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Palaces in Middle Islamic Transjordan: Reflections of the Royal Tradition of Bilad ash-Sham

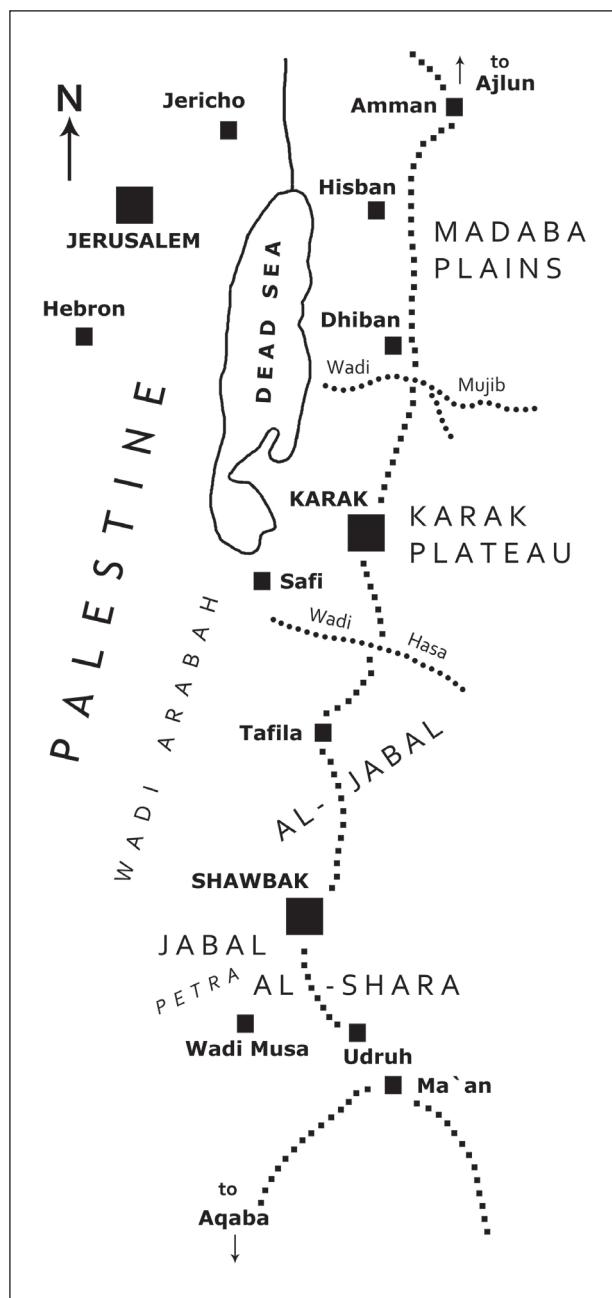
Introduction

The development and spread of the Middle Islamic palace tradition in Syria and Transjordan was coupled with a phenomenal wave of citadel constructions that emerged during the 12th century as authority over Muslim Bilad ash-Sham was invested in the Turkish dynasties of the Seljuqs, Zangids and Burids. This trend was further perpetuated by the Kurdish dynasty of the Ayyubids, and subsequently adopted by the Turkic, Georgian and Circassian lines of Mamluk sultans.¹ These penetrating powers were profoundly influential, introducing hierarchical militaristic social organization and manners of governance that were expressed in the austere citadel fortifications raised throughout the cities and towns. Within the citadel walls, opulent royal palaces provided seats of authority for administration, military command and control over economic resources. The palace design concepts that were established between the late 12th and mid-13th centuries persisted within royal and elite residential architecture for centuries to follow. Although the expression of these concepts experienced significant transformations through the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, the essential principals

remained the same.

As a powerful expression of governance, the palace theme was replicated throughout Syria in this period and is well represented in Transjordan, although these monuments have received less attention. The introduction of this tradition in Transjordan emerged after 1188 as the Ayyubid political domain expanded, uniting Egypt and Syria. A former Frankish province, southern Transjordan was rapidly reintegrated within the Muslim cultural milieu, as is evident in Ayyubid investments in fortifications, religious institutions and secular monuments. This study considers ways the palaces of Transjordan inform and contribute to an understanding of this tradition as a cultural hallmark of the Muslim Levant from the 12th to the 15th centuries. The Transjordan palaces add breadth to our perception of this architectural form as their designs are both principled and unique, as demonstrated by remains of citadel and tower residences at Shawbak, Karak, ‘Ajlūn and Hisban (FIG. 1). Particular attention is devoted to the spatial organization of the *qa‘ah* (*qā‘ah*), the principal hall at the heart of every Middle Islamic palace, which provided a salon for reception, domestic life and other activities.

1. In Transjordan, the Middle Islamic era (*ca.* 1100 - 1600) includes the periods of the Ayyubid confederation (1188 - 1263) and the Mamluk sultanate (1263 - 1516).



1. Map of southern Transjordan with selected Middle Islamic sites.

The Emergence of the Ayyubid Palace Tradition in Bilad ash-Sham

In broad terms, the Middle Islamic palace represented a locus of authority as the residence of social notables, including royalty, state leaders and their representatives, and military commanders. Three key features characterize the palace. It included at least one *qa'ah* composed of a *durqa'ah* (central court) with facing *iwans* (open chambers) and *suffahs* (open niches) that

often occurred in pairs (see David 2007: 60-67; Tabbaa 1997: 81-95; Sayed 1987; David and Rousset 2008). These arrangements frequently included tripartite facades (*travée rythmique*), some of which offered triple entranceways of monumental proportions (e.g. Qal'at Najm, in Tabbaa 1997: fig. 59). The *qa'ah* was essential to palace life, accommodating domestic activity and formal receptions, and typically connecting to a bath (*hammām*) and storage facilities for warehousing materiel, luxury goods and other valuables. The palace was further distinguished by grandeur in scale, accomplishment and embellishment, particularly in the *qa'ah*. Lastly, it was associated with a defensive installation and was therefore supplied with weaponry and attended by guards.

