



Ayyubid Military Fortifications in the Lands of Egypt and Syria

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Abstract:

Salah al-Din Youssef ibn Nagm al-Din Ayyub ibn Shady is an orthodox Sunni Muslim, to whom the Ayyubid state attributed. his family was a decedent of the Kurdish, originated in a town called Doween in Alkrj.

His position in Egypt was far from secure. As the general of Nur al-Din, holding Cairo by force of Zangid arms, he was regarded with deep suspicion by the Fatimids, who tried to oust the inexperienced young vizier by encouraging a revolt of their Sudanese palace guards. The insurrection was easily crushed, however, leaving the Fatimids with no pretense of military support. Salah al-Din then abolished Fatimid rule in 1171 A.D, reintroducing Sunni Islam as the official religion of Egypt. The surviving Fatimid princes and princesses were carefully segregated and placed in honorable captivity to prevent the birth of a future claimant to a universal Shiite state. Al-Qahira was deprived of its royal status and opened shift northward followed, resulting in al-Fustat's losing its position as Egypt's major center of trade and production.

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Introduction

Egypt was now, in theory, part of Nur al-Din's empire, in reality, it was firmly in the hands of his Kurdish general, Salah ad-Din. Alarmed by the growing power of his vassal, Nur al-Din prepared to invade Egypt and establish direct Zangid control. War between Damascus and Cairo was averted only by his sudden death in 1174 A.D. The subsequent break up of Nur al-Din's domain into numerous Zangid principalities left Salah al-Din undisputed master of Egypt, but destroyed the Muslim solidarity needed to defeat the Crusaders.

The Zangid princes of Syria were more concerned with their own short-term needs, than with the duty of waging Jihad and soon fell out among themselves. Only Salah al-Din had the vision and determination needed to reunite the empire of Nur al-Din against the Christians. To this goal he dedicated the rest of his life.

As for his victories against the crusaders and the liberation of Jerusalem; Al-Malik an-Naser Salah al-Din deserved to be identified as a hero in the Muslim world.

This research will focus - in details- on the Ayyubide main military structures in Egypt like the citadels of al-Gabal, Ras- al-Gendi, and Fara'oun, in addition to Aleppo citadel in Syria, and 'Ajloun citadel in Jordan.

1 - The Egyptian castles

1 - Al-Gabal Citadel

Salah al-Din's first task was to secure Cairo against Crusader attack. His military advisors warned him that al-Fustat and al-Qahira would require separate garrisons for defense. Rather than divide his army, Salah al-Din instead devised an ambitious plan for the refortification of the entire capital. He ordered the construction of a massive citadel on the Muqattam spur overlooking the deserted plain between the two cities.

According to a legend recorded by al-Maqrizi, the 15th - century Egyptian historian, Salah al-Din chose the outcrop of the Muqattam hills as a site of his Citadel because of its healthy air. Although the healthy climate of the Muqattam spur was no doubt an important consideration, Salah al-Din's main concern was the military advantage of the site. Its elevated, central position dominated al-



Fustat and al-Qahira while posing a major obstacle to a foreign army invading Egypt. As a further defensive measure, the two cities were to be linked to the new Citadel by a series of long enclosing walls. For the first time, the separate urban centers that made up the Egyptian capital were united within a single defensive system then completed for the eventual growth Cairo into a unified city.

Work on the Citadel began in 1176 under the supervision of Salah al-Din's lance controller, Qaraqush. He demolished the Fatimid mosques and tombs on the site and started building stone walls and towers that still ring the hill. Stone for the fortifications was quarried from the east side of the Citadel spur. This had the further advantage of separating it from the rest of the Muqattam range.

The Citadel was constructed using the most up-to-date castle building technology that had developed out of nearly 100 years of warfare against the Crusaders. Its dressed stone walls are ten meters high and three meters thick. Wherever possible, they are built on rock, above ground level, to prevent undermining; the most effective means of breaching fortifications during a medieval siege. Small, half - round towers, with inner chambers, project from their outer façade every 100 meters, allowing the defending garrison to direct flanking fire against enemy soldiers trying to scale the walls. The towers are connected by upper ramparts, once protected by crenellation, and by interior corridors. These corridors contain small rooms, with window-slits to admit light and allow hidden archers to shoot at enemies from the safety of the inner walls. The northeastern corner of the Citadel juts out from the rest of the enclosure, dominating the pass cut between the fortress and the Muqattam hills. An invading army could only bypass defile, which is controlled by two towers, the burg al-Ramla and the burg al-Haddad. The Citadel initially had three major entrances. The Bab al-Mudarrag, on its northwestern side, was the main public entrance, giving access from the city. It was approached by a sloping ramp road, leading to two fortified gates separated by a curving flight of step stairs cut into the rock of the Citadel hill. Only the domed vestibule of the upper gate survives.

The other gates are on the east and south sides of the enclosure. Both are protected by twin towers and had bent entrance ways for maximum defense. Their names are unknown, but the southern entrance was probably the bab al-Qarafa, named after the burial grounds in the vicinity of the fortress. The



eastern gate is today known by its 18th – century name, the burg al-Imam. It faces the Muqattam hills and was the entrance most exposed to enemy attack. In order to protect it against battering rams, it was built above ground level and was reached by way of a bridge across a 16 meter wide moat.

If enemy soldiers managed to storm either of these gates, they would find themselves within an open court, surrounded by inner walls lined with archers. Those who survived this death trap still had to make a 90 – degree turn into a tunnel, protected by a second gate, before they could reach the interior of the Citadel. A number of small postern gates were also located around the fortress, enabling the defending garrison to make surprise sorties against an enemy's position outside the walls.

Within the Citadel , the Bir Yusuef was cut 8 meters through solid limestone , down to the level of the Nile , supplying the fortress with it own impregnable source of drinking water. Surrounding the well is an enclosed spiral staircase with windows for light opening onto the inner shaft. The stairs descend to the lowest level and give the well its second name, the Bir al-Halazun.

• The Citadel Under Al-Kamil

In 1207, al-Kamil son of sultan al-Adil strengthened the fortifications of Cairo. Some of the towers of the Citadel built by Salah al-Din, such as the burg al-Haddad and the burg al-Ramla, which controlled the narrow pass between the Citadel and the Muqattam hills, were felt to be too small for adequate defense. They were totally encased in new towers, forming the cores of much larger defensive units. The original window – slits were broken open and used as doorways leading to a new series of rooms. The new burg al-Haddad was also equipped with machicoulis, projecting chambers with openings that allowed defenders to drop stones or pour molten lead on an enemy below.

The towers of the Citadel's eastern entrance, now known jointly as the burg al-Imam were enlarged to twice their original size. A long the northern walls , a rectangular stone platform was constructed behind the Burg as-Sahra to serve as a base for mangonels and other missile – throwing weapons that connect with the inner chambers of the tower .

Al – Kamil also erected a number of massive square keeps around the perimeter of the Citadel. The square towers are filled with interior halls and



corridors, which acted as command posts, storage areas and barracks. The largest of al-Kamil's square towers, is the Burg at-Turfa. Its name obviously reflects al-Kamil's pride in its gigantic proportions, but the scale of the Burg as-Suffa and the Burg Kirkilyann is equally impressive. In times of peace these spacious towers were often used as prisons housing, among others, the last of the Fatimids, who ended their days in confinement in the Citadel.

