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K.A.C. CRESWELL

MARDĪN AND DIYĀRBEKR

The following manuscript was found among the papers which the late Professor K.A.C. Creswell bequeathed to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. It is the text of a lecture, but the circumstances of its presentation are unknown. Although the material it contains was intended for his Early Muslim Architecture, *the piece was not included in that study, nor was it subsequently published. It is still of interest for what it reveals of Creswell's characteristic eye for detail and his empirical approach to issues of chronology as much as for its contribution to architectural history.*

Because it is in the nature of a historical document, the text has been left in its original form throughout, aside from correcting minor slips and typographical errors, and no attempt has been made to make it consistent in style with the rest of the articles in this volume. An introductory note explaining the circumstances under which the author's visit to eastern Anatolia took place has also been included. The accompanying photographs were selected from a series of images of Diyarbekr in the Creswell Photographic Archive of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, that were evidently intended to illustrate the piece. These have been provided with captions according to contemporary conventions, and figure numbers have been inserted into the text at appropriate intervals.

Edinburgh, Scotland F.B. Flood

Reason for visit. My reason for visiting Diyārbekr was the fact that two of its gates, the Mardīn Gate and the Kharpūt Gate, were known to bear inscriptions of the Khalif Muqtadir, dated 297 H. (909/10). I therefore wanted to study them in order to include them in my *Early Muslim Architecture.*

It may not be generally known that, for a number of years past, the whole eastern half of Turkey, that is to say the whole of Turkey east of a line drawn north from the Gulf of Scanderūn, is a closed area for foreigners. I applied to the Foreign Office for a visa, but was told that it was an area not normally open to foreigners, and so they could do nothing. I then went with a letter of introduction to the Turkish Embassy in Portland Place, but the Ambassador said that the area was under military control; he said that nevertheless he would write to Constantinople, but he knew it would have no result.

However, some time previously I had asked Lady Loraine, before she left for Turkey, if she would help me when the time came that I wanted to go to Diyārbekr, and she had promised to use her good offices. After the failures just mentioned, I decided to write to her at Ankara and, many months afterwards, a letter came saying that she understood that permission was going to be granted me and that the Chancellery would write to me in due course. Ultimately they did so, saying that permission was to be granted to me on the following terms:

(1) That I should be met at the frontier by a Turkish Government Official, who would accompany me throughout my journey.

(2) That I should pay his expenses from Adana to Diyārbekr and back.

(3) That I should never try to go anywhere except with his approval.

I agreed and some weeks later I met him at Muslimīya Junction, on the Turkish frontier, 10 miles from Aleppo.

To reach Diyārbekr from Aleppo one must travel by the Baghdād Railway as far as Darbīsīya Junction, then change and take the line which branches off, runs north for 15 miles, and ends in the level plain at the foot of the mountain on which Mardīn stands. From Mardīn it is 55 miles by road to Diyārbekr. I will speak of Mardīn first.

MARDĪN

Mardīn presents an extraordinary spectacle, perched as it is on a mountain 4,000 feet high, which overlooks the flat plain of Upper Mesopotamia at its foot. The station is on the plain, and a winding road climbs up to Mardīn. The summit of the mountain is occupied by the remains of the citadel, and the main street of the town runs along the sloping face of the mountain with houses towering above it on the north side; the

houses on the other side, in many cases, have their roofs almost level with the road, and over them one has a marvellous view of the flat plain beyond, stretching away as far as the eye can see.

No wonder such a place was regarded as impregnable; Saladin attempted to take it in vain in 579 H. (1183). Even the Mongols failed in 658 H. (1261) when Hūlagū's son Yashmut besieged it for eight months. Even Tīmūr, in 806 H. (1404), although he took the town, failed to take the citadel.

As for the monuments of Mardīn, most of the mosques and madrasas were occupied by troops. This was the case with the Great Mosque, which I could not enter. However, I photographed the eastern entrance. This inscription is not the dating inscription of the mosque, but a decree ordering the abolition of various illegal taxes. It is dated 582 H. (1186), so the mosque cannot be later than that. The minaret alongside, however, is dated 572 H. (1176) which may well be the date of the mosque also.

The attractive cornice on brackets recalls similar work a century later at Jerusalem, e.g., the Rībāṭ al-Mansūrī of Sultān Qalāūn, dated 681 H. (1282/3). It is earlier than anything of the kind in Syria.