The physical unification of political and military authority emerged from the citadel-centric Seljuq and Zangid approach to governance, which was structured according to a rigid military hierarchy; citadels were designed to house and separate these foreign rulers from their local subjects (Rabbat 2006: 84-93; Bachrach 1991: 111-12, 123-27). This model was enthusiastically adopted by the Ayyubids, whose princes and high ranking amirs created substantial defensive works with elite residential facilities at key locations within their territorial domains. In addition to controlling local settlements and *bedouin* populations, the citadels and fortresses played a substantial role in internal dynastic power struggles. A handful were also situated for defense against external threats from Frankish or Mongol territories. The palace tradition flourished as a cultural motif within both the urban citadels and rural fortresses that spread throughout the Muslim Levant, transforming the landscape. Standing remains and historical references suggest that as many as a hundred 'citadels' existed within this region between the 11th and 13th centuries (Rabbat 2006: 87-88). This trend slackened, however, with the inception of the Mongol invasions of Syria in 1260.

Four types of palatial dwellings appear in Bilad ash-Sham, and these are briefly described here.

- 1) ***The citadel-palace.*** This refers to royal and amiral palaces built within urban citadels and rural fortresses as seats of governance over a territory and with resident military support. The concept of a grand, royal residence within an urban citadel is well illustrated at the main Ayyubid palace of Aleppo (Tabbaa 1997: 71-96; Korn 2004 [2]: 221-22).
- 2) ***The tower-palace.*** Ayyubid defensive towers were sometimes equipped with *qa'ahs* providing residential suites for military commanders or amirs with governing responsibilities. Notable examples include al-'Adil's 1201-1218 constructions at Bosra (Yovitchitch 2004: 209-211ff.; 2011a: 190).
- 3) ***The fortified country palace.*** Presently known only at Mu'azzara in Syria, this grand country manor of the late Ayyubid or early Mamluk period was insulated within a fortified shell (Fourdrin 2005).
- 4) ***The private dwelling in the palatial style.*** Residences of the urban elites mimicked the royal palaces in design and accouterments, as seen at the Matbakh al-Ajami house in Ayyubid Aleppo (Tabbaa 1997: 90-91; fig. 62) and Dar as-Sitt Tunshuq in Mamluk Jerusalem (Burgoyne 1987: 485-504).

Within these categories some general patterns appear, yet a linear development of design styles among Ayyubid palace *qa'ahs* is not readily apparent. The variety among *qa'ah* compositions indicates influences from numerous sources, as well as a desire to achieve individuality. Unfortunately, no Seljuq or Zangid palaces have survived in the Levant, and little is known of the Ayyubid palaces of Egypt, although the Cairo citadel residences of Salah ad-Din and succeeding sultans were probably both innovative and widely influential. Nevertheless, the attributes of the Ayyubid palace *qa'ahs* of the Levant ultimately display origins within the traditional residential styles

of Fatimid Cairo, particularly with respect to the essential *durqa 'ah-and-iwan* relationship, as well as in the use of suffahs, fountains and triple entrance facades (see Revault 1982: 26-38; Creswell 1978 [1]: 119-28). Shared aspects of design among palace *qa'ahs* and madrasas of this period also present an interesting field of inquiry (Tabbaa 1997: 129-31; Fourdrin 2005: 168-69; Yovitchitch 2011a: 203, 276).

The complex variations among Levantine *qa'ahs* merit exploration beyond the scope of this work, but a few observations provide a framework for interpreting palatial architectural forms in Transjordan. Singular structures occur at Raqqa (*ca.* 1170) and Diyarbakir (early 13th century), but most notable are the shared traits within a cluster of Ayyubid palace *qa'ahs* in north Syria, including Harim (Gelichi 2006: 188, fig. 2; David 2007: 65, fig. 54), Qal'at Najm (Tabbaa 1997: fig. 58; Yovitchitch 2011b: 110, fig. 3; 123-25), Qal'at Sahyun (Grandin 2007: 147, fig. 117; 173-74) and the Aleppo citadel with two *qa'ahs* in the main Ayyubid palace (Tabbaa 1997: 81ff., fig. 31; Gonnella 2007: 125-28, 137) and one in Tawashi palace (Gonnella 2007: 117-18, no. 25; 137, fig. 109). The elite Aleppo residence named Matbakh al-'Ajami also belongs to this group (Tabbaa 1997: 90-91; fig. 62). These *qa'ahs* clearly display a grand iwan, but do not prioritize axial symmetry among iwans or suffahs. Alternatively, the Syrian palace at Mu'azzara displays bilateral symmetry and is exceptional for pillars towards the corners of the *durqa 'ah* in support of vaulting around the central court (Fourdrin 2005: 152ff., 180, fig. 4; 189, fig. 23). This late Ayyubid or early Mamluk *qa'ah* compares with the symmetrical late Ayyubid palace *qa'ah* at Riwadah Island in Cairo, which included pillared support for a dome (Creswell 1978 [2]: 86: fig. 38). In the Jawlan, the Ayyubid castle at Qal'at Subayba includes a master tower with a residential suite (Deschamps 1939: château de Subeibe, plan 2; see also Ellenblum 1989). This *qa'ah* is unstudied owing to poor preservation,

yet Deschamps' plan suggests an arrangement typical of the Mamluk period. These citations are by no means exhaustive, yet they provide a broad introduction to the repertoire of palatial ruins in Syria. The citadel and tower palace *qa‘ahs* of Transjordan that are discussed here offer additional perspectives on this significant architectural tradition.

