Muqaddasî, *Ahsan al-taqâsîm fî ma'rifat al-aqâlîm*, edited by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906; *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 3): 183.

up beyond the means of most Muslims.[130] This would also account for the great interest the *Chronicle of 1234* takes in the foundation tales and great monuments of Christian cities, especially in Bilâd al-Shâm.[131] One might also see in this proposal an explanation for the decline in church-building and occupation in Abbasid Bilâd al-Shâm — the Christian population was not necessarily declining or retracting; it could have been concentrating more in larger urban centers, leading to the abandonment of churches in villages and smaller towns.[132]

If one notes in Syriac historiography a certain broadening of interests and awareness at the social and cultural level among the Christians of Bilâd al-Shâm, it is worth noting that a similar trend can be seen in other genres of Syriac literature. In the field of church law, for example, it is clear that in early Abbasid times there was considerable interest — with commensurate material benefit at stake — in how Muslims were solving legal problems in such fields as marriage and inheritance, what the legal content of the Qur'ân was, and so forth. It is also clear that the paradigm of dichotomy that comprised the perspectives from which historical writing of both Muslims and Christians viewed relations between the members of different confessional communities was, to some extent, a literary form that served to distort historical reality. Christian feasts, for example, were often celebrated by Muslims in Bilâd al-Shâm, while Christian participation in Muslim feasts was widespread enough for the church to make a special effort to denounce it. In the field of popular medicine, remedies and practices mentioned in traditions of the Prophet Muhammad may also be found in Syriac works.[133] In the late third/ninth century, the renowned Iraqi Christian physician Qustâ ibn Lûqâ (d. ca. 300/912) wrote for al-Hasan ibn Makhlad, vizier to the caliph al-Mu'utamid (r. 256-279/870-892), a treatise advising him on how to preserve his good health and avoid illness and injury while undertaking the pilgrimage to Mecca.[134]

---

130. Al-Jâhiz, *Kitâb al-Hayawân*, edited by 'Abd al-Salâm Muhammad Hârûn, 2nd edition (Cairo: Matba'at Mustafâ al-Bâbî al-Halabî, 1385-1389/1965-1969), IV: 431–432.

131. *Chronicon 1234*, I: 105–107, 123-124, 142-145, 171-172.

132. On this phenomenon of abandonment, see Robert Schick, "Christian Life in Palestine During the Early Islamic Period", *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988): 239–240.

133. See *The Book of Protection*, ed. and trans. Hermann Gollancz (London: Oxford University, 1912).

134. Qustâ ibn Lûqâ, *On the Regimen During the Pilgrimage to Mecca*, ed. and trans. Gerrit Bos (Amsterdam, 1989).

Overall, the point to be made here, and one that can hopefully be pursued in future work on the history of Bilâd al-Shâm, is that there is a great deal to be learned from all of the literature that has survived from the period — Islamic as well as non-Islamic, historical as well as non-historical. To a considerable extent, the material available can be used for purposes of historical reconstruction of detailed events; but this is but one item on a long agenda of desiderata for the period, and I would venture to conclude with the proposition that in the final analysis it is the broader picture that is most important, and that in this respect all the sources, irrespective of confessional category or literary genre, have important roles to play in the furtherance of our historical understanding of this region and era.

The Syriac Population of the Thughūr al-Shāmiya and the 'Awāsim, and its Relation with the Byzantines and Muslims

Jean Maurice Fiey [*]

Starting from a text of the Syriac writer, Patriarch Michael (inaccurately called Michael the Syrian), the eminent Byzantinist, Gilbert Dagron, has brilliantly analysed what he called "the Syriac immigration" into the Byzantine East during the end of the 10th and the 11th centuries A.D.[1].

Michael's text tells us of a request addressed by Nicephorus to Patriarch John Sarighta to come and settle, with his Syriac people, in the territories newly conquered by the Greeks, promising him in exchange protection against the persecutions of the Melkites, the emperor's own party[2].

The reason for such a move of population is obvious; when a city was taken, the Byzantines gave the Muslim inhabitants the choice among adopting Christianity, being put to death, being reduced to slavery, or, sometimes, being permitted to leave the town safely[3]. To repopulate the towns, the Greek population did not dare to come so close to the Muslims; as for the Syriacs, they could come because the were considered to be neutral, "a people used to living and dwelling in the midst of two peoples and two empires", as Michael the Syrian puts it, and so could settle anywhere.

But, before seeing how far the Syriacs responded to Nicephorus' offer, let us notice two points about Michael's text:

First, strictly speaking, only three localities are mentioned where the Syriacs would be settled: Melitene, Qlisura and Hanzit, the three being situated on both sides of the Euphrates, in the Thughūr Jazariya, far to the northeast of the Thughūr Shāmiya about which we are concerned.

Second, as for the dates, Dagron tells us that Nicephorus' offer is to be dated around 354/965, and that the immigration movement was soon abated, if not stopped altogether, by new acts of persecution of the Syriac clergy by the Rūm in 360/969 and especially in 395/1003-1004[4]. That would leave less than forty years for the planned resettlement.

---

[*] St. Joseph University, Beirut.

1. Gilbert Dagron, "Minorités ethniques et religieuses dans l'Orient Byzantin á la fin du Xe et au Xie siecle: l'immigration syrienne", *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (1976): 177-216.
2. Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, edited and translated by Jean Baptiste Chabot. (Brussels: Culture et civilization, 1963), 3: 130.
3. Yāqūt al-Hamawī (d. 626/1229), *Mu'jam al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dār Sadr, 1955-1957), 4: 28-29.
4. Dagron, "Minorités", 138, following the Byzantine sources.

These being remembered, let us try to see whether there were in fact Syriac population movements related to the Byzantine wars in the Thughūr Shāmiya and in the 'Awāsim. One knows, of course, that the border cities in close contact with the Greeks were called the Thughūr, while their immediate hinterland was formed by Hārūn al-Rashīd, in 170/786, into a special Jund, a kind of buffer zone, called al-'Awāsim[5].

There may be variance among the Arab sources about some cities, like Dulūk or Kaysūm, belonging to the Thughūr Jazariya or to the Shāmiya. I would stick here to the definition given by Ibn Shaddād that the Thughūr Shāmiya and the 'Awāsim formed two lines from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, that is to say from Tarsus and Antioch to Manbij[6]. That there was already an important Syriac population there is shown by the fact that ten of the localities enumerated were Syriac bishoprics. That means that the amount of their non-Rūm, Christian population was enough to raise them to the status of an ecclesiastical district centre, including, of course, neighbouring villages of the same denomination.

These dioceses were: Antioch, official seat of the patriarch of the Western Syriac Church, the Church known in Arabic sources as the Jacobite Church (al-Ya'qūbiya); then, the cities of Tarsus, Adana, Mopsuestia (al-Massīsa) and Anazarbus ('Ayn Zarba) to the west; Cyrrhus (Qūrus), Dulūk, Ra'bān and Kaysūm to the northeast; and Manbij to the east.

From the chronological historical point of view, Manbij always remained in Muslim hands in our period, Qūrus was probably taken by the Byzantines around 294/906 and Kaysūm around 347/958, while the eastern group, Ra'bān, Dulūk and 'Ayn Zarba, fell in 351/962-963, and the western group, Massīsa, Adana and Tarsus, in 354/965[7]. This last date was given, one remembers, for the offer by Nicephorus to the Syriacs to repopulate some cities.

Such repopulation of more or less deserted cities had been common in the past. To speak only of our region, Zott and Tziganies (Sayābija) from the marshes of southern Iraq were transferred to Antioch in 49-50/669-670[8]; 7000 Slavs were

5 . Marius Canard, "al-'Awasim", *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd edition, vol. 1: 761-762.
6 . 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285), *Al-A'lāq al-Nafisa fi Dhikr Umarā' al-Shām wa al-Jazīra,* translated by Anne-Marie Eddé-Terrasse, *Description de la Syrie de Nord* (Damascus: Institut Francais, 1984): 88-98, 223-297.
7 . The general historical framework has been taken from: Marius Canard, *Histoire de la dynastie des Hamdanides de Jazira et de Syrie,* part 1 (Algerᵉ, 1951); Alexander Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes,* vol. 3, part 1 (Brussells, 1968) and part 2 *Extraits de sources arabes,* translated by Marius Canard (1950); and the older but still important G. Schlumberger, *Un empereur byzantin au Xe siècle, Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris, 1890, new edition. 1923).
8 . Ibn Shaddad, *Description:* 225.

settled at Qūrus before 85/704[9]; people from Sumaysat, Shimshāt, Kaysūm, Dulūk and Ra'bān were forced to go to Hadath in 169/785[10] the rebel Nasr b. Shabath, in 210/825, obliged Christians to reside in Kaysūm[11]; 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir established people from Egypt in 'Ayn Zarba in 213/828[12]; al-Mu'tasim (218-227/833-842) brought again Zott from the marshes between Basrah and Wāsit to 'Ayn Zarba[13], and so on.

Now, when cities changed hands, the attitude of the Muslims towards the Syriacs, on one side, and of the Greeks towards them on the other, should be well defined.

First, the Muslims distinguished clearly between the Rūm and the Syriacs, sometimes called Nabat. At the time of the Muslim conquest, for example, when Edessa (al-Ruha) was taken, in 19/640, the Greeks fled, leaving in the town the greater number of the "Nabat" inhabitants, who were not molested by the Arabs and could stay in the town. The same happened in Harran[14].

Later, in 99/717, when the Arab armies took the two Byzantine cities of Sardis and Pergamos, they "led many into captivity, and the Syriacs also who were there they carried away, and [then] let them go into safety"[15].

As for the Greeks, we cannot say that they loved the Syriacs very much. From their point of view, the Syriacs were heretics, having refused the decisions of the council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.). Not only were the Greeks "jealous of the wealth of the Syriacs", but "they had vowed them an implacable hatred", says the Armenian monk Matthew of Edessa in his Chronicle written in 1136[16].

In 362/972-973, when John Tzimiskes took Nisibis, his troops plundered Syriac churches and monasteries as well as Muslim property[17].

9 . Gregorius Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abu'l-Faraj*, translated by E. A. Wallis Budge (London: Oxford University Press, 1932): 1041.

10 . Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 2: 228.

11 . *Chronicon Anonymum ad Annum Christi 1234 Pertinens*, edited and translated by Jean Baptiste Chabot. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri, series 3, tomus 14, (Paris 1920, text, Louvain, 1937, translation), 2: 10.

12 . Michael the Syrian, *Chronique*, 3: 60.

13 . Yāqūt, *Mu'jam*, 4: 117-178.

14 . Abū Yusuf Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm (d. 182 A.H./795 A.D.) *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, translated by E. Fagnon, *Le livre de l'impôt foncier (Kitâb el-Kharâdj)* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1921): 63.

15 . "Chronicon ad Annum Domini 846 Pertinens", edited by E. W. Brooks and translated by Jean Baptiste Chabot. *Chronica Minora I*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Syri, series 3, tomus 4 (Louvain 1903): 583.

16 . Matthew of Edessa, *Chronique de Matthieu d'Edesse*, translated by H. Dulaurier (Paris, 1858): 93.

17 . Mari, *De patriarches nestorianorum commentaria*, edited by Gismondi (Rome, 1899); 103; Yahyā b. Sa'īd, *Histoire de Yahya-Ibn-Sa'id d'Antioche*, edited and translated by J. Kratchkovsky and Alexander Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis* 18 (1924), 23: 353-354.

is why, says the anonymous Edessenian chronicle, in time of persecution, the bishops of the Cappadocian region move from seat to seat"[32].

Of course, even if the western Syriac patriarch did not reside permanently in Antioch, from time to time he would visit his followers who remained there, and we know from Matthew of Edessa that in the year 445/1053-1054 they were still numerous in Antioch. They were rich and "lived in opulence and magnificence" in spite of their being persecuted by the Greeks[33].

Let us see now what we know of the Syriac population of the other cities of the Thughur and the 'Awasim.

There is no problem about Manbij, which was always in Muslim hands in our period. Before that, a bishop is attested there up to the 6th century A.D., and then from 203-232/818-845 to 1195 or even to 1264. One cannot draw any conclusion from the hiatus between the sixth and the ninth century; it may be the result of a gap in our sources. But one remarks that Manbij took a new importance when Harun al-Rashid made it the capital of the 'Awasim in 173/789[34]. The revival of the episcopal seat was not long in coming after that.

Qurus was also an ancient diocese. It remained in existence under the Muslims, then under the Greeks, who had probably taken the city in 294/906. The inhabitants are said to have been led into captivity, but it seems that the Syriacs remained there, since the diocese is still mentioned in 433-434/1042.

The case of Kaysum is somewhat different. When the caliph Harun al-Rashid (170-193/786-809) needed stones to rebuild the wall of the city of Hadath, he had the great church of the Syriacs at Kaysum destroyed[35]. At about the same time (793-817) the town was already a bishopric. It suffered from the occupation by the 'Uqaylid rebel Nasr b. Shabath, who resisted Ma'mun from 199/814 on. When at the end Tahir besieged the town, Nasr twice posted Christian women on the wall to try to soften the compassionate Tahir's heart and induce him to spare the city, which nevertheless had to surrender in March 209/825[36].

In 216/831, Patriarch Denys of Tell Mahre met there the caliph Ma'mun, who had him to come to Egypt with him to try to help quell a Christian revolt[37].

In 285/898 and again in 288-289/900-901, the Greeks deported the Arabs from the region of Kaysum, "and they took with them to the country of the Rum the great number of Christians with a forceful hand [saying] lest the Arabs should

32 . *Chronicon ad 1234:* 216.
33 . Matthew of Edessa, *Chronique:* 93.
34 . Yaqut, *Mu'jam,* 4: 165-166.
35 . Michael the Syrian, *Chronique,* 3: 8. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography:* 129-130.
36 . *Chronicon ad 1234,* 2: 10. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography:* 129-130.
37 . Michael the Syrian, *Chronique,* 3: 74. *Chronicon ad 1234,* 2: 200.

come and kill them[38]. The text does not say whether these Christians were Greeks or Syriacs. The town itself was taken by the Greeks in 347/958. The succession of bishops continued at least up to 570/1174.

Ra'bān, ruined by an earthquake in 340/951, and rebuilt the next year by Abū Firās in thirty-seven days, was taken by the Greeks ten years later, and ceded officially by the treaty of Aleppo in 359/970, after the death of Nicephorus. The territory of the truce did not include our district[39]. It surely had Syriac inhabitants, but apparently their number was not enough at the time to make the town into a bishopric. The seat of the bishop was then at Hadath, farther north, across the Aq Sū. It seems that when Iwānīs, bishop of Hadath, had trouble with the Greeks and was taken to Constantinople in 1030[40], the seat was moved south to Ra'bān, where it is attested since 1058-1063. It was joined to Kaysūm in 1155.

Dulūk, corresponding to the ancient town of Doliche, had bishops almost continuously since the 4th century A.D. No change in the situation of the Syriacs there can be noticed after the Islamic conquest, and again after it was taken by the Greeks in 351/962. It did not lose ecclesiastical importance before the Seljuq conquest. Its last known bishop, Athanasius, ordained between 1086 and 1088, bore at that time the title of Dulūk and Manbij.

'Ayn Zarba, the Greek Anazarbus, was from the 4th century A.D. the Christian metropolis of Cilicia II. It had bishops continuously through our period and regained the title of metropolis between 818 and 845. Does it mean that there were some "Nabat" with the Zott al-Mu'tasim brought there from the marshes between Wasit and Basrah between 218 and 227/833-842[41]? When the Greeks took it in 351/962-963, nothing is said of what happened to the Syriacs[42]. The diocese is attested up to 1168-1169.

The last three cities, Massīsa, Adana and Tarsus, all of them situated west of the district, were the latest to be conquered by the Greeks, in 354/965, the very year Nicephorus is said to have offered the settlement to the Syriacs[43]. Did the offer apply to these cities?

Massīsa (Mopsuestia) had certainly a Syriac population. One reads that al-Mansūr, in 140/757, transferred to the town itself the Nabat who inhabited the

38 . Bar Hebraeus, Chronography: 155. Bar Hebraeus, Ta'rīkh Mukhtasar al-Duwal (Beirut: Dar al-Masira, 197-): 151.

39 . Ibn al-'Adīm (d. 660/1262), Zubdat al-Halab min Ta'rīkh Halab, edited by Sāmī Dahan (Damascus 1951), 1: 163-168.

40 . Chronicon ad 1234, 2: 213.

41 . Yāqūt, Mu'jam, 4: 177-178.

42 . Bar Hebraeus, Chronography: 167.

43 . Yahyā b. Sa'īd, Patrologia Orientalis 18 (1924): 796.

For their part Syriac chronicles are full of not so flattering remarks about the Greeks, especially about their treachery and perfidy.

Nevertheless, the Greeks needed the Syriacs to repopulate the cities they had conquered and which had been deserted by the Muslims. We have seen at the beginning Nicephorus' appeal to the Syriac patriarch. Maybe this kind of cooperation at this particular time was prompted by the fact that the Macedonian dynasty had strong ties with the Armenians[18], these Armenians being, like the Western Syriacs, perhaps anti-Chalcedonians.

As a matter of fact, the agreement between the Greeks and the Syriacs did not last long. Already during the reign of the same Nicephorus, contrary to his previous offer, the Greeks started again, towards 395/1003-1004, to persecute the Syriacs[19].

But it was mainly in 420/1029, at the end of the Macedonian dynasty when Emperor Romanus III had come to power and suffered a few defeats, that he seemed to discover the presence of what he regarded as a fifth column to the eastern end of his kingdom. The emperor is reported to have said, "What is that gathering of heretics?" The Syriac patriarch was deported to Constantinople[20].

Later again, Patriarch Denys fearing of being arrested, took refuge among the Muslims in Amid (Diyarbakr), "because of the perfidy of the Greeks", in 427/1034[21].

Later still, a short visit to Melitene by Patriarch Athanasius VI (450-455/1058-1063) caused him to be arrested by the Greeks[22]. No wonder the Syriacs preferred normally leaving the territory occupied by the Byzantines to move to live in Muslim land.

Having made clearer the general pattern of the relations between the three communities, Syriacs, Byzantines and Arabs, we may now come back to the question we asked at the beginning: practically, even at the time of the honeymoon, after Nicephorus' offer, may we talk about Syriac immigration into the Thughūr Shāmiya and the 'Awāsim?

As Dagron himself remarked the regions of Melitene or of Edessa, situated in the Thughūr Jazariya, are better documented in Syriac sources, because most of the Syriac historical writers of the time lived or were born in these districts[23]; but can we say about our district what is said of the Syriac immigration into the Thughūr Jazariya?

---

18 . Gerard Dedeyan, *Histoire des Arméniens* (Privat, Toulouse, 1982): 282-296.
19 . Dagron, "Minorités": 200, resuming Greek and Syriac sources.
20 . Dagron, "Minorités": 201-202.
21 . Dagron, "Minorités": 204. *Chronicon ad 1234,* 2: 216.
22 . Dagron, "Minorités": 204.
23 . Dagron, "Minorités": 186.

If we look carefully at the lists, although uncomplete, of the bishops known for the dioceses of the district[24], we see that the bishoprics were there at the time of the Arabs, before the Greek conquest, and continued to be there even after the Seljuqs had conquered these territories in 1071. But can we trace an increase of the Syriac population in answer to Nicephorus' offer in 356/965?

Antioch, the capital of the 'Awāsim in the 10th century, succeeding Manbij, the capital under Hārūn al-Rashīd (173-789)[25], was the official seat of the patriarch of the Western Syriac Church. In fact, since the council of Chalcedon there were two holders of the title, one Chalcedonian, and the other anti-Chalcedonian. After the Arabs had conquered the city, in 16/637-638, the non-Chalcedonian patriarch changed his residence several times, always in Islamic territory, at Antioch itself, or Aleppo, Harran, al-Raqqa, where the Patriarch Denys (203-231/ 818-843) met 'Abd Allah b. Tāhir,[26] and Edessa[27], while his flock lived in both territories, Byzantine and Arab. The situation of the Chalcedonian Greek patriarch of Antioch, Nice-phorus, was at that time ever less comfortable. Fearing that Sayf al-Dawla would suspect him of unfaithfulness, he left Antioch in 355/966 to go to dwell in the monastery of St Symeon, at the limit between the territories of Antioch and Aleppo. That did not save him from being assassinated the next year[28].

If Dagron is right in fixing Nicephorus' invitation to John Sarighta in 354/965, this happened even before the Greeks recaptured Antioch, which they took only in 358/969[29].

Patriarch John agreed to the request, and started building a great monastery on the "Cold River" (al-Nahr al-Bārid), not far from Mar'ash, when he came later to dwell[30], after staying for a while in the Monastery of Mār Barsaum near Melitene, where he was still in 358/969[31].

In spite of renewed harassment from the part of the Chalcedonians the Syriac patriarchs of Antioch remained in Greek territory until 425/1034, then they prefer-red going back to "the land of the Muslims", precisely to Amid, where Denys IV was granted asylum by the enlightened Kurdish Marwanid prince, Nasr al-Dawla Abū Nasr Ahmad, who even refused to surrender the prelate to the Greeks. "That

---

24 . I can not give here all the details about the bishoprics. They can be found in my forthcoming book, *Vers un'Oriens Christianus Novus, Dioceses Syriaques orientaux et occidentaux.*

25 . Yāqūt, *Mu'jam,* 4: 164-166.

26 . *Chronicon ad 1234,* 2: 203.

27 . Michael the Syrian, *Chronique. Chronicon ad 1234,* 2: 211-212.

28 . Yahya b. Sa'id, *Patrologia Orientalis* 18 (1924): 798, 807-810; 23 (1929): 416.

29 . Michael the Syrian, *Chronique* 3: 123, in 966. Yahya b. Sa'id, *Patrologia Orientalis* 18 (1924): 833.

30 . *Chronicon ad 1234:* 2: 211-212.

31 . *Chronicon ad 1234:* 212.

suburb of al-Khusūs, across the Jayhān[44]. Its western Syriac diocese, attested before Islam, appears only once later in the chronicles, around the year 184/800; the eastern Syriacs (the Nestorians) mention their diocese there only around 287/900, as a suffragan of Damascus.

It is said that Nicephorus repopulated the city after he took it and massacred its inhabitants, taking 200,000 of them into captivity, but no details are given about those who were brought in[45].

Our information about Adana is even scarcer. Its ancient Syriac diocese disappears from the sources from 62-63/681 until 524/1130, that is to say beyond our period.

The remaining city, Tarsus, was for the Muslims a base of operations, both by sea and by land, before it surrendered to Nicephorus in 354/965[46]. As a western Syriac diocese it had bishops, more or less continuously, from the 4th century A.D. to 652/1264, except, perhaps between 48/668 and 177-202/793-817. This seems to correspond to the period between the Muslim conquest and the rebuilding of the town by Hārūn al-Rashīd in 170/786-787, a period during which, according to Ibn Shaddād, its inhabitants had emigrated, leaving the town in ruins[47].

It is time now to conclude. The Syriac population in the former Byzantine empire had seen the coming of the Muslims as a liberation from the persecution of the Melkites[48]. When the Greeks came back to the Thughūr Shāmiya and the 'Awāsim, and especially when Nicephorus offered the Syriacs peace and protection so that they would come and populate certain cities that had been emptied from their Muslim and Greek population, the Syriacs agreed to the offer, especially regarding some cities of the Thughūr Jazariya, but there is no evidence of an increase of the Syriac population of the Thughūr Shāmiya and the 'Awāsim at that time.

Soon, even from the time of Nicephorus himself, and more so after the end of the Macedonian dynasty, Greek discrimination against the "heretics" started anew, and the Syriacs understood again that they were safer in Arab lands.

The next step was for the Syriacs to live with the Seljuq Turks. That came after their victory at Mantzikert, in 465/1071, a date which, in this part of Bilād al-Shām, marks a turning point of history.

---

44 . Ahmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān,* edited by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1866): 165-166.

45 . Canard, *Hamdanides:* 823 without references.

46 . See Yāqūt, *Mu'jam,* 4: 28-29 for the story of the two standards as told by refugees to 'Ali Tanukhī. Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography:* 171. Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtasar:* 169.

47 . Ibn Shaddād, *Description:* 93.

48 . Michael the Syrian, *Chronique,* 2: 412-413. *Chronicon ad 1234,* 1: 236-237.

SYRIAC DIOCESES
* of the Thughūr
■ of the 'Awāsim
O other towns mentionned
in the text

100 Km.

Malatya   O

Hadath
Mar'ash   O
O   KAYSŪM
■

RA'BĀN   ■

'AYN ZARBA
*

DULŪK
■

ADANA
*   MASSĪSA
*   *
TARSUS

QŪRUS
■

Mediterranean
Sea

MANBIDJ   ■

Euphrates

ANTIOCH
■

Aleppo
O
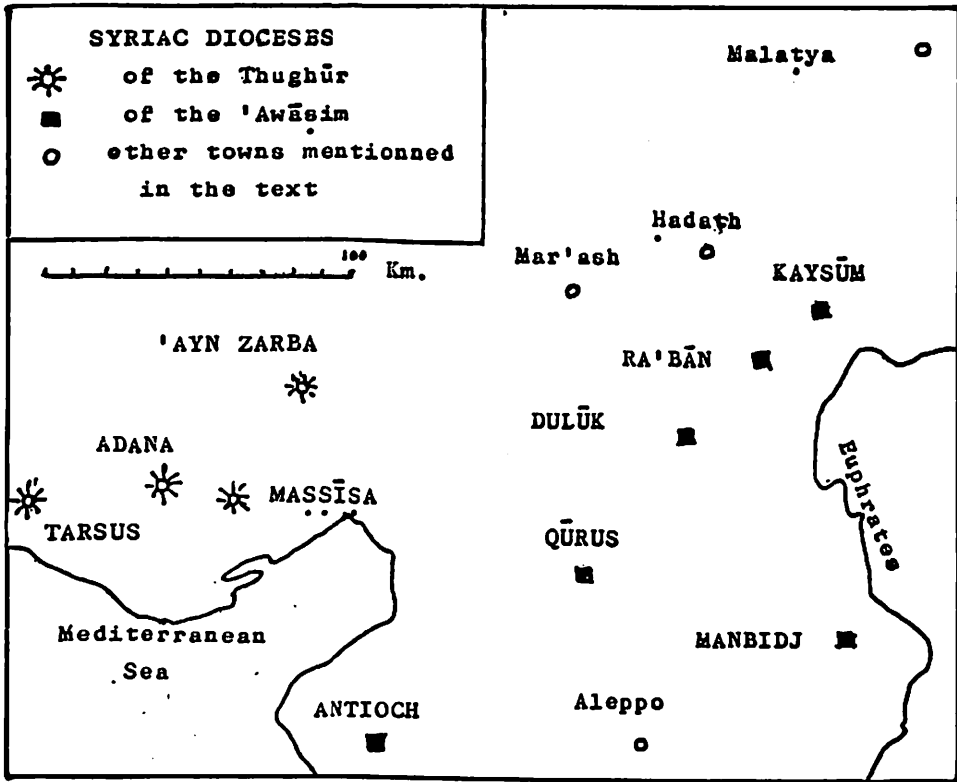
Byzantium and the Syrian Frontier in the Early Abbasid Period

C. Edmund Bosworth[*]

The Byzantine defence system in Asia Minor erected against the Arabs in the Ist/7th century and the beginnings, on the Arab side of the frontier, of the system involving a forward line of defences along the *thughūr* of Syria and al-Jazīra, backed by a line of fortresses in their rear stretching from Antioch to the westward bend of the Euphrates, the *'awāsim,* all facing a much fought-over zone between the two empires, the *dawāhī al-Rūm,* were the subject of my previous paper presented to the Fourth International Congress on the History of Bilād al-Shām[1]. In the present paper, I shall consider events along the Arab-Byzantine frontier in the first sixty years of Abbasid rule, i.e. up to Hārūn al-Rashīd's death in 193/809.

An initial observation which should be made is that the transfer, under the Abbasids, of the Islamic capital from Damascus to Iraq and the downgrading of Syria, the essential base for both land and maritime warfare with the Greeks, to a subordinate province of the caliphate, somewhat neglected by all the caliphs up to al-Mutawakkil and thus inclined to harbour resentments, might be expected to militate against a whole-hearted prosecution of the wars with Byzantium[2]. To some extent this was true, for the first Abbasid caliphs had other problems involving them much more in the Hijāz or Iraq or Persia and Transoxania, with their various sectarian or socio-political revolts. But Syria, after the defeat in 137/754 of the bid of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Afī b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās for power, became a virtual appanage first of the latter's brother Sālih till his death in 152/769, then of his own son al-Fadl for some twenty years and then of his other son 'Abd al-Malik, who can be considered as the representative of Syrian interests at the court of Hārūn al-Rashīd until the latter's suspicious nature brought about 'Abd al-Malik's fall in 187/803. Sālih had taken over many of the Umayyad family's personal domains in Syria and had married the former wife of the last Umayyad caliph Marwān al-Himār; in Hārūn's time, malicious rumour was to have it that 'Abd al-Malik was the son of Marwān rather than of Sālih. Sālih and his family were well aware of their position as heirs of the Umayyads as defenders of the *thughūr*

---

[*] University of Manchester, England.

1 . C. E. Bosworth. "The Byzantine Defense System in Asia Minor and the First Arab Incursions", in *Proceedings of the Second Symposium on the History of Bilād al-Shām During the Early Islamic Period Up to 40 A.H./640 A.D. The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilad al-Sham*, ed. Muhammad Adnan Bakhit, vol. 1– French and English Papers (Amman: University of Jordan, 1987): 116-124.

2 . R. -J. Lilie, *Die Byzantinische Reaktion auf die Ausbreitung der Araber. Studien zur Strukturwandlung des byzantinisches Staates in 7. und 8. Jhd.,* Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 22 (Munich: University of Munich, 1976): 162-163.

and leaders of *jihād* against the Christians[3]. They frequently led the summer raids *(sawāfī)* into Anatolia in person, and were active in rebuilding and garrisoning important fortresses along the frontier. Thus Sālih himself in 138/755-756 restored Malatya (Melitene) after the Greeks had destroyed it, Mar'ash (Germaniceia) in al-Mansūr's reign, Massīsa (Mopsuestis, Mamistra) in 140/757-758 and Adhana (Adana) in 141-142/758-760)[4].

Between 717 and 780 Byzantium was ruled by the line of Isaurian Emperors founded by Leo II the Isaurian (717-741), who has traditionally been regarded, as his name implies, as stemming from the region of Isauria in southern Anatolia but who is stated by one Arabic historical source to have been a native of Mar'ash or Germaniceia in the Jasīran *thughūr*, this speaks of Leo as being equally fluent in Arabic and Greek, so that the dynasty might well be described as that of the Syrians rather than that of the Isaurians[5]. It may be assumed that Leo III and certainly his successor Constantine V Copronymus (741-755) were particularly aware of the importance of the empire's frontiers and the threat from the Muslims there; it was possibly Leo who was responsible for the creation of two new themes[6], under *strategoi* or powerful military governors: the Thracesion theme in western Anatolia, carved out of the vast Anatolikon theme, and the Bucellarion theme (called after the *bucellarii* or retainers of a great commander, often foreign troops) in the northwest, carved out of the Opsikion theme[7].

It is broadly true however, that the first century or so of Abbasid rule was characterised by a rough equilibrium of forces between Arabs and Greeks, in which the Muslim nevertheless achieved some notable successes. The Byzantines no longer strove to regain the territories in eastern Anatolia and Syria lost in the

---

3 . See H. Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History* (London and Totowa, N.J.: Croom Helm and Barnes and Noble, 1981): 162-163.

4 . Al-Balādhurī, Ahmad b. Yahya (d. 279/892), *Futūh al-Buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1866): 166, 168, 189. al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr (d. 310/923), Ta'rīkh *al-Rusul wa-al Mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et alii (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879-1901), III: 122. M. Canard, "Byzantium and the Muslim World to the Middle of the Eleventh Century", in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, IV: *The Byzantine Empire*. Part I, *Byzantium and its Neighbors,* ed. J. M. Hussey (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1966): 704. Lilie, *Byzantinische Reaktion:* 164-165.

5 . Anonymous, *Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa-al-Hadā'iq.* ed. M. J. de Goeje, Fragmenta Historicorum Arabicorum, Pars Tertia (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1871): 25. E. W. Brooks, "The Campaign of 716-18 from Arabic Sources", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 19 (1899): 21-22. A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, 1952), vol. 1: 234.

6 . On the theme system, see Bosworth, "Byzantine Defense System": 120-123 .

7 . Vasiliev, *History,* vol. 1: 249-250.

first impetus of the Arab conquests. After the high point of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik's abortive attack on Constantinople in 97-99/715-717, the frontier became stabilised along an area following the ridges of the Taurus and Anti-Taurus Mountains from the Gulf of Alexandretta through Arab-held Cilicia, to the west and north of Tarsus (at this time still in ruins), to Mar'ash and Malatya, both of which remained in Muslim hands, thence to Kemākh (Kamakhon), possession of which oscillated between Greeks and Arabs, and thence to the Black Sea and the southern fringes of Caucasian Albania. Byzantium now followed a policy of attempting to destroy Arab fortresses in the frontier zone, so that these could not be used as bases for raids into Anatolia, but not to hold them[8].

Thus in 123/741, the newly-succeeded Constantine V followed up Leo's great victory of 740, when he had defeated and killed the Muslim *ghāzī* commander 'Abd Allāh al-Battāl at the abortive Arab siege of Akroinon in Phrygia (the later Qara Hisār-i Sāhib, modern Afyon Karahisar), by sending an army of *ca.* 20,000 men against Malatya and in 125/743 destroyed Zibatra (Sozopetra). Since from this year onwards the Umayyad caliphate was plunged into civil strife and internal dissension, the emperor was able to destroy for a second time the newly-rebuilt Zibatra; he captured Hadath (Adata), strategically important for controlling the pass across the Taurus to Albistān (Arabissos), and he drove the Muslim population out of Mar'ash and destroyed the town[9]. In 132/750, when the caliphate had been shaken by revolution and the Abbasids had only just shakily established their authority, Constantine personally led an army that conquered Malatya. Although the bravery of the defenders of the town so impressed the emperor that he gave them leave freely to depart, the inhabitants of the surrounding areas were deported westwards for settlement in Thrace, with the aim of strengthening the Byzantine population element there against the pressure, increasingly felt at this time, of the Turkish people of the Bulghars in the Balkans[10].

This policy of resettlement, above all in the European provinces of the empire, became a regular practice in Constantine's time; he also deported Slavs from the Balkans to Asia Minor, in particular to Bithynia along the Black Sea coast, and brought in new population elements from the Peloponnesus, the Aegean Islands,

---

8 . Lilie, *Byzantinische Reaktion:* 163-164, 180.

9 . E. W. Brooks, "The Arabs in Asia Minor (641-750) from Arabic Sources", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 18 (1898): 201-202, 207-208. Vasiliev, *History,* vol. 1: 238. Canard, *The Cambridge Medieval History,* IV, part 1: 698-699. M. Canard, "al-Battal, 'Abd Allah", *Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), vol. 1: 1102-1103.

10 . E. W. Brooks, "Byzantines and Arabs in the Time of the Early Abbasids", *English Historical Review* 15 (1900): 731-732; 16 (1901): 87-88, 91. Lilie, *Byzantinische Reaktion:* 164-165.

etc., to Constantinople itself[11]. The aim in the east, as noted above, was to create a depopulated buffer zone between the Greek and Arab-held territories across which the Muslims would find it difficult to mount raids. During the 750s, when al-Mansūr was still concerned to make firm his authority against ambitious other members of his family, the Arabs were generally on the defensive. In 139/756-757 the emperor campaigned in Cilicia and reached the Pyramos River or Jayhān[12], and it was during the next two or three years that, in response to Byzantine pressure, the caliph and his governor in Syria, Sālih b. 'Alī, rebuilt and strengthened many frontier fortresses (see above). Al-Tabarī notes that after the fidā' or exchange of prisoners between the sovereigns in 139/756-757, there were no summer raids (with the possible exception of one in 140/757-758 under the commander al-Hasan b. Qahtaba al-Tā'ī and the Abbasid prince 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ibrāhīm al-Imām) until 146/763 because of al-Mansūr's preoccupation with the revolts in Hijāz and Basra of the Hasanids Muhammad b. 'Abd Allāh, "the Pure Soul", and his brother Ibrāhīm respectively[13]. In fact, al-Ya'qūbī records the names of leaders of the sawāfī for intervening years, but no details of their goals or their success or otherwise[14].

Parallel to the deportation and resettlement policies of the Byzantine emperors, the Muslims for their part employed similar procedures on their side of the frontier. Soldiers were encouraged to garrison newly-restored fortresses by increases of pay above the normal rates of their 'ata'. Thus Hārūn al-Rashīd's eunuch commander Faraj b. Sulaym used this policy at the newly-rebuilt Tarsus in 171/787 (see below), and again at Adhana in 194/810 when Faraj refortified it and garrisoned it with troops from the Khurasanians who had settled in Baghdad as descendants of the Abnā' al-Dawla of Abbasid revolutionary times in return for pay increases, and Hārūn did this in 183/799 at al-Kanīsa al-Sawdā' in Cilicia, inviting the muqātila thither. New civilian settlers were also brought in, as by al-Mansūr in 140/757-758 at the rebuilt Massīsa, when, as well as regular troops (muqātila) and released prisoners (ahl al-mahābis), specialist groups (ahl al-khusūs), comprising Persians, Saqāliba and Christian Anbāt (i.e. from the Aramaic-speaking indigenous populations of Iraq and Syria) who had already been transplanted to the frontier region by Marwān al-Himār, were brought in to swell the population in Massīsa and given plots of land for building (khitat) in the

---

11 . Vasiliev, *History,* vol. 1: 259. M. V. Anastos, "Iconoclasm and Imperial Rule 717-842", in *The Cambridge Medieval History,* IV, part 1: 73. Lilie, *Byzantinische Reaktion:* 165-166.

12 . Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh:* 166. al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* III: 125. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 733, 16 (1901): 89.

13 . Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* III: 125.

14 . Al-Ya'qūbī, Ahmad b. Abī Ya'qūb (d. 284/897), *Ta'rīkh,* ed. M. Th. Houtsma (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1883), II: 470.

town[15]. Jhāts or Zutt, originally from northwestern India, had been brought via Basra with their flocks of water buffaloes to a habitat in the 'Amq of Antioch similar to that of the Batā'ih of lower Iraq from early Umayyad times onwards, and al-Mu'tasim was to continue this practice at 'Ayn Zarba (Anabarza) in Cilicia[16].

With the opening of the decade of the 760s, the Abbasid caliphate, under the vigorous direction of al-Mansūr, achieved a greater degree of internal stability and a more activist policy along the frontiers was now pursued, especially as during the last twenty years of Constantine V's long reign, the emperor was engaged in a series of campaigns, generally successful, against the Khans of the Bulghars. Hence Sālih b. 'Alī was able in 151/768 to rebuild and refortify Mar'ash, and in the following year deported the entire indigenous Greek and Armenian populations of Mar'ash and Sumaysāt (Samosata) to Palestine on suspicion of their having supplied spies for the Byzantines[17]. The Arabs were themselves able to mount raids deep into Byzantine territory. In 153/770 Ma'yūf b. Yahyā al-Hajūrī led the summer raid and penetrated as far as Lādhiqiya al-Muharraqa, i.e. Laodicea Combusta or Laodicea Katakekaumene, and brought back 6,000 youths and children as captives; and in the next year the commander Ibn Waqqās (in the Greek of Theophanes, Banakas) operated in Isauria and Lycia and conquered the fortress of Sike on the Isaurian coast to the west of Cilicia[18]. In 159/776 al-Mahdī despatched his uncle al-'Abbās b. Muhammad b. 'Alī (in the Greek sources, Abasbali), who reached as far as Anqira (Ancyra) and plundered it, together with an unnamed underground fortress (matmūra); and in the year after, the Arabs undertook what was for them a comparatively rare venture in the Abbasid period, a raid by sea under the command of al-Ghamr b. al-'Abbās al-Khath'amī[19].

In 163/780, a two-pronged Arab attack was mounted against Byzantine Anatolia. The first prong, under the prince (and heir to the throne) Hārūn, accompanied by Khālid b. Barmak and other members of the Barmakī family, entered the Armeniakon theme and captured Samālū (Semaluos), carrying off the defenders for resettlement behind the frontiers of the caliphate, whilst the other prong, under the experienced commander Thumāma b. al-Walīd al-'Absī, raided as far west as the Thrakesion theme, i.e. the westernmost theme of Anatolia[20]. A year

15 . Al-Balādhurī, Futūh: 166, 168, 171. al-Ya'qūbī, Ta'rīkh, II: 466. Brooks, EHR 16 (1901): 85-86.

16 . Al-Bāladhurī, Futūh: 162, 168, 171.

17 . Al-Balādhurī, Futūh: 189, Brooks, FHR 16 (1901): 89.

18 . Al-Tabarī, Ta'rīkh, III: 371. Brooks, EHR 15 (1900): 734. Lilie, Byzantinische Reaktion: 170-171.

19 . Al-Ya'qūbī, Ta'rīkh, II: 486. al-Tabarī, Ta'rīkh, III: 477. Brooks, EHR 15 (1900): 734-735. Lilie, Byzantinische Reaktion: 171.

20 . Al-Ya'qūbī, Ta'rīkh, II: 477-478. al-Tabarī, Ta'rīkh, III: 494-498. Brooks, EHR 15 (1900): 736-737, 16 (1901): 86-87. Lilie, Byzantinische Reaktion: 172-173.

later, in 164/781, according to al-Ya'qūbī, or two years later in 165/782 according to al-Tabañ, a further major raid by the Arabs was launched when Byzantine energies were distracted by the rebellion in Sicily (during 781, according to Greek historians) of its governor Elpidius; Elpidius's revolt was suppressed, but he fled to Arab-held North Africa and was there recognised as King of the Romans by the Arabs (782). Again led by Hārūn, the expedition reached as far as Nicomedia and then Chrysopolis (Scutari) on the shores of the Bosphorus, whilst other commanders operated in other regions of western Anatolia. Strengthened by the defection of the *strategos* of the Bucellarion theme, Tatzates, who was jealous of the ascendancy of the eunuch commander Stauracius over the Empress Irene, the Muslims were able to impose severe peace terms on Irene: a three years' truce, a tribute which al-Tabañ reckons at either 70,000 or 90,000 gold nomismata, to be paid over twice a year in April and June, and the supplying of the Muslim army with provisions and guides for the return journey across Anatolia, laden down as it would be with rich plunder of captives and beasts[21].

The truce in fact lasted for thirty-two months, for it seems that the Greeks broke it just before the death of al-Mahdī in 169/785, and their army destroyed the walls of Hadath and Zibatra[22]. But with Hārūn's accession in 170/786, a period of increased activity began, with the Arabic sources registering regular summer expeditions for each year, even if they do not always their goals. During these years, the Byzantine empire was racked by a series of internal cataclysms and external failures. Irene's intervention in northern Italy in support of the pretender to the throne of Lombardy, Adalgisus, ended in defeat (788), and by 798 she had been compelled to surrender the Byzantine territories in Italy of Istia and Benevento to the Frankish Emperor Charles the Great, thus shattering all hopes of a revival of the Byzantine Exarchate of Ravenna. The Byzantine Church was rent by an internal split, the so-called "Moechian schism" (from *moikheia* "adultery") caused by the Emperor Constantine VI's second marriage in 795. The Empress Irene deposed and blinded her son two years later and assumed sole power for five years, until in 802 she was overthrown by the Logothete Nicephorus, who then became the Emperor Nicephorus I (802-811)[23].

But certainly up to Nicephorus's accession, Hārūn, on the other hand, was at the height of his power, served by able and energetic commanders and administrators like the Barmakīs, and during his caliphate the Muslims were victorious by land and sea. Notable among these successes was a naval defeat of the fleets

---

21 . Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh:* 168, al-Ya'qūbi, *Ta'ñkh*, II: 477-478. al-Tabañ, *Ta'ñkh*, III: 503-505. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 737. Anastos, *The Medieval Cambridge History*, IV, part 1: 83. Lilie, *Byzantinische Reaktion:* 173-176.

22 . Lilie, *Byzantinische Reaktion:* 176.

23 . Anastos, *The Medieval Cambridge History*, IV, part 1: 87-91.

of the two Byzantine maritime themes, the Thrakesion and Cibyrrhaeot, off the Cilician coast, the capture in 177/793 of Kemākh after it had been betrayed to the Muslims by rebellious troops of the Armeniakon theme, and a raid in 178/794 led by Mu'āwiya b. Zufar al-Hilālī, but accompanied also by the renegade Elpidius (Albīd), which reached as far as Amisus (Samsun) on the Black Sea coast[24]. In the summer of 180/796 Hārūn took up residence at al-Raqqa in Diyār Mudar on the middle Euphrates, this becoming his favoured residence in preference to Baghdad, and one of the effects of the move was to make access to the region of the *thughūr* more convenient. In 181/797 Hārūn personally led the summer raid and captured the so-called "fortress of the willows", al-Safsāf, beyond the northern end of the Cilician Gates. In the next year the Abbasid prince 'Abd al-Malik b. Sālih, now governor of Syria and the marches, plundered Cappadocia and Galatia and captured Ancyra in the same year (al-Tabarī) or in the following one, 799 (Theophanes), whilst an expedition into the Opsikion theme apparently reached Ephesus and the Aegean coast; only the distraction of an invasion through the Caucasus into Armenia of the Turkish Khazars disposed Hārūn to make a truce with Irene[25].

When Nicephorus gained the throne in 802, he renounced payment of tribute to the Arabs, so that warfare was resumed in the following year. It was in 186/802 also that the caliph made arrangements for the succession of his sons after his own death, embodied in the so-called "Meccan documents", and in this year (al-Tabarī) or possibly the next one (al-Mas'ūdī) Hārūn's son al-Qāsim al-Mu'taman was made third heir and appointed governor of Jazīra and the frontier regions and their fortresses (*al-thughūr wa-al-'awāsim*)[26]. Now, in 187/803, two expeditions were launched against the emperor, one under al-Qāsim into Cappadocia and the other headed by the caliph himself which captured and destroyed Hiraqla (Heracleia, the modern Eregli)[27]. Eventually, in 189/805, an exchange of prisoners

24 . Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh,* II: 552, making Yazīd b. Ghazwān the leader of the raid of 178/794. al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* III: 637. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 741. Anastos, *The Medieval Cambridge History,* IV, part 1: 83. Canard, *The Medieval Cambridge History,* IV, part 1: 707. Lilie, *Byzantische Reaktion:* 176-177.

25 . Al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh,* II: 552. al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* IV, part 1: 83. III: 646. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 741. Anastos, *The Cambridge Medieval History:* IV, part 1: 83. Canard, *The Cambridge Medieval History,* IV, part 1: 707. Lilie, *Byzantinische Reaktion:* 177-178.

26 . Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* III: 652-653. al-Mas'ūdī, Abū al-Hasan 'Alī b. al-Husayn (d. 345/956), *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'ādin al-Jawhar,* ed. and French trans. C. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille (Paris: Société Asiatique, 1861-1877), VI: 328 = ed. Ch. Pellat (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, Section d'Études Historiques 11, 1962-1979), #2530.

27 . Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* III: 696-699. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 743-744. Canard, *The Cambridge Medieval History,* IV, part 1: 707.

was arranged, the first of twelve *fidā'* s to take place on the banks of the Lamas River (the later Lamas Su) over the next century and a half. In this exchange, the caliphal eunuch Abū Sulaymān Faraj acted as negotiator on the Muslim side, and 3,700 Muslims were freed; this was followed three years later by the *fidā'* arranged at al-Budandūn (Podandos) by Thābit b. Nasr al-Khuzāʿī, when 2,500 Muslims were received in exchange for Christian captives[28].

However, in 189/805 Hārūn was compelled to journey eastwards in order to investigate complaints of oppression against the governor of Khurāsān, ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān, and to receive the homage of local rulers in the Caspian provinces. Nicephorus thereupon restored the fortifications of the Cappadocian towns of Ancyra, Thebasa (Arabic, Dabasa) and Andrasos, and took the offensive in Cilicia against al-Qāsim, attacking him at al-Kanīsa al-Sawdāʾ[29]. But then in 190/806 Hārūn was back in the frontier zone in personal command there, having left his son ʿAbd Allāh al-Maʾmūn as his deputy at al-Raqqa. The Byzantines raided into Cilicia and attacked there ʿAyn Zarba and al-Kanīsa al-Sawdāʾ, but Hārūn retook Hiraqla and reduced it to ruins, and then raided into southern Cappadocia. Nicephorus, threatened again by the resurgent Bulghars under the greatest of their leaders Khan Krum, had to sue for peace, offering tribute and promising not to destroy the fortresses of Dhū al-Kulāʿ, Samalū and Hisn Sinan which he had captured, whilst Hārūn undertook not to resettle or to refortify Hiraqla. It had been during the course of this fighting that, according to al-Tabarī, Hārūn wore a special *qalansūwa* or cap with the words on it *Ghāzī, Hājj* "Warrior for the Faith, Pilgrim"[30]. It was also in this year 190/806 that the caliph made Humayd b. Maʿyūf al-Hajūrī governor of the Levant coastlands as far as Egypt. Humayd raided Cyprus, alleging that the Cypriots had violated the treaty of neutrality of 698 which regulated the island's relations with both the Greeks and the Arabs; he devastated the island and enslaved 16,000 of its people, including its archbishop, who were sent to al-Rāfiqa (they were later allowed to return home once the treaty of neutrality had been renewed)[31]. In the next year, 191/807, Arab ships attacked Rhodes and Myra on the Lycian coast, but were unable to capture the fortresses there.

---

28 . Al-Tabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 706-707, 732. Al-Masʿūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa-al-Ishrāf*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Bibliotheca geographorum arabicorum, pars octava (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1894): 189. French trans. B. Carra de Vaux, *Le Livre de l'avertissement et de la revision* (Paris: Société Asiatique, 1897): 255-256. Cf. Huart, "Lamas-Su", *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983), vol. 5: 647.

29 . Al-Balādhurī, *Futūh:* 171, Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 744-745, 17 (1901): 87.

30 . Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II: 519, 523. Al-Tabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 709. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 745-746, 16 (1901): 86-87.

31 . Al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾrīkh*, II: 523. Al-Tabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, III: 709. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 745-746, 16 (1901): 86-87. Anastos, *The Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, part 1: 91.

The Byzantines had renounced the peace agreement of 190/806 between Nicephorus and Hārūn in the year when it was made, and according to Theophanes (but not mentioned in the Arabic sources), the caliph had returned to the fray forthwith and had captured Thebasa. It is true that in 191/807 the Greeks took the field and defeated an Arab army in the Cilician Gates, killing its commander Yahyā b. Makhlad al-Hubayrī al-Fazārī, and likewise crushed another Arab force under Sa'īd b. Salm b. Qutayba before Mar'ash[32]. The outcry from the inhabitants of the eastern Islamic lands against 'Alī b. 'Isā b. Māhān could now no longer be ignored by Hārūn, and the caliph was forced first to transfer Harthama b. A'yan from the Syrian marches, where he had been operating with a force of 30,000 Khurasanian troops to stiffen the fighting power of the local frontier fighters, to Khurāsān in order to remove 'Alī from office there, and second, to proceed thither in person in order to deal with the revolt in Transoxania of Rāfi' b. Layth b. Sayyār[33]. Hence there was no major expedition against the Byzantines in the years up to his death in 193/809; al-Ya'qūbī records no *sawāfī* after Hārūn's and Harthama's move to Hadath in 191/807 until 194/810[34].

Thus the first sixty years or so of the Abbasid caliphate closed with something like the position of equilibrium between the two great powers which had obtained in 132/750. The Arabs had successfully mounted long-distance plunder raids across Anatolia almost to the capital Constantinople, without however extending the permanent borders of the *Dār al-Islām* beyond the *thughūr* as they had existed in the Umayyad period. In subsequent times, after the victories of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'tasim, the twin factors of the increasing impotence of the caliphs in Sāmarrā' at the hands of their Turkish slave troops and the resurgence of Byzantine power after 867 and the advent of the Macedonian emperors tipped the balance against the Muslims for almost two centuries, allowing the Greeks during this time to make territorial gains in the region of the Syrian and Jazīran marches.

---

32 . Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, III: 712-713. Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 746-747.

33 . Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, III: 712, 713 ff.

34 . Brooks, *EHR* 15 (1900): 747.

Christianity in The Patriarchate of Jerusalem in The Early Abbasid Period, 132-198/750-813

Robert Schick[*]

American Center of Oriental Research

1. Introduction

This paper will examine the history of the Christians in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the early Abbasid period. It will cover the time period from the Abbasid revolution in 132/750 to the end of the civil war in 198/813 that followed the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 193/809. The area of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the Byzantine period covered the three provinces of Palaestina Prima, Secunda and Tertia, roughly the Umayyad-Abbasid *jund* of Filasṭīn, and the southern portions of the *junds* of al-Urdunn and Dimashq, and roughly equivalent to modern-day Israel and Jordan south of the Wādī Mūjib. There is no evidence to indicate that any shifts in the boundaries of the patriarchate had taken place by the early Abbasid period.

The status of Christianity in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem during this early Abbasid period is illuminated principally by a large number of Greek historical and religious texts. Arabic texts and archaeology are of secondary importance.

The see of the patriarchate was the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The sequence of patriarchs is not extensively documented, but the attested patriarchs were[1]: Theodore, probably from 745 to 770, and attested in 764; Eusebius, attested in 772; Elias, attested in 785, when he was overthrown and exiled, and 796-800; Thomas, from 807 to 821.

The bulk of the population within the Patriarchate of Jerusalem was probably still Melkite Christians. The presence of other Christian groups is shown by a parallel line of Armenian bishops in Jerusalem[2], and Monophysite metropolitans in Jerusalem and Tiberias, starting in 793[3]. The patriarchate, and especially the city of Jerusalem, always had an international flavor to it by virtue of pilgrims coming to visit the holy places.

Muslims were probably still a minority. Jews and Samaritans were still present, but only in small numbers. There also may have been pagans left, if Nevo's claim

---

*   American Center of Oriental Research
1 . Giorgio Fedalto, "Liste vescovii del patriarcato di Gerusalemme", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 49 (1983): 15-16.
2 . Tournebize, "Arménie", *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastique* 4: 375-376.
3 . Michael the Syrian, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien,* edited and translated by Jean Baptiste Chabot (Brussels: Culture et Civilization, 1963), appendix 3, III: 448-491; IV: 752-768, Jean Baptiste Chabot, "Les évêques Jacobites du VIIIe au XII siècle d'après la chronique de Michel le Syrien", *Revue d'Orient Chretien* 4 (1899): 451; 6 (1901): 198-199.

to have found a cultic center at Sde Boker in the Negev where Arab tribesmen worshipped stelae that came to an end in the early Abbasid period can be believed[4].

The Abbasid Revolution

Most of the events of the Abbasid Revolution were played out elsewhere. Christians in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem were affected during the flight of Marwān II to Egypt after his defeat in the Battle of the Zab in 132 / 750 when he plundered an otherwise unattested monastery in Palestine in a futile attempt to obtain money with which to stave off final defeat[5]:

> And there was in Palestine a clean and decent monastery, which entertained thousands of travelers, and contained a thousand monks; and it was called Dair Mut, and in Coptic, the Monastery of Abba Harimanus...So when Marwan arrived at the aforesaid monastery, he demanded of them a sum of money amounting to three weights; and he severely chastised the superior of the monastery and his assistant, for he killed those two; and he plundered the monastery, and continued his march, accompanied by his army. Then, when they were at a short distance from the monastery, there was a hermit upon a pillar, a very old man, who had been there many years, an orthodox Theodosian [Monophysite]...[who prophesied Marwan's downfall]. When Marwan heard this, he commanded that the pillar should be overthrown; and he brought down the old man, and burnt him alive in the fire.

The monastery appears to have been plundered rather than destroyed, so it presumably continued to be inhabited afterwards.

Most of southern Bilād al-Shām came under Abbasid control without recorded incident. The Umayyad army commander Habīb b. Murra al-Murrī resisted the Abbasids for a while in the Balqā', Bathaniya and Hawrān, but after several clashes, negotiations with the Abbasid commander, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī, resulted in a peaceful settlement in which the Abbasids extended guarantees of safety to Habīb and his followers[6]. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī also killed some seventy members of

---

4 . Yehuda Nevo, "Sde Boker and the Central Negev", *3rd International Colloquium: From Jahiliyya to Islam.* The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, June 30 to July 6, 1985. Yehuda Nevo and Judith Koren, "The Origins of the Muslim Descriptions of the Jahili Meccan Sanctuary", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49 (1990): 23-44.

5 . Severus ibn al-Muqaffa', *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria,* edited and translated by B. Evetts, *Patrologia Orientalis* 5 (1910): 154-156.

6 . Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr (d. 310 / 922), *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,* edited by M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879-1901), III: 52, 56.

the Umayyad family at Antipatris (Nahr Abī Fatras)[7], where Marwān II had passed through during his flight[8]. Theophanes reports this incident in what appears to be a less reliable fashion as the killing of *mawālī*[9] "In this year the new conquerors killed most of the Christians who were 'Kinsmen' of the previous rulers. They overpowered them by treachery at Palestinian Antipatris."

Neither the Christians nor their churches appear to have suffered any detectable harm at the hands of the Abbasids at the time of their takeover.

2. The Early Abbasid Period

A. The *Vita* of Saint Stephen the Sabaite

The single most important source for the Christians in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the early Abbasid period is the *Vita* of Saint Stephen the Sabaite, a monk in the monastery of Mar Saba in the Wilderness of Judaea, who was born in a village near Ascalon in 725 and died in 794[10]. The *Vita* is filled with incidental references to places and local events, especially about the monasteries in the Wilderness of Judaea, but it records little about major political events. Most of the events in the *Vita* can not be precisely dated to any specific time within the last years of the Umayyad period and the early Abbasid period.

The *Vita* shows that monasticism was thriving in numerous monasteries of the Wilderness of Judaea, with the presence of Muslims and the Abbasid rulers barely perceptible. Stephen and other monks used to wander in the Wilderness of Judaea and walk around the Dead Sea during Lent and at other times, without fear of attack by any Arab tribesmen, although once God had to protect Stephen from the consequences of stumbling into a bedouin encampment at night. Among the people about whom the *Vita* tells stories are a woman who came from Rome to visit Saint Stephen and then stayed on with two nuns in the Wilderness of

7. Al-Ya'qūbī, Ahmad b. Abī Ya'qūb (d. 284 / 897). *Ta'rīkh* (Beirut: Dar Sadr, 1970), II: 355. al-Mas'ūdī, 'Alī b. al-Husayn (d. 346 / 957), *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar*, edited by Yūsuf As'ad Daghir (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1965), VI: 76. Sabatino Moscati, "Le Massacre des Umayyades dans l'histoire et dans les fragments poétiques", *Archiv Orientální 18*, # 4 (1950): 88-115.

8. Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, III: 47, 48.

9. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, edited by Carolus de Boor (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1885), A.M. 6243: 427. Harry Turtledove, translator, *The Chronicle of Theophanes* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania, 1982): 116.

10. "Vita S. Stephani Sabaitae Thaumaturgi Monachi", *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 30, July III: 497-584. Gérard Garitte, "Le début de la Vie de Saint Étienne le Sabaite retrouvé en arabe au Sinaï", *Analecta Bollandiana 77* (1959): 332-369. Gérard Garitte, "Un extrait géorgian de la Vie d' Étienne le Sabaïte", *Le Muséon 67* (1954): 71-92. Leontius of Damascus, *Vita di S. Stefano Sabaita*, translated into Italian by Camillo Carta. Quaderni de "La Terra Santa" (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1983).

Judaea for years and Mark, a pilgrim from Egypt, who came to Jerusalem with a Muslim who wanted to pray in the mosque of Jerusalem. For 778 the *Vita* refers to an abbot, Martyrios, who was born in Jarash, and it also refers to Cosmas, an abbott of a monastery at el-Quwaysma. The *Vita* also records Basilius, the administrator of Jericho and later bishop of Tiberias, John, the bishop of Karak for the end of the eighth or the start of the ninth century, and Eustatius, one of his disciples who became bishop of Lod in the ninth century. The *Vita* is also the source of information about the overthrow of the Patriarch Elias II.

B. From Greek to Arabic

In the early Abbasid period the monks in the monasteries in the Wilderness of Judaea were beginning to switch from writing in Greek to writing in Arabic[11]. The *Life* of Saint Romanos, martyred in al-Raqqa in 780, for example, was written in Arabic by 787 by a monk in the monastery of Mar Saba and translated directly into Georgian, bypassing Greek[12]. While Saint John of Damascus, who died around 750, had written in Greek, a few decades later Theodore Abū Qurrah, also a monk in the monastery of Mar Saba, wrote mostly, if not exclusively in Arabic and Syriac. George, a monk at Mar Saba for twenty-seven years in the mid-9th century, learned Greek, Latin and Arabic, before the abbot send him on a mission to raise funds from monasteries in North Africa[13]. One further example of the linguistic mix is the many Christian papyrus documents in Palestinian Aramaic, Arabic and Greek that were found in the monastery of Castellion (Khirbat al-Mird), mostly dating to the eighth-tenth centuries[14].

3. Events under the Early Abbasid Caliphs

A. The Reign of Abū al-'Abbās al-Saffāh (132-136 / 750-754)

No one from the Patriarchates of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria or Rome participated in the 754 iconoclastic council in Byzantine territory, but whether this

---

11 . Sidney Griffith, "The Gospel in Arabic: an Inquiry Into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century", *Oriens Christianus* 69 (1985): 126-167. Idem, "Greek into Arabic: Life and Letters in the Monasteries of Palestine in the Ninth Century: the Example of the Summa Theologica Arabica", *Byzantion* 56 (1986); 117-138. Idem, "Stephan of Ramlah and the Christian Kerygma in Arabic in Ninth-Century Palestine", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 23-45.

12 . Paul Peeters, "S. Romain le Néomartyr (1 mai 780) d'aprés un document géorgien", *Analecta Bollandiana* 30 (1911): 393-427.

13 . Eulogius of Toledo, "Memoriale Sanctorum, Documentum Martyriale, Apologeticus Martyrum", *Patrologia Latina* 115, paragraph 23: 786-787.

14 . G. R. H. Wright, "The Archaeological Remains at el-Mird in the Wilderness of Judaea", *Biblica* 42 (1961): 1-21. J. T. Milik, "The Monastery of Kastellion", *Biblica* 42 (1961): 21-27. Adolf Grohman, *Arabic Papyri from Hirbat el-Mird* (Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1963).

was due to their opposition to the Byzantine policy of iconoclasm or from their inability to attend is unclear[15].

B. The Reign of Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr (136-158 / 754-775)

Al-Mansūr himself came to Jerusalem in 141/758-759 and 154/771[16]. During his second trip to Jerusalem, in order to prevent tax evasion, "after fasting, he ordered the Christians and Jews tattooed on their hands. Many of the Christians fled to Romania by sea"[17]. During his reign there was a revolt in Palestine, when 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. Ibrāhīm was governor. The governor captured the leader of the rebels and sent him to al-Mansūr. The rebel recited a witty poem, so al-Mansūr set him free[18]. Christians are not reported as having been involved or affected.

There was also unrest in Nablus, where the Samaritans were strong. Although the background and details of the incident are obscure, at some point al-Mansūr sent to Palestine a general named 'Abd al-Wahhāb Abū Shindī, who greatly oppressed the people. 'Abd al-Wahhāb ordered the ruler of Nablus to burn down the church of the Theotokos on Mount Gerizim. A group of people went out at night and burned the church and killed the monks in it. The Christians blamed the Samaritans for the incident, so Abū Shindī arrested the Samaritan chief and fined him[19]. There appear to be archaeological traces of this destruction and later reuse of the church[20].

In 756-757 Theophanes reports[21]:

> Theodore the patriarch of Antioch was exiled. Because of the Arabs' jealousy, they falsely accused him of revealing their affairs to the Emperor Constantine by letters. Salim put him in an out-of-the way place: the land of the Moabites, which was also his native land.

"Theodore son of Vicarius, who sprang from lesser Arabia, was chosen patriarch of Antioch" in 751-752[22]. Theodore is attested later in 763-762.

---

15 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6245: 427. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 117. Stephen the Deacon, "Vita Sancti Stephani Junioris". *Patrologia Graeca* 100: 1143.

16 . Ibn 'Asākir, Abū al-Qāsim (d. 571 / 1176), *Ta'rīkh Madīnat Dimashq* 38 ('Abd Allah b. Qays — 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ada), edited by Sukayna al-Shahābī (Damascus, 1986): 202, 212.

17 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6264: 446. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 133.

18 . Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, III: 436-437. Al-Jahshiyārī, Muhammad b. 'Abdūs (d. 331 / 943), *al-Wuzara' wa-al-Kuttāb* (Cairo: Mustafa al-Babī al-Halabī, 1983): 138.

19 . Abulfathi, *Annales Samaritani*, edited by E. Vilmar (Gotha: 1865): 181-182.

20 . Alfons Maria Schneider, "Römische und byzantinische Bauten auf dem Garizim", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 68 (1946-1951): 211-234.

21 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6248: 430. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 119.

22 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6243: 427. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 116.

In 760 a local anti-iconoclastic synod was held in Jerusalem[23]. In 763-764 the Patriarchs Kosmas of Alexandria, Theodore of Antioch and Theodore of Jerusalem "and the bishops under them" jointly anathematized Kosmas of Epiphaneia in Syria, "each in his own city", because he was an iconoclast[24]. Later, in 767 the Patriarchs of Rome, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria sent an anti-iconoclastic letter to the Emperor Constantine V[25].

One bit of archaeological evidence is of interest. In a building to the south of the chapel in the monastery of Ra's al-Tawil was a hoard of two hundred Abbasid coins mostly dating between 750 and 770. The coins were deposited under a late phase, raised floor. It is unclear what connection the coin hoard had with a Christian use of the monastery at the time[26].

C. The Reigns of al-Mahdi (158-169 / 775-785) and al-Hadi (169-170 / 785-786)

Al-Mahdi visited Jerusalem in 163 / 779-780[27]. During his visit he dismissed Ibrahim b. Salih b. 'Ali, his governor of Damascus and al-Urdunn[28]. In this period Michael Syncellus, a native of Jerusalem, was growing up and receiving a proper Greek education in the patriarchal school of Jerusalem. In 785 his mother and two sisters retired to a convent adjoining the church of Holy Zion on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and he went to the monastery of Mar Saba in the Wilderness of Judaea a year later[29]. George, another native of Jerusalem and a monk who often visited the monastery of St. Chariton, became the *synkellos* for the Patriarch Tarasios in Constantinople after 784[30]. Theodore and Theophanes, the two Graphti brothers, were born in Moab in 775 and 778. They were educated in Jerusalem and became monks in the monastery of Mar Saba. During the civil war after the death of Harun al-Rashid they became refugee monks in Constantinople where they played a major role on behalf of icons in the Byzantine empire[31].

23 . Johannes Dominicus Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence, 1767), 12: 679-680.
24 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6255: 433-434. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 123.
25 . Stephen the Deacon, "Vita S. Stephani Junioris", *Patrologia Graeca* 100: 1117-1118.
26 . *Surveys and Excavations in Israel* 1 (1982): 101-103.
27 . Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa-al-Muluk*, III: 500.
28 . Al-Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa-al-Muluk*, III: 530.
29 . Theodor Schmitt, ed., "Life of Michael Syncellus", *Bulletin de l'institut archéologique russe de Constantinople* 11 (1906): 227-259.
30 . George Syncellus, *Chronographia*, edited by Dindorf, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae 12 (Bonn: E. Weber, 1829): 200-201. Heinrich Gelzer, *Sextus Julius Africanus und die Byzantinische Chronographie* part 2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1885): 179-181. G. L. Huxley, "On the Erudition of George the Synkellos", *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 81C, #6 (1981): 207-217.
31 . Jeffrey-Michael Featherstone, "The Praise of Theodore Graptos by Theophanes of Caesarea", *Analecta Bollandiana* 98 (1980): 93-150. "Vita S. Theodori Grapti", *Patrologia Graeca*, 116: 653-684.

When Elias II was the Patriarch of Jerusalem, perhaps in 785, Theodore and Basilius, two monks of the Spoudaeon monastery adjoining the church of the Holy Sepulchre, managed to overthrow him. Theodore, through bribing the Muslim rulers, expelled Elias, who lived in exile in Persia but was later released and lived for a few more years in Jerusalem[32]. Basilius later became the administrator of Jericho and then bishop of Tiberias.

4. Events under Hārūn al-Rashīd (170-193 / 786-809)

A. Political Unrest

When Hārūn al-Rashīd became caliph, al-Husayn b. Jumayl seized the governorship of Egypt and took its taxes for himself. This provoked a rebellion by Abū al-Nada, the *mawla,* of Bala, and the people of al-Hawf, numbering about a thousand men. Some members of the Judhām tribe also took part. They plundered and killed a great deal until Hārūn al-Rashīd sent armies from Baghdad and Egypt against them. The two armies joined forces in 'Aqaba and defeated Abū al-Nada and his followers[33].

The major political event in southern Bilād al-Shām during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd was the rebellion of Abū al-Haydhām, the *fitna* of Damascus. It started when a member of the Banū al-Qayn went to al-Raha in the Balqa', to have some wheat milled. On his way he passed by a wall near which were watermelons and cucumbers belonging to a member of the Lakhm or Judhām tribes. He took some of them and cursed the owner, which provoked a fight that led to the death of one Lakhm member. This led to a larger conflict lasting several years with other tribes becoming involved mostly in the area south of Damascus, but extending as far south as al-Rabba. Hārūn al-Rashīd had to replace the ineffectual governor of Damascus before the rebellion could be brought under control in 797[34].

The breakdown in the ability of the Abbasid government in the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd to govern effectively is also revealed in the Greek sources. Saracen raiders killed twenty monks of the monastery of Mar Saba in the Wilderness of Judaea in March 797, after first overrunning the countryside[35]. The Saracens are

32 . "Vita S. Stephani", *Acta Sanctorum,* July III, 522-527. Gérard Garitte, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (Xe siècle),* Subsidia Hagiographica 30 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes), January 27: 46, 143.

33 . Ibn Taghribirdī, Abū al-Mahāsin (d. 874/1470), *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fi Mulūk Misr wa-al-Qāhira* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1929), 2: 134-135.

34 . Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh Madīnat Dimashq* ('Asim b. Bahdal-'A'idh b. Muhammad), (Damascus: n.d.): 393. Ibn al-Athīr, Abū al-Hasan (d. 630 / 1132), *al-Kāmil fi al-Ta'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār Sadr, 1965-1967), part 10: 168.

35 . Stephen the Sabaite, "Passio SS XX Martyrum Laurae S Sabae", *Acta Sanctorum,* March III: 165-179. Robert Blake, "Deux lacunes comblées dans la Passio XX monachorum Sabaitarum", *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950): 27-43. Garitte, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien,* March 19: 55, 179-180. François Halkin, "Saint Théoctiste,
=

briefly described as having destroyed Ascalon, Beit Guvrin, Gaza and Sarifia, but they did not manage to capture Jerusalem itself, where a garrison was able to remove them from around Bethlehem. The Saracens ravaged the monastic dependencies around Jerusalem, destroyed the monasteries of Saint Chariton and Saint Euthymius, and seized the monastery of Mar Saba on two separate occasions a few days apart. They tortured and killed many of the monks in their search for treasure and were about to set fire to the church when troops arrived and prevented it. The *Vita* oi the Graphti brothers also refers to a bedouin attack at the monastery of Mar Saba around this time, most likely the 797 sack[36].

The connection between this raiding and the *fitna* of Damascus, which was in its final stages at the time, is not apparent. Just a few years earlier in 178/794-795, an army led by Harthama b. A'in had pacified Syria-Palestine and North Africa, while al-Balādhuři reports that Hārūn al-Rashīd sent Harthama to Palestine to bring abandoned land under cultivation[37].

B. Contact with Byzantium and the West

It appears that official ecclesiastical contact between the Christians in the areas under Muslim rule and the Byzantine Empire had largely been broken off by the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Sevcenko has observed that the *Vita* of Saint Stephen and the martyrdom of the twenty monks of Mar Saba in 797 are purely local in outlook and say nothing about the Byzantine Empire[38].

John of Jerusalem and Thomas from Egypt participated in the seventh ecumenical church council at Nicaea in 787 that restored icons[39]. According to Theophanes' account[40]:

> The Empress and the patriarch also sent men to Antioch and Alexandria, for the peace with the Arabs had not yet been broken. From Antioch they brought John, who shared the holiness of the patriarch of Antioch and was his synkellos; he was great and famous in

= moine sabaïte et martyr (+797)", *Analecta Bollandiana* 73 (1955): 373-374. V. Grumel, "L'ére mondiale dans la date du martyre des vingt moines sabbaïtes", *Revue des Études Byzantines* 14 (1956): 207-208.

36. "Vita S. Theodori Grapti", *Patrologia Graeca* 116, paragraph 11: 662.

37. Al-Tabari, *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, III: 629-630. al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, II: 411. al-Balādhuři, Ahmad b. Yahyā (d. 279 / 892), *Futūh al-Buldān*, edited by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968): 144; translated by Philip Hitti, *The Origins of the Islamic State* (New York: Columbia University Press): 221.

38. Ihor Sevcenko, "Constantinople Viewed from the Eastern Provinces in the Middle Byzantine Period", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3-4 (1979-1980): 735-737. Reprinted in: *Ideology, Letters and Culture in the Byzantine World* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982).

39. Mansi, 12: 1127-1146; 13: 133-134 and elsewhere.

40. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6277: 460-461. Turtledove, *Chronicle*: 145.

speech and action. From Alexandria they brought back Thomas, a zealous, pious man who later became famous as the archbishop of the great Illyrian city of Thessalonike.

However, John and Thomas seem to have been monks who had been living in Constantinople for years, and became representatives only because none of the patriarchs or bishops in Muslim territory could come and there was no one else available, who by their attendance could bolster the claims of the council to be ecumenical. John and Thomas are listed in the acts as representatives of the apostolic sees of the East, and not of the patriarchs themselves. They presented to the council an encyclical letter from the Patriarch Theodore of Jerusalem (745-767) that he had written on the occasion of the earlier iconoclastic church council of 754[41]. This letter stressed the orthodoxy and views in favor of icons among the Christians in Syria and Egypt, areas ruled by "the enemies of the cross". The letter also apologized for the absence of the patriarchs of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch themselves, and their bishops who could not publicly show any support out of fear of "horrible threats and deadly penalties of those who rule over us"[42]. Theodore the Studite later commented on the presence of John and Thomas and the lack of more appropriate representatives from the eastern patriarchs at the council[43]:

> As for those from the East, they were persuaded and induced by people here and were not sent by the patriarchs who, because of their fear of the heathen, took no notice of it either then or later. The people here did this in order to persuade the heretical populace more easily to come over to Orthodoxy on the pretence of there being an oecumenical council.

Later oriental patriarchs were reluctant to call it ecumenical, such as at the time of Photius in 879[44]. This council was held when the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Elias II, was in exile, after having been overthrown by Theodore.

There was, nonetheless, steady contact between the Carolingians and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, especially during the reign of Charlemagne[45]. Char-

---

41 . Mansi, 12: 1135-1146.
42 . Mansi, 12: 1130, 1134.
43 . Theodore the Studite, "Epistolarium Liber I, #38: Arsenio filio", *Patrologia Graeca* 99: 1043-1046; Patrick Henry, "Initial Eastern Assessments of the Seventh Oecumenical Council", *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1974): 77.
44 . Mansi, 17: 493.
45 . Michael Borgolte, *Der Gesandtenaustausch der Karolinger mit den Abbasiden und mit den Patriarchen von Jerusalem*. Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 25 (Munich: Arbeor Gesellschaft, 1976). Idem, "Papst Leo III., Karl der Grosse und der Filioque Streit von Jerusalem", *Byzantina* 10 (1980): 401-427. Steven Runciman, "Charlemagne and Palestine", *English Historical Review* 50 (1935):

=

lemagne sent money on a number of occasions for the support of the Christians in Palestine and the restoration of churches, last recorded in 810. Around 870 the pilgrim Bernard stayed at the hospice for Latin pilgrims furnished by Charlemagne[46]. A Latin monastery was also founded on the Mount of Olives.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd exchanged envoys with Charlemagne. In 800 the Patriarch sent envoys to Charlemagne. In 807 Hārūn al-Rashīd sent 'Abd Allāh and the Patriarch Thomas sent two Latin monks, George, the abbot of the Latin monastery on the Mount of Olives, and Felix, another monk from the monastery, on a joint mission.