The minaret is remarkable as the first exception to the rule in Syria, where every minaret down to almost the end of the 12th century is square. The change begins with the octagonal minarets of Bālis, 1193–1218, and Salkhad, 1232/3. Here, the shaft is circular, like most Persian minarets, but it rests on a fairly high square base, remarkable for a splendid Kufic rectangle, the earliest example known to me, although it is such a fine specimen that it must have been preceded by a previous period of evolution. The whole minaret is of stone with crisply cut ornament, medallions, arched panels, etc. The top part is due to a recent rebuilding. From the top of the bazaar the plain of Mesopotamia is far below, stretching away into the distance.

The masonry of this minaret is as sharp as the day it was cut; it is impossible to imagine anything finer than the beautiful limestone of this region, which takes on a beautiful warm amber tint in the course of time.

DIYĀRBEKR

As nearly all the monuments of Mardīn were being used as barracks for troops, I could not enter them (except one), so after a day I went on to Diyārbekr by road. Owing to the high level of the country it was beautifully cool, although it was June, and the country was green.

The bridge. On approaching Diyārbekr one passes a magnificent bridge across the Upper Tigris, whose source is only about 100 miles away. The bridge is built of black basalt and has ten pointed arches. On the north face, near the west end are the remains of a long inscription in elaborate Kufic characters carved on blocks of white limestone set in the masonry. It states that it was built by Mu'ayyīd ad-Daula Abu'l-Qāsim Naṣr in 457 H. (1065). Even the name of the architect—'Ubayd, son of Sanjar—is given, a practice rare in Egypt, but more common in Syria and Asia Minor. Curious thing: unlike the rest of the inscription which stands out in white, the name of the architect is carved on a block of black basalt.

This, therefore, must be the bridge mentioned by Ibn al-Azraq Fāriqī. It must be the third bridge built at this spot. The first was destroyed by a flood which brought down timber and great trees which formed a mass six miles long, in 124 H. (742/3), the last year of the reign of the Khalif Hishām. Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē tells us that the Khalif had collected masons and workmen, and all that was necessary for its rebuilding when he suddenly died. It must nevertheless have been rebuilt, for Matthew of Edessa tells us that a bridge over the Tigris was destroyed by the Emperor Zimisces about 973, during his expedition against Amida (= Diyārbekr). Thus we have three bridges, (i) an ancient bridge, destroyed in 742, (ii) another destroyed in 973, and (iii) the present one, built in 1065. This is the oldest existing bridge in Islam.

From this bridge one has a good view of the wall that encircled Amida, the finest city walls in the Middle East.

The Mardīn Gate. The road which passes the west end of the bridge leads to the Mardīn Gate, the south gate of Diyārbekr. It consists, or rather once consisted, of a triple entrance flanked by two immense towers, but only the east entrance is open to-day. The inscription of the Khalif al-Muqtadir runs across the façade about two-thirds of the way up. It is dated 297 H. (909/10). There are two others, with the same date on the right (east) salient, just below the moulding. But these inscriptions, which merely say, "This is what has been ordered, etc.," cannot possibly mean that al-Muqtadir has built the gateway, for it is quite clear that al-

most two-thirds of the wall between the salients has been destroyed. Only the lower part of the door-jambs of the central and west gateway has been left, after which they have been filled up with masonry and a plain wall built up above them. Only the right gateway has survived intact. As the inscription of al-Muqtadir runs across his plain wall built above the remains of the central and left gateway, it follows that his work cannot be earlier than the event which caused such serious damage.

What was this event? About the middle of the third (ninth) century, Diyārbekr belonged to a family of which the chief was Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn ʿIsā ibn Shaykh, whose father and grandfather had governed Diyārbekr before him. He revolted against the Khalif al-Muʿtadid, who marched against the city in 286 H. (899), which surrendered and had its walls damaged to prevent it from offering a similar defiance again. Hence the repairs of al-Muqtadir eleven years later. Thus the Mardīn Gate is not due to al-Muqtadir at all, but is part of the Byzantine fortifications, its triple entrance serving the three divisions of a long main street, probably colonnaded, leading northwards and ending at the Kharpūt Gate.