The Ayyubid Palace *Qa‘ah* at Shawbak: a Royal Throne Hall

The palace at Shawbak houses a monumental *qa‘ah* and suites adjoining it to the north-east, south-east and south-west. A 1986 archaeological and architectural investigation indicated an early Ayyubid construction date for the palace (Brown 1988; Brooker unpublished), for which there has been general consensus (e.g. Rugiadi 2009: 120-21; Nucciotti 2007: 44-45; Korn 2004 [2]: 92-93). Since then, clearance operations along the external south / south-west side of the *qa‘ah* have opened the connecting chambers and corridor linking it to the central hall. As no accurate, updated plan of the palace is available, the 1986 plan is reproduced here with some modifications (FIG. 2), yet this is an incomplete rendering of features now exposed.²

The presence of a monumental palace *qa‘ah* at Shawbak is especially intriguing for it was a royal throne hall with important ceremonial functions, yet the identity of its patron is a matter of speculation. The essential roles of both Shawbak and Karak castles are demonstrated in the history of the Ayyubids in southern Transjordan and each benefitted from royal patronage in this era. However, Karak was historically much more prominent as a strategic asset, administrative seat and repository for treasures, grain stores and goods (Milwright 2008: 37-42, 69, 71-74; al-Zahir, in Sadeque 1956: 180). This citadel also served the defensive needs of its robust town

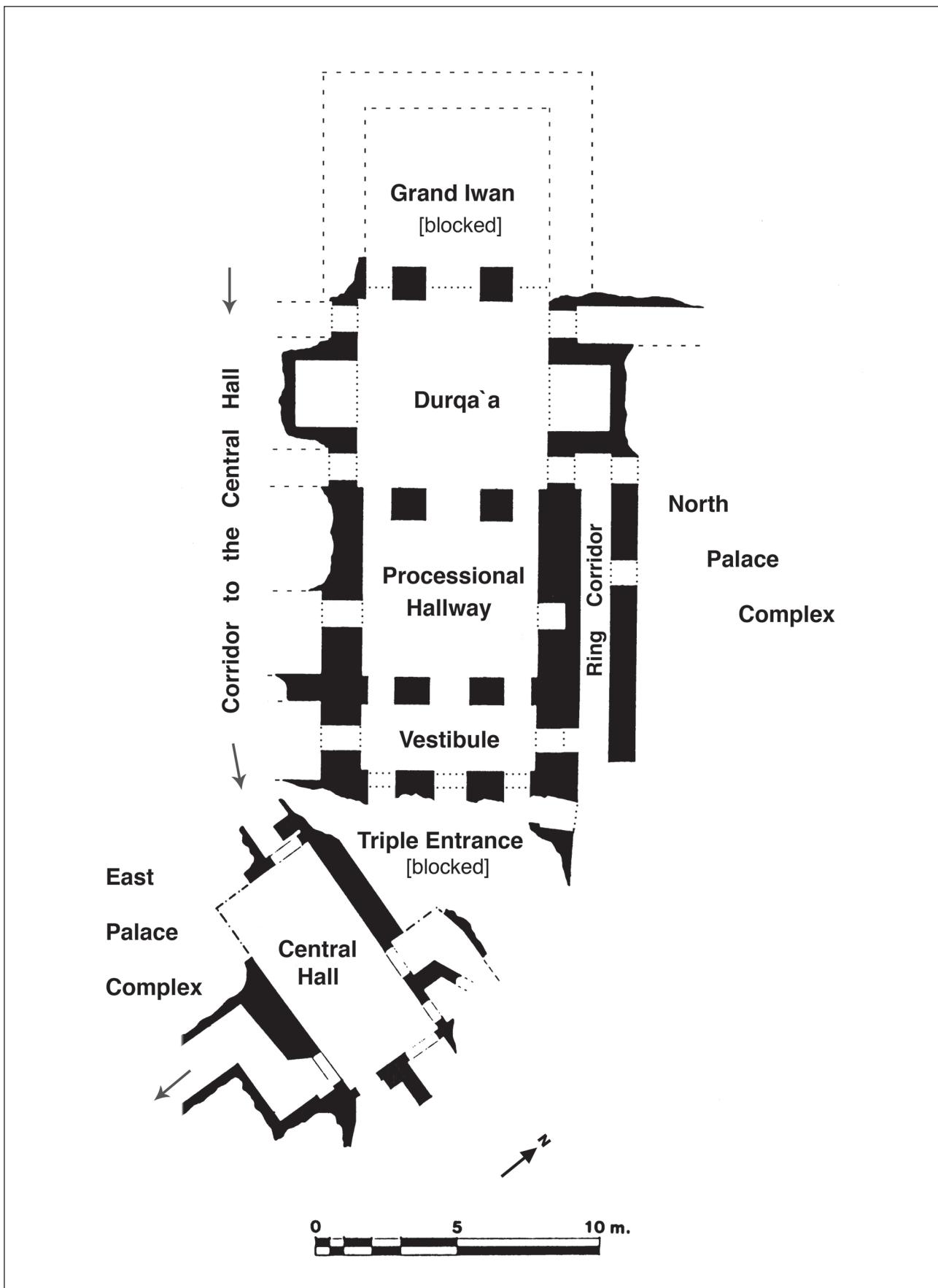
population of Christians and Muslims. The citadel at Shawbak served a relatively small resident population, yet it remained a strategic stronghold for enforcing regional control by providing a locus of interaction between governing authorities and the substantial bedouin groups of the hinterlands. As the design, scope and lavish accomplishment of the palace at Shawbak indicate a royal sponsor committed to maintaining a regional administrative center, these populations would have witnessed palace ceremonials. The citadel palace with its grand processional throne hall was a powerful demonstration of Ayyubid power and wealth in this remote territory.

