

# Shayzar I

## The Fortification of the Citadel

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BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2012

Cover illustration: The citadel of Shayzar. ©Photograph by Luca Tarducci.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tonghini, Cristina.

Shayzar I: the fortification of the citadel / by Cristina Tonghini in collaboration with Nadia Montevecchi; and with contributions by Fabrizio Antonelli ... [et al.].

p. cm. — (History of warfare, ISSN 1385-7827; v. 71)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-21736-2 (hardback: alk. paper)

1. Qal'at Shayzar Site (Syria) 2. Fortification—Syria—Qal'at Shayzar Site.
3. Excavations (Archaeology)—Syria—Qal'at Shayzar Site. 4. Shayzar (Syria) I. Montevecchi, Nadia. II. Title. III. Title: Shayzar one.

DS99.S43T66 2011

956.91'3

2011037986

ISSN 1385-7827

ISBN 978 90 04 21736 2 (hardback)

ISBN 978 90 04 21767 6 (e-book)

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Our 1039 inscription should be considered an important example – the only one from Shayzar – of the modest revival of Greek epigraphy during the period of Byzantine domination in northern Syria, in a still partly bi-lingual ‘Melkite’ context: it was only with the Mongol invasions of the XIII century that Christian inscriptions in Greek ceased altogether.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.2 THE ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS OF THE CITADEL OF SHAYZAR

Roberta Giunta

The citadel of Shayzar has revealed a fair number of monumental inscriptions in Arabic, both unbroken and fragmented and bearing texts of various kinds, which, with a few rare exceptions, were found in their original location. Unfortunately, for many of these there is no extant trace.

The deciphering of most of this epigraphic documentation has already been the object of several publications;<sup>81</sup> however, it seemed timely and appropriate to present here the entire *corpus* in order to facilitate the advancement of hypotheses about the chronological attribution of some unpublished texts – whose state of preservation in most cases does not allow them to be read easily – and, more importantly, to help reconstruct both the phases of occupation of the citadel and the interventions of the rulers who wielded their power over the area for some centuries (XII–XV).

The inscriptions are presented on the basis of their location, along a north-south axis.

### 2.2.1 *Bridge on the Orontes*

**Inscription 1.** In Max Van Berchem’s photographic archive there is a picture (no. 2993) of two adjoining epigraphic stone blocks (1a and 1b), discovered by the scholar in the southern wall of the bridge over the Orontes,<sup>82</sup> some 350 m. away from the entrance of the citadel (Fig. 11). Both blocks, which were almost certainly part of the same epigraphic program, are now missing.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Rey-Coquais 2006, pp. 47–48.

<sup>81</sup> All bibliographic references are given in the presentation of each inscription. The inscriptions of the northern tower CF8 have already been the object of a study by the author (Giunta 2006).

<sup>82</sup> The position of the blocks on the bridge can be inferred from the picture.

1a. On the right block the inscription is bordered by a thin frame in relief – of which only the sides are preserved – and is divided into four horizontal lines. The text is carved in relief in Mamluk *nashī*, accompanied by diacritical dots, some vowels and orthographic marks.<sup>83</sup> Some ornamentation with vegetal motifs fills in the blanks of the field:

١ جدد عمارة هذا الجسر المبارك بعد هدمه بالزيادة سبب مده مولانا السلطان  
٢ الملك الاشرف برسباي خلد الله ملكه ورسم تصرف كلفته من الجزائن الشريفة وكان  
٣ ابتدا العمارة به ثالث عشر شوال المبارك سنة اربعة وثلثين وثمان مائة واتهواه  
٤ سلخ رمضان مما [تولى عمارتها ؟] المقر الاشرف [السيفي ؟] جلبان كافل المملكة  
الشريفة [الحموية ؟]<sup>(a)</sup>

(a) Littmann 1905: الحلية (see *infra*)

- 1 *Has restored the building of this blessed bridge after its demolition and has also enlarged it – our Lord, the Sultan*
- 2 *al-Malik al-Ašraf Barsbāy. May God prolong his reign! And he has prescribed that its cost be covered by the noble state coffers. Its*
- 3 *building began on the 13th of blessed šawwāl in the year 834 (24 June 1431) and was completed*
- 4 *on the 30th of ramadān. Its [construction was supervised] by His Excellency [al-Ašraf al-Sayfī] Julbān, general governor of the royal province of [Hamā?].*

The inscription commemorates the restoration and enlargement of the bridge, which took place during the period when the citadel of Shayzar was under the control of the sultan of the Burji Mamluks Barsbāy (825–41/1422–38),<sup>84</sup> whose name is introduced, as was customary, by the titles of *al-Sulṭān* and *al-Malik al-Ašraf*. The text provides detailed information on the date of execution of the works. The latter went on for eleven months, since they began in the second ten days of *šawwāl* and were completed the following year, at the end of

<sup>83</sup> Littmann 1905, p. 211, no. 34c (picture and text in Arabic were provided to the author by Max van Berchem).