This triple division of the two main streets: a central broader track for chariots and pack animals and narrower side one for pedestrians, was the rule in Hellenistic cities, and this involved triple gateways, e.g., the Golden Gate at Constantinople, the Bāb Sharqī at Damascus, the North Gate at Baʿalbek, Hatra, and similar gates in Asia Minor at Hierapolis, Patara, Adaeia, etc.

The Kharpūt Gate. A long irregular main street leads northwards and ends at the Kharpūt Gate, the north gate of the city. Let us go through it and examine it from the exterior (fig. 1). Here we have a single entrance only between two great towers nearly 18 m in width, and projecting 14 m set 18½ m apart, i.e., less than in the case of the Mardīn Gate, but much farther apart than they need be to flank a gateway only some 2½ m wide. The towers are similar to those of the Mardīn Gate, with the same moulding running round them at about one third of their height and the same slight reduction in width where the curved front begins. The masonry is of black basalt in both cases. The wall to the west of the gateway has been cut away for a distance of about 50 yards; this was done after the Kurdish uprising of 1925.

The towers are divided into two stories internally; a very badly damaged quarter-round moulding marks the floor level between them. But for this they are quite plain and devoid of decoration, except for four little niches, two of which flank the entrance, the other two set in the inner faces of the towers themselves. All appear to be re-used classical niches, except the one set in the east salient, which may well be of Muslim origin; likewise the curious animals flanking it.

Fig. 1. Diyārbekr. Kharpūt Gate, exterior. (Photo: courtesy Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

The entrance is very small, being barely 2½ m wide. It is spanned by a horizontal arch, with a shallow relieving arch above, the whole being set in a semicircular arched frame. High above it are still preserved the stone brackets of a machicoulis. The entrance passage, which is nearly twice the width of the entrance, is covered by a brick vault.

Across the back of the exit is a tranverse vaulted hall of three bays, with three arches opening towards the road going south (fig. 2). It bears a magnificent Kufic frieze, much damaged, but apparently in the

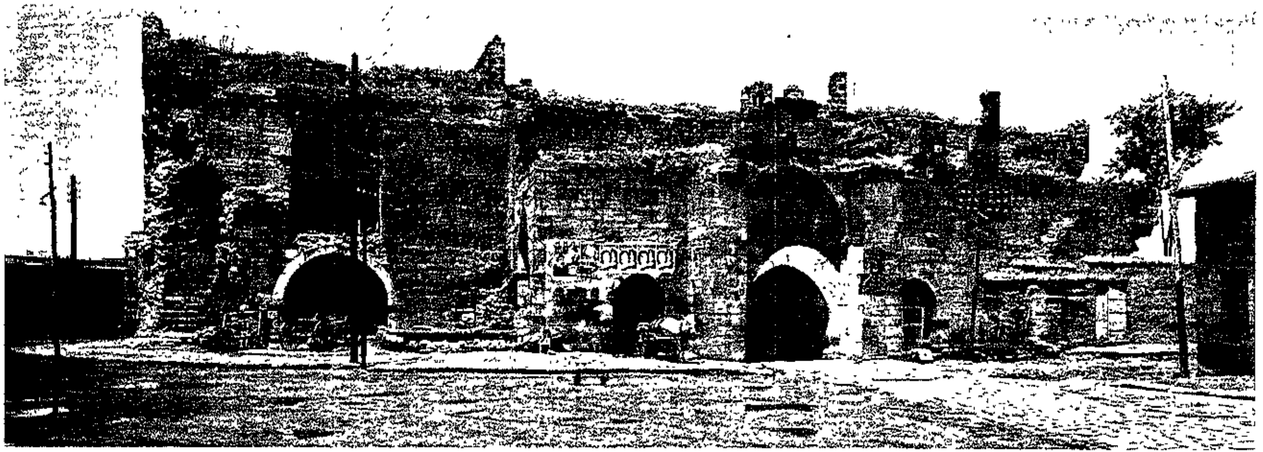

Fig. 2. Diyārbekr. Kharpūt Gate, interior. (Photo: courtesy Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

name of the Emīr Aḥmad who reigned from 401 to 453 H. (1010–61). Above it, in the centre is a machicoulis, which opens into the crown of the arch.

To the right and left are the rear faces of the two towers. The entrance to the lower storey of each tower is at the back of an arched recess about 5 m deep, on either side of which is a staircase running up to the first-floor level, where there is a landing at the back of the entrance to the second floor. From this landing, staircases to the right and left run up to the platform on top of the towers. It is quite obvious that the ground has risen considerably, for there is a splay-face moulding almost at the present ground level.