The *Qa‘ah*: a Royal Throne Hall

The *qa‘ah* is a striking monument, lofty, elegantly arranged and finely finished (FIGS. 3-4). Its role as a royal throne hall for processions and related ceremonial activities is demonstrated by a progression of chambers that includes the entrance vestibule, processional hallway, *durqa‘ah* and grand iwan (FIG. 2). Within this arrangement, the identification of the grand iwan is clear, although its dimensions can only be approximated as it remains blocked with rubble (FIG. 5). The *durqa‘ah* is unusual, being framed by tripartite facades on all sides (FIGS. 6-7). Although seen at Karak, this is an atypical arrangement for Bilad ash-Sham. Even more exceptional is the complex pattern of access into the *qa‘ah* suite, with doorways leading into the *durqa‘ah* (four portals), the processional hallway (one portal) and entrance vestibule (five portals). Most unique is the 17 m processional pathway along the principal axis. The *qa‘ah* was entered through a modest but elegant triple entrance facade (now blocked). From this entrance, an individual would proceed through two identical monumental triple entrance facades to reach the *durqa‘ah*,

2. An erroneous but widely published adaptation of the 1986 plan misrepresents the *qa‘ah* by falsely implying a wall sealing the north-west side of the *durqa‘ah* (e.g. Bertocci 2009: 112, fig. 25; 111, fig. 26; 115, fig. 30; Bini 2009: 29, fig. 39; 2004: 64-65, fig.

63; 69, fig. 66; 70, fig. 67; 71, figs 68-69; Faucherre 2004: 53, fig. 8; 54, fig. 9; Luschi 2004: 198, fig. 205; Yovitchitch 2011: 270, fig. 332; 338, plate VII; Vannini 2012: 45, fig. 11).



2. Plan of the palace *qa'ah* at Shawbak (adapted from Brown 1988: 229: fig. 3).



3. Palace *qa'ah* at Shawbak: view east / south-east from the *durqa'ah* into the processional hallway (photo courtesy of Joseph Greene).

then face the third identical facade before the grand iwan. Serving the royal prince, his entourage and guests, this processional path created a grand impression as the sequence of triple entrance facades presented a mirrored effect, as seen through both the high central portals and the alignments of the smaller side portals (FIGS. 6 - 7).

Visitors admitted to this hall acquired a lasting impression. In addition to expert masonry, mirrored facades with arched portals, soaring walls and high ceiling treatments, embellishments probably included carpets or geometrically designed pavements, a pool of running

water in the center of the *durqa'ah* and a shaded *irwan* fountain in the grand iwan, behind the ruler's seat. Reaching the *durqa'ah*, guests were confronted with a visually complex arrangement, for the tripartite facades around this court are riddled with ten doorways, implying a vast labyrinthine complex (FIG. 2). It would not have been readily apparent if these doorways led to passages, rooms or blind cubicles. Simultaneously, senses were further heightened by the sights and sounds of one or more water fountains. In the presence of a royal figure, this scene would have left visitors in absolute awe of the grandeur and mystery of the *qa'ah*.



4. Palace *qa'ah* at Shawbak: tripartite façade along the north-east side of the *durqa'ah* (photo courtesy of Joseph Greene).

The Question of Patronage at Shawbak

The most likely patrons of the palace at Shawbak are perhaps al-'Adil Sayf ad-Din (d. 1218) and al-Mu'azzam 'Isa Sharaf ad-Din (d. 1227). Establishing the Ayyubid confederation through the distribution of lands and offices among family members, Salah ad-Din granted his brother al-'Adil territories that included Karak (by 1189), Shawbak, Salt and the Balqa' (no later than 1192). Al-'Adil's involvement in Transjordan focused on Karak, where he improved fortifications and installed a treasury (Ibn Shaddad 1897: 336, 397; Ibn al-Athir 1887: 73, 76; see also Milwright 2006: 5; Humphreys

1977:161). His apparent lack of similar attention to the less important castle at Shawbak is not surprising as Transjordan was just one among al-'Adil's widely scattered territorial possessions at the time (Humphreys 1977: 63-64, 83, 141) and political circumstances following the death of Salah al-Din in 1193 were of principal concern. al-'Adil formally granted Palestine and Transjordan to his son al-Mu'azzam 'Isa in 1208, although the latter may have assumed oversight in this region earlier.