The addition of the "filioque" clause to the creed used by the Latin monks on the Mount of Olives provoked a dispute between them and the Greek monks of the monastery of Saint Saba[47]. John, the leader of the Greek monks, accused the Latin monks of heresy when their abbot George and Felix had not yet returned from their trip to Charlemagne late in 807. On Christmas Eve, 807 the Greek monks attacked the Latin monks in the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The Latin monks wrote to Pope Leo III for help, and he replied in 808. The Patriarch Thomas, a former monk at Saint Saba, wishing to preserve friendly ties with Charlemagne, in 808 wrote to Charlemagne. Agamus and Roculphus, apparently two pilgrims from Charlemagne's territory who happened to be in Jerusalem, took his message back with them.

The Patriarch Thomas and monks from the monasteries in the Wilderness of Judaea agreed to send Michael Synkellos with Theodore and Theophanes, the Graphti brothers, and Job from the Spoudaei monastery in Jerusalem to Rome to inform the Pope about the Greek position in the "filioque" dispute. They arrived first in Constantinople in 813 with a letter opposing iconoclasm, but got no farther. They were among the refugees from the sack of the monasteries in the Wilderness of Judaea during the civil war that will be examined later.

Around 808 a document, called the *Commemoratorium de casis Dei*, was prepared for Charlemagne[48]. It is a list of the major churches and monasteries in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and it is full of details. It records that annually the

---

=   606-619. Karl Schmid, "Aachen und Jerusalem. Ein Beitrag zur historischen Personer forschung der Karolingerzeit", *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse,* third series, vol. 87 (1974): 122-142. Louis Brehier, "La situation des chrétiens de Palestine à la fin du VIIIe siècle et l'établissement du protectorat de Charlemagne", *Le Moyen Age* 30 (1919): 67-75.

46 . Titius Tobler and Augustus Molinier, eds., *Itinera Hierosolymitana et descriptiones Terrae Sanctae* (Geneva: J. -G. Fick, 1879-1885): 314. John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977): 142.

47 . Borgolte, *Byzantina* 10 (1980): 401-427.

48 . Tobler and Molinier, *Itinera Hierosolymitana:* 299-305. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims:* 137-138.

patriarch paid 500 dirhams to the Saracens, apparently a lump sum tax payment. Among the more interesting items in this list are a stylite saint in Nablus and bishops at Nablus, Mount Tabor, Sebastia and Tiberias. For the monastery of Theodosius in the Wilderness of Judaea it records that seventy monks were there and that:

> Saracen brigands burnt this monastery and slaughtered many monks there, and others fled because of the pagans. They destroyed two churches dependent on this monastery.

For Mount Zion in Jerusalem it records the ethnic diversity of the Christians:

> hermits living in cells holding offices in the Greek language eleven; in Georgian four; in Syriac six; in Armenian two; in Latin five; in the Saracen tongue one.

It records that one hundred and fifty monks were at the monastery of Mar Saba. It also records:

> At Sebastia, where the body of St John lies buried, there used to be a great church, but it has now fallen to the ground. All that is left is the place of the glorious Baptist's tomb, which has not been entirely destroyed, and the church where the prison was, and (where) he was beheaded. There is a bishop, Basil, and twenty five presbyters, monks and clergy.

C. Christian Martyrs

While Hārūn al-Rashīd may have approved of Charlemagne's support for Christians in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, accounts of martyrs furnish evidence for Muslim hostility towards Christianity. One Christian martyr was Anthony, a relative of Hārūn al-Rashīd, who liked to harass the Christians in Damascus until some miracles led him to convert to Christianity. He went to Jerusalem, where he wanted the patriarch to baptize him, but the patriarch declined, presumably because he was aware that his baptism of a convert from Islam would provoke a reponse from the Muslim authorities. Instead, the patriarch sent him to the Jordan River where he met two wandering monks who baptized him. After putting on monastic garb he returned to Damascus, where he was promptly arrested and later executed at al-Raqqa on December 25, 799[49]. Being a relative of the caliph did not save him from his punishment.

Bacchus the younger was martyred around 806. He was a native of Gaza; his father converted to Islam but his mother remained Christian. After the death

---

49 . Ignace Dick, "La passion arabe de s. Antoine Ruwah, néomartyr de Damas (+ 25 dec. 799)" Le Muséon 74 (1961): 108-133. Paul Peeters, "S. Antoine le néo-martyr", Analecta Bollandiana 31 (1912): 410-450. Sidney Griffith, "The Arabic Account of 'Abd al-Masih an-Nagrani al-Ghassani", Le Muséon 89 (1985): 347-348.

of his father he went to Jerusalem and requested baptism from a monk he saw in the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The monk took him to the hospice of Mar Saba in Jerusalem where the hegumen baptized him. He was immediately arrested and sent to Fustat in Egypt by the amir, where he was executed[50].

Another, highly questionable account of a martyr is that of Michael of Mar Saba[51]. An incident of some sort did lead to Michael's death, perhaps sometime in the early Abbasid period, as is confirmed by a reference by Daniel the Abbott, a Russian pilgrim during the Crusades, to his relics in the Monastery of Mar Saba[52], but no details in the account are credible.

D. Archaeological Evidence for Christians

One bit of archaeological evidence closely datable to the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd is at Beth Shean, where the church on the mound of Tall al-Husn had clear Islamic, Kufic inscriptions scratched on the marble floor and columns. One of these is dated to 786 or 806 and was written lengthwise on one of the fallen columns, clearly indicating that the church had gone out of use before then[53].

An inscription on a lintel of an otherwise uninvestigated church at the site of al-Muhazzaq, somewhere near al-Rashādiya, south of Tafila, is a problem. The discoverers of the inscription at the turn of the century translated it:

> Le beau martyrion d'Achis et le cimitiére des justes d'Achis (ont été établis) sous Léonce Entoméos évêque du lieu, l'an des martyrs 502.

Dated according to the era of martyrs under Diocletian the year 502 is 786 A.D. Where Leonce Entomeos was bishop is uncertain. Clermont-Ganneau proposed a radically different reading and dated it according to the era of the province of Arabia to 607-608 A.D., when one might have expected the indiction year to be included, but whether the era of Arabia would have been used at al-Muhazzaq because it was in Palaestina Tertia is unclear. Also the numerals of the date are given units first then hundreds, typical for the era of Gaza, rather than the hundreds first then units, typical of the era of Bostra. Kirk argues for the 786 date[54].

---

50. Garitte, *Calendrier*, April 11: 59, 197; December 22: 111, 415. Brehier, "La situation", *Le Moyen Age* 30 (1919): 71-72. Griffith, "Arabic Account", *Le Muséon* 89 (1985): 348-349.

51. Paul Peeters, "La Passion de S. Michel le Sabaïte" *Analecta Bollandiana* 48 (1930): 65-98. Garitte, *Calendrier:* 340. Griffith, "Arabic Account", *Le Muséon* 98 (1985): 349-350.

52. B. de Khitrowo, *Itinéraires Russes en Orient* (Osnabrück: O. Zeller 1966): 34.

53. Gerald FitzGerald, *Beth Shean Excavations, 1921–1923, The Arab and Byzantine Levels* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press): 18-30, 48.

54. Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau, "La province d'Arabie", *Recueil d'archéologie orientale* 6 (1905): 327-328. George Kirk, "The Era of Diocletian in Palestinian Inscriptions", *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 18 (1938): 161-162. J. Germer-Durand, "Rectifications", *Echos d'Orient* 1 (1897-1898): 117-118.

Another church with archaeological evidence for the period is at Khirbat al-Nitla, near Jericho[55]. The fourth-phase church was built after the destruction of the third one, at the end of the eighth or start of the ninth century. It, like the third-phase church, was a small chapel made of dried, plastered bricks that reused the earlier mosaic. It was later remodeled into a storeroom for the next church built above it when piers were erected to support a second story. The fifth-phase church was made of dried brick walls and collapsed in the middle of the ninth century. The church phases show poor workmanship, indicating that they were built with limited, strictly local resources. Pottery from the ninth century was found in collapse debris as well as coins from the fourth to eighth centuries.

E. Umm al-Rasas

While strictly not in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem the recent discovery of the church of Saint Stephen at Umm al-Rasas, ancient Mefaa[56], is of such importance for the early Abbasid period that an examination is necessary here[57]. The mosaic floor in the nave should be dated to October 718, not to 785, while the mosaic in the apse dates to 756. The dedicatory inscription in the nave mosaic appears to date to October, 785 recorded as October of year 680 of the province of Arabia, which began in 106 A.D. when Trajan annexed the Nabataean Kingdom, in the time of Sergius, the bishop (of Mādabā).

The correctness of the 785 date can be disputed because the inscription also records the dedication date as year 2 of the fifteen year indiction cycle, which began in the reign of Diocletian, but this does not correspond to year 680 of the province of Arabia, which was indiction year 8 or 9[58]. Also the mosaic inscription was damaged in the vicinity of the date (See fig. 1). This damage was repaired by someone who did not know Greek when he inserted cubes to restore the inscription. This is demonstrated by his erroneous conversion of the letters Mu and Epsilon in the name Mefa to a Nu and Sigma. The full extent of the damage is indicated in the line above the date by the misshapen lower right portion of

55 . James Kelso and Dimitri Baramki, *Excavations at New Testament Jericho and Khirbat en-Nitla. Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 29-30 (1941-1951).

56 . The argument by Yoel Elitzur, "The Identification of Mefa'at in View of the Discoveries from Kh. Umm al-Rasas", *Israel Exploration Journal* 39 (1989) : 267-277 that Umm al-Rasas is not Mefaa is not convincing.

57 . Michele Piccirillo, *Chiese e Mosaici di Madaba* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1989): 269-308. Michele Piccirillo and Taysir Attiyat, "The Complex of Saint Stephen at Umm er-Rasas-Kastron Mefaa. First Campaign, August 1986", *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 30 (1986): 341-351. Michele Piccirillo, "Le iscrizioni di Um er-Rasas-Kastron Mefaa in Giordania I (1986-1987)", *Liber Annuus* 37 (1987): 177-239.

58 . See the charts of the indiction cycle and era of the province of Arabia in Rudolf Brünnow and Alfred von Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia* (Strassburg: K. J. Trubner, 1904-1909), vol. 3: 306-307.

the Omicron-Upsilon ligature and the misspelled Mu and Epsilon and, in the line with the date, by the misshapen upper right arm of the Chi and the misshapen left edge of the Upsilon. A few colored tesserae that the repairer used in the otherwise pure white background to the black letters also shows the area of damage and repair, as do the two upper dots to the right of the Pi that are not set at a 45 degree angle as are the lower dot and all the other dots in the inscription. Most of the upper right arm of the Greek letter Chi for the 600 of the 680 date appears to be damaged, but this damage does not affect the clear identification of the letter as Chi. However, it appears that all of the Greek letter Pi for the 80 of the 680 date is a repair, except for the extreme lower right portion, leaving doubt about whether the letter was correctly restored as Pi or originally was some other letter or letters.

If one accepts that the Chi for 600 is intact, but that the Pi for 80 may be wrong, the problem of the incorrect indiction year can be solved by replacing the Pi with the two Greek letters Iota and Gamma, dating the inscription to October of the year 613 of the province of Arabia, equivalent to March 22, 718 to March 21, 719 A.D., which corresponds to the second year of the indiction cycle, from September 1, 718 to August 31, 719 A.D. (See the proposed reconstruction in fig. 2). The letter Pi looks as similar to the Iota and Gamma as the restored Nu and Sigma look to the original Mu and Epsilon. It appears possible that when the mosaic was damaged, many of the cubes could have remained loosely in place, permitting the repairer to gain an impression of what the shapes of the original letters were, but that his ignorance of Greek prevented him from restoring the letters correctly.

The mosaic in the apse of the church of Saint Stephen was dedicated between March 1 and 14, 756 in the time of Bishop Job, as attested by a Greek dedicatory inscription. Its date is given as the month of March of year 650 of the era of the province of Arabia, equivalent to March 15, 755 to March 14, 756 A.D., and indiction year 9, equivalent to September 1, 755 to August 31, 756 A.D. The mosaic inscription is undamaged, making the correctness of the March 1–14, 756 date undisputed.

Bisheh argues that the nave mosaic in the church of Saint Stephen dates to the 6th century, rather than to 785 or 718, as proposed here[59]. He bases his date on his impression of the art style of the mosaic, which to him fits better in the late 6th century than in the 8th century. He also observes that Sergius is named

---

59 . Ghazi Bisheh, "Munahadāt al-Suwar wa-Tashwīhuha fī Daw' al-Ardīyāt al-Fusayfisā'iya al-Muktashifa fī Umm al-Rasās wa-Māʿīn". Paper presented at the March 1990 conference at the University of Jordan on the History of Bilād al-Shām During the Abbasid Period, expanding his arguement in "Mulāhazāt Hawla Kanīsat al-Qadīs Istifān fī Umm al-Rasās (Mayfaʿa): Taʾrīkhuha wa-Ahammiyāt Zakhārīfiha al-Fusayfisā-'iya", *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* 31 (1987): 11-16.

as the bishop in both the 587 inscription in the mosaic floor of the Bishop Sergius church, which adjoins the Saint Stephen church at Umm al-Rasās, and the nave mosaic from the church of Saint Stephen, and concludes that these two bishops are one and the same person, who built both churches.

Bisheh simply dismisses the repaired date recorded in the inscription without explaining how the Greek letter Chi of the date should be taken into account. If, as argued here, the Chi is largely intact, with only the upper right arm damaged, then the inscription must date to the 600s of the province of Arabia, the 8th century A.D., regardless of what general date the art style of the mosaic may suggest, and so the two bishops named Sergius must be two different people who merely happened to have the same name.

The implications of restoring the date as 718 instead of 785 are great[60]. The 718 date is before the March 756 date of the apse mosaic, rather than later. Thus the sequence of events in the history of the church are changed. The images of people and animals in the nave mosaic, as well as those in the mosaic of the adjoining Bishop Serius church were all deliberately damaged and then repaired. A dedication date of 785 places the subsequent damage to the images well into the early Abbasid period, a time when literary sources provide no convincing setting for the motivation for the damage. However, with the dedication date of 718 the date of the subsequent deliberate damage can be linked with a number of different motivations. The damage could have been the direct result of the iconoclastic edict that the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II issued in 721 three years after the dedication of the mosaic[61].

The damage and repairs, however, could also be connected with the dedication date of March 1–14, 756 for the purely geometric mosaic in the apse[62]. It is possible that at the same time that the new geometric mosaic in the apse was laid in 756 the damage to the images in the nave mosaic was repaired. It is hardly likely that damage done by Yazīd's edict in 721 was only repaired some 35 years later, but it is possible that 756 is the date when the damage itself occurred, which was promptly repaired.

If this last possibility is correct, the 756 date is close enough to the date of the 754 iconoclastic church council in the Byzantine Empire to suggest the possible influence of Byzantine iconoclasm on the solidly Melkite Christians in Jordan-

---

60 . For the general background of the Christians in the early Islamic period see: Robert Schick, "The Fate of the Christians in Palestine During the Byzantine-Umayyad Transition, A.D. 600-750", (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1987), soon to published as *The Christian Communities of Palestine From Byzantine to Islamic Rule: An Historical and Archaeological study* (Princeton: Darwin Press, Forthcoming).

61 . Mansi 13: 196-200. Alexander Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721", Dumbarton Oaks Papers 9-10 (1956): 24-57.

62 . As argued by Bisheh (See footnote 59).

Palestine. The major argument against Byzantine iconoclastic influence, however, is the nature of the damaged images, which at Umm al-Rasās and the forty or so other cases of similar damage to church mosaics in the area are not icons of Christ, the Virgin Mary or saints, subject to veneration, but rather are images of ordinary people and animals. 756 is also so soon after the Abbasid revolution of 132/750 that the damage could reflect a stricter Muslim attitude towards the Christians and their use of images by the new Abbasid rulers than the Umayyad attitude, but this has little support in any literary source.

Irrespective of the exact date of the nave mosaic, the use of Greek, the Byzantine indiction year cycle, and the era of the province of Arabia, by the Arabic speaking population of this small remote town as late as the mid-8th century is indicative of the degree to which the local Christians had not yet assimilated to their Muslim rulers.

The Civil War (193-198/809-813)

The civil war after the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 193/809 had a dramatic impact on southern Bilād al-Shām. Theophanes reports for 808-809[63]:

> Thereupon [after the outbreak of the civil war] the inhabitants of Syria, Egypt, and Libya divided up into different states and upset public affairs and each other. They were ruined by murders, robberies, and every kind of misdeed toward both themselves and the Christians under them. It was then that the churches in the holy city of Christ our God were laid waste, as were the monasteries of the two great groups of eremitic monks (Khariton and Kyriakos), that of St. Saba, and the remaining cenobitic communities of Sts. Euthymios and Theodosios. This slaughter, directed against each other and us, continued through five years of anarchy.

Theophanes later says that one rebel piratically plundered Palestine in 811-812[64], and reports for 812-813[65]:

> In the same year many Christian monks from Palestine and all Syria reached Cyprus, fleeing the boundless evil of the Arabs. For general anarchy had seized Syria, Egypt, Africa, and their entire empire: in villages and cities their people, cursed by God, murdered, robbed, committed adultery and acts of licentiousness, and did all sorts of things hateful to God. The revered sites of the holy resurrection, the skull, and others in the vicinity of the holy city were profaned. In the same way, the famous eremitic monasteries of Sts. Khariton

---

63 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6301: 484. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 165.
64 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6304: 497. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 176.
65 . Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6305: 499. Turtledove, *Chronicle:* 178.

and Saba in the desert, as well as other churches and monasteries, were devastated. Some men became martyrs; others got to Cyprus, and from it to Byzantium. The Emperor Michael and the holy patriarch Nikephorus kindly entertained them. Michael helped them in every way. He gave the men who entered the city a famous monastery, and sent a talent of gold to the monks and laymen still on Cyprus.

These raids were certainly destructive, but they did not mean the end to monasticism in the Wilderness of Judaea. For example, Theodore the Studite wrote letters to the monasteries of Saint Chariton and Saint Euthymius and Mar Saba around 817-819[66].

Among the refugee monks, as mentioned earlier, were Michael Synkellos, the Graphti brothers, Theodore and Theophanes, and Job. None of the refugee monks seem to have ever returned[67]. These refugee monks from Palestine played a major role in the Byzantine Empire in the revival of learning and the adoption of the minuscule Greek script in the 9th century[68]. The need for a more efficient way to copy Greek manuscripts may have developed in the monasteries of the Wilderness of Judaea and Saint Catherine's monastery at Mount Sinai, due to their reduced resources in isolation under Muslim rule and due to the challenge to produce writings that would refute iconoclasm. The refugee monks would have brought their manuscripts and techniques with them to Byzantium, where copying manuscripts had not yet become a part of the monks' daily routine.

Conclusion

Throughout this period the Christians were in decline. They were largely cut off from contact with the Byzantine Empire and subjected to pressures to convert to Islam. But the picture of decline should not be overly stressed. Many Christians and churches remained, especially in Jerusalem where hardly any decline in their fortunes is noticeable. Similarly the church of Saint Stephen at Umm al-Rasās reveals that a thriving community of Christian Arabs in an out-of-the-way town could continue to prosper for at least a while after the Abbasid revolution. Also the monasteries in the Wilderness of Judaea and Saint Catherine's monastery in Mount Sinai remained influential far beyond the territorial limits of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

---

66 . Theodore the Studite, *Patrologia Graeca* 99: 1155-1174.
67 . Jean Gouillard, "Un "quartier" d'émigrés palestiniens à Constantinople au IXe siècle", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européenes* 7 (1969): 73-76.
68 . Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1987): 404-407, citing Cyril Mango, "La culture grec et l'Occident au VIIIe siècle", *Settimane* 20 (1973): 683-721.
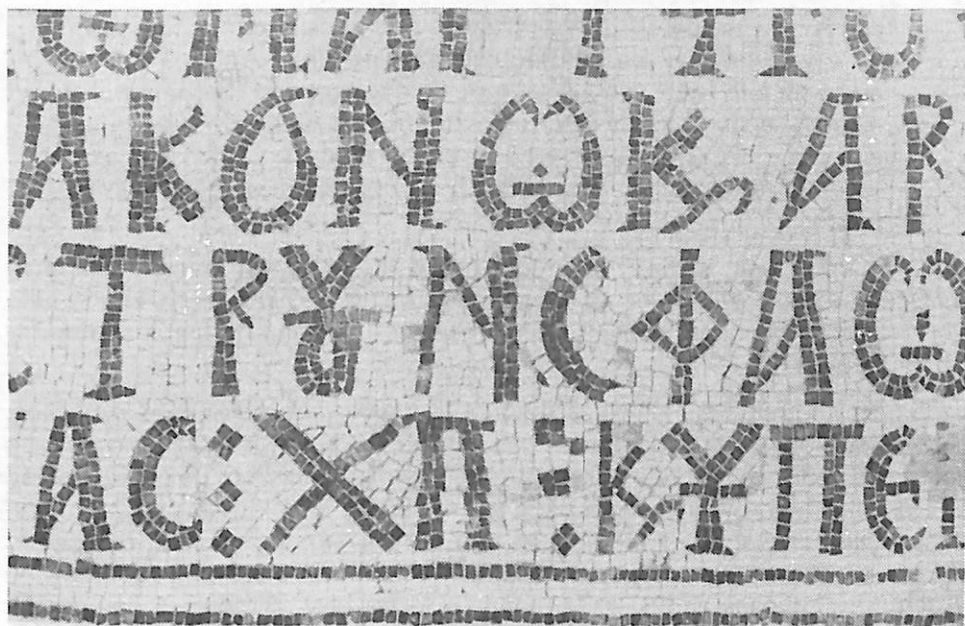
Fig 1: Detail of the Damaged Area of the Umm al-Rasas Mosaic Inscription
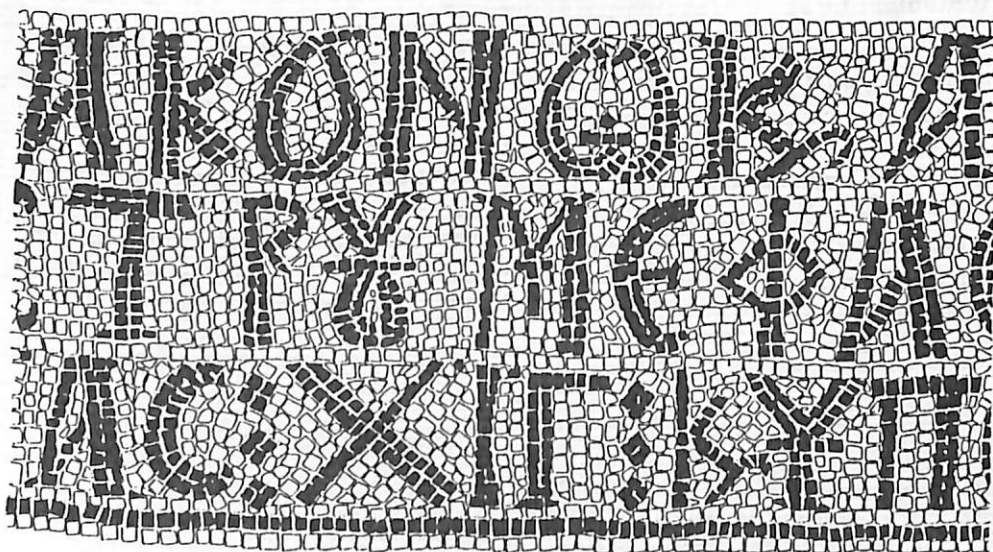
Fig. 2: Proposed Restoration of the Umm al-Rasas Mosaic Inscription

Non-Urban Rebels in Urban Society - The Case of Fatimid Damascus

by
Axel Havemann[*]

1. The Question at Issue

Thanks to the research of scholars in the field of Syrian urban history, we know a fair amount about the political and social roles played by certain groups, who almost always stemmed from a low social origin. Described by the sources under different generic names, which will be discussed in this paper, these groups seemed to have fully appeared by the second half of the tenth century, i.e. since the attempts of the Fatimids to rule over large parts of Syria. Beçause these groups distinguished themselves, among other things, by defending Syria's cities against the Fatimid armies, they are generally characterized as urban groups of armed resistance or as a kind of urban militia, the so-called ahdāth.

However, it has been largely overlooked that parts of this social stratum, as well as some of its leaders, did not come from an urban milieu, and, therefore, cannot simply be lumped together with the urban groups of local resistance and unrest. On the other hand, the non-urban elements became more or less integrated into the urban environment, and, in some cases, were acknowledged as members of one common concern, namely resistance to the Fatimids. To the best of my knowledge, in Fatimid Syria this phenomenon of rural elements within an urban area can only be observed with regard to the events in Damascus.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the rural origin and character of some sections and leaders of the armed groups in Fatimid Damascus and to attempt to assess the significance of this influx of rural elements into Damascus for the social organization of the city in the period under study.

The period to be discussed spans the first three decades of Fatimid rule in Damascus, from its inception in 359/969 to 388/998. In order to place things in the right perspective, it is necessary to consider our topic within the general context of Fatimid policy towards Syria during this period.

2. A Sketch of the Political History

By the second half of the fourth/tenth century, Syria emerged from the marginal position to which it had been relegated since the fall of the Umayyad caliphate. Coveted by three competitive powers, the Byzantine empire, the Fatimid caliphate, and the Abbasid caliphate, Syria became the principal battlefield of their imperial ambitions. However, due to the increasing political weakness and military inability of the Abbasids, mainly the Byzantines and the Fatimids, since

---

[*]   Institute of Islamic Studies, Free University of Berlin.

359/969 at their new capital of Cairo, were left to struggle for predominance over Syria, located midway between them. Each of these powers eagerly tried to gain control of as many key positions in the land as possible. Because of its excellent seaports Syria became both a goal and a challenge for the imperial competitors, after the revival of commerce in western Europe and the emergence of the Italian cities as flourishing centres of mercantile exchange had reactivated maritime trade in the Mediterranean[1].

The conflict of imperial interests between the Byzantines and the Fatimids provided the opportunity for various forces within Syria to assert themselves either with the backing of one or another of the contestants, or by resisting them. Most prominent among these local Syrian forces were the great tribal confederations and the townsmen. In the absence or near absence of orderly administration, a minimum of order was maintained in Syria through regional principalities who, being themselves of tribal origin, tried to come to terms with the local tribes by placating them with favours, and through local urban dynasties who tried to keep their power by becoming clients of one of the imperial neighbours[2]. In yet other cases, notably in Damascus, people tried to get along with politics on their own by strongly resisting any effort of imperial occupation and control. In short, Syria was open to whomever proved to be the strongest.

Given these conditions, the first three decades of Fatimid policy towards Syria developed in several distinctive phases[3]:

The *first* one (359/969-368/978) was marked by three successive Fatimid military defeats. After the invasion of Syria in 359/969 and the conquest of al-

---

1. Shlomo D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society. The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 1: 29-42.

2. Thierry Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination fatimide (359-468/969-1076). Essai d'interprétation de chroniques arabes médiévales* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1986/1989), 1: 14-22; 2: 653-670; see also Bernard Lewis, "Egypt and Syria", in B. Lewis, A. S. Lambton, P. M. Holt, eds., *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 1: 175-230; Kamal S. Salibi, *Syria under Islam: Empire on Trial, 634-1097* (Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1977): 84-94; Mustafa al-Hiyari, *al-Imāra al-Tayy'iya fi Bilād al-Shām* (Amman: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa al-Shabāb, 1977).

3. For the following see the short survey in Axel Havemann, *Ri'āsa und qadā'. Institutionen als Ausdruck wechselnder Kräfteverhältnisse in syrischen Städten vom 10. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1975): 78-83; Gerhard Hoffmann, *Kommune oder Staatsbürokratie? Zur politischen Rolle der Bevölkerung syrischer Städte vom 10. bis 12. Jahrhundert* (Berlin/GDR: Akademie-Verlag, 1975): 51-59.

Ramla, Tiberias and Damascus the Fatimid army was defeated by the Qarmatians (in 360/971), the heretical tribesmen of eastern Arabia who attempted several times to threaten Fatimid power. Three years later (363/974), a new Fatimid army was dispatched into Syria and for almost a year made repeated attacks on Damascus. In spite of heavy fighting and destruction the army leader, Abū Mahmūd Ibrāhīm b. Ja'far b. al-Falāh[4], failed to gain a firm grip over the city. Another two years later (365-366/976-977), the Fatimids suffered their most humiliating defeat. Having besieged Damascus for several months in vain, the army commander himself came under siege by both a Turkish adventurer called Alptakin, who was meanwhile ruling over the city, and by the Qarmatians. When the Fatimid Caliph al-'Azīz personally led an army into Syria, the Turk was crushed, but Damascus fell into the hands of the local militias, the *ahdāth*.

During the *second* phase (368/978-373/983), Damascus was ruled by the *ahdāth* under their leader al-Qassām. It took the Fatimids five years to bring this rule to an end (373/983). However, the military achievement was wasted by nominating as governor someone who disobeyed the caliph's orders and tyrannized the Damascene population. His rule, which also lasted for five years (373/983-378/988), underlined the difficulties that the Fatimids had with firmly controlling the cities of Syria. This *third* phase only ended when the governor was expelled by a new Fatimid general (378/988).

The *fourth* phase, lasting for eight years (378/988-386/996), is characterized by Fatimid attempts to expand their rule further into northern Syria. During a three-year long war against Aleppo, the Fatimids clashed with the Byzantine armies, which ended in complete Fatimid defeat (385/995).

The *fifth* and last phase relevant for our discussion (386/996-388/998) is related to the conflict between the Berbers and the Turkish and other eastern elements in the Fatimid army[5]. When the Berbers established their supremacy in Egypt, the then Turkish governor of the Fatimids in Damascus, Manjūtakīn, became alarmed. Successive fights between his forces and those of a newly arrived army under a Berber commander led to the defeat of the Turk, but soon turned out to be fateful for the Berber commander himself, as the *ahdāth* of Damascus rose in rebellion against him, drove him out of the city and assumed the leadership. Among them was a certain Duhayqīn (387/997).

The next year saw a new Berber general, Jaysh b. al-Samsāma, as governor of Damascus who intended to deal once and for all with the power of the *ahdāth*. Having invited about two hundred of them with their leaders to a banquet, he

---

4 . Thierry Bianquis, "Notables ou malandrins d'origine rurale à Damas à l'époque fatimide", *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 26 (1973): 188-196.

5 . Jaacov Lev, "Army, Regime, and Society in Fatimid Egypt 358-487/968-1094", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 337-366.

gave orders to start a massacre among the *ahdāth*. According to some sources, 3000 of them were killed in the excesses that followed[6].

3. Rural Leaders and Rural Gangs in Fatimid Damascus

Both the contemporary and later Syrian and Egyptian accounts mention the appearance of rural elements in early Fatimid Damascus. This is explicitly stated with regard to the first, the second and the fifth phase of Fatimid policy outlined above. However, the difficulty in evaluating the extent of rural and urban interrelation in Damascus fairly is partly due to the meagerness or lack of information, as well as to the vague use by historians of varying terms to characterize the armed groups in and around the city.

From studying the events in tenth century Damascus and, more generally, in all of Syria, it is evident that the failure of the Fatimid campaigns was not only due to their military shortcomings. Nor was it only their inability to make, as Ismāʿīlis, their rule popular in the Syrian cities, which were either staunchly Sunnite (like Damascus, al-Ramla, Tiberias and Jerusalem) or staunchly Twelver Shīʿite (like Aleppo, Tyre and Tripoli), and in either case strongly opposed in principle to Ismāʿīlism. A crucial reason for the fiasco of Fatimid policy in Syrian cities was the violent resistance put up by local armed groups, particularly in Damascus. Who were these groups? In a previous study I examined the terminology used by medieval historians to specify these groups as well as the reasons underlying this specification[7]. In this article, I am primarily concerned with those armed groups and individuals who did not have an urban origin but, nevertheless, were as important as the urban groups for the social composition of the city and partly also for the organization of its defense against foreign, non-Syrian powers. Considering the terminology, I think that under the different generic names given by the sources two groups can be broadly distinguished: the *ahdāth*, who are often defined by rather pejorative terms, and an amorphous group of a somewhat criminal character, composed of both urban and rural elements. The following examples may support this differentiation.

1 . Ibn al-Qalānisī and Ibn ʿAsākir identify the elements that participated in the revolt against the first Fatimid occupation of Damascus as *ahdāth* of Damascus and the Ghūta, the city's fertile surroundings[8]. The later historian Ibn al-Athīr uses

---

6 . Abū Yaʿlā Hamza ibn al-Qalānisī, (d. 555/1160), *Dhayl Taʾrīkh Dimashq*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908): 52-54 (there is another edition by Suhayl Zakkar, Damascus, 1983, which, however, has not been quoted here). ʿAlī b. Muhammad ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233), *al-Kāmil fī al-Taʾrīkh*, ed. C. J. Thornberg (Reprint Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1966), 9: 121-122; for the context see Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie*, 1: 243 ff.

7 . Havemann, *Riʾāsa*, esp. 113 ff.

8 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 1; ʿAli b. al-Hasan ibn ʿAsākir, (d. 571/1176), ed. Thierry Bianquis, "Les derniers gouverneurs ikhchidides à Damas", *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 23 (1970): 192.

the same term[9]. Al-Dhahabī speaks of people of the Ghūta and *al-shabāb*, the young men, while al-Maqrīzi and Ibn al-Dawādāri speak of armed people *(hummāl al-silāh)* and about *dhu'ār,* spiteful and wicked people[10].

2 . An additional definition of the armed groups is given in the records that deal with the Fatimid attacks on Damascus during 363/974. Ibn al-Qalānisī and al-Maqrīzī tell us of many mobsters *(al-ghaughā')* and armed men[11]. Ibn al-Dawādāri speaks of groups defined as *al-shuttār, al-mashālih* and *al-harāmiya,* which means slyboots, malefactors, and criminals. Alternatively these men are sometimes signified as *al-ahdāth* and *al-ghaughā'* or as *al-ahdāth* and *ahl al-shirr* (or: *ahl al-shirra*), which can both mean evil people or young, enthusiastic men[12].

After the initial clashes between the Fatimid troops and the population of Damascus many people from the Ghūta and even from more remote villages sought refuge in the city. They were organized into bands according to their place of origin, and each band, led by a chief of its own, had control of a zone of the city. According to al-Maqrīzī, these groups included beggars and rapacious people[13]. One group among them was called *al-Hiyājana,* the people of Hijāna, a village situated some thirty kilometers southeast of Damascus in the area called al-Marj[14]. This gang was known for its notorious reputation, its members having nothing to do than to rob and rifle the honorable men. Al-Maqrīzī goes on to say that the wicked people *(dhu'ār)* of the Ghūta ganged up with the *ahl al-shirr* of Damascus; together they levied taxes from the markets and looted several areas, thereby improving their own situation and impoverishing many others[15]. This description clearly indicates criminal activity.

On the other hand, the population of Damascus fought on the side of the *ahl al-shirr,* i.e. the *ahdāth.* When, on one occasion, the Fatimid soldiers tried to

---

9 . Ibn al-Athīr, 8: 591-592.

10 . Muhammad b. 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), *al-'Ibar fi Khabar Man Ghabar,* ed. F. Sayyid (Kuwait, 1961), 2: 319: Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Maqrīzī, (d. 845/1441), *Itti'āz al-Hunafā' bi-Akhbār al-A'imma al-Fātimiyīn al-Khulafā',* ed. J. al-Din al-Shayyal (Cairo, 1967), 1: 124; Abū Bakr b. 'Abd Allāh b. Aybak al-Dawādāri, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar,* (written in 732/1331), ed. S. al-Din al-Munajjid (Cairo, 1961), 6: 126.

11 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 4-5: al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz,* 1: 211, al-Maqrīzī; *al-Muqaffā,* transl. Bianquis, "Notables ou malandrins": 191.

12 . Ibn al-Dawādāri, 6: 166; Ibn al-Qalānisī: 5, 8-9; Ibn al-Athīr, 8: 640; see also on these groups Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), index.

13 . Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz:* 212; *al-Muqaffā* (Bianquis): 193, gives various names of city quarters and band leaders.

14 . Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz:* 211: *al-Muqaffā* (Bianquis): 192.

15 . Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz:* 212-213.

attack only the latter, it was impossible to distinguish them from the rest of the population.[16] Unfortunately, the sources do not mention whether armed elements from a rural origin like the *Hiyājana* gang also joined company with the urban population and the *ahdāth* in the fight against the Fatimid troops.

3. The most striking example of the influx of rural elements into the armed groups of Damascus was a man called al-Qassām[17]. His emergence as the political leader of Damascus fell at a time when the Fatimids were trying hard to regain control over the city after having lost it to the Turkish general Alptakīn who had ruled in the name of the Abbasid caliph.

Al-Qassām became the ruler of Damascus for five years (368/978-373/983). He is characterized as *al-tarrāb,* a term which Cahen translated as "terrassier" and Ashtor as "ditcher"[18]. A further idea of the kind of work al-Qassām was doing can be gained from the sources. Al-Maqrīzī describes him as a man who carried earth on his donkey and also calls him *saqqāt,* i.e. junkman[19]. In the words of Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Qassām was a dustman *(tarrāb)* who dealt with dung *(zibl)*[20]. According to al-Kutubī, he was only *tarrāb; zabbāl,* i.e. a man working with *zibl,* was a nickname given to him by the Damascene population[21]. In the Cairo Geniza documents the word *tarrāb* means dustman, worker in clay or in mortar[22]. Whatever the case, al-Qassām's occupation points out his very low social position.

Al-Qassām was not a native of Damascus. He stemmed from a village in the Sanīr mountains between Hims and Ba'albek and belonged to the Bedouin tribe of Hārithūna[23]. Because of this semi-rural and semi-nomadic origin, al-Qassām was not recognized as a full member of the urban society of Damascus. Irrespective of his political career in the city he is described by some sources as *'ayyār,* tramp or vagabond, and his group as *'ayyārūn*[24]. The latter term usually referred to popular movements in the eastern Islamic world; very probably, it cannot be considered as a synonym to *ahdāth,* though there existed certain similarities

---

16. Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz.* 212-213; see also Ibn al-Qalānisī: 9-10.
17. Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie,* 1: 117 ff., 135 ff.
18. Claude Cahen, "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie musulmane du moyen âge, 1 ", *Arabica* 5 (1958): 236; Eliyahu Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages* (London: Collins, 1976): 204.
19. Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz.* 1: 249.
20. Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 196.
21. Muhammad b. Shākir b. Ahmad al-Kutubī, (d. 764/1363) *'Uyūn al-Ta'rīkh,* MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Arabic, f. 402 A.
22. Moshe Gil, *Documents of the Jewish Pious Foundations from the Cairo Geniza* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976): 186, 192-193, 462, 464.
23. Al-Kutubī, f. 401 A; Ibn al-Qalānisī: 26; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 195.
24. Al-Dhahabī, in Ibn al-Qalānisī: 27, n.1; al-Maqrizi, *Itti'āz,* 1: 257: Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 209.

between the eastern movements and those in Syria[25]. That al-Qassām was called al-'ayyārī by a drunken Persian soldier may explain the use of this term in the Syrian context; it was probably nothing else than invective[26].

Concerning al-Qassām's career in Damascus there are two accounts that are complementary rather than contradictory. He associated with a certain Ibn al-Jistār, depicted by some authors as an armed idle man and by others as belonging to the ahdāth. It was through Ibn al-Jistār's group that al-Qassām rose to a powerful position[27]. According to the second version, he was a companion of the Turkish general Alptakīn and, through his connection with him, became famous and respected[28].

Having assumed the leadership of Damascus, al-Qassām is described as ra'īs al-shuttār (chief of the malefactors) and alternatively as head of the ahdāth and young people[29]. At the beginning of his rule he enjoyed wide support both from the city folk and the villagers of the Ghūta. He was called "the King of Damascus" and "the King of men". The symbol that appeared on his standards was a skull (qihf)[30]. There are some indications of criminal activity by al-Qassām's men in the Ghūta where they collected protection money (al-khafāra) and illegal things (bātil), like the group of al-Qassām's friend, Ibn al-Jistār, had done[31]. According to some reports, al-Qassām also appropriated the functions of the financial administration in Damascus[32]. From reading the various accounts of al-Qassām's activities one gets the impression that he became for some years an almost independent ruler with rather unlimited powers.

However, by 373/983, the support that al-Qassām had enjoyed fell away and, finally, completely evaporated. The sources provide a lively picture of the last days of al-Qassām's rule in Damascus[33]. On the eve of the arrival of a new

---

25 . Cahen, "Mouvements populaires, 2, 3", Arabica 6 (1959): 25-56, 233-265; Franz Taeschner, "'Ayyār", The Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed., 1: 794.

26 . Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 192: Ibn 'Asākir, Tahdhīb Ta'rīkh Dimashq, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Badrān (Damascus, 1332 H.), 4: 454.

27 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 21, 26; al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, 1: 258; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 196; al-Kutubī, ff. 401 B, 402 B. Before that, al-Qassām already seems to have been one of the band's leaders in Damascus, but lower in rank and with no exclusive control over a zone of the city; al-Maqrīzī, al-Muqaffā (Bianquis): 193.

28 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 16, 21: al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, 1: 239-240; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 177, Ibn al-Athīr, 8: 697.

29 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 21, 23; al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, 1: 253-254; Ibn al-Athīr, 8: 697-698, Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 190; al-Dhahabī, al-'Ibar, 3: 2-3.

30 . Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 190, 195, 210; Bianquis, Damas et la Syrie, 1: 118, gives three possible meanings of the Arabic word qihf.

31 . Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 196; al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, 1: 257.

32 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 21; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 190-191.

33 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 25-26; Ibn al-Athīr, 9: 7-8; Ibn al-Dawādārī, 6: 206-207, 209; al-Kutubī, ff. 429 A-B; al-Maqrīzī, Itti'āz, 1: 256-258.

Fatimid army, al-Qassām recalled his men from the Ghūta and from inside Damascus, giving them orders to fortify the city walls and keep watch at the gates. But when the fighting started only a handful of his followers remained faithful to him. Al-Maqrīzī explains that al-Qassām did not satisfy the financial demands of his men, but from his own account it seems clear that the causes were more profound and the discontent more widespread. Even the most loyal supporters did not stand by him to the end. The proposal to cease fighting came from among them. Al-Qassām fell into complete despair when he heard this suggestion. He abandoned his wife and children and went underground. Several days later he gave himself up to the Fatimid opponent and was brought to Egypt[34].

4 . My last examples of rural impact on Damascene politics refer to incidents that happened from 386/996 to 388/998. In the course of tensions that were evolving between the Fatimid governor of Damascus, a man of Turkish extraction, and the Berber troops, who tried to maintain their military position vis-a-vis the rising Turkish element[35], the economic situation in Damascus deteriorated heavily. The population wanted to get rid of the Turkish governor, but the armed people *(hummāl al-silāh)* and "those who sought a riot" *(wa-man yatlub al-fitna)* refused to fight the Turk. However, again a gang called *al-Hiyājana,* made up of village people from the Marj area and known for its misdeeds and lawlessness, appeared and looted both the houses of the Turkish governor and his commanders, whereupon the governor fled from the city. According to my understanding of the report as given by al-Maqrīzī[36], this time the rural elements were not alongside the urban armed groups, be they *ahdāth* (denoted as *hummāl al-silāh*) or those who were characterized as "people who sought a riot", an expression which obviously means criminal elements.

It was only some months later that repercussions of the ongoing competition between the Berbers and the Turks were felt again in Damascus. The newly appointed Berber governor was expelled by a coalition built up of the population of Damascus and the Turkish forces in the city. Following this, the heads of the *ahdāth* divided the leadership over Damascus among themselves. One of these leaders is called in the sources Duhayqīn or Duhayqayn, in others also Dahtaqīn[37]. Unfortunately, very little is known about this man's biography, apart from the fact that his rule came to an end very quickly. On the eve of the arrival of a new Fatimid army, Duhayqayn escaped from Damascus to Egypt where he was wel-

---

34 . See the interesting details in Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie,* 1: 135-140.

35 . Ibn al-Qalānisī: 45-46; Ibn al-Athīr, 9: 118 ff.; for the background of this conflict see Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie,* 1: 217 ff.

36 . Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz,* 2: 10; Ibn al-Qalānisī: 46-47.

37 . Al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz,* 2: 31-32; Ibn al-Qalānisī: 49-50; Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Antākī, *Histoire,* ed./trad. I. Kratchkovsky and A. Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis* 23 (1932): 454.

comed as a military volunteer[38].

However, it has been plausibly suggested that the meaning of the name Duhayqayn is "the small *dihqān*". According to Cahen, the Iranian word *dihqān* usually denoted a village chief and corresponded to the Arabic word *ra'īs*[39]. As is commonly known, the word *ra'īs* was also the term used for a leader of the *ahdāth*. If Cahen's argument is true, it would imply that Duhayqayn, one of the leaders of the *ahdāth*, must have had some connection with rural areas. Whether he really was a village chief or not, either before or even during the time he rose to power in Damascus, cannot be proved, as the sources do not give any information about this question. But what seems to be rather probable is that he was not from an urban origin, but belonged to that kind of rural people who happened to infiltrate the city, whatever the reasons they might have had.

4. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn, both as results of what has been said and as new questions open to future research:

1 . During the first three decades of Fatimid sovereignty over Damascus the social composition of the city was subject to a considerable degree of mobility and change. On the basis of Arabic records dealing with the period under discussion it has been demonstrated that there existed some groups in Damascus that originated from rural areas, but participated very actively in the internal affairs of the city. The fact that the same gang, the *Hiyājana*, appeared twice in a span of twenty four years indicates a recurrent, if not a continual presence of rural elements in Damascus. The same is true for individuals from the countryside who made their political careers in the city as leaders of the *ahdāth*. The most illustrative example of this type of individual is certainly al-Qassām al-tarrāb.

2 . It seems that, usually, the rural groups and/or individuals cooperated with the urban armed elements. Whether this cooperation was restricted to doing criminal or semi-criminal acts (such as collecting protection money) or whether urban and rural elements also associated in the city's resistance and defense against foreign troops, is not always clear. In this context, it should be taken into consideration that the belief of the Fatimids, i.e. Ismā'īlism, elicited a rather welcome reception in the countryside, whereas it was categorically rejected by the Sunni city folk. On the other hand, during the first revolt against Fatimid occupation, the *ahdāth* of Damascus and of the Ghūta, the city's fertile surroundings, fought side by side.

---

38 . Yahyā b. Sa'īd: 455; according to Ibn al-Qalānisī: 53-54, Duhayqayn fell victim to the massacres committed among the *ahdāth* in 388/998 by the Berber soldiers of the governor.

39 . Cahen, "Mouvements populaires, 1": 236; see also Ann K. S. Lambton, "Dihkān", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new ed., 2: 253-254.

3. The influx of rural elements into Damascus can be partly explained by the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity outside the city, caused by Bedouin raids and the invasions of the Qarmatians, and other tribes.

4. It seems that, generally, the scope of interrelations between the city and rural environs in Muslim society was much greater than often assumed. As has been elaborated, for example, similar phenomena of rural elements joining the urban population can be observed during the Mamluk period in Syria as well[40]. In the context of research done on Islamic law, the concept of the Hanafite school of "the all-embracing town" *(al-misr al-jāmi')*[41] points to an interesting parallel to the situation of city-village relations in Fatimid Syria as revealed by the reports on the armed elements in Damascus.

---

40. Ira M. Lapidus, "Muslim Cities and Islamic Societies", in idem (ed.), *Middle Eastern Cities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969): 47-79; Lapidus, *Muslim Cities.* (see note 12)

41. Baber Johansen, "The all-embracing town and its mosques. al-Misr al-Gāmi'", *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* 32 (1981-1982): 139-161.

L' ânier de village, le chevalier de la steppe, le cavalier de la citadelle, trois personnages de la transition en Syrie.

Thierry Bianquis*

Introduction: La Syrie en marge.

Le Xe et le XIe siècles furent pour la Syrie des siècles de transition. La province avait connu une période difficile dans les dernières décennies du califat omayyade et au premier siècle abbasside. La guerre navale que se menaient Byzantins et Musulmans et l'installation de pirates en Crète avaient entraîné la fermeture de la Méditerranée orientale au trafic maritime. L'ancien itinéraire commercial qui joignait le Yémen et l'Arabie à la Méditerranée par le plateau est-jordanien avait été détourné au profit d'une voie iraqienne, maritime, fluviale et terrestre, Golfe-Mésopotamie-Djéziré, frolant seulement la Syrie du nord.

Par ailleurs, les désordres bédouins, impossibles à juguler définitivement, reprenaient sans cesse. Les tribus très nombreuses avaient conservé jalousement leur identité, nouaient et dénouaient des alliances. Celles qui, relevant de Qays, étaient demeurées bédouines, étaient de moins en moins facilement acceptées dans les armées califales, et s'efforçaient de gêner l'installation agricole des Yéménites. Les petites tribus bédouines avaient perdu leur rôle de convoyage car les caravanes importantes comme celles du pélerinage finançaient des troupes d'accompagnement, fournies par l'armée officielle ou par deux ou trois grandes tribus. Ces petites tribus, appauvries, furent réceptives, à la fin du IXe et au début du Xe siècle, à une propagande carmate condamnant les fastes urbains et ceux de pélerinage. La répression fut dure. La carte tribale, si complexe et si nuancée á l'époque de Hârûn al-Rashîd -une trentaine de tribus différentes mentionnées dans les environs immédiats de Damas — se simplifia dramatiquement aux Xe et XIe siècles. L'ensemble de la Syrie ne devait pas comprendre alors plus d'une quinzaine de groupes tribaux ayant gardé conscience d'une identité. Ces groupes étaient évidemment bien plus puissants que précédemment et dotés pour certains d'une véritable armée ainsi que d'ambitions politiques à long terme.

Une province, sans fonction publique développé.

Depuis 750, Damas n'était plus le siège d'un pouvoir impérial mais simplement d'un gouvernorat de jund aux activités réduites. Aucune ad-

* Université Lumière - Lyon II

ministration offrant des emplois fixes n'y fonctionnait. Déjà, sous les Omayyades, les récits biographiques rassemblés par Ibn 'Asâkir témoignent d'un développement très modeste du systéme étatique. Lorsqu'on suit la vie de la cité à l'époque fatimide on s'étonne de la rareté de mentions concernant un dîwân ou un muhtasib, à une époque où les textes décrivant le Caire et Fustat montrent le bourgeonnement d'une bureaucratie pléthorique[1]. La discrétion des indications sur les lieux d'exercices du pouvoir public à Damas s'explique aisément ainsi que la difficulté que rencontrent les historiens à les localiser avec précision.

L'image contrastée des aspirants au pouvoir.

Dans une telle cité, le lent gravissement des échelons hiérarchiques tel que le pratiquaient les secrétaires chrétiens et juifs des diwans égyptiens, n'avait pas cours. Le mode de sélection des élites était différent à Misr-Fustat où la soumission aux autorités militaires et civiles faisait prime et à Damas où la carrière était ouverte aux caractères forts et aux hommes courageux.

Cet exposé va être consacré à la typologie de ceux qui parvinrent soit à faire parler d'eux, soit à prendre le pouvoir à Damas ou à Alep. Plus que sur leurs spécificités réelles, sur lesquelles les renseignements précis et fiables manquent, c'est sur l'image que les écrivains arabes ont donnée de chacun de ces types humains qve porte cet article. A l'exception d'al-Musabbihî et de Yahyâ d'Antioche, les historiens qui nous informent sur cette longue crise, Ibn 'Asâkir, Ibn al-Qalânisî, et Ibn al-'Adîm, vivaient un ou deux siècles après les événements décrits, dans un monde différent où le pouvoir était fermement tenu par une élite militaire non arabe, turque ou kurde. Pourtant, dans leurs textes apparaît en filigrane le jugement qu'ils portaient sur leurs contemporains.

Voyageurs et sédentaires.

Nous avons choisi d'analyser trois types de figures humaines disposant d'une monture. Ces personnages mobiles vivaient dans un monde où l'horizon de presque toutes les femmes et de la plupart des hommes était limité. Le trajet quotidien de ces derniers était borné à une ruelle ou à une enfilade de rues et de souqs, jusqu'à un marché, à une mosquée, à un bain; exceptionnellement ils franchissaient la porte de la ville pour enterrer les morts,

---

1 . al-Kindî, Abû 'Umar Muhammad (m. 350/961), *Kitâb al-Wulât wa-Kitâb al-Qudât*, édition Rhuvan Guest (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1921): 592-603; al-Maqrizî, Ahmad ibn 'Alî (m. 845/1441), *Itti'âz al-Hunafâ' bi Akhbâr al-A'imma al-Fatimiya al-Khulafâ'*, édition Muhammad Hilmî Muhammad Ahmad (Le Caire, 1971): 21-24.

pour fêter au *musalla* 'Id al-Fitr et 'Id al-Adha, ou encore pour la grande aventure du pélerinage. Dans un tel monde, le pouvoir appartenait à qui osait se déplacer.

Savantes élites des temps de paix.

En période de calme et de prospérité, le marchand et le savant en traditions, (souvent le même personnage) qui avaient acquis renommée scientifique et fortune grâce à leurs voyages, jouaient un rôle important dans la cité dont ils fournissaient les juges et les notables. C'étaient les adeptes d'un systême juridique, économique et social, qu'ils s'efforçaient de faire fonctionner, au plus juste et sans à coup, à leur profit. Les résultats favorables de la prudente stratégie familiale qu'ils menaient, génération après génèration, pouvaient se lire par le rang qu'ils occupaient à la prière du vendredi et par le déplacement de la demeure familiale, de la périphérie de la ville vers son centre. Mais parfois la situation leur échappait et des troubles durables s'installaient dans les rapports entre écoles juridiques, entre confessions islamiques, entre métiers, entre ethnies, entre quartiers. Une fois toutes les tentatives de conciliation au sein des élites de bonne famille épuisées, ils passaient la main et se réfugiaient derrière *al-sultân*, la force coercitive du prince.

Alors la chance était donnée à d'autres, à ceux que nous avons appellés les surgissants car ils ne s'appuyaient ni sur une famille anciennement urbanisée et à la réputation honorable, ni sur une science chèrement acquise et reconnue par leurs pairs, mais sur une force de caractère et sur une présence physique incontestables qui leur permettaient de s'affirmer face aux notables apeurés.

La crise en Syrie, une chance pour des hommes nouveaux.

Or, les Xe et XIe siècles furent en Syrie des siècles de crise, marqués par une violence endémique, en ville, dans les campagnes et dans la steppe. Une crise fit la transition entre deux états sociaux et politiques d'équilibre relatif[2]. Elle se manifesta par une mise en cause d'abord idéologique, puis active, des notables civils et des autorités traditionnelles. Des groupes d'hommes, que leur sang, leur langue, leur confession ou leur condition

---

2 . Cette crise fut d'abord une crise frumentaire, le blé se fit rare et devint très cher. Les bédouins, les paysans, les citadins pauvres furent les plus touchés. Voir Thierry Bianquis, "Une crise frumentaire dans l'Egypte fatimide", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* (1979): 127-167, et la conclusion de Thierry Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination fatimide* (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1986 et 1989), 2: 664-701.

rassemblaient, se donnaient des chefs et tentaient de mettre en place de nouvelles hiérarchies politiques qui leur fussent favorables. Les temps étaient alors favorables pour ces "surgissants" qui tentaient de s'imposer, sans scrupules ni respect excessif des valeurs aux quelles se référaient les notables dépassés.

Ces hommes nouveaux surgissaient de trois lieux privilégiés: le rude travail de la campagne façonnait dans les villages de robustes paysans, les pièges de la steppe, pâturée ou non, affinaient la ruse et l'astuce des chefs de tribus arabes, l'exercice constant des armes et les combats incessants forgeaient le professionnalisme du cavalier turc des camps et des citadelles.

Premier type, le villageois, travaillant en ville.

Les villages des campagnes syriennes disposaient de terroirs limités, souvent impossible à élargir. L'absence de droit d'aînesse assurait légalement un partage équitable des terres entre les fils à chaque nouvelle génération mais les paysans eurent toujours conscience que pour chaque exploitation agricole il existait une taille minimum, au-dessous de la quelle on ne pouvait descendre sans risque économique. Les documents manquent pour savoir à quelle époque la pratique des waqfs ruraux permit de déposséder les filles et de concentrer entre un ou deux fils la direction de l'exploitation. Les villages surpeuplés fournirent régulièrement une main d'oeuvre vigoureuse et peu exigeante aux villes moyennes qui structuraient l'espace utile de cette province. Les textes anciens attestent la pratique par les villageois de métiers où ils mettaient, partiellement ou totalement, au service des citadins, leur force de travail et leur patience.

L'ânier médecin.

Ainsi, Abû al-Farâj al-Yabrûdî venait régulièrement du village de Yabrûd, situé à environ 80 kms de Damas, accompagné de son âne chargé de broussailles sèches, livrer du combustible aux boulangers du quartier chrétien de Bab Tûmâ. Le récit que lui consacre Ibn Abî Usaybî'a montre qu'il avait un père paysan pratiquant une culture irriguée soignée dans la petite oasis de Yabrûd et que son fils l'aidait[3]. Grâce à son esprit d'observation face aux pratiques des barbiers saigneurs qui opéraient dans les rues de Damas et grâce à son intelligence, Abû al-Farâj put poursuivre son ascension sociale et devenir un des plus grands médecins du temps.

---

3 . Ibn Abî Usaybî'a, Ahmad ibn al-Qâsim (m. 668/1270), *Uyûn al-Inba' fî Tabaqât al-Atibba*, édition A. Muller (Le Caire, 1882), 2: 140.

L'ânier, lecteur du Coran.

Autre exemple de promotion urbaine à la fin du IVe/Xe siècle, celle d'un paysan de la Ghûta, 'Alî ibn Dâwûd, savant lecteur du Coran selon la grande tradition uthmanienne et imam de la mosquée de Daraya. Quand les notables damascains vinrent le chercher pour être l'imam de la mosquée des Omayyades, cela faillit provoquer une émeute et les gens de Darayya se saisirent de leurs armes. Il fut enfin autorisé à partir, refusant la mule honorifique qu'on lui offrait, il gagna Damas sur son ânesse de travail. Grâce à celle-ci, tout en enseignant la lecture coranique et en exerçant la fonction d'imam de la grande mosquée, il put chaque jeudi, aller au village cultiver son champ, porter son blé à moudre, faire cuire son pain et le ramener à la mosquée des Omayyades pour sa consommation hebdomadaire. Il répondait ainsi à l'impératif acharite qui imposait au savant de ne pas tirer profit matériel de son enseignement.

L'ânier, lien entre la campagne et la ville.

L'âne permettait au fils de paysan de gagner sa vie en ville mais de continuer à habiter au village. Chemin faisant, il glanait les nouvelles et les chants à la mode, diffusait cette information chez ses clients et ses parents. Il était donc un informateur privilégié au village pour faire connaître les événements qui se déroulaient en ville et, en ville, il renseignait les marchands sur l'état de la végétation et la promesse des récoltes, permettant à ceux-ci de fixer les prix. Il entrait en ville toujours par la même porte. Là, dans un quartier connu, il jouissait d'une petite notoriété. Al-Yabrûdî, chrétien, avait sa clientèle à Bâb Tûmâ. Au contraire, les bédouins qui venaient de la steppe et les mauvais garçons qui venaient des villages agités du Marj oriental avaient leur quartier général autour du cimetière de Bâb al-Saghîr dans un environnement de marchés de moutons, où les nomades achetaient tentes et cordages. C'était le rendez-vous des malfrats, les notables citadins ne s'y aventuraient guère sinon lors des enterrements.

L'ânier, installé en ville.

Un jour ou l'autre, le villageois voyageur était tenté par l'installation en ville. Il choisissait naturellement un lieu familier pour trouver un logement, soit dans le faubourg, de part ou d'autre de la route qui entre en ville, soit juste de l'autre côté de la muraille dans le quartier désigné sous le nom de la porte qu'il avait l'habitude de traverser. Il n'y a pas lieu de suivre dans leur lente ascension sociale les familles qui se constituaient difficilement car les citadins refusaient leurs filles à des gueux et les campagnards répugnaient à voir leurs filles quitter le village. Souvent, les

jeunes hommes devaient rester célibataires et constituaient alors ces bandes que l'on désigna sous des termes variés, *shuttâr, ahl al-sharr.* Lors de la longue série de guerres que Damas mena contre les Fatimides, les partis *(hizb, ahzâb),* portaient le nom de la porte de la ville où se regroupaient leurs membres. Ils défilaient avec drapeau et fanfares et faisaient le coup de poing. Si les troubles duraient plusieurs mois, le pillage des beaux quartiers et un système de racket des villages proches de la ville leur permettaient de s'armer et de se monter en chevaux. Désormais, ils pouvaient affronter des troupes régulières et au besoin participer à la défense de la cité.

L'ânier, chef de bande.

L'exemple le plus célèbre de l'accession au pouvoir politique d'un paysan ânier est celui de Qassâm al-Tarrâb, terrassier ou éboueur, originaire de Talfita qui, pendant les années 365-373/976-984, mena la résistance de Damas face aux Fatimides. Henri Laoust, dans *Les schismes de l'islam,* y vit un combattant religieux défendant le sunnisme. Certes, Qassâm siégea á la grande mosquée de Damas où il reçut les hommages de tous les notables de la ville et consigna ceci dans un procès-verbal qu'il expédia au calife al-'Azîz, mais la mosquée jouait ici son rôle de bâtiment public où le peuple de la ville reconnaissait solennellement la légitimité de son prince. Dans les notices biographiques qui lui sont consacrées, aucune mention ne met en relief une foi sunnite particulièrement manifeste. Qassâm choisit comme blason, *al-qihf,* c'est-à-dire soit l'écuelle du gueux, soit son bonnet, soit la pelle de l'éboueur. Il ne reniait donc pas ses origines ni l'aspect social de sa revendication.

L'opposition de Qassâm au pouvoir fatimide doit être nuancée car si plusieurs gouverneurs militaires furent nommés avec mission officielle de le chasser, une fois sur place, ils se plièrent curieusement à ses ordres et s'efforcèrent de ne pas gêner son action. Il paraît avoir bénéficié de la protection occulte du vizir Ibn Killis et à Damas même, quand il fut poursuivi par les soldats maghrébins, il trouva refuge un temps auprès de la communauté israelite de la ville. S'il fut finalement pris, il ne fut jamais exécuté â notre connaissance[4].

L'institutionnalisation des ahdâth.

Aux Xe et XIe siècles, nombreux furent les mauvais garçons qui accédèrent grâce à une série de coups de force à un pouvoir urbain, au niveau

---

4 . al-Maqrizî, *al-Muqaffâ,* ms. Istanbul, Pertev Pacha, 496: 25-28.

d'un quartier ou d'une ville. Les échecs furent fréquents et en général fatals. Pourtant, dans certains cas, on assista à un changement d'image avec le temps. Les termes péjoratifs désignant les mauvais garçons furent remplacés par le terme plus neutre et encore mal expliqué de *ahdâth*[5]. Cela témoigne d'une institutionnalisation de la bande des jeunes gens en arme. Elle était reconnue comme exerçant une "protection" sur un quartier ou sur la ville, protection financée par une contribution des commerçants et des artisans ainsi assurés de ne pas voir mis en péril, leurs biens, l'honneur de leurs femmes et de leurs filles ou leur vie. Au début des Croisades, les *ahdâth* formaient à Damas un élément important et relativement stable du paysage politique de la ville. Il faudrait étudier leur recrutement. On trouverait, sans doute, à nouveau des paysans des environs et en plus des réfugiés des terres occupées par les Francs.

Deuxième type, le chevalier arabe, seigneur de la steppe.

Ibn 'Asâkir dans la vie d'Abû al-Haydhâm al-Murrî, le grand rebelle du Hawrân et de la Ghouta à l'époque de Hârûn al-Rashîd, le qualifie dès le début "ahad fursân al-'arab al-madhkûrîn wa suj'ânihim al-mashhurîn, huwa za'îm Qays... wa lahu ash'âr wa akhbâr". Alors que la plupart des biographies de l'histoire de Damas occupent une demie page de l'édition imprimée, celle d'Abû al-Haydhâm va de la page 393 à 418. En général, les biographies détaillées concernent des hommes de religion, or il n'est guère question de la foi ou des tendances théologiques d'Abû al-Haydhâm dans ce texte. De même, Ibn al-'Adîm, l'historien d'Alep, truffe ses récits concernant les Banû Mirdâs, qui ont tenu presque continuellement la ville entre 1024 à 1080, de plus de poèmes et d'allusions à leur qualités de chevaliers arabes que de témoignages de leur piété.

Avant d'examiner ce portrait robot du bédouin arabe chevaleresque, il faut revenir sur la situation en Syrie et montrer les opportunités politiques que les tribus ont tenté de saisir dans cette période de transition. Le IXe siècle commence en Syrie par la révolte d'Abû al-Haydhâm et se termine par les premières attaques carmates dans le Hawrân. Au Xe siècle, la tribu la plus puissante de Syrie centrale et de sympathie carmate, 'Uqayl, se constitue une principauté dans la Biq'a, dans le Hawrân et autour de Damas qui connait à plusieurs reprises des gouverneurs nommés ou des princes de facto, uqaylites. Les Fatimides repoussèrent au troisième quart de ce Xe siècle 'Uqayl vers la steppe de Syrie du Nord et ils rejoignirent sans doute leurs contribules dans le Diyâr Rabî', autour de Mawsil. Les Banû

---

5 . Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie* 2: 671-681.

Murra, si puissants au siècle précédent, ne formaient plus qu'une petite tribu; avec les Banû Fazâra, ils pillaient les villages de l'Antiliban. Le nombre de tribus attestées subit, nous l'avons vu, une chute extraordinaire entre le début du IXe siècle et le milieu du Xe siècle.

Quelques tribus plus puissantes émergèrent. Sur le plateau jordanien, les Tayy, une tribu Yéménite famélique et prolifique, étaient toujours à l'affut d'un village à piller, d'un allié à trahir ou d'un rebelle vaincu à livrer contre récompense. Les Kalb, installés autour de Palmyre tiraient profit du contrôle du trafic entre Rahba et Homs. Ils avaient abandonné leurs traditions guerrières et entretenaient de bons rapports avec les États de la région. Au nord de la Syrie, Sayf al-Dawla avait mis à mal, au milieu du Xe siècle, une coalition de tribus Qays qui pillaient les plateaux de Ma'arrat al-Nu'mân et de Hama. Toutes les tribus s'étaient éparpillées dans le Diyâr Mudar et dans le Diyâr Bakr.

Pourtant, les plus puissants d'entre eux, les Banû Kilâb, étaient bien décidés à demeurer en Syrie du Nord et à s'y tailler une principauté. Ils réalisèrent, nous l'avons vu, leur rêve à partir de 1024, date où ils s'installèrent à Alep. Ils y demeurèrent, sauf de rares reprises de la ville par les Fatimides, jusqu'en 1080. Ibn al-'Adîm retraça deux siècles plus tard leur saga. Il est impossible ici de raconter cette longue histoire mais un certain nombre de faits sautent aux yeux de l'historien[6].

Eclat des actions guerrières du chevalier arabe.

Tant Abû al-Haydhâm que les Banû Mirdâs furent des soldats hors de pair, enclins à l'exploit individuel et à l'élégance au combat et conquirent au bout du sabre leur renommée. Ainsi Ibn 'Asâkir et Ibn al-Athîr rapportent une série de rencontres entre les Qays d'Abû al-Haydhâm et les Yéménites de la Ghouta ou de Homs qui se terminèrent invariablement par le massacre de plusieurs dizaines et parfois de plusieurs centaines de Yéménites. La première fois que l'armée califale, des Arabes venus du Khurasan, décida d'intervenir contre Abû al-Haydhâm, celui-ci fut encore fois vainqueur, pourtant, à la fin de la journée, l'armée officielle vaincue comptait quatre cents blessés et aucun mort, ce qui prouve un maniement délicat du sabre.

---

6 . Ibn 'Asâkir, 'Alî ibn al-Hasan (m. 571/1176), *Ta'rîkh Madînat Dimashq* ('Asim-'Ayid) (Damas): 20-42. M. Canard, *Sayf al-Dawla,* recueil de textes (Alger: 1934), M. Canard, *Histoire des Hamdanides de Jazira et de Syrie* (Alger, 1951), I.

Jouir de sa vie sans trop s'y attacher.

Pas un seul des chefs Jarrâhides de Tayy ne semble être mort au combat à cette époque alors qu'à plusieurs reprises leurs manoeuvres tortueuses avaient contraint leurs alliés à prendre tous les risques. A l'inverse, les princes mirdasides périrent en général jeunes, et nombre d'entre eux dont Sâlih ibn Mirdâs et Nasr ibn Sâlih, moururent au combat, les armes à la main face à un ennemi supérieur en nombre. Parmi ceux qui ne moururent pas au combat, l'accident dû à l'excès de boisson causa des ravages. 'Atiyya, mourut de la chute qu'il fit alors qu'il était ivre du toit d'une maison où il dormait. Nasr ibn Mahmûd, mourut à la fois ivre et les armes à la main, ayant chargé ses propres soldats. Quand on alla chercher son frère, Sâbiq ibn Mahmûd, pour le proclamer son successeur, le nouveau prince était tellement saoûl qu'il dut être hissé dans la citadelle d'Alep dans un panier au bout d'une corde.

Les histoires rocambolesques, évasion de Sâlih ibn Mirdâs de la citadelle d'Alep, traînant une chaîne autour de sa jambe, pansement avec un bandeau noir d'une tour de la ville qui avait reçu un boulet de mangonneau pour la guérir de sa migraine, sont trop nombreuses pour être racontées. Elles font toutes ressortir un sens aigu de l'humour, une puissante volonté de profiter de tous les plaisirs de la vie et l'absence de crainte de mettre celle-ci en jeu dès lors que son honneur ou son pouvoir était en cause[7].

Liberté d'action et sens politique des princesses bédouines.

Un autre fait attire l'attention de l'historien, c'est le rôle des femmes aussi bien dans les récits concernant Abû al-Haydhâm que dans ceux concernant les Banû Mirdâs. Une femme jeta aux pieds d'Abû al-Haydhâm le corps de son fils tué dans la Ghouta en l'adjurant d'intervenir, faute de quoi elle en appellerait au calife (la femme sous-entendait qu'un tel recours serait la honte suprême pour le chef des Banû Murra responsable de l'honneur de Qays dans la région). Une autre femme, yéménite, vint lui apporter le message de soumission de cette confédération. Chez les Banû Mirdâs, le sort de Tarûd, l'épouse de Sâlih, la plus belle femme de l'époque que lui avait volée Murtada al-Dawla Ibn Lû'lû', fut à l'origine de la violence de la haine que le kilabite témoigna à l'égard de ce tyran d'Alep. Quand il eut enfin vaincu l'ancien *ghulâm* et que celui-ci s'ensauva en territoire

---

7 . Ibn al-'Adîm, Umar ibn Ahmad (m. 660/1262), *Zubdat al-Halab min Ta'rîkh Halab*, édition Sâmî al-Dahhan (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1951-1968), 2: 20-42.

byzantin, oubliant dans sa fuite son harem à Alep, Sâlih lui renvoya toutes ses femmes et ses filles sans les toucher sauf une belle enfant, qu'on lui avait promise et jamais livrée, et qu'il consomma sur l'heure.

Figure plus étonnante, la princesse al-Sayyida al-'Alawiyya, fille et soeur d'un prince numayrite, épouse successive de deux princes mirdasides et mère d'un autre. Elle se rendit, seule avec son fils, un petit garçon, au Caire en 1051, pour aller faire pardonner à son mari, Thimâl ibn Sâlih, la victoire trop éclatante qu'il avait remportée contre l'armée fatimide. Elle charma par sa dignité et par sa connaissance de la situation politique en Syrie du nord, l'Imâm al-Mustansir qui lui accorda tout ce qu'elle demanda. Bien plus tard en 1071, elle alla négocier pour son fils, Mahmûd ibn Nasr, dans des circonstances autrement difficiles avec le Sultan seljoucide Alp Arslân, qui assiégeait Alep. Ibn al-'Adîm qui rapporte les deux négociations montre combien, face à un Turc, la princesse arabe, pourtant en position difficile, se montra raide et cassante alors qu'elle avait usé de charme auprès de l'Imâm fatimide.

Utiliser son espace de liberté.

Au cours du XIe siècle, un équilibre relatif neutralisa les Byzantins, les Bouyides et les Fatimides, et permit aux tribus qaysites de se constituer un chapelet de principautés en Syrie du Nord et tout autour du désert syro-iraqien. Un trait caractérisa ces princes; ils répugnaient en général à résider longtemps dans leur capitale et dès qu'ils le pouvaient, ils confiaient le pouvoir à un officier subalterne et partaient rejoindre leurs épouses dans un campement installé dans la steppe. Cela créa à plusieurs d'entre eux de graves difficultés politiques. On ne peut éviter d'évoquer à cette occasion, le souvenir des Omayyades et de leurs palais dans le désert. Par contre, il est très rarement question à leur propos d'une préoccupation religieuse quelconque. Quand Mahmûd ibn Nasr constata en 1070 la montée de la puissance seljoucide à Bagdad et l'effacement des forces fatimides en Syrie, il en tira les conséquences. Les Banu Kilâb étaient de sympathie chiite et la famille mirdaside avait été bien acceptée à Alep, ville alors imamite, pour cette raison. Pourtant, il persuada tant bien que mal ses sujects de se reconnaître officiellement sunnites pour éviter les foudres du nouveau sultanat turc[8].

Troisième type, le cavalier turc, combattant professionnel.

Ces principautés ne résistèrent guère aux Turcomans et aux Seljoucides. La supériorité militaire de l'armée turque paraît reposer surtout

---

8 . "Mirdas (Banû)", *Encyclopédie de l'Islam* 7: 117-125.

sur le professionnalisme des soldats, leur discipline, leur infatigabilité au combat. L'histoire de la présence fatimide en Syrie est jalonnée avant l'arrivée des Seljoucides par les faits d'armes des cavaliers turcs, les *ghulâms*, achetés enfants en Asie Centrale et élevés au Palais pour être consacrés à la vie militaire. Il s'agit certes des prédecesseurs des mamlouks mais avec des caractères différents. Ils ne constituaient qu'une petite élite dans une armée très nombreuse et n'avaient pas l'espoir de parvenir à une autonomie complète de décision politique. Il suffit de les évoquer ici tant ils sont bien connus de tous.

Quatre ghulâms turcs de l'époque fatimide.

Nombreux furent les *ghulâms* turcs qui, soit servirent les Fatimides, soit les combattirent, soit firent successivement les deux. Quelques exemples choisis parmi ceux que nous rapportent les historiens permettent de saisir certains comportements qui, à tort ou à raison, les caractérisaient aux yeux de ceux-ci.

Un mot donc sur les plus connus. Alp Takîn, le brillant cavalier qui à la tête de trois cents *ghulâms* avait fui les désordres de Bagdad pour aller chercher fortune en Syrie. Il savait que ses guerriers étaient objet de convoitise pour tous les princes de la région, désireux de moderniser leur corps de bataille. De peur de susciter des tentations il leur fit traverser la steppe de Rahba à Rafaniyya, cuirassés et les chevaux caparaçonnés. Appelé par les habitants de Damas en proie aux troubles, il fut un prince loyal mais naïf, facilement manoeuvré par Qassâm. Il conquit par son caractère et sa technique impeccable de l'escrime à cheval l'admiration du Basileus Jean Tzimiskes. Plus tard, tenant à sa merci en Palestine son grand adversaire, le général fatimide Jawhar, il se laissa attendrir par les propos de celui-ci qui en appellaient à la solidarité islamique. Contre le gré de ses partenaires arabes, il accepta la capitulation et le retour en Egypte du général fatimide. Sitôt au Caire, Jawhar persuada al-'Azîz d'intervenir contre lui. Alp Takîn succomba en 978 avec courage, submergé par l'énorme armée fatimide. Perdu dans la campagne steppique, il eut tort de faire confiance à l'amitié d'un des Banû al-Jarrâh qui le livra à ses ennemis. Fait prisonnier, il conquit al-'Azîz, mais trop confiant dans son entourage, il finit empoisonné par le vizir Ibn Killis.