On entering the upper storey of these towers we find ourselves in a large room partly covered by a dome and partly by a semi-dome, both of brick. There are five arrow-slits set at the end of narrow vaulted recesses over 3½ m deep, for the walls are immensely thick.

To whom must we attribute this gateway? On the slightly projecting part of the façade immediately above the entrance is a Kufic inscription carved on the stones, which states: "This is what has been ordered by the Khalif al-Muqtadir billāh, and that in the year 297 H." (909/10). An inscription to the same effect runs above the niche set on the inner face of the west tower and continues above the shell-hooded niche on the right tower.

But when we come to examine the structure, it becomes increasingly difficult to attribute it to al-Muqtadir. In the first place the vaults of the tower chamber are constructed of brickwork unlike any that I have ever seen in Muslim work. The bricks, for example, are very large and very thin like tiles, and the mortar joints are nearly as thick as the bricks. All this is characteristic of Byzantine work, even in Syria, e.g., the Praetorium of Bālis on the Euphrates, of Qaṣr Ibn Wardān, and Andarīn, and moreover, it is exactly like the brickwork vaults of the round towers of the curtain wall running away to the right and left of this gateway. As for the exterior of the towers, they are similar, as I have already remarked, to those of the Mardīn Gate which we have seen was most certainly not built by al-Muqtadir, but merely partly walled up by him after it had been seriously damaged in an uprising eleven years previously.

Yet if this gate dated from the pre-Muslim period we should expect it to have a triple entrance to match its counterpart, the Mardīn Gate, at the opposite end of the main north-south street with its triple division, chariots, and pack animals in the centre and pedestrians at the sides. There is obviously plenty of room for such a triple entrance, for the towers are set 18½ m apart and the entrance only measures 2½ m in width. Can al-Muqtadir's work have been confined to the rebuilding of the part between the towers?

Let us look at it once more. What is the meaning of the pilaster or door-jamb to the left of the little niche? There is a similar one in the same position on the other side of the entrance. Note that their capitals have the same form as the central pair, except that they are without decoration. Now the lateral entrances of a triple gate are always smaller than the central one. This suits our jambs, for they are lower than the central one. Moreover, they are placed 3.69 m and 3.70 m respectively from the flanks of the towers nearest to them, so that there is plenty of room for a lateral

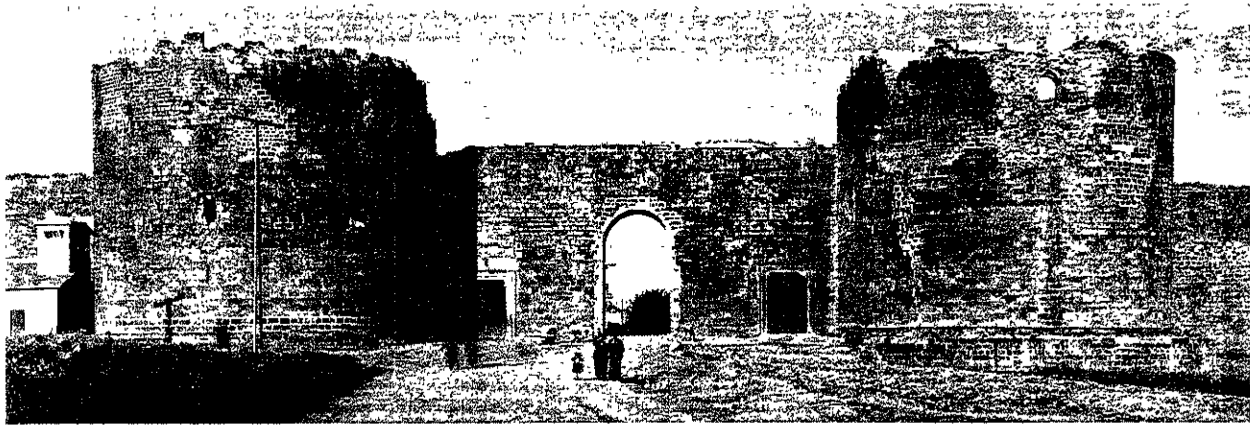

Fig. 3. Diyārbekr. Aleppo or Urfa Gate, exterior. (Photo: courtesy Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