If al-'Adil had been motivated to build a grand palace at Shawbak between the 1190s and 1208, it would have reinforced the freshly



5. Palace *qa'ah* at Shawbak, entrance to the grand iwan (blocked with rubble), view north-west from the *durqa'ah*.



6. Palace *qa'ah* at Shawbak: view south-east from the *qa'ah* through the central portals of the triple entrance facades, to the vestibule and blocked doorway at the entrance to the *qa'ah*.



7. Palace *qa'ah* at Shawbak: view south-east from the *durqa'ah* through the left portals of the triple entrance facades, to the vestibule and blocked doorway at the entrance to the *qa'ah*.

established Ayyubid presence within the highlands and semi-desert regions south of the Karak plateau. Yet al-'Adil kept principal residences elsewhere and his activities suggest that he did not expect to administer Transjordan directly. In this respect, a splendid royal palace at Shawbak appears inconsistent with his priorities.

Al-Mu'azzam 'Isa was appointed prince of Damascus by his father al-'Adil in 1201, but was given no real opportunity to govern there. Rather, the disenfranchised prince was allowed to rule in Palestine, where he kept royal

residences at Nablus and Jerusalem (Humphreys 1977: 141-42, 145). In 1208, al-Mu'azzam 'Isa received Karak and Shawbak (al-Maqrizi 1980: 150-51) and, upon his father's death in 1218, he assumed the royal seat in Damascus while retaining jurisdiction over Palestine and Transjordan. The chronology and details of al-Mu'azzam 'Isa's investments in Transjordan are unknown, but they include strengthening the fortress and town at Karak and providing local villages with trees and water (Ibn Shaddad 1963: 73).³ At Shawbak, al-Mu'azzam 'Isa fortified the site and bestowed its environs with

3. A 1227 inscription of al-Mu'azzam 'Isa was set at an entrance to the town of Karak (Mauss and Sauvaire 1874: 202, no. 20).

imported trees, beautifying the (naturally well-watered) landscape so as to rival the gardens of Damascus (*ibid.* 1963: 80). This attribution suggests that the less-attended castle at Shawbak and its garden setting may have appealed to the prince's personal tastes more than Karak, which was closely associated with his father's investments. Al-Mu'azzam 'Isa's creation of gardens to rival those of Damascus implies that this activity may have been undertaken prior to 1218, when Damascus remained beyond his reach and his principal territorial domain was limited to Palestine and Transjordan. If al-Mu'azzam 'Isa built the palace at Shawbak, he must have intended to administer its territory through personal appearances, as well as through appointed representatives. In this manner, he would have enjoyed the fruits of his labors, at least on occasion. An energetic supporter of monumental works in Jerusalem (Hawari 2007: 15), al-Mu'azzam 'Isa emerges as a highly likely patron of the palace at Shawbak.

Most significant in this period is the transformation of Shawbak from a Frankish fortress into a royal Ayyubid complex of the citadel-and-palace type, with a grand throne hall providing a seat for Ayyubid authority and administration. This accomplishment speaks to an engagement between royal ceremonials and the residents of the castle suburb and hinterlands, including the bedouin tribes that were integral to the political realm, as well as to the local economy and social fabric of southern Transjordan. The source of inspiration for the arrangement of this throne hall and the duration of its use are open questions. Yet within the repertoire of palaces in Bilad ash-Sham, the design at Shawbak appears markedly innovative, perhaps having been most influenced by one or more of the now lost royal palaces of the Ayyubid citadel in Cairo.

The Ayyubid (?) Palace *Qa'ah* at Karak

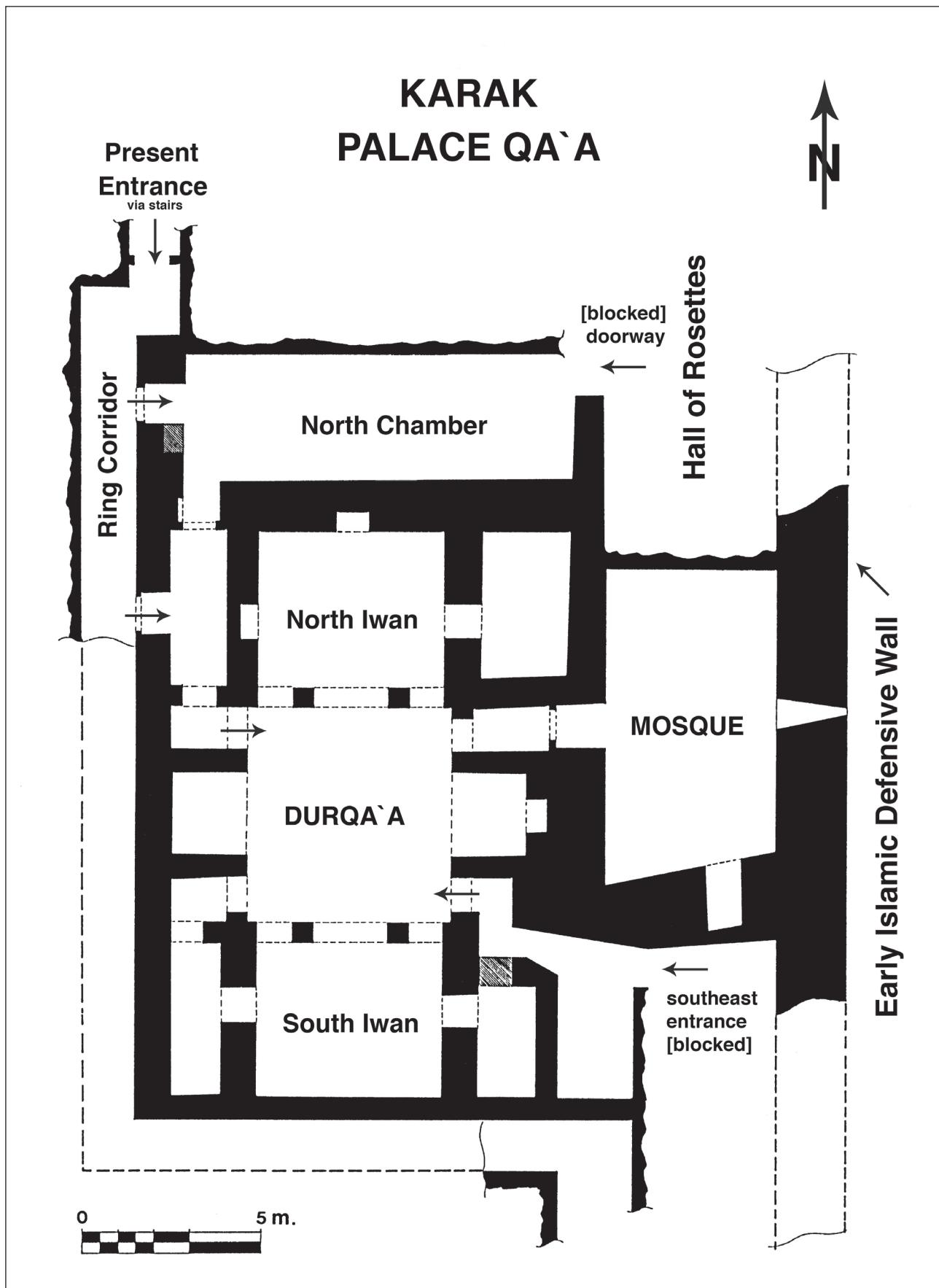
The palace complex at Karak rests at the southern end of the upper castle, near the