Bakjûr, brillant cavalier, piètre politique quoique très ambitieux, fut complètement incapable de se ressaisir après sa défaite en 991 face à l'armée hamdanide, commandée par Lû'lû'. Perdu dans la steppe, il se confia à un bédouin qui le trahit. On lui trancha le col.

Manjû Takîn, général fatimide, courageux et brillant mais paresseux

et ami de ses aises, ne put imposer sa supériorité militaire á ce même Lû'lû', l'intelligent chambellan des derniers Hamdanides, prototype des futurs mamlouks, excellent soldat et habile politique. Manjû Takîn, entraîné par un sentiment de loyauté absolu à l'égard du jeune imâm al-Hâkim, chambré par les Maghrébins, lança devant les Damascains réunis à la Mosquée des Omayyades, une invraisemblable proclamation en faveur de l'enfant opprimé et de ses camarades turcs persécutés au Caire. Il déclencha une rebellion qui finit piteusement et il termina sa vie dans une position subalterne.

Dotés d'un grand courage physique, les *ghulâms* traditionnels désespéraient assez facilement quand leur maître mettait en doute leur loyauté ou les privaient de leurs laqabs. On vit ainsi Anûsh Takîn al-Dizbirî, le plus brillant administrateur que les Fatimides eurent en Syrie, entamer en 1041 une guerre épistolaire avec le vizir al-Jarjarâ'î. Dès qu'il fut officiellement privé de ses titres et que sa condition d'esclave acheté fut rappelée du haut des minbars dans les mosquées de Syrie, l'ancien *ghulâm* fut moralement déstabilisé. Incapable de se défendre, il prit la fuite avec quelques très jeunes pages. Toute l'armée l'évitait et il ne pesait plus d'aucun poids politique. Il mourut d'impuissancé. Dans des circonstances semblables, un Abû al-Haydhâm aurait pu compter sur ses contribules, un Sâlih ibn Mirdâs aurait trouvé dans son caractère les forces pour rebondir; rien de semblable chez le Turc, élevé dans le souci unique du service de l'Imâm[9].

Le cavalier turc, taciturne et pieux.

Autant beau parler et poésie constituaient les ornements traditionnels du chevalier bédouin, autant le Turc était présenté comme taciturne, patient et sombre. Certains buvaient beaucoup mais l'ivresse joyeuse et créatrice ne semblait pas les caractériser. Ils maniaient maladroitement la langue arabe et quand ils l'avaient acquise ils fréquentaient plutôt les hommes de mosquée que les poètes. Certains même apprenaient le Coran ou mémorisaient le hadith. Ne perdant jamais courage sur le champ de bataille, ils faisaient preuve tant qu'ils avaient la confiance de leur maître, tous les historiens le soulignent, de bons talents d'administrateurs civils. D'origine servile et lointaine, sans famille élargie à protéger, ils passaient auprès des sujets pour désintéressés, justes et équitables.

---

9. Ibn al-Qalânisî, Abû Ya'lâ Hamza, (m. 555/1160), *Dhayl Ta'rîkh Dimashq*, édition H.F. Amedroz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1908), 2: 35 et sq. Ibn al-Dawâdârî, Abû Bakr ibn 'Abd Allâh (733/1333), *Kanz al-Durar*, édition Salâh al-Din Munajjid (Le Caire, 1961), 6: 127 et sq.

A lire Ibn al-Qalânîsî, qu: vivait à Damas du temps de Nûr al-Dîn, on sent son admiration pour la piété et le courage du guerrier turc et son mépris envers le bédouin arabe et envers les mauvais garçons, fraîchement installés en ville. A l'inverse, Ibn al-'Adîm, qui connut le déclin des Ayyoubides kurdes et les premiers mamlouks turcs au Caire, semble regretter la chance perdue des Mirdasides et des Uqaylides.

La langue turque préservée.

Si le *ghulâm*, importé dans sa plus tendre jeunesse de la lointaine Asie centrale, ne pouvait espérer fonder une famille avec une femme turque, il n'en fut plus de même lorsque dans la deuxième moitié du XIe siècle, des Turcs libres et dominateurs franchirent l'Euphrate. Les Turcomans amenèrent avec eux leurs femmes et parurent très attachés à garder des épouses turques même si à l'occasion ils violaient des femmes de toute origine. Ce mariage préférentiel explique peut-être la résistance de la langue turque dans une province arabophone, les femmes turques qui passaient en Syrie pour être très jolies étaient l'object de bien des convoitises, notamment de la part des Banû Mirdâs, connus pour leur penchant pour le beau sexe. C'est pourquoi, quand les Turcomans partaient en campagne, ils rassemblaient leurs épouses et les plaçaient sous la garde de l'un d'eux. Un récit nous les montre ainsi rassemblées dans la vallée de l'Oronte mais décimées par la maladie, sans doute la malaria.

Apparition de la hiérarchie militaire dans l'Orient arabe.

Dans la notice qu'il consacre à Mahmûd ibn Subuktagîn al-Sultân al-Kabîr, le biographe al-Subkî compare les qualités d'un *wazîr*, d'un *malik*, et d'un *sultân* en pays *'ajam* (monde iranien) aux qualités de trois personnages de même rang en "nos pays", c'est-à-dire en pays arabes. Il choisit comme exemple de chef politique en pays arabe *al-Sultân* Salâh al-Din, le conquérant de Jérusalem, et avant lui *al-Malik* Nûr al-Dîn Mahmûd ibn Zankî al-Shâhid. Il précise qu'il ne peut accorder à Nûr al-Dîn le titre d'*al-Sultân* et il se justifie ainsi:

> La cause en est que l'usage du vocabulaire politique veut que l'on réservât le terme d' *al-Sultân* à qui règne sur deux provinces ou plus. Celui qui ne règne que sur une province doit être désigné comme *al-Malik* et celui dont le pouvoir se résume à une ville ne peut se faire appeler ni *al-Sultân*, ni *al-Malik* mais *Amîr al-Balad* ou *Sâhib al-Balad*.

Après avoir reproché à des auteurs de son temps d'avoir donné indûment le titre d'*al-Sultân* au maître de Hama, il ajoute: "Une condition

pour qu'un homme mérite effectivement le titre d'*al-Sultân* est qu'aucun pouvoir n'existe au-dessus du sien. Cela est également valable pour le titre d'*al-Malik*. Cela n'est pas le cas pour le maître d'une seule localité puisque le Sultan à autorité sur lui..."[10].

Ce genre de texte est impensable à mon sens au Xe ou au XIe siècle. Chaque armée avait alors son *qa'id* ou son *amir*, général désigné pour l'ensemble des opérations, chaque aile avait son chef et tout le monde jouissait pendant la bataille de la plus grande autonomie. Cette hiérarchisation de la titulature politique telle qu'elle est décrite ici, sans aucune référence à une investiture accordée par le calife, date évidemment de la seconde partie du "Moyen Age" musulman, celle où le pouvoir n'était plus normalement exercé par des vizirs civils, des gouverneurs nommés ou des princes arabes issus des tribus mais par des Kurdes, des Persans ou des Turcs d'origine militaire. Ce texte décrit l'époque même où se rédigeaient les histoires analysées ci-dessus. Le souci de la discipline et de la hiérarchie était entré en Syrie avec les Turcs. La systématisation des commandements apparut dans les armées musulmanes en même temps que l'idée d'une carrière militaire, menée de forteresse en forteresse.

Conclusion, le cavalier professionnel, vainqueur dans la crise avec l'aide du savant commerçant.

La crise née en Syrie de l'affaiblissement du pouvoir abbasside après le milieu du IVe/Xe siècle vit donc s'affronter des paysans encitadinisés, des bédouins refusant de s'urbaniser totalement et des Turcs, esclaves ou libres, professionnels de la guerre. Une lutte longue s'engagea entre eux, reléguant les civils, commerçants et savants, autrefois maîtres des finances et du droit, dans un rôle secondaire.

Une autre analyse, plus longue et plus subtile, serait nécessaire pour savoir si la victoire politique finale des militaires turcs et kurdes ne fut pas ardemment souhaitée et soigneusement préparée par ces élites traditionnelles, hantant les souqs et les mosquées et disposées, pour sauvegardes leurs intérêts économiques et sociaux, à sacrifier des libertés politiques "formelles".

---

10 . Al-Subkî, Tâj al-Dîn Abû Nasr 'Abd al-Wahhab (m. 771/1370), *Tabaqât al-Shâfi'iya al-Kubra*, édition Halabî, (Le Caire, 1966), 5: 315-316.

Nomads and Settled People in Bilād al-Shām in the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries

Hugh Kennedy[*]

In recent years there has been increasing interest among the historians of Bilād al-Shām on the subject of the interaction of the settled and nomadic peoples of the area and the way in which the balance between these two groups changed[1]. Special attention has been focussed on those areas that lie along the borders of the desert and the sown and which are inhabited by settled townspeople and villagers in some periods and by pastoral nomads at others. One of the most interesting features of this research is that it has brought together archaeological, anthropological and historical studies in a most fruitful interaction. This paper is intended to be a small contribution to this debate. I shall make some suggestions about the history of settlement in the area of Jordan, the Hawrān and those parts of Syria that lie on either side of the Damascus-Hims-Hamā-Aleppo road.

The picture that has emerged from recent research is that of a gradual expansion of the settled area in Roman and early Byzantine times followed by a period of growing nomad influence, at least in some areas, from 540 onwards. The Umayyad period saw a continuation, or perhaps a revival, of urban life in cities and some rural areas.

After the collapse of the Umayyad Caliphate, Bilād al-Shām suffered a major economic and social crisis. This began with the devastation caused by Marwān b. Muhammad, notably in the area of Hims, when he established himself as caliph and a series of very destructive earthquakes which seem to have put an end to the prosperity of cities like Jarash and Fahl (Pella)[2]. The picture from the first half

---

* University of St. Andrews, U.K.

1. For the pre-Islamic period see Glen Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983); Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fourth Century* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984); Idem, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989); S. Thomas Parker, *Romans and Saracens: a History of the Arabian Frontier. ASOR* dissertation series (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986); for late antiquity, Hugh Kennedy, "The Last Century of Byzantine Syria", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10 (1985): 141-184; for the early Ottoman period, Wolf-Dieter Hütterroth and Kamal Abdulfattah, *Historical Geography of Palestine, Transjordan and Southern Syria in the Late 16th Century*. Erlangen Geographische Arbeiten, Sonderband 5 (Erlangen: Fränkische Geographischen Gesellschaft, 1977); for the late Ottoman period, Norman Lewis, *Nomads and Settlers in Syria and Jordan, 1800-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987).

2. For the sack of Hims by Marwān and again by Mūsā b. Bugha in 250/864 see al-Balādhuri, Ahmad b. Yahyā (d. 279/892), *Futūh al-Buldān* ed. M.G. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966). 134; for earthquakes, Kenneth Russell, "The Earthquake Chronology of Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the 2nd through the Mid-8th Century A.D" *BASOR* 260 (1985): 37-59.

century of Abbasid rule shows a rather varied picture, with evidence of development by members of the Abbasid family at Salamiya and al-Ramla contrasting with reports of the sack of the monastery of St Sabas in Palestine by the bedouin in 181/797[3].

In the third/ninth century the trend is much clearer. The Abbasid government was unable or unwilling to provide the framework for the economic prosperity of settled areas and no members of the Abbasid family settled in and developed Bilād al-Shām as they had done previously. Nor does the interlude of Tulunid rule seem to have improved matters significantly. The first half of the next century (fourth/tenth) sees the increasing influence of the pastoral people in Bilād al-Shām and the retreat of settled habitation to the mountains and the coastline. This process reached its peak in the half century between the second wave of Qarmati incursions into Syria from 358/969 onwards and the battle of Uqhuwāna in 420/1029. It is the argument of this paper that this bedouin political dominance was the result of important changes in the economy and society of Bilād al-Shām in this period. In order to demonstrate this, I shall turn first to the meagre archaeological evidence.

This can be dealt with fairly briefly since most of it is negative, a record of non-building. With the exception of the early Abbasid cistern at al-Ramla[4], I believe I am right to say that there is no significant surviving architectural monument in Bilād al-Shām from the period between the abandonment of the last Umayyad palace construction and the restoration of the al-Aqsā mosque by the Fatimids. We have some literary evidence of construction of fine residences by members of the Abbasid family at Salamiya and Manbij and by Sayf al-Dawla at Aleppo but no traces of these works survive. Clearly this does not constitute hard and fast evidence for the decline of urban and settled life but, nonetheless, the contrast between this total gap and the numerous remains dating earlier from the Umayyad period and later from the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries is suggestive.

When it comes to settlement, the evidence points in the same direction. In none of the areas where extensive archaeological work has been undertaken is there evidence of permanent habitation. Jarash, Pella and Busra have provided no evidence of the continuity of urban settlement in this period, and al-Humayma, the early home of the Abbasid family, seems to have been deserted after their departure[5]. Further north, neither Apamea nor the limestone hills of northern Syria

---

3. I shall use the word bedouin to describe the Arabic speaking pastoral nomads of Bilād al-Shām; the sources usually refer to them as *'arab*. For Salamiya and al-Ramla see especially, al-Balādhuñ, *Futūh:* 134, 143-144; For St Saba see Stephen the Sabaite, "Passio SS Martyrum Lavrae S Sabae", *Acta Sanctorum,* March III, 9: 165-179.

4. K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), vol. 2: 161-164.

5. John Eadie and John Oleson, "The Water-Supply System of Nabatean and Roman
=

have shown much sign of important settled habitation, though both of these are known to have been settled in late antiquity and again in the sixth/twelfth century. Archaeological evidence for settlement always has to be used with caution and negative evidence in particular can easily be disproved. The investigations on village settlement being conducted by Johns and McQuitty are going to be of key importance here. So far, however, the archaeological record gives no evidence that there were any significant settled communities south of Damascus and east of the Jordan, Dead Sea, Wadi 'Arabah line in the third/ninth or fourth/tenth centuries. The position in the steppe lands of the Hims and Aleppo areas does not seem to have been much different, although the archaeological data is very much more limited[6]. The next stage is to see whether the literary sources can support and explain the apparent gap in the physical remains.

This picture of decline is in large measure supported by the written sources. The accounts of the Arab geographers are, as usual, interesting but not as full as one might hope. Earliest in date is al-Ya'qūbī, writing in about 276/889, who gives a fairly cursory administrative geography of the area[7]. He details the districts of the southern part of the area with their capitals *(madīna),* Busra for the Hawrān, Adhri'āt for Bathaniya, 'Ammān for al-Balqā, and Adhruh for al-Sharāt but he gives no further descriptions[8]. He is the last source to mention Jarash and Fahl (Pella) as inhabited places, saying that they were both inhabited half by Arabs and half by *'ajam.* Further north he mentions that both Afamiya (Apamea) and Ma'arat al-Nu'mān were ruins, but Salamiya was still inhabited by a mixture of farmers and merchants[9].

The geographers of the next century are more rewarding. Ibn Hawqal, based on the work of al-Istakhrī, produced the final version of his work around 378/988,

= Humayma", *BASOR* 262 (1986): 49-77. For further discussion of discontinuity in the Decapolis region, Cherie Lenzen and E. A. Knauf, "Beit Ras/Capitolias; a Preliminary Evaluation of the Archaeological and Textual Evidence", *Syria* 64 (1987): 21-46 and B. Mershen and E. A. Knauf, "From Gadar to Umm Qais", *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 104 (1988): 128-145, both of which draw attention to the gap in the evidence after the end of the early Abbasid period. Alan Walmsley, "Pella/Fihl after the Islamic Conquest (AD 635-c. 900)" *Mediterranean Archaeology* 1(1988): 142-159 adduces evidence to suggest continuing settlement, at least at a modest level, until about 900.

6 . For recent discussion of settlement in the limestone hills, Jean Pierre Sodini, Georges Tate, et al, "Déhès (Syrie de Nord). Campagnes I–III (1976-1978), recherches sur l'habitat rural", *Syria* 67 (1980): 1-303.

7 . Al-Ya'qūbī, Ahmad b. Abī Ya'qūb, (d. 284/895), *Kitāb al-Buldān,* ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1892).

8 . Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān:* 326.

9 . Al-Ya'qūbī, *Buldān:* 324.

although much of the material was gathered considerably before this[10]. His work contains many more judgments on the economic state of the country and is much more than a bare administrative schema. For the southern area, Ibn Hawqal says little, simply noting that al-Sharāt with its capital at Adhruh, and al-Jibāl to the north were fertile and that most of the population were bedouin *('arab)*. Interestingly, he also mentions Ma'ān, ignored by the other sources, which he describes as a small town on the borders of the desert inhabited by members of the Umayyad family. Further north, Damascus he describes purely in terms of its rivers and the ancient mosque and we are given no indication as to the present prosperity of the city[11]. Hims, by contrast, he describes as largely ruined by Byzantine attack and occupation of the suburbs by the bedouin[12]. He notes the old site of Qinnasrin as being in ruins but Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān as a town set in rich agricultural lands and he reports that Khunāsira, to the southeast of Aleppo, enjoyed a temporary prosperity because of the shift of trade routes away from the settled areas as a result of the attacks of the Byzantines and the oppression of Muslim tax-collectors[13]. Travellers put themselves under the protection of the bedouin who effectively controlled the routes. Ibn Hawqal notes, however, that this situation soon resulted in a total interruption of commerce[14].

The most detailed account of the geography of Bilād al-Shām is given by al-Muqaddasī, writing at the much same period as the final version of Ibn Hawqal's work (373-380/985-990)[15]. Al-Muqaddasī gives a glowing account of his native country (he came from Jerusalem). There no ruins or deserted landscapes in al-Muqaddasī's writing but bustling cities, fertile gardens and prosperous villages. Whether he visited all the places he describes, or simply relied on old accounts or hearsay, is not clear, but while his account is interesting, it should perhaps be treated with some caution.

To start with the most southerly area, al-Muqaddasī describes Ayla[16], at the head of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, as a populous and beautiful city, the port *(furda)* of

---

10 . Ibn Hawqal, Abū al-Qāsim Muhammad al-Nasibī (d. after 378/988), *Kitāb Surat al-Ard*, ed. J. H. Kramers (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1938). For his relationship to his predecessor, al-Istakhrī, see A. Miquel, *La geographie humaine du monde musulman* (Paris: Mouton, 1967), 1: 367-390.

11 . Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard*: 173, 174-175.

12 . Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard*: 176.

13 . Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard*: 178.

14 . Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard*: 179.

15 . Al-Muqaddasī, Muhammad b. Ahmad (d. after 378/988), *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (E. J. Brill, 1906).

16 . Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 178.

Palestine and the treasury *(khizāna)* of the Hijāz. References throughout the Abbasid period suggest that Ayla remained a town of some importance and something of a centre of Islamic learning.

Al-Muqaddasī mentions Adhruh as a town on the borders of Hijāz and Syria where they preserve a mantle of the Prophet and a treaty written on skins[16]. 'Ammān, like Ayla, he describes in glowing terms: "Lying on the borders of the desert, has around it many villages and cornfields"; he goes on to speak of the market-place, mosque and citadel[17]. Further north, he describes Adhri'āt as a city on the edge of the desert in a country full of villages. He also adds that the Jabal Jarash belongs to it, implying perhaps that there were no nearby urban communities. Nearby Busra, once the capital of Roman Arabia, he simply notes for its grapes and gives no details of urban life[18]. In the hills to the west he mentions Baniyas, with its fertile soil and delightful climate. He makes the interesting and plausible observation that the population here was increasing because of the arrival of refugees from the city of Tarsus which had been taken by the Byzantines in 354/965[19].

In addition to these towns, al-Muqaddasī also mentions areas of prosperous villages; at Ma'ab (al-Rabba), which he describes as in the mountains on the edge of the desert, he notes many villages where almond trees and vines grow[20]. Similarly he mentions many villages around Nawa in the Bathaniya[21]. Of the towns further north, al-Muqaddasī has much less to say; he describes Hims in some detail but like Ibn Hawqal, al-Muqaddasī notes the decay of the town at his time; Salamiya, Hamā and Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān he completely neglects, while he notes that Qinnasrīn is small and ruined.

The last geographer whose writings fall within the period covered by this conference was Nāsir-i Khusraw in 1047[22]. Nāsir's work is not a geographical survey like the works of al-Ya'qūbī, Ibn Hawqal and al-Muqaddasī but rather a travel diary. As such it has disadvantages, in that the author only describes places he visited, but it does give his writing a freshness and immediacy, and we can be reasonably confident that he did not not simply extract reports from previous authors. He mentions Manbij and Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān as flourishing towns, but further south he travelled along the coast from Tripoli to Egypt. The only exception

---

17 . Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 175.

18 . Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 162.

19 . Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 160.

20 . Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 178.

21 . Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 160.

22 . Nāsir-i Khusraw (d. 453/1061-1062), *Sefer nameh,* ed. C. Schefer (Paris: École des Langues Orientales, 1881).

was when he came to the area around Irbid to visit a number of tombs of Prophets. He mentions villages at Abilin, Hazira and Irbid, but beyond saying how well the people of Hazira keep the shrine of Jethro (Nabī Shuʻayb) he gives us few details[23].

The geographical record is patchy and inconsistent but it does give some pointers and is especially valuable for what is left out; the disappearance of Jarash, Fahl and Busra from the record during this period for example, the desolation of Hims in the tenth century. All these are indicators. While urban and settled rural life was by no means extinct in the marginal areas of Bilād al-Shām, there is enough evidence to suggest that, at least compared with the Umayyad and early Abbasid period and the Ayyubid and Mamluk period, that it was in decline. It remains to examine the historical sources to see how far they substantiate and explain these trends.

There is scattered but considerable evidence of bedouin attacks on settled areas from the end of the third/ninth century onwards. The earliest of these are connected with the Qarāmita. In 290/903 the Qarmati leader al-Husayn b. Zikrawayh led "most of the people of the desert" *(akthar ahl al-bawādī)* in an assault on the settled areas of northern Bilād al-Shām; Damascus and Hims made terms, the inhabitants of Hamā, Maʻarat al-Nuʻmān and other cities were slaughtered, Baʻalbakk suffering especially badly. Salamiya was taken by treachery and all living creatures, both humans and animals were slaughtered and the city depopulated and the surrounding villages ravaged[24].

After this devastation, the evidence suggests that there was about half a century of comparative peace while Bilād al-Shām was ruled by the Ikhshidids, before the next bedouin attacks. Once again these were led by the Qarāmita, based now in al-Ahsā, but bedouin chiefs played an increasing role[25]. As far as the southern areas of Bilād al-Shām were concerned, the main development was the arrival of the Banū Tayyi from northeastern Arabia[26]. It would seem that these nomads provided a large proportion of the supporters of the Qarāmita. We are extremely well informed about developments in Damascus and the surrounding area at this time thanks to the survival of sections of the lost chronicle of Hilāl

23 . Nāsir-i Khusraw, *Sefer nameh:* 23.

24 . Al-Tabarī, Muhammad b. Jarīr (d. 310/923), *Taʼrīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,* ed M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879-1901), III: 2225-2226.

25 . For the background see Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London: Longman, 1986): 287-292, 320-321.

26 . For the Banū Tayyi in Bilād al-Shām, see Max von Oppenheim, *Die Beduinen* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1939), 1: 350-375. Von Oppenheim dates the earliest appearance of the tribe in this area to 345-346/957 when the poet al-Mutanabbī encountered the shaykh Wardan b. Rabīʻa al-Tayyi in al-Hisma between Maʻān and ʻAqaba. It would seem that about this time they replaced or absorbed the Lakhm and Judhām of early Islamic times or the numerous small groups mentioned by al-Yaʻqūbī, *Buldān:* 324-328.

al-Sābī that are contained in the manuscript of Ibn al-Qalānisi's *Dhayl Ta'rīkh Hilāl al-Sābī* [27]. This chronicle is the best narrative source for the history of Bilād al-Shām in the years 363 to 448 and is full of fascinating detail.

The surviving section opens in 363/973-974 with an account of the assaults on Damascus by the Qarāmita and their allies and a detailed description of the damage done in the surrounding area with the comment that the bedouin *('arab)* had taken over the whole of the Ghūta[28]. There then follows a long narrative of the complicated political relations between the Fatimids of Egypt, trying to establish their authority in Bilād al-Shām, the Qarāmita and various Turkish commanders like Alptakīn and Bakjūr, all competing for influence. We are left in no doubt as to the destructive effects of this struggle or the importance of the bedouin; under the year 369 we are told how Ibn al-Jarrāh and the Banū Tayyi took over al-Ramla and the surrounding area, defeating Abū Taghlib the Hamdanid and his supporters from the Banū 'Uqayl. Ibn al-Jarrāh is said to have "ruined Palestine and destroyed its inhabitants so that a man could enter al-Ramla looking for food and find nothing. The people died of hunger and the cultivated lands *(a'māl)* were ruined". Yahyā b. Sa'īd speaks of many Christians leaving to take refuge in the Byzantine controlled areas of northern Syria around Antioch[29].

Nor were things much better around Damascus where the Arabs had sought to take over its revenues *('amal)* and had laid waste the Ghūta. The city was only saved from disaster by the Turkish governor of Hims, Bakjūr, who controlled Qārā, Yabrūd, Ma'lūlā, Saydnayā and other places in the Jabal Sanīr and protected them from the bedouin and bandits *(harāmiya)* and was able to supply food to the city. Bakjūr's activities were not confined to emergency relief; he found Hims devastated by Byzantine attacks and determined to restore its prosperity. He heard that the Hawrān and Bathaniya areas had become ruined by the disturbances and he attracted settlers from there to come and cultivate the areas around Hims[30].

The picture given by Hilāl is of a country ravaged by warfare and above all by the depredations of the bedouin, especially in southern Palestine, the Hawrān and the Ghūta of Damascus. A puzzling feature of this is that there is no echo of this in al-Muqaddasī's account of the area, which is usually said to be almost

---

27 . Ibn al-Qalānisī, Hamza (d. 555/1160), *Dhayl Ta'rīkh Dimashq*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1908). The history of Damascus in this period has been the subject of a major study by Thierry Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination Fatimide* (2 vols, Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1986-1989).

28 . Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl:* 12.

29 . Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl:* 24; Yahyā b. Sa'īd al-Antakī (d. 458/1066), *Ta'rīkh*, ed. I. Kratchkovsky and Alexander Vasiliev, *Patrologia Orientalis* 23 (1932): 506.

30 . Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl:* 28.

contemporary with these events. There are various possible explanations, that the country recovered very rapidly for example, but perhaps the most likely is that al-Muqaddasī was producing an outdated and somewhat rosy view of the situation.

There is evidence that the influence of the bedouin continued to expand for the next half century until the battle of Uqhuwāna in 420/1029, a period which can be considered the high watermark of the power of the pastoral people in Bilād al-Shām[31]. In Palestine and Jordan the most active of these were the Tayyi under the leadership of the Jarrāhids. The evidence suggests that the Tayyi arrived· in Jordan in considerable numbers at the time of the second wave of Qarāmita incursions but they soon established themselves as the dominant bedouin group in Jordan and Palestine. The Banū al-Jarrāh made repeated attempts to establish their rule over al-Ramla but the Fatimids were determined to prevent this and successfully drove them off. But they remained very influential in the area and in 403/1012 established themselves in al-Ramla and invited the Alid amir of Mecca to come there as Caliph. It was the Jarrāhid chief who gave permission for the rebuilding of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, destroyed by the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakīm three years previously[32]. Their moment of power was shortlived, however, and the Fatimids soon forced them to leave al-Ramla. Nonetheless, this shows the extent of the political influence of the bedouin at this time.

The political influence of the bedouin was not confined to Tayyi in Jordan and Palestine. It is not the purpose of this paper to go into the details of the politics of Bilād al-Shām during this period but it is important to note that the position of Tayyi in Jordan and Palestine was matched by Kalb in the Damascus area and Kilāb in the northern part of Bilād al-Shām. Kalb, of course, were long established in the Syrian desert but at this time we find them ravaging the Ghūta of Damascus and, while they never succeeded in taking the city itself, there is no doubt that they formed a threat. Kilāb had been present in small numbers in northern Syria since Umayyad times, but they seem to have been joined by large numbers of immigrants from north Arabia at this time. The Hamdanids relied on them and their influence increased yet further when Sālih b. Mirdās al-Kilābī became ruler of Aleppo after 818/1023[33]. This increasing bedouin political power reached its climax in 420/1029 when the leaders of Kilāb, Kalb and Tayyi came together to challenge Fatimid power. In the end they were decisively defeated by the great Fatimid general Anūshtagīn al-Dizbarī; both al-Ramla and Damascus were saved from bedouin control. In the following years the influence of the

---

31 . See Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates:* 339-340.

32 . Yahyā b. Sa'īd, *Ta'rīkh:* 520.

33 . See Suhayl Zakkar, *The Emirate of Aleppo 1004-1094* (Beirut: Dār al-Amana and al-Risāla, 1971); Kennedy, *Age of the Caliphates:* 302-306.

bedouin was reduced by Fatimid operations and later by the arrival of Turkman adventurers at the time of the Saljuk invasions.

Both archaeological and written evidence for the economy and society of Bilād al-Shām in this period is weak but the evidence we have suggests that the settled population was coming under pressure from the bedouin and that areas which had previously supported thriving cities were becoming the domains of the pastoralists. Nor were the bedouin the only threat faced by the settled people: the Byzantine advances laid waste many areas in the north at the same time. Between 360/970 and 420/1029, Bilād al-Shām underwent a major crisis but the society survived and went on to enjoy the great efflorescence of the sixth and seventh (twelfth and thirteenth) centuries.

BAYSĀN
A City From the Ninth Century A.D.

by
Ali Hussein Zeyadeh[*]

Introduction

In the past, writing history was a process dependent on written and oral sources for documentation and interpretation. These two types of sources have constraints which are partially eliminated by the integration of archaeological data with them. Archaeology has broadened the horizon of history and added a new dimension to the process of collecting data. It provides specialists with a technique to examine societies, events and periods which were documented by historical sources. Archaeologists and anthropologists have been developing techniques of excavation and recording based on the pure and applied sciences. Theories of interpretation have been built to interpret and read the past through material culture remains. Although excavating and recording techniques are coming closer to being the same all over the world, the different theories of interpretation will never be closer as long as there are different ideologies. In other words, the same raw data can be analyzed and interpreted from more than one viewpoint, and different results can be presented.

One of the topics for which archaeology can provide a suitable data base is the nature of occupation in Palestine and Jordan following the Abbasid revolution. Historical sources are almost silent concerning the situation prior to A.D. 877, the date of the Tulunid takeover. The marginal accounts in primary Arabic historical and geographical sources have lead most historians to conclude that this area was of marginal significance to the central regime in Baghdad. This marginal official status, which was a result of the Abbasid revolution and transfer of the capital of the caliphate from Damascus to Baghdad influenced archaeologists to adopt a "theory" of deterioration for Palestine and Jordan under the Abbasids. Archaeologists had neither the ability nor the courage to trace and date the material culture remains from the period. Fortunately, some archaeologists have overcome these problems, particularly in Jordan, e.g., the excavations at Pella, Jarash, 'Ammān and Bayt Rās. Recent discoveries have attested to continuous occupation in these cities; indeed, even to flourishing occupation. The history of occupation during this period will become less obscure as archaeological research continues and more data is published.

The increasing interest of international archaeologists to explore what have been identified as "Islamic" sites and the developing national awareness of local authorities have both given impulse to "Islamic" archaeology. However, occupied Palestine is an exception to these developments: archaeologists are primarily

supported to investigate the pre-Islamic occupation, while "Islamic" sites are being neglected and destroyed. Stratified archaeological data relative to the "Islamic" occupation of sites is almost totally absent from publications. Arabs are not allowed to protect their heritage.

Since its begining, archaeological research in Palestine has concentrated on certain periods of occupation: only these were to be explored, published and exhibited for definite political goals. Most archaeological activity has been related to the Bible and identified as an independent branch of archaeology known as "Biblical Archaeology". At many of the sites there were material culture remains from different Islamic periods, but these were destroyed, neglected or superficially documented. There are a few exceptions to this general situation, e.g., Khirbat al-Mafjar, Khirbat al-Minya, al-Ramla, Tabariyā (Tiberias) and al-Quds (Jerusalem). Other sites, not identified as being "Islamic", were excavated with the data from the Islamic periods included in the publications, e.g., Baysān.

For archaeologists who are interested in the nature of occupation in Palestine under the Muslims, and who are not allowed or able to excavate there, the only choice left is to depend on the published materials. It might be possible to extract from the raw archaeological data enough information to reinterpret. This is certainly not the ideal situation; it is what is possible and may somewhat make up for the lost. This paper is an attempt at the possible for Baysān, a city excavated earlier in this century and for which a major publication was produced.

BAYSĀN: HISTORY AND EXCAVATIONS

Baysān, identified as Beisan or Beth Shean and classical Scythopolis, is situated in northern Palestine, on the west bank of the Jordan River in the Jordan Valley. It is one of the most productive areas in Palestine. With a strategic position, the ancient city stood at the crossroads of the east-west trade routes. According to K. Salibi, the depression of Tiberias was the "nerve center" of Syria around which a complex network of coastal and inland routes were focused. The depression of Tiberias was the "point which was most vulnerable to outside pressures and influences and whose security was indispensable to the security of the whole"[1]. It is, therefore, not surprising that the decisive Battle of the Yarmūk took place in this area; it was the key to taking over Bilād al-Shām. Baysān was one of the first cities on the west bank to be taken over peacefully after the Muslim victory in the battle.

Visited in the early nineteenth century by the German explorer Seetzen, Baysān was first excavated in 1921 by the Palestine Expedition, The University of Pennsylvania Museum. Between 1921 and 1928, the expedition carried out eight seasons of excavations on the *tall*, Tall al-Husn. The first three seasons were directed by C. S. Fisher who was not able to continue in his position.

---

1 . Kamal Salibi, *Syria Under Islam* (New York: Caravan, 1977): 8.

Throughout the three seasons the "Arab and Byzantine levels" were excavated and preliminary reports were published in the *Museum Journal.*[2] G. M. Fitzgerald, depending on Fisher's records, published the final volume on the levels[3]. The data published by Fitzgerald was somewhat inconsistent with what Fisher had published.

In 1986, a new expedition was organized to excavate and restore Baysān. Efforts are being concentrated on intergrating the Roman and Byzantine structures in the lower part of the site into a national park. Results of the recent work have been published only in preliminary fashion[4]. Although the published data is insufficient relative to the occupational phases encountered, it has been integrated into this paper.

Baysān Before the Muslims

Tall al-Husn, located on the southern bank of the Jalūd River, was the center of occupation during different periods in the history of the city. The strategic location of Baysān and the fertility of its lands have made it an attractive and inviting place for settlement since the second millennium B.C. Three occupational levels, relating to Egyptian control prior to 1200 B.C., have been excavated on the Tall. A series of mud-brick temples were identified corresponding to these Egyptian levels[5]. It was not until the Roman occupation that radical changes occurred in the city.

The Romans established an economic and political confederation, known as the Decapolis league, in which each of the members was a self-governing city, a *polis.* Only Baysān was located to the west of the Jordan River, whereas the others were located within modern Jordan and Syria. Scythopolis or Nysa became the Roman name of the city. The Romans altered the city in terms of planning and architecture (Fig. 2). The hilly topography of the city did not enable the planners to lay an orthogonal network of thoroughfares, the distinguishing mark of Roman cities; however, the city comprised wide streets with colonnades, an expected feature of Roman cities. It was provided with a variety of secular and religious public buildings, e.g., a theatre, amphitheatre, odeon, nymphaeum and baths. All of these buildings were erected in the lower part of the city at the foot

2. C. S. Fisher, "Beth-Shan", *Museum Journal* (1922): 32-45; idem, "Beth-Shean", *Museum Journal* (1023): 227-248; idem, "The Church at Beisan", *Museum Journal* (1929): 171-189.
3. G. M. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations 1921-1923, The Arab and Byzantine Levels.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1931).
4. G. Foerster and Yoram Tsafrir, "Center of Ancient Bet Shean-North", *Excavations and Surveys in Israel, 1987/1988* 6 (1988): 25-43; G. Mazor, "City Center of Ancient Bet Shean-South", *Excavations and Surveys in Israel, 1987/1988* 6 (1988): 10-23.
5. Alan Rowe, *The Topography and History and History of Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1930).

of the Tall. The Tall itself appears to have continued as the religious focal point--a Roman temple was built there[6]. The Tall was the acropolis of the city. No evidence has yet been found of a Roman city wall.

Despite the religious revolution and the consequent political and social changes in the eastern part of the Roman empire, Scythopolis retained its status as the capital of the province of Palaestina Secunda. These changes, along with natural factors, e.g., population growth, earthquakes and deterioration of buildings, affected the city structure and precipitated a series of developmental stages. This was attested to in the buildings and streets of both the Tall and the Lower City.

The Tall retained its traditional status as the religious center and became the site of a major church (Fig. 3). The excavators identified two phases of the church which had been constructed on the razed remains of a Roman temple[7]. The first church, basilical in plan, was built in the fourth century A.D. with a central nave and two aisles. This was destroyed later and then replaced by a rounded church of radically different plan[8]. Contemporary with the church's second phase, a monastery, dated to the sixth century A.D. was erected on the southern side of the Tall[9]. The residential areas of the Tall were not phased with the church phases and only discussed as a "Byzantine level".

The enclosing or fortification wall of the Tall is, unfortunately, published in a confused manner. Although the wall cut through the foundations of the "Byzantine houses", which dates it later than the houses, the excavators dated the wall to the Byzantine period because it contained in parts "some large, well-dressed masonry".[10] The existence of the dressed stones does not date the wall, as the stones could have been brought from the Lower City from destroyed buildings. The excavators also noted that there were traces of an earlier structure in the area of the standing gate; however, they did not date or identify it. They did propose that it could have been an earlier gate.

It is clear to the current excavators of the Lower City that "population pressure and change in municipal concepts resulted in inroads of buildings into public areas and monuments and in putting practical considerations of housing, commerce and low cost of construction before the preservation of the monuments' splendor"[11]. Generally, the earlier Roman public buildings were not functioning during the Byzantine period; however, the architectural components were utilized in constructing other residential and commercial buildings. The amphiteatre, the

---

6.   Foerster and Tsafrir, *ESI* 6 (1988): 42; Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1923): 241.
7.   Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1923): 241.
8.   Ibid; Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 18-26.
9.   G. M. Fitzgerald, *A Sixth Century Monastery at Beth-Shan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1939).
10. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 4-5, 8-9, 11.
11. Foerster and Tsafrir, *ESI* 6 (1988): 43.

theatre and the basilica were encroached upon by houses, and the sidewalks of the colonnaded streets were blocked and partitioned as shops. This alteration process was accompanied by the construction of new wide and well-organized streets in the lower city. All of these changes would not have been implemented without a flourishing economy and powerful administration.

BAYSĀN UNDER THE MUSLIMS

Bilād al-Shām was always a natural junction of trade routes as well as an active center of commerce because of its intermediate position. It was, therefore, an important area to be controlled by any power looking for sovereignty. Both the Byzantine and Muslim leadership realized the value of this territory and both endeavored to control it. The Muslims prepared themselves to meet the powerful Byzantine armies in Bilād al-Shām knowing its strategic importance. It took the Muslims about six years to capture Bilād al-Shām completely. Most of the Muslim-Byzantine battles took place in the countryside away from cities, towns and villages. According to al-Balādhuñ (d. 279/892), most cities surrendered peacefully to the Muslims; the Muslim takeover was "easy"[12] and not accompanied by the destruction of civic life.

It is important to note that cities were not destroyed when the Muslims took over, although this has not been an acceptable concept, especially among archaeologists. It is not unreasonable to accept the idea of "peaceful surrender" of cities if it is taken into consideration that there had been strong social and economic relations between the locals and the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula. Contacts between the two areas were established long before Islam. "By the seventh century, whether by migrations from South Arabia or by Bedouin settlement from the nearby desert, the Syrian countryside had already been infiltrated by Arabs to a considerable degree"[13]. This demographic base of Arabs and Semites is attested to by the retention of the Semitic names of many cities which were given Roman names, e.g., Beth Shean-Scythopolis-Baysān.

Following their takeover of Bilād al-Shām, the Muslims divided the area into military provinces, *ajnād*. This division somewhat corresponded with the earlier Roman and Byzantine division. This was probably dictated by the widely differing landscapes and patterns of settlement of Bilād al-Shām, which facilitated control and administration. Each province, known as a *jund*, represented a geopolitical entity, in coordination with the central administration.

Palestine and Jordan were two military provinces, but with different geopolitical boundaries than those of the present. Jund al-Urdunn was in the north, with

12. al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*, ed. by 'Abd Allah Tabba' and 'Umar Tabba' (Cairo, 1957).
13. Salibi, *Syria Under Islam*: 15.

its capital at Tabariyā, and it extendeo from 'Akkā (Acre) in the west to Jarash in the east. Jund Filasfin extended between Jund al-Urdunn and Egypt on both sides of the Jordan River and it was administered from al-Ramla. These divisions survived throughout the Umayyad and Abbasid periods; they were not altered until the time of the Crusaders.

Baysān was included in the Jund al-Urdunn which replaced Palaestina Secunda. The direct effect on Baysān was the loss of its political and administrative position to Tabariyā. This altered position of Baysān is reflected in Arabic historical and geographical sources in which it is merely listed as one of the cities of the *jund*. From these sources, it is possible to conclude that the city lost its economic status in addition to its political status and thus deteriorated in terms of its civic life. However, if this occurred, it should be reflected in the archaeological data.

A theory of interpretation was adopted by earlier archaeologists which detailed the deterioration and decay of cities following the Muslim takeover; fortunately, this is being changed. This theory had an ideological background as well as an archaeological basis, as extensive alterations were observed in the cities which were dated to the Islamic periods. In the cities which had been planned or re-planned by the Romans, later occupational phases, based on architectural phases, were identified as being of lesser quality, based on the Roman model of urbanism. Without analyzing the sequence of development within the cities and with no attention paid to what might have been the underlying reasons for change, the Muslims were "accused" of destroying civic life. The above forces the archaeologists of today to review the records of sites and to reinterpret the data in light of recent advances in interpretation.

Baysān provides an opportunity for just such a reinterpretation. The early excavators of the Tall presented a sequence of occupation which was general, indefinite and confused. Three levels of occupation were identified following the Roman period: "Byzantine, Earlier Arab, Later Arab". Time limits for the "Arab levels" were not defined in the reports, excluding the date of the Arab occupation following the Muslim takeover. The term "Earlier Arab" was used to cover the period between the early seventh and early eleventh centuries A.D. The lack of accuracy in data collection and interpretation was reflected in the plan of the "Earlier Arab level" where walls were drawn without taking into account their different phases. The result was collections of walls in more than one area which cannot be correlated to functional spaces (Fig. 4). The process of isolating occupational phases of a settlement is not an easy task, especially when the available data is problematic. However, in the case of Baysān, it might be made somewhat easier, if the data from the recent excavations is integrated.

In the following discussion, the term "phase" is used to define the city at a certain period of time during which its settlement pattern developed a distinctive character. The following phase did not begin until a major event took place which dictated or inspired subsequent changes and alterations in the city that gave it a

new character. The concern here is to study the city and its history of development as a unit. This offers the opportunity to trace the relation between major political, economic, and natural events and the development of the settlement pattern.

Baysān, along with the entire region, experienced a series of major political and natural events which preceded, accompanied and followed the Muslim takeover. Before and during the Muslim-Byzantine wars, the people of Bilād al-Shām, including the armies, suffered from a severe plague. The result of this was the depopulation of most cities which probably aided the Muslims in defeating the Byzantines and taking over the cities peacefully. The frequent occurrence of earthquakes, especially in the Jordan Valley, was also destructive to the cities. The comprehensive destruction of the A.D. 747 earthquake is well-known and well-documented within the archaeological record. Another earthquake, that of ca. A.D. 633, is, however, generally overlooked[14]. Generally, the alterations in the cities, dated to approximately this time by archaeologists have been attributed to the Muslim "conquest"[15]. Due to political and cultural biases, archaeologists have tended to ignore the influence of plagues and earthquakes on the deterioration of cities. Accusing the Arabs of the destruction has supported the biased notion that the coming of the Muslims brought about the end of civilization as founded by the Greeks and the Romans.

Earthquake destruction played a decisive role in changing the physical environment of cities, in addition to political and socio-economic factors. Based on these data, a new understanding of the sequence of occupation at Baysān is proposed for the period between the early seventh and ninth centuries A.D. This sequence includes two transitional phases resulting from the earthquakes: the first was a result of the A.D. 633 earthquake and was contemporary with the Muslim takeover; the second resulted from the A.D. 747 earthquake and was contemporary with the Abbasid revolution. Both transitional phases evidenced extensive architectural alterations in the city.

OCCUPATIONAL PHASES FOLLOWING THE MUSLIM TAKEOVER

A. The First Transitional Phase

It seems clear to the recent excavators in the Lower City that "the transition from the Byzantine to the early Arab period was not accompanied by an upheaval"[16]. A series of changes and alterations in different parts of the city occurred

---

14. Kenneth Russell, "The Earthquake Chronology of Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the 2nd through the Mid-8th Century A.D." *BASOR* 260 (1985): 37-59.
15. Ali Zeyadeh, "An Archaeological Assessment of Six Cities in al-Urdun from the Fourth Century to the Mid-Eighth Century A.D.", Unpublished MA Thesis (Yarmouk University, 1988).
16. Foerster and Tsafrir, *ESI* 6 (1988): 43.

following the Muslim takeover. In the area of the shopping street (Fig. 2), the paving slabs and the roof tiles were "dismantled" from the sidewalks[17]. As well, encroachment upon streets and public buildings continued during this period.

What is being proposed here is that the inhabitants were forced to restore destroyed buildings and alter them into new living spaces. It appears that the least amount of effort was expended on the restoration of buildings and that the priorities of the people had changed from those of the Roman period. Namely, the residents of the early seventh century A.D. were concerned with creating functional spaces rather than aesthetic ones. It is unlikely that the existing sidewalks were destroyed in order to reuse roof tiles and paving slabs. It would have been easier to block and partition the sidewalks, thus creating new functional spaces with less effort. It is more likely that the structures were destroyed by the A.D. 633 earthquake.

The destructive nature of this earthquake can also be traced in the contemporary structures on the Tall. In the apse of the round church "the paving slabs found in the course of excavation were nearly all broken up, only a few complete ones remaining, and here and there, the fragments bore traces of Arabic characters, showing that they had been relaid after the destruction of the church"[18]. Because of the Arabic inscriptions, Fisher concludes that the church was turned into a mosque following the Muslim takeover[19]. It is likely that the sequence of events began with the destruction of the church and its floors, when it was possible to take off some of the marble slabs and inscribe them, some of the inscribed marble slabs were reused in the restoration of the apse floor. The church was not destroyed completely, as parts of the apse floor were found intact. In the vicinity of the church, two jars were found containing "gilded and delicately colored red, yellow, blue and green glass tesserae...in the early churches the use of such tesserae was restricted to the upper portion of walls and to the interior of domes"[20]. The restoration was not completed because the building was destroyed once again.

It is possible to describe a general outline of the history of the church between the two destructions through the history of the inscribed marble slabs in the apse. The church was destroyed, then it was deserted for a period of time during which the slabs were taken, inscribed and probably used for an undefined purpose. Following this, the church was partially restored. Further archaeological data supports the proposed outline: "Inside the church a number of human bones were found in the water channels, chiefly legs and arms; these presumably had been collected from the neighboring graves at the time of destruction of the

---

17. Ibid: 34, 43.
18. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 21.
19. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1923): 243.
20. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1922): 24.

church"[21]. The process of collecting the human bones and reburying them inside the church should have taken place before the beginning of restorations, in the period when the church was deserted. Attributing the first destruction to the A.D. 633 earthquake, provides enough time for the subsequent developments.

B. Baysān Between the Early Seventh and Mid-Eighth Centuries A.D.

In the primary Arabic sources, Baysān was an agricultural center. Al-Maqdisi (d. 355/966) mentioned Baysān as the source of rice for both Jund Filisṭīn and Jund al-Urdunn[22]. Grapes were a major product as well, as *dibs* is known from Baysān, as well as the high quality of the wine as commended by al-Akhtal. Al-Idrīsī listed other crops that were cultivated in the area like sugar cane, olives, corn, flax and reeds. Baysān was also famous for the production of indigo and lime. The production of these items provided an economic basis for the city.

The A.D. 633 earthquake was not severe enough to demolish the city entirely; however, it did precipitate extensive restorations. The recent excavations in the Lower City have confirmed this interpretation. The uncovered structures in the Lower City have been residential or commercial, no public building has been identified[23]. Residential units were found throughout the Lower City in the spaces which were originally the amphiteatre, the theatre, the nymphaeum, and the bathhouses. Shops and workshops continued to be built along the main streets of the city. A workshop dated to this period was found in the area of the Byzantine market street; it was described as a goldsmith's shop; and other shops continued to be used[24]. A series of "industrial installations" was built on the steps running along the east side of the theatre; some of these installations were used for pottery production[25]. A lime kiln was excavated in the entrance hall of the bathhouse[26]. The existence of such commercial and industrial facilities would seem to support, along with the historical documentation of agricultural products, the prosperity of Baysān.

The earlier excavators of the Tall were not able to date material culture remains to this period. Unfortunately, not enough data was published to reinterpret adequately. It is probable, however, that destroyed structures were restored and continued in use. This may be the reason why the excavators were unable to identify the two phases. The church data, presented above, argue for the existence of the two phases.

---

21. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 22.
22. al-Maqdisi, *Ahsan al-Taqasim fi-Ma'rifat al-Aqalim*, ed. by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1909).
23. Foerster and Tsafrir, *ESI* 6 (1988): 43.
24. Ibid: 34.
25. Mazor, *ESI* 6 (1988): 21.
26. Ibid: 13.

C. The Second Transitional Phase

This transitional phase was the result of the A.D. 747 earthquake. For the second time in the history of Baysān an earthquake accompanied a major political event: the Abbasids revolted against the Umayyads and replaced Damascus with Baghdad as the capital of the caliphate. Recent excavations in the Lower City have identified the destruction in all areas and it has been identified as the decisive destructive force to the city: "The city rebuilt in the Abbasid period was but a pale shadow of its former glory. No attempt was made to renovate ruined buildings"[27]. The restoration of the round church on the Tall was ended by a destruction; however, the excavators were unable to date it. It would appear that this was a result of the second earthquake.

The earliest Arabic historical source relative to Baysān, al-Baladhurī, dates to the ninth century. Later, Baysan was visited by a number of historians and geographers of the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to describe Baysān as a flourishing economic center in the ninth century, especially as this is supported by the archaeological evidence. Following the mid-eighth century destruction, the early plan of the Lower City was completely abandoned and new arrangements were used in the rebuilding of the city. The streets of the earlier period were not restored. It seems that it was not practical to clean and restore the earlier structures. Because the destruction was not disturbed, it was possible to trace the destruction archaeologically. Among the material culture remains excavated was a "hoard, including eleven gold coins of the Umayyad period, the latest dating from 737 A.D. (This) was discovered under one of the fallen columns as well as the skeleton of a man caught under a column"[28]. In the area of the Byzantine market street, the excavations exposed the front wall of the shops as well as the arcades "lying in the same orderly manner as before the earthquake when they were standing upright"[29].

Despite this disastrous destruction, people continued living in Baysān, exploiting what was available to rebuild the city. In the Lower City, the abandoned streets were partitioned and transverse walls were built, creating new living spaces[30]. Parts of the monumental structures which remained standing after the earthquake were exploited and turned into living spaces. Occupation was dense in the north, close to the Tall, due probably to the running water in Wādī Asi at the foot of the Tall[31]. The increasing density of occupation towards the Tall may indicate the increasing importance of the Tall during this period.

---

27. Foerster and Tsafrir, *ESI* 6 (1988): 43.
28. Ibid: 28.
29. Ibid: 29.
30. Ibid: 26; Mazor, *ESI* 6 (1988): 23.
31. Foerster and Tsafrir, *ESI* 6 (1988): 28-29.

The Tall was replanned during this period. A fortification wall, penetrated by one gate at its northwest angle was built (Fig. 4). The gateway was flanked by two substantial towers built with large stone blocks on the face and core consisting of reused architectural elements[32]. This gateway was part of the enclosing wall, but it seems that it had replaced an earlier one, as the excavators traced remains of massive foundations, neither excavated nor dated[33].

Concerning the date of construction of the enclosing wall, it was stated previously that the wall cut through the foundations of the earlier Byzantine structure, which dates it to the period following the Muslim takeover. The phase following the first destruction in the early seventh century was an extension of the earlier phase that followed the general outline of the city plan. However, the phase which followed the second destruction in the mid-eighth century, attested to drastic changes in the settlement plan of the Tall. Construction of the enclosing wall was probably part of a larger project to replan the Tall.

The Tall was divided into parts: the summit which occupied the southern side of the Tall, and the terraces of lower levels which covered the rest of the Tall (Fig. 5). The only available data on the terraces is that they comprised "small houses along narrow lanes"[34]. From the settlement plan, the houses on the northeastern side of the Tall were geometrical with walls perpendicular to the enclosing wall. No approaches were found; however, it is likely that there was a road running from the main gate towards the southeastern corner of the Tall, parallel to the northeastern side of the enclosing wall.

On the western side of the Tall, the most striking feature was the street leading from the gate to the summit. The street was straight with a consistent and regular width of more than four meters (Fig. 6). As Fisher described it, "the street inside the gate extended 30 m. eastward in a gentle incline, then made an abrupt bend to the south (ascending to the summit)...the earlier paving stones were placed systematically, while later repairs, of larger blocks, had been laid less regularly"[35]. This street crossed the foundations of the earlier Byzantine walls and the earlier street[36]. Before reaching the summit, the street was flanked on both the east and the west sides by residential units. Despite confusion in the published plan, it is possible to notice the geometry of structures and the perpendicular walls flanking the street.

At its southern end, the street ran at a right angle, approaching the entrance gate to the summit. "The summit had its own enclosing wall, forming a platform,

32. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 4.
33. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1922): 37.
34. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1923): 243.
35. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1922): 37.
36. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 11.

with a second or inner entrance on the west from the lower area"[37]; however, the enclosing wall was not clearly demonstrated in the published plan. The street did not change in width or direction as it passed through the entrance gate. This street was the backbone of the summit plan, dividing it into two equal parts, while narrower passages branched off the street north and south. Along the street and branching passages regular structures were erected that the excavators identified as "houses".

Excavations on the Tall evidenced a small mosque (*ca.* 20 sq. m.) on the northern side of the main street[38]. The flooring was white plaster and it had a *mihrāb*. The latter was "modelled in white stucco", according to Fisher; while Fitzgerald observed that it was "constructed in the southernmost corner by means of two small columns, as a *mihrāb* turned in the direction of Makka for the purpose of prayer". There are no photographs or drawings to be consulted.

THE DATE OF THE REPLANNING OF THE TALL

The above discussion indicates the existence of two transitional phases. Following the mid-eighth century earthquake, the city was rebuilt with new plans for both the Lower City and the Tall. The date of this replanning is somewhat clear based on inscriptions. A shaft "half buried in the filling of the street" which penetrated the summit of the Tall was uncovered. Three inscriptions were found on it: one in Hebrew and two in Arabic. One of the Arabic inscriptions contained a date, published in two forms. Fisher published the inscription as "Mohammed the son of Saeed in the year 170 A.H. (A.D. 764)"[39]. Based on this, he concluded that the settlement was built before A.D. 784. Fitzgerald published it as: "inscription of Ahmed ben Said ben El-Dhattab al-Najjari in the month of Rabi of the year 190 A.H. (A.D. 806)"[40]. Both dates allow for the suggestion that the Tall was replanned in the second half of the eighth century and not later.

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE CITY PLAN OF BAYSĀN

When Baysān was declared a *polis* by the Roman administration, it was given a Roman character. It was planned according to the Roman concept of urbanism and provided with all of the features that characterized contemporary Roman cities. Some of those features, buildings and thoroughfares continued to be present in the following phases, attesting to the strong influence of the Romans on Baysān. The two religious revolutions of Christianity and Islam, and the natural factors of deterioration and earthquake destruction imposed certain alterations in terms of city planning and architecture. The priorities of the Byzantine and Muslim administrations differed from those of the Romans. Most efforts were

---

37. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1923): 243.
38. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1922): 39, Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 17.
39. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1922): 39.
40. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 43.

focused on erecting residential and commercial buildings, and the Roman public buildings were exploited for these purposes. The new concept of urbanism produced a pragmatic methodology in restoring and developing the city in the Byzantine and Islamic periods. This concept continued to be expressed following the mid-eighth century earthquake.

The fortified settlement on the Tall, which measured about twenty *dunums,* was provided with an orthogonal network of streets, directed northeast-southeast and northwest-southwest. These were almost the same directions of the streets in the Lower City during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The streets on the Tall were of two types: major streets about four meters wide, and minor streets about two meters wide. The major streets served the entire settlement and minor streets served the residential units. It appears that they dead ended. These streets represented a conceptual difference: they were not colonnaded nor were they as wide as in the Roman period. Wheeled carriages were non-existent in the Islamic periods, eliminating the necessity for wide streets; consequently, Islamic cities can be characterized by comparatively narrow streets.

The structures of the Tall settlement were as organized as the street system. Most structures, flanking streets and lanes were geometrical with perpendicular walls and regular spaces. This was well-represented in the structures on the south side of the Tall. The summit, which had been originally at a higher level than the rest of the Tall, was surrounded by retaining walls and levelled before being built upon. The excavators identified this as a "fairly level surface"[41]. An "artifical filling" was excavated against the eastern side of the summit[42]. "The summit had its own enclosing wall, forming a platform, with a second or inner entrance on the west from the lower area"[43].

A question arises concerning the relation between the summit and the rest of the settlement. The enclosing walls and the western entrance gate may suggest a distinctive position for the summit. The quality of the structures on the summit as they appear on the plan supports this suggestion. The summit was identified as the palace of "the headquarters of the Arab administration...the commandant occupied a fine regularly built house with a court. One small apartment was set aside for prayer"[44]. Unfortunately, the "commandant's house" was not identified on the plan and the data on which the interpretation was based were not published.

The summit may, however, be viewed in another way. The enclosing walls could have been built for the purpose of retaining the filling only, and not to isolate this area. The structures and streets of the summit were an extension of and

---

41. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1922): 39.
42. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations:* 12, 13.
43. Fisher, *Museum Journal* (1923): 243.
44. Ibid: 246.

complementary to those of the settlement outside. The main street ran east, passed the gate and did not change direction or width. The structures inside were similar to those outside. The summit appears different on the plan only because the structures were complete and less disturbed than the rest. Comparing the structures at the junction of the streets outside of the western wall with the structure of the summit shows that they were similar (Fig. 7). Additionally, the series of rooms of equal size, which appears on the northern side of the main street of the summit, seems to have continued outside the western wall along the same street and the northerly directed one. These rooms could have been parts of the residential units. However, it was common to use the rooms along the streets as shops, while homes were in the back. It is not possible to discuss the use and function of the spaces because the related material culture remains were not published and the architectural data is also incomplete. The structures on the summit were probabaly residential units separated by walls or lanes.

This high standard of planning on the Tall reflects the fact that there was a central administration for the purpose of planning, organizing and supervision of the construction. Baysān was an organized and economically flourishing city with a municipal authority during the period in which Bilād al-Shām was under the direct rule of the Abbasids.
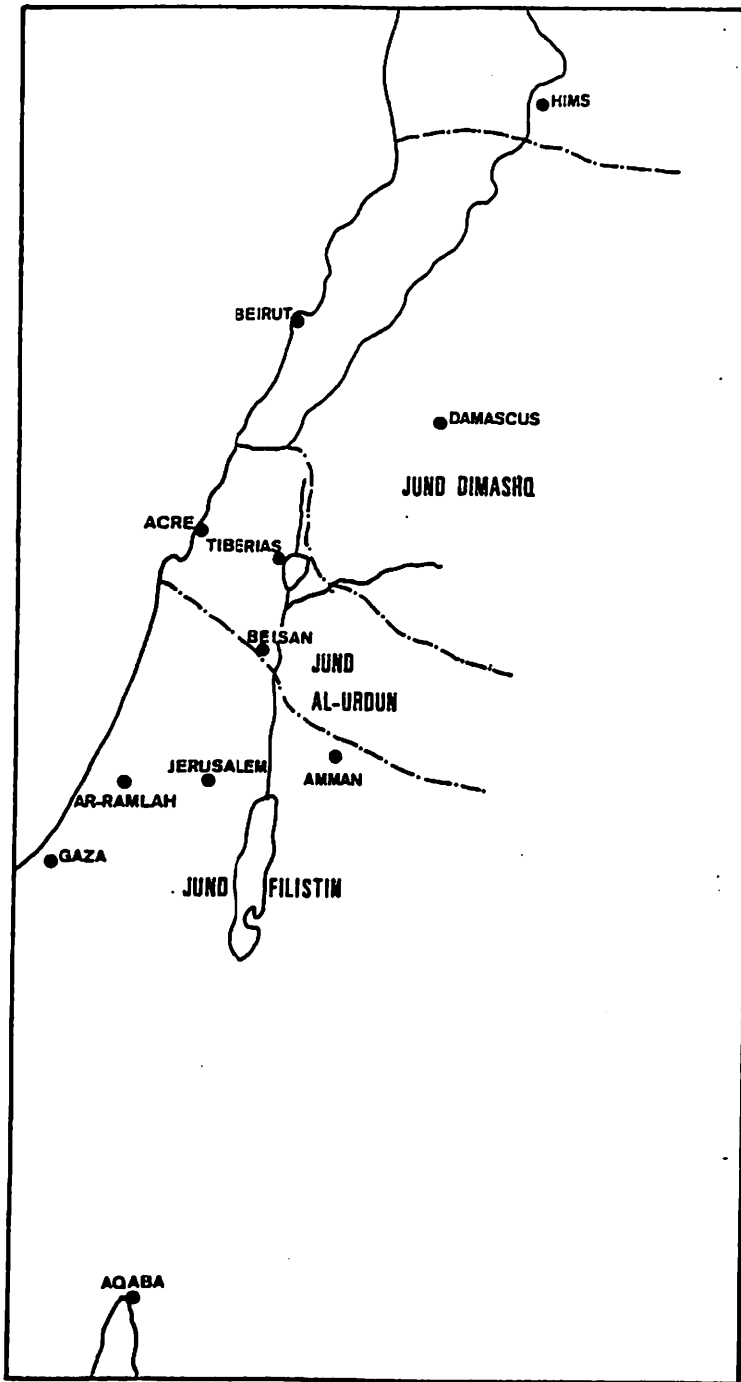
Fig. 1: Map of Ajnad al-Sham, after K. Salibi, *Syria Under Islam.*
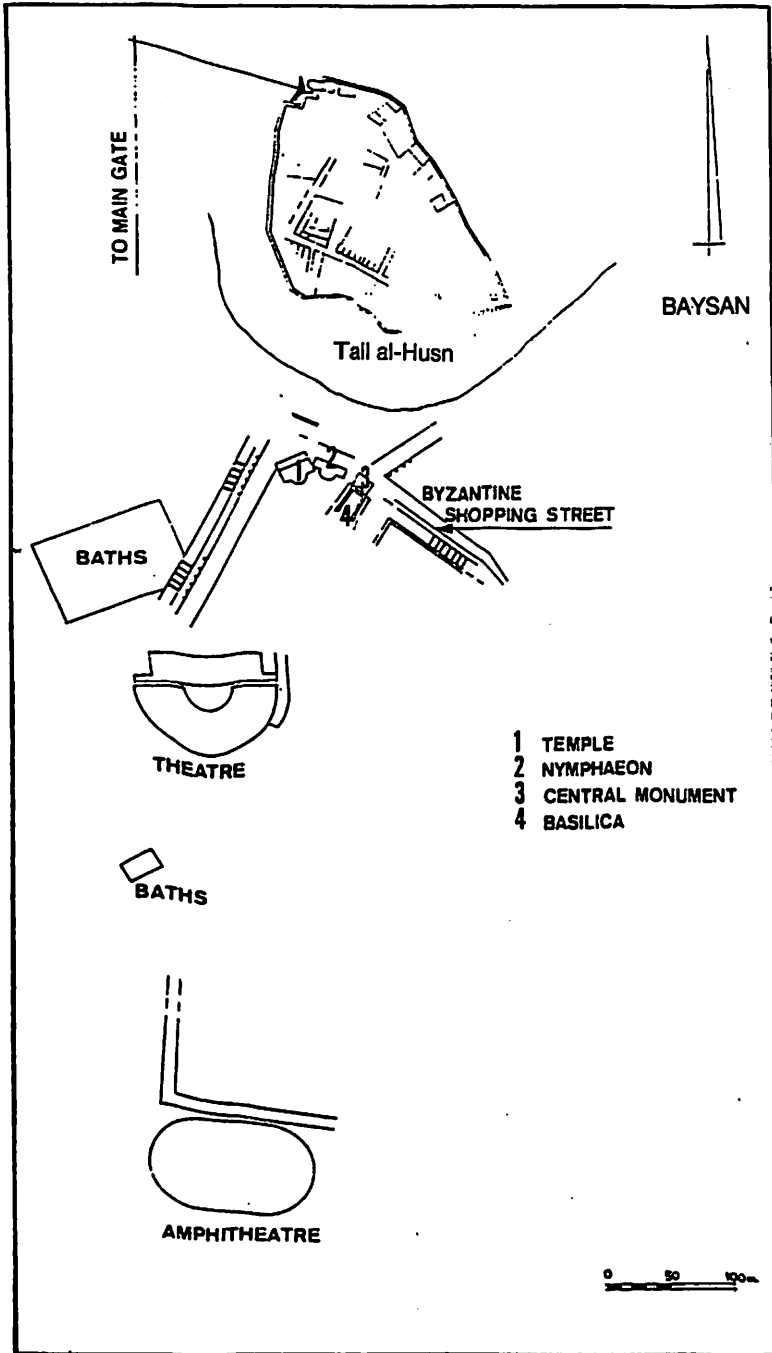
Fig. 2: Baysan: Tall al-Husn and Lower City.

BAYSAN
Tall al-Husn
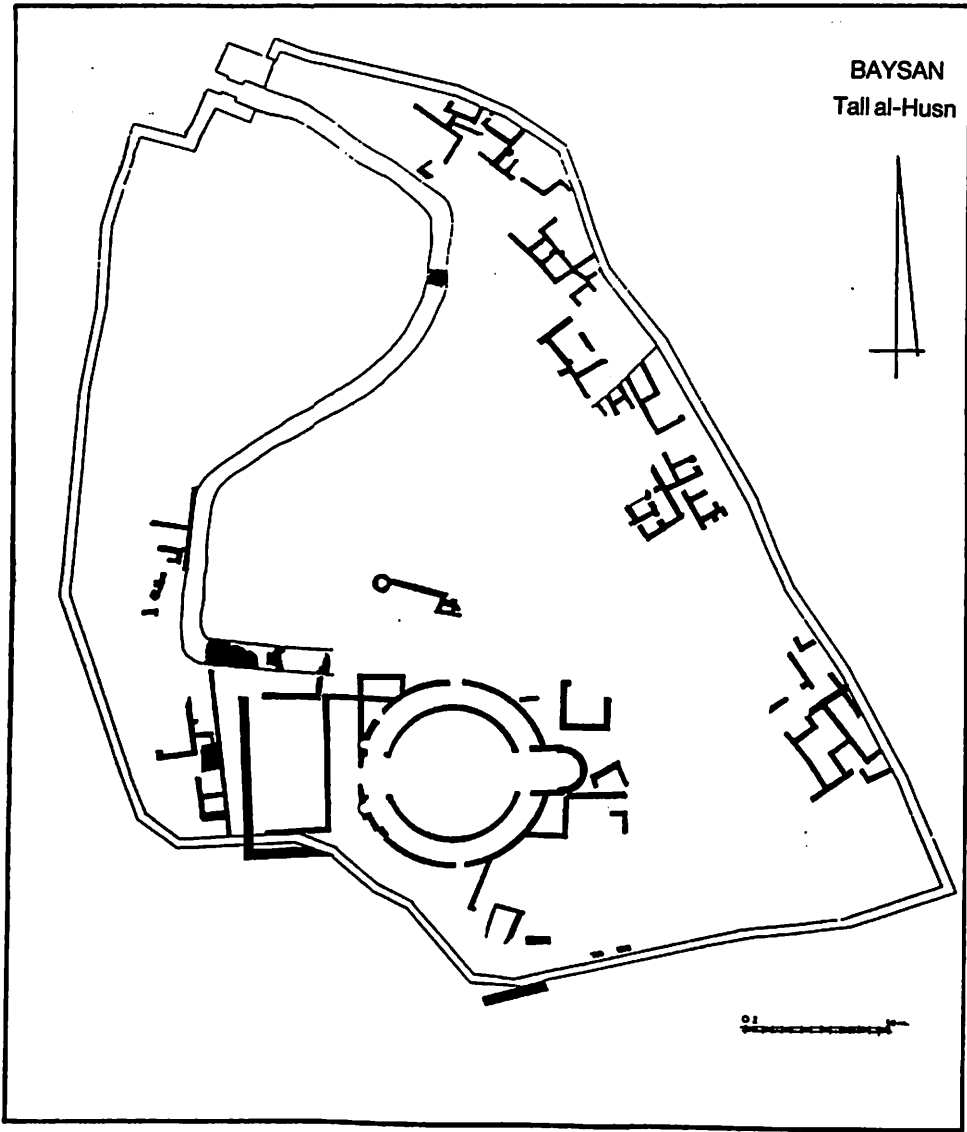
Fig. 3: Tall al-Husn: "Byzantine Level", after Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations 1921-1923.*

BAYSAN

Tall al-Husn

Fig. 4: Tall al-Husn: "Earlier Arab Level", after Fitzgerald, *Beth Shan Excavations 1921 – 1923.*

BAYSAN

Tall al-Husn

HOUSES OF LOW TERRACES

HOUSES OF THE SUMMIT

A MOSQUE
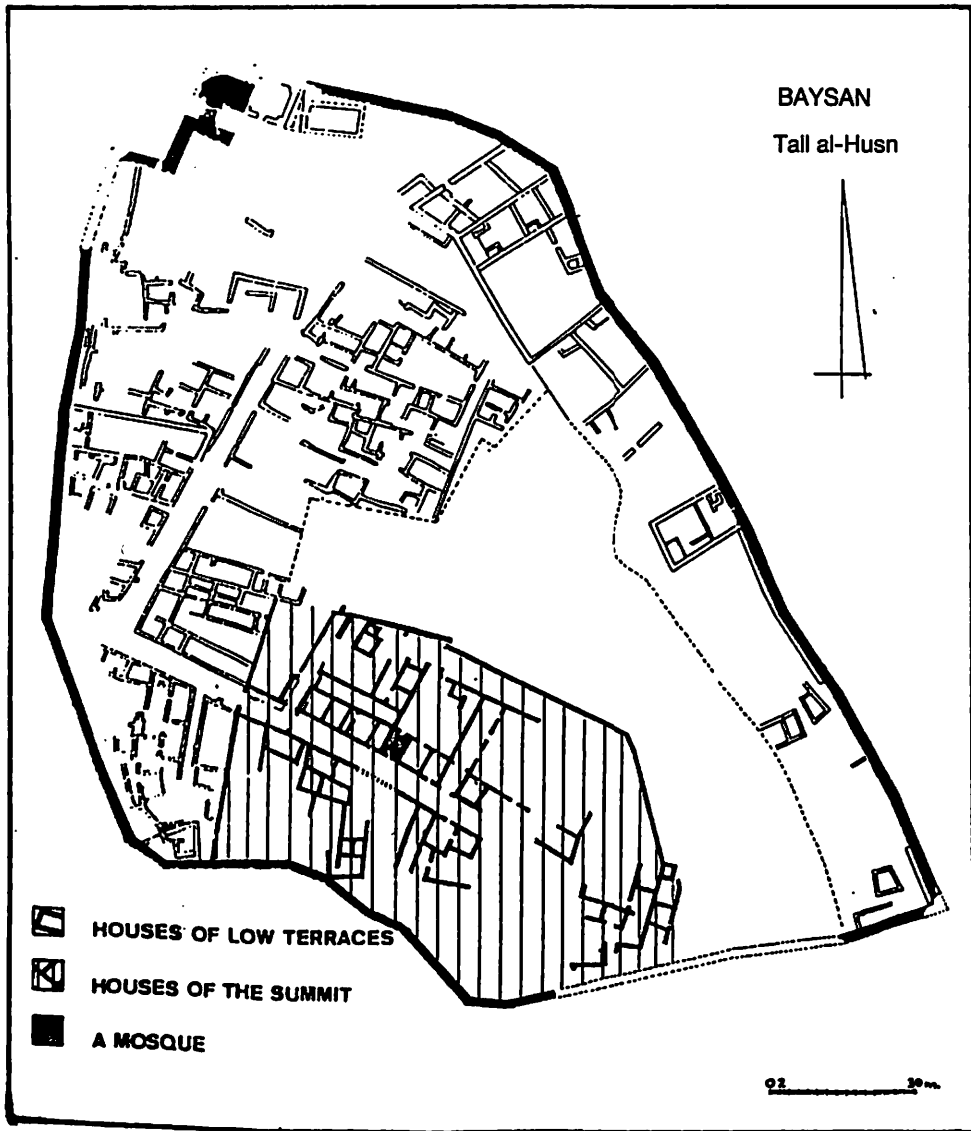
Fig. 5: Tall al-Husn: the Two Divisions of the Settlement, the Summit and the Lower Terraces.
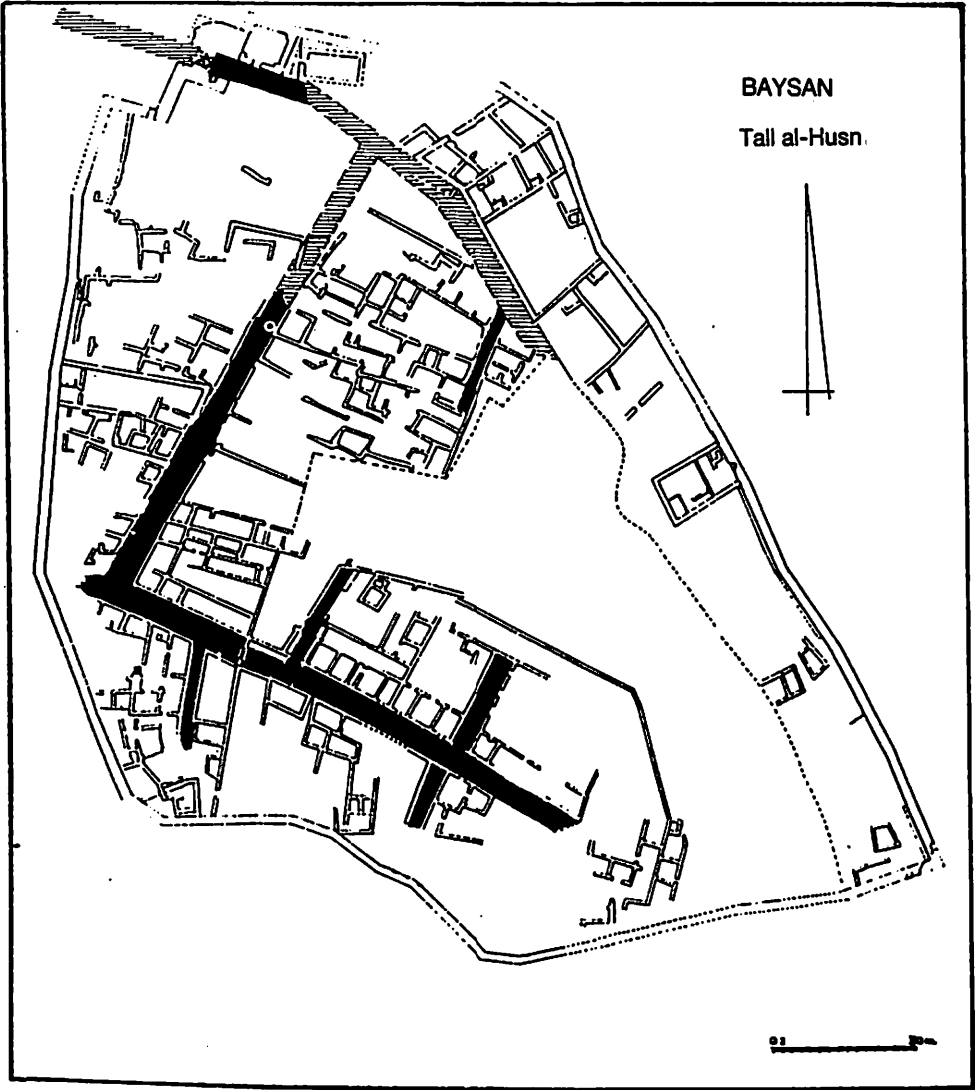
Fig. 6: Tall al-Husn: System of Streets.
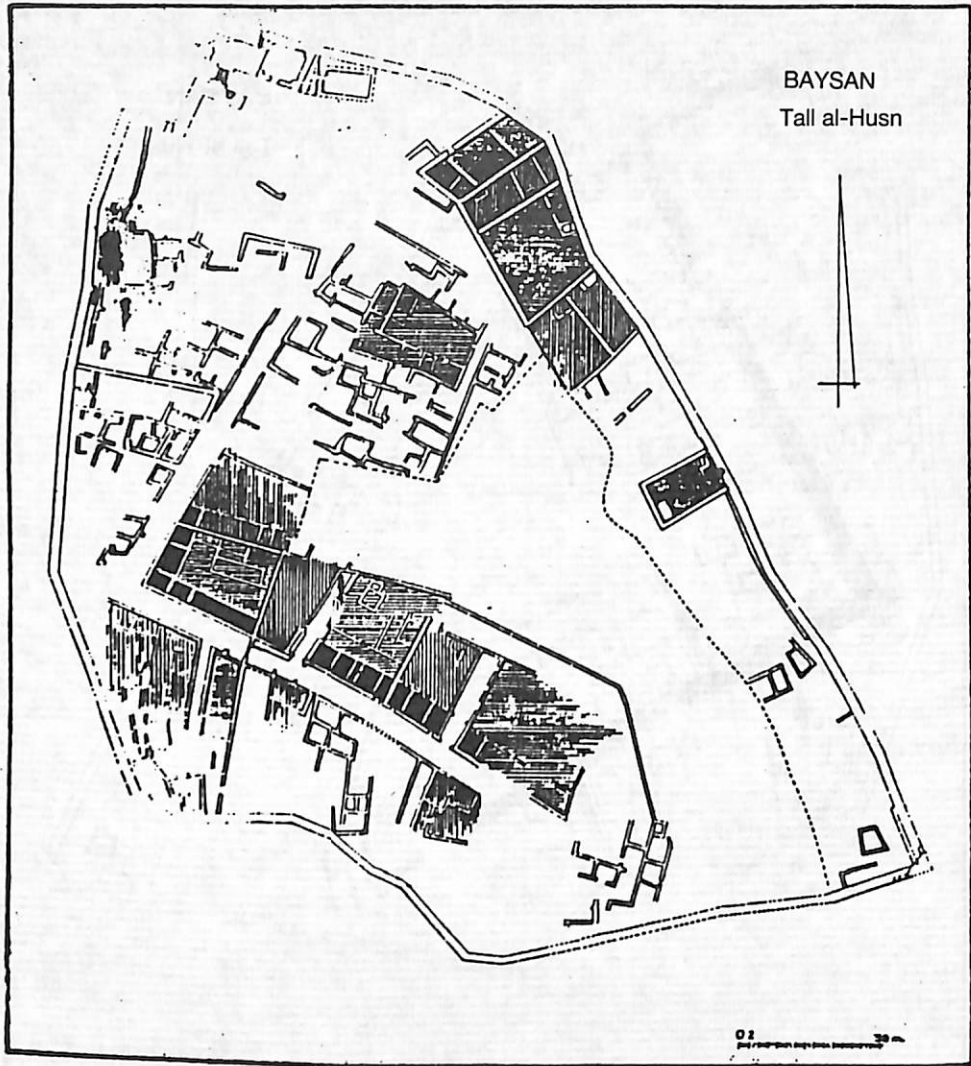
Fig 7: Tall al-Husn: a Proposed Division of Residental Units.