entrance, say 2 m wide and another pilaster to take the return of the arch. I am therefore convinced that the central part of this gate met a fate similar to that of the Mardīn Gate in the rising of 899, the central door jambs and perhaps the arch being left, but only one jamb of each of the side doors, and that al-Muqtadir built up the curtain wall as he had done in the case of the Mardīn Gate, leaving only the central one in use. In confirmation of this, the shaft of the eastern door jamb forms one with the block to the right, and the capital likewise, whereas the courses of masonry to the left do not correspond, but are merely brought up to the shaft and the mouldings of the capital and abut against them. Finally I would add that the courses of this curtain wall do not correspond in any case with those of the flanking towers.

The Urfa Gate. A length of wall, about 16 m high and 4½ m thick, flanked by about 20 great round fronted towers, similar to those of the Kharpūt Gate, brings us to the Urfa Gate, which faces west. In the curtain wall between each tower is a rectangular buttress. It is sometimes called the Aleppo Gate (fig. 3). Its flanking towers are 20 m high and the wall between nearly 17 m. Here the whole composition is obviously pre-Muslim, with its central and lateral openings corresponding to the triple divisions of the main east-west street. The left opening has been re-made in the Muslim period by the Urtuqid Muḥammad, as is recorded by an inscription dated 579 H. (1183/4). Immediately above the lintel is an eagle or hawk standing on the horns of the skull of an ox, through the nose of which hangs a ring. The gate closing this lateral entrance is made entirely of horizontal and perpendicular bars of iron riveted to thick iron plates. The whole is entirely of iron, no woodwork being employed. The central opening, which was walled up until quite recent times, is now open. Its arch is new. A staircase to the rampart walks runs up behind the wall to the south of the gateway.

The walls (fig. 4). If we now continue to our right, we observe four great round towers, similar to those we have already seen, with a rectangular buttress between each as before. Then the style suddenly changes: with two exceptions, all the towers from this point to the Mardīn Gate are square; each curtain wall is strengthened with a rectangular buttress as before. From now onwards, for some distance, the wall follows the edge of a deep ravine full of orchards. In following this ravine the wall comes forward, retreats, and then comes forward again, forming as it were two horns; the tip of each horn is defended by a most magnificent tower of limestone instead of basalt like the rest. The first is called Evli Badan, the second Yedi Qardash (fig. 5).

Above the remains of a stone glacis, intended to protect the base of the tower and render difficult the placing of scaling ladders, runs a great inscription in Naskhi characters between fine, crisply carved mouldings. Above the centre of it is a double-headed eagle, and flanking the central part of the inscription are two rectangular frames, containing curious feline animals with human heads.

The inscription is in the name of the Urtuqid Mahmūd of Hisn Kaifa, and is dated 605 H. (1208/9). In some of his inscriptions this ruler is called *baighu* = falcon. Is this bird intended for a falcon? At a

