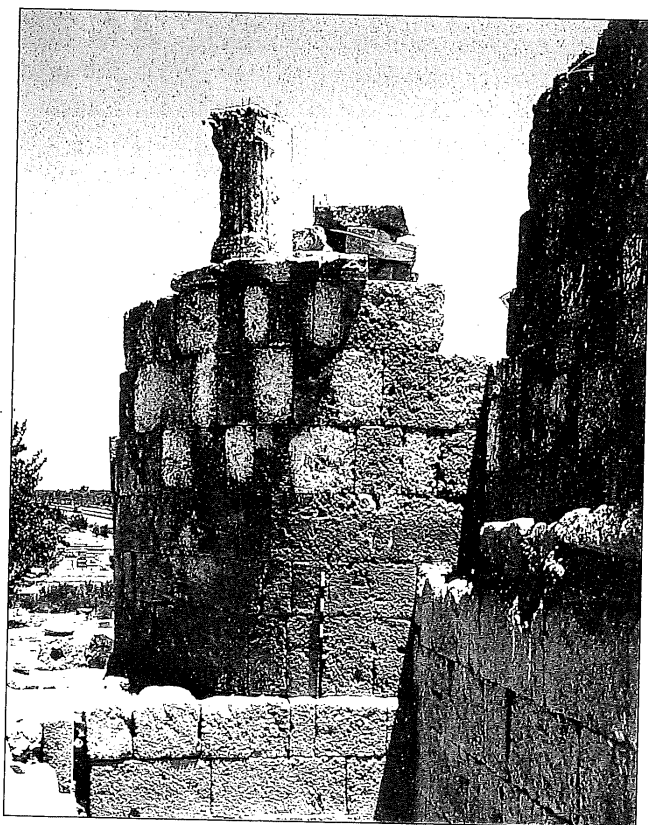


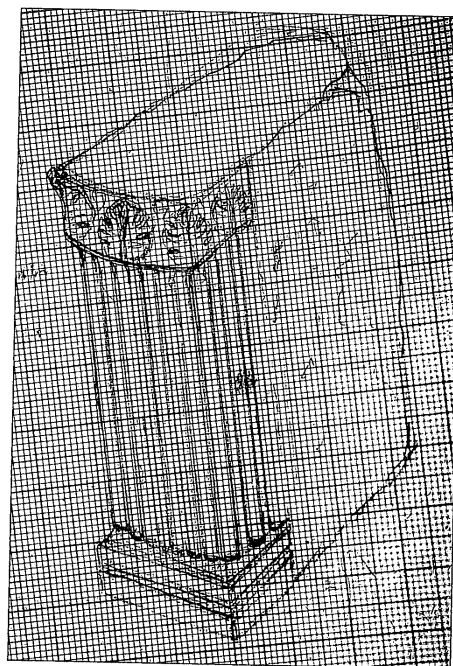
and the lower three courses of the inner (southern) face only of the northern wall belong to the original building. The southern and eastern walls are recent and probably date from the late Ottoman period.

Recognizing the importance and uniqueness of the minaret at al-Qastal, the Department of Antiquities initiated a project to restore the first storey of the minaret, a project that lasted from March 16th to May 11th, 2004.*

The minaret has a cylindrical shaft 5.00m in diameter and rests on a rectangular base of three courses, 1.35m high, measuring 2.55m from the south, 5.00m from the west, 4.95m from the north and 2.57m from the east. The shaft consists of six courses 3.27m high, a projecting moulded cornice marks the beginning of the second storey and serves as a base for the channelled Corinthian pilasters (FIGS. 2, 3). Although only six pilasters have been recovered, it seems that originally ten such pilasters stood on the cornice. Initially we thought that arched panels of alternating blind and open