<sup>84</sup> For the main historical references to the different phases in the occupation of the citadel see the resumptive diagram on pp. 84–86.

*ramadān*, a circumstance revealing the importance of the intervention. The last line of the inscription bears some information relating to the supervision of the works, which is however rather unclear, due to the fact that the bottom of the slab was partially buried. The name of the supervisor corresponds to Julbān,<sup>85</sup> who probably has the *laqab* of *Sayf al-dīn* (literally, *al-Sayfī*) and certainly the title of “general governor of the royal province” (*Kāfil al-mamlaka al-šarīfa*). The name of the province – engraved at the end of the line – is almost unreadable; yet, it seems rather to correspond to Ḥamā (الحموية, *al-ḥamawīyya*) than to Aleppo (الحلبية, *al-ḥalabīyya*), as proposed by Max van Berchem.<sup>86</sup> Gaston Wiet’s abridged French translation of the biographies of *Manḥal Ṣāfī* by Abū’l-Maḥāsīn b. Tagrībīrdī (IX/XV c.) mentions five Sayf al-dīn Julbān.<sup>87</sup> Among them, two had a governorship: the first, Sayf al-dīn Julbān Zāhirī, known as *Qarā Saqal*, was governor of Aleppo in 793/1390 and died in 802/1400;<sup>88</sup> the second, who was known as *Amīr āḥūr* and whose date of death remains unidentified, was governor of the province of Ḥamā in 826/1422, of Tripoli in 837/1433, of Aleppo in 842/1438, and of Damascus in 843/1439.<sup>89</sup> Since the restoration of the bridge was carried out between 834 and 835 (1431–32), it must be assumed that the inscription refers to the second above-mentioned figure and that the royal province referred to may be that of Ḥamā.<sup>90</sup>

**1b.** On the left block, positioned upside down, the inscription is carved inside a circular medallion divided into three sections.

The style of the writing is similar to that of the inscription described above (1a). Because of the state of preservation and the quality of the picture the text is only partially readable:<sup>91</sup>

١ [بالامرالعالي المولوي؟] برسباي

٢ [مولانا السلطان الملك الاشرف

٣ [ . . . ]

<sup>85</sup> A name frequently attested during the Mamluk rule (see Sauvaget 1950, p. 47).

<sup>86</sup> *Apud* Littmann 1905, p. 212.

<sup>87</sup> Wiet 1932, pp. 123, 124, nos. 842–846.

<sup>88</sup> Wiet 1932, p. 123, no. 844.

<sup>89</sup> Wiet 1932, pp. 123–124, no. 845.

<sup>90</sup> It is important to notice how, among the bibliographic records on this historical figure, Wiet (1932, p. 124) also mentions the study by Littmann reporting the inscription presented here.

<sup>91</sup> Unpublished inscription. Littmann (1905, p. 212) only publishes the picture.

1. [*For the supreme order of our Lord ?*] Barsbāy
2. [*our Lord, the Sultan*] al-Malik al-Ašraf
3. [...]

The central cartouche of the medallion certainly bears a part of the protocol of the sultan Barsbāy, whose name is still readable at the end of the upper cartouche. The reading of the beginning of the text is tentative and it is difficult to propound the deciphering for the final part carved in the lower cartouche and currently almost completely abraded. However, given the morphology of the cartouche it is possible to hypothesize that the text reported only the protocol of the sovereign who commissioned the restoration of the bridge.

**Inscription 2.** A third epigraphic stone block (62×40 cm.) was found by Max van Berchem inserted in the wall of the bridge-house. Only the Arabic text of this inscription is provided and is here faithfully reported:<sup>92</sup>

..... في ابطال المقر الكريه العلاني طر على بن صقلية (؟)

نائب شيزر المحروسة اعز الله انصاره ما على

... ( اهل شيزر ) جريا في ذلك عاده والده المقر

المرحوم (.....) ملعون بن ملعون من يجدد مظلة

Though the version reported by Littmann presents some anomalies, the lack of a graphic or photographic reproduction makes it impossible to verify the deciphering of this text. It is definitely a decree ordering the abolition of some taxes and it is very likely that it dates back to the years of rule of the Mamluk sultan who commissioned the two inscriptions described above and who was constantly occupied in the resolution of the economic problems of the provinces of the sultanate.<sup>93</sup> However, what is left of the text does not allow us to identify the nature of the injustice, perpetrated perhaps by their own governor (*nā'ib*), against the people of Shayzar.<sup>94</sup> The governor's name (Ṭar'alā, son of Saqalbiyya, صقلية بن طر على), reported in the first line, is anoma-

<sup>92</sup> Littmann 1905, p. 212, no. 34b, following Max van Berchem's documentation.

<sup>93</sup> See Darrag 1961, pp. 57–107.