Architecture And Artefacts From Abbasid Fihl: Implications For The Cultural History of Jordan

Alan Walmsley[*]

Dedicated to the staff members, past and present, of the Pella Excavations

Reconstructing the Cultural History of Southern Bilād al-Shām.

The cultural heritage of southern Bilād al-Shām between the second and fifth centuries A.H. has, belatedly, become the subject of intense historical and archaeological investigation. Just a decade and a half ago, W.D. Hütteroth could remark[1]:

> The question has not yet been solved as to what the cultural landscape looked like in the long period between the Roman Empire and the nineteenth century... Can the general pattern of density of settlements be reconstructed for a specific period of time?

Yet in the past few years, research by a new generation of archaeologists in Jordan has addressed, and reached preliminary conclusions on, this question. Following A. Northedge's pioneering study of the 'Ammān Citadel[2], recent work at Bayt Rās[3], Fihl/Tabaqat Fahl[4], Jarash[5], al-Muwaqqar[6], Khirbat Fāris[7], and Ayla/

* University of Sydney, Australia.

1. W.D. Hütteroth, "The Pattern of Settlement in Palestine in the Sixteenth Century: Geographical Research on Turkish *Defter-i Mufassal,* in M. Ma'oz (Ed.) *Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem, 1975): 3-4.

2. A. Northedge, *Qal'at 'Amman in the Early Islamic Period* (Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1984).

3. C. Lenzen, "Irbid and Beit Ras: Interconnected Settlements *Ca.* A.D. 100-900", in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan, vol. 4.* (Amman, forthcoming); C. J. Lenzen & E. A. Knauf, "Bayt Ras/Capitolias: a Preliminary Evaluation of the Archaeological and Textual Evidence", *Syria* 64 (1987): 21-46.

4. A. Walmsley, "Pella/Fihl after the Islamic Conquest: a Convergence of Literary and Archaeological Evidence", *Mediterranean Archaeology* 1 (1988): 142-159; id. "Early Islamic and 'Abbāsid Pella/Fihl (635 - c. 900)" in D. Homes-Fredericq and J.B. Hennessy (Eds.) *The Archaeology of Jordan 2* (Leuven, 1989): 436-440.

5. F. Zayadine (ed.), *Jerash Archaeological Project, 1981-83* vol. 1. (Amman, 1989); id. *Jerash Archaeological Project, 1984-86* vol. 2 (Amman, 1989).

6. M. Najjar, "Abbasid Pottery from el-Muwaqqar," *ADAJ* 33 (1989): 305-323.

7. J. Johns, A. McQuitty, R. Falkner, et al. "The Fāris Project: Preliminary Report upon the 1986 and 1988 Seasons", *Levant* 21 (1989): 63-95; J. Johns, "Settlement and

al-'Aqaba[8], has openly acknowledged the social and economic vitality of Jordan between the second and fifth centuries A.H. The recognition of theoretical deficiencies in the results of Jordan's pioneering archaeologists has challenged the suggestion of a gap in settlement after the fall of the Umayyad califate[9], and opened the way for a re-evaluation of the cultural history of Islamic Jordan in which literary sources and the archaeological record can be given equal consideration[10].

Southern Bilād al-Shām in the Second to Fifth Centuries A.H.: the Historical-Geographical Perspective.

The social and economic structure of southern Bilād al-Shām under Abbasid and Fātimid administration is outlined in eight literary works of Islamic historical geography[11]. Although woefully brief, these books give a mostly accurate descrip-

---

= Land Exploitation Strategies in the Ard al-Karak during the Islamic Period", in C. Lenzen & A. Walmsley (Eds.) *The Archaeology of Islamic Jordan: New Directions* (Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology Occasional Paper Series; Irbid, Yarmouk University, forthcoming).

8 . D. Whitcomb, "Excavations at Aqaba: First Preliminary Report", *ADAJ* 31 (1987): 247-266; id. "A Fātimid Residence in Aqaba, Jordan", *ADAJ* 32 (1988): 207-224; id. "Evidence of the Umayyad Period from the Aqaba Excavations", in M.A. Bakhit & R. Schick (Eds.) *The Fourth International Conference on the History of Bilād al-Shām: Bilād al-Shām in the Umayyad Period,* vol. 2 (Amman, 1989): 164-184; id. "Mahesh Ware: Evidence of Early Abbasid Occupation from Southern Jordan", *ADAJ* 33 (1989): 269-285.

9 . Note for example the comments in: Lenzen & Knauf, "Bayt Ras"; Johns, "Settlement" A.G. Walmsley, "Fihl (Pella) and the Cities of North Jordan during the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods", *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan, vol. 4* (Amman, forthcoming); D. Whitcomb, "Reassessing the Archaeology of Jordan of the Abbasid Period", *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan, vol. 4* (Amman, forthcoming).

10 . See the present author's synthesis in *The Administrative Structure and Urban Geography of the Jund of Filastin and the Jund of al-Urdunn* (Ph. D. thesis, University of Sydney; to be published as *The Islamic Cities of Palestine and Jordan: an Historical Geography, A.H. 20-375/A.D. 640-985,* Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Monograph Series; Irbid, Yarmouk University, forthcoming); see also Walmsley, "Pella/Fihl after the Islamic Conquest"; Lenzen & Knauf, "Bayt Ras".

11 . The eight works central to this paper are: The *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān* by al-Balādhuñ (d. 279/892), completed in 255/869; the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* by Ibn Khurdādhbih (211-300/826-913), first published in 232/847 and revised in 272/885; the

=

tion of the major provincial cities and district centres of Palestine and Jordan, and also allude to numerous villages in the surrounding countryside (Fig. 1). The complex urban-rural network revealed in the geographical accounts, although uneven in details, is convincing evidence for cultural continuity throughout all southern Bilād al-Shām during the second to fifth centuries A.H.[12].

Settlement on the Mediterranean Littoral.

The geographical texts identify twenty-two centres between Sūr and Rafah, comprising six major and seven secondary ports on the Mediterranean Coast and nine centres on the coastal plain. Sūr operated as the foremost naval base for al-Shām in the late Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, and appears as a major manufacturing and trading centre in the fourth and fifth century sources. Other eminent coastal ports according to the sources were 'Akkā, Qaysāriya, Yāfā, 'Asqalān and Ghazza. Inland, the coastal plain was dominated by al-Ramla, a city of more than a square mile by the third century, As the capital of Filastīn, al-Ramla stood at the crossroad of numerous transport routes including the highway and government post-road from Damascus to al-Fustāt[13]. Other leading centres of the coastal plain were Ludd, Yubnā and Kābul, the latter a *madīna* according to al-Maqdisī[14]. The overriding impression gained from the sources is settlement continuity along coastal Palestine throughout the period, which indicates the considerable value placed upon the Mediterranean littoral by successive Islamic governments in Damascus, Baghdād, and al-Fustāt.

=   *Kitāb al-Buldān* by al-Ya'qūbī (d. 284/897 in Egypt), published in 278/981; the *Kitāb al-Buldān* by Ibn Faqīh, compiled in ca. 290/903; the partly-preserved *Kitāb al-Kharāj* by Qudāmah (250-320/864-932), written in about 316/928; the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* by al-Istakhrī, published in about 340/951; the *Kitāb Sūrat al-Ard* by Ibn Hawqal, the definitive form of which appeared in 378/988; the *Kitāb Ahsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm* of al-Maqdisī (d. 390/1000), completed in 375/985 and revised in 378/988. References in this paper are to the B. G. A. editions edited by M. de Goeje (Leiden).

12 . This section on the historical geography of southern Bilād al-Shām is based upon Walmsley *Administrative Structure*; see in particular the gazetteer.

13 . Description of al-Ramla: al-Maqdisī: 164-165; also the fifth century Persian travelogue by Nasir-i Khusraw, in A.-S Marmardji (transl.) *Textes Geographiques Arabes sur la Palestine* (Paris, 1951): 83. Al-Ramla on the Damascus - al-Fustāt highway: Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik*: 78, 80, 117, 154; Qudamah, *op. cit*: 219, 228.

14 . Kābul was noted for sugar and indigo. Ibn Hawqal, *Kitāb Sūrat al-Ard*: 184-185; al-Maqdisī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm*: 154, 162.

Settlement in Central Palestine.

Thirteen sites are mentioned in the Arabic geographies, and of these Qadas, Nābulus, Bayt al-Maqdis, and Bayt Jibrīn appear as the leading cities. The distribution of sites in central Palestine continued the Byzantine pattern until the Crusades, although economic changes and religious factors apparent in the sources had an appreciable impact upon the long-term size and relative importance of the urban centres. The prominence of Bayt al-Maqdis and the promotion of Habrā (al-Khalīl) and Bayt Lahm can be explained by the sacred nature of these centres and the accompanying benefits of pilgrimage; whereas the sustained importance of Qadas, Nābulus, and Bayt Jibrīn is attributable to regional economic factors, especially the expansion of the rural economy and the marketing of primary produce in the major cities of southern Bilād al-Shām and Egypt. Bayt Jibrīn functioned as a district depository and supplier of provisions to al-Ramla[15], Nābulus was noted for its agricultural produce[16], and Qadas was a source of fish, specialist garments, mats and ropes[17].

Settlement in the Jordan Rift Valley.

The Arabic texts list seven major and three secondary sites for the Jordan Valley-Wādī 'Araba cleft in the third to fifth centuries A.H., primarily Bāniyās, Sūsiya, Tabariyā, Baysān, Fihl, Zughar and Ayla. The principal centre in the north was Tabariyā, which grew rapidly as the capital of the newly constituted Jund al-Urdunn[18]. The city was well endowed with baths, city walls, a large sūq, mosques, churches and synagogues and was noted for its manufactured goods, especially kapok, paper, clothing and straw prayer mats[19]. The other centres were known for their primary produce: Baysān for rice, indigo and dates; and Bāniyās also for rice and cotton[20]. South of the Dead Sea, the towns of Zughar and Ayla at either end of the dry Wādī 'Araba experienced steady growth based on trade

---

15 . Ibid.: 155, 174.

16 . Ibid.: 155, 174. The city had large markets, many olive trees, and water-driven mills.

17 . Ibid.: 154, 161; the dammed Hulah lake and Jabal 'Amila to the west supplied the raw materials for the industries of Qadas.

18 . Tabariya replaced Baysān as the principal administrative centre in the northern Jordan Valley with the conversion of *Palaestina Secunda* into the enlarged *Jund al-Urdunn* under 'Umar in 18/639. See Walmsley, *Administrative Structure* : 151.

19 . Al-Istakhrī, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-al-Mamālik* : 58-59; Ibn Hawqal, *Kitab Sūrat al-Ard*: 173-174; al-Maqdisī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm*: 154, 161, 182, 185; Nasir-i Khusraw, in Marmardji, *Textes*: 128; J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades* (Jerusalem, 1977): 128, 139.

20 . Baysān: Al-Maqdisī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm*: 154, 162, 180; A. Rowe, *Topography and History of Beth She'an* (Philadelphia, 1930): 5; Bāniyās: al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*: 326; al-Maqdisī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm*: 160.

in the third to fifth centuries. Zughar was a busy market town with roads to Ayla, Bayt al-Maqdis, 'Ammān, Adhruh and beyond; whereas Ayla, a *farda* for Filasṭīn and the entrepot of al-Hijāz, benefitted from both trade and pilgrimage[21].

Settlement in the Eastern Highlands.

The geographical works name ten major and seven secondary settled communities east of the Rift Valley, three-quarters of which were clustered in the agriculturally fertile land north of the Wādī Mūjib. The sources feature Adhri'āt, Busrā, 'Ammān, Ma'āb and Adhruh, each the social and economic focal point for surrounding villages and either on or near the Darb al-Hajj[22]. These five principal centres seemingly overshadowed the other places mentioned in the sources, including Jarash and the northern trichora of Bayt Rās, Abil and Jadar. Although the continued occupation of the north Jordan sites during the third to fifth centuries A.H. finds support in the literature, this material also raises the question as to whether these centres performed any wider "urban" function after the mid to late third century[23].

Settlement and Literary References.

The geographical sources make a valuable contribution to the historical geography of southern Bilād al-Shām between the second and fifth centuries, naming sixty-six settled communities and alluding to the presence of countless others, mostly villages. The texts provide sufficient detail to make an initial assessment of the relative importance of each site, although the elementary nature of these conclusions is obvious when the narrow information base from which they are drawn is considered. In time, the systematic study of Arabic historical works and biographical literature on the early Islamic scholars will identify many other locations and subsequently expand the data base[24].

---

21 . Zughar was also noted for indigo and dates: Ibn Hawqal, *Sūrat al-Ard:* 184-185; al-Maqdisī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 178; Aylah: ibid: 155, 178; Whitcomb, "Excavations at Aqaba", "Fatimid Residence".

22 . See Walmsley, *Administrative Structure:* 223-231, 283-285, gazetteer, for references. For instance, the al-Balqā' district around 'Ammān is described as a land of villages, fields and water mills which produced grain, sheep, goats, fruits and honey (al-Maqdisī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm:* 175-176).

23 . The urban function of early Islamic cities in Bilād al-Shām has not been thoroughly discussed. Size alone is not a reliable guideline; the maintenance of public space, a central economic role, an administrative function, and organised communal waste disposal may be more useful criteria with which to identify the urban centres of al-Shām.

24 . Yāqūt's account of the revolt of al-'Uthmānī in the early Abbasid Period identifies a number of places, including al-Fudayn and Hisbān and their fortresses. Hisbān may have served as the regional centre for *Zāhir al-Balqā'*, a district of the *Jund Dimashq* (Ibn Khurdādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-(al-Mamālik:* 77).

The Formulation of a Cultural History of Southern Bilād al-Shām: the Archaeological Contribution.

The steady growth in recent years of research into the archaeology of the Islamic Periods has produced new and challenging evidence on the nature of occupation in Palestine and Jordan between the first and fifth centuries A.H.[25]. The last decade has seen a refinement in the pioneering ceramic·chronology developed by J. Sauer and R.H. Smith[26], notably an increasing awareness of Abbasid and Fatimid settlement. Although still in its infancy, this research is beginning to provide additional information at a level of detail and reliability unobtainable from the written sources.

Two impediments limit the usefulness of archaeological research: the shortage of adequately published material and the frequent misidentification and misdating of Islamic occupation levels. Many prominent sites were excavated by archaeologists whose main interest was the pre-Islamic history, and· often the upper levels were cursorily dealt with to expedite the recovery of Biblical and Classical remains. Many sites in Palestine suffered (and still suffer) from this treatment[27]. Other material from sites on both sides of the Jordan River remains substantially unpublished[28], and in those instances when reasonably detailed reports have appeared their authors have often conformed to prevailing attitudes that owe more to Western prejudice than scholarly accuracy[29]. While often lacking in details and repeatedly misinterpreted, the archaeological evidence constitutes an independent source of information with which to assess and expand the geographical accounts.

The Archaeology of Abbasid Fihl –– Contributions to the Cultural History of Jordan.

In the past twelve years, excavations by the Sydney-Wooster Joint Expedition

---

25 . See the papers in Lenzen & Walmsley, *Archaeology of Islamic Jordan.*

26 . J. Sauer, *Heshbon Pottery* (Michigan, 1973); id. "The Pottery of Jordan in the Early Islamic Periods", *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan, vol. 1,* (Amman, 1982): 329-339; R.H. Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis* (Wooster, 1973).

27 . One notorious example being the few pages devoted to the rich Islamic levels of Tall al-Husn at Baysān in G.M. Fitzgerald, *Beth-Shan Excavations 1921-1923: the Arab and Byzantine Levels* (Philadelphia, 1931).

28 . There are numerous examples, including the crucial excavations at Tiberias (Tabariya) and Udhruh. Preliminary reports indicate the importance of this material: M. Dothan, "Hammath Tiberias", *Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land,* vol. 4 (Jerusalem, 1978): 1178-1184; G. Foerster, "Tiberias", Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land, vol. 4 (Jerusalem, 1978): 1171-1177; A. Killick, "Udhruh – the Frontier of an Empire. 1980 & 1981 Seasons. A Preliminary Report" *Levant* 15 (1983): 110-140.

29 . Walmsley, "Fihl (Pella) and the Cities of North Jordan".

to Pella have yielded convincing evidence, in the form of public buildings and private dwellings, for the uninterrupted and prolonged settlement of Fihl during the first to fourth centuries A.H. Umayyad Period occupation is represented by the extensive residential quarters on the main mound (Areas IV and VIII) and the three churches of Byzantine construction (Areas II, V, and IX). Evidence for continued settlement into the third and fourth centuries comes from a large site located immediately to the northeast of the main mound (Area XXIX), which probably served as the Islamic city-centre built after the 129/747 earthquake. Occupation of the same date has been identified on the main mound, in the form of walls and pits.

Islamic Fihl Before the Abbasid Period.

The initial recognition of a first and second century (viz Umayyad) presence at Fihl occurred during R.H. Smith's 1967 season of excavations in the West Church. In the final report, Smith pioneered the separation of Byzantine and Umayyad ceramics for Jordanian sites.

> (The) corpus of pottery [from Area I] is of considerable importance in the identification of the salient features of Umayyad ceramics. Alongside the obvious evidences of continuity with Byzantine ceramic traditions, Umayyad pottery shows many distinctive developments[30].

In addition to developing a ceramic sequence, Smith noted the nonviolent transition from Byzantine to Muslim sovereignty over the city in the history of the West Church[31].

Subsequent work has built upon Smith's original conclusions[32]. As in the West Church, excavations in the East Church (Area V), the Civic Complex Church (Area IX), and the residential quarters (Areas IV and VIII) have failed to produce any clear proof for a destructive occupation by the Islamic armies. This uninterrupted use of the churches, symbols of the local Christian community and its earthly powers, is a reliable indicator of social continuity at Fihl after the Conquest. In Area IV at the western end of the main mound, the exposure of 1,700 square metres of housing by the Sydney University team has provided a detailed insight into domestic life in the late Umayyad Period that contradicts the impression of social deterioration gained from the churches. The constructional quality of these structures, casualties of the destructive 129/747 earthquake, and the wealth of their contents reflects the reasonably high standard of living enjoyed by the citizens of Fihl, and reveals their extensive social/economic relations with surrounding

---

30 . Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis.*

31 . Ibid.: 164.

32 . For recent summaries see: Walmsley in "Pella/Fihl after the Islamic Conquest", and "Early Islamic and 'Abbasid Pella/Fihl".

areas. This demonstration of respectable prosperity and an easy, if provincial, lifestyle at the end of the Umayyad Period gives credence to the concept of Abbasid settlement at Fihl.

Fihl in the Later Second to Fourth Centuries A.H.: New Discoveries.

Two recent seasons of excavations in Area XXIX at the head of the Wādi al-Khandaq ("the ditch") have unearthed a large, originally public, structure containing stratified deposits dating to the late second to fourth/fifth centuries[33]. Initial soundings in the 1985 season demonstrated the cultural and historical significance of the site, precipitating the more comprehensive area excavations of 1989 and 1990[34]. At the time of writing (January 1990), nearly 1,000 square meters has been systematically exposed[35], and a representative corpus of Abbasid pottery, ceramic lamps, iron implements, glass and other artefacts has been recovered[36].

The surface remains, typically plain stone walls and pottery scatter, are dominated by two large rectangular structures at the elevated eastern end of al-Khandaq. These structures, referred to as the Western and Eastern building complexes, are set next to one another directly onto a low clay mound, and together cover an area of some seventy by forty metres. The Western Complex lies at a noticeably

---

33 . A.G. Walmsley, in A.W. McNicoll et al. "Preliminary Report on the University of Sydney's Seventh Season of Excavations at Pella (Tabaqat Fahl) in 1985", *ADAJ* (1986); 182-195; id. "Pella/Fihl after the Islamic Conquest": 156-157; id. "Early Islamic and Abbasid Pella/Fihl".

34 . This work owes much to the generous support of Prof. J.B. Hennessy. Director of the Pella Excavations, and Dr. Ghazi Bisheh, Director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The principal funding bodies for the Pella Excavations are the Australian Research Council and the Australian National Gallery (Canberra), with additional support from the University of Sydney. This paper was written while the author was employed as a National Research Fellow at the University of Sydney by the Department of Science, Canberra, Australia.

35 . A variation of the so-called "Wheeler-Kenyon" (baulk and debris) method of excavation is used in Area XXIX. The standard unit of excavation is a ten by ten metre plot, with metre baulks retained between adjoining plots. Subsequent removal of the baulks allows the systematic exposure of a reasonable area of architecture, while preserving stratigraphical relationships. Sieving of the soil from the excavations is standard.

36 . Preliminary reports are in: Walmsley, "Preliminary Report"; id. "Early Islamic and Abbasid Pella/Fihl". This paper concentrates on the ceramic finds, as the great quantities of glass, bone and metals are currently undergoing conservation and processing. Pottery drawings are by Mss. Susan Thorpe, Judith Sellers and Justin Channing; the plan is by Stephanie Licciardo. Thanks also to Ms. Rachael Sparkes (small finds), Dr. Margaret O'Hea (glass), Mss. Noel Siver and Wendy Reade (conservators), and Mr. Kevin Rielly (animal bone).

lower level than its eastern counterpart, and slightly offset to the south. Both buildings appear to have annexes along the west, north and east sides; further walls from a number of outlying units, probably houses, are traceable in the surrounding fields.

The excavations have concentrated on the higher Eastern Complex, exposing around half of this structure on its south and west sides. Following the success of the four soundings in 1985 (plots XXIX A-D)[37], eleven other plots (E-H, J-K, M, O-R) have been opened and the original soundings enlarged. All of these plots were positioned over the Eastern Complex except plots XXIXP and XXIXQ, which cut down the slope to the Western Complex (Fig. 2). The objective of this recent work is three-fold: to expose a reasonable area of architecture by connecting the original soundings with one another, to expand the range of material culture, and to further investigate the date(s) of construction and periods of use. As the work was still continuing at the time of writing, the conclusions offered in this paper should be considered provisonal.

The Architecture. Although greatly reduced by later stone robbing, the architectural remains exposed by the excavations confirm the reasonably grand character of the central buildings. Sizable areas were paved, normally with flagstones but also square clay bricks. Walls were built in two parallel faces from medium-sized, roughly dressed stone blocks laid in even courses and the core/interces packed with small field stones. Many blocks were found to have plaster remnants adhering to their surfaces, suggesting that the destroyed buildings of the Umayyad city served as a convenient quarry. Foundations for the walls were shallow, as most were built directly onto the firm clay bedrock. An upper storey, clearly attested in the Western Complex, had walls of unbaked yellow clay bricks. The recovery of numerous light yellow to red rooftile fragments suggests that pitched roofs were common.

The Eastern Complex was dominated by a large building with a central pebbly courtyard flanked by rooms (Fig. 2)[38]. The courtyard was entered from the west, where a 2.5 metre-wide gateway and passage lead from a street. Just inside the gate were two 0.5 metre high benches and, to the south, a staircase. At the northern end of the court, thick piers and a few fallen archstones indicate that a large arched portico once stood here, which was bound by rooms to the west, north and, possibly, the east. At least three rooms were entered by doorways in the south wall of the courtyard. The roughly paved room E2 was probably a later addition, and the presence of a low feed bench suggests that this room was used to stable animals. The two deep, narrow rooms east of rooms El and E2 (Fig. 2,

---

37 . First reported in Walmsley, "Preliminary Report".

38 . Pebbling of courtyards is also known from the main mosque at Tabariya (al-Maqdisī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm*. 161, 182.

nos. 3 & 4) may have served as either repositories or shops. The next two rooms (Fig. 2, nos. 11 and 12) and the large piered room E6 probably belonged to the courtyard building, but their exact relationship is unclear as yet. The imposing paved court in the southwest corner of the complex had its own gateway into the street, but extensive stone robbing in this area has destroyed any connection between this court and the paved rooms E1 and E2 to the east.

Living quarters are attested in the southeast quarter of the Eastern Complex, where two major architectural phases and multiple occupation levels have been identified. The two rooms E7 and E8 belonged to one small unit entered through a doorway in the outer south wall. This unit, in its last period of use, was reduced to a single room by the construction of a second wall. A second unit is represented by rooms E10, E13, E14 and possibly E9, but their exact relationship has not been clarified. These domestic units and the cesspits outside the south wall of the complex produced well stratified ceramics, glass and other finds from the major occupational phases. A selection of the processed material from these areas is presented in the next part of this paper.

The Eastern Complex was separated from its western counterpart by a four metre wide gravelled street, which narrowed towards the southern end. This constriction, and the presence of latrines along the south wall, suggests that the principal orientation of the complexes was to the north. The partial excavation of five rooms at the eastern end of the Western Complex has revealed primarily domestic occupation, with a *tābūn* and related structures in rooms W1 and E5. the doorway between rooms W1 and W2 was partially blocked, perhaps to prevent the entry of animals, while that between rooms W3 and W4 was completely closed. Rooms W2 and W4 had centrally placed columns to support the ceiling, while room W5 was a later addition of poorer construction. An up to 1.8 metre deep deposit of collapsed and decayed clay bricks filled rooms W1 to W4, indicating an upper storey that perhaps opened out eastwards onto the street. Subsequent burning in room 4 preserved some of the bricks, which measured around 40 by 25 by 10 centimetres. The sudden destruction of these rooms suggests tectonic activity as the cause, although the date of this event is unclear[39].

---

39 . It may be possible, after further study, to match building phases in Area XXIX to known earthquakes of the second to fourth centuries. Tabaqat Fahl is located on a secondary fault of the Jordan Rift, and thus susceptible to tectonic shock. Major earthquakes are known in 233/847 (perhaps not strong in the south), 239/853-854 "vigorous", ?242/856, 245/859-860 "terrifying", 381/991 "great", and 393/1002-1003 "great" (see: D.H. Kallner-Amiran, "A Revised Earthquake Catalogue of Palestine — I", *IEJ* 1 (1951): 223-246; Y. Ghawanmeh, "Earthquake Effects on Belad El-Shām Settlements", *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan, vol. 4* (Amman, forthcoming)). The last event may have caused the final destruction of the buildings, which was accompanied by some violence as evidenced by the brick tumble and collapsed stonework in the eastern rooms of the West Complex.

The Ceramics. The ceramic vessels and lamps recovered during the excavations can be provisionally divided into two groups, based upon the architectural phasing. All of the pottery selected for Group 1 came from the cesspit in room 5, which was abandoned in the second period (Table 1, Fig. 3). A second latrine, also from the earlier phase, has recently been discovered with pottery that duplicates and expands the range presented here[40]. Not surprisingly, this earliest pottery from Area XXIX has much in common with the late Umayyad corpus from the Area IV houses, represented in Wares I to V. The Ware VII cup is a new addition, and is paralleled at Abu Gosh with a fourth century date[41]. Considering the similarity with the Umayyad wares, this group can be tentatively dated to the latter part of the second century A.H. (late eighth-early ninth century A.D.).

The pottery in Group 2 came from two distinct sources: a second cesspit next to the first one, and from within the last major collapse level. As there may be a short chronological distinction between the two deposits, this pottery is further divided into subgroups (Tables 2 & 3, figs. 4 - 7). The Group 2 pottery displays a significant development in ware and form over Group 1. Glazed pottery appears in limited quantity for the first time (Wares IXa-c), although plain fabrics are still in the majority. Also new are the increasingly common Sāmarrā' - style, thin-walled, pale cream jars and strainer jugs with often deep finger rilling marks inside the body and a knife-trimmed lower body. These vessels are either plain or decorated with incisions; incised bowls and water flasks in the same fabric are also present. Straight sided, hand-made bowls make an appearance (Ware X). These are highly decorated with incised, cut and painted geometric designs on the outside, and with painted lines inside. Three new types of moulded ceramic lamps occur, the most popular of which is the adjoining semicircle (arcade) variety. The remainder of the pottery in Group 2 represents a continuation of earlier wares. This includes the fine, burnished cups with a pared and grooved base, the increasingly obtuse-sided amphora in Ware V, and a seemingly diminishing number of the once ubiquitous small basins, jugs and jars in Ware I. Taking into consideration these perceivable changes to the ceramic assemblage, Group 2 can be very tentatively placed in the later third century A.H. (second half of the ninth century A.D.).

Occupation on the Main Tell. Abbasid resettlement of the main tell, a long-standing conundrum, is represented by house or perimeter walls and two refuse pits, one of which had a stone-lined mouth and measured over five metres in

---

40 . This second cesspit may be slightly later in date. Wares I to V and VII are represented, with glazed jars (Ware IXc) and thin "Samarra" style pale cream jars with trimmed (pared) bases in Ware VI making their first appearance. The other glazed wares (IXa & IXb) and cut-incised-painted bowls (Ware X) are absent.

41 . R. de Vaux & A.-M. Steve, *Fouilles a Qarayat el-'Enab, Abu Gosh* (Paris, 1950): 123-124; M. Gichon, "Byzantine Fine Wares from the South of Israel", *PEQ* (1974): 119-139.

depth. Excavation of this pit yielded, amongst other things, ceramic vessels, lamps, and glass. The pottery complements that of Group 2 from Area XXIX, chiefly the pit Group 2a, and is here presented as Group 3 (Table 4, Figs 8 - 9). Particular attention should be paid to the amphora in Ware V, which has the typically late very obtuse angle at the neck-body junction, and an exquisite example of the predominantly Abbasid Period red-painted bowls in Ware II[42].

The Cultural History of Southern Bilād al-Shām and the Archaeological Evidence.

The literary sources, particularly the geographical texts, provide a reliable framework on which to build a cultural history of southern Bilād al-Shām during the second to fifth centuries A.H. Although earlier commentators were skeptical of the general accuracy and appropriateness of these accounts, today the question is a lesser one of partiality, thoroughness, and errors of omission. Similarly, gross errors of interpretation in the past have distorted the archaeological record, resulting in the significant down-dating of occupation levels from the Islamic periods. As a consequence, Islamic historians have understandably mistrusted the usefulness and dependability of historical explanations based upon archaeological results.

Recent years have seen a convergence of the literary and archaeological sources, as evidenced in this paper by the excavations at Tabaqat Fahl. In keeping with the texts, archaeological research in Area XXIX and on the tell has identified the continued and widespread settlement of Fihl after the end of the Umayyad period. The urban reconstruction of Fihl that followed the devastating earthquake of A.H. 129, represented by the public complexes in Area XXIX, is unmistakable evidence of the social and economic resilience of the late Umayyad city. Social continuity is further demonstrated by the Abbasid ceramics, which display a strong continuation of the late Umayyad potting traditions of north Jordan well into the third century. This material clearly indicates that the imposition of an Abbasid administration over southern Bilād al-Shām had little immediate impact on the material culture[43]. Evidence for change appears during the third century, when local pottery types are replaced by foreign styles. The jars, jugs and basins in Ware I, products of the kilns at Jarash, are gradually supplanted by vessels of

---

42 . A solely Umayyad date for these bowls is not supported by the Pella Excavations (see: A.J. 'Amr, "Umayyad Painted Pottery Bowls from Rujm al-Kursi, Jordan", *Berytus* 34 (1986): 145ff). All stratified examples have originated in 'Abbāsid levels, although a terminal Umayyad date for the start of these vessels can not be ruled out as yet.

43 . The Area XXIX pottery disproves J. Sauer's argument for "a rather sharp break in ceramic traditions" following the 'Abbāsid revolution (see: J. Sauer, "A Ceramic Note on the Arabic 'Ostracon' from Tell Siran", *ADAJ* 18 (1973) 16).

similar shape (and probable same function) in Ware VI and Ware X. The appearance of glazed wares at about the same time is a further demonstration of the growing influence of imported (Islamic?) cultural concepts on the indigenous population of Fihl.

Table 1: Selection of Earlier Abbasid Pottery (Group1)

C.N.	Fig.	Form	Ware	Decoration
10247	3.6	Bowl, flat base, outfolded rim	I	strokes of white paint around rim
10250	3.5	Spoutless jug	I	white painted wavy lines
10251	3.3	Small jar, tall neck, carinated body, dimple base	I	white painted wavy lines and vertical strokes on handle
10260	3.4	Jar, form as previous	I	white painted wavy lines
10256	3.1	Jar, with ring base	II	red-brown painted lines
10257	3.2	Tall-necked jar, with handle from rim to shoulder	II	red-brown painted straight and wavy lines
10255	3.12	Cooking pot, ribbed	IV	none
10259	3.11	Casserole lid	IV	none
10252	3.10	Wide-mouth jar	VI	none
10253	3.9	Jar lid	VI	none
10246	3.8	Cup, base pared and grooved	VII	burnished outside body
10248	3.7	Cup, straight-sided	VIII	incised date palms within border

Table 2: Selection of Later Abbasid Pottery (Group 2a)

C.N.	Fig.	Form	Ware	Decoration
10235	4.2	Spouted jug with single handle	I	white painted wavy lines, strokes on handle
10241	4.1	Jar, dimple base	I	white paint in curing bands
10233	4.6	Cooking pot, shallow ribbing	IV	none
10238	4.4	Casserole, shallow ribbing	IV	none
10240	4.5	Casserole lid	IV	none
10234	4.3	Amphora, tall necked	V	white paint
10228	4.10	Jar, lipped pared base	VI	none visible
10229	4.12	Jar, form as previous	VI	none visible
10230	4.13	Water flask neck	VI	irregular grooves on neck
10232	4.11	Thin bodied jar, flat pared base, no lip	VI	none visible
10236	4.9	Carinated bowl	VI	incised lines within grooves
10237	4.7	Amphora, tall necked	VI	none
10242	4.8	Thin walled jar, lipped pared base	VI	vertical finger indents
10231	4.14	Bowl	IXa	green-yellow-dark brown glaze

Table 3: Selection of Later Abbasid Pottery (Group 2b)

C.N.	Fig.	Form	Ware	Decoration
10243	7.9	Small basin	III	incised wavy line
16038	5.3	Casserole lid	IV	none
16037	5.4	Casserole	IV	none
16028	5.1	Casserole lid, button handle, mild ribbing	var.IV	none
16029	5.2	Casserole, broad ribbing	var.IV	none
16020	7.1	Jar, shallow ribbing	VI	none
16021	7.7	Jar, pared base and lower body, flat base	VI	none
16022	7.6	Jar, pared base – lower body	VI	none
16027	7.2	Three-handled jug, pared and lower body, sieve in neck	VI	incised body and pierced neck, "turban" knobs on handles
16030	6.4	Water flask, shallow ribbing deeper on neck, pared	VI	circles of lightly incised lines on body
16023	7.8	Cup, base pared	VII	incised line below rim
16036	5.7	Bowl, pared body exterior patchy white slip exterior	IXa	thick glassy green, yellow and turquoise glaze
16024	5.5	Bowl	IXb	dec. zones within black lines, bubbly green and yellow glaze
16025	5.6	Bowl	IXb	as previous example
16031	6.3	Bowl, hand made, pared, ledge handle	X	red and white painted lines interior incised, cut & painted exterior
16032	5.8	Bowl, as previous	X	decoration as previous
16033	6.1	Bowl, as previous	X	decoration as previous
10222	7.3	Lamp, moulded	–	vine and grape in low relief, chevrons in nozzle channel
16018	7.4	Lamp, moulded	–	three adjoining segmented semi–circles, deep channel, cone handle
16019	7.5	Lamp, moulded	–	palm-leaf, deep channel, cone handle, radiant base pattern

Table 4: Some Abbasid Pottery from the Tell (Group 3)

C.N.	Fig.	Form	Ware	Decoration
16016	8.1	Small thin-walled jar, tall neck	I	bands and waves of white pair
16001	8.2	Deep carinated bowl, incurving rim	II	red painted interlacing circles, spiral border
16009	9.1	Basin, hand made	III	none visible
16010	9.4	Casserole, shallow ribbing	IV	none
16011	9.3	Casserole lid	IV	none
16012	9.2	Casserole lid	IV	none
·16013	9.5	Cooking pot, ribbed	IV	none
16014	8.3	Amphora, tall neck	V	wavy-lined white paint
16003	8.8	Thin walled jar, flat pared base, three knob feet	VI	none visible
16004	8.9	Thin walled jar, lipped pared base	VI	none visible
16006	8.6	Jar, fine ribbing on neck	VI	deep groove below rim
16007	8.7	Thin walled jar, mild ribbing mid body	VI	finger indents
16008	8.5	Thin walled jar	VI	incised lines on neck
16002	9.6	Cup, base pared and grooved	VII	light spiral burnishing
16017	9.7	Bowl, cream slip	IXa	glassy yellow, turquoise and brown glaze interior
10441	8.4	Lamp, moulded	–	three adjoining segmented semi – circles, deep channel, cone handle

Provisional Index of Abbasid (circa Third Century A.H.) Wares

I. Thin "metallic" fabric coloured patchy orange/brown/grey, with small to medium white and other inclusions; white painted decoration of banded wavy lines and strokes on rims/handles. Forms: jars, juglets, small basins.

II. Light orange fabric, sometimes apparently white slipped, with small and sometimes medium white and grey inclusions; reddish brown painted decoration. Forms: jars, bowls.

III. Dark grey fabric, hand made, with small to medium grey, white and transparent inclusions. Forms: basins, bowls.

IV. Cooking pot fabric, gritty with copious white, transparent and grey inclusions. Late variant has redder fabric. Forms: casseroles, cooking pots.

V. Grey/brown surfaced fabric, with small to medium white, grey and or brown inclusions; white painted decoration in broad intersecting wavy lines. Form: amphorae.

VI. Pale cream fabric, with fine white, orange and or grey inclusions and aerated; incised decoration if any. Forms: thin-walled jars, jugs, water flasks.

VII. Fine table ware ("Fine Byzantine"), compact orange fabric with small white and grey inclusions; pared base and lower body, often with grooved spiral/circle on underside. Form: cups.

VIII. Similar to Ware I, but fabric dark grey, with many small white inclusions; incised decoration. Form: cups.

IX. Glazed wares, provisionally divided into three varieties.
IXa: Polychrome glazed on white slip over orange fabric. Form: bowls.
IXb: "Coptic glazed" or variant; interior divided into zones by painted black lines with bubbly green and yellow glaze, reddish-orange fabric. Form: carinated bowls.
IXc: Thick turquoise or blue glaze on greenish fabric. Form: jars.

X. Cut, incised and painted ware ("chip-carved" or Kerbschnitt), brown to orange fabric with many white, yellow, grey, red and black inclusions of various sizes; cut, incised and red and/or painted decoration in panels exterior; red and white painted lines interior. Form: hand made small basins with flat ledge handles.
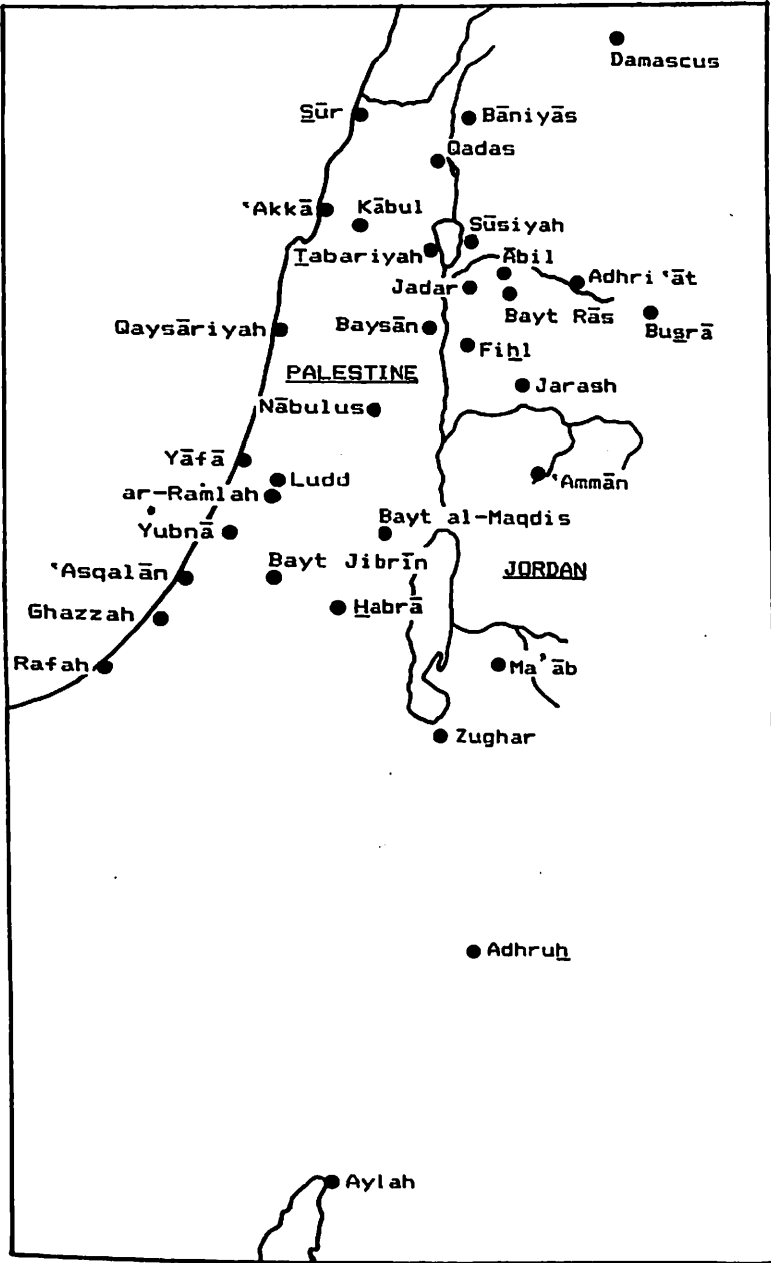
Figure 1: The Urban Centres of Southern Bilād al-Shām in the Abbasid Period
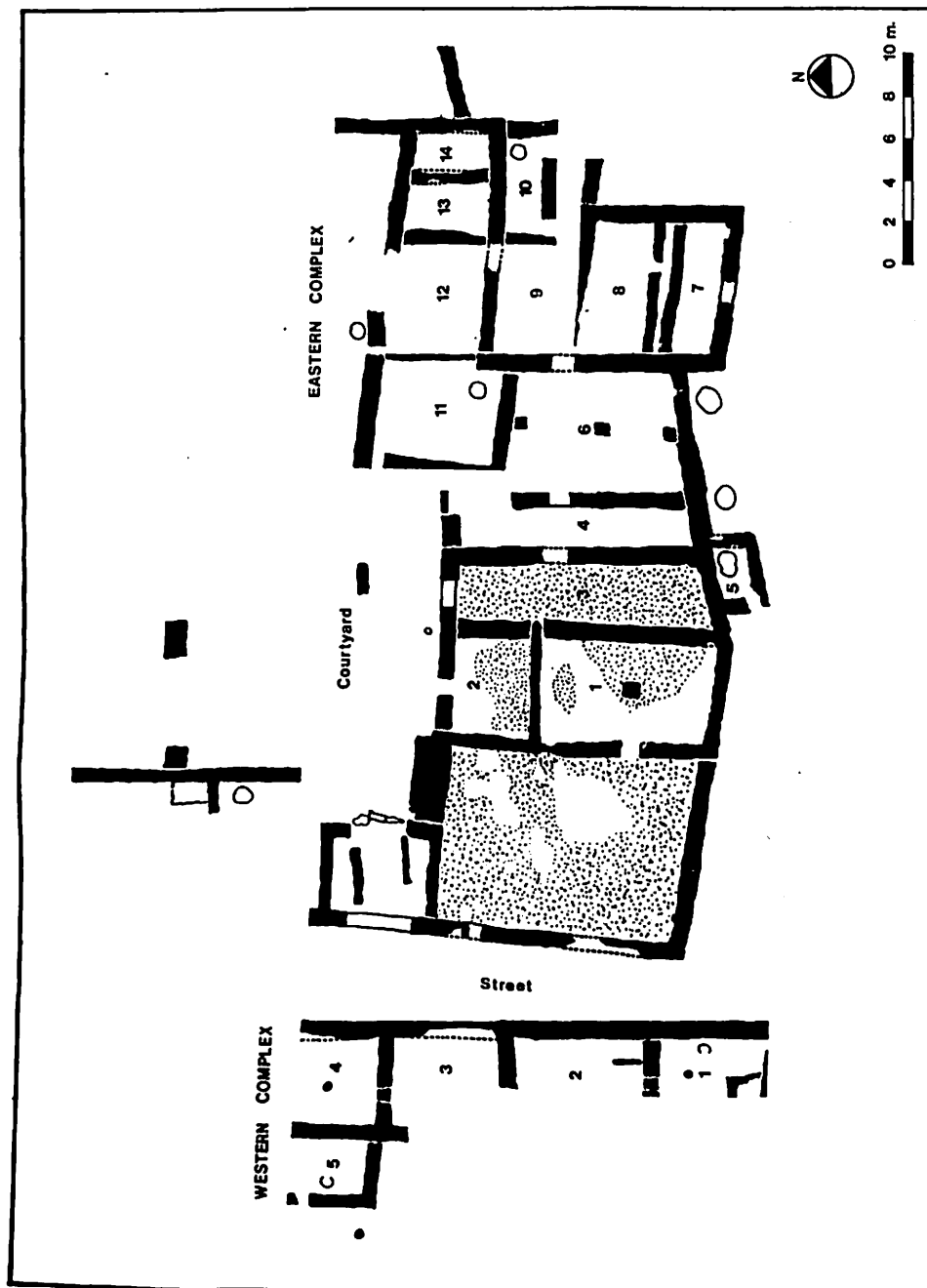
Figure 2: Plan of Area XXIX Excavations (January 1990)
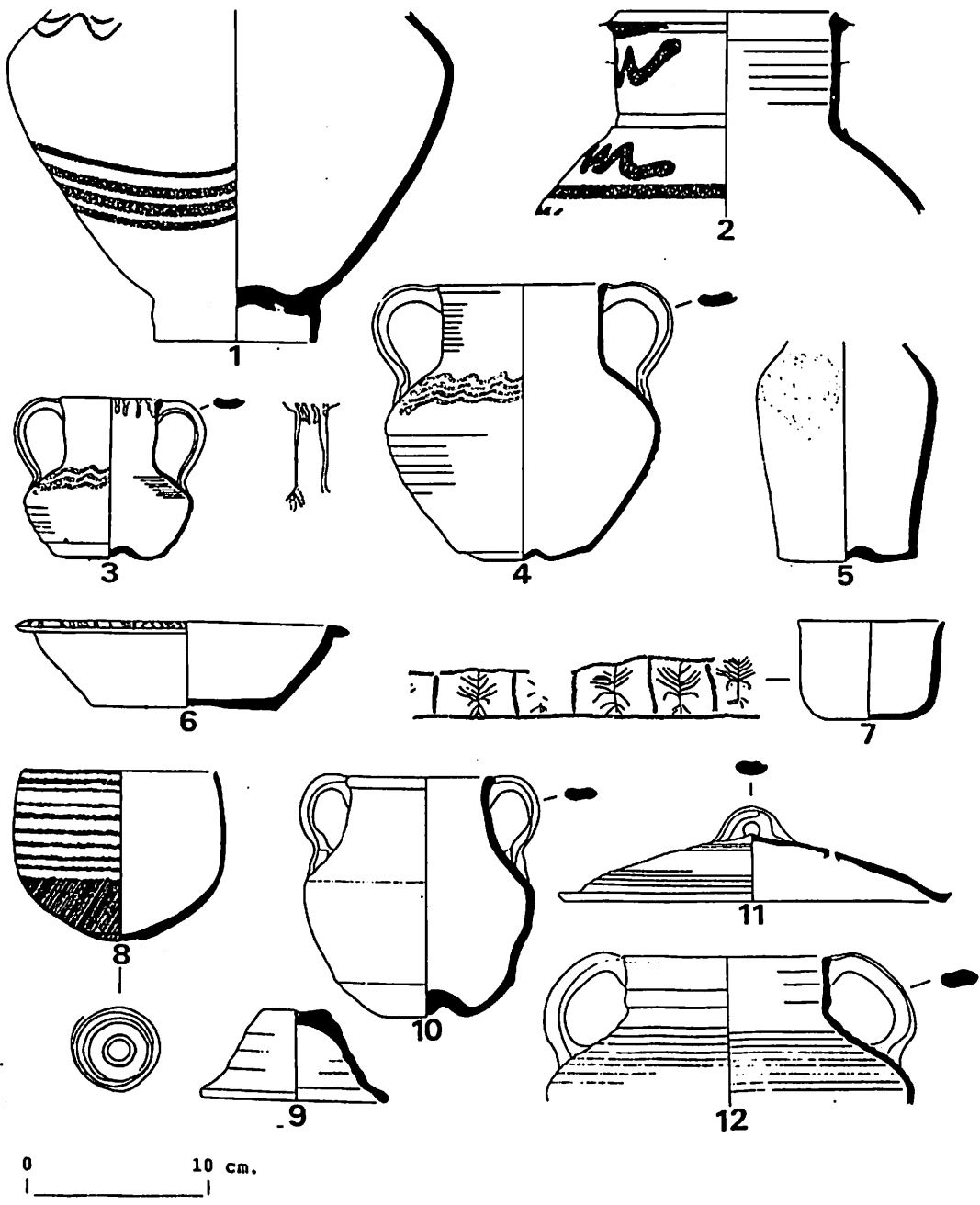
Figure 3: Selection of Earlier Abbasid Pottery, Group 1 (Descriptions – Table 1)
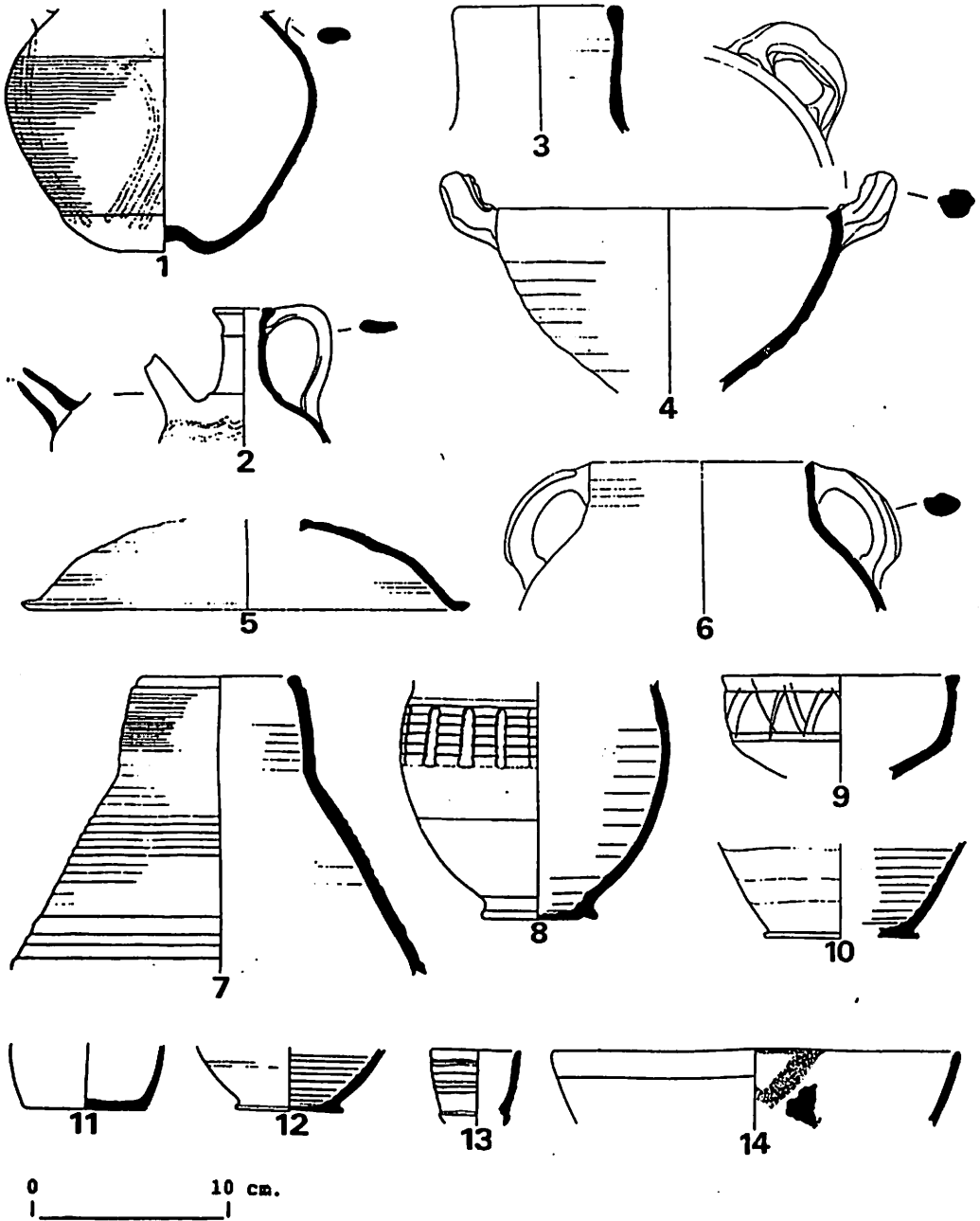
Figure 4: Selection of Later Abbasid Pottery, Group 2a (Descriptions - Table 2)
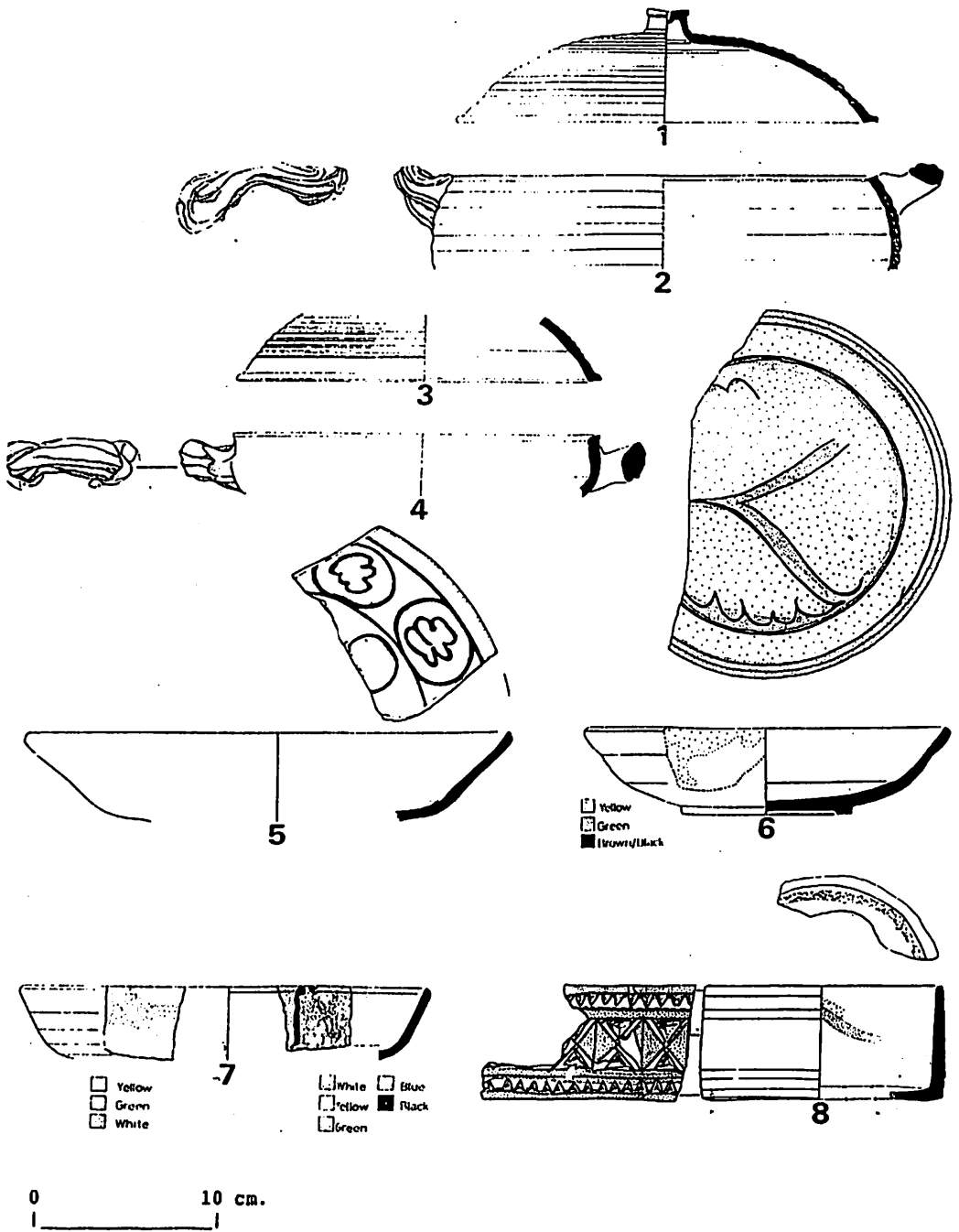
Figure 5: Selection of Later Abbasid Pottery, Group 2b (Descriptions – Table 3)

0 _____ 10 cm.
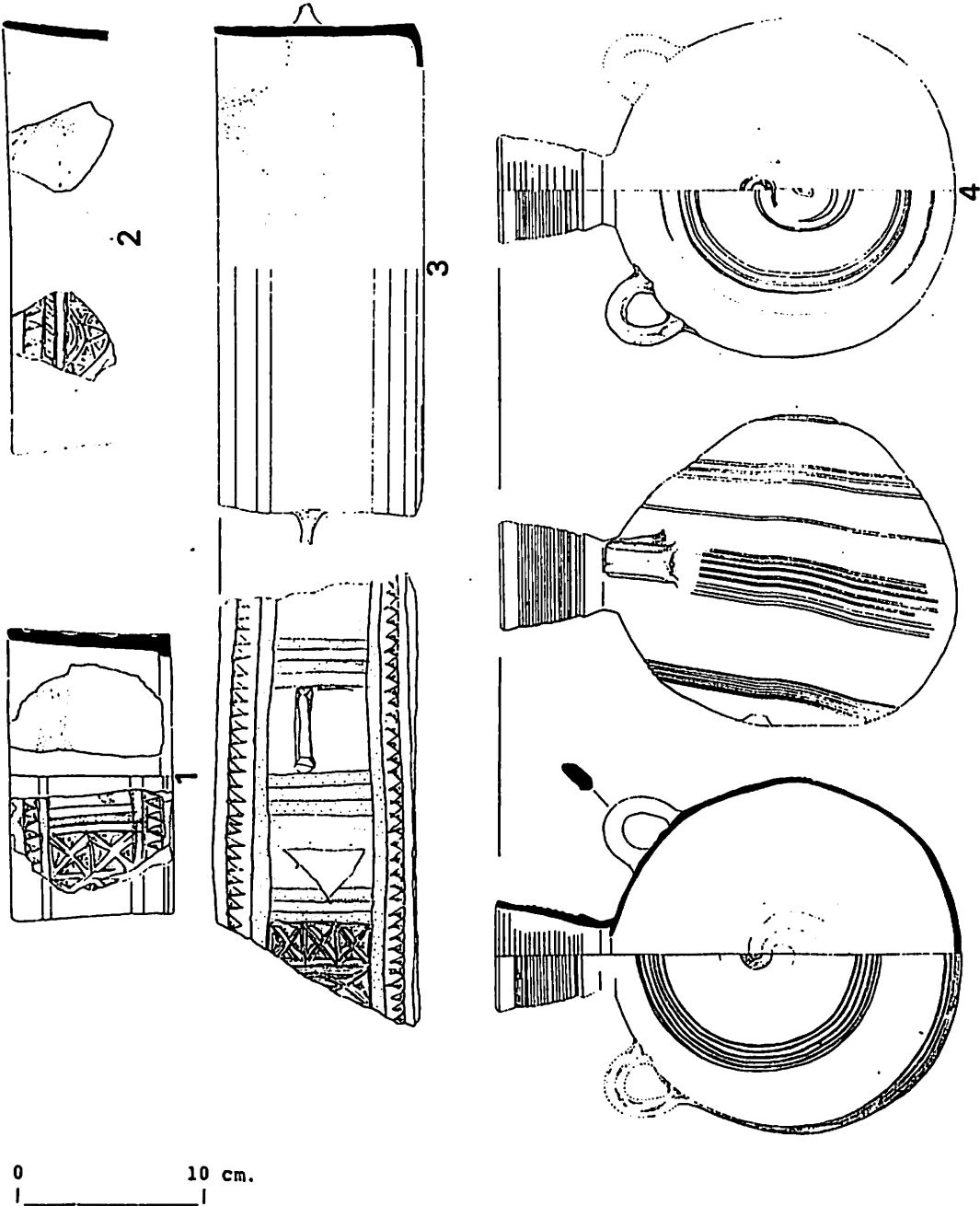
Figure 6: Selection of Later Abbasid Pottery, Group 2b (Descriptions – Table 3)
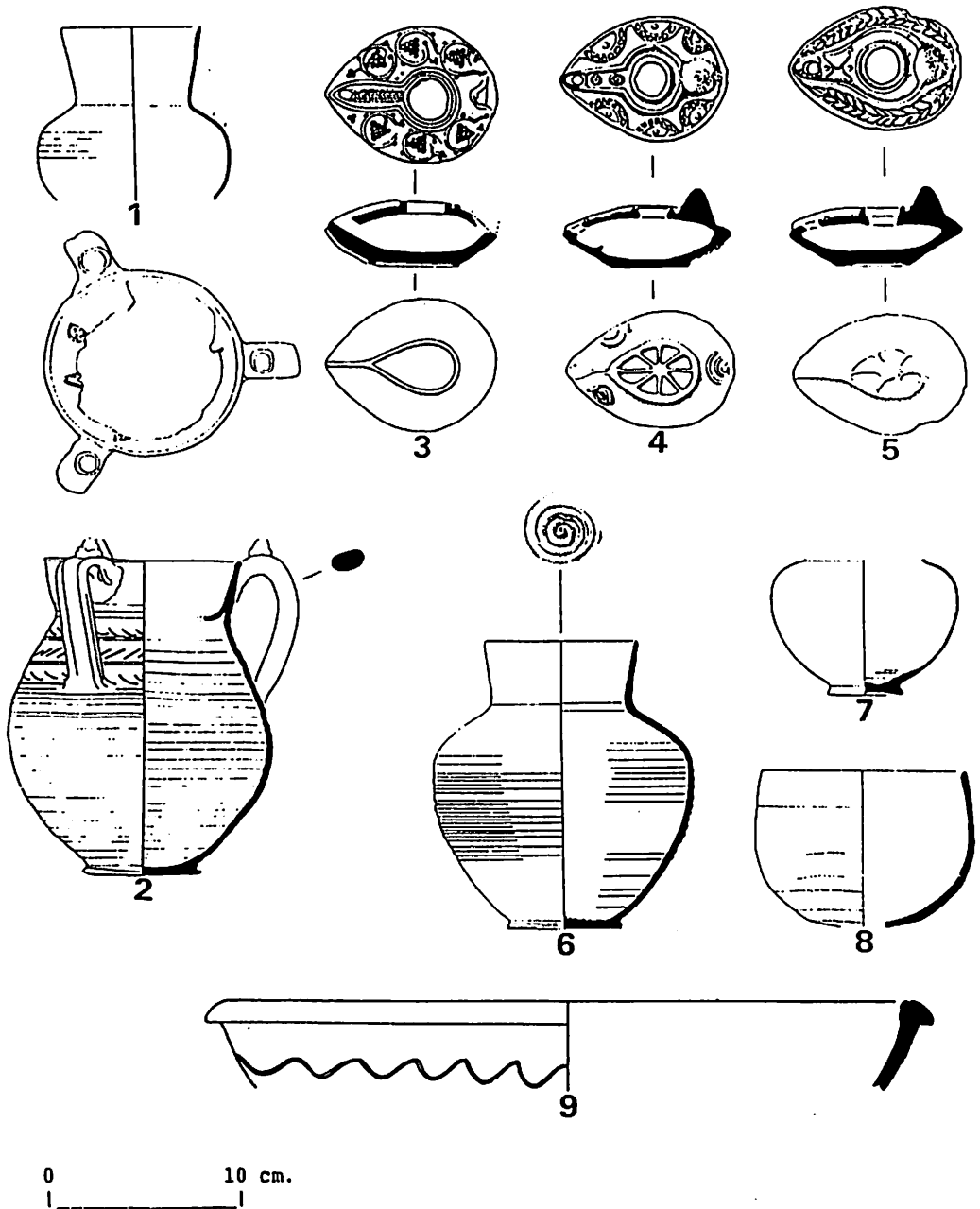
Figure 7: Selection of Later Abbasid Pottery, Group 2b (Descriptions – Table 3)

0 _____ 10 cm.
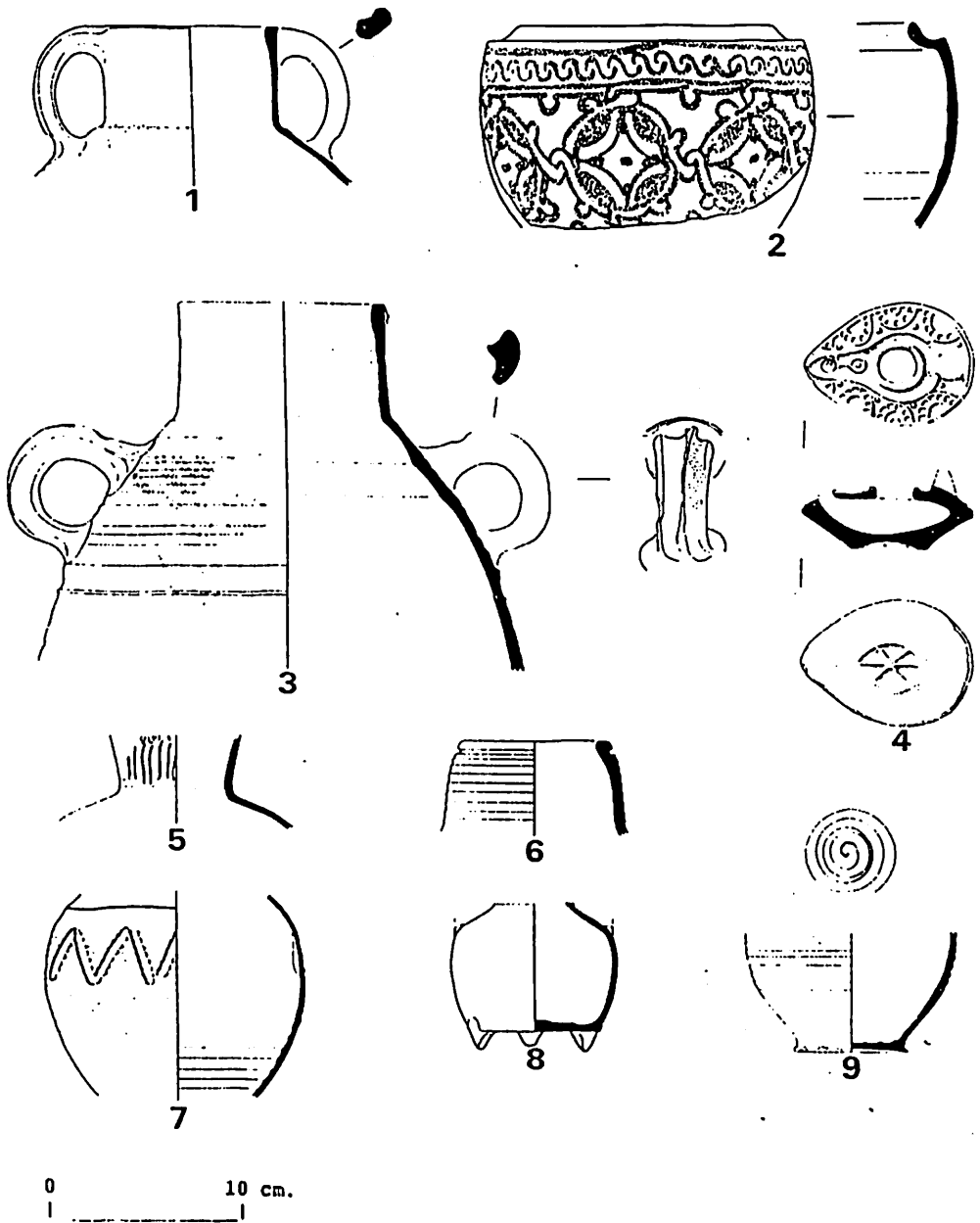
Figure 8: Selection of Abbasid Pottery from the *Tell*, Group 3 (Descriptions – Table 4)
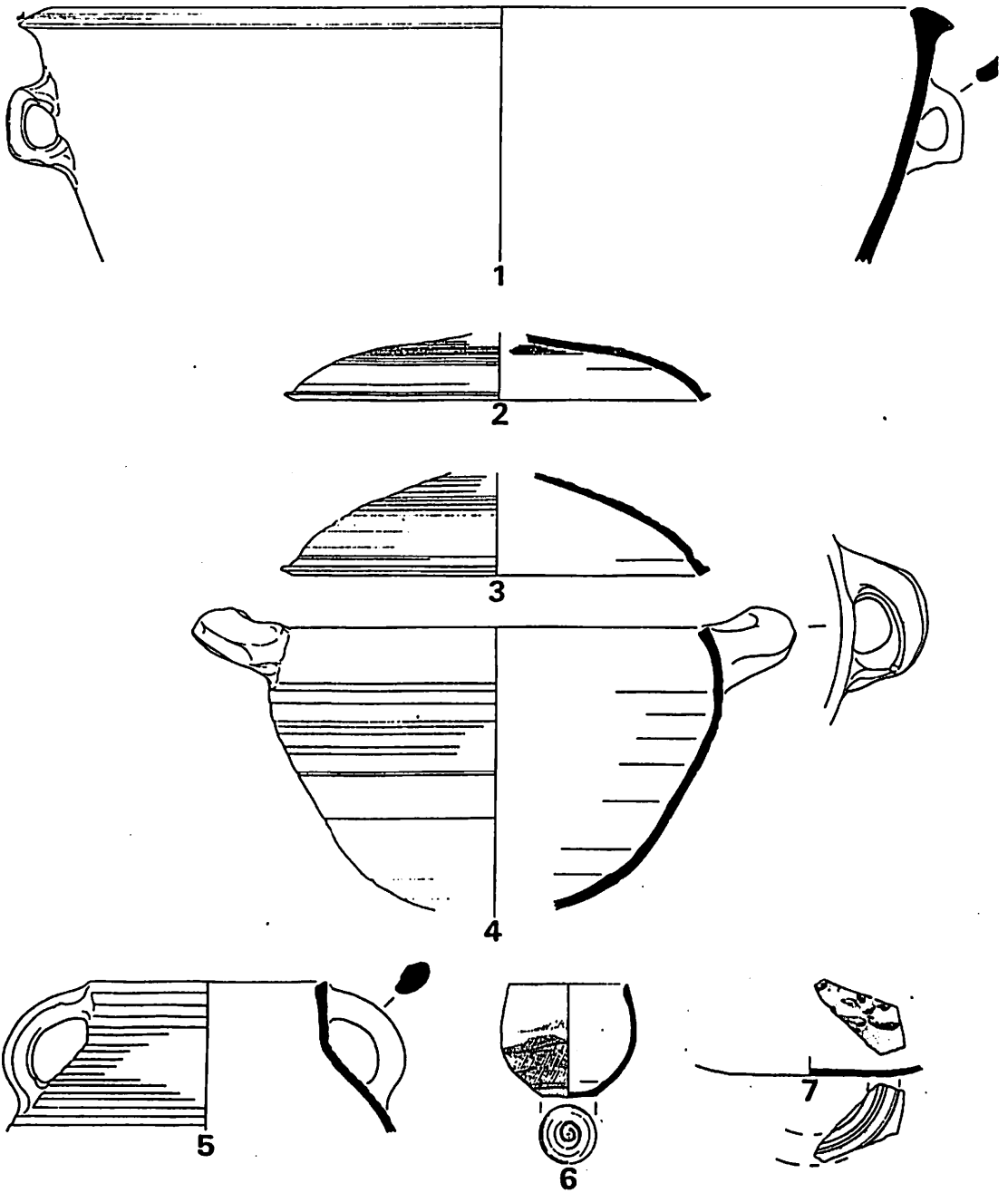
Figure 9: Selection of Abbasid Pottery from the *Tell*, Group 3 (Descriptions – Table 4).