Al – Kamil inherited the Ayyubid Sultanate on his father's death in 1218 A.D and was the first ruler of Egypt to make the Citadel his royal residence. The royal compound of the Citadel was only half its current size in the Ayyubid period, having a circumference of about 600 meters. The area was later enlarged by the Mamluks, who also isolated by constructing an interior wall which divides the Citadel into two separate enclosures. The dimensions of the northern portion of the fortress however are largely unchanged since the time of Salah al-Din. Here were located the military regiments stationed in the Citadel, the arsenal and the sultan's pigeon post. Al- Kamil had 900 homing pigeons used to carry dispatches throughout his empire. Messages were written on thin sheets of paper which were tied under the birds' wings. When a pigeon settled, it was immediately brought to the sultan, who alone might detach the message. The pigeon lofts were on a platform between the twin towers defending the Citadel's southern entrance, which became known collectively as the Burg al-Mattar.

2- Fara'oun (Aila) Castle

- The Castle's several names

In ancient times and exactly during the medieval ages; this castle was called Aila castle attributing it to Aila city; that stands in front. This ancient city was founded over the remnants of the Greco – Roman city called Aila and Ailana. Through the Islamic eras, it was famed as a trading harbor, which connects Egypt, Syria and northeast of the Arabian island. Since the beginning of the 19th century A.D and until nowadays, it was attributed to Fara'on Island where it was erected.

- The founder and foundation date

Although the castle's architectural composition is mostly similar to that of the Ayyubid Ras al-Goundi castle in Wadi Sadr, however, the Egyptian monument authority excavations in the island, declared that the Ayyubide epoch structures dominated the castle's structures, but this did not disprove that the island was



exploited in multiple purposes through other preceding -Byzantine, Tulunide-ages.

Contemporary historians referred that the actual beginning of constructing the castle was through the crusades wars; especially during the reign of Beldowin I king of Jerusalem, exactly in 510 H/ 1116 A.D. However, according to an Ayyubide sunken naskhi foundation text over the castle's mosque, beside other two inscriptions found on the castle's annexed structures, Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi is the founder. The construction had been completed when king al-Adil Abou Bakr brother of Salah al- Din was his viceroy in Egypt, however the direct supervision for building was prince Ali ibn Sukhtekman an- Nasrery al-Adily.

- The castle's location

Fara'on castle stands over the small granite Fara'on Island, encloses two elevated mounds. Such unique location provides several properties, such as the proportional height above the sea level, overlooking the main (trading, pilgrimage, and military) routes, neighboring to abundant water source from Taba valley, and neighboring the crusaders' aggression center.

- The historical events that connected to Fara'on Island

For its strategic situation, this castle had a rich history. During the whole Ayyubid epoch, this castle played a great role in the Arabian -Islamic and crusader conflict and one of the few castles that participated in the struggle against the crusades.

During both Mamluk and Ottoman epochs, this castle continued in protecting the Egyptian eastern borders, the Egyptian pilgrimage route, and the trading caravans. In 510 H / 116 A.D, the crusaders dominated the castle and the whole area of Alia. In 566 H / 1170 AD, was the great conquest that was led by Salah al-Din after he had defeated the crusaders in Damietta in 565 H / 1169AD. In 578 H/ 1181 -1182 A.D, Ernat the prince of al-Kark fortress attacked Aila city and tried to dominate the castle, but failed. During the same time, the Arabian navy that directed to Aila Island succeeded in defeating the crusaders who were stationed there.

- The castle's planning

It is a rooky Island, extends longitudinally, and surrounded with water from all sides. The island's platform is encircled with an external wall as an additional defensive line beside the sea. The architectural structures are devastated



according to the island's shape, as two elevated mounds and a pan in between. Over each mound, a fire stones fortress stands.

- The northern fortification

It is a standing castle works as the main fortification, occupies the northern mound. It is divided from the interior into two- northern and southern- sections, these are:

1- The first northern part encloses the fortress's main entrance, followed from the southern side with a big water cistern at the castle's courtyard. This part's wall is fortified by eight towers and the carrier (homing) pigeon tower included. Moreover, this part encloses several rooms; designated as residences for the garrison's soldiers, this beside a stone quarry, from where stones were cut and utilized in building the castle's towers and walls. Later, this quarry was employed for draining rainwater away from the castle.

2- The southern part, it is erected on a level higher than the previous –northern- part. This part has a bent entrance at the end of the northern part. Its wall encloses six towers, with several residential rooms for the castle's soldiers. These residences were composed of two stories, a small water cistern, a kitchen, a storeroom and a prison. This section has two portals; one on the southern side reaches to the supplements in the central part, and the other portal in the western side leads to a heating furnace.

3- The central part, it is the lower area between the mounds; enclose a small harbor for sending small ships. Moreover, it encloses a small mosque, stable and annexed residences, storerooms, and the castle's weapons' furnace.

- The southern fortification

It occupies the island's southern mound, connected to the external wall, which is surrounding the island and acts as a part of it. It encloses residential vaulted ceiling rooms, composed of two stories and defending rooms with machicoulis.

• The main entrance

The entry to the northern part was through a portal, which is reachable through several steps, and sequent basta-s. This portal was of yellow colored limestone courses, intertwined with granite stones in both sides. The entrance's opening is crested with a semi circular arch, topped with a simple cornice. Mostly, this portal once topped with the castle's foundation text.



- The castle several supplements

- To the southeast of the northern fortress, is the castle's **mosque**. It is a small rectangular mosque, entered through a white marble lintel portal in the northern wall. Over the portal, there is the mosque's construction five lines text, in sunken Ayyubide naskhi calligraphy, reads as follows:-

The first line	(د) امر بإنشاء هذا المسجد
The second line	(دين) المبارك الأمير حسام ال
The third line	باخل من حمدا (ن) في شع (بان)
The fourth line	(نة) المعظم سـ
The fifth line	(سماية) خمـ

Another supplement of the castle is the **weapons furnace**, which occupied the southern side of the castle's supplements. It is entered through an 83 cm in width portal in the western wall.

3- Sadr (Ras el-Goundi) Castle

- The Castle's name

This castle was identified with several names; such as Sadr castle, al-Basha castle, al-Goundi castle, al-Haj castle, Sinai castle, and Salah al-Din castle in Sinai, recently known as al-Goundi castle.

- The founder and location of the castle

Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, the founder of the Ayyubid state, has constructed this castle, to compose a strong defensive front against the crusaders. This castle stands on the summit of the unique shaped Ras al-Goundi hill that is rising up to 656m above the sea level, and rises 156 m above the plain land around from all sides. The construction began in 1183 A.D and accomplished in 1187 A.D, that date corresponds to the Hegira date that is inscribed over the castle's portal.

- The castle planning

This castle looks as an irregular rectangular, moving into two directions, north-east and south-west. Its southern sides end in a semi-hexagonal shape. The castle's sides Ranges between 150 - 200 meters in length and the most width of a hundred meters. The castle's outer walls are about two meters thick. Its corners are fortified with strong supporters. It is occupying a strategic location



over an independent mountain's summit, flanked from North and North West sides with a trench of five or six meters in width, filled with water, so increases the castle's safety.

The castle's wall encircles several rooms for multiple purposes. Of these are kitchens, residential rooms for the garrison men, bathes, besides other daily life purposes. The castle's courtyard encloses several buildings for various purposes, including the lobby of a flat (50 x 60 meters) depth of five meters below ground level and may have been a warehouse for supplies, As well as an unroofed mosque. There is also a water cistern sculpted within the hill on which is a tank containing two opening to insert and withdraw water.

Although the castle was located over an independent mountain's summit, however, a little part – the northern part of the eastern side- of this mountain is gradually slopes down, so could easily be climbed. That is the reason for having a water trench around. In front of the main entrance, the trench is semi square, with smoothed unclimbed sides. Over the trench, there is a movable bridge, the remnants of which still exist.