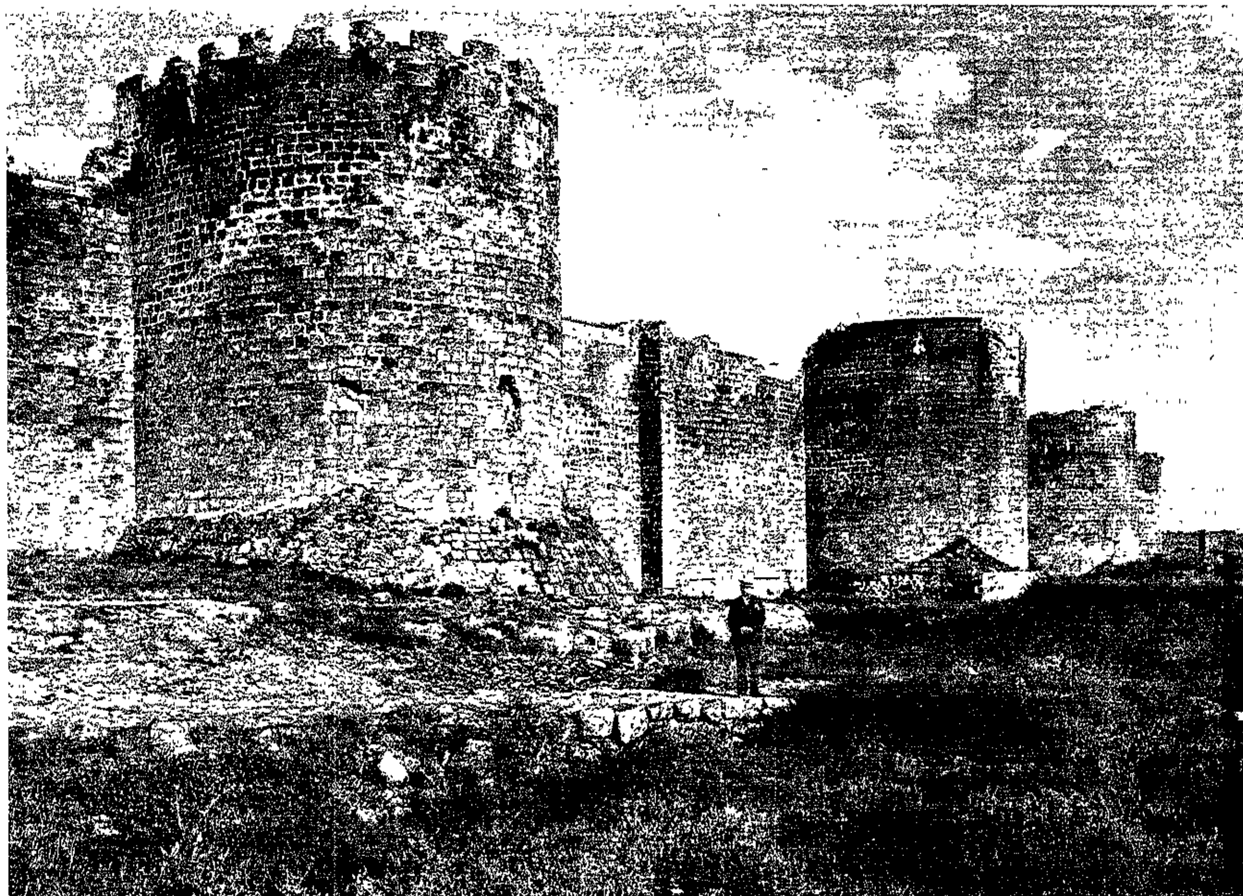

Fig. 4. Diyārbekr. City walls, general view. (Photo: courtesy Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

level slightly above the inscriptions are five arrow slits framed in fine mouldings, salient not recessed. Above them is an ogee moulding on which rest five machicoulis with splendid stalactite corbels; such machicoulis are unique, except for very inferior specimens on Yedi Qardash. From this tower onwards the wall is similar to that just described, except that there are two rectangular buttresses instead of one between each tower.

We now come to the other point of the horn, defended by the second great round tower—Yedi Qardash (fig. 5). It is surrounded by a similar band of inscription, but instead of being framed between two fine mouldings, it has one only, which runs along its upper edge. As in the last, the central part is flanked by two human-headed felines, with a double-headed eagle or falcon above. In this case, however, it is set in a stepped rectangular frame with a trefoil in the centre. The inscription is in the name of the same Maḥmūd of Ḥiṣn Kaifa, but there is no date.

This tower, like its fellow, is built of limestone which has taken a beautiful amber tint. I was fortunately able to examine its interior, which held a great surprise in store for me. Instead of being entirely the work of Maḥmūd, as has been supposed hitherto, I found that the tower was composite. Within it still existed the original but much smaller Byzantine corner tower of basalt. Round this nucleus had been built the immense tower of Maḥmūd, the arrow slits of the former having been cut away to form doorways into the casemates of the addition. From this has resulted the immense tower of Mahmūd which measures nearly 28 m in diameter. I have no doubt the other tower, Evli Badan, which I could not enter, also contains the Byzantine corner tower inside it. Evli Badan and Yedi Qardash are the noblest and most beautiful flanking towers that I have ever seen.