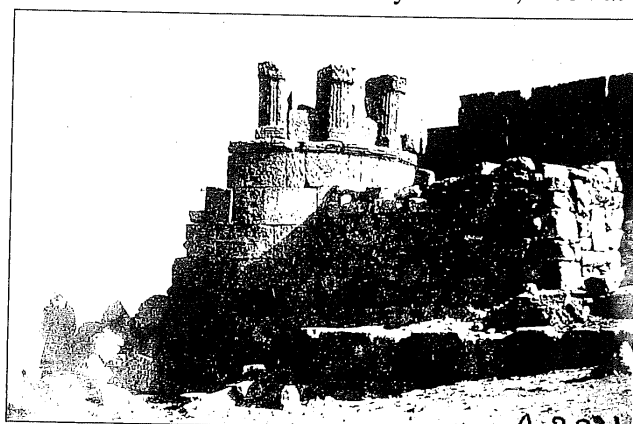


2. The minaret: looking north.



3. A channelled Corinthian pilaster.

niches stood between these pilasters; however, a photograph in Harding's photographic archive taken in 1951 shows a rectangular stone with a smooth face between the standing pilasters (FIG. 4); this, together with the recovery among the tumbled stones of a partially broken rectangular slab with an arched narrow opening in the middle, would indicate that recessed blind niches with slits stood between the pilasters (FIG. 5). The minaret was entered from the northwestern corner of the mosque's courtyard through a narrow door, 0.60m wide, and the interior space was taken up by a spiral staircase that, until the year 2000, stood at a



4. The minaret: looking E-NE (Harding's archive, 1951).

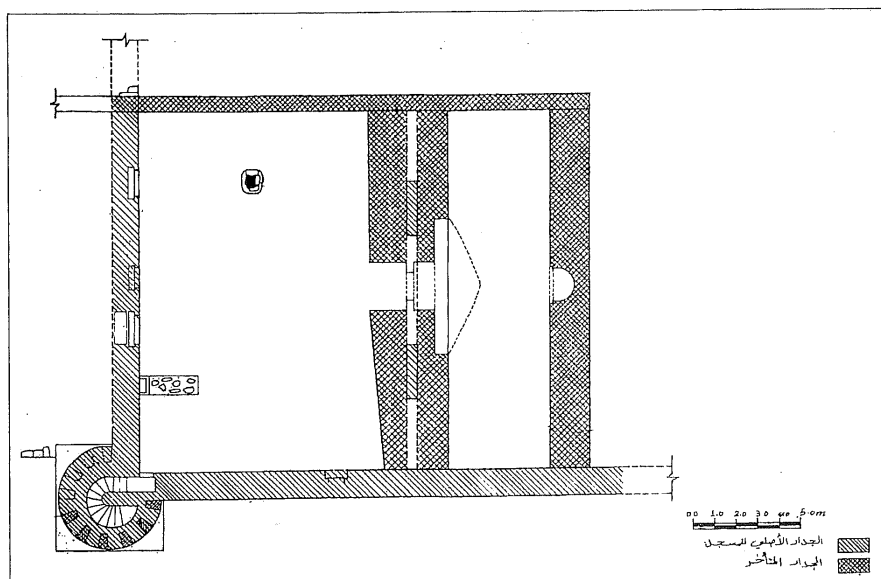
* My gratitude to Dr. Fawwaz al-Khrayshah, Director General of the Department of Antiquities, for his moral and practical support, to Mr. Abd al-Majid Mjalli and his technical staff from Jarash who carried out the actual restoration work, and to Sahar al-Nsour for

help in providing access to the photographic archive in the Registration Center. My thanks also go to Shaykh Shibli al-Fayez (Abu Abd-Allah) and his sons for hospitality and unfailing friendship.