• The main gate

The ascending route that leads to the castle, terminate with the main entrance that is preceded with a trench and the movable bridge above. This bridge leads directly to a small portal, and then there is an ascending nine steps staircase, leads to a vestibule, which connects both the small –first- portal and the large-second- one. This portal opening is crested with a straight arch of ten joggled voussoirs, with a central circle, inscribed with recently added inscription of God's name الله. Over the portal's arch, is a rectangular stone inscribed in its center with the main gate and the two towers' foundation text, reads as follows:

The first line	بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم صلى الله على محمد
The second line	خلد الله ملك مولانا الناصر صلاح الدين
The third line	نيا و الدين سلطان الإسلام و المسلمين أبو المظفر
The fourth line	يوسف بن أيوب خليل أمير المؤمنين أمير
The fifth line	هذين البرجين و الباب المبارك و الصور العبد
The sixth line	الخاصع لله تعالى ابراهيم بن ابى بكر ابن
The seventh line	سختكمان العادلى الناصرى فى جمادى



The eighth line

الأخر سنة ثلاث وثمانين و خمسمائة

The entrance's opening is flanked with two semi circular towers. The northern one protrudes externally with 3 m; however the second tower protrudes only to 2.50 m. This portal's opening leads to a rectangular vestibule, roofed with a barrel shaped vault with a semi circular arch.

The castle's walls and towers

The castle's **western wall** encloses five towers, these are the northwest tower, the western tower, south west tower that is a corner one overlooks the castle's western and southern walls, the large southern tower that is the castle's largest square tower, and another southern tower.

The castle's **eastern wall** begins with the circular southeast tower, continued until the northeast tower. The wall extends to 129.85 m length, a distance that encloses seven towers; these are the southeast circular tower, a tower to the north of the previous tower, other four alternating towers, beside the northeast tower that is a circular corner tower.

The castle's **northern wall** act as the castle's main façade encloses five towers, of which two are circular ones.

The Castle's Supplements

2.5.1 - The castle's prayer niche

It is located to the east of the small cistern and to the west of the castle's mill. According to the foundation text, it is dated back to Zu al-Qe'da 578 H / February – March 1183 A.D.

2.5.2 - The small cistern

This cistern is located between the mosque from the western side and the prayer niche from the eastern. As recorded in the cistern's foundation text, it was built in Rajab 581 H / September – October 1185 A.D.

- The large mosque

This mosque is the most intact of the castle's parts, which still keeping its original beauty. It has been built over the large cistern, cut in the rock, where is the castle was erected, all of which are apparent.

The northwest wall encloses the mosque's main entrance. At the western part of the northern façade are the remnants of the minaret's pedestal. The southeastern façade has a portal; leads to the cistern below the mosque. Over



the portal, there was the mosque's and the cistern's foundation text; written in Ayyubid naskhi calligraphy of 11 lines, reads as follows:-

- The first line (بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم)
 The second line صلى الله على سيدنا محمد
 The third line خلد الله ملك مولانا الملك الناصر
 The fourth line صر صلاح الدنيا و الدين سلطان
 The fifth line الإسلام والمسلمين خليل أمير
 The sixth line المؤمنين عمر هذا الصهريج و
 The seventh line لجامع المبارك على بن محمد سحتكم (ا)
 The eighth line ن الناصري العادلي المظفرى
 The ninth line التقوى و كان فراغه فى شهر
 The tenth line شوال سنة اثنين و ثمانين خمس ما (ية)
 The eleventh line يسئل الله الجنة و النجاة من النار

Other Supplements of the Castle are the small mosque, the large cistern, the mill and its supplements, the rock cut hall, the prison or crop storehouse, the bathroom and several residential supplements.

II- Jordon castles

Ajloun Castle (Qal'at al-Raabad)

Military works of Salah al-din al-Ayyubi didn't restricted to Egypt, but he had a military strategic perspective that he realized several defense lines against the crusaders in Syria, east of Jordon is of great and intense significance for Egypt's and the whole Jordon area security, that is originated from the strategic and excellent location that distinguished it.

• The founder of the castle and its location

Although Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi is the owner of the military strategy that required the construction of Ajloun castle (Qalaat er-Raabad), however, his army commander Ezz al-Din Osama – who was the ruler of kawkap and Ajloun regions- carried out the constructions of this castle.

The topography of Eastern Jordon where the castle stands looks as elevated mounds; the most famous of these is Ouef Mountain where Ajloun city and its castle stand. To the south of Ajloun city, is a vast desert and plain lands.



• Description of the castle

This castle is surrounded from all sides with a rectangular trench, the sides of which are of variant lengths, the northern and southern sides are 100 meters; however, the eastern and western sides are about 150 meters in length. These sides connect together in corners forming vertical angles. Also, its wide varies, about 13 meters from the northern and eastern sides, 18 meters from the southern side, and 16 meters from the western side. For the carved rocks, however, the trench's depth is varying. This trench was filled with water in order to prevent any one tries to come into it.

Anciently, this trench was filled with water through ditches from the surrounding area or from the castle's summit where water channels were dug in the internal part of rocks. Water was falling down to this trench through stone or earthenware channels. At the southeast side of the castle's walls, there is a water tank surrounded with a rectangular area with small channels to drain extra water away.

• The exterior of the castle

The castle's entrance is in the eastern side, to the right of which is a tower built of variant sized stones, composed of three stories, with many windows. This is followed with the eastern wall that was built of limestone, where is an adjacent tower, with a two lines inscription, says:

The first line "جدد في أيام مولانا السلطان الملك الناصر صلاح الدين يوسف"

The second line "ابن لملك العزيز محمد الله خلد ملكه بنظر العبد الفقير محمد بن يزيد صاحب عنتاب"

According to this text, this tower's restorations had been achieved during the reign of sultan an-Nasser Salah al-Din Youssef ibn Mohammed ibn az-Zaher Ayyub, who took over the reign after the death of Sultan as-Saleh Nagem al-Din Ayyub, who's reigning period was extended between (648 – 699 H / 1250- 1260 A.D).

The castle's northern side extends 19 meters length; composed of 13 courses. Adjacent to this part, there are several elevated rocks, where the northern wall of the tower that is occupying the central part of the castle's northern wall stands. This castle's wall enclosed neither windows nor arrow slits. The castle's western side encloses a group of regular and identical sized stones; it encloses five machicoulis openings of varied width, topped with small arches, and dominating the castle's southwest side, distributed in different heights. The



southwestern side of the castle extends about 32 m, with no machicoulis. At the southern side, there is a tower that is protruding 12 meters out from the wall. This tower encloses two arrow slit openings. This tower's eastern façade overlooks the surrounding water well. A three lines text occupied the tower's first story, says:

The first line بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم انشأ هذا البرج
The second line المبارك أبيك بن عبد الله استادار المعظمى
The third line في شهور سنة احدى عشر و ستماية

• The Interior Of The Castle

The castle's entrance is located in the northeast façade. It is preceded with a 10, 30 meters wide trench. This entrance is reachable through a wooden bridge -of nineteen stone courses- that is leaning on a stone base over the trench's central part. This bridge was to be raised or brought down according to the need. Such draw (movable) bridge over the trench, duplicated the trench's defensive property.