The Integration of the Data Bases
Archaeology and History: A Case in Point, Bayt Ras

C. J. Lenzen*

Introduction

The growth of interest in and research into the archaeology of the Islamic periods during the last quarter century within modern Jordan has been phenomenal[1]. The discipline of archaeology as practiced today in Jordan owes much to the initial research of Robert Smith and James Sauer[2]. In particular, both Smith and Sauer forced archaeologists to consider seriously the material culture remains of the periods following Islamic hegemony, indeed one might even say after the Iron Age.

How the data from Fihl/Pella and Hesban were used, however, created an archaeological fallacy and reinforced an historical fallacy[3]: first that material cultural changes are an automatic result of political/historical events; and, second that following the A.D. 747 earthquake and the demise of the Umayyad caliphate in A.D. 750, Jordan became essentially a "backwater"[4]. What was assumed was

---

* Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.

1. Cherie Lenzen, "The Archaeology of the Islamic periods", In: *Archaeology of Islamic Jordan: New Directions*, edited by Cherie Lenzen and Alan Walmsley. Occasional Paper Series, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Yarmouk University (Irbid: Yarmouk University, forthcoming). In this article the author argues for the need to integrate archaeology into "Islamic Studies" and further discusses the roots of the problems relating to the archaeology of the Islamic periods.

2. James Sauer, *Hesbon Pottery* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1973); Robert Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis, I* (Wooster: The College of Wooster, 1973). This is not to denigrate their predecessors or contemporaries. However, it is important to emphasize that it was Smith and Sauer who first attempted to distinguish the material culture of the Islamic periods for Jordan, and that it was Smith who first set an important precedent for the reporting of pottery data by presenting details of his ceramic analyses, such as Munsell colours, hardness scales, firing techniques, and so forth.

3. See, for example, Robert Schick, "The Fate of the Christians in Palestine During the Byzantine-Umayyad Transition, A.D. 600-750". Unpublished PhD Dissertation (University of Chicago, 1987): 210-214, who reiterates his belief in this fallacy. Schick's premise in using archaeological data for his study is the primacy of inscriptional data, negating other material cultural remains. Also, however, he has decided to utilize archaeological data only where it supports his original premise/s.

4. For Smith's recent interpretation see Robert Smith and Leslie Preston, *Pella of the Decapolis, II* (Wooster: The College of Wooster, 1989). One quote will suffice (page 9):
=

that there was no 'Abbasid occupation to speak of in Jordan as the centre of the then known world shifted eastward to Baghdad. A cursory reading of the textual documentation resulted in the condensing of the data to one over-riding fact: Baghdad was the centre. Using this minimalist political/historical fact as a starting point, an archaeological myth of no Abbasid occupation in Jordan was constructed.

Although the 1970s and 1980s witnessed the growth of archaeology into a multi-disciplinary branch of Near Eastern studies, it is rare to find an archaeological expedition with a "resident" historian of any period, let alone of the Islamic periods. The two disciplines, archaeology and history, have become almost totally divorced, and it can be argued that this has been to the detriment of both. At this point, the myth of no Abbasid occupation in Jordan has become so well accepted that the essential point has been lost: the archaeology of the Islamic periods is historical archaeology.

The need for critical integration of the archaeological record with textual documentation had, for the most part, only recently been recognized, most notably by Alan Walmsley. There remains, however, a tendency for archaeologists and historians to expect too much of each other, to remain isolated and never to engage in the interpretation of the past together. This paper is an attempt to demythologize, using the site of Bayt Ras (Figure 1). Integration of the archaeological record and the textual documentation may lead to a fuller understanding of the specific site and may provide the data from which to posit hypotheses for future testing.

The Textual Documentation

Textual documentation relating to Bayt Ras in the period following the formation of the Abbasid caliphate is slim. Bayt Ras was located within the *jund* of

---

= "In view of the city's greatly weakened condition by the mid-8th century, it is not surprising that after the earthquake of A.D. 747 Pella never recovered. Herdsmen came to water their flocks at the spring, occasionally leaving behind the sherds of contemporary vessels, and in the 14th or 15th century a small group of Mamluks lived amid the ruins for a short time, but there was no continuous post-Umayyad occupation of the area". Arguments against the use of Smith and Sauer as dogma have been raised previously, e.g. Cherie Lenzen and Ernst Axel Knauf, "Beit Ras/Capitolias: A Preliminary Evaluation of the Archaeological and Textual Evidence", *Syria* 54 (1987): 21-46. Alan Walmsley in "Fihl (Pella) and the Cities of North Jordan During the Umayyad and Abbasid Periods", *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan,* 4 (Amman: Department of Antiquities, forthcoming) recently identified the erroneous use of their pottery typological series, while clearly stating the contribution both scholars have made. Robin Falkner in "Precrusader Islamic Pottery in Jordan: Four Missing Centuries" in Lenzen and Walmsley, *Archaeology of Islamic Jordan* has taken to task systematically Sauer and the use of Sauer's pottery typological studies. It is unfortunate that this critique is being misunderstood.

al-Urdunn, even though there were modifications to the *jund* system made throughout the periods following its formation[5]. Since al-Tabariya was the centre of the *jund,* it plays a more obvious role in the texts. Because it is not mentioned frequently by the historians, geographers and governmental administrators, it initially appears that Bayt Ras lost its significance following the early eighth century A.D.

Three different interpetations of the character of Bayt Ras during the Abbasid period have been espoused based on the available textual data. Walmsley[6] has suggested that Bayt Ras did not continue as an urban area following the later ninth century. In contrast, the author has suggested the continuance of the urban nature of the site well into the tenth century[7]. Khalid J. D. Deemer has adopted what is essentially a middle ground between the two extremes.

All three interpretations have used Ibn Khurdadhbih's (d. *ca.* A.D. 911) list where Bayt Ras is one of the *kuras,* administrative subdivisions, of the *jund* of al-Urdunn, along with Baysan, Fihl, Jarash, Jadar, Abil and Susiya[8]. In analyzing this list, Walmsley[9] has pointed out that the account drew on governmental sources; however, as it was revised late in the ninth century that it reflects the situation of the mid-ninth century. Walmsley, therefore, finds al-Ya'qubi a better source for the latter part of the ninth century where Bayt Ras is not mentioned specifically. This and his further analysis allows Walmsley to project that the occupation of Bayt Ras went from "medium/high to low",[10] i.e., from urban to rural. Lenzen and Knauf[11] argued for the validity of the list for the mid-ninth century because it was compiled for governmental reasons. Certainly even in a revision the accuracy of place names would have been pertinent.

Al-Ya'qubi[12] used the more general geographical term "al-Sawad" to describe the agricultural and pastoral land east of the Jordan River Valley, south of the

5 . Alan Walmsley,"The Administrative Structure and Urban Geography of the Jund of Filastin and the Jund of Al-Urdunn". Unpublished PhD Dissertation (The University of Sydney, 1987). Khalid James Deemer, "The Islamic Periods", In: *Beit Ras-Capitolias: A Late Antique City,* ed. by Cherie Lenzen, forthcoming. Deemer is the historian of the Islamic periods for the Bayt Ras research programme. A discussion of the Umayyad period at the site can be found in Lenzen and Knauf, "Beit Ras"; for an update, see Deemer, "The Islamic Periods".
6 . Walmsley, "Administrative Structure": 301-302.
7 . Lenzen and Knauf, "Beit Ras": 35ff.
8 . Ibn Khurdadhbih, *Kitab al-Masalik wa-al-Mamalik,* ed. by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1889): 78.
9 . Walmsley, "Administrative Structure": 16-17.
10 . Ibid: Table 15.
11 . Lenzen and Knauf, "Beit Ras": 41-42.
12 . al-Ya'qubi, *Kitab al-Buldan,* ed. by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1892).

Yarmouk River and west of Adhri'at (Der'a). Walmsley[13] sees him as more "practical" and "critical"; Deemer[14] sees him as a generalist and less familiar with the region. The geographer Ibn al-Faqih[15], contemporary with Ibn Khurdadhbih and al-Ya'qubi, does not mention either Bayt Ras or the geographical term, "al-Sawad", but does mention the other *kuras* of the *jund*. Deemer[16] argues that this is probably because of a lack of information on his part. Al-Istakhri[17] mentions only al-Tabariya within the *jund*; Ibn Hawqal (after A.D. 973) does not mention the site, as he essentially copied from al-Istakhri. The Yamani geographer and geneologist, al-Hamdani (d. 945) mentions Bayt Ras as a wine-producing area but without political importance[18].

The only site al-Muqaddisi (d. 375/985) mentioned was Adhri'at, which Walmsley had used to support his thesis of the lessening of the importance of the other sites within the region of the *Sawad*. The author, however, would like to suggest that this may have been merely bias on the part of al-Muqaddisi; however, Deemer[19] suggests that al-Muqaddisi was simply less familiar with the region.

The tax revenues *(kharaj)* of the region have played a role in the interpretations of the period as well. Between the ninth century and the early tenth century, the revenues decreased by about seventy percent from the original 350,000 dinars[20]. This can be interpreted as an indication, again, of the lessening of the importance of the region and Bayt Ras specifically.

From the above, it is clear that Bayt Ras does not figure in the contemporary or approximately contemporary textual documentation in a way that would easily persuade one to view the site as important within the political system of the post-A.D. 750 period. However, later textual sources may provide a further clue to the situation. By extrapolating from these sources one can suggest that there was only a gradual change in the nature of the occupation at Bayt Ras and that there was a slow devolution from urban to rural status. Given that the Frankish Crusaders[21] negotiated a series of treaties to share in the revenues of the *Sawad*, which included Bayt Ras, there was either a recovery in the economy or the instability of the government and its inability to collect the revenues is the reason

---

13 . Walmsley, "Administrative Structure": 17.

14 . Deemer, "The Islamic Periods": 19.

15 . Ibn Faqih, *Kitab al-Buldan,* ed. by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1885).

16 . Deemer, "The Islamic Periods": 19.

17 . al-Istakri, *Kitab al-Masalik wa-al-Mamalik,* ed. by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1870): 58ff.

18 . Deemer, "The Islamic Periods": 19.

19 . Ibid: 19ff.

20 . For a discussion see Lenzen and Knauf, "Beit Ras" and Walmsley, "Administrative Structure".

21 . Lenzen and Knauf, "Beit Ras": 42. Deemer, "The Islamic Periods": 55ff.

for the apparent earlier drop in the revenues[22]. Extrapolating from the texts relating to the post-A.D. 1050 period, Deemer[23] has proposed that the term "Sawad" became the designation for the entire region, and replaced the designation of the individual cities such as Bayt Ras[24]. In his view, the economic potential of the area was simply too great for it to have been ignored unless there was a weakening of the central government in the latter part of the tenth century.

It is clear from the above discussion that however the textual documentation is interpreted, the archaeologist is faced with few clear sign-posts in interpreting the character of Bayt Ras specifically. The choice is simply either to view the region and the site as relatively insignificant; or, to take Deemer's suggestion that the lacunae exist because the region was enjoying a degree of autonomy during the period in question. Be that as it may, the textual documentation, however it is interpreted, gives only general and somewhat hazy impressions of the region.

Bayt Ras: The Archaeology

The archaeological research programme in Bayt Ras was begun in 1983 and is ongoing[25]. From the outset, the research has been viewed as an integrated project. One occupational period has not taken precedence over another and it

22 . Deemer, "The Islamic Periods": 43.
23 . Ibid: 49.
24 . Particularly interesting is Deemer's reference to al-Bakri's mention of a fortress on the "ras" (al-Bakri, *Mu'jam Ma Asta'jam Min Asma al-Buldan wa-al-Mawadi'*, ed. by Mustafa al-Saqa (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, 1983): 288). Salvage excavations in 1988 on the "ras" did not produce material culture remains dating to post-*ca.*A.D. 900. However, structures were uncovered in a small probe. These were undatable, because of the lack of other material culture remains. The al-Bakri reference could be used as a hypothesis to test on the "ras".
25 . Cherie Lenzen, "Tall Irbid and Bait Ras", *Archiv für Orientforschung* 33 (1986): 164-166. Idem, "Tell Irbid and Its Context: A Problem in Archaeological Interpretation", *Biblische Notizen* 42 (1988): 27-35. Idem, Unpublished File Report on the 1989 Excavations, Department of Antiquities Registration Center. Idem, "Irbid and Beit Ras: Interconnected Settlements, *ca* A.D. 100-900". *Studies on the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, 4 (Amman: Department of Antiquities, forthcoming). Idem, *The 1984 Survey of the Irbid/Beit Ras Region*, in preparation. Idem, *Beit Ras/Capitolias: A Late Antique City*, in preparation. Cherie Lenzen and R. L. Gordon and A. M. McQuitty, "Excavations at Tell Irbid and Beit Ras, 1985", *ADAJ* 30 (1985): 151-159. Cherie Lenzen and Ernest Axel Knauf, "Tell Irbid and Beit Ras, 1983-1986: *Liber Annuus* 36 (1986): 361-363. Lenzen and Knauf, "Beit Ras", op. cit. Cherie Lenzen and A. M. McQuitty, "A Preliminary Survey of the Irbid/Beit Ras Region, North-western Jordan", *ADAJ* 27 (1983): 656. Lenzen and McQuitty, "The 1984 Survey of the Irbid/Beit Ras Region", *ADAJ* 32 (1988): 265-274. Cherie Lenzen and Zaydoon Zaid, "The Spring Excavations in Beit Ras". *Newsletter of the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology Yarmouk University* 2/2 (1988): 22-25. Idem, "Beit Ras/Capitolias: A Preliminary Report
=

is anticipated that the long continuity of occupation at the site since its foundation[26] will be explicated both through the archaeological material culture remains and the textual documentation relative to the site and the region.

Although Bayt Ras is not a unique archaeological case in Jordan, it is appropriate to describe the kind of archaeological research conducted at the site in terms of the specific methodologies and techniques employed. Most significantly, Bayt Ras is an inhabited village that is undergoing rapid change because of municipal or individual needs. The organization of the village has changed considerably since 1983 as the new village street plan has been implemented, destroying much of the early twentieth century housing and village plan[27]. The archaeological situation is often one of salvage and rescue, rather than planned long-term oriented research. In terms of data retrieval, no differentiation is made between the three strategies. The only difference between the three is time available: salvage archaeology occurs as development is taking place; rescue archaeology takes place where development will be occurring in the future; and, in the case of Bayt Ras, planned long-term archaeological research takes place on land already held in trust by the government as containing antiquities. The rapid development in Bayt Ras has meant that emphasis is often placed on the first two strategies as opposed to the latter. Because of this, archaeological research in Bayt Ras does not always follow the long range plans which are developed. Archaeology is not in conflict with modern development. There is no intention to have the past take precedence over the present, as has been the case elsewhere. The attitude is that the past and the present are compatible and that they may inform the future, touristically or otherwise. The technique employed in all three strategies is the one familiar to everyone: the stratigraphic removal of layers, including architectural features, and retrieval of the material cultural and environmental remains from these layers. A modified open-plan system has been used with success given the monumental nature of most of the architectual features. Practically, what has occurred is that excavations often take place on privately owned land and thus take the configuration of the land area available or appropriate given the salvage nature of the

---

=   on the 1986, 1988 and 1989 Excavations, *ADAJ,* forthcoming. Idem, Recent Excavations in Beit Ras", *Newsletter of the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Yarmouk University,* Idem, also unpublished file reports on the two seasons of excavations during 1988, Department of Antiquities Registration Center. Since 1985 the archaeological project in Bayt Ras, directed by the author, has been a joint project of the Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, Yarmouk University, and the Department of Antiquities. The "Friends of Archaeology" based in Amman, and private individuals have continually helped to fund the excavations. Survey conducted in 1983 was privately funded; in 1984 NEH/ASOR funded the author's survey.

26 . Lenzen, "Irbid and Beit Ras: Interconnected Settlements".

27 . Lenzen and McQuitty, "The 1984 Survey of the Irbid/Beit Ras Region": 265-267. Lenzen, *The 1984 Survey of the Irbid/Beit Ras Region.*

excavation. The understanding that agricultural and/or developmental concerns cannot be hindered is ever present. Because the village is developing rapidly, excavations take place as needed, any time of the year. What is gradually emerging through a combination of archaeology, textual documentation, ethnoarchaeology and anthropology is an understanding of Bayt Ras both as ancient Capitolias and Islamic Bayt Ras.

Bayt Ras was a well-planned Roman city (A.D. 97/98)[28]. It was modified during the subsequent Byzantine and Umayyad periods; and it continued as a city into the Abbasid period. Following about the mid-ninth century the nature of occupation seems to have changed gradually from city to village[29]. By the Mamluk period, what had been public space was being used as domestic space[30]. There is then general continuity in domestic space until the early 1980s. No *in situ* inscriptions or coins[31] dating to the pre-Ottoman Turkish rule have been found.

Complicating the situation further, there is an endemic archaeological problem at the site: namely the continuous robbing out of or other disturbances to the archaeological record. Schumacher[32] was the first to identify this problem. When he visited, the villagers were robbing the church, located in the archaeologically designated Area A, for building stone and marble. G. Lankester Harding[33] recounts the same problem for the "ras" and reservoir/cistern area of the village. The result of this pattern, one with long roots in antiquity as well as the more recent past as demonstrated by the archaeological record,[34] is that a pristine stratigraphic

---

28 . Lenzen and Knauf, "Beit Ras/Capitolias". Lenzen, "Irbid and Beit Ras: Interconnected Settlements".

29 . Albeit there are problems with the criteria used for defining "urban", "city", and "village".

30 . Lenzen, Gordon and McQuitty, "Excavations at Tell Irbid and Beit Ras", Lenzen and Zaid, "Beit Ras/Capitolias". Here the discussion is simplified to provide a general framework.

31 . That coins provide only a *terminus ante quem* is often overlooked by archaeologists and historians alike. A critique of the use of coins can be found in Ali Zeyadeh, "An Archaeological Assessment of Six Cities in al-Urdun: From the Fourth Century to the Mid-Eighth Century A.D". Unpublished MA thesis (Yarmouk University, 1988) and in Falkner, "Precrusader Islamic Pottery". For the historian, who can use archaeological data only if these two material culture remains are present, this presents a problem and provides the justification for ignoring the site.

32 . G. Schumacher, *Northern Ajlun Within the Decapolis* (London, 1890).

33 . G. Lankester Harding, "Beit Ras", Unpublished Notebooks on deposit with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

34 . Lenzen and Zaid, "Beit Ras/Capitolias".

record is rarely available. Interpretation, therefore, can be problematic and often cannot be based primarily on the usual indicator of occupation for archaeologists, the pottery.

The City Wall

The city wall (Figure 2) identified by Schumacher[35] and mapped by him was not located again until the spring of 1988. During survey from 1983 and following,[36] attempts had been made to locate remaining sections of the wall. Not until it was possible to survey privately owned land was a 23.30 m. east-west segment of the wall found. Rather than attempting any excavations at that time as the priority was the salvage excavations in Area A (discussed below), excavation was left until the fall of 1988.

The wall is located to the north-east of Area A and west of the school along the main road from Irbid. It overlooks one of the small northern wadis which bounds Bayt Ras and the area where a church, outside the city wall, was excavated during the 1960s[37]. Remnants of the wall were traced to the west for approximately 150.00 m. and it may extend as far as the northern extent of the 1985 excavations in Area A, i.e., those in the cave. To the east, the wall was traced another 35.00 m. where it corners and runs south below modern housing. The older citizens of the village have recounted the existence of both the remains of what sounds like a gate and would have been in-line with the wall on the east; as well, until recently stones of the *decumanus* were present where the modern road is.

The wall consisted of well-cut limestone blocks. The limestone appeared to be the local variety[38] and is that which most of the nineteenth century explorers referred to as the kind that disintegrates easily. Most of the blocks above ground are well-preserved. Those that are damaged, some below ground level and others above ground level, have been destroyed by tree roots (floralturbation), e.g., olive,

---

35 . Schumacher, *Northern Ajlun:* 158ff.

36 . Lenzen and McQuitty, "The 1984 Survey of the Irbid/Beit Ras Region". Lenzen, *Beit Ras/Capitolias.*

37 . The information on this church is available at the Irbid office of the Department of Antiquities.

38 . In recent geological testing of the limestone from Bayt Ras, Jadar, Abil, Fihl, Jarash and Amman (see Zaydoon Zaid, "An Architectural Analysis of the Constructional Techniques in Beit Ras/Capitolias" Unpublished MA thesis (Yarmouk University, 1989) for results of testing from architectural features only), it became clear that the limestone at all of the sites was generally the same. Research now will have to extend to the quarries for the sites. During the 1983/1984 survey (Lenzen, *The 1984 Survey*), the Bayt Ras quarries were identified to the west of the village between Beit Ras and Tuqbul. In 1988-1989 further quarrying activity was found to the northeast of the city wall.

fig, pomegranate, as well as by the weather. Seven courses of the wall were visible at the time of excavation. Within this visible part of the wall, three gates were also present[39]. The western and middle gates had been recently used for local purposes and thus it was decided that the likelihood of *in situ* archaeological data was slim. The easternmost gate had not been used and it was here that excavation took place.

The excavated gate had a lintel of well-cut stones without decoration. An arch was present over the lintel for structural purposes. To the east and west of the gate, the stubs of walls which originally extended from the main east-west part of the wall were visible. Two probes were excavated: probe A in front of the city wall and probe B above the city wall. Probe A measured 4.00 m. by 1.50 m. at the beginning of excavation, later the probe was extended inside the city gate to the south for 1.50 m. Below topsoil, in front of the city wall, a structure appeared. The structure was semi-solid; blocks were placed both horizontally and vertically, and gray, ashy plaster lay on top of the stones (Figure 3). This patterning of the blocks has not been encountered elsewhere at Bayt Ras[40]. There were two phases to the structure; because of floralturbation, the interpretation of the first phase may be skewed somewhat. The first phase had only four blocks remaining but was of a different technique than the second. No material culture remains were present because of floralturbation. The second phase consisted of four walls crossing each other, creating spaces between them. The pottery was all body sherds of bi-ansulate jars and large basins. Above this phase is where remnants of the plaster were found. According to plaster tests recently conducted,[41] this plaster differs from that dated to the Umayyad period only in colour, a result of the clay source.

In conjunction with this outside structure, there was one built inside of the gate. It consisted of four walls: the north one, which was the blocking of the city gate, was a four-course extension down of the city wall; these courses obscured the original inside face of the city wall (Figure 4). The east one consisted of seven courses and incorporated the city wall into it as did the west wall which was also seven courses; the south wall was six courses. All of the walls of this inside structure were made of randomly sized reused blocks and boulders. The width of this inside structure was exactly the same as that of the city wall (1.20 m.) creating a space within the city gate. The inside structure blocked the gate; there is no way that the gate could have been used as such once the outside and

---

39 . Since the excavation season, the landowner has systematically covered the wall in fear that the land will be taken from him as an antiquity site. It is no longer possible to see all of what was visible in 1988.

40 . Zaid, "Architectural Analysis": 150.

41 . Ibid.

inside structures had been built. It can be suggested that these structures were part of a tower.

Probe B was located directly above the city wall in line with Probe A. This area was part of the terracing of the modern fields. The probe measured 4.00 m. by 4.00 m. The top layers in this probe were trampled soil layers; below these, a burned (garbage) layer was excavated. These layers contained material culture remains from all of the occupational periods at Bayt Ras. Until the time of excavation, the area of the probe had been used as a pathway through the orchards. Below the burn layer, there were layers containing pottery which dated from no later than the early ninth century A.D. As these were on top of the south wall of the inside gate structure, they had to have been laid after it was out of use. The inside gate structure contained decorated architectural fragments from the earlier city. The general impression was of cleaning up, not of filling to construct something else. It is tempting to suggest clean-up following a major destruction, e.g., an earthquake (seismiturbation); however, there was nothing to indicate this in the baulks, nor has there been stratigraphic evidence elsewhere.

Based on the constructional techniques, the wall was built during the Roman period and re-used throughout the following periods. The pottery from the fill in Probe A, based only on comparative analysis, cannot date prior to the mid-eighth century; the pottery from the fill in Probe B seems to date somewhat later. The tower was constructed probably during the eighth century and went out of use sometime during the mid-eighth to ninth centuries.

Area A

Extensive excavations have now taken now taken place in Area A of the village. This Area was originally defined (1985) as north of the main east-west street of the village, east of the modern mosque and encompassed the olive groves to the north. When excavations were started in the Area in 1985, the following were visible: nine north-facing vaults, three domestic units built ca. 1930, a major wall in the north and a cave to the far north. As the entire area was not purchased, the building of a modern concrete house in 1988 led to salvage excavations to the north-east across from Vaults 5 and 6. Following this, part of the land was purchased so that the limits of Area A have now been circumscribed and encompass the area from the mosque to two west-facing vaults, the nine north-facing vaults and a major delimiting wall to the north (Figure 5).

Excavations were limited to a salvage trench which measured 3.30 m. east-west and 4.30 m north-south in the area of the modern house foundation trenches; and, was extended to the south 7.80 m. To the east there was a relatively diagonal extension, measuring 1.50 m. x 3.50 m. The initial importance of the excavations centred around determining the constructions within the actual area of the foundations for the new house, Each of the thirteen modern foundation trenches contained structural evidence of early occupation. However, because of the lack

of funds and time, preliminary dating of the structures indicates a late third century A.D. date for the earliest and a fifth/sixth century date for the church. A section of the main apse was excavated in 1985[42] as well, although not identified as such then.

Once the excavations of the foundation trenches was completed, the salvage work was extended to the south in order to connect these excavations with those from the 1985 season. In the process of excavating, it was determined that the identified water installation of the 1985 season had been constructed against the main apse of the church. To the east of this area, a three-tiered water installation was found, which corresponds and relates to that of 1985 (Figures 6 and 7). The fill of the water installations contained pottery and other material culture remains dating to all of the periods of occupation. The foundation trench of the first section of the installation, excavated in 1985, contained body sherds of "red-on-white" pottery dating to the mid-eighth century[43].

Two levels of tessellated pavement were in 1985, both *in situ*. Unfortunately, the construction of the 1930s housing had destroyed most of the pavement; as well although the bedding was present for the second level, no material culture remains were found in it. The technique, however, is significantly different than that of the earlier tessellation found in 1988 as well. The later one is made of unevenly cut tesserae measuring 3.5 cm. to 4.0 cm. with large unfilled interstices between the individual tesserae. It would appear that the church went out of use and the back of the east wall was used for the west wall of part of the water installations[44]. ···

---

42 . Lenzen, Gordon and McQuitty, "Excavations at Tell Irbid and Beit Ras, 1985".

43 . These sherds are paralleled at Pella, cf. Alan Walmsley, "The Umayyad Pottery". In: Anthony McNicoll, Robert Smith and Basil Hennessy, *Pella in Jordan I* (Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 1982), Plates 140/11. 142/2-3, 143/1.

44 . Zeyadeh, "Archaeological Assessment", has basically argued for a "catastrophe theory" understanding of the alteration of the city plans of primarily Amman, Jarash and Fihl; secondarily for Bayt Ras, Jadar and Abil. The author originally suggested seismiturbation as the reason for the rebuilding of the vaults in the *suq* area, Area A (Lenzen, Gordon and McQuitty, "Excavations"; Lenzen, Tall Irbid and Bait Ras"; 165-166). Although Zaid, "Architectural Analysis" has successfully shown that the back wall of the vaults as well as the front wall, on the which a two-phased facade is constructed, formed an earlier Roman unit within the same space, he did not account for the variance in the angle of the arches of the vaults. It would seem that without the stratigraphic data, we may be at a loss. However, I will still agree with Zeyadeh that the cause for reorientation of the city between the Roman and Byzantine periods was probably an earthquake. If the earthquake of A.D. 746-747 destroyed Beit Ras as it did Fihl, it was either not as severe, which is likely although the intensity would still have been high on the plateau; or the city was basically "cleaned up" following it. The latter would appear likely. The arches above the walkway (Lenzen and Zaid, "Beit Ras/

=

Conclusions

The above discussion leaves several lacunae for both the archaeologist and the historian. Archaeologically, the usual dating tool, pottery, has not been excavated within controlled contexts and is fragmentary. This in fact means that the excavated pottery mentioned here must be treated in the same manner as survey. In other words, it must be compared to controlled contexts from other sites. In terms of constructional techniques, the basic indicators, mortar, plaster and how stones were placed, vary only in terms of general historical periodization. Historical specificity based on the textual documentation is not available as well. It would appear, however, from the archaeological data that those areas excavated, including those not discussed here, were visible throughout most of the time period prior to the Ottoman Turkish takeover. Research will have to focus on attempting to identify the use of the structures, both primary and secondary. It would appear that there were no gaps in occupation of the site, contrary to what has been proposed by interpretations of the textual documentation.

It is not always possible to meld the two data bases which allow for an easily usable history of the site to be written. Both records, the archaeological and the textual, remain silent at various points. Without sealed or undisturbed layers, the archaeologist is obligated to utilize comparative material culture remains data from other sites which have better control to suggest the dating possibilities. Without direct textual references, the historian is obligated to think regionally, to infer and to suggest possibilities. Each data base may stand alone: the techniques and methods of the two disciplines differ. However, each inform the other as well, allowing for new avenues of inquiry rather than the intentional dogmatic representations of facile explanations of the past.

= Capitolias") in front of the vaults fell, some of the stones were found *in situ* above the Mamluk installations, sometime late in that period. Zaid's argument for the arches in front of the vaults being Umayyad is convincing. It would appear that they stood until quite late.
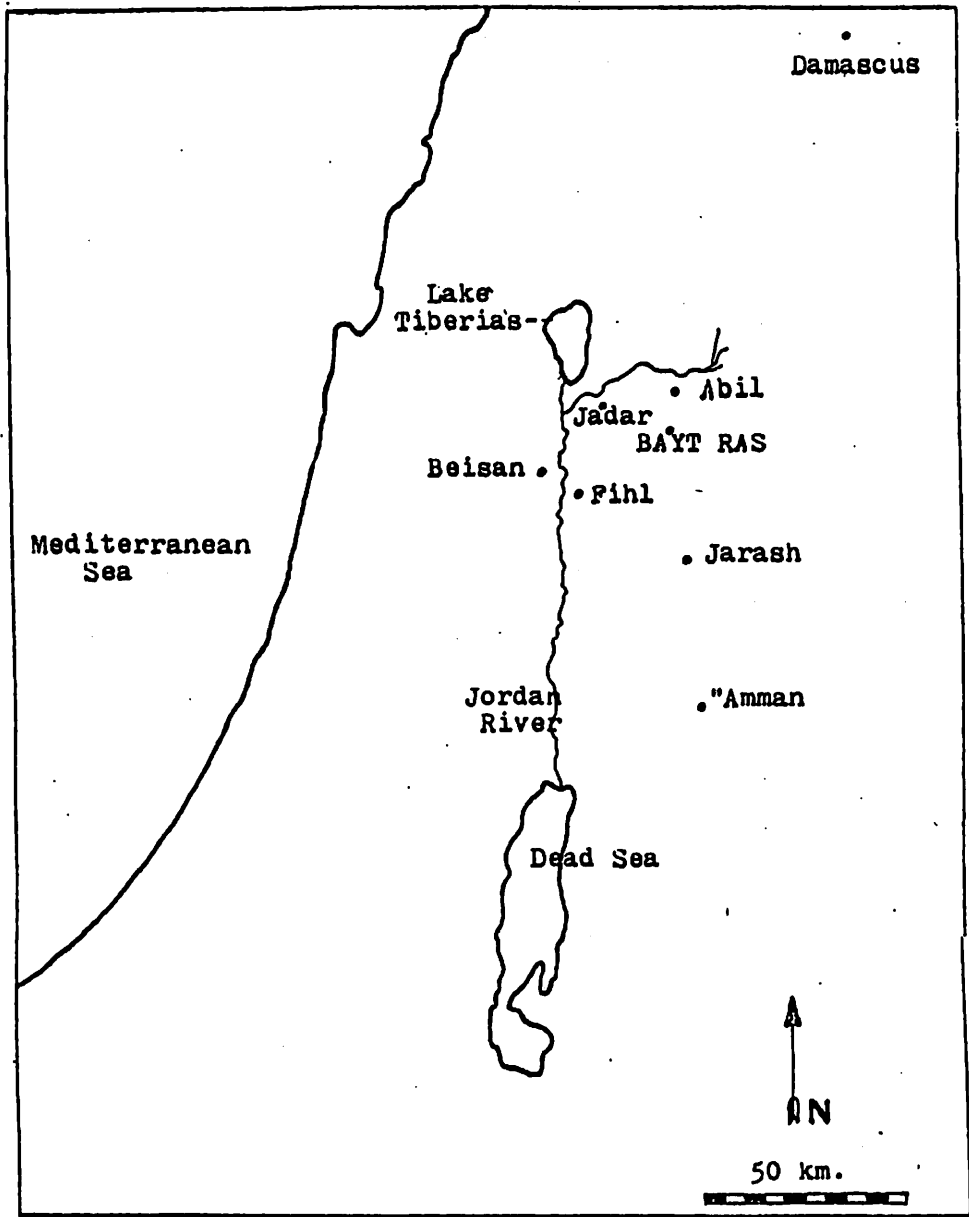
Figure 1: Location of BAYT RAS
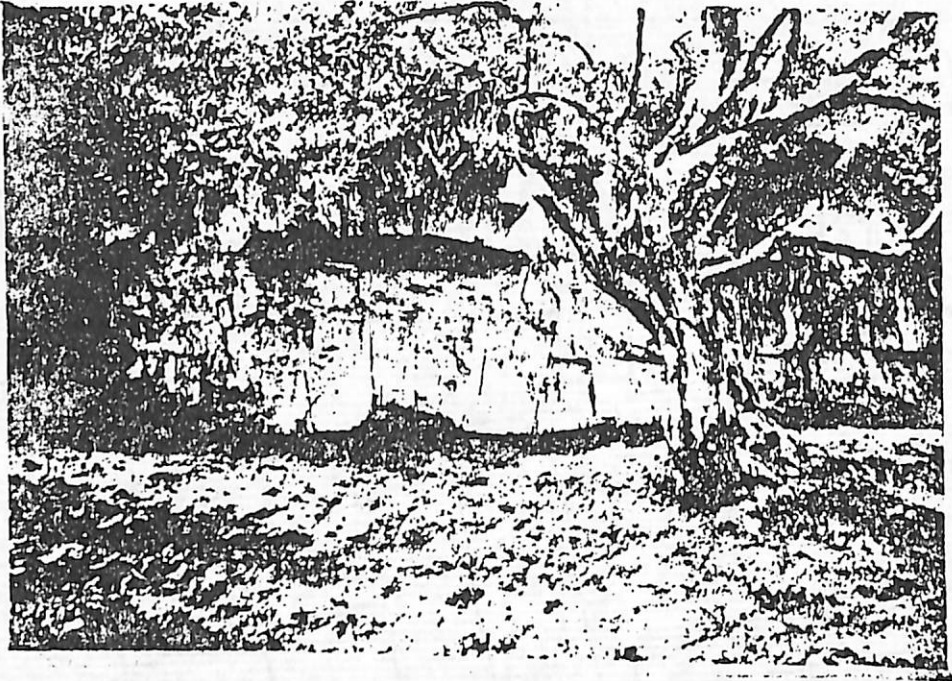
Figure 2 : The City Wall
          View Looking South
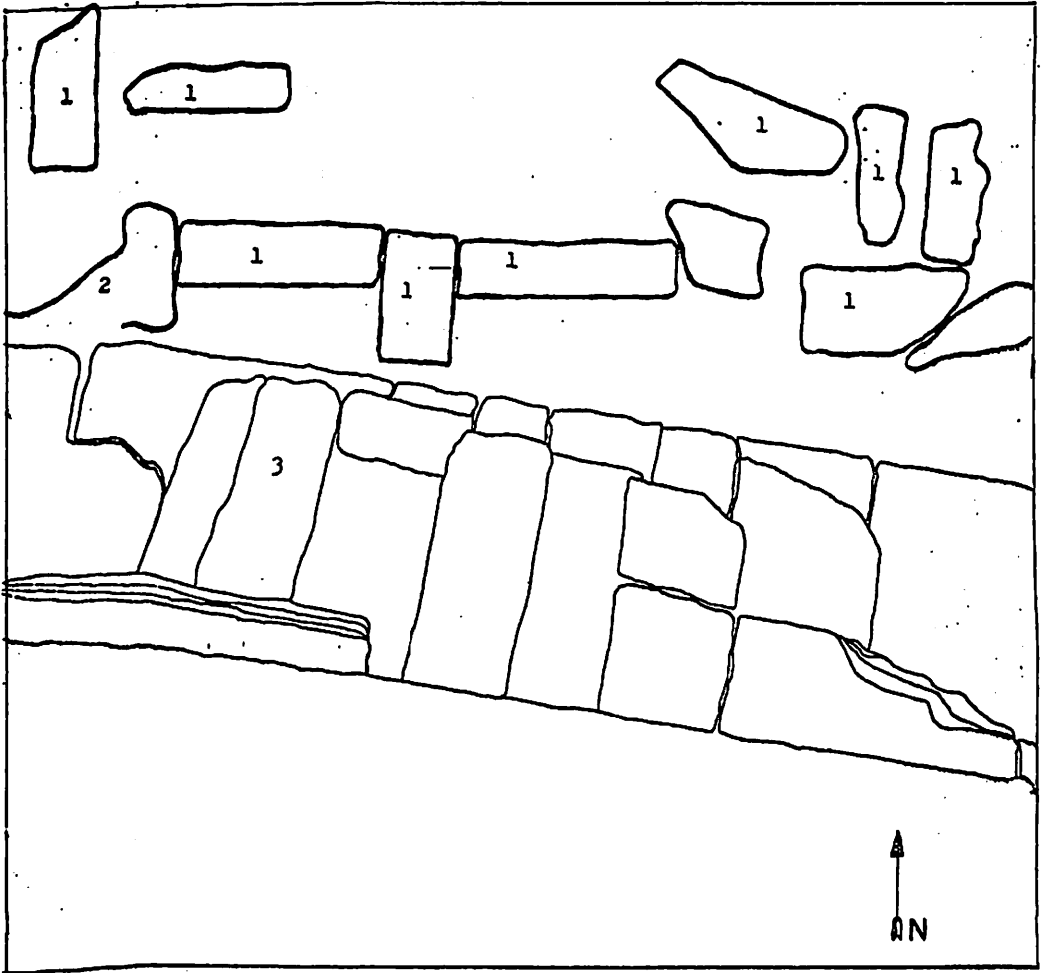
Figure 3 : Top Plan of the City Wall
(1: Stones of the possible Tower;
2: Plaster, 3: The top of the wall)
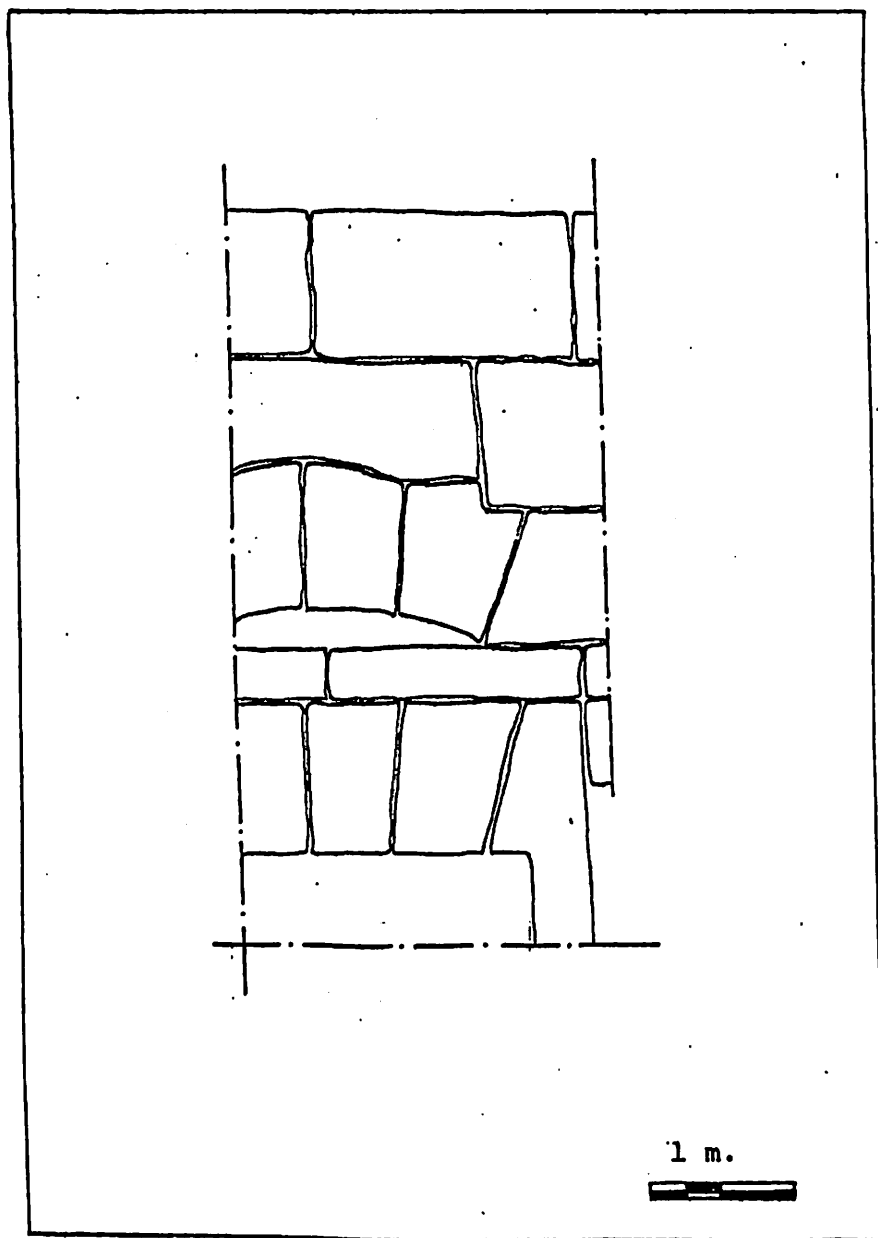
Figure 4: The inside Face of the Excavated.Gate, City Wall
           (Original Drawing: Z. Zaid)
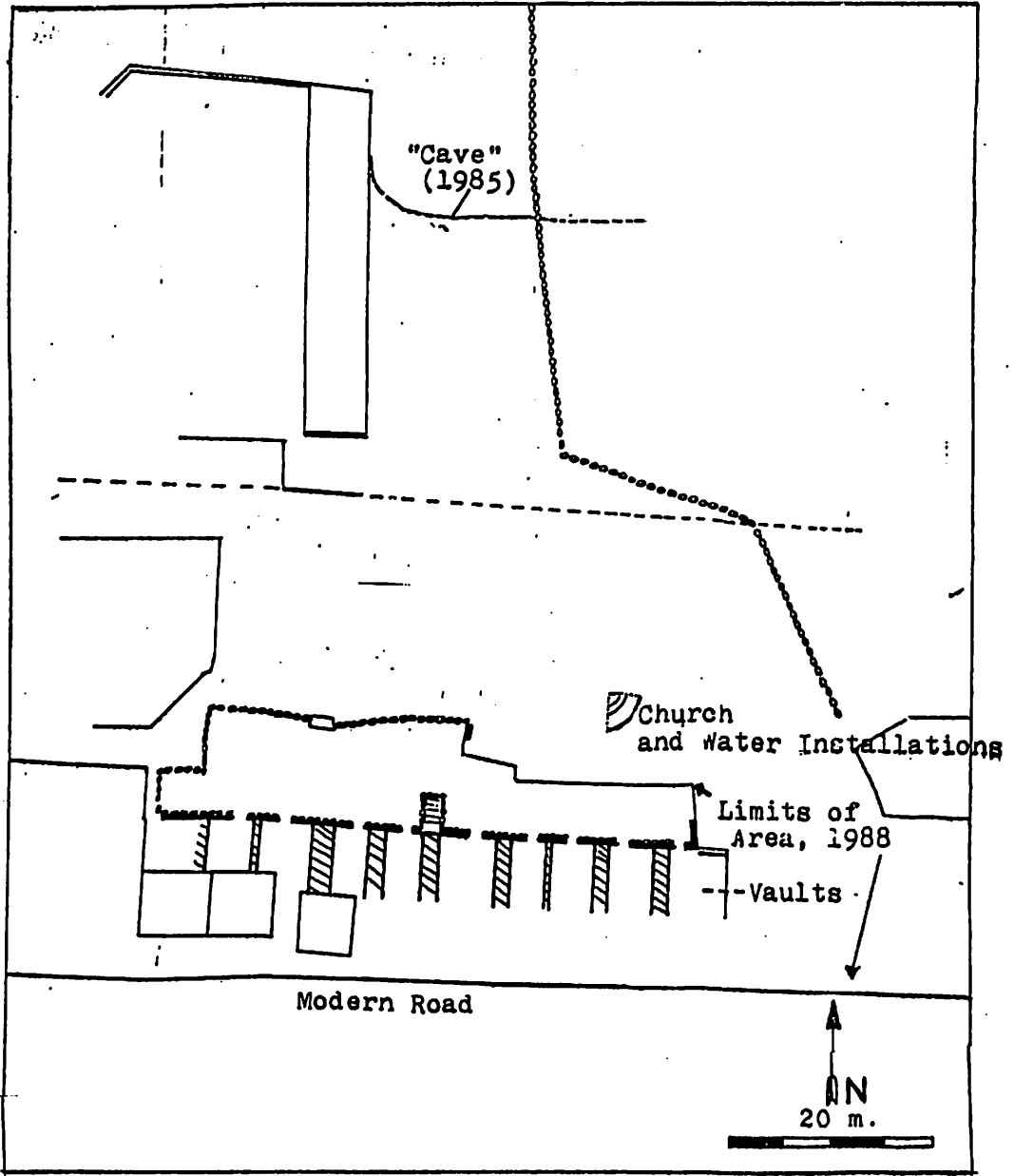
Figure 5: Area A, Showing Original Boundaries of the Area and the Change as of 1988.
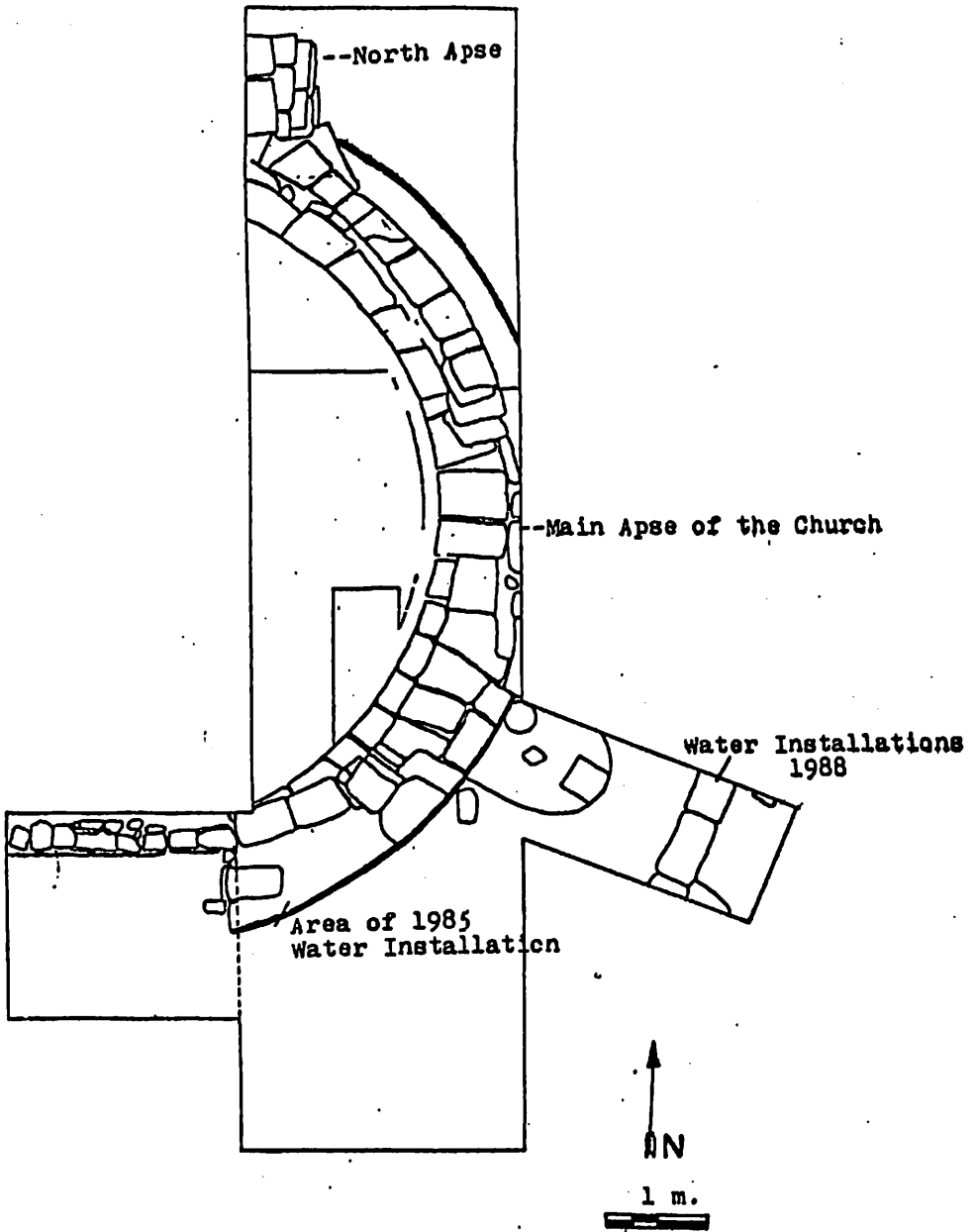
Figure 6 : The Main Apse of the Church with the Water Installations Abutting (Top Plan).

Figure 7 : View of the Main Apse of the Church with the Water Installation (1985) Built Against It (to the left; view: southwest).

The Citadel of 'Ammān in the Abbasid Period

Alastair Northedge[*]

1. Introduction

The Citadel of 'Ammān is only one among many archaeological sites in Jordan to have extensive evidence of occupation in the Umayyad period. However, it is distinctive in possessing substantial evidence of continuing occupation after the Abbasid Revolution of 132/750. In particular there is clear evidence of attempts to restore the Umayyad architecture, following the devastating earthquake of 130/747-748, and of a gradual change from a monumental, designed citadel into a domestic settlement, a change that was punctuated by, and eventually terminated by, the periodic severe earthquakes that affect the areas flanking the Jordan Valley. In this respect, the Citadel at 'Ammān is capable of functioning as a paradigm of what one should expect of the social and physical changes that affected the southern parts of Bilād al-Shām after the Abbasid Revolution.

2. The Umayyad Citadel (figs. 1 and 2)

In the course of the Umayyad period a radical reworking of the plan of the Citadel is to be observed. New construction appeared everywhere. This seems to represent a single, planned unit, a citadel[1]. The elements that make up this citadel are: the palace, laid out in the double enclosure at the north end; a rebuild of the fortification circuit; an open circular cistern; and the stratum V buildings of C.-M. Bennett's excavations in Areas B and C, and Umayyad houses excavated by G. L. Harding on the site of the Jordan Archaeological Museum.

Two terraces of the hill were enclosed within the fortification wall, leaving the easternmost terrace outside. This produced two enclosures, but so far no evidence has emerged of related habitation on the lower terrace. The Byzantine-Umayyad complex excavated in 1987 appears to have originated in the Byzantine period, and its Umayyad occupation probably predates the reconstruction of the Citadel[2]. Although without more extensive excavation one cannot be certain, Islamic pottery of any kind is very rare on the surface of the lower terrace.

The lower terrace may therefore have been an "outer bailey" intended for animals or storage, or perhaps it was intended to be built over, but never in the event reached that stage. The settlement was limited to the upper terrace.

---

[*] University of Tübingen, Germany.

1. I have to thank for this suggestion Prof. H. Kalayan, who first saw a similarity between the Umayyad buildings of Area C and 'Anjar.

2. Fawzi Zayadine, Mohammad Najjar and Joe Greene, "Recent Excavations on the Citadel of Amman (Lower Terrace); a Preliminary Report" *ADAJ* 31 (1987): 299-311.

The central focus was the palace (fig. 3), which occupies a third of the upper terrace, and in particular its public audience hall, the Reception Hall. The Reception Hall stood at the entrance to the palace, and also functioned as its main gate[3]. In front of the Reception Hall there may have been a courtyard (Arabic *rahba*). From the main south door one passed through the hall into a further small courtyard, and then into a columned street, which was flanked by residential buildings. At the north end there was an *iwān* and dome chamber building, the North Building.

The remaining two-thirds of the upper terrace, hexagonal in area, was partly occupied by buildings. The enclosure was not completely filled. Although there was extensive construction on the west side (Area C) and in the central area (Area B, Museum site), Area A had an open pavement. In retrospect the actual area of construction can be recognised as corresponding to the area marked "ruins (heaps of stones)" in Conder's Special Survey map of 1881.

There was apparently little at the southern end of the upper terrace, where the ruins of the Temple of Hercules still stood. This may have collapsed, and at least became delapidated before the Umayyad period: one capital of the temenos colonnade is incorporated into the church. The building served as a stone quarry for the builders of the Umayyad wall, but it was not built over, and there is relatively little evidence of Islamic occupation in its vicinity.

It is certain that the Umayyad Citadel did not possess a rectangular grid of streets. Perhaps this was not to be expected on an irregular hill-top site. If the lines have been extrapolated correctly, then the basic pattern was radial, diverging from the Reception Hall.

All the Umayyad buildings of the settlement except Building A can reasonably be identified as houses, built as multi-unit blocks. It is evident that the project included the construction of separate courtyard house units of a variety of sizes, ranging from two rooms and a courtyard, to seven rooms, a latrine and a courtyard, up to the residential units of the palace, of which Building 6 has ten rooms, a latrine, staircase and courtyard.

3. Dating of the Umayyad Citadel

In addition to the general dating to the Umayyad period established by coins and pottery from the excavations, one can only refine the dating by means of the place of the palace in the sequence of Umayyad architecture. The broad slightly pointed tunnel vaults cannot be seen as earlier than about the reign of Hishām

---

3 . This building has been described as a grand gateway, for example by Antonio Almagro Gorbea, *El Palacio Omeya de Amman I; La Arquitectura* (Madrid: Instituto Hispano-Arabe Cultura, 1983), but this is incorrect. It was the finest building of the palace, and its focus; the second monumental structure, the North Building, was of a lesser quality of construction and decoration.

b. 'Abd al-Malik (105/724-125/743). Equally the vast construction project cannot be seen as postdating the Abbasid revolution of 132/750, when the resources of the Caliphate were diverted to Iraq. It follows that the *terminus ante quem* must be the beginning of the Third Civil War in 126/744. The median date is 117/735. This is about right, for even given the ability of the Umayyads to provide large gangs of workmen, stone construction takes time. The relatively complete state of the result indicates that a number of years were spent on the work.

4. The Destruction of the Umayyad Citadel (fig. 4)

Two areas, Building B of Area C and the Museum site, show distinct evidence of a destruction shortly after they were built. In both cases the buildings collapsed on their contents. Further confirmation of the violence comes from a human skeleton on a threshold of Building B, lying in an impossible position for a burial. Evidence of damage might also be seen in the restorations, discussed in the next section, that were subsequently made to the fortification wall, and the palace, particularly the North Building. The damage, however, was not universal: the buildings of Area B show no sign of interruption in their occupation. The Reception Hall continued to stand.

There seem to be two options to explain the cause of the destruction: (i) an earthquake and (ii) a sack. The possibility of a sack resultant upon an attack on the Citadel does not carry conviction: there is insufficient evidence of fire. However 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī is reported to have sent an army to subdue the Balqā' in 132/750.

The use of earthquakes as an explanation of destruction is not one to be taken lightly. There are two important problems: firstly, reasonable certainty that the evidence of destruction visible represents an earthquake; and secondly, dating the evidence to a particular shock known from textual sources.

Here the evidence available matches the expected results of a severe earthquake and is further supported by the partial nature of the destruction (for a distribution map of the destruction, see fig. 4). The areas which appear to have suffered most damage, Area C, the Museum site, the fortification wall, and the North Building, are all built on fills of greater or lesser stability. Structures which were little damaged, the Reception Hall and Area B, are built directly on bedrock, or close to it. According to Amiran, alluvial valley fills increase the effects of seismic activity[4]; so too with constructional fills.

We have two earthquakes to choose from, one on 18th January between 746 and 750 but probably 130/747-748, and a second on 9th March, ten years later[5]. But there is little doubt from literary sources that the first was of much greater intensity:

---

4 . D. H. Kallner-Amiran, "A Revised Earthquake Catalogue of Palestine", *IEJ* 2 (1952): 48.

5 . Kenneth Russell, "The Earthquake Chronology of Palestine and Northwest Arabia from the 2nd Through the Mid-8th Century A.D.", *BASOR* 260 (1975): 47-49.

A great earthquake in Palestine, Jordan and all Syria, 18th January at the fourth hour (= 11 a.m.)... innumerable myriads died; churches and monasteries were ruined, especially in the desert of the Holy City[6].

The archaeological parallels for the destruction at 'Ammān are extensive, and by general consensus they have been attributed to this earthquake. In Jerusalem the Aqsā mosque was damaged[7], and the Umayyad complex on the south side of the Haram was completely destroyed[8]. At Jericho the unfinished palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar was partly destroyed, but continued in occupation; the Bath Hall was also destroyed[9]. At Tabaqat Fahl (Pella) an extensive earthquake destruction level in a residential area[10], and the final destruction of the West Church are attributed to this earthquake[11]. The monastery of the Memorial of Moses at Mt. Nebo, may also have evidence of a destruction of this period[12]. Umm al-Jimāl apparently suffered damage at this time, and was subsequently abandoned[13].

5. The Restoration of the Citadel in the Early Abbasid Period

There are two important pieces of evidence which suggest that the Citadel was restored after the earthquake damage.

The first of these is the addition of sloping buttresses and revetment to the Umayyad wall circuit (fig. 5). This work was evidently a restoration of the fortification; for example, in rebuilt buttress 1 of sector 9, there was no good wall face behind the addition, and the original buttress must have collapsed.

The second is the period 4 construction in the palace: in this phase colonnades were added in Buildings 4, 5 and 6, using round piers of rubble and gypsum

6 . Theophanes, *Chronographia,* ed. Carolus de Boors (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1882): 442.

7 . K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture,* vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University, 1940).

8 . Meir Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1985).

9 . Robert Hamilton, *Khirbat al-Mafjar: An Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley* (Oxford: Claredon, 1959): 8.

10 . Anthony McNicoll, Robert Smith and Basil Hennessy, *Pella in Jordan I: Report of the Joint Sydney University-Wooster College Ohio, Excavations 1979-81* (Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 1982). Alan Walmsley, "Pella/Fihl after the Islamic Conquest (A.D. 635-c.900): A Convergence of the Literary and Archaeological Evidence", *Mediterranean Archaeology* 1 (1988): 142-159.

11 . Robert Smith, *Pella of the Decapolis I* (Wooster: Wooster College, 1973): 165-166.

12 . Sylvester Saller, *The Memorial of Moses on Mount Nebo* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1941), vol. 2, pl. 144, 146, showing room 89.

13 . Bert de Vries, "The Umm el-Jimal Project, 1972-1977", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 244 (1981): 65, 72.

mortar (fig. 6), and in the North Building a pair of rubble and gypsum mortar engaged columns were added at the mouth of the *iwan,* while the side room N2 was reroofed with a transverse arch of the same construction.

There is no direct evidence that both these items belong to the same project of restoration, nor is it necessary for us that they should. They are both modifications that early postdate the Umayyad construction. Clearly over a period, or at one time, the citadel was being restored in a modest fashion. Some areas of the residential settlement, however, remained derelict.

The parallelism between the events of the 130/747-748 earthquake and restoration here, and at the Haram in Jerusalem, another site with Umayyad construction built on a platform and other fills, is quite striking. The Dome of the Rock, built on the bedrock, of course, continued to stand. The Umayyad complex south of the Haram, built on fills over Byzantine houses, was completely demolished and not rebuilt[14]. The Aqsā *(al-mughatta)* was destroyed "except for the part around the *mihrāb*"[15]

The restoration of the Aqsā was in a more modest form of construction, like 'Ammān; the colonnades were supported on lofty piers *(asatin mushayyada),* in place of the former marble columns *(a'midat al-rukhām)*[16].

Al-Muqaddasī's explanation of this more modest restoration could also parallel 'Ammān:

> When the news (of the earthquake) reached the Caliph, he was told that the treasury of the Muslims was not adequate to restore (the mosque) to what it had been before. So he wrote to the amirs of the provinces and the other generals, that each one of them should build a colonnade. And they built it firmer and more substantial

---

14 . Ben Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple.*

15 . Al-Muqaddasī, Muhammad b. Ahmad, (d. 356/967 or 381/992), *Ahsan al-Taqāsīm fi Ma'rifat al-Aqālim,* ed M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906): 169. According to Jamāl al-Dīn Ahmad (8th/14th century), the Aqsā was destroyed twice and rebuilt twice early in the Abbasid period, and this account had been accepted by Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture,* vol. 1: 120. Other sources do not support this late account: al-Muqaddasī speaks of one restoration, and Hamilton, in his examination of the structure of the mosque, identified only one phase of rebuild belonging to this period, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque* (Jerusalem, 1949): 71-73.

16 . *Asatin mushayyada* was translated in Creswell's *Early Muslim Architecture* as "built-up piers", implying that the piers were of multiple blocks. A second translation is offered in K. A. C. Creswell's *Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture,* revised and supplemented by John Allan (Aldershot: Scholars Press, 1989): 82: "plastered", from *shīd,* "plaster". Another common meaning of *mushayyad* is "lofty", "imposing", of buildings. Although Creswell's original translation may not be technically correct, the contrast with marble columns shows that multi-block piers are being referred to.

than it had been before[17].

The date of al-Mansūr's work on the Aqsā is given clearly by Pseudo-Dionysius as the year before work was begun on al-Raqqa, that is 771, although he misunderstands the work as a conversion of Solomon's Temple into a mosque[18]. This was some 24 years after the earthquake of 130/747-748, a very long time for the rebuilding of a major sanctuary after an earthquake, and gives an idea of how long it might have taken before the Citadel at 'Ammān was restored.

The modest style of work prevents us from dating this work before the Abbasid revolution of 132/750. The reconstruction was perhaps the work of one of the early Abbasid governors of the Balqa'. We know the names of two: Muhammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh under al-Mansūr (158/774) and Sālih b. Sulaymān under Hārūn al-Rashīd (180/796). Either of these easterners could have introduced the oriental rubble and gypsum mortar technique of Period 4 in the palace. However Muhammad b. 'Ubayd Allāh is only known to have been in the Balqa' for a year. Sālih b. Sulaymān was a supporter of Ja'far b. Yahyā al-Barmakī, who was given control of Syria to bring peace to the country, and might well have been the sort of man to restore the Citadel at 'Ammān.

6. The Continuation Settlement (Strata IVb-IIb)

Following this restoration the next event appears to have been the final collapse or destruction of the fortifications. They had collapsed in Areas C and D down to their present level by house phase 1b of Area D, the construction of a building over Tower E. Our only information on dating comes from this: phase 1b is characterised by stratum IVb pottery, including early polychrome glazed wares. One might tentatively suggest that the collapse occurred before the end of the 3rd/9th century, but we know nothing of the causes. The walls might have been razed, perhaps in connection with a revolt, such as that of Sa'īd b. Khālid al-'Uthmānī al-Fudaynī under al-Ma'mūn (198/813-218/833). Alternatively the destruction might have been the product of a further earthquake. There were earthquakes in 808 and 856[19]. At any rate, the walls were never restored.

Occupation at the Citadel continued in three main periods, distinguished by their ceramic horizons. In the main the pattern of the Umayyad settlement was retained – occupation in the palace and its immediate vicinity, the northern and western areas of the upper terrace (Areas B, C, and D, but not Area A). As far as

---

17 . Al-Muqaddasī, *Ahsan al-Taqāsim:* 169.

18 . Dionysius of Tell-Mahre, *Chronique,* ed. and trans. by Jean Baptiste Chabot (Paris: E. Bouillen, 1885): 108. cf. al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarīr, (d. 310/923), *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk,* ed. by M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1885-1901), III: 372.

19 . D. H. Kallner-Amiran, "A Revised Earthquake Catalogue of Palestine, I", *IEJ* 1 (1950-1951): 226.

our evidence goes the street lines of the Umayyad period continued to be used up to stratum III, even where the Umayyad buildings no longer were.

To generalise on the Area analysis one may say that in places Umayyad buildings continued to be occupied (Areas B and C), and in others new buildings were erected (Areas C and D). The palace was converted into a small-scale occupation. The whole appears to represent an urban settlement.

Stratum IVb (3rd/9th-4th/10th centuries) is represented in Areas B, C, D, and the palace. In this period are found the first constructions over the top of the fortification wall in Areas C and D.

Unfortunately there are no coins to date this stratum. However, characteristic stratum IVb pottery is an early introduction, for it appears on or connected with earth floors that must be Umayyad in date or shortly postdate the Abbasid Revolution (132/750). Polychrome glazed ware appears in the course of this stratum, but not necessarily at the beginning of it. Local polychrome splashed and early sgraffiato wares are all found associated with it. This stratum can only be broadly assigned to the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries.

In stratum III (5th/11th century) the settlement expanded, but remained essentially a continuation of the IVb period. Area C was widely reoccupied, and traces of occupation are found in all areas of the upper terrace except Area A. This stratum is associated with two Fatimid coins, both of the early 5th/11th century.

7. The Stratum III Destruction

At the end of this period there was a further widespread abandonment, with deposits of pottery on floors in Areas B, C, and D. Areas C and D were not occupied again. Although the buildings are not stratigraphically linked, there is enough similarity in the pottery to suggest that the abandonment occurred at the same time. In the case of Room 4 of Building 1 in Area C, the sherds of one cooking pot were found high up in the tumble, suggesting that the pot had fallen from a high niche in the course of the collapse of the building. This building at least collapsed on its contents; a collapse of the vault in Room D, Building D at this period was also indicated by the necessity to rebuild the east wall before further occupation in Stratum IIb. It was more difficult to be certain elsewhere, for the poor quality of construction did not leave the distinctive traces found from the Umayyad earthquake.

Nevertheless the traces that were found and the widespread nature of the abandonment suggest quite strongly that the cause was a further earthquake (fig. 7). If, because of the loose Stratum VI fills, many of the areas of the Citadel were vulnerable to earthquake in 130/747-748, the same areas would only be more vulnerable a second time, through the build-up of occupation deposits over the centuries. The effects of this second earthquake seem to have been more severe than the first, for destruction deposits of pottery were excavated from every building of the stratum excavated in Areas B, C, and D, with the exception

of the limited reoccupation of Umayyad Building B in Area C. Nevertheless no human or animal remains trapped in the collapse were found, and it is possible that a fore-shock had given warning.

This destruction seems to have terminated general occupation in Areas B, C, and D. The abandonment was not in itself, of course, the product of the earthquake, but resulted from the inhabitants being unable to afford to rebuild their property, and is a reflection of the economic circumstances of the times.

Dating this earthquake is more difficult than that of 130/747-748. It must postdate the latest Fatimid coin found, an issue of al-Zāhir, thus postdating his accession year, 411/1021, as it is undated. The position is complicated by the rarity of late Fatimid issues[20]. It should predate the Ayyubid period and the introduction of pseudo-prehistoric ware. Furthermore it must have been a severe earthquake to cause such widespread destruction.

The earthquakes of this period which might have affected 'Ammān were:–

Severe Earthquakes

a) 15th Muharram 425/10th December 1033-1034, in the winter. Al-Ramla, Jerusalem (the wall and the Aqsā Mosque were damaged), Gaza, Tiberias. Described by Amiran as one of the three most destructive earthquakes in Palestine[21].
b) 11th Jumada I, 460/18th March 1068. Palestine and northern Hijāz: al-Ramla, Jerusalem (Dome of the Rock damaged), Madīna, Wādī Safra, Khaybar, Badr, Yanbū', Wādī al-Qurā, Tayma, Ayla ('Aqaba)[22].

Distant or Less Severe Earthquakes

c) 500/1105, 24th December. Jerusalem, reported in Crusader sources[23].
d) 508/11'4, 10th August. Palestinian coast, Jerusalem, reported in Crusader sources. Probably a fringe effect of a severe earthquake in northern Syria[24].
e) 515/1121-1122. Serious earthquake in Hijāz, reported at Makka and Madīna[25].

---

20 . Lowick, personal communication.

21 . Al-Suyūti, Jalāl al-Dīn, (d. 911/1505), *Kashf al-Silsila 'an Wasf al-Zilzila*, French trans. by Nejjar (Rabat, 1973-1974). Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture:* 121, Amiran, "Earthquake Catalogue", *IEJ* 1 (1950-1951): 227.

22 . Al-Suyūfi, *Kashf al-Silsila:* 20-21; al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allah, (d. 748/1348), *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, fol. 4b; Ibn al-Qalānisi, Hamza b. Asad, (d. 555/1160), *Dhayl Ta'rīkh Dimashq*, ed. Amedroz (Beirut, 1908).

23 . Amiran, "Earthquake Catalogue", *IEJ* 1 (1950): 227.

24 . Ibid: 228; al-Suyūfi, *Kashf al-Silsila:* 22.

25 . Al-Suyūfi, *Kashf al-Silsila:* 24.

f) 565/1170, 29th June. Severe in Syria at Damascus, Hims, Hamā, Aleppo, Ba'albakk. Strong in Palestine at Caesarea[26].

Of these options, the distant or less severe earthquakes described were probably insufficient to cause extensive damage at 'Ammān. The earthquake of 425/1033-1034 is an attractive option, as the excavators of Tiberias date a destruction and abandonment to this earthquake[27]. But for 'Ammān there are two problems: (a) the *dirham* of al-Zāhir found in the floor of Area C, Building 3, and minted at the earliest in 411/1020-1021, is worn, and that wear would have had to occur in 14 years and (b) the pottery is largely paralleled by Crusader and Middle Islamic pottery of the 6th/12th century, and even the 7th/13th century. It is questionable how much earlier one can date such pottery; without doubt there is pottery of the first half of the 5th/11th century at the Citadel, for example pottery excavated by the Spanish Archaeological Mission, including splashed wares with straight flaring rims[28].

The effects of the earthquake of 460/1068 were concentrated in Palestine and the northern Hijāz, on either side of the Balqā', and the epicentre has been suggested to have lain in the northern Red Sea, while there may even have been a second associated earthquake in Palestine.

The same problem of ceramic dating applies also, but to a lesser degree, to this earthquake, but it is the most likely candidate. But this conclusion should be regarded with caution, and the destruction might have taken place at any time in the second half of the 5th/11th century, or the first half of the 6th/12th century.

---

26 . Amiran, "Earthquake Catalogue", *IEJ* 1 (1951): 228.

27 . E. D. Oren, "Early Islamic Material from Ganei Hamat (Tiberias)", *Archaeology* 24 (1971): 274-277.

28 . Emilio Olavarri-Giocoechea, *El Palacio Omeya de Amman, II: La Arqueologia* (Valencia: Institucion San Jeronimo, 1985): figs. 22-23.
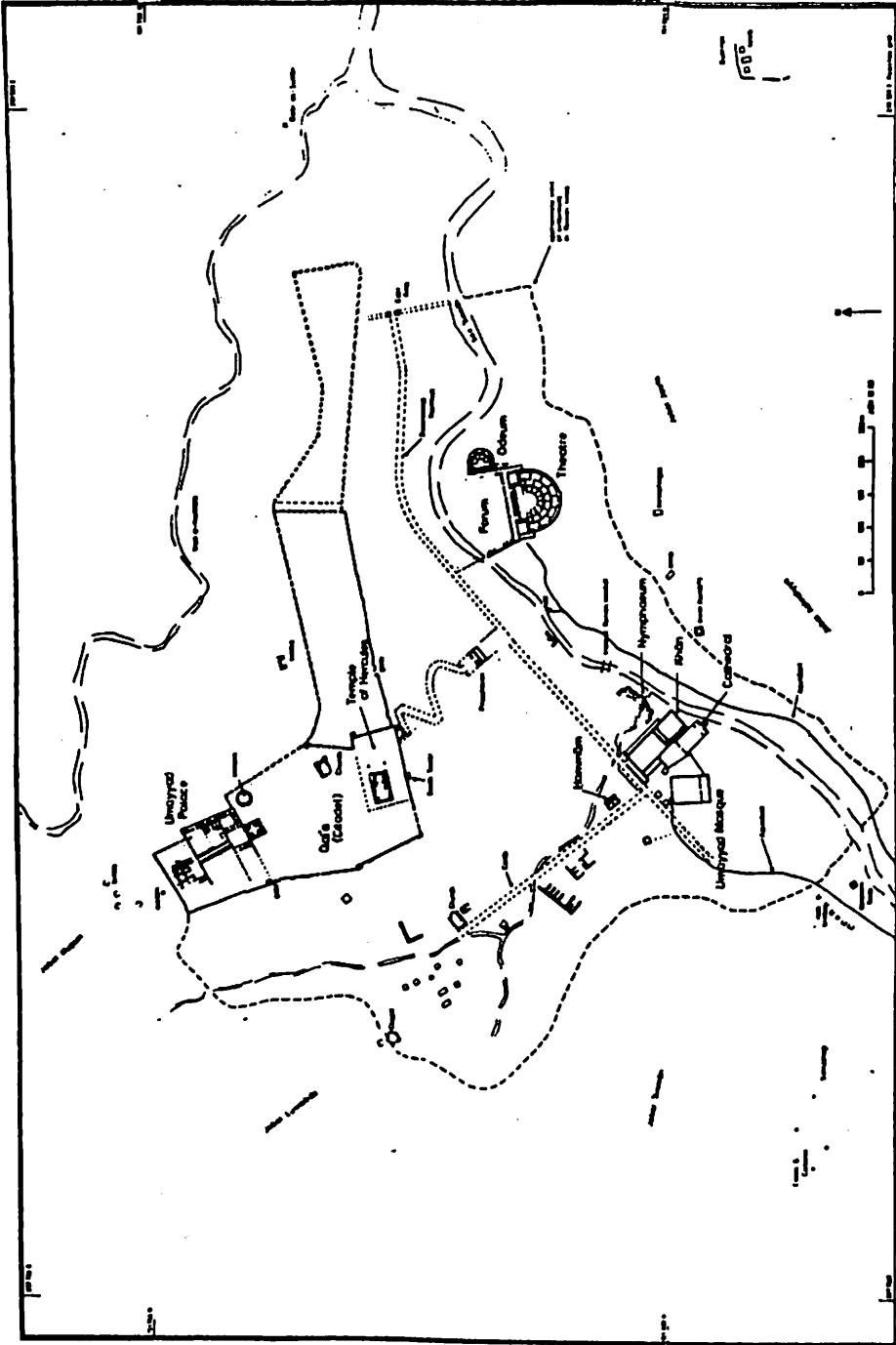
1. The Roman and Islamic topography of 'Ammān.
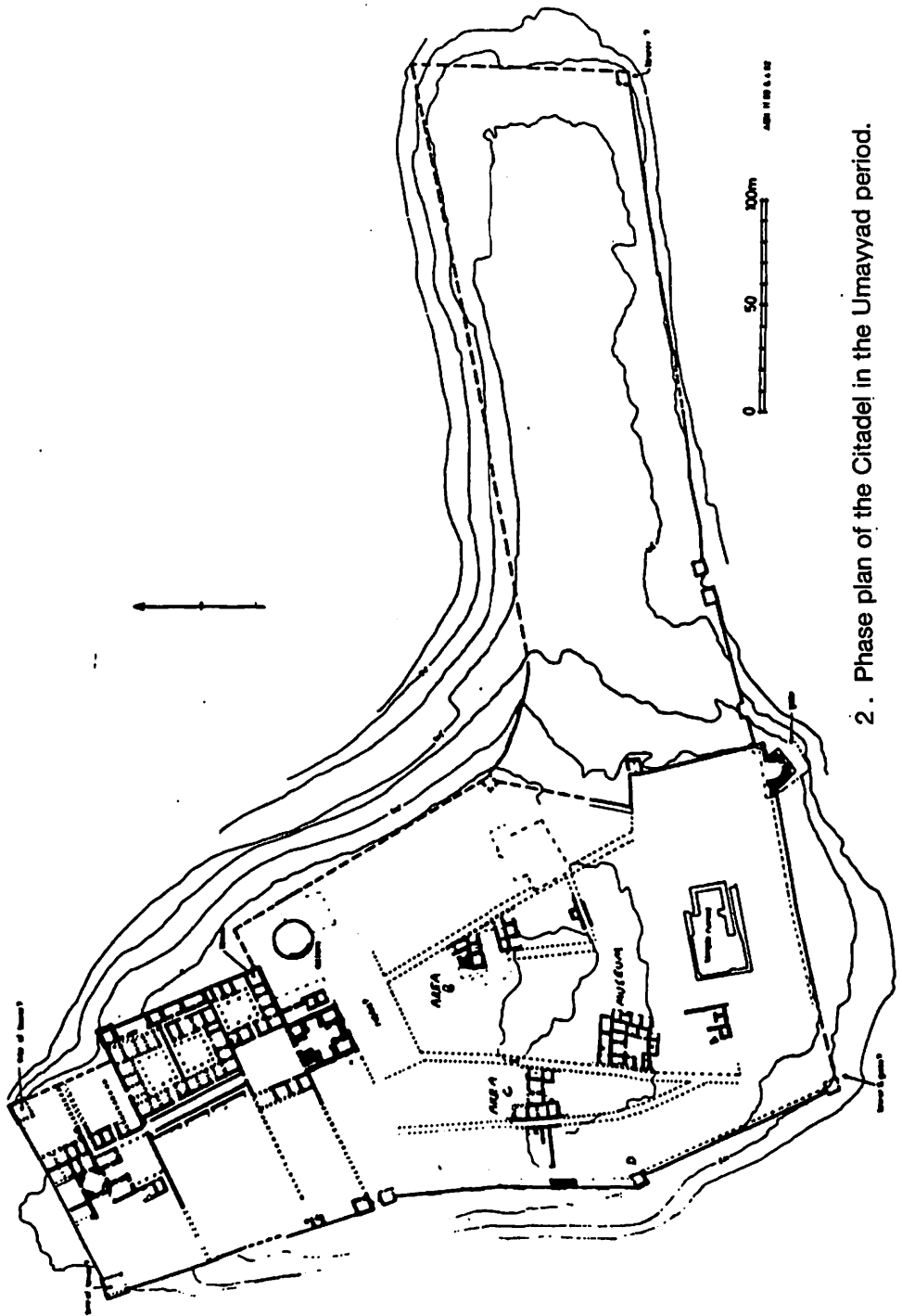
2 . Phase plan of the Citadel in the Umayyad period.