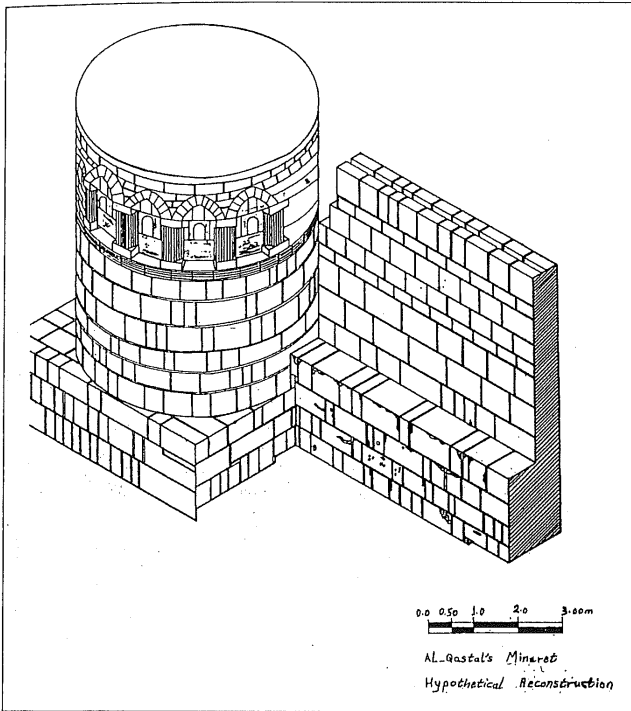
The Umayyad Minaret at al-Qasṭal and its Significance

Although the minaret attached to the northwestern corner of the mosque at al-Qasṭal has been known from as early as the 19th century, and its plan was drawn by Brünnow and Domaszewski in 1897 (Brünnow and Domaszewski, 1905, II: 100-101, Figs. 681-3 — the mosque is referred to as Praetorium), yet it never figured in the extensive literature dealing with the minaret and its architectural origins. In his study of the qaṣr and mosque at al-Qasṭal, Heinz Gaube was the first to make two important observations: first, he referred to the existence of a minaret in a relatively small mosque, and second that the minaret has a circular form (Gaube 1977: 77), the rest of Gaube's article dealt with establishing the architectural phases of the mosque. Later, between 1979-1981, Patricia Carlier and Frederic Morin excavated at al-Qasṭal and drew a new plan for the mosque which, for no cogent reason, they attributed to the reign of 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwān (65-86AH/ 685-705AD) (Carlier

1984: 343-52, 1989: 114-21, Fig. 8). In 1999 Erin Addison removed what looks like a stone platform outside the northwestern corner of the mosque and excavated down to bedrock. This excavation exposed four courses of the original (Umayyad) western wall (Addison 2000: 487, Fig. 10). Addison's study of the mosque, which relied on photographic archival material and analysis of mortar samples taken from various parts of the place, the mosque and the northwestern reservoir, is the most detailed so far (Addison 2000: 477-90). She also recognized the importance of the minaret, "the earliest minaret built as such still standing today". It is not my purpose here to discuss the architectural phases of the mosque, which, in its current state, seems to be a futile exercise because the mosque was damaged, rebuilt and repaired more than once since the middle of the 19th century (FIG. 1). Suffice it to say that only the lower courses of the western wall, preserved between one to four courses,

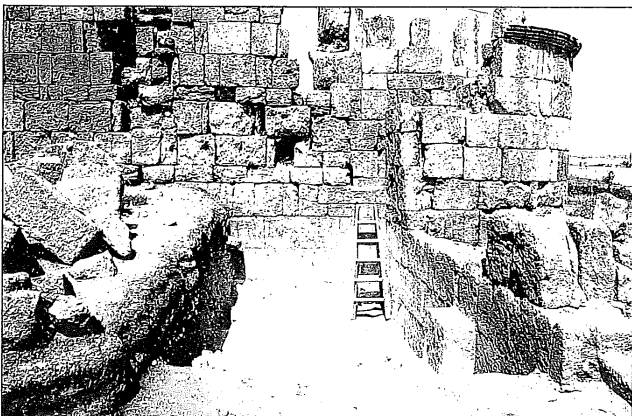


1. The Mosque at al-Qasṭal (ground plan).



5. A hypothetical reconstruction of the upper storey of the minaret.

level slightly below the top of the upright pilasters. The sill of the doorway is 2.10m above the original floor level, and there is no evidence of a stairway leading up to it, perhaps a wooden ladder was used to get up to the doorway (FIG. 6). At about 4.00m to the east of the inner face of the western wall, there is a pier resting on a rectangular base attached to the northern wall. A low wall, 0.80m wide and 0.50m high, takes off from the base in a southerly direction, it seems that both the base and the wall are cut off from the natural rock. If this wall served as a sort of stylobate for columns, it may be assumed that a portico existed on the western side of the mosque's courtyard. Only excavation can



6. The narrow entrance to the minaret.

verify this point.