The castle's gate is topped with the remnants of a machicoulis –used in pouring boiled water or oil over the attackers- that was leaning on stone corbels. This entrance is topped with a vaulted ceiling. Towards the interior; this gate leads to a 16 meters long vestibule, at the end of which is a 24 steps ascending staircase. To the entrance's right side, there is an arrow slit, above the ground level and occupying the southern wall of the entrance's adjacent tower. However, on the vestibule left side; there are five machicoulis.

At the end of the entrance – to the right - is another entrance leaning on two pointed arches, separated from each other with half a meter, employed in pouring incendiary substances over the attackers. This entrance was to be shut with an iron portal as a defending mean to prevent any one tries to come into the castle. The castle has a bent entrance, a type that was usually employed in military structures, cities' gates, beside some secular structures.

-The eastern courtyard (space)

It is a space stands between two towers, one of them adjoining the entrance and the castle's north eastern tower. This space also encloses the remnants of a wall that was once dividing this space into three halls, the eastern wall of this space encloses three arrow slits.



-The north eastern tower

This tower is entered through its southern wall. In the outer right side of the tower, is water well. Both this tower and the one adjoining the entrance are mostly identical in building substance and the semi-cylindrical vault that covers their ceilings. The arrow slits in this tower throwing towards the trench's northeastern angle. Although this tower is 10 meters higher than the first story level, but there is no floors for halls over the first story. Therefore, it could be deduced that the main purpose of this tower was for serving the carrier (homing) pigeon.

-The southern tower

This tower is entered through a vestibule in its western wall. Its floor is lower than the portal's, and descended through four steps. This tower composed of two independent -western and eastern- parts, with an opening connects both parts together. The arrow slits in this tower are mostly differing from those in the castle's eastern side. Here; they -the arrow slits- were built within halls, the interior front of which was adorned with a stone arch, intended to facilitate the defenders' (guardians') duty.

III- Syrian Castles

Aleppo Castle

Aleppo (Halab) castle - Pearl of the north of Syria- is located between two valleys, embraced by al-'Asi and al-Forat Rivers. Historical resources reported this Arabian city, so one can realize ancient civilizations' breeze that had passed over each part of Halab city.

Halab city witnessed the Arab conquest in 636 A.D during the reign of Seif al-Dawla al-Hamadani the founder of al-Hamadania state- by the army commander Abi Oubayda ibn al-Garah. As a result, his city occupied the priority in history, so became the capital of his state and a center for culture and arts pioneers. What interests here, is the Ayyubides attention of Halab famous castle. The army commander Ghazi -son of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi - had restored and fortified both the castle and its surrounding walls. It has been mentioned that no conqueror succeeded in seizing this castle by force.



- The castle's foundation

It is one of the marvelous historical structures, and a sign in military fortified architecture during the medieval epochs with its walls, towers, portals, and vestibules. It was constructed in the 8th or 9th century B.C. The castle's recent description dated it back to the Ayyubide epoch in the 12th century A.D. it was restored in 1946 A.D and the throne hall was restored in 1973A.D.

A trench surrounds the castle, of 30 meters in width, and 32 meters in depth. This trench was filled with water. The castle encloses several towers, bridges, halls, vestibules, portals, mosques, barracks, mills, and repositories (store houses). Although a part of this castle has been demolished, but its standing structures testifies on its safety and immensity.

The Citadel's Planning

Sultan az-Zaher Ghazi ibn Youssef ordered the erection of this castle. It is ascended by a staircase. It is distinguished with its bending upper side, in the form that composes neither an archway, nor straight one. Over the portal, there are finely intertwined black and white stones.

Over these stones, there is a panel inscribed with the castle's founder name. Over the panel there is a stone cornice, however the portal itself is of two iron shutters, each composed of four supporters. Both supporters and transoms are hammered with nails in shape of sun disk shaped large gear. Between each two supporters, there are iron dividers, forming - 14 cm thickness- rectangles with horseshoe shape and arrow's tips referring to chivalry. On both left and right sides of each rectangle, is a hexagonal shape; with each one is a large gear shaped nail. And the iron dividers are adorned with rings in shape of sun disk with rays coming out. Over the door, there is a door latch in each shutter, used as knocker to conduct sound to within the interior. Moreover, it is used as a fastening for the door chain.

The Citadel has an elliptical base with a length of 450m and width of 325m, at the top, this ellipse measures 285m by 160m with the height of this slanting foundation measuring 50m. The entire mound was covered with large blocks of gleaming limestone that unified the built structure with the hill thus increasing its visual scale. It was also surrounded by a moat filled with water to protect against intruders. The Citadel hovers over the city in a uniqueness



that rivals the larger Citadel of Cairo and the more massive Citadel of Damascus.

Although the Citadel is an Islamic landmark, archeological digs have uncovered Roman and Byzantine ruins dating back to the 9th century BC. The Citadel was originally a Neo-Hittite acropolis built on a natural hill; this provided a strategic site for a military fortress to guard and protect the surrounding agricultural areas.

- The citadel through ages

Seif al-Dawla (944-967), the first Hamdanid ruler of Aleppo, built the fortress and used the citadel as a military center of power over his region. Zangid ruler Nur al-Din (1147-1174) fortified the citadel and added some structures such as the Small Mosque of the Citadel. But it wasn't until Ayyubid period during the reign of the Sultan al-Zahir al-Ghazi of Aleppo (1186-1216) that the Citadel went through major reconstruction, fortification and addition of new structures that create the complex of the Citadel in its current form. During the first decade of the thirteenth century the citadel evolved into a palatial city that included functions ranging from residential, religious, military installations and supporting elements such as water cisterns and granaries.

A particularly significant addition during al-Ghazi's reign is the Great Mosque of the Citadel that was built in 1214. Its situation at the highest point of the Citadel, with its towering minaret that is 21m high, extended both the citadel's visibility and its defense to greater distances. Here the minaret begins to play a religious and military role; this duality merges the virtues of power and piety in the icon of the Islamic faith.

The most prominent renovation is the entrance's block that al-Ghazi rebuilt in 1213. Eight large arches structure the bridge that leads up to the Citadel over the moat. It is punctuated at the bottom by a defense gate with two towers and at the top of the ramped bridge by the Gate of Serpents and the Gate of the Two Lions. A complex defense mode was developed in the sequence of movement into the Citadel, as perpetrators would have to penetrate 3 iron doors and change direction 6 times through a series of 90 degree abrupt turns while being subjected to hot liquids being poured through the slit openings on the upper floors.



These defense strategies made the Citadel of Aleppo one of the hardest forts to conquer in the region.

In 1415 the Mamluk governor of Aleppo, prince Seif al-Din Jakam, was authorized to rebuild the Citadel after the Mongol invasion of Timur in 1410. His most important addition was the new Mamluk palace that rose higher than the two entrance towers. The Ayyubid palace was almost completely abandoned during this period. During the Ottoman period, the military role of the Citadel as a defense fortress slowly diminished as the city began to grow outside the city walls and was taking its form as a commercial metropolis. Large restoration projects took place after the Citadel was heavily damaged in the earthquake of 1828. These restoration operations continued throughout the next century until the present.

The Castle's Importance

Halab castle was a place for civilian struggle, demolished several times under the reign of the Romans, the crusaders, and the Mongols. In later times, it was restored by the Moslems like the Nourien, the Salahdins, and the Mamluks. This castle's historical importance stems from the inscriptions that testify on the predecessors' civilization.