The reinforcing of a corner tower in this fashion

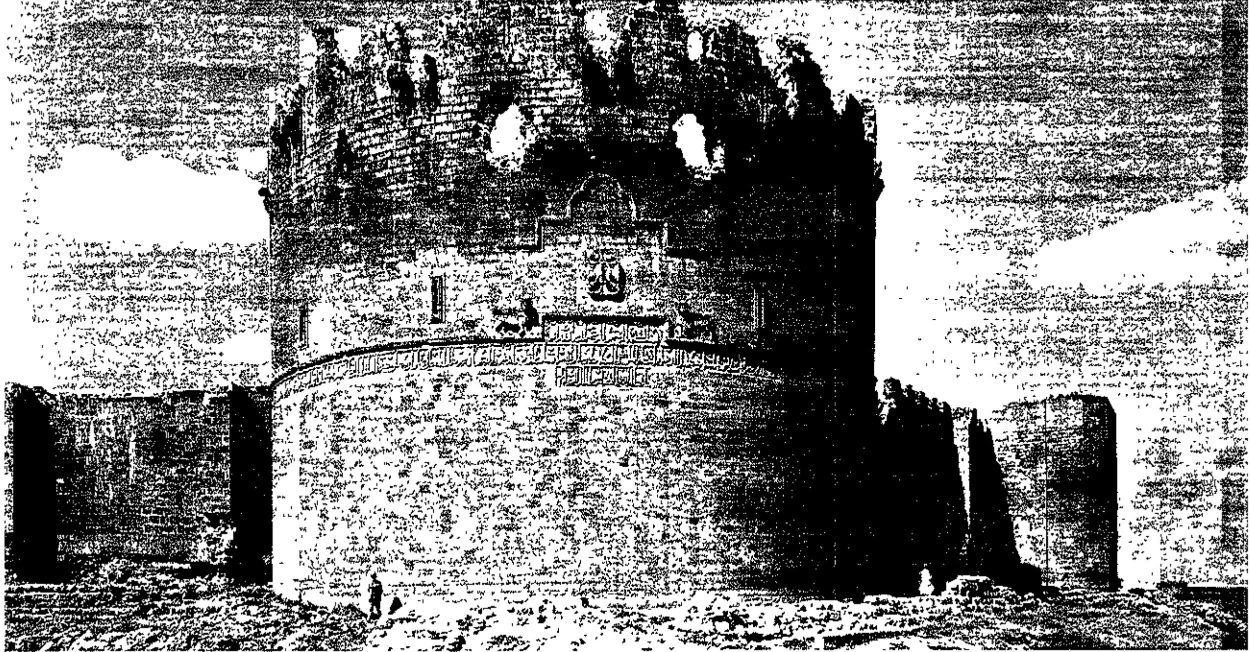

Fig. 5. Diyārbekr. City walls. Tower known as Yedi Qardash. (Photo: courtesy Creswell Archive, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

was not new; a year earlier Sultan al-Kāmil had done the same thing in Cairo with the two towers of the Citadel which look towards ʿAbbāsīya. On Napoleon's map they are called Burg ar-Ramla and Burg al-Haddad. Both are composite, for within each of them is a half-round tower of Salāh ad-Dīn, the arrow slits of which have been cut away, as at Diyārbekr, to form doors to the casemates of the addition of al-Kāmil. But large as they are, neither approach those of Diyārbekr in size, for they measure 18 and 22 m only.

THE GREAT MOSQUE

The Great Mosque is situated a little to the west of the main north-south street, not quite half way from the north gate.

The historical work attributed to Wāqidī relates that after the capture of Diyārbekr by the Arabs in 18 H. (639) the principal church, dedicated to St. Thomas, was divided between them and the Christians; two-thirds were taken by them and a third left to the Christians. On the other hand, we learn from Dionysius of Tell Mahrē that the principal church of Diyārbekr was built by Heraclius in 629. This, if we are to believe Wāqidī, must have been the church of which two-thirds were taken by the Muslims, yet we learn from Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē that this church was restored in 770; it was therefore still a Christian sanctuary 131 years after the conquest.

Now let us examine the present building. The *ṣahn* is oblong, measuring approximately 60 × 30 m. On the south side is the sanctuary which consists of three aisles approximately equal in width, running parallel to the qibla wall, and covered by parallel gable roofs. These three aisles are cut in the centre by a transept, nearly 11 m wide, also covered by a gable roof at a higher level than the others.

Now it is quite obvious that such a structure can never have been a church. For example, the proportions of pre-Muslim churches in Syria, many of which have been preserved, do not vary greatly. The relation of width to length is either 2:3, 3:4, or 4:5.

Here, however, we have the impossible proportion of 1:4½, Nor can we imagine a church with all its aisles of equal width and equal height, and cut in the centre by a sort of narthex in the wrong place.