massive half-tower on the south rim. Its *qa'ah* is an impressive monument, surrounded by a ring-corridor and chambers, including a mosque (FIG. 8). A complete plan is not available as some areas remain inaccessible, but the principal entrance was probably to the north (at or near the present entrance) and a secondary entrance to the west is also possible. The subterranean aspect of the palace is due to a massive artificial earthen fill that was probably inserted during the final Ottoman occupation. Results from a 1987 archaeological investigation in the *qa'ah* indicated a Mamluk foundation date, but this interpretation has been re-evaluated and an Ayyubid origin should now be considered more likely (Brown 1989: 292; Brown forthcoming).

The *Qa'ah* at Karak

The *qa'ah* is well-preserved despite later modifications, such as partial blockages of some of the smaller doorways (FIG. 9; see also Deschamps 1939: pl. XVII A). Its four-iwan plan is precisely symmetrical and apparently unparalleled among the Ayyubid palaces of Syria. Two large vaulted iwans face the nearly square *durqa'ah* to the north and south. These display identical triple entrance facades, each with a monumental central portal flanked by smaller doors (FIG. 9). To the east and west of the *durqa'ah* are vaulted suffahs with doorways to either side, creating identical tripartite facades (FIG. 10). These pairings of facades around the *durqa'ah* are reminiscent of Shawbak, yet the designs and functions of these two palace *qa'ahs* are distinct. In contrast to the outstanding investment at Shawbak, the Karak *qa'ah* was less ambitious. Here the iwan walls were built of roughly dressed ashlar with plaster finishing. It is likely that the *durqa'ah* was enhanced with a water fountain; wooden doors may have been fitted to some of the portals facing it.

The intended location of the grand iwan is not evident as the iwans are essentially identical, sharing the same dimensions,



8. Plan of the palace *qa'ah* at Karak (adapted from Brown 1989: 291: fig. 3).



9. Palace *qa'ah* at Karak: north iwan with triple entrance facade (right and left portals now largely blocked), view north from the *durqa'ah*.

construction techniques and facades, with no remaining traces of special decoration. The chamber joining the north iwan would have been a suitable bedroom (alternatively a storage area for valuables), whereas a private latrine may have been attached to the south iwan. Conjecturally, the south iwan may have been used primarily during the day, with the north iwan providing sleeping quarters during the night. With respect to circulation, guests would have approached from the north and most

likely entered the palace through a north-facing portal. If the dignitary were seated in the south iwan, guests would have entered the *durqa'ah* through the north-west doorway to face the seat at a maximal distance across the *durqa'ah*; the south-east entrance would have been reserved for the ruler and household.⁴ Guests entering the *durqa'ah* would have found themselves surrounded by tripartite facades offering ten doorways. This arrangement, in addition to access corridors and vestibules with multiple

4. Paths leading into the *qa'ah* were assigned separately for household use or visitor access, in order to ensure family privacy. The access closest to the grand iwan was for the ruler and his family.

The visitor, however, entered the *durqa'ah* through a doorway opposite the grand iwan, thus standing at a maximum distance from the seated authority.



10. Palace *qa'ah* at Karak: tripartite façade along the east side of the *durqa'ah*.

right-angled turns, contributed to a sense of intricacy that is familiar to *qa'ah* arrangements but is exceptionally well-executed at both Karak and Shawbak. The interesting similarities between the *durqa'ahs* at these palaces suggest that the architect designing Karak drew a measure of inspiration from Shawbak.