3 . Plan of the Umayyad Palace.

4 . Areas of the Citadel affected by the earthquake of 130/747-748.
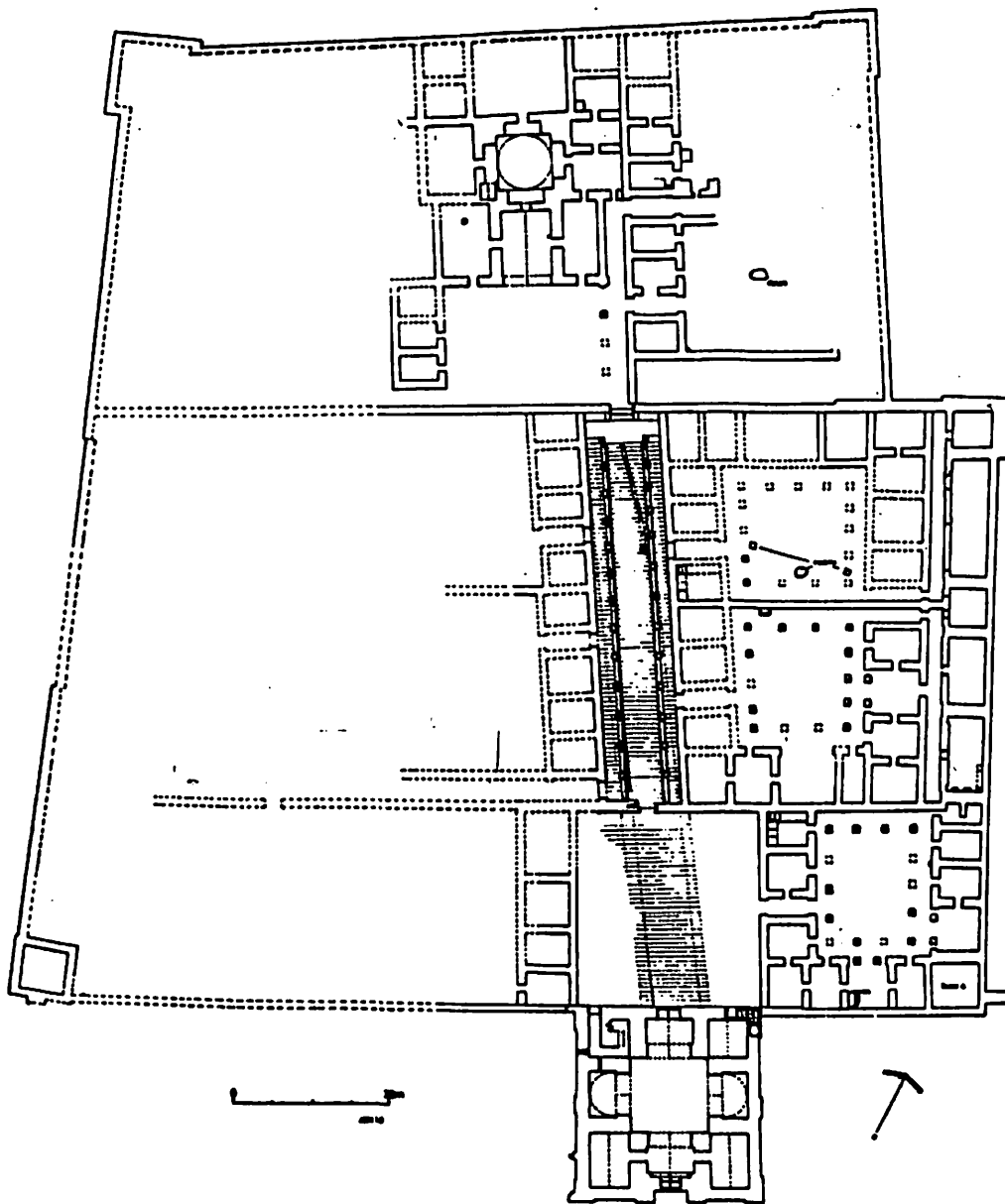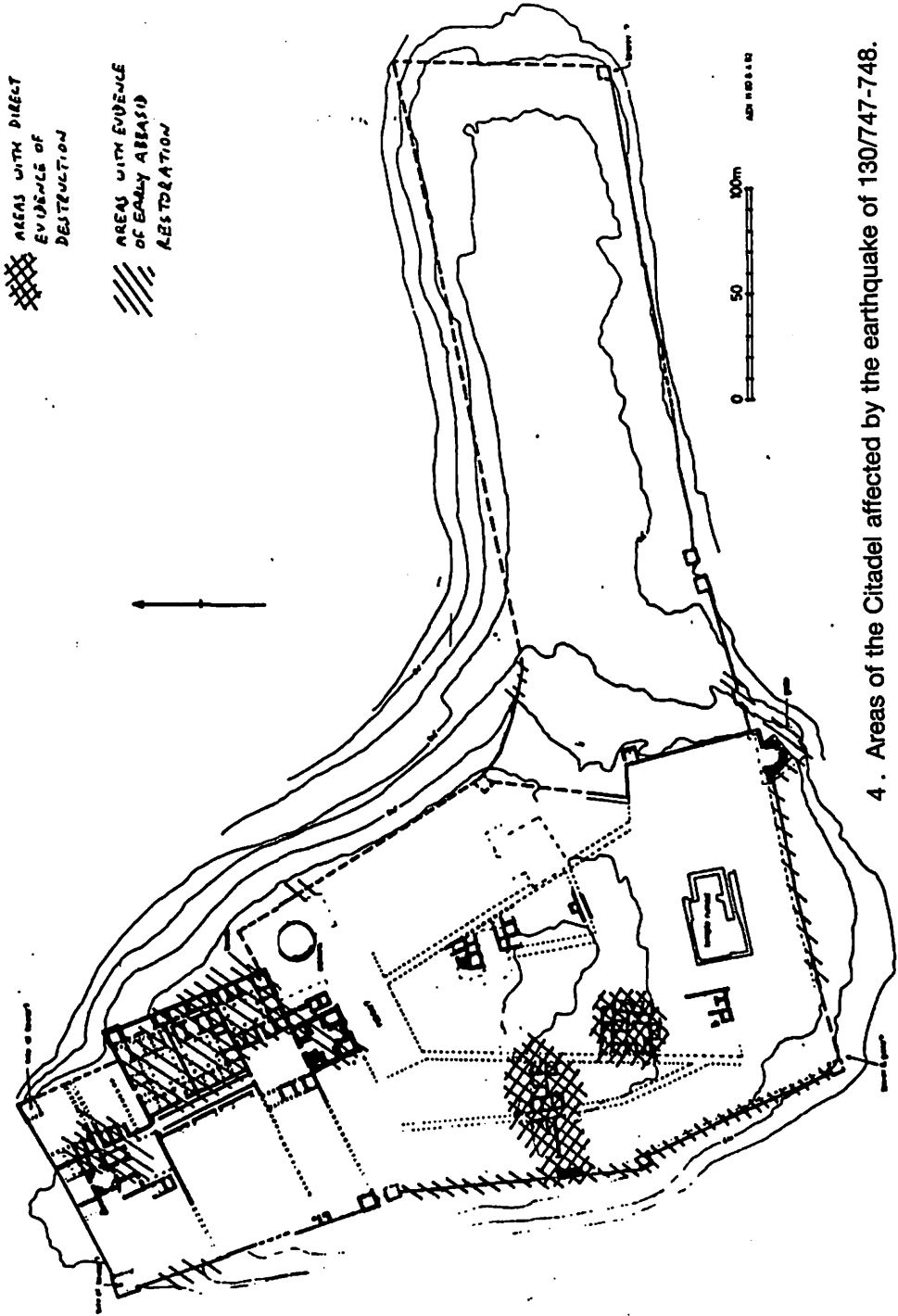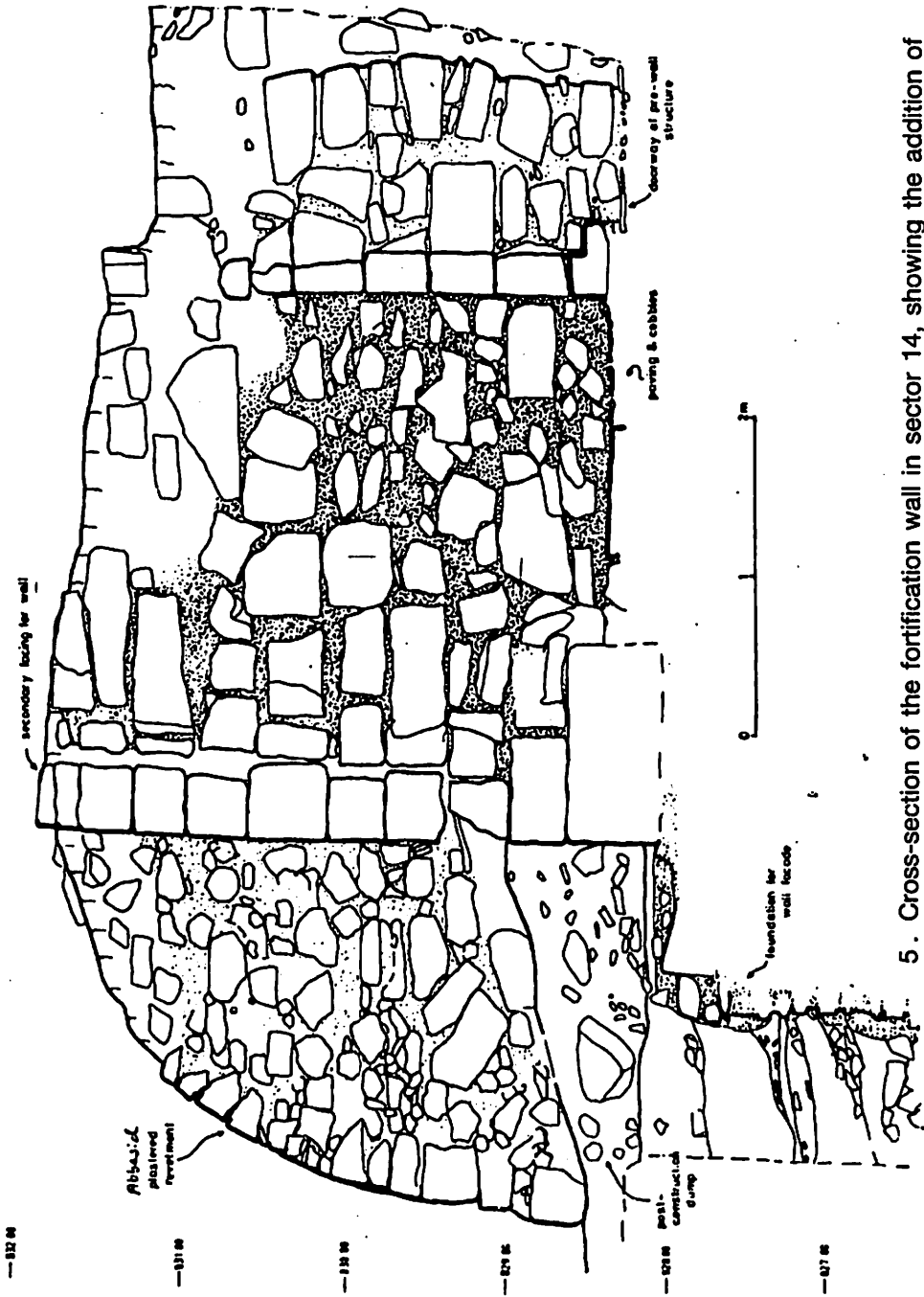
5. Cross-section of the fortification wall in sector 14, showing the addition of the Abbasid revetment.
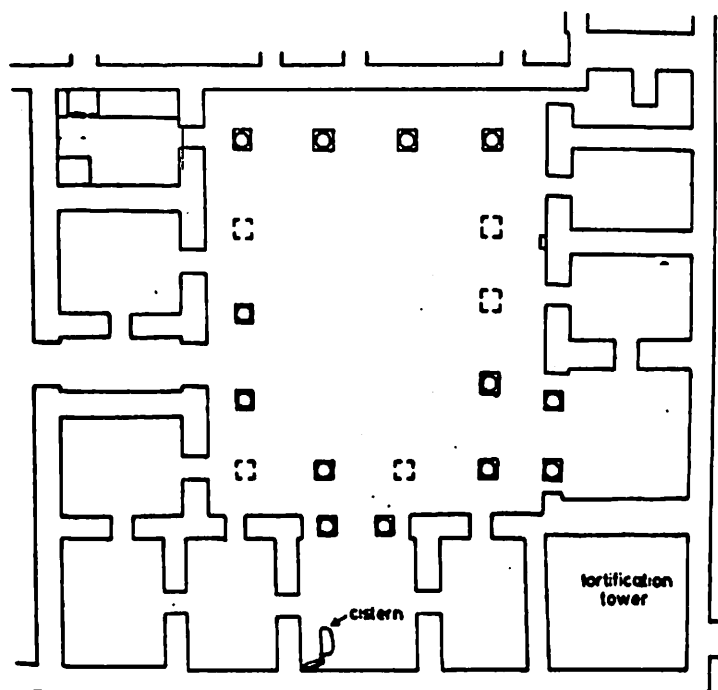
6. Plan of Building 6 in the Umayyad Palace, showing the Abbasid arcade of Period 4.

AREAS WITH
EVIDENCE OF DESTRUCTION
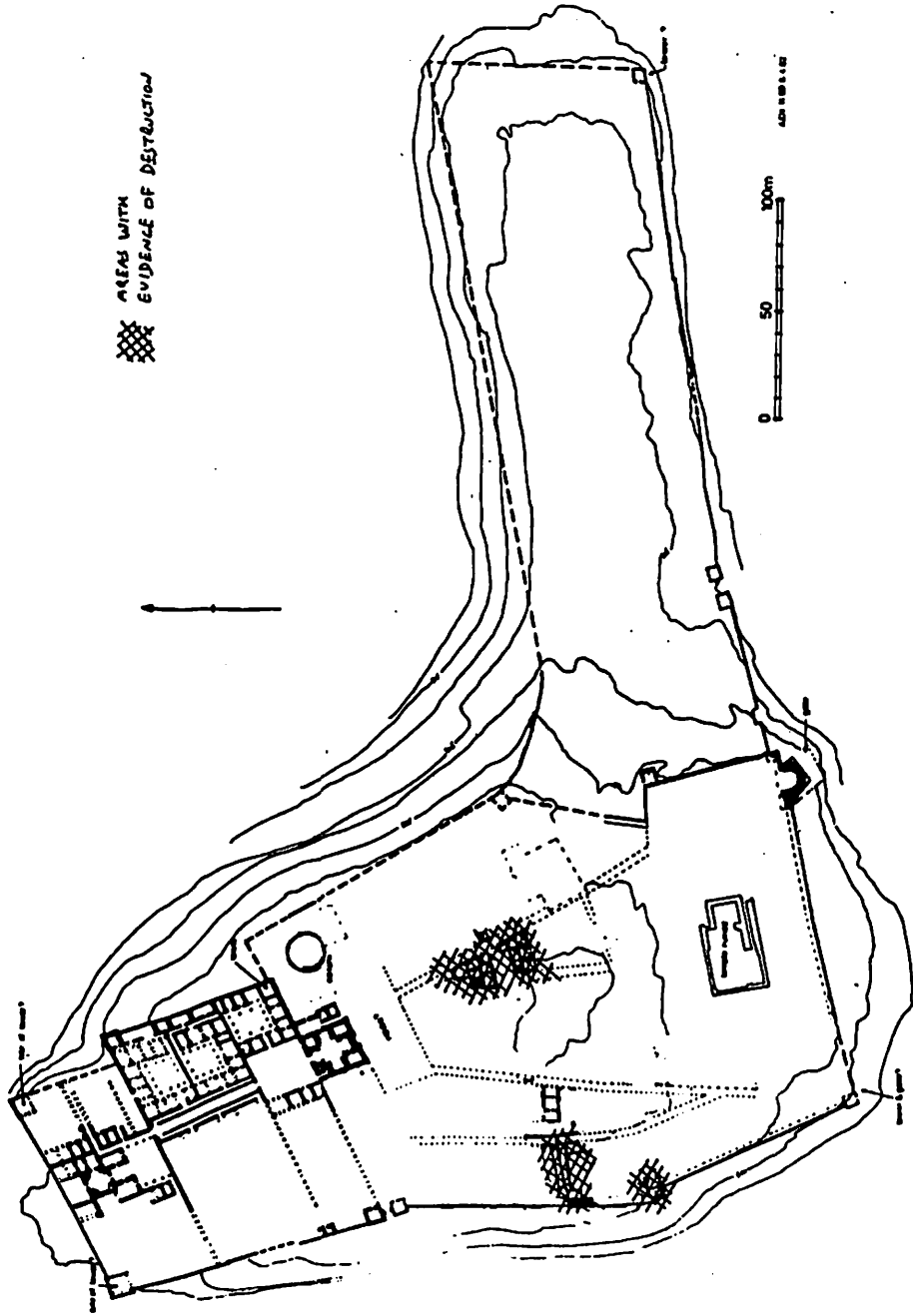
7 . Areas of the Citadel affected by the earthquake probably dated to 460/1068.

The Friday Mosque at Rusāfat Hishām in the Abbasid Period

Dorothée Sack[*]

In the years between 1983 and 1986 in the ruined city of Resafa-Sergiupolis, situated 25 km south of the Euphrates in the Syrian Palmyrene, research concentrated partly on the Islamic settlement and its remains[1]. Although the main part of this paper will deal with the results of the excavation of the Friday mosque, it is necessary first to look at Resafa and its surroundings to explain the local situation.

The city was fortified by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century to safeguard the tomb of Saint Sergius, a Roman officer, who suffered here the martyr's death about the year 300. In 105/723-724 Resafa became the residence of the Umayyad Caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Mālik. Hishām chose the place after escaping from al-Raqqa when the Euphrates area was contaminated by pestilence. The sources tell us[2] that he died in 125/743 in Resafa, now called Rusāfat Hishām[3]. Some results of our fieldwork indicate that he seems to have been buried in one of the gardens outside the city. During the survey in the surroundings of the city, we elucidated the main part of the residential area in an area of four square kilometers south of the city. Here we classified six different building complexes. Each of these complexes includes a palace-like building and buildings for the economy. Four of these palace-like buildings were erected on exposed places in the landscape. The results of the fieldwork show that the residential area was founded in the Umayyad period, well before the reign of Hishām. It was in use until the early Abbasid period, as far as we know from the coin-spectrum[4].

Nevertheless, the religious center of the Muslim community was built inside

---

the wall. The Friday mosque is situated on the north side of the so-called basilica A, the basilica of the Holy Cross, one of the four big churches in Resafa[5]. This church, built in the sixth century and in use until the Mongol invasion in the middle of the 13th century, was the center of the pilgrimage to the tomb of Saint Sergius, who also has, even today, a certain importance for Muslims. The internal connection between the church and the mosque indicated this pecularity from the beginning.

The excavation revealed on the northside of the basilica a once rectangular courtyard, surrounded on three sides by a peristyle, which was used for the ceremonies of the pilgrims. After the destruction of its northside, caused by earthquakes or erosion from below, its importance for the area of the mosque and the church we have to explain later, a part of the courtyard became part of the south *riwāq*. Additionally, the former north peristyle was changed into the middle *riwāq* of the three-*riwāq* wide prayer hall of the mosque. To the north, the prayer hall is annexed to the courtyard of the mosque.

The exterior walls of the prayer hall, consisting of local white gypsum, are still standing, but the condition of the walls surrounding the courtyard are much worse due to underground movement. In part they are not higher than 30 cm and different phases and repairs, mainly made from mud bricks, are visible. An explanation for the obvious differences was found by excavating the ground plan of the courtyard. The courtyard was planned as a yard, surrounded on three sides by one-naved *riwāq* halls. The foundations are *in situ* and well made on the east and the west sides. On the north side they are poorer in quality and partly missing. All these observations indicate that the upper structure had never been finished.

The prayer hall measures north-south nearly 21 m and east-west about 40 m[6]. The courtyard, with the same width, has a length of approximately 35 m. The building was entered on the west and east sides; the southern doors open on to the prayer hall and the northern ones to the courtyard. The large opening in the southeast corner allowed access to three more rooms, probably used by the caliph and his court. Formerly these rooms were part of the northern courtyard of the church, as we have seen already. The main entrance of the mosque, planned on the north side of the courtyard, was never finished. Although the upper parts of the internal structure of the prayerhall are missing, the whole building is ransacked, the foundations, still *in situ*, reveal the former plan: the qibla *riwāq* was a hall opening towards the courtyard and divided into three naves, each six meters

---

5 . T. Ulbert, *Resafa II. Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiupolis* (Mainz, 1986).

6 . For the first presentation of the excavations in the mosque, see D. Sack, "Das islamische Resafa", *Bericht über die 33. Tagung für Ausgrabungswissenschaft und Bauforschung, 30.Mai bis 3.Juni 1984 in Trier*, Karlsruhe 1984: 38-41

wide, parallel to the *qibla*. The three subdividing arcades were supported by a system of pillars and columns. The middle was accentuated by three pairs of pillars, the fictitious transept, followed on each side by two columns, one pillar and a half-pillar as a link to the outer wall. The inner structure consisted totally of reused material and the chosen material underlined the rotation of columns and pillars. The pillars, made like the walls of white gypsum from the quarries outside the city, were followed by rose-colored columns, made from shell-lime-stone, a material which is found in other important buildings in the city.

The *qibla* wall contains two *mihrāb* niches, a door serving as the connection to the north yard of the basilica A and nine windows in the upper part of the wall; the final corniche of the south wall still partly exists. We thus know the height of the building: it measured 7.20 m from the doorstep to the top of the corniche. The position of the two *mihrāb* niches, bonded in the *qibla* wall - the oldest, unchanged part of the mosque - is conspicuous. The prayer niches do not have any relation to the main axes of the building. Furthermore, the central axis of the prayer hall reaches the *qibla* wall exactly between the main *mihrāb* and the *minbar*. The stone *minbar* now to be seen replaces an earlier, wooden one. This *minbar* was more slender and higher than the stone *minbar*, revealed by two holes up on the wall next to the main *mihrāb*. This observation is contrary to the theory that postulated that the early *minbars* were normally very low[7]. We are faced with the fact that a high *minbar*, maybe crowned with a baldachin, was used in Rusāfat Hishām. This could coincide with an observation of Hans-Caspar von Bothmer, who had presented a beautiful illuminated Qur'ān manuscript dated presumably to the time of al-Walid I. The Qur'ān belongs to a group of manuscripts found during the restoration of the roof of the great mosque at San'ā'. The cover sheets show two different idealised mosques. One of them, comparable with the Umayyad mosque in Damascus, shows a high *minbar* as well[8].

The excavation of the mosque revealed that the building passed through three main phases. First, the mosque with a three-nave deep prayer hall and a courtyard surrounded by a one-nave deep *riwāq* was planned and partly built under Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik. He may have given the commission to construct the mosque when he was still prince. We know that Hishām was in Rusāfa when he received his nomination as caliph[9]. It cannot be decided, if later disinterest by the caliph, probably when he built Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqī, or only the problems in the characteristics of the foundation, or both, resulted in the first change of the plan. Anyhow, the foundations of the courtyard *riwāq* are *in situ*, but the *riwāq*

---

7 . C.H. Becker, *Die Kanzel im Kultus des Islam, Islamstudien I* (Leipzig, 1924). EI', 3 (1936): 575-577, s.v. "Minbar" (E. Diez).

8 . H. C. Graf von Bothmer, *Architekturbilder im Koran. Eine Prachthandschrift der Umayyadenzeit aus dem Yemen*, Bruckmanns Pantheon 45 (1987): 4-20.

9 . See note 2.

itself was never built. Only the prayer hall, presumably covered with a three-bayed cross-beam roof, and the courtyard surrounded by a simple wall, which in the middle opened to the north, were in use into the early Abbasid times. The coins show a range from the end of the first/seventh century to 133/750 and 136/753[10]. The planning and the first construction-phase is thus Ia and the finishing of the prayer hall and the courtyard-walls phase Ib.

Later, the excavation revealed that the phase II showed restorations of the courtyard walls and in the prayer hall. These restorations show that the problems with the foundation still existed. The east wall of the courtyard was repaired by building up a new wall with half-pillars of gypsum filled with walls made from a mixture of claybricks and small stones on the top of the first foundation. The north wall was closed by including a water basin installed in the place and with the material of the planned main entrance. In the prayer hall, mainly the eastern part of the south arcade needed to be restored. Here a column and a pillar were slipped off from their foundations, probably even without destroying the arcades, when the foundation moved again. Perhaps the *qibla riwāq* was covered then with a flat roof. At the same time the stone *minbar*, replacing the wooden predecessor, and the single room in the southeast corner of the *qibla riwāq*, both made from white gypsum, were installed. Before erecting the single room, the connection to the adjoining rooms was closed. We assume that from this time on the single room was used for the sovereign cult. The architecture of the stone *minbar* and the single room, respectively, is not expressive. Therefore we have to look for other possibilities to date the restoration phase. First, the sources tell us that at the beginning of the 10th century there was an invasion of the Banū al-Asbagh, and that "they destroyed the mosque". We do not know details of these events, only that shortly after the invasion Rusāfa became a flourishing metropolis again[11]. On the other hand, a restoration-phase is noticable in the basilica A. Here the apse was restored, after its destruction; the apse had moved when an underground doline collapsed. The apse was then covered with a stucco frieze, dating perhaps to the time of al-Mu'tasim at the end of the 830s as Michael Meinecke has explained in detail.

At least by the Ayyubid period, a smaller, three-aisled prayer room was built in the northwest of the courtyard of the mosque, instead of a restoration of the prayer hall again. From its ground plan this building could be a *mashhad* showing the continuity of pilgrimage here until the Middle Ages. The building is dated by coins[12].

---

10. See note 4.

11. EI¹. 3, (1936): 1280 s.v. "al-Rusāfa" (E. Honigmann); see also note 2.

12. See note 4.

The Friday mosque at Rusāfat Hishām follows the tradition of the transept type, here constructed as a fictitious transept, in consequence of the uncertain foundation. The mosque at Rusāfa is comparable with the mosques of Damascus and Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqī, but its throughgoing arcades already show in the Umayyad period further development, that can be studied in monuments, like Harrān, al-Raqqa, Busrā and perhaps Dar'ā built in the Middle Ages during the renaissance of Umayyad forms[13].

---

13 . The publication of the results of the excavation are in preparation: D. Sack, *Resafa IV, Die Grosse Moschee in Resafa-Rusāfat Hishām*, with contributions by L. Ilisch (coins), B. Kellner-Heinkele (sources), N. Logar (ceramics and glass-finds).
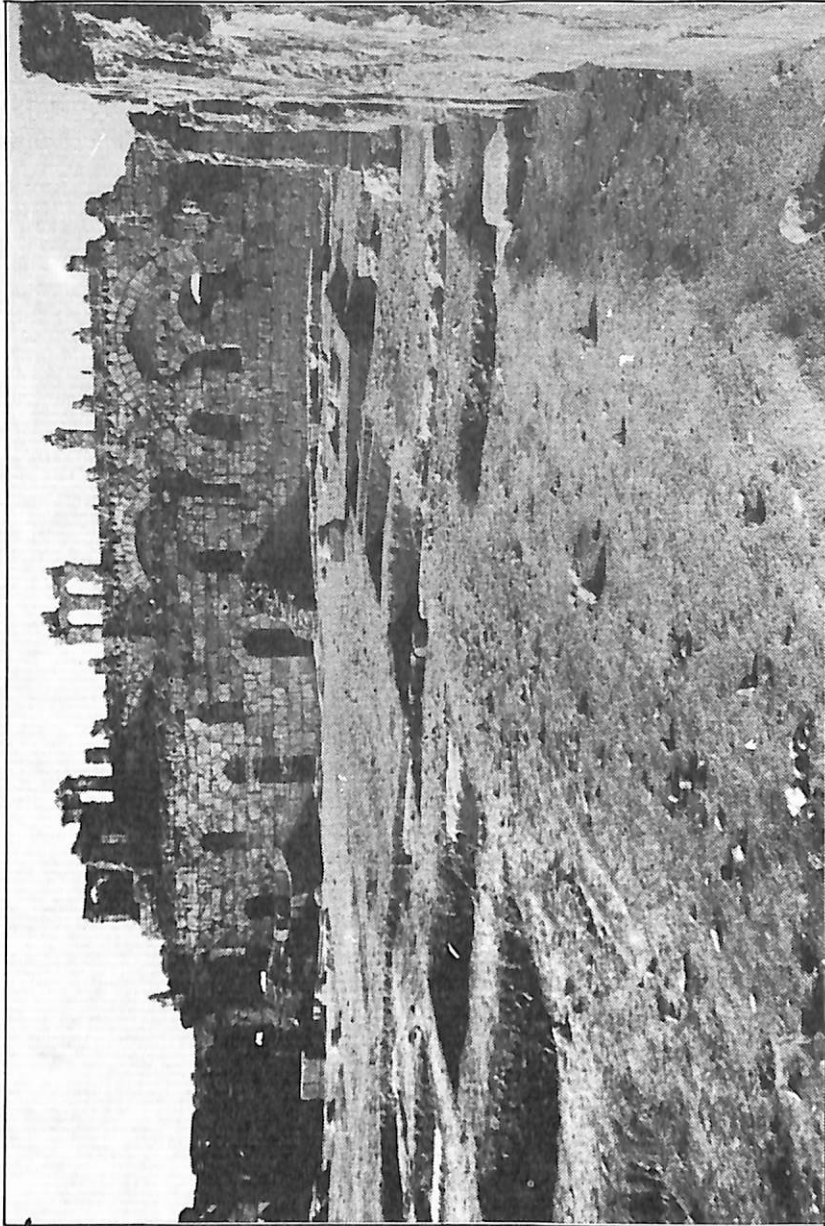
1.1   View from the northwest towards the qibla-wall.

1.2 Single room, incorporated in the southeast corner of the qibla-riwāq, Abbasid period.
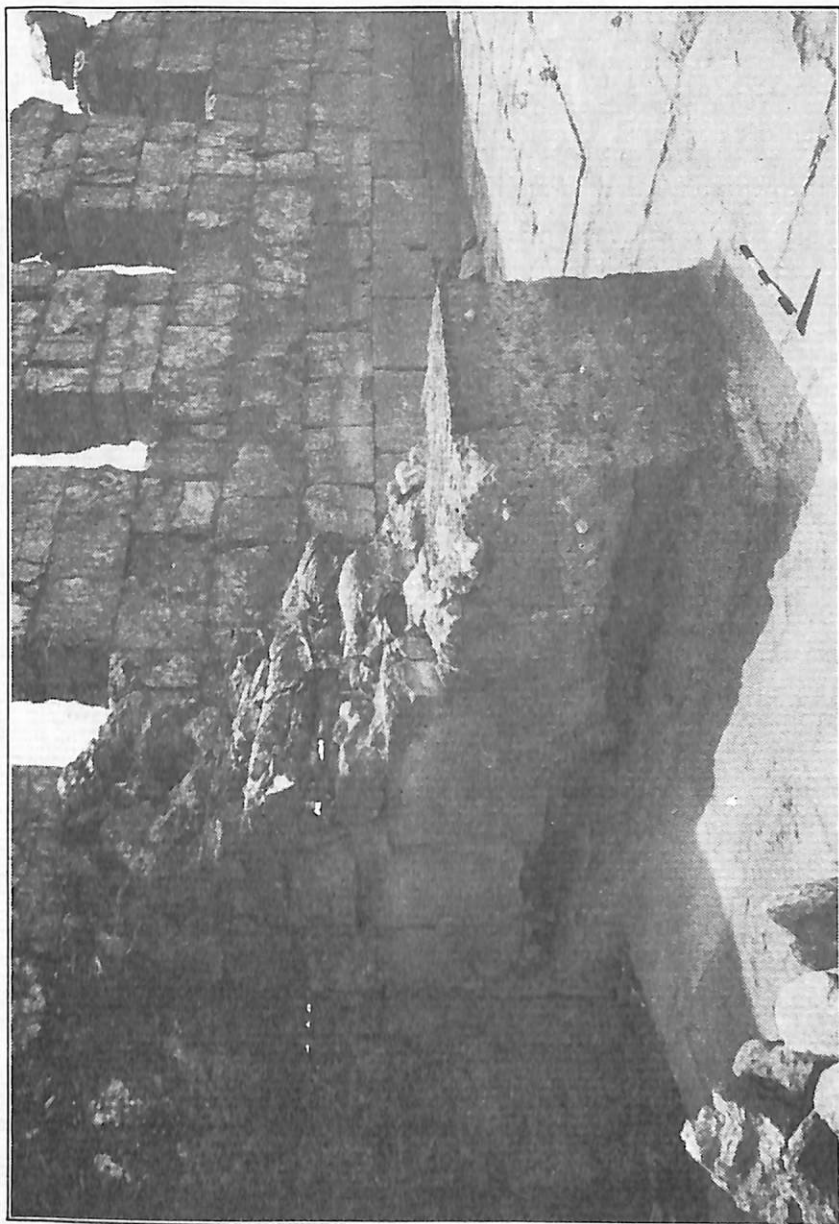
1.3 Stone-minbar, Abbasid period.
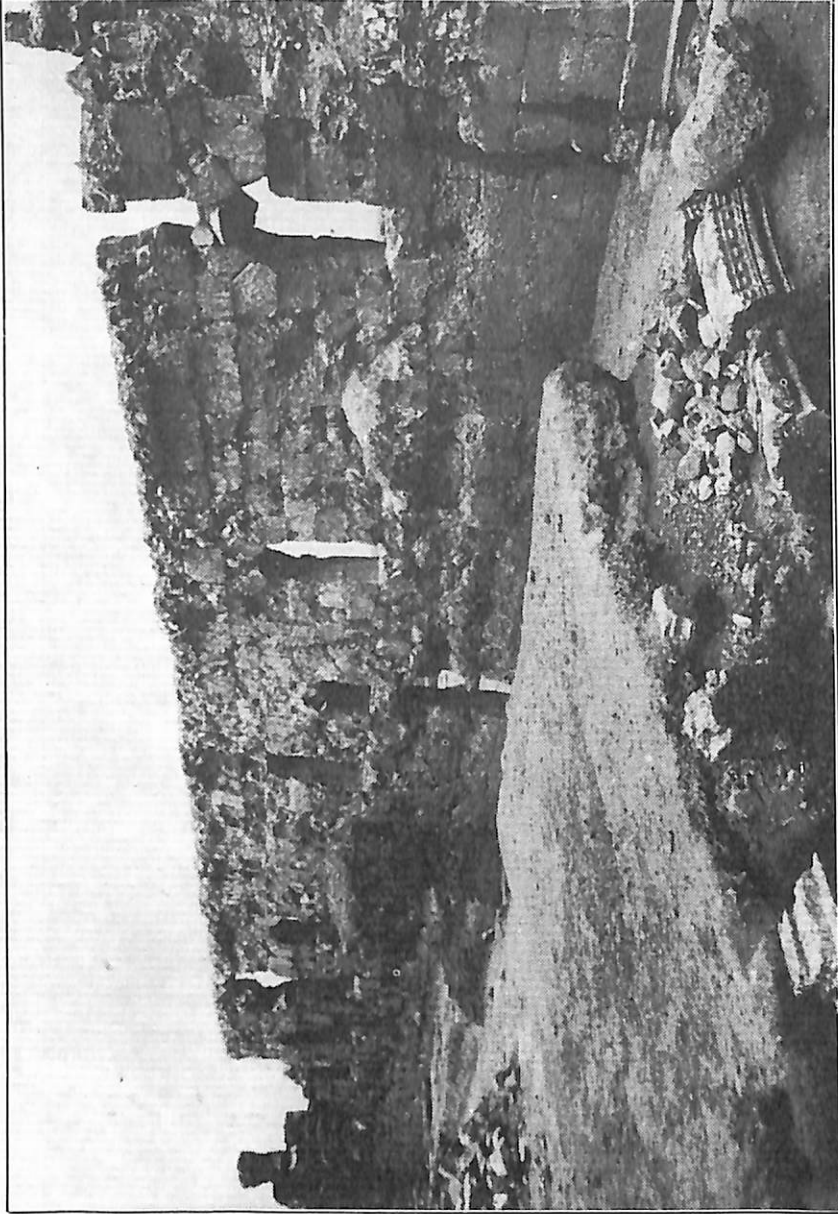
2.1   View from the southeast to the backside of the qibla-wall and the miḥrāb-niches.
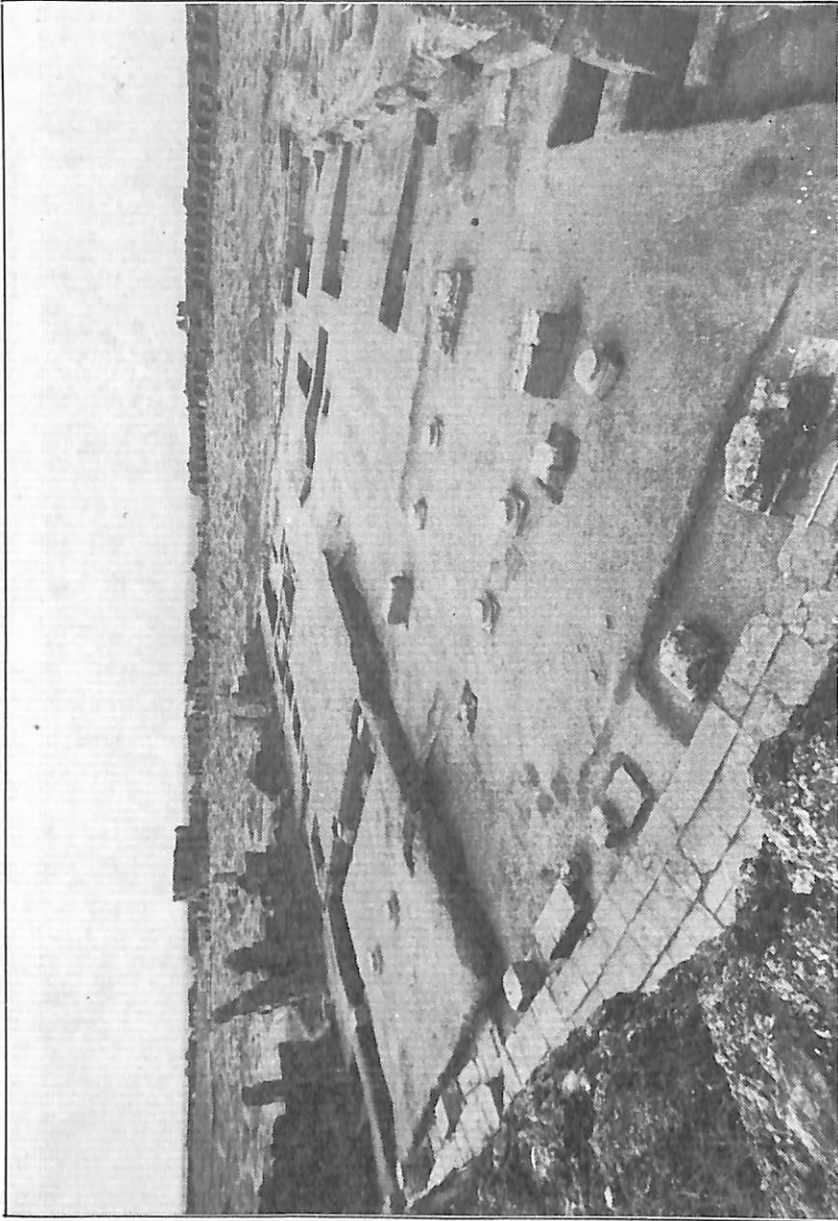
2.2 View from the southeast into the qibla-riwāq and the attached courtyard (photograph-Stefan Gabriel, Munich).
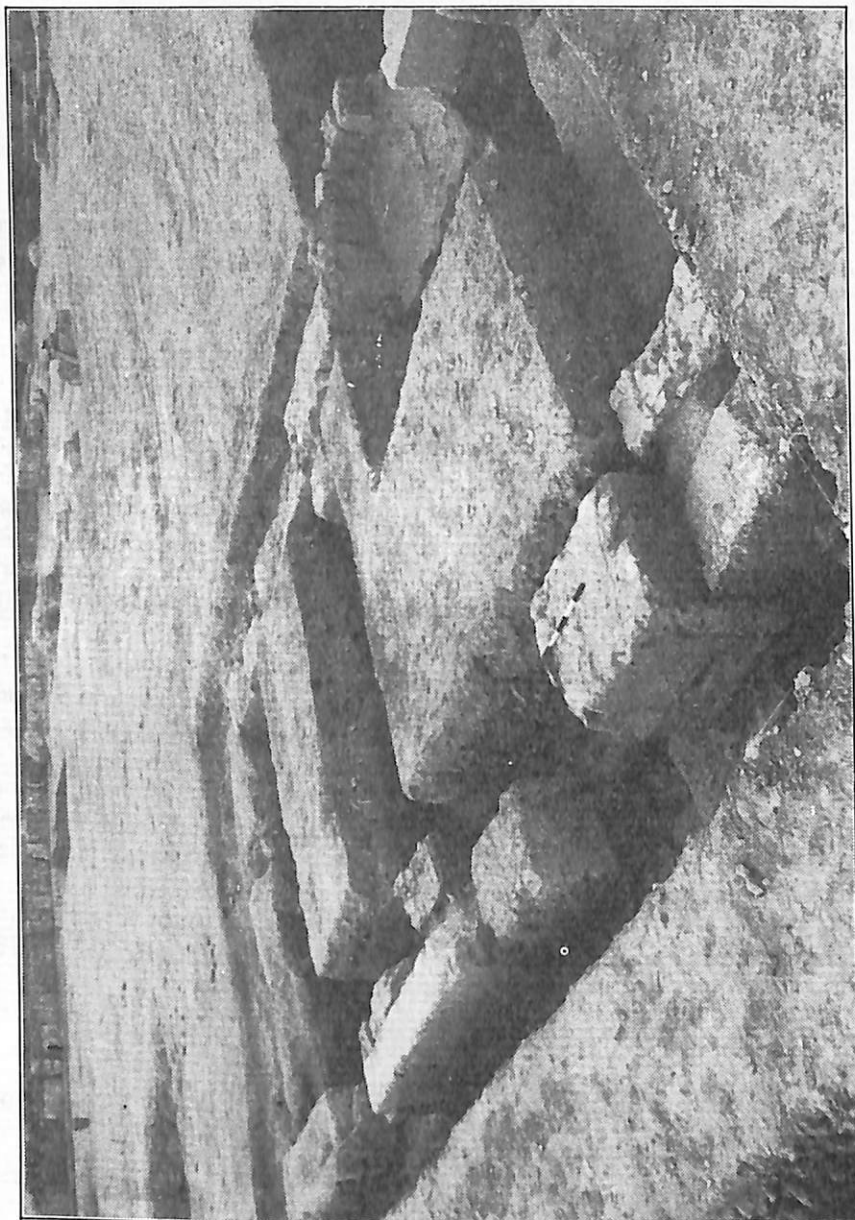
2.3   View from the northwest to the small mosque, Ayyubid period.

Madīnat al-Fār/Hisn Maslama – First Archaeological Soundings at the Site and the History of an Umayyad Domain in Abbasid Times

Claus-Peter Haase*

1. Introduction

One very ancient major route from the middle Euphrates to the north into Anatolia and the north Iranian and Caucasian regions leads along the Balīkh River. From al-Raqqa or its pre-Islamic forerunners at the junction of the Euphrates with this eastern tributary, the road reached Harrān, the next large ancient city, having crossed an east-west route from Mosul-Nasībīn-Ras al-'Ayn in between. Along the river several sites from various periods have been located and surveyed by the Dutch archaeological team at Tell Hammām Turkumān, but apparently only a few of them were occupied for a long period of time. Problems in the utilization of water or other reasons for frequent abandonment seem to be long standing in this region, the Jazīra, where the population has changed often and nomadism has left enduring placenames in various areas. This region around al-Raqqa is called Diyār Mudar for one of their great tribal groups, and more to the north is the Diyār Rabī'a, associated with some famous poems about their battle "days", the *ayyām,* between the Banū Qays and Banū Taghlib, both before and after the rise of Islam[1]. Certainly the route was in use in Umayyad times for incursions into the Armenian and Anatolian provinces of the Byzantine Empire, and in early Abbasid times it led into the provinces bordering the Byzantine Empire *(al-Thughūr).* The early Arab historians and geographers mention two stations on the three-day journey between Harrān and al-Raqqa: Bājarwān at a distance of three *farsakhs* (15-18 km) and Tall Mahre, an additional seven *farsakhs.* From al-Raqqa to Ras al-'Ayn and Nasībīn/Nisibis there seems to have been a bifurcation somewhere after Bājarwān; from there it was seven *farsakhs* to Hisn Maslama, from Hisn Maslama to Jārūd six *farsakhs,* and Jārūd to Ras al-'Ayn four *farsakhs*[2]. The distances are very uneven and do not appear to pertain to road stations but to settlements that may have been founded for other reasons.

---

* University of Kiel, Germany.

1. Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, (d. 356/967), *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Būlāq, 1868), 11, 62. Qudāma b. Ja'far, (d. 320/931), *Kitāb al-Kharāj,* ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1889): 228f.

2. Ibn Khurradādhbih, Abū al-Qāsim 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 300/911), *Kitāb al-Masā-lik wa-al-Mamālik,* ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1889): 69, 95, 215. Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Kitāb al-Kharāj:* 215 (counting in farsakh), 228f (counting in stations). Ibn Hawqal, Abū al-Qāsim b. 'Alī al-Nasībī, *Kitāb Sūrat al-Ard,* 2nd ed. by J. H. Kramers (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1938-1939), 210, 229, trans. by J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet, *Configuration de la Terre* (Beirut and Paris, 1964): 204, 224. Compare R. Dussaud, *Topographie de la Syrie* (Paris, 1927): 495, 521, with a vague location.

At the distance indicated for Bājarwān there are several ruined sites suitable for identification: Tall Mahre, which according to Yāqūt was also called Tall Bahre and Tall Bulaykh[3], might be at Tall Shaykh Hasan, judging by the distance. Jārūd, I shall elsewhere propose, may be the ruins now called Kharāb Sayyar. As for Hisn Maslama, the first to propose an identification with the site of Madinat al-Fār, east of Hammām Turkumān and about six km east of the Balīkh River, was 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Ayyash, quoting the description of Yāqūt[4]. He was an authority of this region, as is now Mustafa Hassun, the retired director of the al-Raqqa Museum, who insisted on the same identification of Hisn Maslama. He finally drew the attention of archaeologists to this place, and in 1981 Nassib Salibi and Murhaf al-Khalaf of the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities started work at Madinat al-Fār for two short campaigns.

2. The Site

Seventy-two km north of al-Raqqa and four km east of Hammām Turkumān, the site is nearly one and a half km in length and nine hundred m in width (Fig. 1). It is situated in a plain, sloping very gently down from the northern hills along the east-west route from Rās al-'Ayn. From the east a wadi approaches the site; a second, perhaps more recent and smaller wadi enters the site at the division between a northern and a more extended southern compound. On older aerial photographs a canal can be recognized coming from the west and, in parts still visible, from the Balīkh River. Its entrance into the site can not be discerned anymore due to recent agriculture around the site. On approaching, the ruins are recognizable in the plain as a regular elevation of ramparts rising up to three and four meters. In the north a castra-like square of about three hundred square meters shows ten regularly spaced elevations in its ramparts on the west, north and east sides. The southern compound, with an extension by two angles pro-truding in sequence on the west side and a long one on the east side closes itself in a pointed form at the south and appears somewhat irregularly shaped. The ramparts or walls here are either only partially preserved or were never finished. Between these two north-south oriented compounds is a rectangular enclosure slightly turned out of that orientation. Whereas in the north the surface shows a dense concentration of small, regularly spaced hills and depressions, which may be interpreted as walls and courts of rather large building units, in the south these structures appear much less dense, but still show something like a north-south orientation. In the northern compound are also traces of a central north-south axis and in the middle of each of the ramparts or walls a higher elevation appears, probably indicating gates. The city walls here, as well as in the north parts in the

3 . Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866-1879), 1: 869.

4 . 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Ayyash, *al-Raqqa, Kubrā al-Muḍun al-Firātiya al-Qadīma* 1969. Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān* 2: 278.

extended compound, are surrounded by a moat and the supposed gates are preceded on the outside by small mounds, perhaps the remains of guard posts. Several traces of lower walls in the outskirts are still visible on the aerial photographs.

The Syrian excavations of 1981/1982, which concentrated on the northern compound, brought to light a splendidly preserved cistern with a pointed vault and two wall arches in brickwork, with an adjoining well, as described by Salibi[5]. The pottery and glass found in the fill and around the structure Salibi recognized as mostly early Abbasid in shape and technique, corresponding to the finds in the al-Raqqa palaces. He tends to see in some simpler forms examples of Umayyad pottery, but does not give comparative material. In the second campaign, Murhaf al-Khalaf detected another cistern more to the center of the northern compound. He also briefly investigated the northern ramparts, where he found the upper part of the city wall constructed of mudbrick.

3. Syro-German Soundings in 1987 and 1989

The German rescue excavations at the Abbasid palaces of al-Raqqa provided the opportunity to continue soundings at Madīnat al-Fār with a small Syro-German team led at first by the Director of Antiquities of the al-Raqqa province, Murhaf al-Khalaf, and then by the Syrian General Directorate of Antiquities represented again by Nassib Salibi and the Director of the Islamic excavations at al-Raqqa, Michael Meinecke[6]. The aims were to clarify the stratigraphy and to find archaeological support for its identification with Hisn Maslama. After two seasons with seven soundings its identification still remains an open question, but the finds and results achieved so far are impressive enough to support further work at this important site of exclusively Islamic date.

During the short first season, soundings 1 and 3 were intended to give comparable material for the stratigraphy and chronology of the central and northern compounds. In the second season, sounding 5 was to add a stratigraphic sample from the southern part. Anticipating the results here, the whole site appears even more coherent from the stratigraphic data and the material finds than the surface leads one to believe. The threefold division of the site with its distinctive circumference is therefore probably to be interpreted not as the product of subsequent urban development but rather as contemporary, but structurally different units.

---

5 . Nassib Salibi, "al-Tanqīb fi Madīnat al-Fār Hisn Maslama 1981", *Les Annales Archeologiques Arabes Syriennes* 33 (1983: 69-88.

6 . Besides the directors, participants of the soundings were Dr Karin Bartl/Berlin, Dr Sophie Berthier/Damascus. Matthias Frantze/Bonn, Dr Claus-Peter Haase/Kiel, Norbert Hagen/Berlin, Muhammad Mektash/al-Raqqa, Nassib Salibi/Damascus, Dr Cristina Tonghini/London and Silke Zwingmann/Hamburg.

Sounding 2 showed the northern wall of an open cistern in the northwest corner of the settlement and the adjoining clearance basin; the connecting pipe and filling spout had unfortunately been destroyed earlier. The walls showed a peculiarity that recurs in several other cases on the site; they were made of various types of stone with much mortar: pebbles, in part of a soft limestone found in a nearby quarry, and large roughly cut ashlars of limestone, apparently in secondary use. The greyish waterproof coating inside, similar to the one in the vaulted cistern, showed what the structure was used for.

A complete and altogether simple stratigraphy was revealed in soundings 1, 5 and 6, the latter in the northern part of the northern compound. To judge from its overall similar appearance, the whole site is evidently of Islamic date only, and in these places shows two major occupation levels with few intermediate or later destruction phases, about 1.5 m deep in total from the surface. In soundings 3 and 4 in the northern compound, after investigation of the corresponding occupation levels, there remains a slight possibility of hidden structures in the architectural remains. Sounding 7 gave spectacular insight into the complex fabric of the city wall with a tower.

The first occupation level was marked mainly by courtyard floors paved with bricks. In sounding 1 these were connected to simple walls of stamped mud with a plaster coating, which do not as yet reveal what type of building it is. The pavement apparently extended widely, as parts of it are visible in various spots on the surface, and it had been repaired (Fig. 2, Pl. 1). In sounding 4 its extension over the whole uncovered area is remarkable; here it is connected to a well inside a small brick *hammām*. The well with a large pierced stone on top was apparently earlier than the building, the small foundation of which lies on the brick pavement; its walls and banks also show reused materials from other structures (Pl. 2). Along the east side of this building is a row of diagonally cut postholes, perhaps closed by brick fragments later on, when the much worn pavement was partly repaired.

More interesting is the pavement in sounding 6, revealing three areas of diagonally set bricks, bordered by one orthogonal area comparable to the floor in the mosque at al-Raqqa (Fig. 3, Pl. 3). Here the distinction between primary and secondary occupation is very clear: the primary construction shows the brick pavement over the whole excavated area of 10 x 5 m, together with very rudimentary remains of a wall or an arcade. This was destroyed except for the lowest layer of thin, soft limestone slabs (similar to one reused in the *hammām* in sounding 4). Directly above it quite different walls of stamped mud, standing up to a height of about 1.40 m belong to a second level of occupation, apparently not after a long interval (Fig. 4, Pl. 4). Whereas this secondary kitchen-room with a *tannur* and a staircase of mudbricks built against two great roughly hewn slabs of limestone suggests rather humble circumstances, the extended and in most parts carefully laid pavement, which we cannot as yet define as an architectural unit because of its extent, gives the impression of stately architecture, fitting the sense

of harmonious proportions already noticed in the vaulted cistern. We gained the impression that it must have been the architecture with these paved floors that shaped the whole northern compound in its regular and systematized lay out, and that the secondary occupation narrowed it down without altering the general structure. This gives a more official character to the northern compound, housing cisterns and other means for water distribution regulated by the governor. Here perhaps also other official buildings are to be expected. Its architectural units seem to be enclosed by extended walls, two examples of which were found in soundings 3 and 4. They consist of incoherent, rapidly thrown together material like pebbles and roughly cut stone slabs, bricks and brick fragments, and mud-bricks set into stamped mud. Perhaps they had been repaired, and in any case they represent a peculiar type of shell wall not common in this region. The structures in the central (no. 1) and the southern (no. 5) compound are not yet defined. Nonetheless, in both places the carefully elaborated stratigraphy shows two occupation levels. Whereas the primary one in sounding 1 is to be connected to the extended pavement levels in the north, in no. 5 there seems to have existed only stamped mud floors and walls, but apparently on a large scale. The orthogonal orientation, parallel to the structures in the north and the careful plastering, together with the artifacts, associate this building with those in the north. Two small walls built of brick fragments were found, parallel with and very close to each other; they look similar to the fabric of the *hammām* walls from the second level of occupation in no. 4.

At least two phases of construction and a peculiar mixture of building materials are also recognizable in the city wall in the north (no. 7) (Fig. 5). On top of a foundation of pebble stones and some stamped mud the wall consisted of four brick layers with mud mortar, above which the actual defence wall was erected of large mudbricks protruding over the baked bricks of the foundation and giving the wall a width of ca 2.50 m. Towards the east, instead of the bricks and two layers of mudbricks three great, carefully hewn limestone slabs were found. They probably indicate that a gate is nearby; the mound protruding externally and upwards at the middle of the ramparts also suggests this and signals one or two towers. The cut reveals that this structure in its preserved elevation is not bonded in with the wall but only attached to it, although it rests on the same kind of pebble foundations which describe a rectangular projection more than 3 m from the wall. It consists of stamped mud up to a height of nearly 2 m and within it a second layer of pebbles. On top an additional 0.70 m of mudbricks are visible in the cut. Many finds of ceramics, coins and bones at the inside wall under mud fill suggest repeated restorations of the structure.

The architectural evidence does not provide a secure date for all of the layers. This type of mixed building material has Abbasid as well as Umayyad parallels, although no example like it had so far come to light in al-Raqqa, except for the foundation of the city gates. In the debris were found several pieces of brick-work with equally thick layers of mortar and bricks, which apparently do not occur in

Abbasid structures, but so far we have not found it in walls, nor have we found evidence for a wall of alternating layers of brick and limestone fabric, although the slabs in no. 6 may be the remnants of such a wall.

The pottery and glass fragments furnish many definitely early Abbasid forms and fabrics parallel or comparable to materials such as that recently found in al-Raqqa/Tall Aswad. There are very few fragments of fine glazed Samarra ware, many more of the types of glazed ware with splash design, recently called the "yellow glaze family" by Oliver Watson and apparently locally produced, some molded fragments and even some with painted designs and inscriptions like the one already described by Salibi. I do not remember having seen any "enamelled" glazes or incised ware of the later type *(laqābī)*. Small stucco fragments on the surface also show parallels to the rich finds in al-Raqqa, as mentioned in the paper by Meinecke. In a sort of dust-hole in sounding 3 we found a few pottery fragments with peculiar simple decorations and very small bricks (13 x 13 cm), which will have to be studied when more of this kind comes to light[7].

One find in a stratigraphic context seems to give a postquem date of the 2nd-3nd/7th-9th centuries for the brick pavements, at least in their repaired state. Under the floors in sounding 1 Sophie Berthier found a silver ring with a carneol inscribed in reversed letters: the Kufic ductus is elegant, slightly rounded and can be read as "Sawāda 'abd Allah" – "Sawāda the servant of God", or – a bit more sophisticated, as it could well represent an amulet – "sawāduhu 'ind Allah" – "his fertile land may rest (in the hands of) God". Sawāda is the name of several warriors on the eastern frontier in the 8th century[8], and is not uncommon; on the

---

7. These preliminary descriptions of the small finds are partly based on the observations made by the specialists Oliver Watson and Alastair Northedge (ceramics), Muhammad al-Khouli and Stephan Heidemann (coins). The information on the sounding 1 and 2 is due to the preliminary report by Sophie Berthier, who was in charge of the work there, on sounding 5 by Karin Barti, who also studied extensively the ceramics and glass fragments, on 6 by Nassib Salibi and on 7 by Muhammad Mektash. Generally the finds were discussed among the team as well as with the colleagues in the al-Raqqa excavations.

8. Compare Sawāda b. 'Abd Allah al-Salūlī, a poet during the campaigns of Qutayba in eastern Iran; al-Tabarī, Muhammad b. Jarīr, (d. 310/923), *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1879-1901), II: 1279 for 96/714-715, a bit too early for this ring, as also is the case with Sawāda b. 'Ubayd Allāh al-Numayrī, who was sent to the east by 'Abd al-Malik in 72/691, al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, II: 832. Sawāda b. 'Abd al-Hamīd al-Hujjāfi in the province Armīnīyā, al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, III: 1408 for 237/851-852; Sawāda b. Sarīj was slain in the east in 128/745-746, al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, II: 1925; Sawāda b. 'Amr al-Sulamī was a *rāwī* in 158/774-775, al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, III, 410. For the form of the ring and the inscription see Derek J. Content, ed. *Islamic Rings and Gems, the Benjamin Zucker Collection* (London, 1987). p. 35, no. 5 "Ahmadu bnu 'Abd Allah.

other hand the designation "sawad" applies to any watered and fertile land, especially to regions in Iraq, and more precisely around Kūfa and Wāsit, traditionally bearing this name.

4. Archaeological Data and the Sources for Hisn Maslama

Madīnat al-Fār is not a site of purely Umayyad date, but is it, by the archaeological finds, purely Abbasid? The dating of some of the coins found in the strata helped to establish a connection with the original aim of our work. Among about thirty identifiable coins only two from the surface were Ayyubid and Zengid, but at least four Umayyad ones came from defined stata. One late Umayyad coin came from the refill at the city wall (no. 7), another one from the small affluent basin (no. 2), and another broken "post-reform" piece came from the destruction level in no. 4.

It thus seems that Umayyad traces have been found on the site and that further consideration of the date is required. The period from late Umayyad to early Abbasid rule must not necessarily be marked by a cultural break and "turning point", evidenced by immediate stylistic changes. Especially in this region, the *Jazīra,* changes and political upheavals had already taken place under the last Umayyads in fights against their Kharijite and Khurasanian opponents, who were marauding over the countryside. On the other hand we may well assume that there were places that preserved Umayyad traditions for some time into the Abbasid period. Such traditions would of course be observable in the more expensive and longer lasting materials such as architecture and its ornaments, more than in perishable and easily lost objects like pottery and coins. Archaeologically this means, for example, that we should look for peculiarities in building techniques and forms of material that are comparable with identified Umayyad work. Unfortunately such secure comparisons are not yet possible due to lack of studies. Very generally we may point out, however, that the mixed material of walls in this form, for example, is not represented in Abbasid architecture of this area but rather matches the work observed in Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqī or even in the 'Ammān citadel in a more elaborated form.

Do the many surely Abbasid finds in Madīnat al-Fār hinder its identification as the Umayyad Hisn Maslama? The answer is no, because this is reported to have been one of the places where Umayyads were expressly allowed to stay on. Similar cases were described in 'Abd al-Mun'im Mājid's paper. Maslama, the son of the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, not his heir but a valiant general and governor with possessions in several places in northern Syria, died around 121/739[9]. His family was also respected by the Abbasids, who wanted to spare his grandson 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī from the massacre of the Umayyads in 132/750, but he fought

---

9 . There exists no study of his life so far; for the dates seo, for example, M. A. Shaban, *Islamic History, A.D. 600-750* (Cambridge, 1971): 136-144.

on until his death[10]. The Abbasid Caliph al-Mahdī is reported to have stayed in Hisn Maslama in 163/779-780[11], but one descendant of Maslama, Muhammad b. Yazīd al-Umawī, a poet, is mentioned as still residing there and bearing the *nisba* "al-Hisnī"[12]. After composing a polemical poem, he expected to be prosecuted by the Abbasid governor of Egypt and Syria in 211/826, 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir, mentioned in Najda Khammash's paper. In a vivid account in al-Isfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī* he sits in front of the gate of his *hisn* waiting for the Abbasid. The governor, however, seemed to not be too sure of the need to persecute him, and hearing of no preparations for a battle arrived there to be entertained with his troops at a banquet. We hear that Muhammad bred animals there; and in another report by al-Mas'ūdī he is mentioned as the best horse breeder of his time[13].

This fits the description of gardening and agriculture in Yāqūt's geography. I do not think that the early 13th century geographer had seen the place himself; for the Balikh region he otherwise quotes the travel account of al-Mu'tadid's expedition in 271/884-885 by Ahmad b. al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsī and may have used it anonymously in this case as well[14]. If so his description of only one cistern filled once a year by a canal and the small extension over 1 *jarīb* (about 1/3 hectare) for the place pertains to the situation at the end of the 9th century. As our Arab colleagues pointed out, the distance of the road and the length of the canal, 1.5 *farsakh* = about 7-8 km from the Balikh River[15], fit the site of Madīnat al-Fār. That only one rather large cistern is described and that the size of the *hisn* is given as much smaller than that of the northern compound may correspond to the reduced size of the structures in the secondary occupation level observed by us. In general the site kept its character as a fortified place, a *hisn*. So we are quite optimistic that further intensified archaeological work on the site will help us in identifying Umayyad structures and material finds there.

---

10 . Al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, 4: 93. He had fought for the Umayyads in the Jazīra against Abū Muslim as well as against the Abbasid general 'Abd Allāh b. Mansūr. See Mahbub/Agapius from Manbij, *Kitāb al-'Unwān*, ed. and trans, A. Vasiliev (Turnhout 1974 = *Patrologia Orientalis* 8/3): 535f, 530f.

11 . Al-Tabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, III: 498f.

12 . Al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghāni*, 11: 13f.

13 . Al-Mas'ūdī, Abū al-Hasan 'Alī b. al-Husayn, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Ma'ādin al-Jawhar*, ed. by Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille (Paris, 1861-1877), 8: 367f = ed. Pellat V, no. 3528, mentioned by al-Safadī, *al-Wāfi bi al-Wafayāt*, (Beirut), 5: 218f, but only as a poet.

14 . Yāqūt, *Mu'jām*, 2: 278, for Ahmad b. al-Tayyib see F. Rosenthal, *Ahmad ibn At-Tayyib As-Sarakhsi* (New Haven, 1943): 59f, idem, *History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1968): 174.

15 . In addition to the ancient Arab geographers see the abridgement of Yāqūt, *Marāsid al-Ittilā'* (Cairo, 1373/1954), I: 407, where the distance from the Balikh River is given as one mil only.

Plate I
Madinat al-Fār
Sounding 4
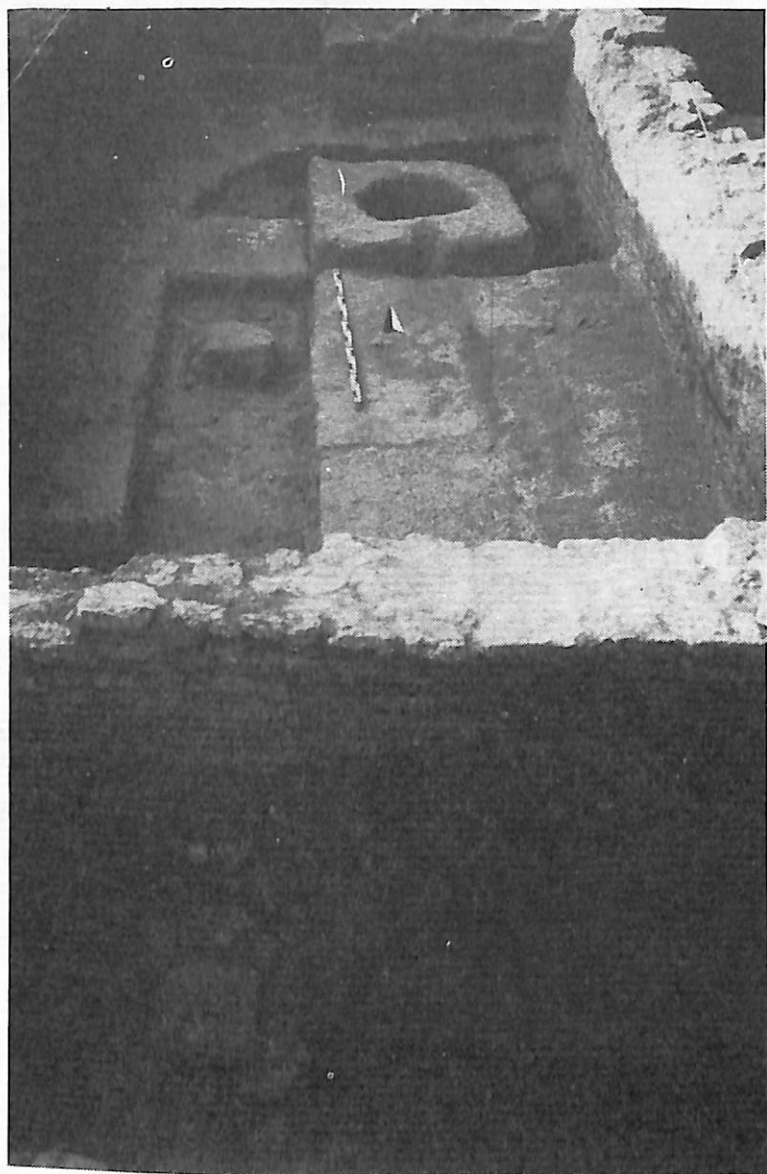
Plate II
Madinat al-Fār
Sounding 4
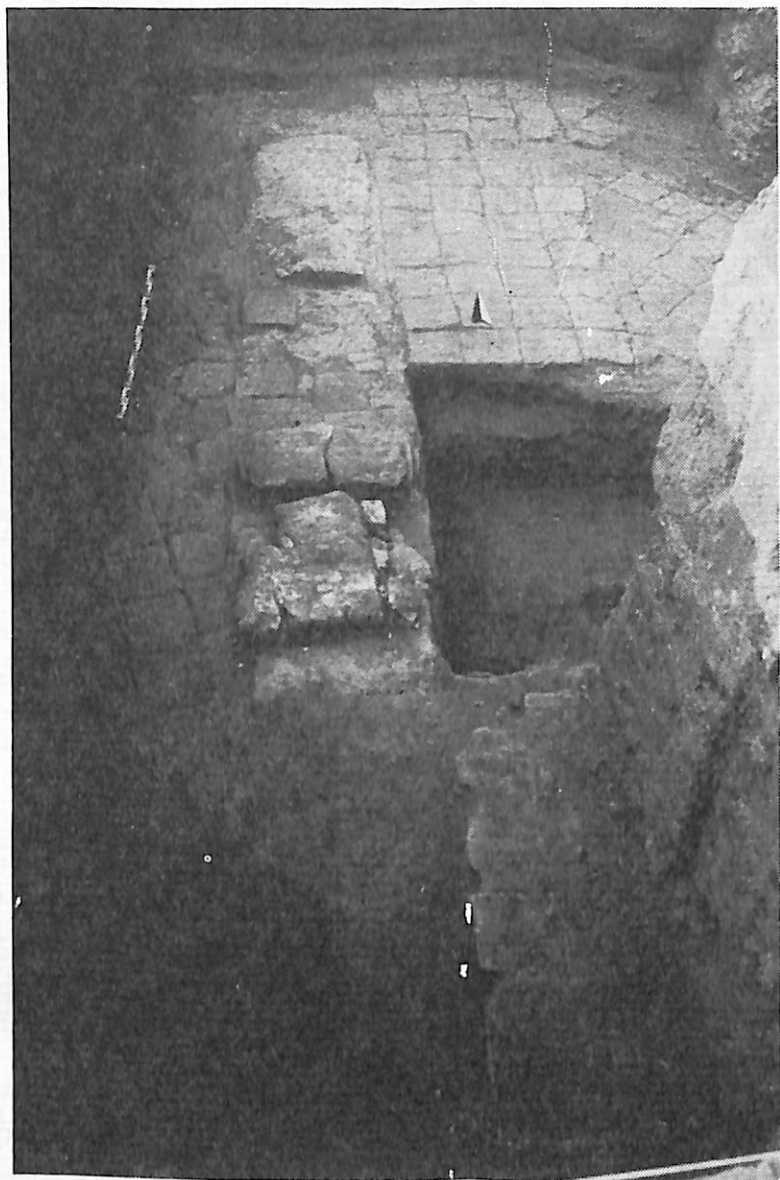
Plate III
Madinat al-Fār
Sounding 6
Level 1
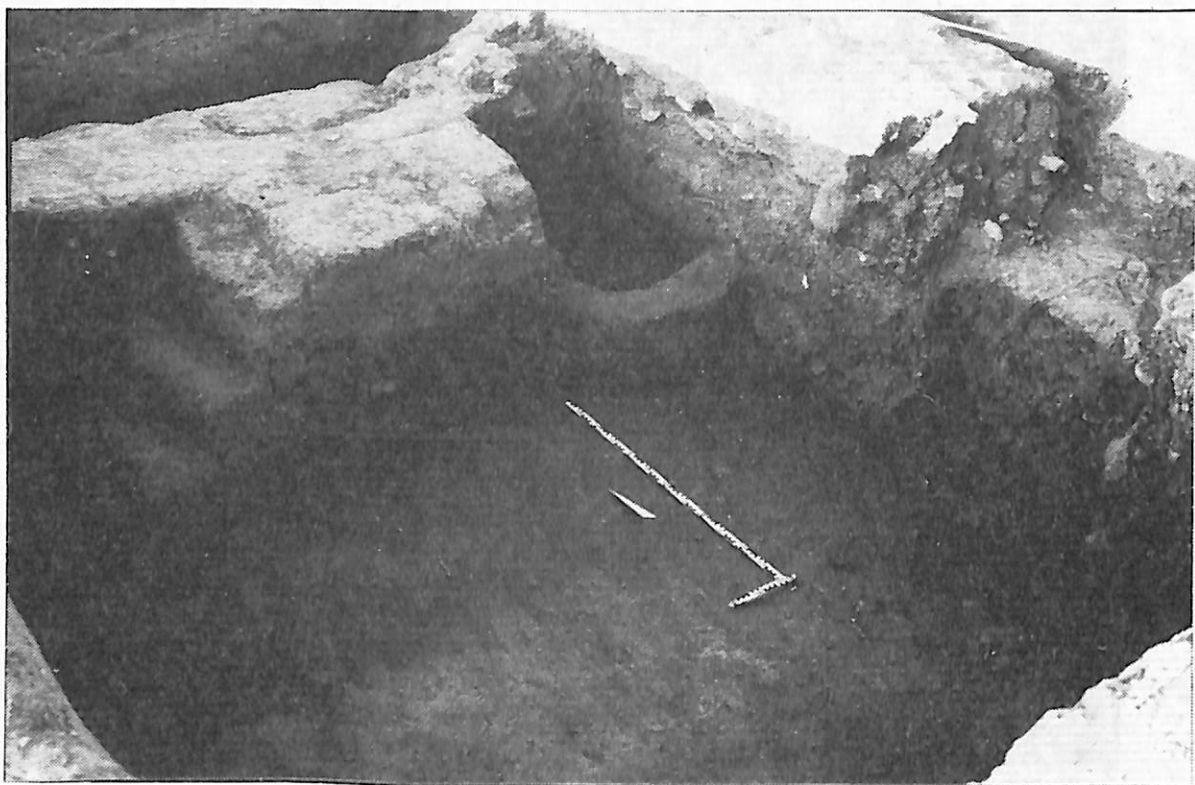
Plate IV
Madinat al-Fār
Sounding 6
Level 2
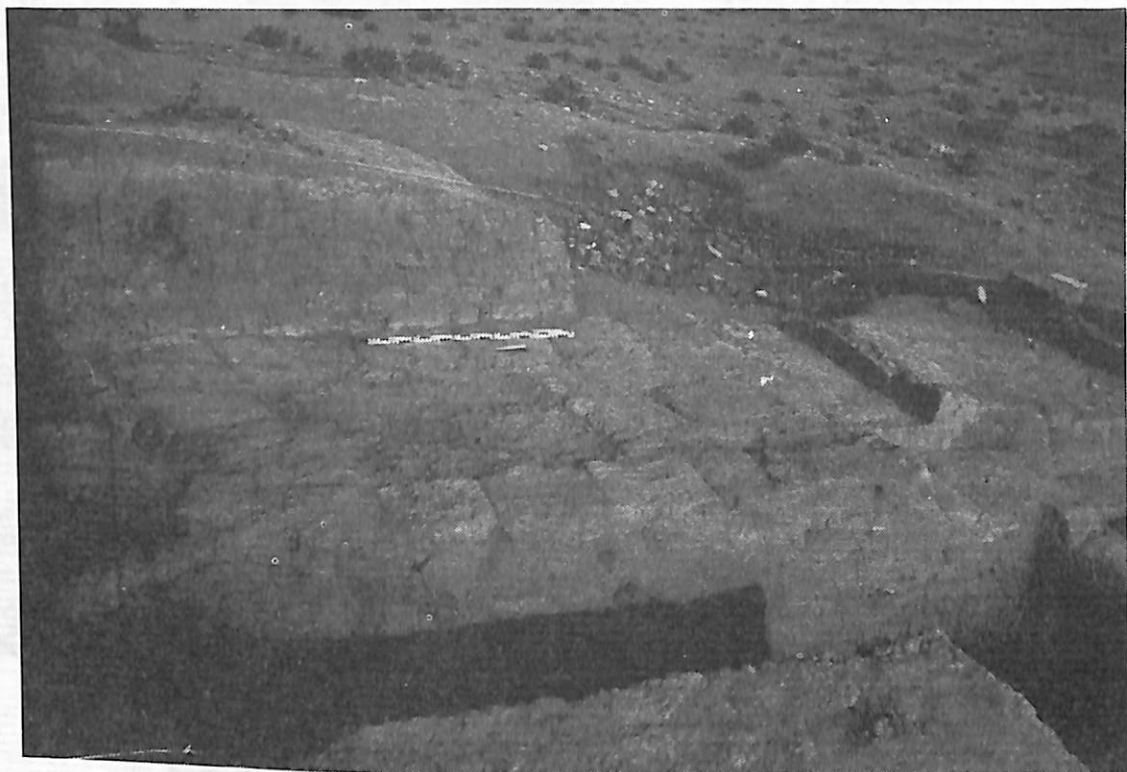
Plate V Madinat al-Fār Sounding 7 Tower of City wall
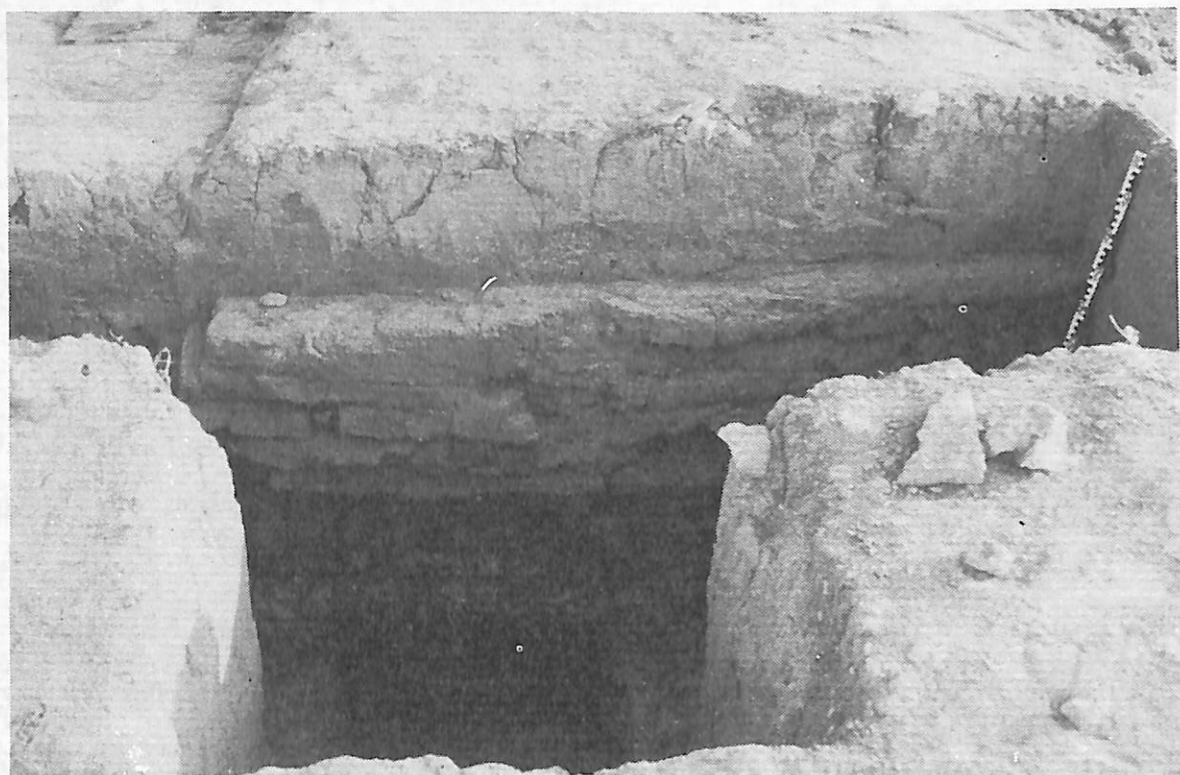
Plate VI Madinat al-Fār Sounding 7 City wall, inner Side.