Let us return to the *ṣahn* and look at the façade once more. It is quite impossible to believe that these pointed arches can date from the time of Heraclius. Epigraphy now comes to our aid, for the west half of the façade bears an inscription dated 484 H. (1091/2) in the name of Malik Shāh, and the east half an

inscription dated 550 H. (1155/6). These inscriptions merely say: "This is what has been ordered...." Can the interior be older than the façade?

It is scarcely possible to believe that it is, for Nāṣir-ī Khusrau visited Diyārbekr in 1046, and his description of the mosque does not correspond to the present structure, for he says that its interior was supported by more than 200 columns, all monoliths. These columns supported arches, forming arcades, number not stated, and above these arcades was a second tier, formed of arches resting on shorter columns. The present sanctuary is formed of arcades in two tiers, but there are no columns in it and only 20 piers.

If we accept Nāsir's description as even fairly accurate, then the present sanctuary must have been built after 1046, and if we accept the inscription of Malik Shāh to mean that he built, not merely the façade but the sanctuary behind it, then its present form, resembling that of the Great Mosque of Damascus, is easily explained. Malik Shāh had restored the Great Mosque of Damascus only eight years previously, after it had been badly damaged by fire and its roof burnt. The Great Mosque of Damascus was one of the Four Wonders of the World of medieval Islam, and what could be more natural than that Malik Shāh should take it as a model for that of Diyārbekr?

On the north side of the *sahn* are the remains of a fine arcade on columns with splendid Corinthian capitals of a late type. Have we here the remains of the lower storey of the arcades seen by Nāsir-ī Khusrau? We would require 22 from one side to the other, 66 therefore for the sanctuary = 88 and 9 + 9 = 18 for the sides = 106, and an equal number of smaller ones for the upper tier makes 212, or as Nāṣir says, over 200 columns.

The most remarkable part of the mosque is formed by the east and west façades of the *saḥn*. Each is of two storeys, and consists of an arcaded façade of 9 bays, formed by engaged columns set about 2 m apart, the entablature being brought forward over each column, as in late Roman work, e.g., the so-called Temple of Jupiter in the Palace of Diocletian at Spalato, AD 303–5.

Two inscriptions in elaborate Kufic run across both storeys of the west façade, the lower dated 511 H. (1117/8), the upper dated 518 H. (1124/5) and a similar inscription on the lower storey of the east façade dates it 559 H. (1163/4).

But it is quite obvious that a great part is older, that part of it has been taken from an earlier building and re-used, for the frieze running parallel to the Kufic inscription consists of an undulating vine stalk which forms a series of circular loops, each containing a vine leaf and a bunch of grapes. This at once recalls the decoration on the bronze covering of the tie-beams of the Dome of the Rock, dating from 691. It is therefore quite possible that these fragments came from the church built by Heraclius in 629. On the other hand it is certain that the very pointed arches cannot possibly be earlier than the ninth century, and the curious ones with a horizontal and slightly raised part in the centre must be of the same date as the inscription, for they resemble a form popular in brick in ʿIrāq in the following century.

The seventh- or eighth-century building from which a part of this façade was derived must have comprised the engaged columns and the entablature which is brought forward over them, for as the latter is decorated with vine scrolls of the type in question it must date from the seventh or early eighth century. The entablature between the column is composed of several pieces, so it must have rested on something solid, but it cannot have rested on the very pointed arches it rests on now. I suggest that it rested on a blank wall which the columns were intended to decorate, or on a wall pierced with windows.

Thus a façade decorated with engaged columns in two tiers with their entablatures decorated with vine ornament must have already existed about the end of the seventh century. Or the façade without the vine ornament may well have existed some centuries earlier, and been decorated with the vine ornament at the end of the seventh century. This façade must have been taken to pieces (or perhaps it had already been thrown down by an earthquake). On re-erection the wall behind the engaged columns of the first storey was then replaced by the present arches and the inscription frieze of 511 H. (1117/18) carved upon it. This façade was used to replace the pre-existing west portico of the mosque, doubtless on account of the fire which, according to Matthew of Edessa, had broken out in the mosque in 1115 or 1116, i.e., two years earlier. Seven years later the upper storey was added.

In 559 H. (1163/4) the west portico, for some reason or other was renewed also in the same fashion, but the supply of pieces decorated with the vine ornament had diminished; hence the upper storey here is less rich.

Cairo, Egypt