The masonry of the minaret that consists of fine ashlar laid randomly in header-and-stretcher fashion with tight joints indicated by a thin, slightly projecting plaster pointing is exactly like the exposed masonry of the original western wall (FIG. 2) and therefore, it is clear that the minaret was erected as an integral component of the mosque. It should also be noted that the semi-circular buttresses of the qasr's exterior walls rest on square socles as well (FIG. 7), just as the shaft of the minaret stands on a rectangular base.

Until recently most scholars agreed that the minaret developed in Syria during the Umayyad period, and that its standard square tower format was copied from the bell-towers of the Syrian churches (Creswell 1969: I, pt. II, 491ff). However, a thought-provoking recent publication on the minaret in Islam concludes that, "the minaret was invented not early in the first century of Islam, but at the end of its second century, not in Umayyad Syria but in Abbasid Mesopotamia, and that in the beginning it (the minaret) had little if anything to do with the call to prayer" (Bloom 1989: 7, 175). Bloom adds that, "Originally the 'Adhan (call to prayer) was made from a small, box-like structure above the mosque's roof which was reached by few steps". An often quoted verse of al-Farazdaq (110AH/ 728-9AD):

"And so that on the wall of every city

A herald called the Adhan from on top of it"

seems to support Bloom's conclusions, and shows that the minaret, as a distinctive feature of mosque buildings, remained relatively rare throughout the first century of Islam. However, the minaret at al-Qastal warrants a re-examination of



7. A half-round buttress resting on a rectangular base from the eastern facade of the Umayyad qasr (al-Qastal).

these conclusions.

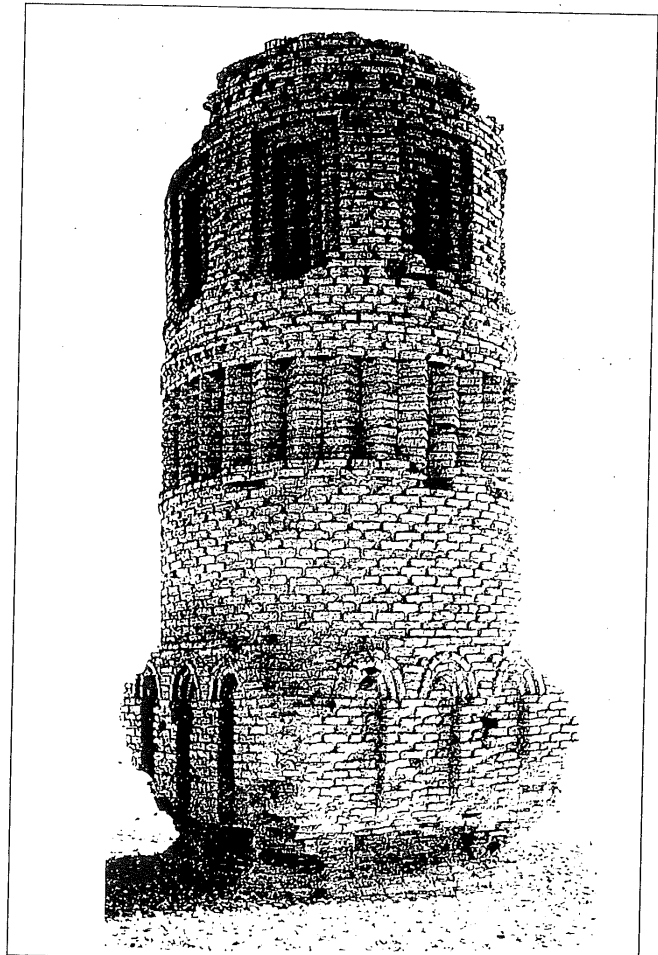
In a poem composed by Jarīr, al-Farazdaq's contemporary and rival, Khālīd bin 'Abd-Allah al-Qasrī, the energetic governor of 'Iraq (105-120AH/ 723-38AD), is praised for having built a minaret so tall that it almost reached the stars, the like of which had never been seen before:

"You built the illuminated manar to guide
so you became a light whose sheen is not sub-
siding

you built a building the likes of which none had
ever seen its walls almost attain the level of the four
stars of Ursa Minor" (Bloom 1989: 36-7).

Bloom points out that the word "Manār" in these verses refers to a lighthouse rather than a mosque's minaret. Though this interpretation cannot be ruled out, it should be noted that the first hemistich of the first line in Jarīr's verses might be translated as, "You, i.e. Khālīd al-Qasrī, built the illuminated minaret to guide to the path of righteousness (*'alā al-hudā*) which has a religious connotation probably associated with a minaret of a mosque. In a curious report al-Balādhurī (279AH/ 892AD) states that Ziyād bin Abīhi built a minaret of stone when he enlarged the mosque of Basra in the year 45AH / 665AD (Balādhurī 1932: 343). Creswell doubted this report because no author other than al-Balādhurī mentioned it (Creswell 1969: 45). Less than a century later, the encyclopedic author al-Jāhiz (255AH/ 869AD) speaks of the minarets of al-Kūfa as different from those of al-Baṣra. The former, he says, were modeled after the bell-towers of the Melkites and Jacobites, by which he probably meant that they were square in plan, in contrast to the cylindrical towers of al-Baṣra (Pellat, 1969: 193). In view of the close relationship between al-Balqā' and al-'Iraq in the Umayyad period, especially after the building of Wāsit by the redoubtable governor of 'Iraq, al-Hajjāj bin Yusuf ath-Thaqafi (Bisheh 1987: 196; Crone 1980: 47, 235N.), it is likely that the Iraqi minarets, as those in al-Baṣra, were the model for the minaret at al-Qaṣṭal, the earliest extant minaret attached to a mosque in the Islamic world. In fact there is an isolated, minaret-like tower, called Manārat Mujda, standing some 22km to the east of Ukhaydir (Bloom 1989: 44, 48 – Fig. 20); Creswell 1989: 260, Fig. 162) which is of some significance to our purpose. It is built of baked brick and has a cylindrical shaft resting on a square base decorated with shallow panels each topped by a triply-recessed arch, in the middle zone

of the shaft there is a band decorated with triangular flutings (FIG. 8). Creswell thought that this tower was contemporary with al-Ukaydir and attributed it to the early Abbasid period. However, re-evaluation of the structure by Finster and Schmidt showed that the tower functioned as a guidepost marking a desert route to al-Kūfa, and they dated it to before Ukaydir (Finster and Schmidt 1976: 25-6). A tower like Manārat Mujda may have provided the inspiration for the cylindrical minaret at al-Qaṣṭal that was realized by local craftsmen accustomed to the use of stone. It is curious, however, that neither the congregational mosque in downtown 'Ammān nor the mosque on the 'Ammān Citadel had a minaret in the Umayyad period (Northedge 1989: 148, 150-1, 1992: 67-8; Almagro and Jiménez 2000: 459-75). Obviously al-Qaṣṭal was not a major urban center that had been the first to introduce the minaret, it was primarily a palatial residence that belonged to Yazīd bin 'Abd al-Malik (101-5AH/ 720-4AD) and his son al-Walīd (125-6AH/ 743-



8. Manārat Mujda/al-'Iraq.

4AD) (Bisheh 2000: 436-7). The minaret was introduced here not only for the call to prayer, but also as a statement of the faith and to reflect the piety of the patron.

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