The Question of Patronage at Karak

Historical documents indicate at least two palace constructions at Karak, one by prince an-Nasir Da'ud in the late Ayyubid period, the other by the early Mamluk sultan an-Nasir Muhammad. Prince an-Nasir Da'ud, son of al-Mu'azzam 'Isa, kept his principal residence at Karak for two decades (1229-1249), from which he maintained semi-autonomous control over the lands from Wadi Zarqa southward (Milwright 2006: 6), but exclusive

of Shawbak, which was governed from Cairo. At Karak, he built the Qā'at an-Nāṣiri and a residence of authority (dār as-sultāna) known as Dār as-Sa'āda or the House of Prosperity (Ghawanimah 1979: 219). The Qā'at an-Nāṣiri played a significant practical and symbolic role when the Mamluks seized Karak from al-Mugith 'Umar, its last resident Ayyubid prince, whose reign in southern Transjordan extended from 1250 to 1263. Arriving in Karak in 1263, the conquering Sultan Baybars I occupied the citadel (*hiṣn*), holding court in the Qā'at an-Nāṣiri while establishing his administration (al-Zahir, in Sadeque 1956: 179). This *qa'ah* later accommodated the Mamluk governors of Karak (Ghawanimah 1979: 219).

In the Mamluk period, royal patronage at Karak burgeoned under Sultan an-Nasir Muhammad (3rd r. 1309 - 1341), showcasing

Karak's status within imperial circles. A palace (*qasr*) was included among his many works of 1311 (al-Asqalani 1973: 317). This residence apparently included the *Qā'at an-Nahās* or Hall of Copper, which would have accommodated the sultan during his visits, as well as his sons who resided at Karak for their education (Ghawanimah 1979: 219; Walker 2011: 87-89). The Hall of Copper presumably displayed decorative features or objects in copper or bronze, which may have been fashioned from ore mined at Faynan, south of the Dead Sea (see Jones *et al.* 2012: 70, 72). During his 1389 exile in Karak, Sultan az-Zahir Barquq was imprisoned in the Hall of Copper, which was noted for west-facing windows looking toward Jerusalem and Hebron (al-Maqrizi 1970: 632; Ibn al-Furat 1936: 138). This might suggest the *qa'ah* was positioned near the western edge of the castle, but such is not necessarily the case.

With respect to the one palace *qa'ah* that still stands at Karak, the lack of fenestration is notable, but also significant is its strong affinity with the Ayyubid *qa'ahs* of Bilad ash-Sham. In addition to similarities between the *durqa'ahs* at Karak and Shawbak, the *qa'ah* at Karak is reminiscent of Syrian arrangements at Qal'at Najm (Tabbaa 1997: fig. 58; Yovitchitch 2011b: 110, fig. 3), Matbakh al-Ajami in Aleppo (Tabbaa 1997: fig. 62), the small *qa'ah* in the main Ayyubid palace at the Aleppo citadel (Tabbaa 1997: fig. 31) and even the palatial suite in Tower 5 at Bosra (Yovitchitch 2004: 210, fig. 8). In contrast, the Mamluk elite residential *qa'ahs* of the Levant and Egypt tended to emphasize spaciousness, often favoring broad open iwans, as for example in Jerusalem at Dar as-Sitt Tunshuq (Burgoyne 1987: 495, fig. 48.5) and in Cairo at Qa'at Yahya, Qa'at al-Irsan and Qa'at 'Uthman Kathuda (Revault 1982: 81, pl. 20; 83, pl. 22; 102, pl. 25). As such the *qa'ah* at Karak is most likely the Qa'at an-

Nāṣiri of an-Nasir Da'ud. This assertion raises the unresolved question as to the location of the Mamluk-era Hall of Copper. No clear traces have been identified, yet a small two-iwan *qa'ah*, which apparently served as a vestibule, stands north of the Hall of Rosettes. The intact portion of this arrangement features a stone-carved panel and water fountain. It is tempting to consider this vestibule as part of a Mamluk residential complex, most of which no longer survives (Brown forthcoming).

The Ayyubid Tower Palace at 'Ajlūn

The Ayyubid castle at 'Ajlūn was constructed by Amir 'Izz ad-Dīn Usāma no later than 1192, and was subsequently passed to Amir 'Izz al-Dīn al-Mansur Aybak who built a large southern tower in 1214 - 1215.⁵ This construction added little to the defensive strength of the fortification system at 'Ajlūn, but stood principally as an ostentatious symbol of Aybak's newly acquired possession of the fortress (Yovitchitch 2011a: 192).⁶ Notably, this large L-shaped tower displays the same construction style as the residential towers erected during al-'Adil's campaign to strengthen the citadel at Bosra (Yovitchitch 2006: 236).

Yovitchitch's analysis of Aybak's tower concludes that it is the only Levantine example of a purely residential tower (2011a: 192). This is demonstrated by internal partitions, windows and latrines on the first and second levels, antique spolia set in a second level bay and a residential suite in the palatial style on the third (uppermost) level. Although there are few structural remains, the *qa'ah* is identified by a triple entrance facade that once marked the interface between the *durqa'ah* and an iwan (Yovitchitch 2006: 237, fig. 7; 2011a: 192, fig. 227). The *durqa'ah* contains remnants of a geometric pavement and the likely remains of a water pool or fountain (Yovitchitch 2006: 236-

5. The construction date is recorded in Aybak's inscription; see *Répertoire Chronologique d'Épigraphie Arabe*, X, no. 3746, Cairo, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (1939).