MADĪNAT AL – FĀR   Topographical plan by Norbert Hagen (1988)

Fig. 1

MADINAT AL-FAR '89
SONDAGE 4
M 1:50
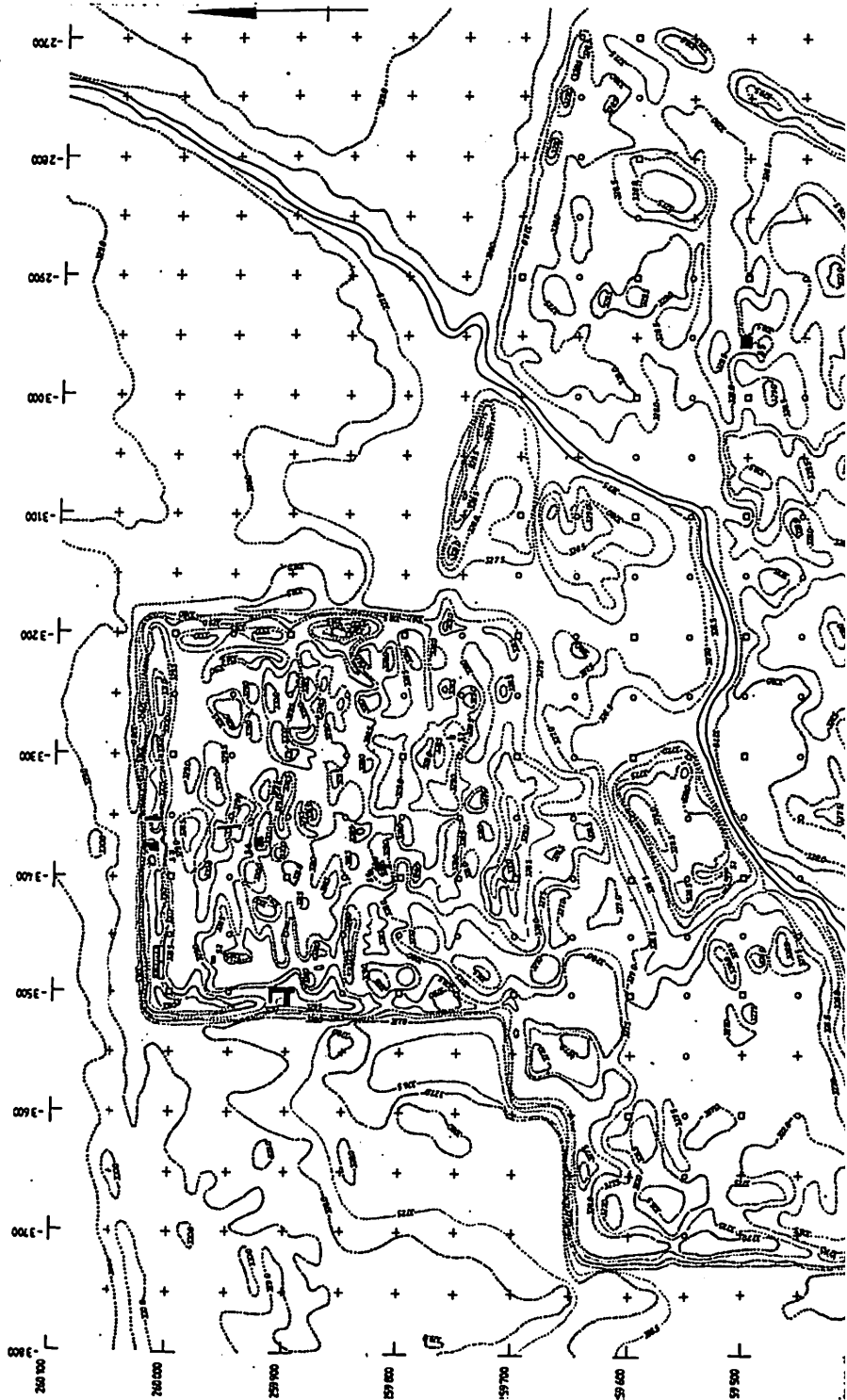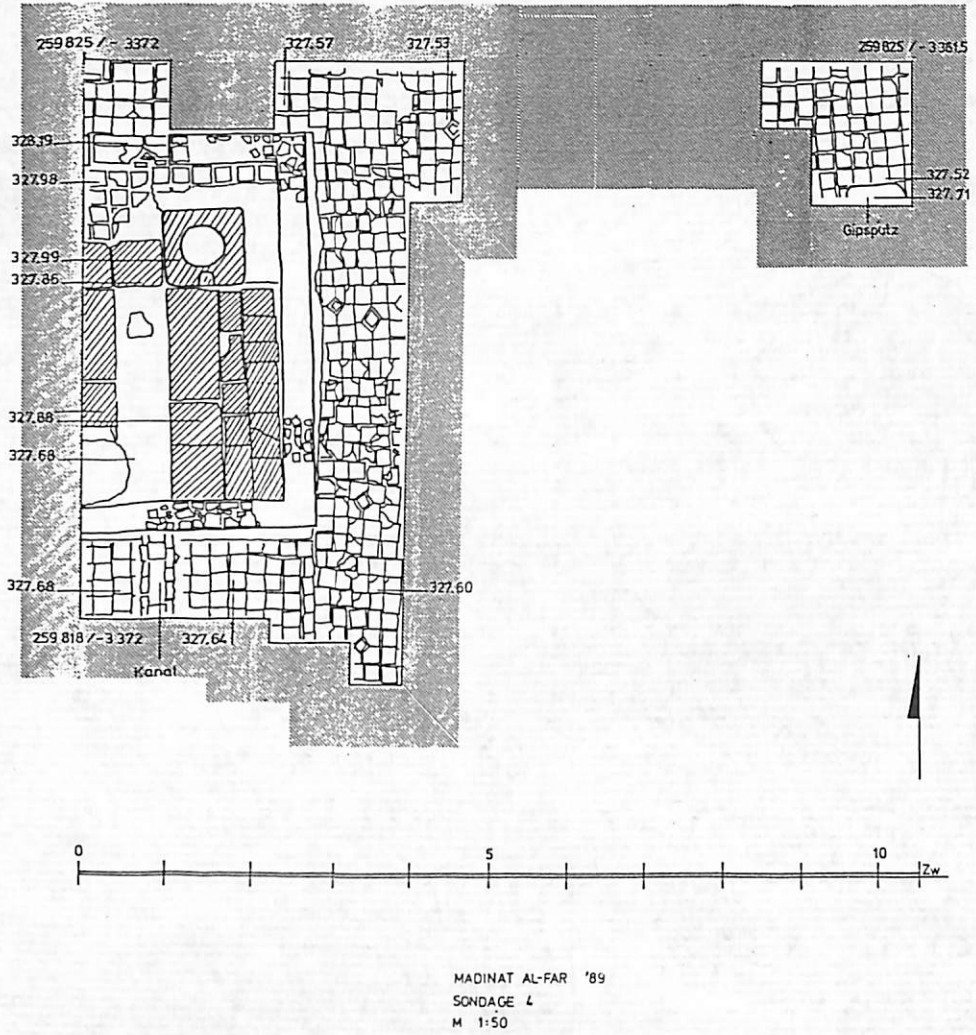
Fig. 2
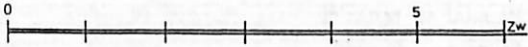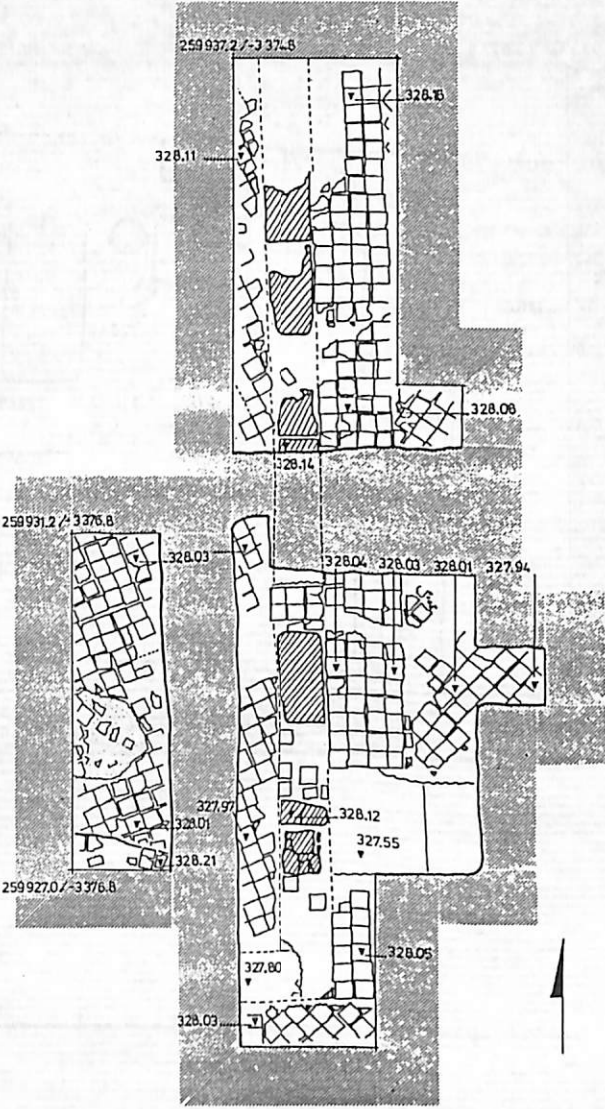
MADINAT AL-FAR '89
Sondage 6
M 1:50
I. Phase

Fig. 3
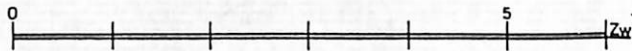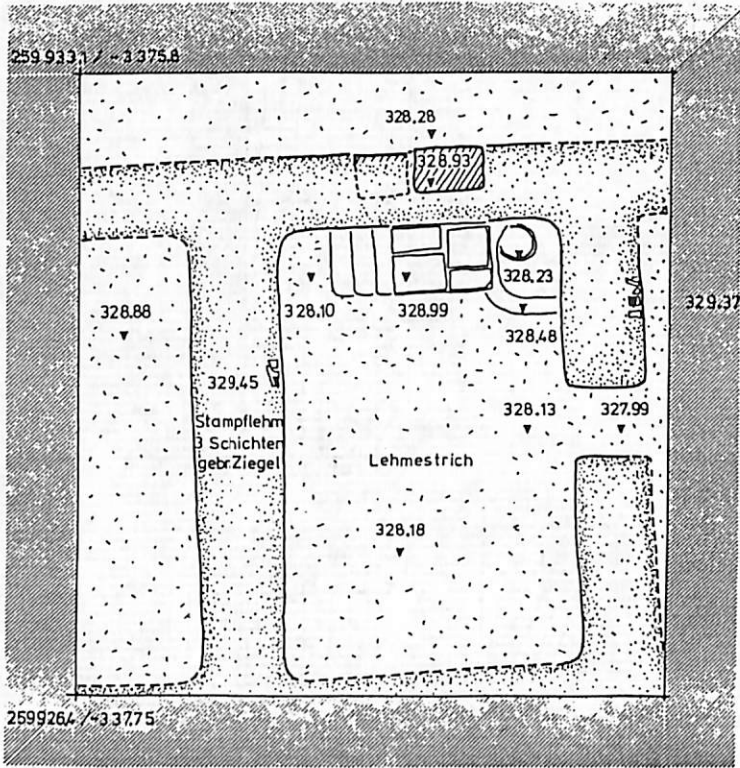
MADINAT AL-FAR '89
Sondage 6
M 1:50
II. Phase

Fig. 4
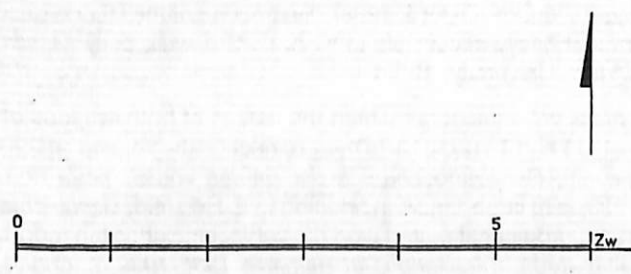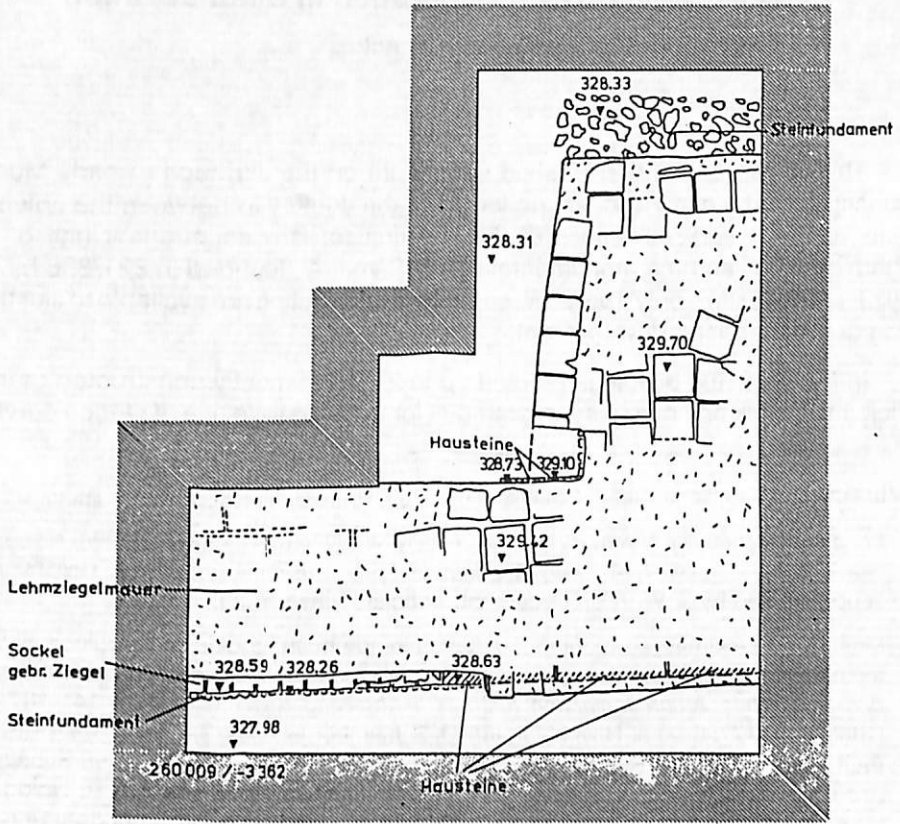
Fig. 5

Early Abbasid Stucco Decoration in Bilād al-Shām

Michael Meinecke[*]

1. Introduction

This paper is intended to shed some light on the dark age of early Muslim archaeology: the early Abbasid period[1]. For the century in between the splendid series of Umayyad residences of the late first to early second/first half of the eighth century[2] and the monumental city of Sāmarrā', founded in 221/836 by the caliph al-Mu'tasim[3], only a very few sources of information are available to illustrate the course of artistic development.

In Sāmarrā' the buildings erected up to 247/861, mostly constructed of fired brick, mud brick and mud pisé, are famous for the extensive use of stucco carving,

---

* Museum für Islamische Kunst, Staatliche Museen, Preussiche Koltorbesitz, Berlin.

1 . For a comprehensive summary in an especially handy format including recent research, see K. A. C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture,* revised and supplemented by J. W. Allan (Aldershot: Scholars Press, 1989).

2 . Most of these Umayyad monuments have already been studied archaeologically, as for instance Jabal Says: K. Brisch, "Das omayyadische Schloss in Usais", *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen·Instituts - Abteilung Kairo* 19 (1963): 141-187; 20 (1965): 138-177; Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbī: D. Schlumberger, *Qasr el-Heir el Gharbi* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1986); Rusāfa : K. Otto-Dorn, "Grabung im umayyadischen Rusāfah", *Ars Orientalis* 2 (1957): 119-134; Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqī: O. Grabar, K. R. Holod, G. Knudstad and W. Trousdale, *City in the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1978); Khirbat al-Mafjar: R. W. Hamilton, *Khirbat al Mafjar: an Arabian Mansion in the Jordan Valley* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1959); idem, *Walid and his Friends: an Umayyad Tragedy* (Oxford, 1988). Illustrations of the stucco decorations from these sites are most easily accessible in K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture,* 2nd ed. I/2 (Oxford University, 1969).

3 . A series of six volumes documented the results of both seasons of the German excavations in 1911 and 1912/1913. In this connection the volume on the stucco decorations by E. Herzfeld, *Der Wandschmuck der Bauten von Samarra und seine Ornamentik* (Berlin, 1923) is of importance, in addition to E. Herzfeld, *Geschichte der Stadt Samarra* (Berlin, 1948). Additional material on the subject includes the report by the Department of Antiquities (ed.), *Excavations at Samarra 1936-1939* (Baghdad, 1940). For recent discoveries see T. al-Janabi, "Islamic Archaeology in Iraq: Recent Excavations at Samarra", *World Archaeology* 14/3 (1983): 306-327. Recently a survey project furnished much new information on the topographical development of Sāmarrā': A. Northedge, "Planning Sāmarrā': a Report for 1983-4', *Iraq* 47 (1985): 109-128, pls. 16-19; *idem,* "Karkh Fairūz at Sāmarrā", *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987): 251-263, figs. 87-91; A. Northedge and R. Falkner, "The 1986 Survey Season at Sāmarrā", *Iraq* 49 (1987) 143-173; cf. also Creswell, *Short Account,* 279f., fig. 173.

most prominently using the bevelled style of seemingly abstract designs[4], a *leit-motiv* for the future development of Islamic architectural decorations[5]. In marked contrast, the earlier stucco decorations of the Umayyad palaces in Bilād al-Shām are by far more naturalistic in appearance and closer to pre-Islamic classical models, although they also reflect various degrees of abstraction due to eastern influences.

Recently new material has come to light in northern Syria that sheds significant light on the genesis of early Abbasid decorations. The results of the archaeological investigations at al-Raqqa on the Euphrates, which started as early as 1944 and have continued with some interruptions up to the present, in particular, have produced remarkable results, though barely recognized on international scholarly levels. Recently a far reaching excavation and restoration programme was launched by the Syrian Antiquities Organization in 1976[6]. Since 1982 the Damascus branch of the German Archaeological Institute has shared in the efforts to rescue the heritage of the Abbasid period from the threats imposed by a mushrooming urban centre[7].

2. Classical Transformation

Stucco decorations represent the dominant decorative feature of the palaces forming the vast residential quarter founded by Hārūn al-Rashīd (170/786-193/809)

---

4. On the classification of the Sāmarrā' stuccoes also K. A. C. Creswell, "The ornament of Sāmarrā", *Early Muslim Architecture,* 2 (Oxford: Oxford University, 1940): 286-288.

5. R. Ettinghausen, "The 'beveled style' in the post-Samarra period", *Archaeologica orientalia in memoriam Ernst Herzfeld,* ed. G. C. Miles (Locust Valley, 1952): 72-83; and also T. Allen "The Arabesque, the Bevelled Style, and the Mirage of an Early Islamic Art". *Five Essays on Islamic Art* (Sebastopol, 1988): 1-15.

6. On this for instance M. al-Khalaf, "Die 'abbāsidische Stadtmauer von ar-Raqqa/ar-Rāfiqa", *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 123-131; K. Toueir, "Der Qasr al-Banāt in ar-Raqqa. Ausgrabung, Rekonstruktion und Wiederaufbau (1977-1982)", *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 297-319; see also below note 29.

7. On the al-Raqqa project Chr. Heusch and M. Meinecke, "Grabungen im 'abbāsidischen Palastareal von ar-Raqqa/ar-Rāfiqa 1982-1983", *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 85-105; *idem,* "ar-Raqqa/ar-Rafiqa: the 'Abbasid Palace Area", *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 33/2, 1983 (1986): 18-20, Arabic section 230; *idem, Die Residenz des Harun al-Raschid in Raqqa/Qasr Hārūn al-Rashīd fi al-Raqqa* (Damascus: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Damaskus, 1989); see also M. al-Khalaf and Kay Kohlmeyer, "Untersuchungen zu ar-Raqqa – Nikephorion/Callinicum", *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 133-162. For previous surveys of the monuments at al-Raqqa see Herzfeld in F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat-und Tigris-Gebiet* (Berlin, 1911-1920), 1 (1911): 156-161, figs. 69f.; 3 (1911) pls. 63-70; 2 (1920): 349-364, figs. 318-344; Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture* 2: 39-49, figs. 27-34, pls. 1/f-g, 2-4; J. Sauvaget, "Tessons de Rakka", *Ars Islamica* 13-14 (1948): 31-45, esp. 31f., figs.1, 5f.; Creswell, *Short Account:* 247-248; figs. 142-145.

outside the twin cities of al-Raqqa and al-Rāfiqa. The decision by Hārūn al-Rashīd to take up residence in the city on the middle Euphrates close to the Byzantine border in 177/793 instigated a building boom that continued until 192/808, when the caliph decided to return to the former capital, Baghdad. All the buildings investigated archaeologically so far, the structures excavated by the Syrian Department of Antiquities between 1944 and 1970, as well as the four complexes under excavation by the German Archaeological Institute in Damascus since 1982 are graced without exception by carved stucco friezes characterized by steep-cut and vegetal ornamentation.

Unfortunately only limited information is available for the central complex of the palace area which was of dominant proportions and formed the focal point of the historic fabric. It presumably was the main residence of Hārūn al-Rashīd, but now has been almost completely built over by modern constructions. It was investigated briefly already in 1944, and a limited operation on the fringes of the structure was conducted in 1987, where stucco fragments appeared on the surface. This revealed some of the finest elements of stucco carving known from the site so far, obviously originating from a monumental vine frieze. Most striking among these is a huge near hemisphere with a diameter of 50 cm, representing a bunch of grapes (fig. 1).

This was thought to be quite exceptional until a similar fragment was detected in the last season of work in the spring of 1989 at a structure near the southeast corner of the palace area (fig. 2). This building, termed the Western Palace, proved especially rewarding, as most of the stucco decoration has been preserved relatively undisturbed. The structure, partially excavated in five seasons, with dimensions of c. 110 x 70 m, is definitely quite impressive on its own, though only of secondary importance compared to the central complexes. Nevertheless in the official part with the characteristic triple room arrangement, the full cycle of 24 friezes on the door jambs can be taken as typical for the decorative style of the period (figs. 3-8)[8]. Arranged in pairs framing the door openings, all the friezes belong to the class of vine scrolls. Undulating in a climbing movement, they have either a single stem, or on major doors a double stem with more complex interlacing. Though rather stylized in details, the general outline clearly reflects natural forms. The framing borders with plated bands are repeated throughout in a stereotyped fashion.

In addition, stucco was also used to indicate the *qibla*. Altogether ten prayerniches have been identified so far. One clearly belongs to the *masjid* of the complex, but the others are distributed throughout the building, providing a distinct Islamic character. Some of the mihrāb-frames in the living quarters are rather simple, occasionally with narrow bands of scrolls (fig. 9), but in the reception wing a more elaborate decoration is again in evidence. In one exceptional case

---

8 . Several of the friezes are published by Heusch and Meinecke, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1989), pl. 31/a-e.

the space between the framing friezes is filled with stucco carving representing a tree with flanking vine scrolls (fig. 10)[9].

The numismatic evidence leaves no doubt about the date of construction. Most of the fifty-nine coins collected from the fill belong to the early Abbasid period; ten represent the type of bronze coins issued in 189/804-805 for Hārūn al-Rashīd by the mint of al-Rāfiqa[10]. Consequently it can be safely assumed that the structure was in use at that time. Therefore, the stucco cycle of the Western Palace can be regarded as a typical example for the common style of decoration in the last years of the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd.

Two features are especially noteworthy: first the sparing use of stucco carving compared to the later development at Sāmarrā', where the walls seem to be almost hidden by a continuous stucco revetment, and second the dependence on classical models. This is a strong argument for the evolution of this special decorative style in Bilād al-Shām or in the immediate neighbourhood of the Syrian monuments from the Roman and Byzantine period.

It must be stressed that the Western Palace excavated by the ongoing German project is in fact only one of many examples. Stucco of the same type is abundant outside and around the modern city of al-Raqqa,[11] and in the area alongside the Balīkh River up to Madīnat al-Fār, c. 70 km further north. At that site, investigated in four seasons of work since 1981[12], the last two in cooperation with the al-Raqqa-project, numerous fragments of stucco with similar patterns have been collected (fig. 11).

Beyond the region of al-Raqqa the closest parallels can be found extraordinarily far away, in Saudi Arabia. At a halting place for the pilgrim caravans at al-'Alwiya, c. 48 km northwest of Makka, a similar stucco decoration has survived on a palace-like structure (fig. 12)[13]. There the door jambs of one of the

---

9 . Illustrated in Heusch and Meinecke, *Die Residenz des Harun al-Raschid in Raqqa.*

10 . On this type of bronze coin, see L. Ilisch, "Die Kupferprägung Nordmesopotamiens unter Hārūn ar-Rasīd und seinen Söhnen (786-842 AD)", *Numismatics - Witness to History, International Association of Professional Numismatists Publication* 8 (Basel, 1986), 109 no. 5, pl. 19/5.

11 . Further fragments of recently excavated stucco are illustrated by Heusch and Meinecke, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985), pls. 30/b,c, 32/d,e, 33/c.

12 . For the first season of work see the report by N. Salibi, "al-Tanqīb fi Madīnat al-Fār/Hisn Maslama 1981", *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 33/1, 1983 (1985), Arabic section 69-88. On the last two seasons a report by C. P. Haase is in preparation for *Damaszener Mitteilungen.*

13 . Kh. al-Dayel and S. al-Helwa, "Preliminary Report on the Second Phase of the Darb Zubayda Reconnaisance 1397/1977", *Atlal, The Journal of Saudi Arabian Archaeology* 2 (1978): 51-64, esp. 53-55, pls. 49, 60, 62A 1-2.

rooms also show variations of the climbing scrolls with vine leaves, as at the al-Raqqa palaces. This building belongs to the installations of the desert route linking the cities of central Mesopotamia with Makka and Madina, improved by endowments of Zubayda, the wife of Hārūn al-Rashīd and consequently named Darb Zubayda[14]. It can be assumed that artists and construction workers active at the caliphal residence of al-Raqqa were employed for the contemporary building programme on the *hajj-route.*

3. Geometric Design

Similar artistic interrelations are also in evidence at al-Hīra, the ancient pre-decessor of the city of al-Kūfa. Several structures there were investigated with limited excavations in 1931 by an Oxford expedition[15]. As in al-Raqqa, only the door openings of the representative rooms were decorated by framing friezes. The plaited bands of the borders are almost identical to the al-Raqqa friezes, but most of the major patterns are markedly different. Though also climbing scrolls of vine ornament are represented in somewhat coarser variations, in most cases the friezes depict series of alternating geometric forms – squares, circles, multifoils – densely filled with vine elements (fig. 13). Thus this can be described as a different pattern type – that of basic geometric ornamentation, while the vegetal forms only constitute secondary elements.

This shift in emphasis from more naturalistic vegetal patterns to geometric arrangements can also be ascribed to the period of Hārūn al-Rashīd[16]. At the al-Raqqa residences the same tendency also exists in some of the decorations, for instance at friezes from previously excavated palaces, at the so-called Palace B investigated in 1950-1952 (fig. 14)[17], or at Palace D investigated in 1954-1958

---

14 . On the settlements and installations along the *hajj*-route see S. A. al-Rashid, *Darb Zubaydah: the Pilgrim Road from Kufa to Mecca* (Riyadh, 1980); *idem, Al-Rabadhah; a Portrait of Early Islamic Civilisation in Saudi Arabia* (Harlow, 1986).

15 . D. T. Rice, "The Oxford Excavations at Hīra", *Ars Islamica* 1 (1934): 51-73; Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture,* 2: 164 f., fig. 153, pl. 34/a-e..

16 . The connection of al-Raqqa with the city al-Hīra, ca 650 km further southeast, is attested by a remarkable piece of pottery excavated at Palace A of the al-Raqqa residences of Hārūn al-Rashīd, signed by a potter from al-Hīra: A. F. al-'Ushsh, "al-Fukhkhār Ghayr al-Mutlī min al-'Uhūd al- 'Arabiya al-Islāmiya fī al-Mathaf al-Watanī bi-Dimashq [1]", *Les Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 10 (1961), Arabic section 140 f., pls. 1/9, 2/8, 15/66 (made by Ibrāhīm al-Nasrānī bi al-Hīra). Another exceptional pottery object from Palace B, a glazed storage jar, is stated in the inscription to have been made at al-Basra by the potter Hassān for the master of al-Hīra: A. F. al-'Ushsh, "Jarrat al-Raqqa al-Khazafiya fī al-Mathaf al-Watanī bi Dimashq", *Sumer* 33 (1977), Arabic section 112-118; cf. *idem* in A. F. Al-Ush, A. Joundi, and B. Zouhdi, *Catalogue du Musée National de Damas* (Damascus, 1969): 175, fig. 82.

17 . S. Abdul-Hak, "Les fouilles de la Direction Générale des Antiquités à Rakka", *Les Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 1/1 (1951): 111-121, figs. 7-9; cf. also M. Meinecke,

=

(fig.15)[18]. But there they only constitute a minority of the friezes, which generally consist of vine scrolls. Therefore it seems that geometric patterns were also included in the decorative repertoire of the stucco ateliers from al-Raqqa as well. It is quite indicative that at greater distances from the classical world the more abstract type of ornamentation was evidently more appreciated, possibly also because it was more economic to execute than the freehand carving of vegetal scrolls.

Further decorations of the same class, as far as is known, also existed at Ctesiphon, about 32 km southeast of Baghdad. There the German expedition in 1928-1929 excavated a house of the early Islamic period with stucco friezes at the door jambs (fig. 16) and further decorative elements from the arcades of the doorways closely related to the patterns of al-Hīra[19]. Again geometric forms are accentuated, banishing the vine elements to the interstices.

The same preference for the geometrical class of ornament is also in evidence at Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqī in the Syrian Desert, some 100 km south of al-Raqqa. There one of the living units of the larger enclosure, dating back to the Umayyad period, in a later phase of occupation received additional stucco decoration[20]. As at al-Raqqa, this decoration is confined to door jambs (fig. 17) in addition to arches from the doorways and the arcades of the porticos. With the dominance of geometric patterns, the friezes stylistically are related to contemporary deco- rations at al-Hīra and Ctesiphon, though surely they, can be considered as another offspring of the al-Raqqa ateliers.

Probably this second style of stucco decoration can be considered as the predecessor of the geometric grid design of stucco panels at Sāmarrā' and

= in H. Weiss, ed., *Ebla to Damascus: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Syria* (Washington, 1985): 514 f. no. 256.

18 . On Palace D a report by N. Salibi will appear shortly in the *Damaszener Mitteilungen;* Meanwhile see N. Salibi, "Hafriyat al-Raqqa: Taqrīr Awwalī 'an al-Mawsim al-Thālith, Kharīf 1953", *Les Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 6 (1956) pl. 10; Direction des Antiquités de Syrie, *Deuxième exposition des découvertes archéologiques des années 1954-1955 au Musée National de Damas* (Damascus, 1955): 47.

19 . O. Reuther, *Die Ausgrabungen der deutschen Ktesiphon-Expedition im Winter 1928/29* (Berlin, 1939): 34 f. fig.19; J. H. Schmidt, "Die Ergebnisse der Deutschen Ktesiphon-Expedition", *Oriens Christianus* 3rd series 5 (1930): 102, pl. 4/1-2. On the Islamic house of Madā'in a monographic article by J. Kröger is in preparation. Meanwhile another part of the site revealing Abbasid stucco decorations has been excavated by the Antiquities Organization of Iraq; see H. 'Abd al-Hālam, "Natā'ij al-Tanqibāt fi Tullūl Jamī'at fi al-Madā'in", *Sumer* 44 (1985-1986) Arabic section 111-138.

20 . O. Grabar, *et.al., City in the Desert:* 67 f., 175-178, figs. 132 f., 135, 139-142, and Ap. 1-18. Several progressive elements (meander borders, "Sāmarrā' friezes") seem to argue for a date somewhat later than the al-Raqqa stuccoes.

elsewhere in Mesopotamia[21], and as far as Nishāpūr in northeast Iran (fig. 18)[22]. The spread of this medium of decoration to the eastern lands of the Muslim world is very probably one of the side effects of the retransfer of the caliphal residence from al-Raqqa back to Baghdad in 192/808. As this surely resulted in a decisive halt in construction activities at al-Raqqa, the specialized craftsmen obviously moved eastwards in search of other construction projects to newly founded cities or reactivated urban centres.

4. Bevelled Style

But even after the sudden reclassification from the centre of government to a city of only regional importance, al-Raqqa retained a certain status also for future artistic development. The political turmoil following the death of Hārūn al-Rashīd in 193/809 surely also affected the Jazira and the twin cities of al-Raqqa and al-Rāfiqa. But subsequently the consolidation of central administration in the region and new prosperity is marked by two issues of bronze coins by the mint of al-Rāfiqa in 208/823-824 and 210/825-826 during the reign of al-Ma'mūn (198/813-218/833), the victorious son and heir of Hārūn al-Rashīd[23]. At that time al-Rāfiqa was the seat of the governor of the Jazira, 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir, one of the most powerful officials of the period[24]. Later, for a short time, al-Raqqa once more served as a residence for an Abbasid caliph; in 223/837-838 al-Mu'tasim (218/833-227/842), the youngest son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, personally led the Holy War against Byzantium, which resulted in a successful military expedition to 'Ammūriya/Amorium in Asia Minor. In the same year the mint of al-Rāfiqa again issued bronze coins[25], several examples of which were also found at the excava-

21 . Examples of the grid design in Mesopotamia include a house at Tall al-Ghariñ near Baghdad: Kh. Hammūdī, "al-Tanqibāt fī Tullūl al-Habībiya - Baghdād", *Sumer* 37 (1981) Arabic section 213-215. figs. pp. 222-224; or the palace at Sumaka: T. Jacobson, *Salinity and Irrigation Agriculture in Antiquity. Diyala Basin Archaeological Projects: Report on Essential Results, 1957-58* (Malibu, 1982(: 99 f., pls. 1/1, 8/16- 10/19; cf. Creswell, Short Account: 267., fig. 166.

22 . C. K. Wilkinson, *Nishapur: Some Early Islamic Buildings and Their Decoration* (New York, 1986). One of the stucco panels is exhibited in the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art (fig. 18); J. Zick-Nissen in the catalogue, *Museum für Islamische Kunst Berlin* 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1979): 60, no. 188 pl. 39.

23 . Ilisch, *Numismatics:* 101-121, esp. 110, nos. 6f., pl.19/6f.

24 . His father, Tāhir b. al-Husayn, called Dhū al-Yamīnayn, was the founder of the Tāhirid dynasty residing in Nishāpūr until 259/873. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir himself later on also ruled there from 213/828 until 230/845. Besides initiating various construction projects at his home residence (Wilkinson *Nishapur:* 41), he is also known as the patron of the final enlargement of the Mosque of 'Amr ibn al-'Ās at al-Fustāt, begun in 212/827, which set the standard for future mosque architecture in Cairo; Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 2 (1940) 171-196, figs. 157-170, pls. 37-43.

25 . Ilisch, *Numismatics* 111, no. 8, pl. 19/8.

tion of the palace area outside the city. Fragments of frescoes with the name of al-Mu'tasim detected in Palace B, excavated back in 1950–1952[26], attest to the reactivation of at least part of the residences founded about a quarter of a century before by Hārūn al-Rashīd.

To this second heyday of Abbasid al-Raqqa can be attributed the development of a third style of stucco decoration, the bevelled style, which later on became especially common at Sāmarrā'. A series of stone capitals originating from the region of al-Raqqa, but now dispersed to several museums, has been know for a long time. They demonstrate the transformation of classical models to abstract configurations with the characteristic slant cut (fig. 19)[27]. So far this development has been attributed to the period of Hārūn al-Rashīd, but it seems that a later date could eventually be more feasible.

As far as the buildings of Hārūn al-Rashīd at al-Raqqa are concerned, there is no indication that this new decorative style was already fully developed at this early period. Nevertheless, in some instances, especially on installations of secondary importance at the palaces of Hārūn al-Rashīd, rather abstract configurations can be found, such as on one of the *mihrāb* friezes in the private quarters of the Western Palace (fig. 20)[28]. These elements however, are by no means representative of the common style based on classical models. The classical stylistic tendencies are very much in evidence in the exceptional victory monument of Hārūn al-Rashīd about 10 km west of al-Raqqa, commemorating the successful conquest of Hiraqla/Heraclea in Asia Minor in 190/806[29]. The fragments of the original stone decoration retrieved from the eastern *īwān* of the central structure in 1978 with dentil pattern and bead moulding from cornices clearly depend on the classical repertoire (fig. 21), though on other fragments vegetal elements similar to the palace stuccoes have also survived (fig. 22).

It is therefore highly unlikely that the stucco frame of the *mihrāb*, detected

26 . N. Salibi (N. Saliby), "Rapport préliminaire sur la deuxième campagne de fouilles à Raqqa (automne 1952)", *Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 4-5 (1954-1955): 205-212, esp. 208; Arabic section 69-76, esp. 76, pl. 8/15.

27 . Sarre and Herzfeld *Archäologische Reise* 2: 350-353, fig. 318-323; 4: pl. 140/1-5, 7-12; and M. S. Dimand, "Studies in Islamic Ornament I. Some Aspects of Omaiyad and Early 'Abbāsid Ornament", *Ars Islamica* 4 (1937): 308-324, figs. 15f/(2)-25, 40-46.

28 . Other examples are also known from the previously excavated palaces; see for instance Salibi, *Les Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 6 (1956); Arabic section pl. 4/1.

29 . On the enigmatic monument at Hiraqla near al-Raqqa; Q. Twair (K. Toueir), "al-Mawāsim al-Awwal wa al-Thānī bi al-Tanqīb fi Hiraqla, 1976-1977", *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 27-28 (1977-1978), Arabic section 111-125; *idem*, "Heraqlah: a Unique Victory Monument of Hārūn ar-Rashīd", *World Archaeology* 14/3 (1983): 296-304, pls. 10-13; *idem*, "Natā'ij al-Tanqīb fi Hiraqla 1976-1981": *Les Annales Archéologiques Arabes Syriennes* 33/1 (1983) (1985), Arabic section 99-112; cf. Creswell, *Short Account:* 275-278, figs. 171f.

in 1985 in the Abbasid Great Mosque of al-Rāfiqa (fig. 23) belongs to the period of Hārūn al-Rashīd. For the slant cut employed throughout, unrecorded among the palace-stuccoes, the closest parallels are panels from the initial period at Sāmarrā', founded by al-Mu'tasim in 221/836 (fig. 24)[30]. In this connection it seems indicative that this caliph, as already mentioned, in 223/837-838 briefly resided at al-Raqqa, at a time when the new capital Sāmarrā' was not yet inaugurated[31].

Similar stucco fragments also came to light on a site immediately east of the city walls of al-Rāfiqa, investigated briefly in 1953 and 1969 (fig. 25)[32]. The border with a horizontal lotus scroll is again related to Sāmarrā' ornaments, but for the frieze so far no immediate counterpart is known from there[33]. The Kufic inscription with a Qur'anic verse, discovered in the upper layers of Tall Aswad, originally covering the front of an arch (fig. 26), also finds no parallel at Sāmarrā'[34]. On the

---

30. For closely similar ornaments on Sāmarrā' stuccoes see Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck:* 30, ornament 24, fig. 31, pl. 18 (for a variation of the framing border of the niche); 19, ornament 9, fig. 12 (for the laurel wreath border of the panel); 104, ornament 157, fig. 156, pl. 54 (for the panel). The acanthus cornice in stucco on the southeast corner pier of the *qibla-riwāq* facade, attributed by Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture,* 2; 47f., fig. 34, pl.4/b,d to the foundation period of the Great Mosque does not in fact belong to the original construction of 155/772 by al-Mansūr, but is part of the restoration of 561/1165-1166 by Nūr al-Dīn Mahmūd b. Zenjī. This cornice therefore cannot be regarded as the oldest known fragment of Abbasid stucco decoration. It is just another indication of the popularity of classical elements in the time of Nūr al-Dīn Mahmūd: on this feature see T. Allen, *A Classical Revival in Islamic Architecture* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1986).

31. This might be deduced from the installation of an iron door, transferred to Sāmarrā' as a spoil of war after the conquest of 'Ammūriya in 223/838, at the Bāb al-'Amma, the main gate of the caliph's residence at Sāmarrā'; Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture,* 2:232.

32. The stucco fragments from the sounding conducted by N. Salibi in 1953 will be published in a forthcoming report in *Damaszener Mitteilungen,* the sondage of 1969 will be described in another report by K. Toueir under preparation for *Damaszener Mitteilungen.*

33. For the border pattern compare Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck:* 37, ornament 38, fig. 45, pl. 40.

34. For the location of Tall Aswad see al-Khalaf and Kohlmeyer, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 137, fig. 2. Strangely enough, the Sāmarrā' decorations, as well as their predecessors at the al-Raqqa palaces, seem to have been nearly anepigraphic; at Sāmarrā' only a single epigraphical stucco fragment was recorded by E. Herzfeld, *Geschichte der Stadt Samarra:* 275, no. 12, fig 11. The meander border nevertheless is closely related to the reportoire of Sāarrā' patterns; compare Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck:* 120, ornament 173 a, fig. 173. For additional examples of stucco inscriptions closely related to the Tall Aswad fragments see Department of Antiquities (ed.), *Excavations at Samarra 1936-1939* (Baghdad, 1940) 1, pl. 74.

other hand, the stucco cornice in the apse of the central church of Rusāfa (fig. 27)[35], just a day's march from al-Raqqa on the southern desert route, finds a close match in the frieze below the springing of the vault in the central *īwān* of the Bāb al-'Āmma, the entrance to al-Mu'tasim's monumental palace at Sāmarrā', the Jausaq al-Khāqānī (fig. 28)[36]. This group evidently should be later than the vine stuccoes from the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd, but beyond that the evidence is still too limited for a precise historical classification. Although this is only a hypothesis, these later stucco decorations might be grouped around 223/837-838 in the reign of al-Mu'tasim, a date one can suggest also for the stone capitals in the bevelled style[37].

5. Provincial Centres

There is still another chapter of early Abbasid stucco decoration in northern Syria awaiting further research. Two more sites have revealed stucco fragments of rather individual character that only vaguely echo the Sāmarrā' decorations. At Tall al-Fakhariya near Ra's al-'Ayn, investigated briefly by the Max von Oppenheim Foundation in 1955, several stucco fragments from the latest occupation were recorded (fig. 29)[38]. Though similar in technique to the earlier al-Raqqa stuccoes, they seem to incorporate geometrical motives unrecorded from the caliph's residence. Probably these fragments might date from the earlier third/ninth century, when Ra's al-'Ayn witnessed a short period of economic improvement. This is reflected by the activity of the local mint issuing bronze coins in 202/817-818, 213/828-829 and 22(1)/836 in the time of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'tasim[39].

At a site called Kharab Sayyār between 'Ayn al-Arūs and Ra's al-'Ayn, 9 km southeast of Tall Khuwayra, already at the turn of the century the existence of

---

35 . S. Guyer in Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 2: 13 fig. 137; Herzfeld *Wandschmuck:* 201, pl. 90/a. Lately the monument was the subject of a comprehensive monograph by T. Ulbert, *Die Basilika des Heiligen Kreuzes in Resafa-Sergiupolis* (Mainz, 1986); on the stucco: 42, 131, pl. 17/1, 19/2.

36 . Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck:* 200, ornament 260, fig. 285, pl. 91; on the portal building Creswell, *Short Account:* 333, figs. 211-214.

37 . The precise origin of these capitals has yet to be established. One possible location could be the Umayyad Great Mosque at al-Raqqa/Nikephorion, which seems to have been enlarged on several occasions in the early Abbasid period. On the completely lost monument see Sarre and Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise*, 2: 353-355, figs. 324-329; cf. also al-Khalaf and Kohlmeyer, *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 2 (1985): 154, 161, figs. 2, 10f.

38 . A. Moortgat, "Vorläufiger Bericht über eine Grabung auf dem Tell Fecherije 1955", *Les Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 6 (1956) : 46, pl. 5/1-2.

39 . Ilisch, *Numismatics:* 105-107 nos. 1-3, pl. 19/1-3.

early Islamic stucco decorations was recorded by Max von Oppenheim[40]. This was confirmed on several recent field trips when numerous stucco fragments were found emerging on the surface (fig. 30). Some of the fragments represent high quality craftmanship, with precisely cut patterns in a combination of geometric, vegetal and abstract motives. Again only a few of the ornaments are related to Sāmarrā'[41]. The majority is of a quite distinct character not recorded elsewhere.

This brief review, covering a period of four decades and centering on a single decorative medium, the stucco carvings, should have indicated that Bilād al-Shām played a decisive role in the formulation of early Abbasid art. At that time the city of al-Raqqa was an outstanding centre of development, where variations of form resulted in stylistic changes which were later on distributed widely through the Islamic world. As the most significant patron, the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd has to be singled out for instigating vast building projects which consequently allowed the training of a great number of specialized artisans. Most important of all however, seems to be the transfer of his residence from Baghdad to Syria, a move that not only brought the western part of the Abbasid empire back into focus, but eventually also initiated strong artistic interrelations of Syria with the eastern part of the Muslim world.

Sources of Figures

T. Allen, Sebastopol, 1977 (fig. 12).

Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Asian Art Archives-Slide and Photograph Collection (courtesy W. Holden): QH 1966 e frame 32 (fig. 17).

Deutsches Archäologisches Institut/German Archaeological Institute Damascus – K. Anger : neg. nos. 86/899 a (fig. 20). 1699 a (fig. 9); P. Grunwald: neg.nos. 84/275 (fig. 4), 278 (fig. 3); 85/583 (fig. 26), 745 (fig. 8), 837 (fig. 10); – A. Kohlmeier: neg. no. 87/678 (fig. 1); M. Meinecke: neg. nos. 85/454 (fig.7), 85/458 (fig. 6), 89/685 (fig. 5), 763 (fig. 21), 772 (fig. 22), 923 (fig. 2).

---

40 . A stucco panel from Kharab Sayyār was donated by M. von Oppenheim to the Berlin Museums, now at the Islamic Museum, East-Berlin (inv. no. I.7167 a-b); published without indication to the original location by F. Sarre, "Eine frühislamische Wanddecoration aus Nordmesopotamien", *Aus fünf Jahrtausender morgenländischer Kultur. Festschrift Max Freiherr von Oppenheim* (Berlin, 1933): 93-96, pl. 3. republished with full documentation in situ by U. Moortgat-Correns, "Charāb Sējār: Zur Lokalisierung einer im Jahre 1913 von Baron Oppenheim entdeckten frühabbasidischen Stuckwand in Nordmesopotamien", *Damaszener Mitteilungen* (forthcoming). On the site W.G. van Liere and G. Lauffray, "Nouvelle prospection archéologique dans la Haute Jezireh Syrienne", *Les Annales Archéologiques de Syrie* 4-5 (1954-1955): 141.

41 . For instance at the border with a continuous row of lotus flowers with a pair of leaves; compare Herzfeld, *Wandschmuck* 188 ornament 248, fig. 270, pls. 93f. The panel in East-Berlin (see note 40) with the vine ornaments is related to the palace-stuccoes of al-Raqqa.

M. Fares, Damascus (fig. 23).

Islamisches Museum/Islamic Museum Berlin-East: neg. nos. Kt. 109 A (fig. 16); E. Herzfeld: Sam. 55b (fig. 28), 202 (fig. 24).

M. Meinecke 1983 (fig. 27), 1987 (fig. 11), 1988 (fig. 30).

U. Moortgat-Correns, Berlin 1955 (fig. 29).

Museum für Islamische Kunst/Museum of Islamic Art SMPK Berlin-West – J. Anders: neg: no. 3274 (fig.18).

D.T. Rice, *Ars Islamica* 1 (1934), fig. 3/Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture 2.* pl. 34/a.

N. Salibi, Damascus (figs, 15, 25).

I. Strüben, Berlin (figs. 14, 19).

Notes

Fig. 1 : al-Raqqa, central palace of Hārūn al-Rashīd: stucco fragment.
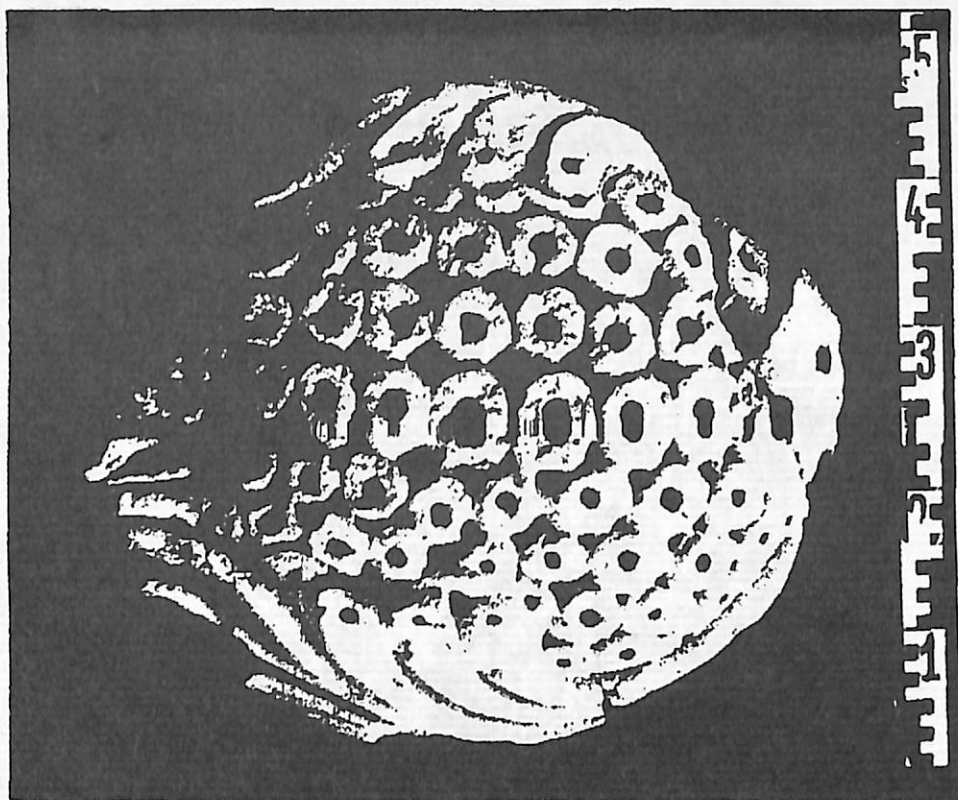
Fig. 2 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: stucco fragment.
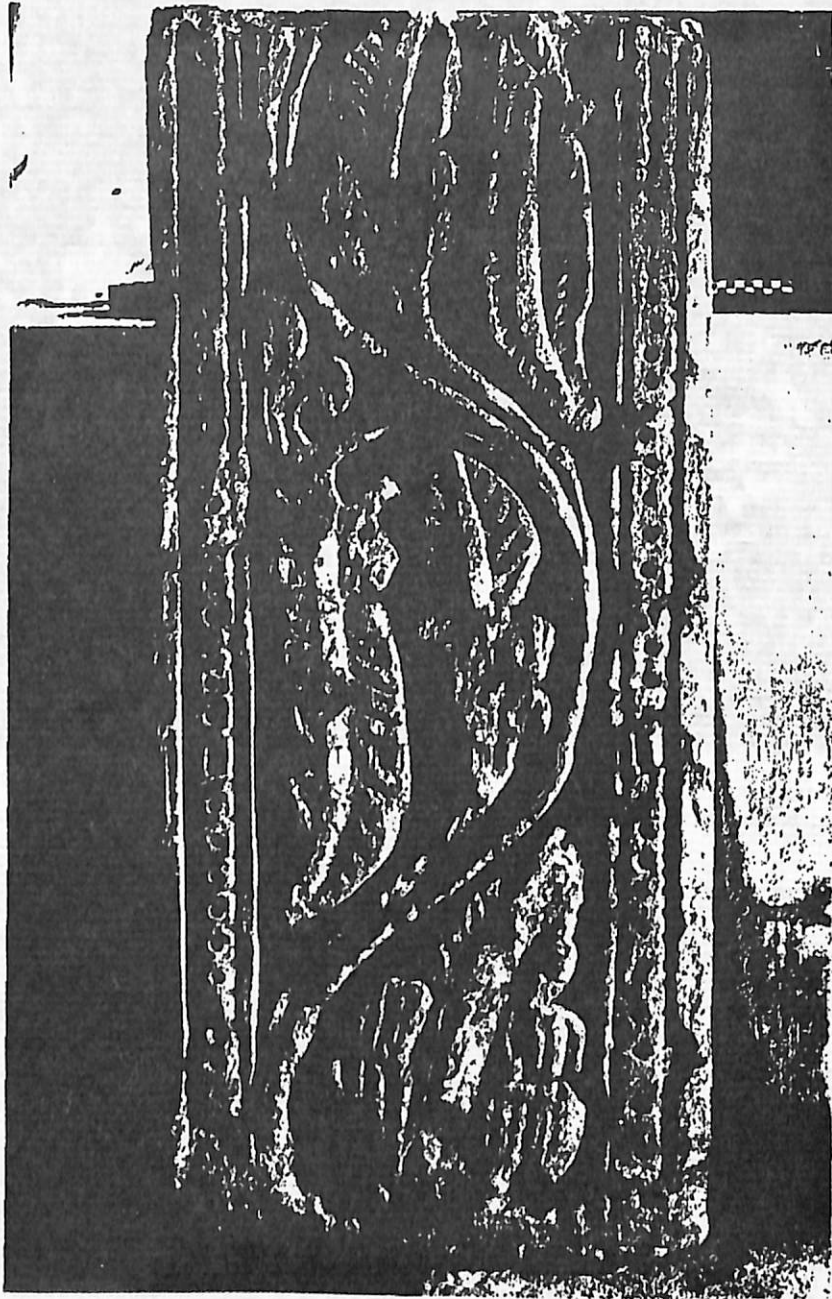
.g. 3 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: frieze K (room I.2), after restoration.
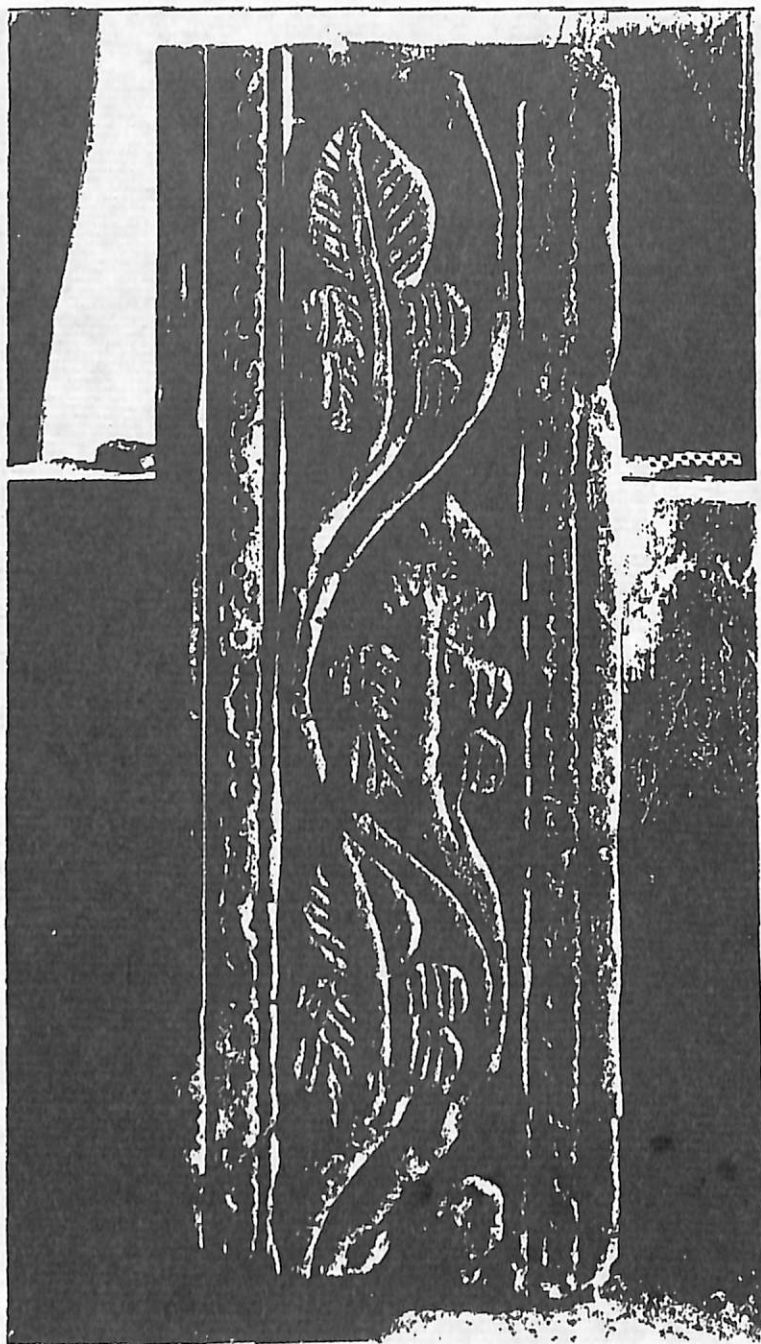
Fig. 4 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: frieze L (room I.2), after restoration.
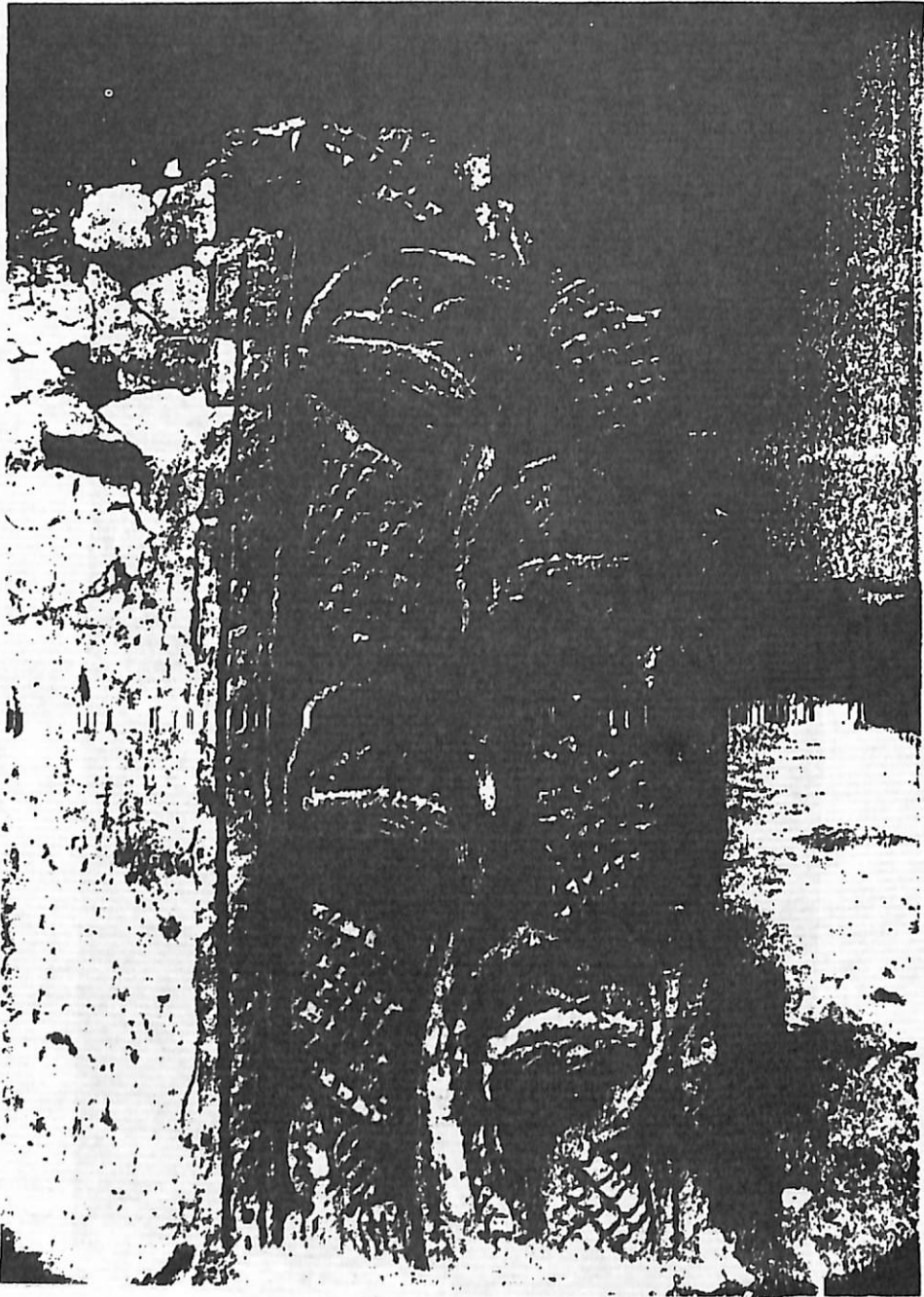
Fig. 5 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: frieze J' (room i.4).
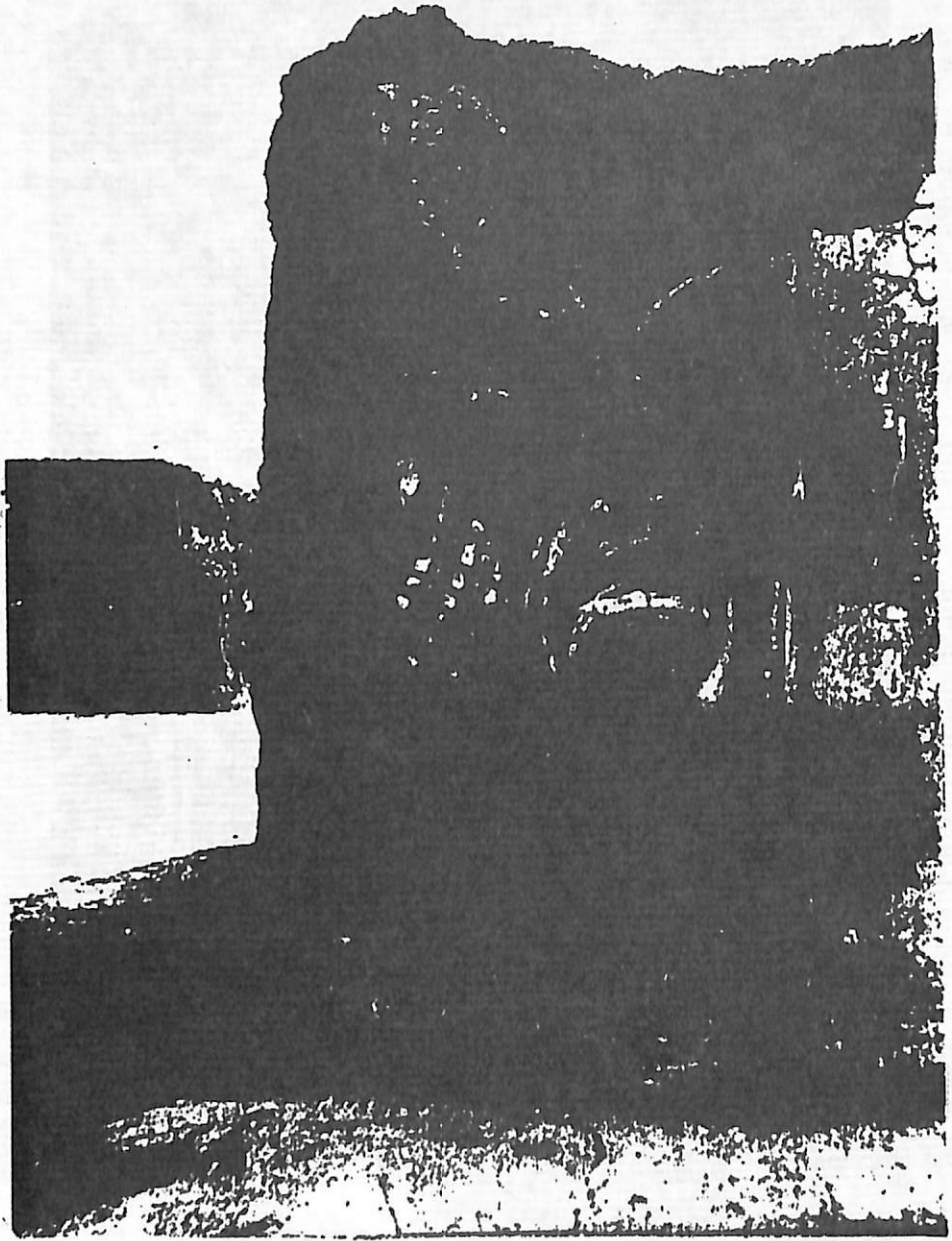
Fig. 6 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: frieze P (room I.4).