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Arabic Summary

رغم أن العمر الزمني للعصر الأيوبي لم يستمر سوى واحد وثمانين عاماً، ورغم أن الإهتمامات الأساسية لهذا العصر كانت تنحصر في الجهاد الإسلامي ضد الصليبيين في بيت المقدس منذ القرن ٦هـ / ١٢م، و ذلك لتكوين دولة إسلامية قوية تهيمن على الدول التي تحوي الأماكن المقدسة. إلا أن ذلك لم يؤثر سلباً على النواحي المعمارية و الفنية لهذا العصر، بل شهد كغيره من العصور تطورات عديدة في كلا الناحيتين.

و يتضح أن العمارة الأيوبية قد استوعبت كلاً من العناصر المعمارية و الأساليب الفنية في البناء من العمارة الفاطمية التي كانت قد استقرت و تاصلت في مصر، و من طرز العمارة السلجوقية التي كانت سائدة في بلاد المشرق الإسلامي، و فيما يلي أهم الجوانب المعمارية التي تميزت بها العمارة الأيوبية، و هي كالتالي:-

- الأبراج

استفاد المعمار الأيوبي من طراز سابقه حيث استخدم الأبراج النصف دائرية التي كانت سائدة في العصور السابقة، مع تطويرها بما يناسب المطالب الحربية المتزايدة في خلال العصر الأيوبي (حيث الجهاد ضد الصليبيين).

- المزاغل

و هي الفتحات التي اقامها المعمار الأيوبي لرمى السهام، و كانت هذه الفتحات عبارة عن شق رأسى ضيق من الخارج و متسع من الداخل ، مما يعطى حرية في الحركة للمدافعين أثناء إطلاق السهام.

- الباشورة (المدخل المنكسر)

و هو عبارة عن باب منكسر ذو منعطفات بحيث تعرقل اندفاع المهاجمين الى داخل الحصن، و هو عنصر معمارى مميز للعمارة الحربية كان منتشراً في بلاد الشام ، كما في مدخل قلعة حلب ، و نقله صلاح الدين الأيوبي الى مصر حيث قلعة الجبل و غيرها من المنشآت الحربية.

- مواد البناء

تابع المعمار في العصر الأيوبي استخدام الأحجار كمادة اساسية في البناء - كما كان سابقاً - و أهتم بقطع الحجارة و صقلها و تنسيقها. كما كان هناك اثر كبير لأساليب العمارة السلجوقية على العمارة الأيوبية، من حيث المتانة و الجمال و كذلك البوابات الضخمة ذات العقود العالية المدببة. كما استخدم المعمار في العصر الأيوبي حجارة منقورة السطح تسمى الحجارة المسنمة ، و هي عنصر معمارى معروف منذ القرن الأول الميلادى ، ثم صارت له مكانته في العصر الأيوبي. و يظهر ذلك في برجى (الحداد و كيركيلان) بقلعة الجبل.

- الصنج المعشقة



من معالم العمارة الأيوبية استخدام الصنح المعشقة في الأعتاب الأفقية و العقود المنبوحة للأبنية بعضها كان يتبع الشكل التقليدي الذي كان سائداً في العصر الفاطمي ، و هو عبارة عن أنصاف دوائر متقابلة أو متعارضة مرتبطة بخطوط قصيرة مستقيمة، و البعض الآخر ظهر بأشكال متطورة ظهرت في التقسيمات المزهرة عملت على هيئة زهرة الزريق و عشقت بالتعارض.

- الزخارف الجصية

احتلت الزخارف الجصية مكانة كبيرة في المباني الأيوبية، و نجد بعضها جاء متأثراً بالأشكال الزخرفية التي وجدت في العمارة الفاطمية من زخارف محفورة على الجص. كما نجد البعض الآخر تميز بمظهر ايوي جديد كان أكثر رقة و اشد تعقيداً في شكل التوريق العربي.

- الزخارف الكتابية على العمانر

أحدث الأيوبيون تطور كبير في الفنون الزخرفية، تمثل في شيوع الكتابات النسخية على العمانر الأيوبية بدلا من الكتابات الكوفية. و كان ظهور الكتابات النسخية في هذه الفترة التاريخية بمثابة أول ظهور لها في العمارة الإسلامية كمظهر من مظاهر المذهب السني المخالف للمذهب الشيعي للفاطميين، و الذي كان يعتمد على الخط الكوفي. و لكن نظراً لمظهر الأبداع الزخرفي للكتابة الكوفية، ظل الخط الكوفي - الذي أدخل عليه بعض التطوير كإختفاء عناصر التوريق من اطراف حروفه و نتج عن ذلك تداخل حروفه في بعضها حتى تعقدت و أصبح من الصعب قراءتها- يستخدم الى جانب الخط النسخي على العمانر الأيوبية.



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Al-Gabal Castle

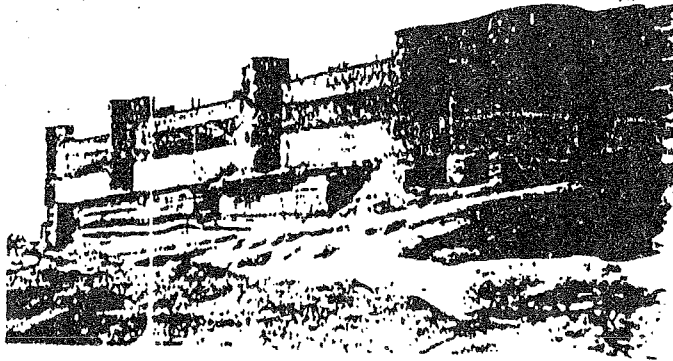


Plate (1)

The castle's northern enclosure: east side, Burg al-Muballat, Burg al-Muqusar, and Burg al-Imam
Creswell (K.A.C), The Muslim architecture of Egypt,

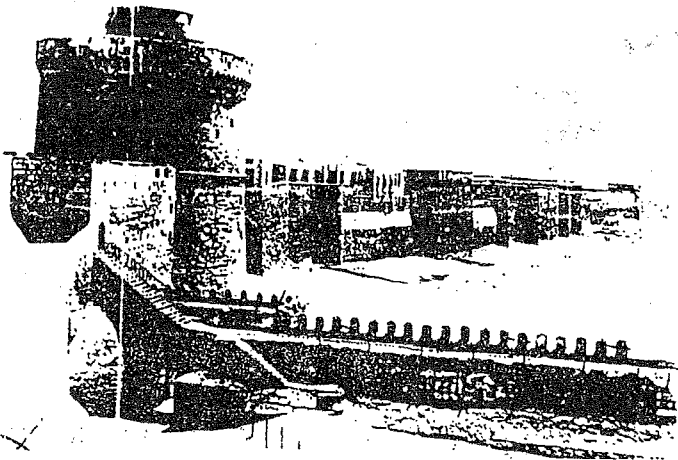


Plate (2)

Southern enclosure; south façade looking over Muqattam Gate
Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

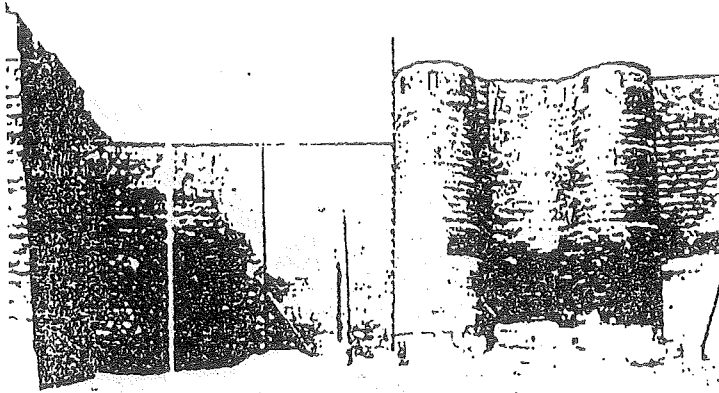


Plate (3)
Burg al- Mattar, outer side
Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