6. The construction of the tower was undertaken at a time when Aybak's authority in the region was growing, for he also received the iqta' of Salkad in 1214 (Humphreys 1977: 143).

37). As an amiral indulgence, the thoroughly residential tower at ‘Ajlūn is a singular example of one of the ways that Ayyubid palace design expressed the interwoven relationship between military prowess and resident authority.

The Early Mamluk Palatial Residence at Hisban

Hisban was an established hilltop settlement in the Balqa’ agricultural plains that rose in size and stature during the Mamluk period. Favored by Sultan an-Nasir Muhammad (3rd r. 1309 - 1341), the town garnered attention within the imperial administration through the first half of the 14th century, offering a station within the state’s postal relay system (*barīd*) and serving as the capital of the Balqa’ district from 1308 to 1356 (al-Bakhit 1992: 67-68; Walker 2011: 71). The facilities at Hisban included a madrasa and market place, as well as a citadel that embraced an elite residential complex described as the probable remains of a Mamluk governor’s residence (Walker 2001: 30, 32-33; 2003: 250-58; 2004: 132-33; 2011: 71, 74-75; Walker and LaBianca 2003: 447-53).

Designed according to the principles of the palatial architectural style, this dwelling features a modest rendition of the *qa’ah* concept, with a *durqa’ah* faced by a single iwan that would have housed the governor’s seat (see Walker and LaBianca 2003: 446, fig. 4; 449, fig. 5). Adjacent to the *qa’ah* were a bath and store-room, facilities traditionally included within the large royal palaces of Ayyubid Syria. The residential complex at Hisban is a unique example of the priority afforded to these functions, even within a proportionally modest dwelling (royal baths were probably also associated with the palaces at Shawbak and Karak, or were located beside their local springs).

Any number of similar elite residences may have been built within the Middle Islamic towns of Transjordan or set within their fortifications, as at Hisban. Excavated by Bethany Walker

between 1998 and 2007, this sole surviving example is exceptionally valuable. In most cases, storage facilities associated with palatial residences would have been emptied over time as these complexes were ultimately abandoned or adapted to other uses. The unusually clear understanding of the nature and use of the Hisban citadel residence is a result of its abrupt destruction by a mid-14th century fire that left material items damaged but *in situ* (Walker 2004: 133), providing a remarkable opportunity to examine artifact distributions and inventory the goods stored at the time the room burned and collapsed. Here the valued items that were accumulated and warehoused, presumably under strict supervision, included weaponry, pottery jars used to store sugar molasses, and luxury ceramics including glazed and inscribed serving vessels imported from specialized manufacturing centers. Some of these vessels were so large that they would have been used only for display or ceremonial events (Walker 2003: 257). The nature and quantities of these goods stored at Hisban create a powerful vision of the roles of warehouses within the larger royal palaces at Karak and Shawbak.

Concluding Remarks on Transjordan’s Contributions to the Middle Islamic Palace Tradition

The palaces and palatial dwellings described here show that this cultural motif was an integral part of the Transjordan landscape in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. In addition to the examples known from Shawbak, Karak, ‘Ajlūn and Hisban, it is fair to assume that additional structures of this genre existed in Transjordan. Of the Ayyubid defensive works in the region, little remains of the fortified tower or citadel built at Salt in 1220 under the auspices of al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa (al-Bakhit 1995: 999; Korn 2004 [2]: 95-96), but it probably included a residence in the palatial style. Similarly, the Roman fort at Azraq rebuilt in 1236 - 1237 by ‘Izz ad-Dīn Aybak (see Walmsley 2001: 530)

likely contained a residence in one of the no longer preserved upper stories of the two major tower blocks (see Kennedy 1982: 74, fig. 14). No example is known from ‘Aqaba, although an Ayyubid palace and bath complex stand across the gulf at Qal‘at Ayla on the island of Jazirat Far‘ūn (De Meulemeester and Pringle 2008: 151). Mamluk palatial constructions in Transjordan remain largely elusive, yet the exceptional residence at the Hisban citadel provides a model of an elite residential form that was probably once a common feature in the towns of this territory.

It is intriguing to consider other elite architectural forms whose functions sometimes included residential accommodations, such as the *jawsaq*, which appears in texts as a pavilion, lodge or garden palace.⁷ An-Nasir Da‘ud possessed a *jawsaq* in the valley below Karak castle, which was probably set within spring-watered gardens. Ibn Wasil reported that he and his party were quartered there during a visit to Karak in 1231 - 1232 (1972: 330). Unfortunately, remains of this building genre have yet to be identified or documented archaeologically.

The palaces and palatial residences of Transjordan express strong thematic continuity with those of Syria. At the same time, their individuality adds considerably to the palace repertoire within Bilad ash-Sham, for each offers unique characteristics. In this respect, the Transjordan residences reinforce the significance of the patron’s architectural signature as an influence over design that was at least as important as considerations of availability of space and funds to support the project. At the same time, the traits shared between the *durqa ‘ahs* at Shawbak and Karak show the same diffusion of design style as among the palace *qa‘ahs* in the Aleppo region. It is tempting to envision a Transjordan style in this pair of *durqa ‘ahs*, as they represent a distinctive

design within the Levantine repertoire, yet this seems premature. Most important, however, are the ways that the palatial architecture of Transjordan describes a rich pattern of cultural integration within the Ayyubid and Mamluk social, political and military organization and expression.

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