Fig. 7 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: frieze Q (room I.4).
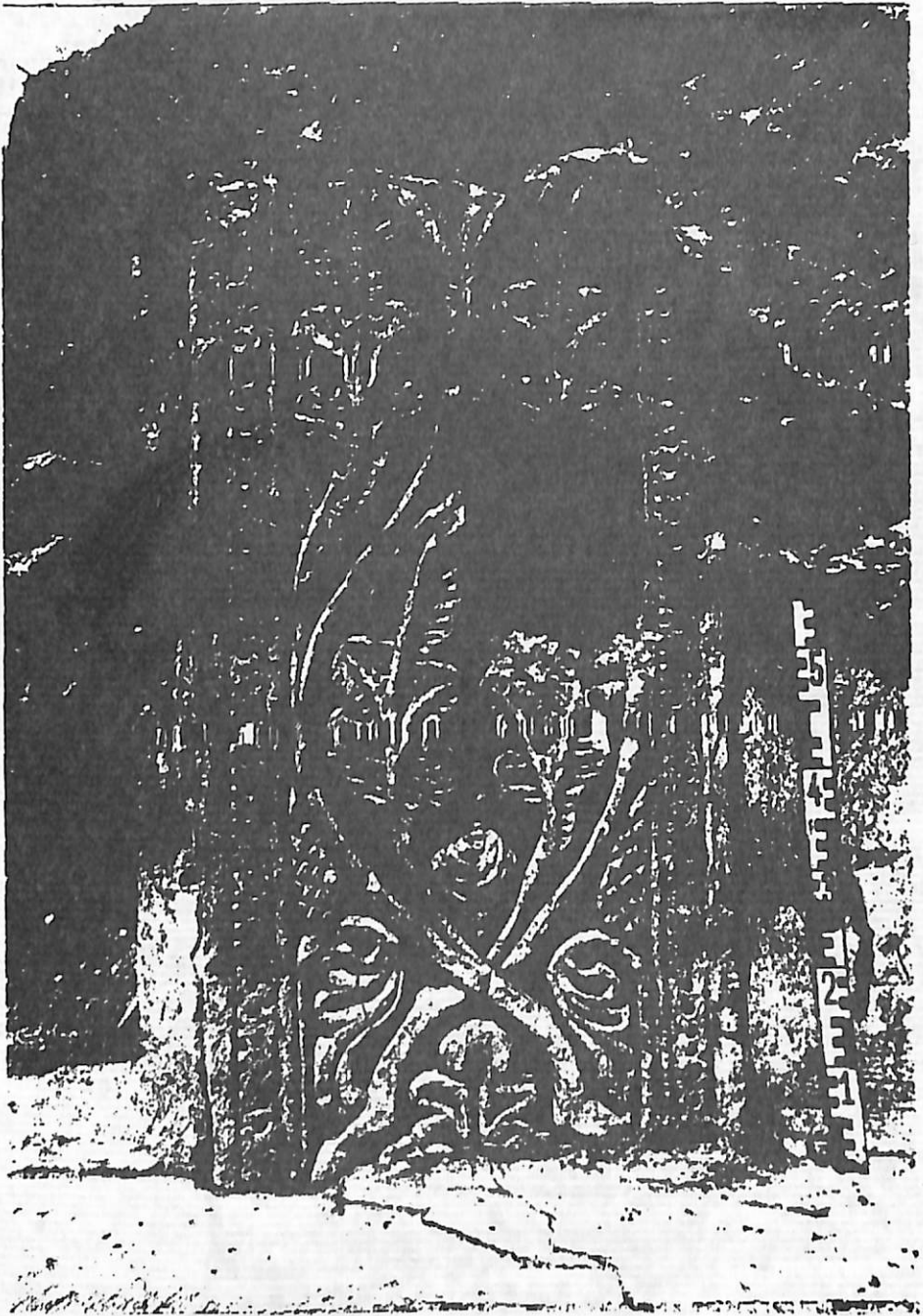
Fig. 8 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: frieze R (room I.4).
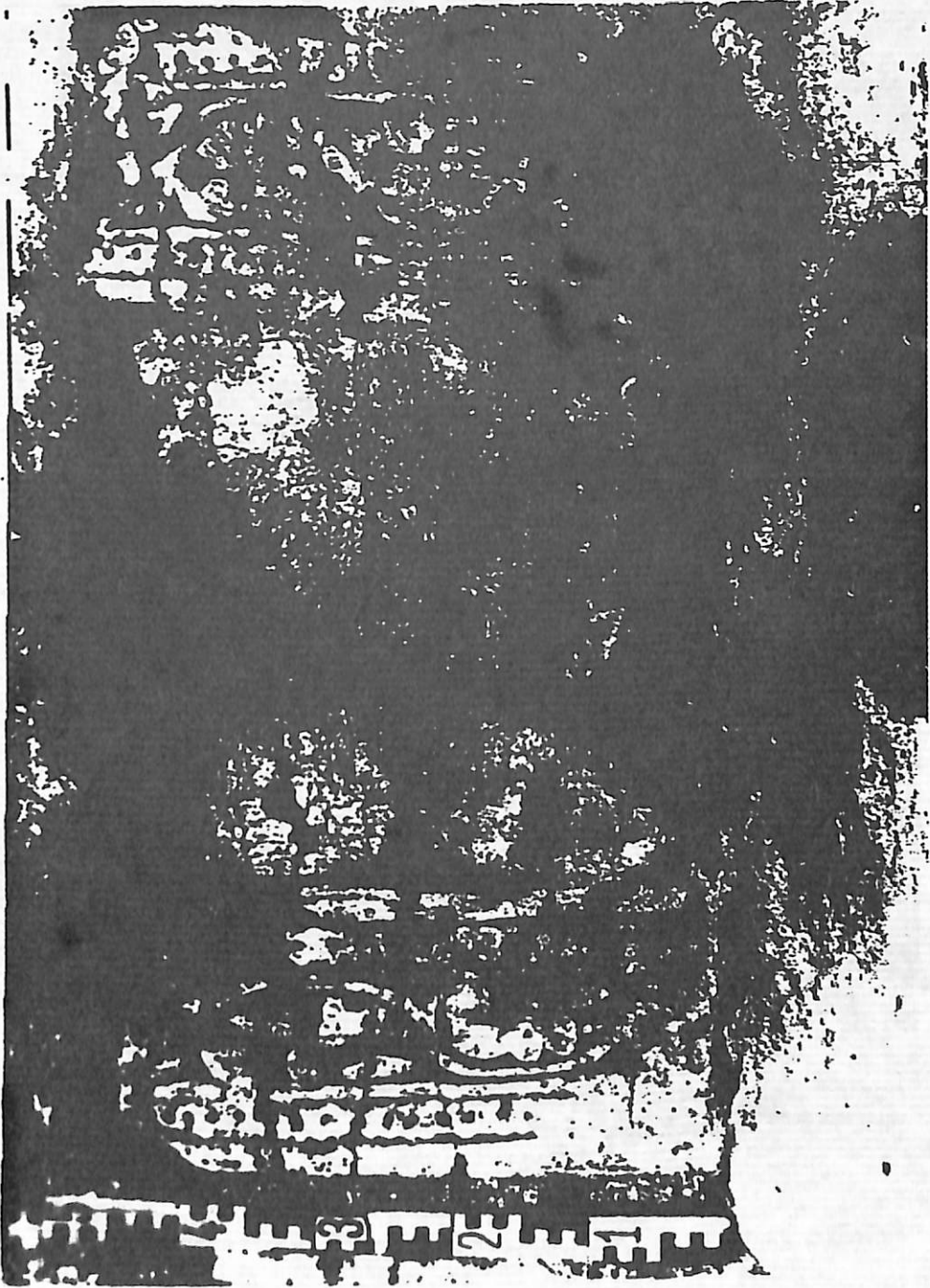
Fig. 9 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: *mihrāb* in room III.5.
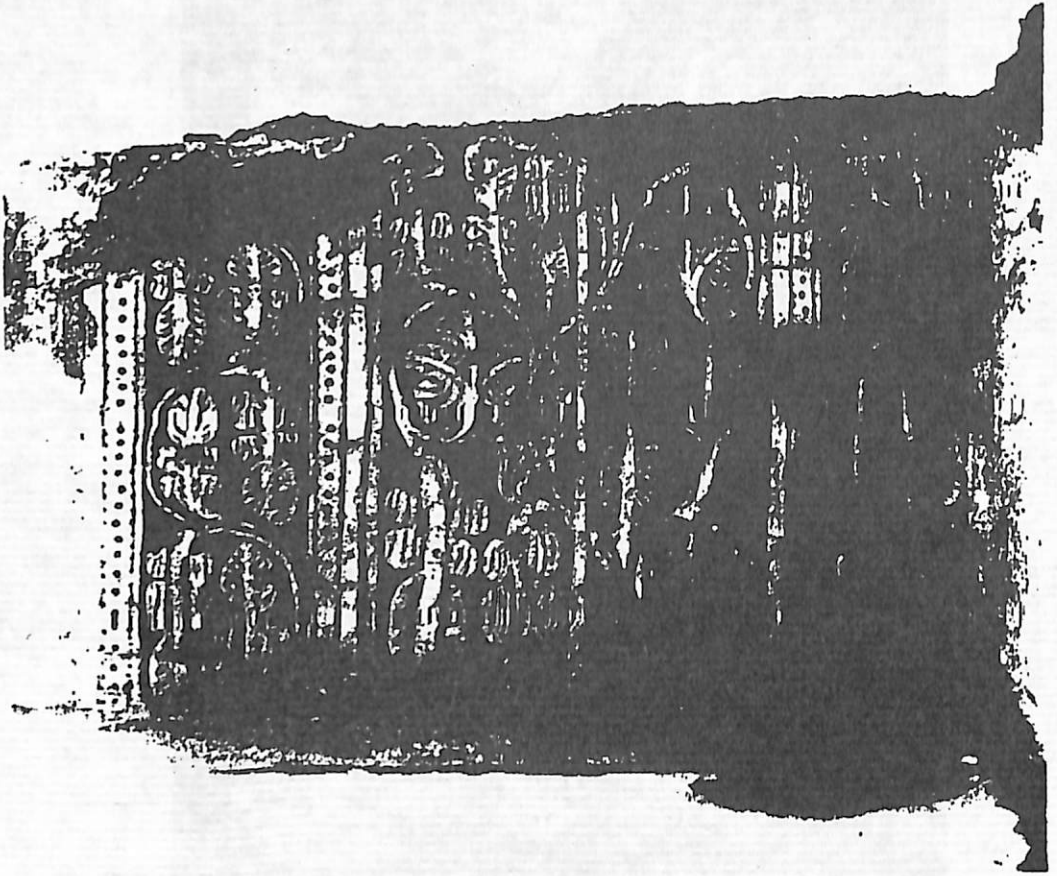
Fig. 10 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: *mihrāb* in room 1.2.
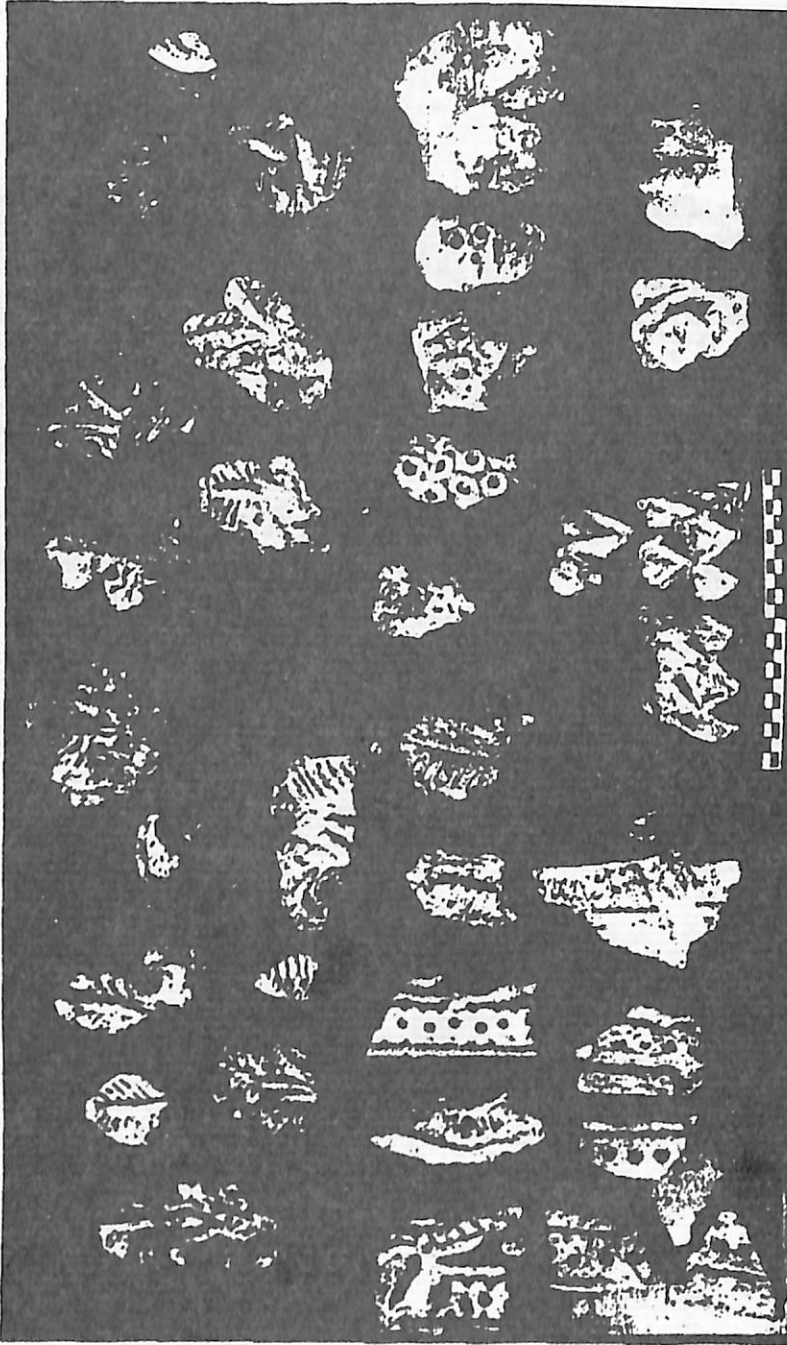
Fig. 11 : Madīnat al-Fār: stucco fragments.
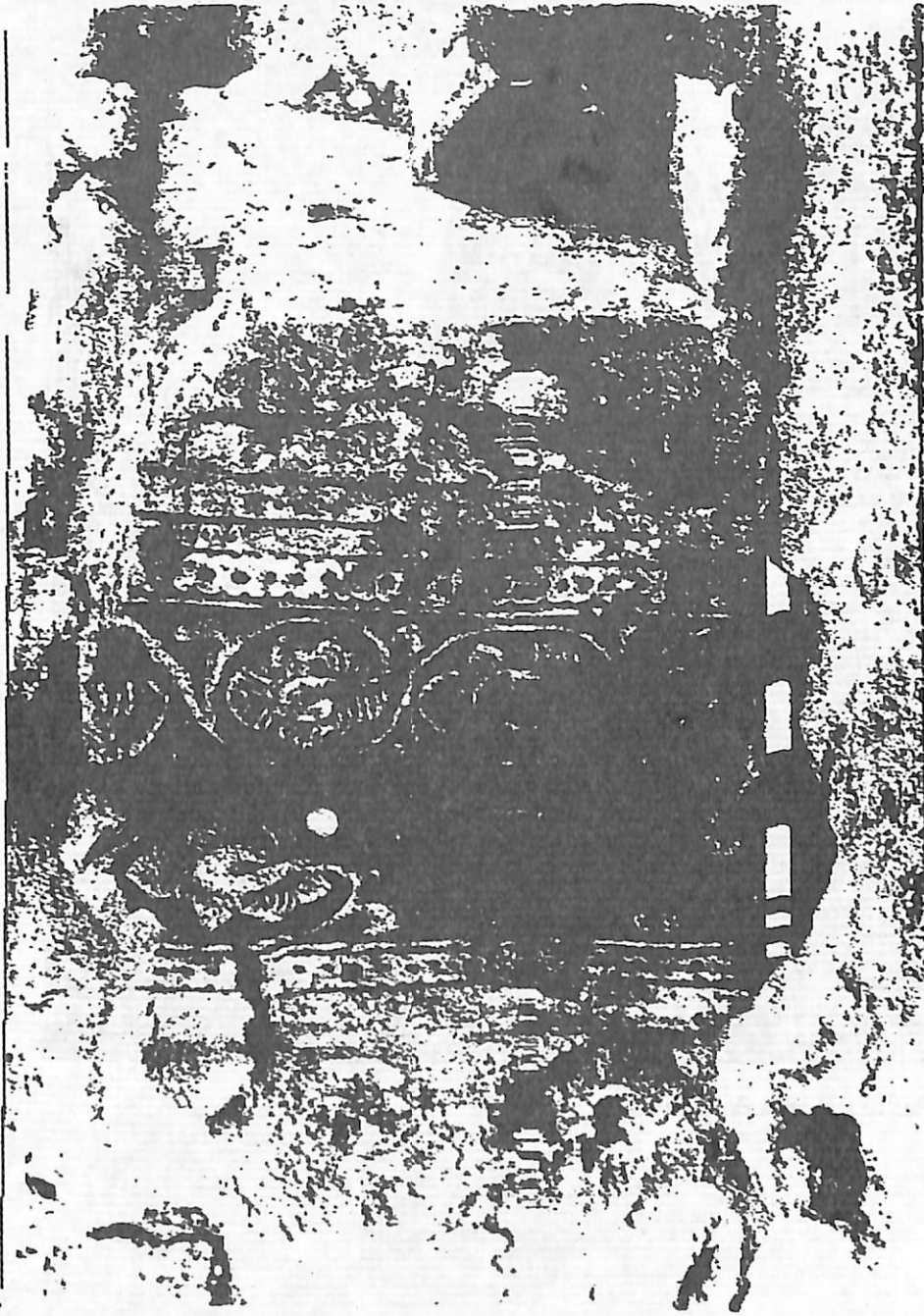
Fig. 12 : al-ᶜAlwiyya/Saudi Arabia: stucco frieze.
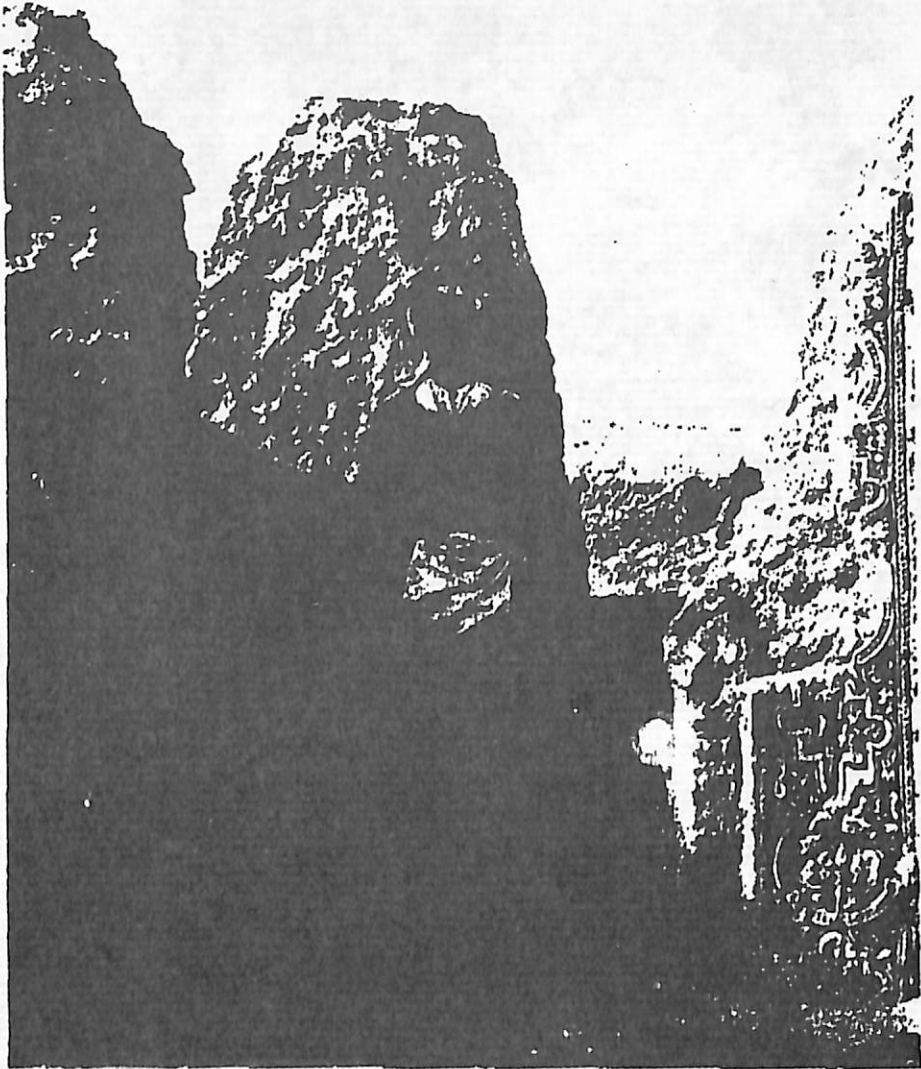
Fig. 13 : al-Hīra, Building I: door jambs.
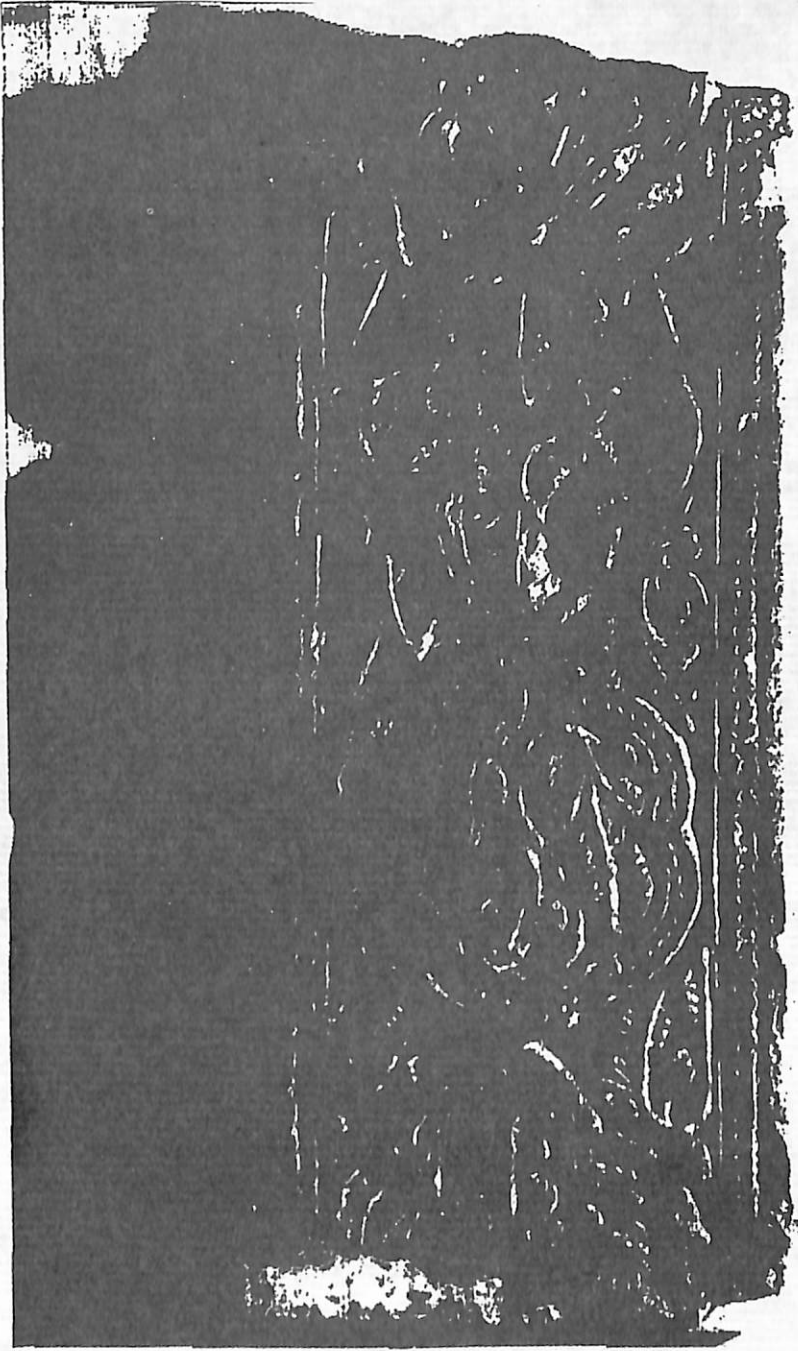
Fig. 14 : al-Raqqa, Palace B: stucco frieze (Damascus, National Museum).
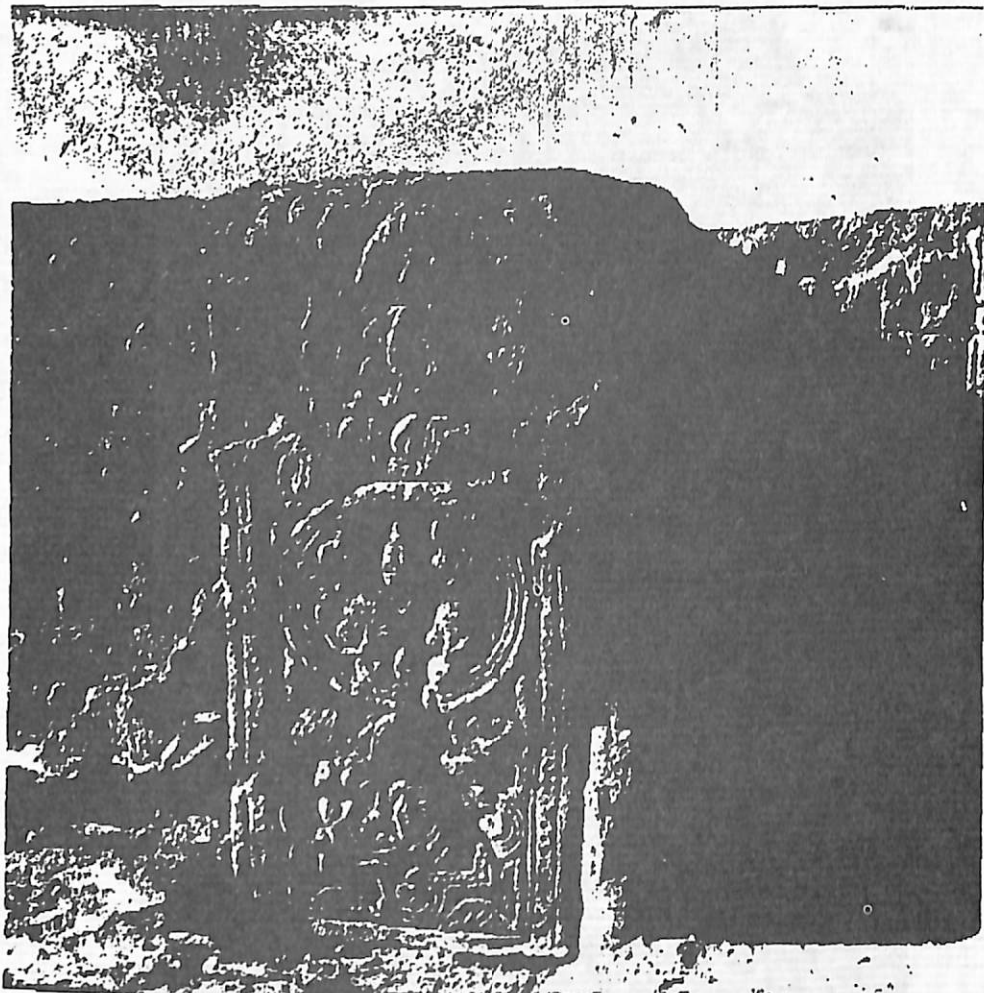
Fig. 15 : al-Raqqa, Palace D: *mihrāb*-frieze.
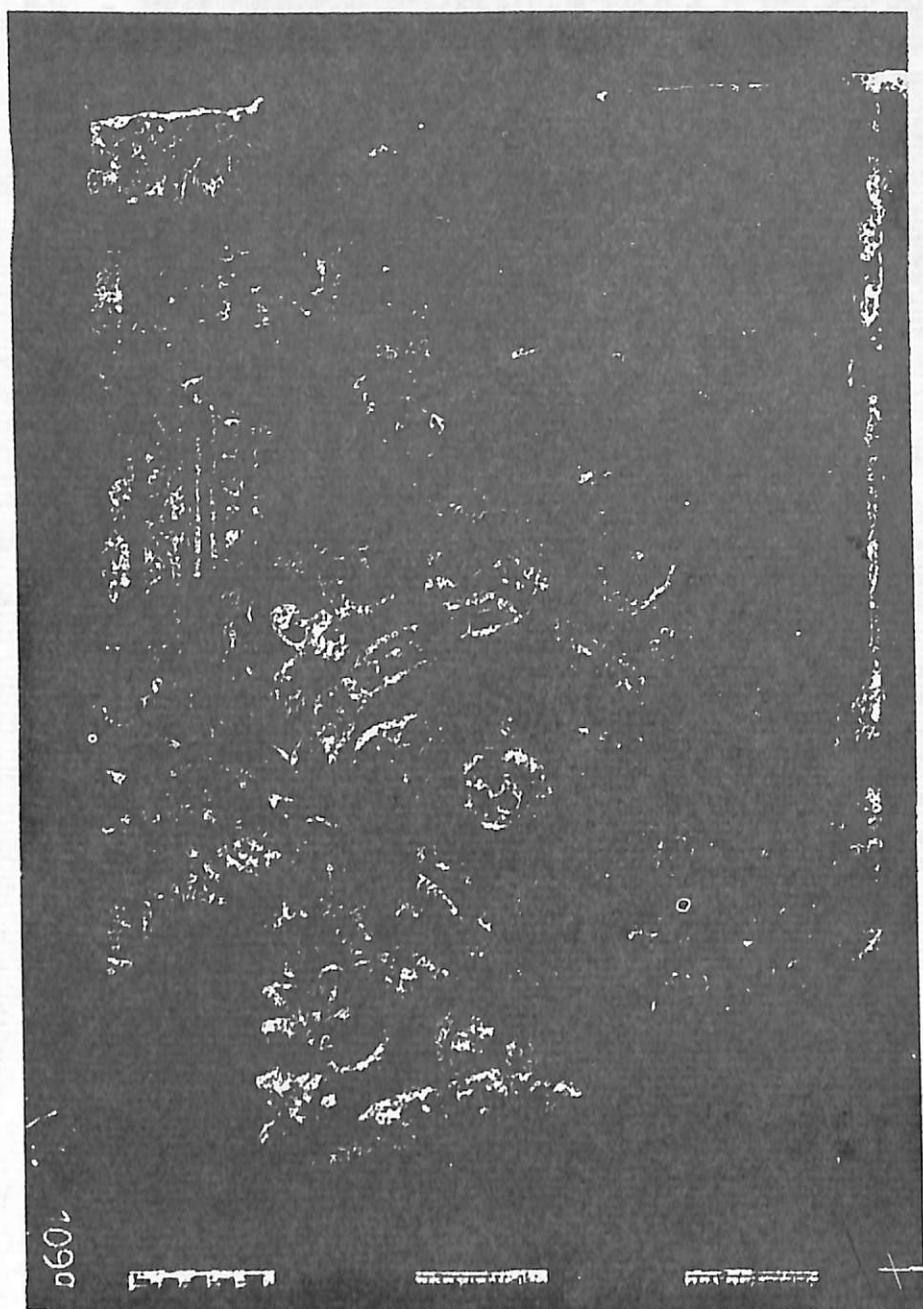
Fig. 16 : Ctesiphon – al-Madā' in: stucco frieze.
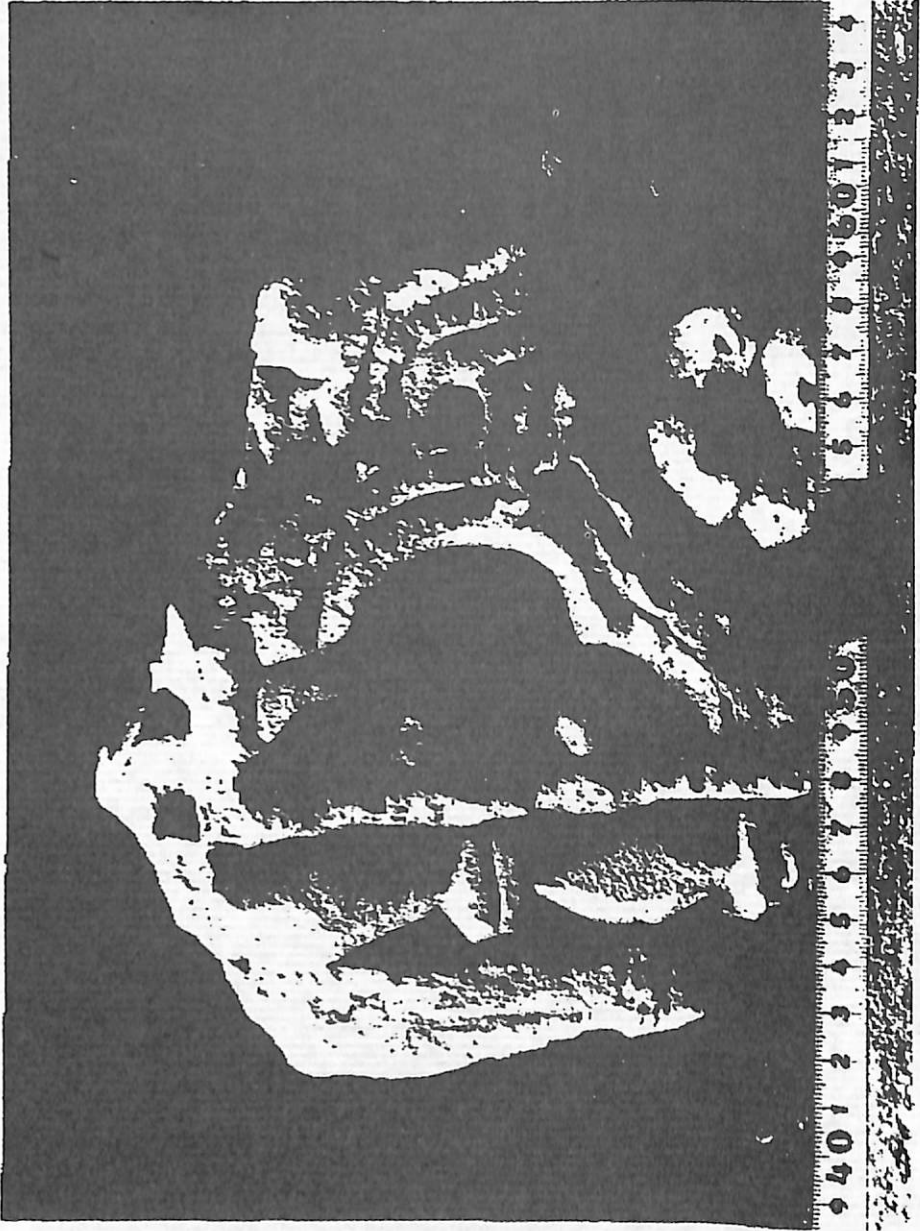
Fig. 17 : Qasral-Hayr al-Sharqi, large enclosure: stucco fragment.
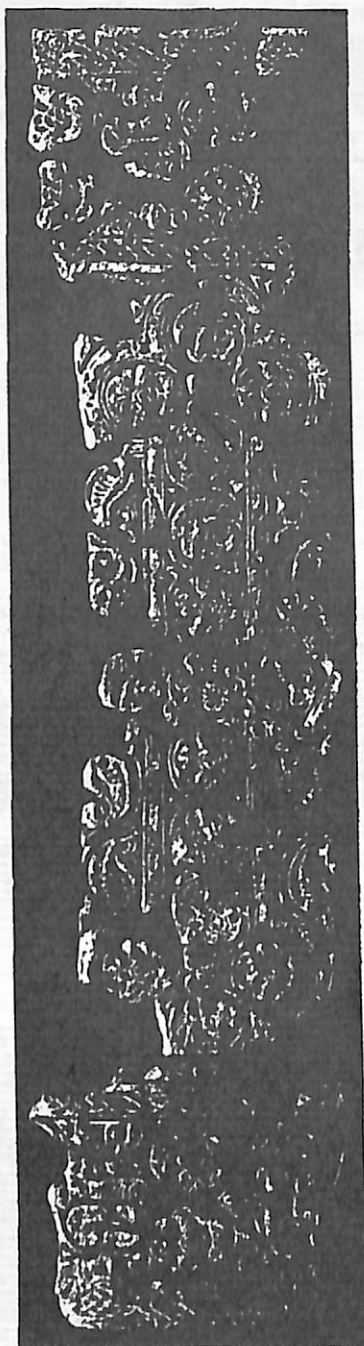
Fig. 18 : Berlin, Museum of Islamic Art inv. no. I.52/70: stucco panel from Nīshāpūr
(43,5 x 185 cm).
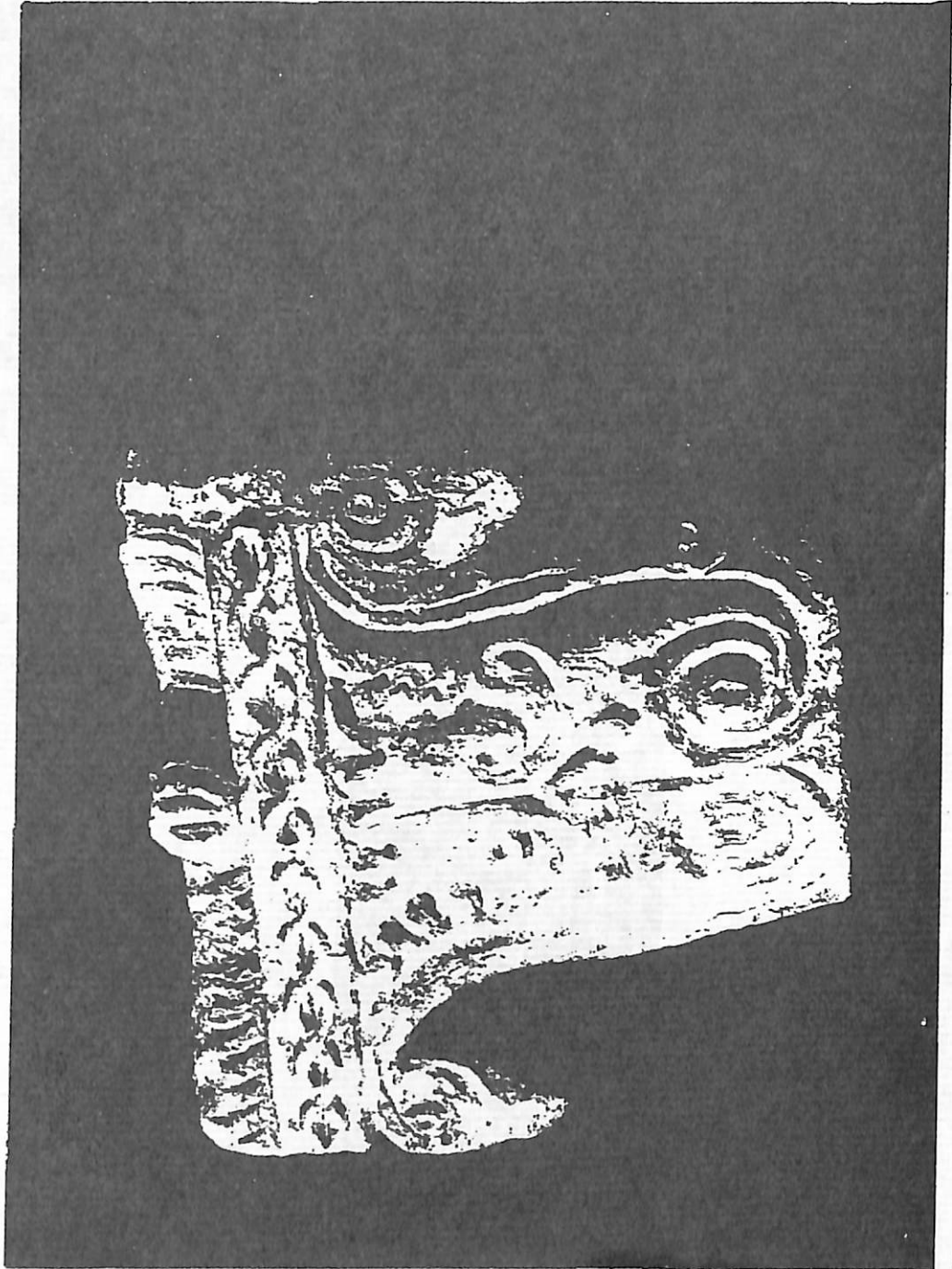
Fig. 19 : Damascus, National Museum inv. no. A 9687: stone capital from al-Raqqa.
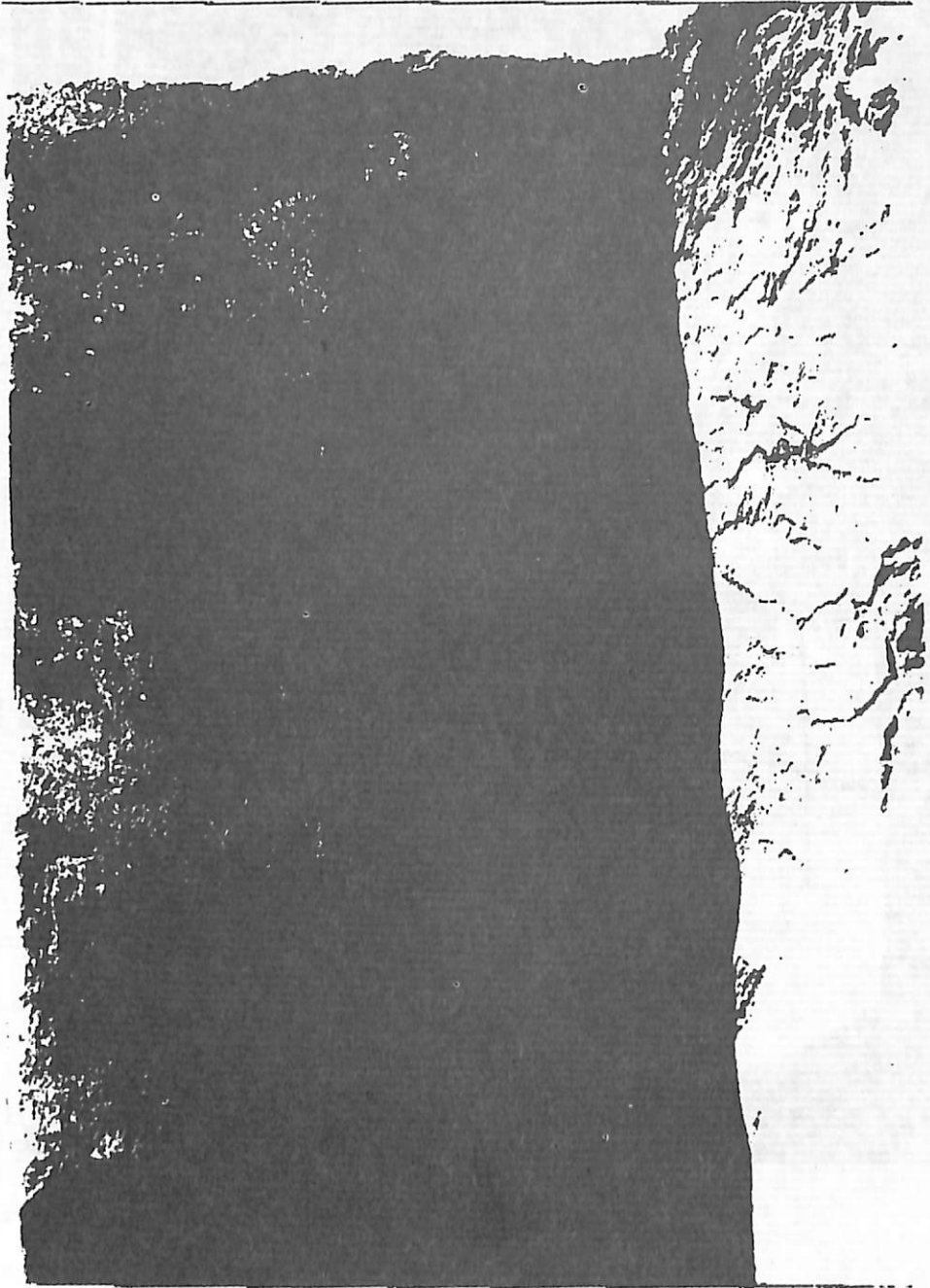
Fig. 20 : al-Raqqa, Western Palace: frieze H' of *mihrāb* in room III.4.
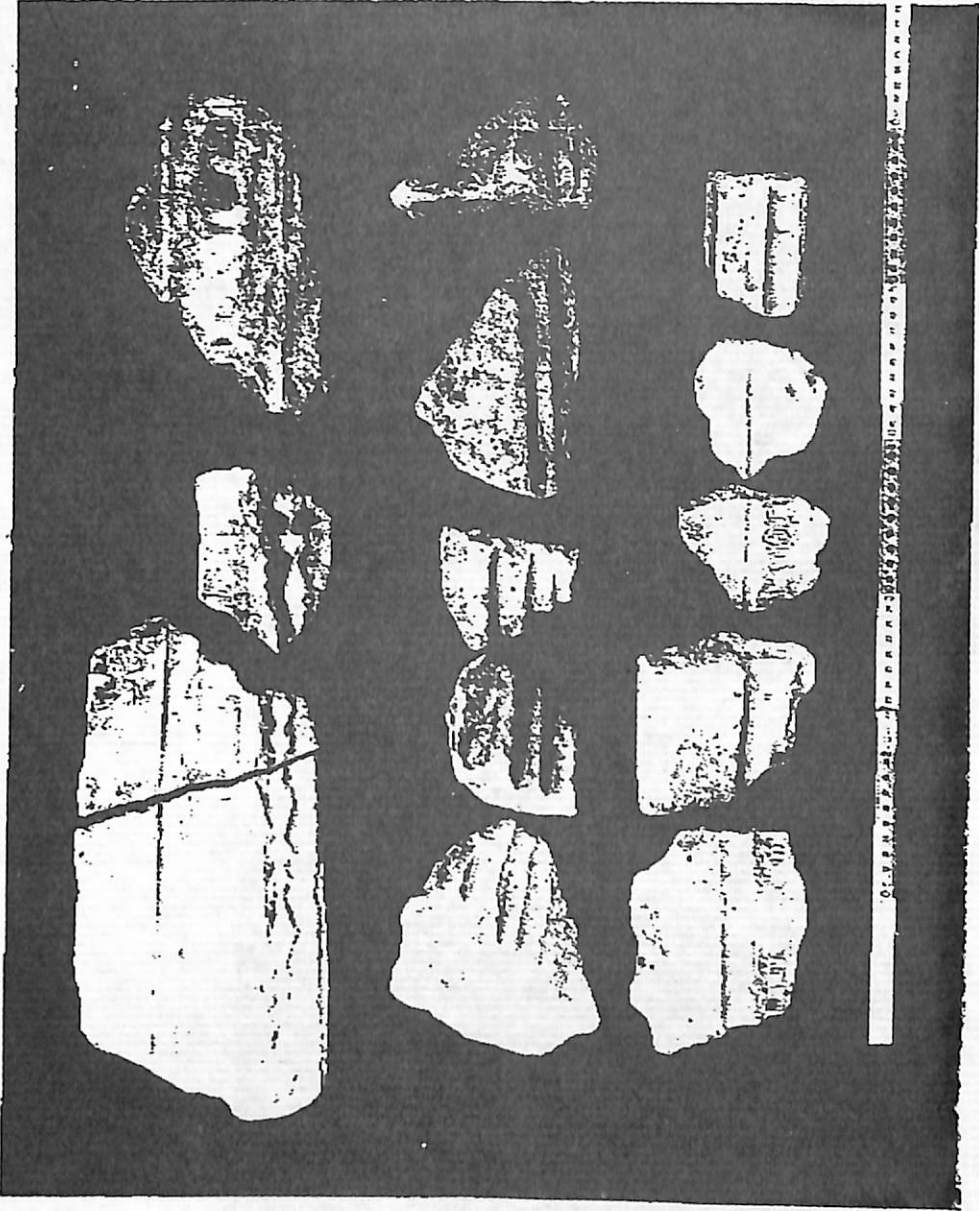
Fig. 21 : Hiraqla near al-Raqqa: fragments of stone decoration.
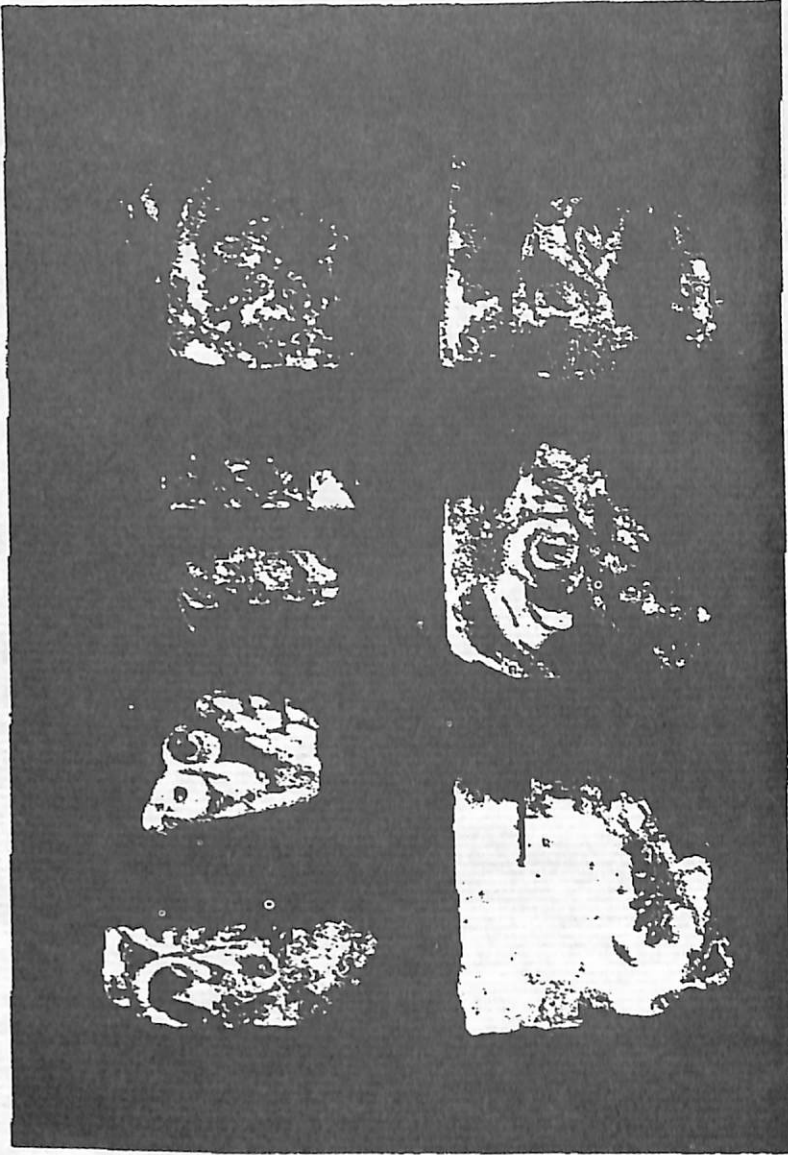
Fig. 22 : Hiraqla near al-Raqqa: fragments of stone decoration.
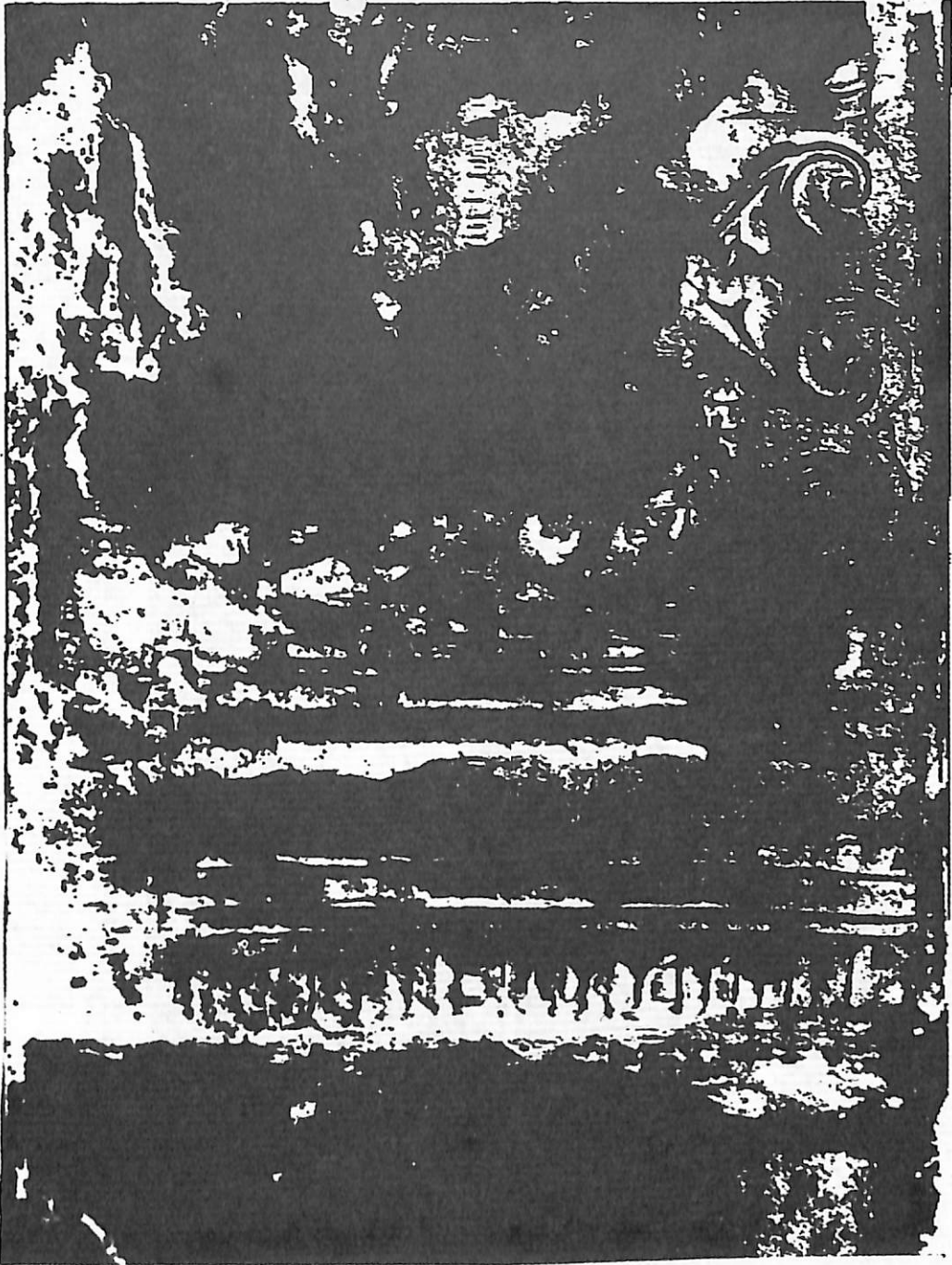
Fig. 23 : al-Raqqa/al-Rafiqa, Great Mosque: *miḥrāb* frame.
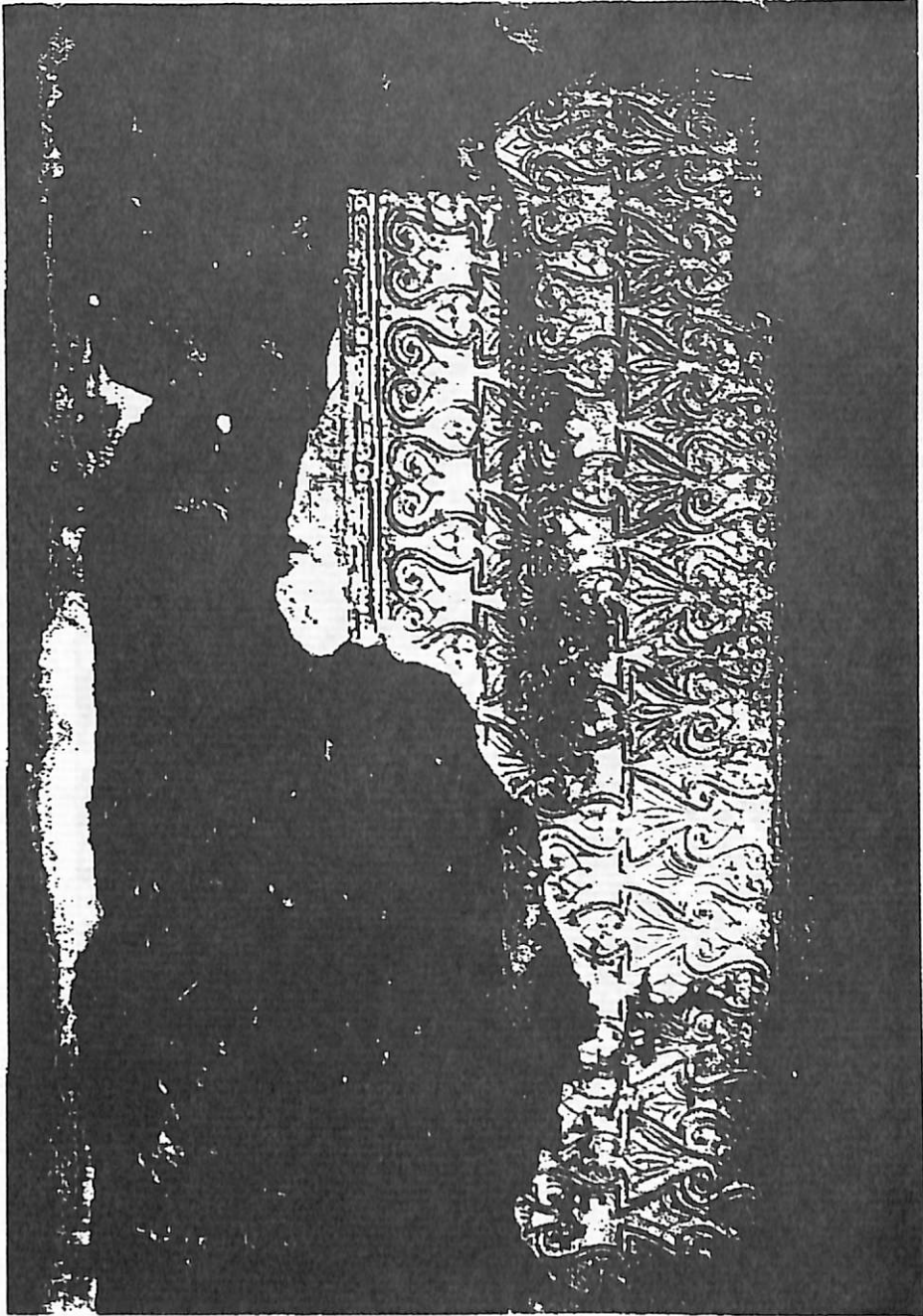
Fig. 24 : Sāmarrā, Jausaq al-Khāqāni: stucco panel.
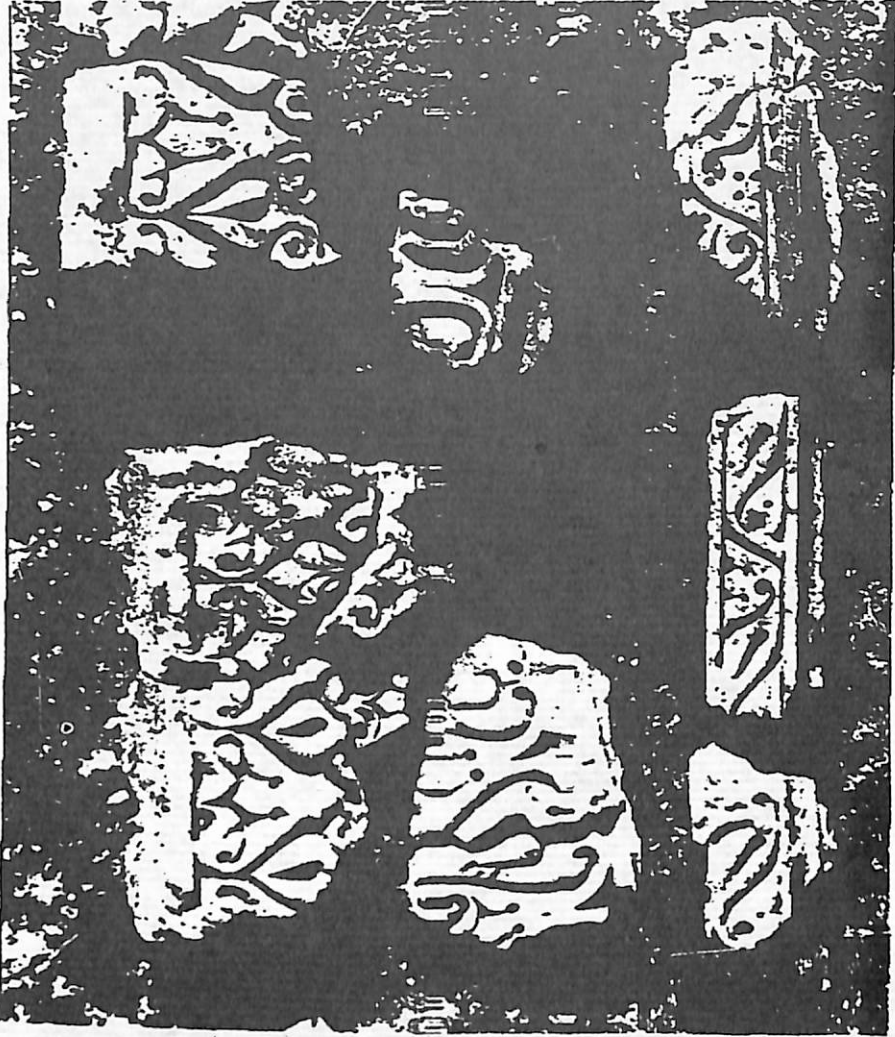
Fig. 25 : al-Raqqa/al-Rāfiqa, structure east of city walls: stucco fragments.
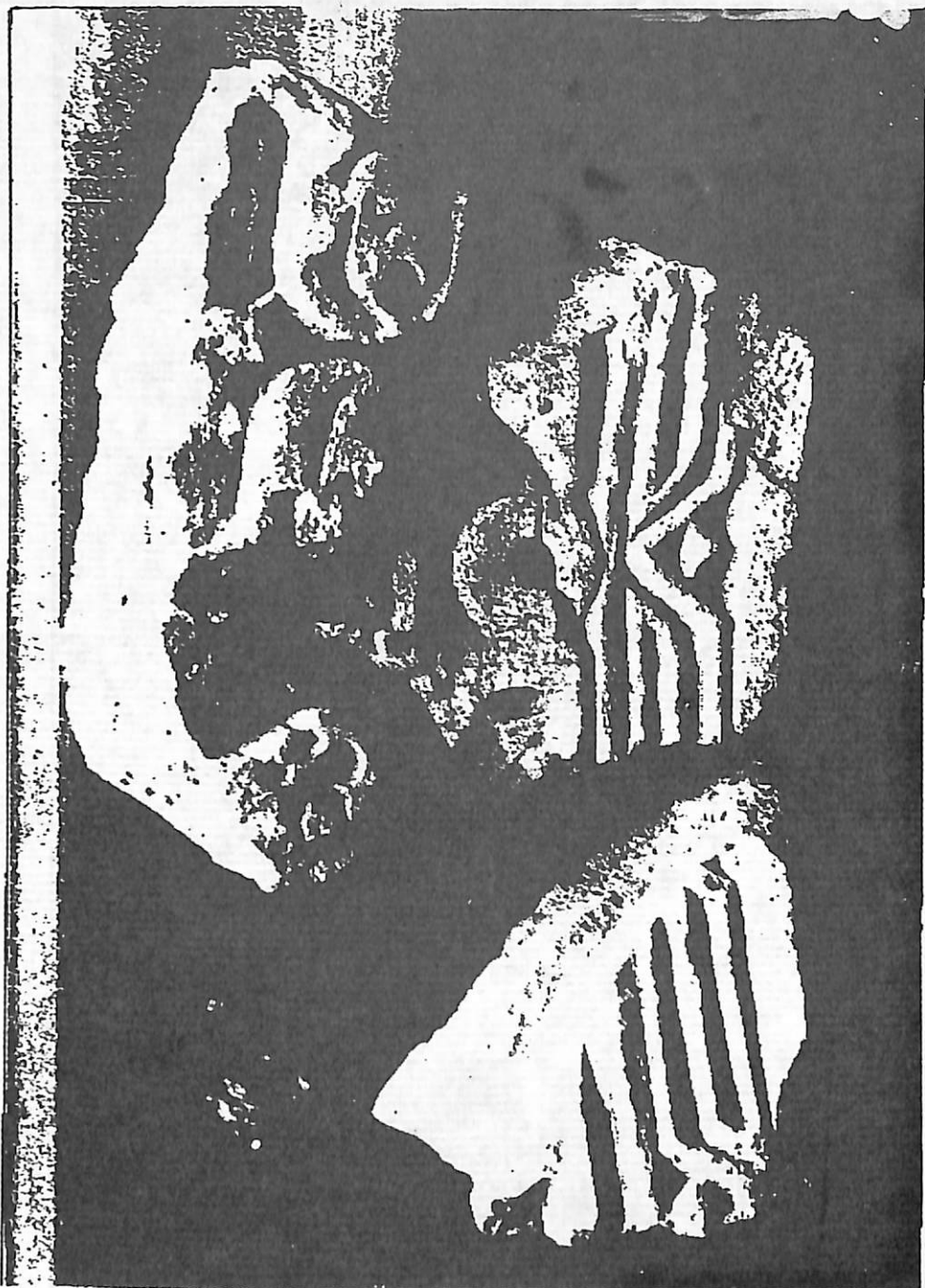
Fig. 26 : al-Raqqa – Tall Aswad: stucco inscription.
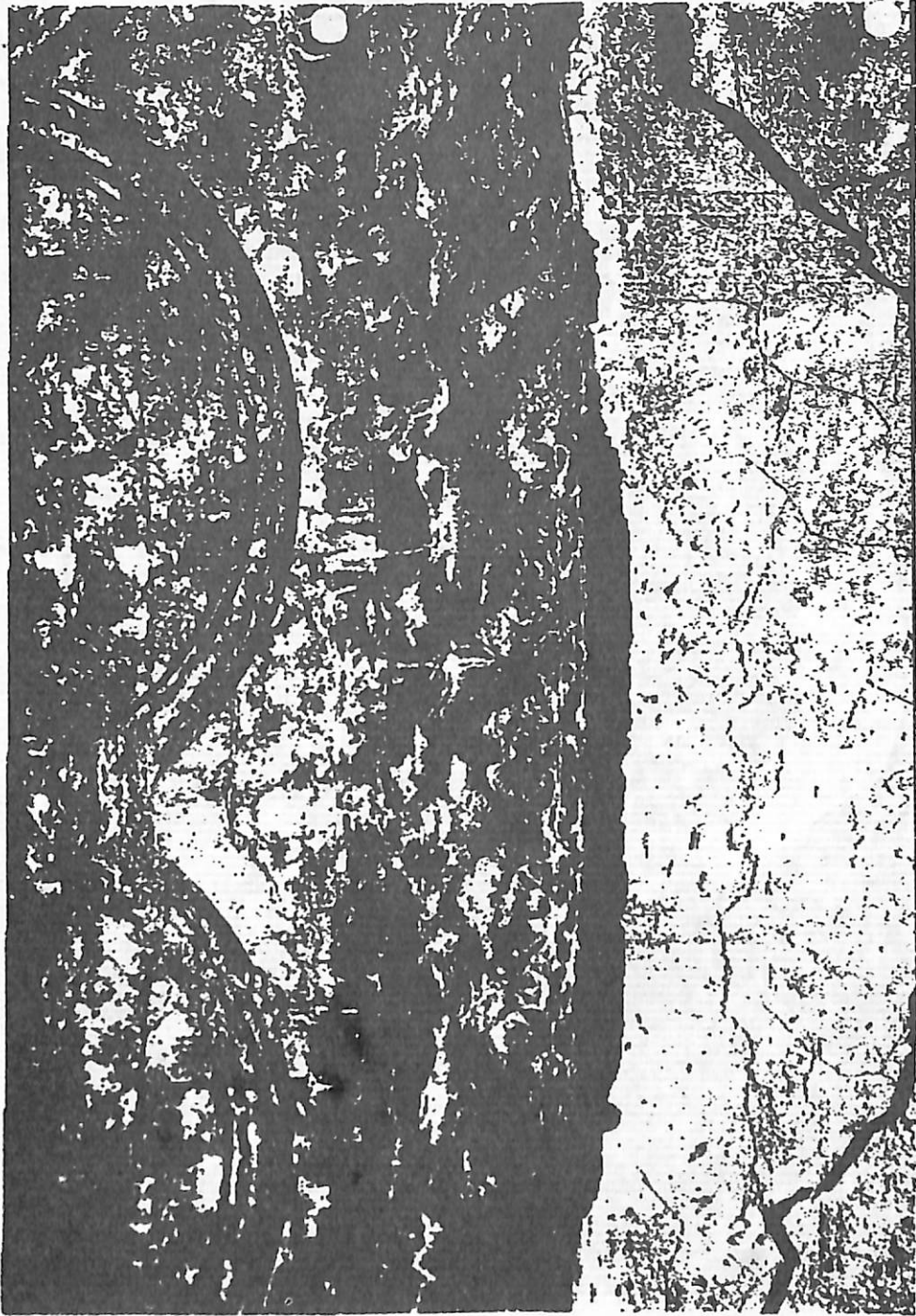
Fig. 27 : Rusāfā, Basilica A: stucco cornice.
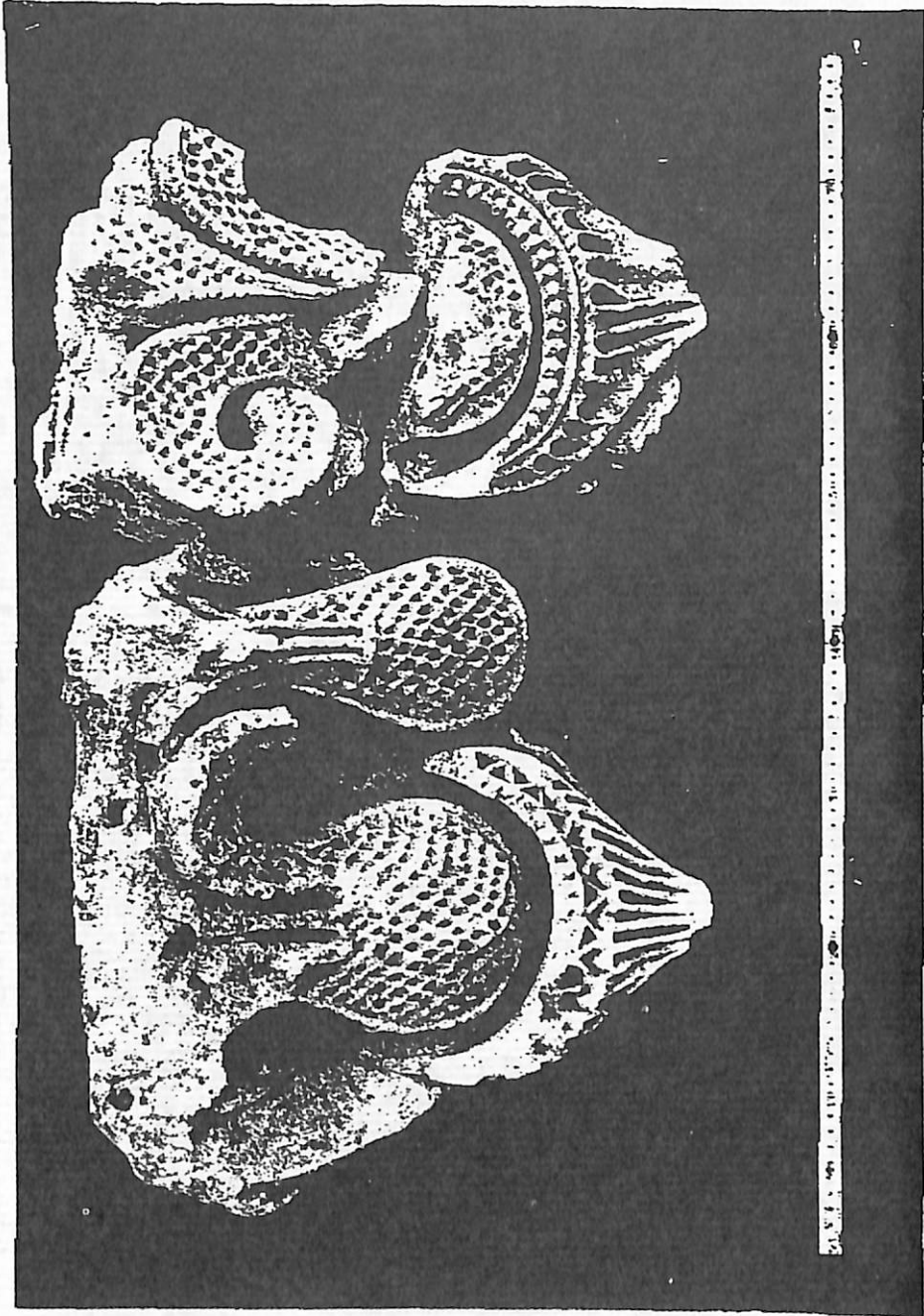
Fig. 28 : Sāmarrā', Jausaq al-Khāqānī: stucco cornice at the Bāb al-ᶜÁmma.
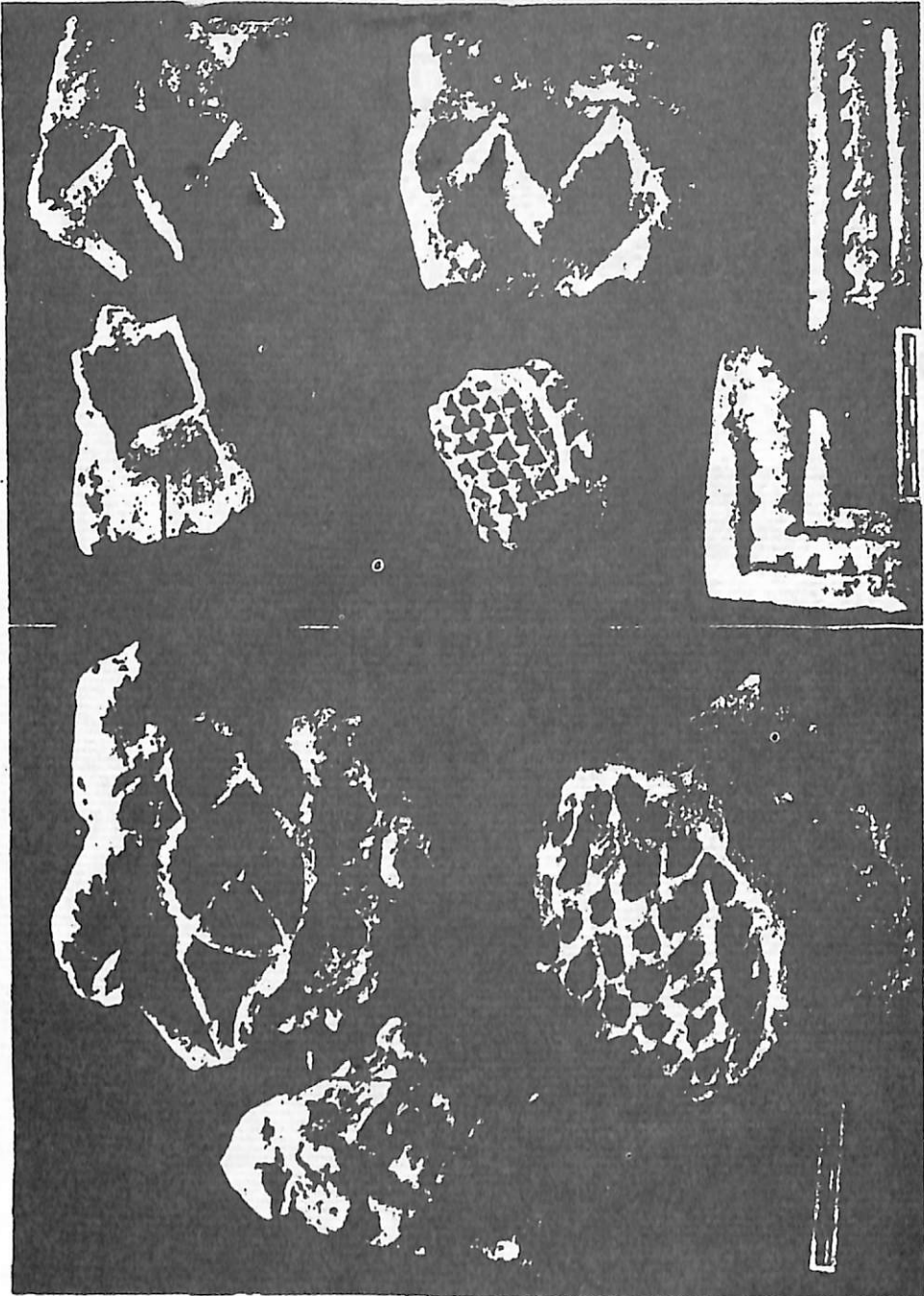
Fig. 29 : Tall al-Fakhariyya near Ra's al-ᶜAyn: stucco fragments.

Fig. 30.: Kharab Sayyar near Tall Khuwayra: stucco fragments.

Index

Fustat 74, 92, 137

Galatia 60
Gangs 81-90, 96-97
Gaza 70, 73, 137, 185
George, abbot 72
George, monk 66
George Syncellos 68
Georgian 66, 73
Georgios, bishop 35
al-Ghamr b. al-cAbbâs al-Khathcam 58
Ghûta 84-85, 87-88, 89, 95, 97, 98, 99, 111, 112
Greek Language 55, 66, 73, 79

Habîb b. Murra al-Murrî 64
Hadath 47, 50, 51, 56, 59
al-Hâdî 68-69
al-Hâkim 112
Hamâ 91, 103, 109, 110, 187
al-Hamdanî 163
Hammam Turkuman 207
Hanzit 45
Hârithûna, tribe 86
Harrân 47, 49, 199, 206
Harthuma b. Acyan 62
Hârûn al-Rashîd 5, 31, 46, 49, 50, 52, 54, 57-62, 68, 69-70, 72, 73, 91, 97, 184, 227-229, 230,
     232-235, 236
al-Hasan ibn Makhlad 43
al-Hasan b. Qahtaba al-Tâcî 57
Hawf 69
Hawrân 64, 97, 107, 111
al-Haytham ibn cAdî 36
Hazira 110
Hebron 138
Hesban 160
Hijâna 85
Hijâz 54, 57, 109, 186, 187
Hilal al-Sabi 111
Hims 98, 105, 108, 109, 110, 187
al-Hîra 230-231
Hiraqla 60, 61, 233
Hishâm b. cAbd al-Malik 181, 195, 197
Hisn Maslama 206, 208, 212-213
Hisn Sinan 61
Historical Geography 136-139
al-Hiyâjana 86-87, 88, 89
Holy Sepulchre 63, 69, 74, 78, 112
Homer 41
Humayd b. Macyûf al-Hajûrî 61
Humayma 106

al-Quwaysma 66

Raᶜban 46, 47, 51
al-Rabba 69, 109
Rafah 137
Rafaniyya 101
Râfiᶜ b. Layth b. Sayyâr 62
al-Râfiqa 61, 228-229, 232, 234
Rahba 98, 101
al-Ramla 83, 84, 106, 111, 112, 115, 119, 137, 138, 186
al-Raqqa 5, 49, 60, 66, 73, 195, 199, 206, 208, 209-210, 227, 228-229, 230-232, 233, 234, 235
Ra's al-ᶜAyn 206-207, 235
Ra's al-Tawîl 68
Ravenna 59
Rhodes 61
Roculphus 72
Romanos, martyr 66
Romanus III, emperor 48
Rome 65, 66, 68, 72
Rûm, see Byzantium
Rusafa 195-205, 235

Sâbîq b. Mahmûd 99
al-Safsaf 60
Saᶜid b. Khâlid al-ᶜUthmânî al-Fudaynî 184
Saᶜid b. Salm b. Qutayba 62
Salah al-Dîn 103
Salamiya 106, 107, 109, 110
Sâlih b. ᶜAlî b. ᶜAbd Allâh 54, 55, 57, 58
Sâlih b. Mirdâs al-Kilâbî 99, 100, 112
Sâlih b. Sulaymân 184
Samâlû 58, 61
Samaritan 63, 67
Sâmarrâ' 226, 229, 231, 233-234, 235, 236
Samsun 60
Sanᶜa 197
Sardis 47
Sarifia 70
Sawad 162-164, 212
Sawâfî 55, 57-60, 62
Saydnayâ 111
Sayf al-Dawla 49, 98, 106
Scythopolis, see Baysan
Sde Boker 64
Sebastia 73
Seljuq 11, 15, 16, 49, 51, 52, 100, 113
Sergius, saint 195
Sergius, bishop of Madaba 75-77
al-Sharât 107, 108
Shi'ite 84, 100

بلاد الشام في العصر العباسي

(١٣٢ / ٥ ٧٥٠ / م ـ ٤٥١ هـ / ٥٩ . ١٠ م)

المؤتمر الدولي الخامس لتاريخ بلاد الشّام

٧ ـ ١١ شعبان ١٤١٠هـ ، ٤ ـ ٨ آذار ١٩٩٠م

القسم الانجليزي والفرنسي

صورة من الرقة

تحرير

محمد عدنان البخيت   روبرت شيك

عمّان

١٤١٢هـ ـ ١٩٩١م