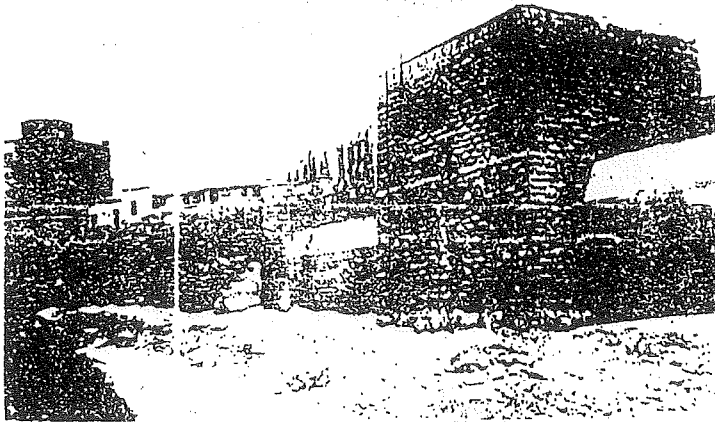


Plate (4)

Northern enclosure; south façade showing Muqattam tower, Burg Soffa, Burg al-Elwa, and Burg Kerkyalan
Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

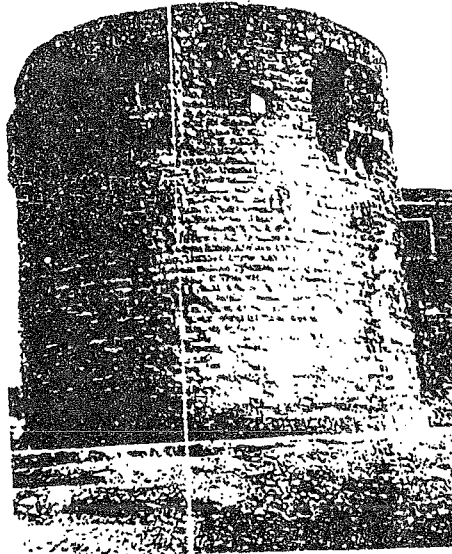


Plate (5)
Burg al-Hadad, with guns' openings that were added during the French
campaign
Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

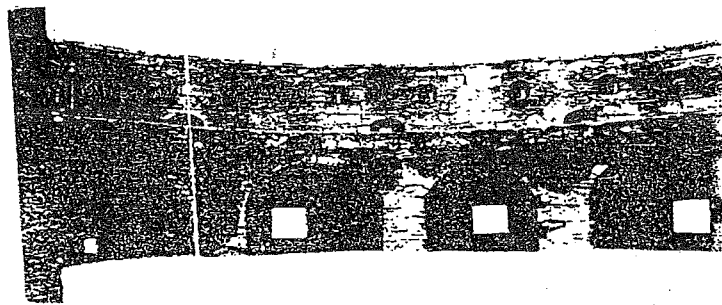


Plate (6)
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Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

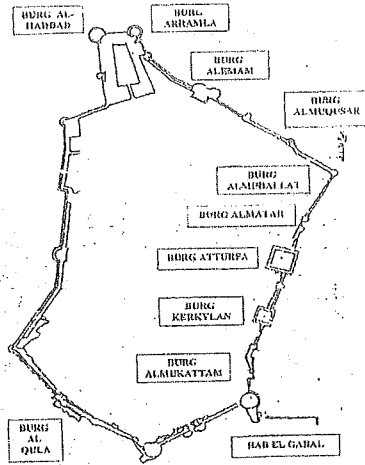


Plate (7)
The northern enclosure

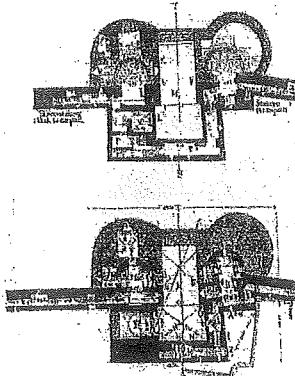


Plate (8)
The Bab al-Mudarrag

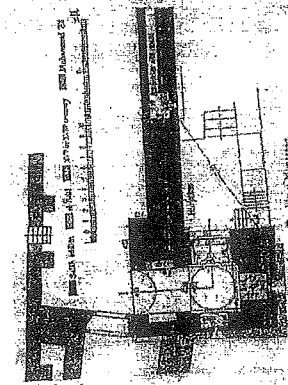


Plate (9)
Burg al-Imam or Bab al-Qarafa
Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

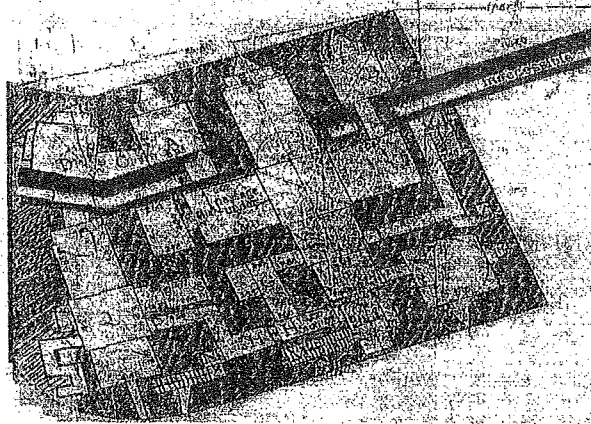


Plate (10)
Burg as-Sofa
Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

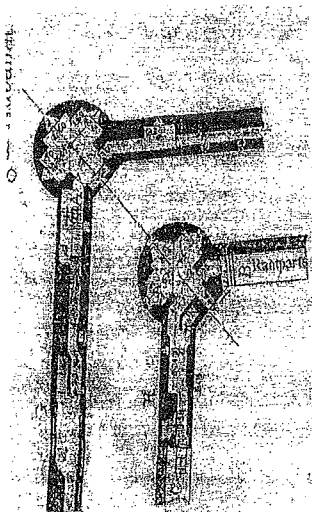


Plate (11)
Burg al-Matar

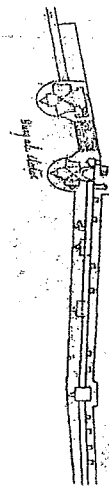


plate (12)
Burg el-Muballat

Creswell (K.A.C), op.ci

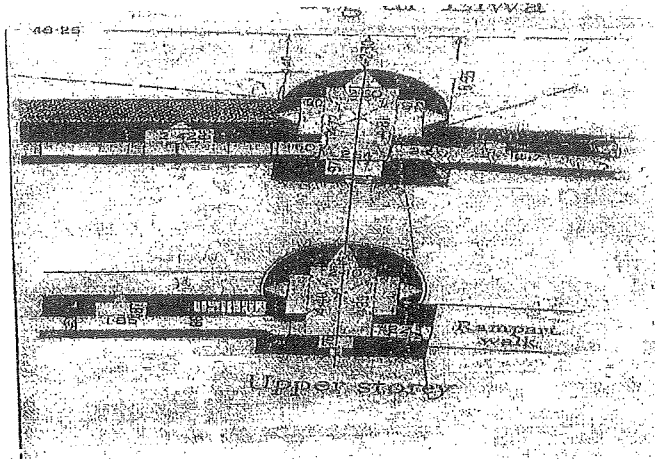


Plate (13)
Burg al-Elwa
Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

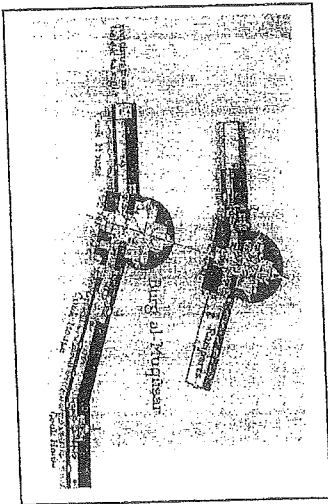


Plate (14)
Burg ar-Ramla

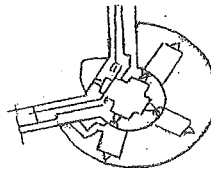
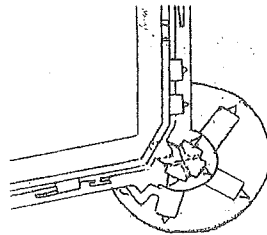


plate (15)
Burg al-Muqasar

Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

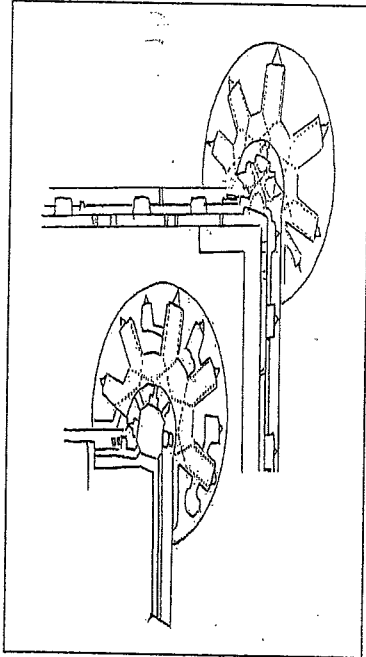
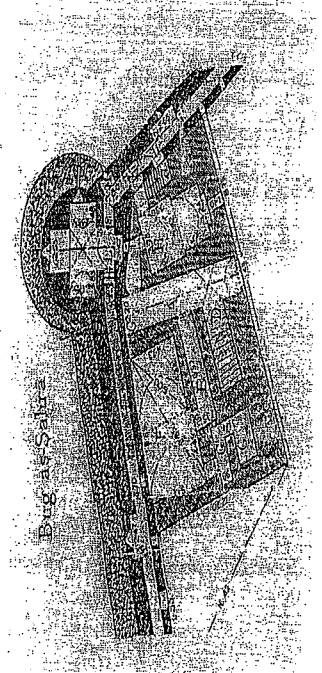


Plate (16)
Burg as-Sahara



Plate(17)
Burg al-Hadad

Creswell (K.A.C), op.cit

Fara'oun Castle

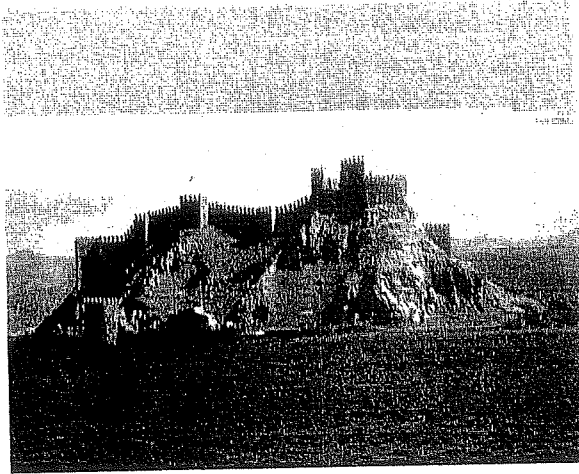


Plate (18)

The castle of Salah el-Din al-Ayyubi in Fara'un Island
(آثار سيناء: جزيرة فرعون، قلعة صلاح الدين)

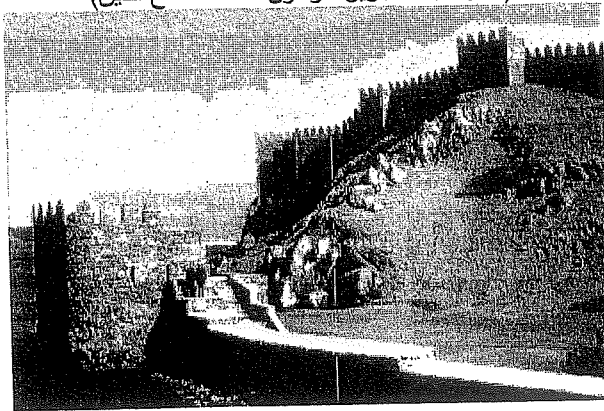


Plate (19)

The external wall surrounding the castle in Fara'un Island
(آثار سيناء: جزيرة فرعون، قلعة صلاح الدين)

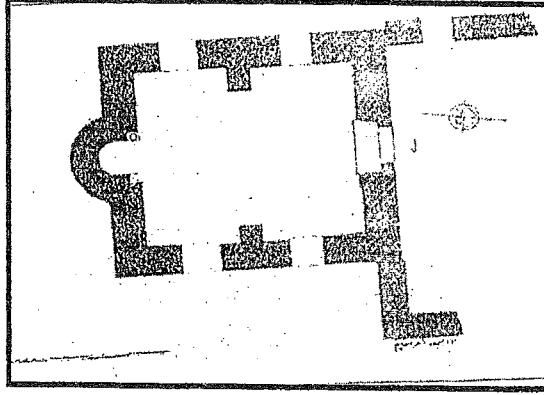


Plate (20)

Horizontal projection of the mosque of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi castle in Fara'oun Island

(آثار سيناء: جزيرة فرعون، قلعة صلاح الدين)

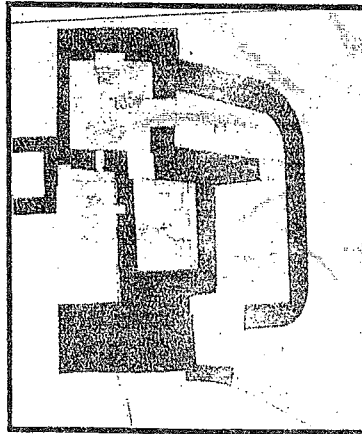


Plate (21)

Horizontal projection for the bath of Salah el-Din al-Ayyubi castle in Fara'oun Island

(سامى صالح عبد المالك، التحصينات الحربية الباقية فى شبه جزيرة سيناء)

Sadr (Raas al-Goundi) Castle

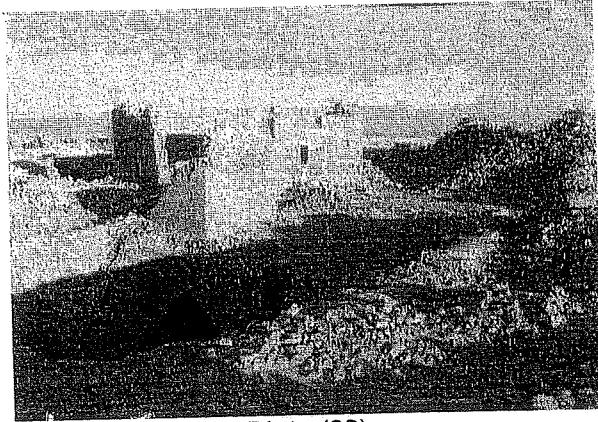


Plate (22)
Ras El-Goundi Castle

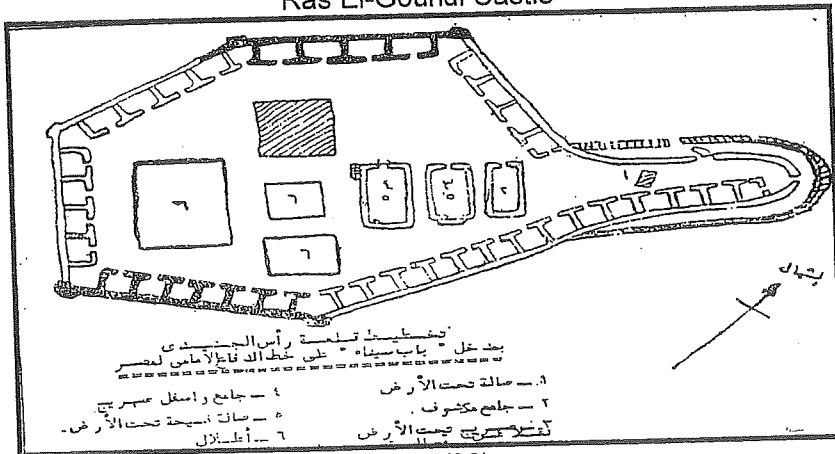


Plate (23)
The Plan of Ras El-Goundi Castle
(سامى صالح عبد المالك، التحصينات الحربية الباقية فى شبه جزيرة سيناء)

Ailoun Castle



Plate (24)

A general view of Ajloun Castle with the stairs and wooden balustrade leading to the entrance

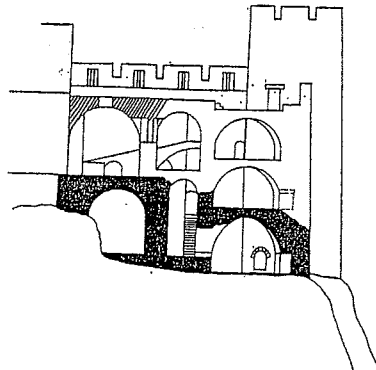


Plate (25)

A vertical projection of Ajloun Castle
(محمود ابراهيم حسين، حصن عجلون مع قلعة الجبل ، دراسة مقارنة)

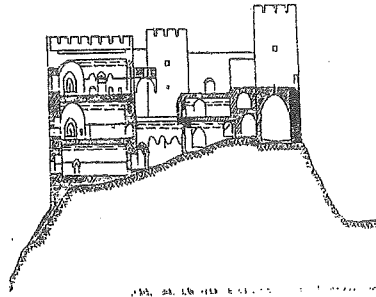


Plate (26)

A vertical projection of Ajloun castle with its three stories
(John C.N, Medieval Ajlun)

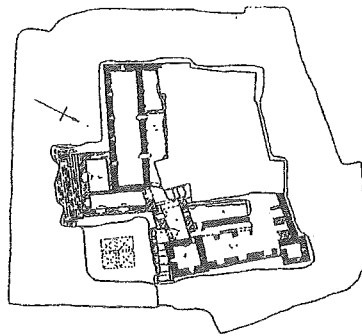


Plate (27)

A vertical projection of the first story of Ajloun castle

(لاتكستر هاردنج ، آثار الأردن)

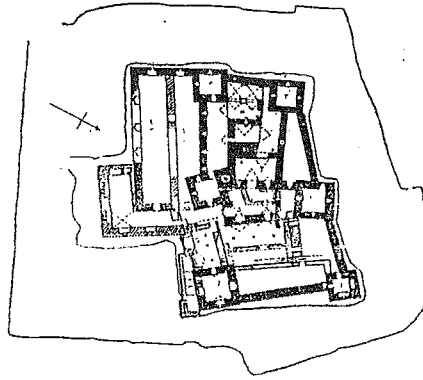


Plate (28)

A vertical projection of the second story of Ajloun castle
(لانكستر هاردنج ، آثار الأردن)

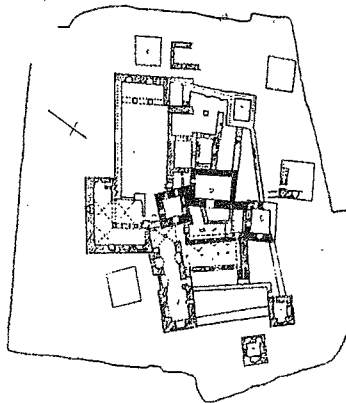


Plate (29)

A vertical projection of the third story of Ajloun castle
(لانكستر هاردنج ، آثار الأردن)

Aleppo Castle

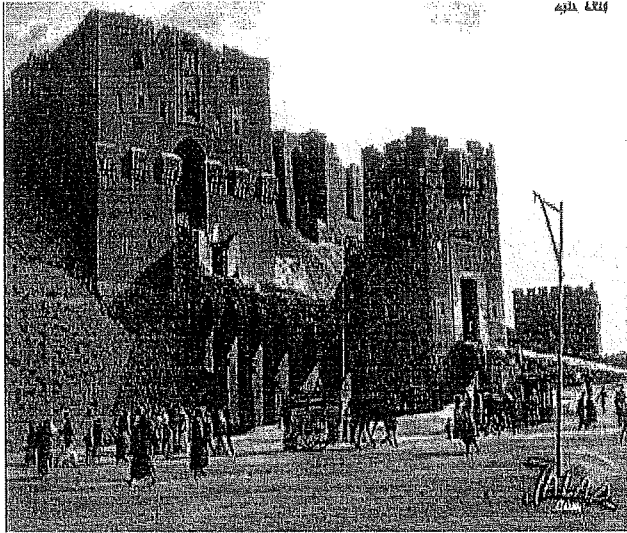


Plate (30)

Aleppo castle in ancient times



Plate (31)

The main entrance of Aleppo castle
(مجلة العربى ، العدد ٤١٩ ، اكتوبر ١٩٩٣)

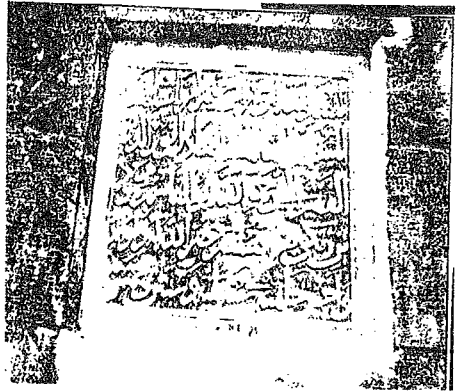
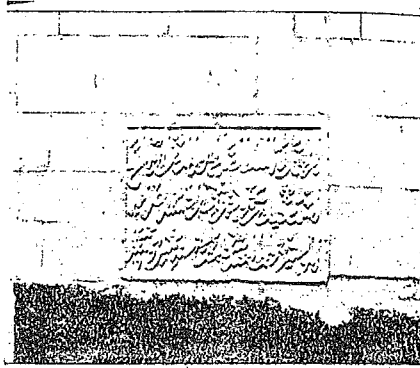


Plate (32)
Historical texts of Aleppo Castle
(محمد وليد كامل، الكتابات الأثرية في القلعة الحلبية)

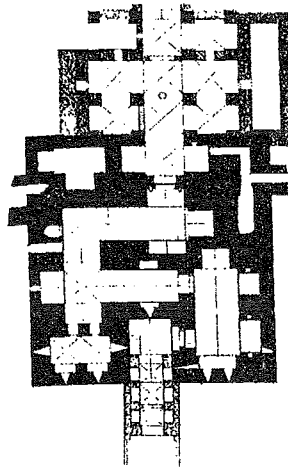


Plate (33)
The Plan of Aleppo Castle's Entrance
Gonnella, Julia, the citadel of Aleppo)(