<sup>94</sup> For the use of the title of *nā'ib* in Egypt and Syria, with the meaning of "deputy", "governor", "fortress governor", or even "viceroy", see van Berchem 1894, pp. 210–212 and 218–222.



lous and certainly inaccurate. A study of the onomastic elements attested at this time made it possible to go back to the form that we believe to be correct and that corresponds instead to *Turgāi*, son of *Saqalsiz* (طرغاي بن صقلسين),<sup>95</sup> although no province governor having this name<sup>96</sup> or the epithet *al-'Alā'ī* (the "eminent") could be identified in the sixteen-year reign of *Barsbāy* (825–41/1422–38).<sup>97</sup>

As we mentioned before, the text is unfortunately incomplete and it proved to be impossible to identify the nature of the "*maẓlima*" ("injustice") calling not only for its "*ibtāl*" ("abolition") – a word that should be preceded by the preposition "*bi*" and not by "*fi*" as reported by Littmann – but also for the threat to put a curse on those who dared to restore it.<sup>98</sup> However, according to what can be inferred from the third line, the abolition of the oppression (or, conversely, the oppression itself) seems to have been in accordance with a policy previously implemented also by the governor's father, already deceased at the time.

In the light of these remarks we propose the following reconstruction of the text:

١ [...] بابطال المقر الكبر العلاءي طرغاي بن صقلسين

٢ نائب شيزر المحروسة اعز الله انصاره [...]

٣ [...] اهل شيزر] جرياني ذلك عادة والده المقر

المرحوم [...] ملعون بن ملعون من يجدد مظلمة

1. [...] *for the abolition – His noble Excellency, the eminent Turgāi b. Saqalsiz*

<sup>95</sup> Both names, of Turkish origin, are attested in Sauraget (1950, pp. 49, 50). The first, *Turgāi* (or even *Turgā*), has the meaning of "bird" and is used by both the *Manluks* and the *Mongols*; the second, *Saqalsiz*, means "the beardless". Among the attestations of the latter Sauraget mentions just this *Shayzar* decree.

<sup>96</sup> In the biographies of the *Manḥal Ṣāfi* the only two personages bearing the name *Turgāy* are reported as being deceased in 696/1297 and in 743/1343 respectively (Wiet 1932, p. 175, nos. 1226, 1227).

<sup>97</sup> With reference to the attestations of *al-'Alā'ī* see Wiet 1932, nos. 197, 390, 528, 592, 612, 680, 789, 1000, 1136, 1236, 1486, 1700, 1875, 1877, 1931, 2738. All these personages died before the Sultan *Barsbāy* ascended to the throne since they lived mainly between the VII/XIII and the VIII/XIV century, with the sole exception of those mentioned in nos. 789, 1700 and 2738, whose first names are however different from those attested in the inscription of *Shayzar*.

<sup>98</sup> This formula, though with some variants, is often used at the end of a decree.

2. *governor of Šayzar, the well-guarded, may God consolidate his victories! – [...]*
3. *[... the people of Šayzar] in order to restore the practice (implemented) by his father, His Excellency*
4. *the late [...]. Cursed – as did his father as well – whoever will restore the injustice!*

**Inscription 3.** On the southern side of the bridge, van Berchem also reported the presence of an additional block of stone (110×40 cm.) bearing a fragment of an inscription in Ayyubid *nashī* carved in relief, of which at the time of the discovery only two lines remained.<sup>99</sup>

١ [...] السكر<sup>(a)</sup> العبد الفقير الى رحمة الله تعالى

٢ [...] الاخر<sup>(b)</sup> سنة ستة وعشرين وستمائة للهجرة النبوية

<sup>(a)</sup> Unclear word, not translated in RCEA

<sup>(b)</sup> Shahada 1981: الاخر

1. [...] *the servant needing God's mercy*
2. [...] *the second of the year 626 of the hijra of the Prophet (1229).*

As in the case of the three epigraphic blocks mentioned so far (nos. 1a, 1b, 2), there is no extant trace of this one either and, most likely, not even a reproduction is available. The fragmentary status of the text does not allow us to reconstruct the nature of the inscription, nor the name of the personage to whom reference is made in the first line. The only clue is provided by the date – the year (626/1229) and the final part of the month (*rabī' II* or *jumādā II* / February-March or April-May)<sup>100</sup> being still readable – which allows us to attribute the document to the era of the Ayyubid rule, when al-Aṣraf I Mūsā (626–35/1229–37) and al-Muẓaffar II Maḥmūd (626–42/1229–44) ascended to the throne of Damascus and Ḥamā respectively, while al-Malik al-'Azīz Muḥammad (613–34/1216–36) had already been ruling over Aleppo for thirteen years.<sup>101</sup> In this year control over the citadel

<sup>99</sup> van Berchem, *carnet IX*, p. 56, *apud RCEA X*, no. 3998 (text in Arabic and translation). This is the most ancient inscription of *Shayzar* reported in RCEA. The deciphering of the text is also provided by Shahada 1981, p. 124.

<sup>100</sup> The expression *li'l-hijrat al-nabawiyya* ("of the hijra of the Prophet") following the date is rarely attested in this period (RCEA IX–XI).

<sup>101</sup> Among the Ayyubid sultans of the Ḥims branch the power was in the hands of al-Malik al-Mujāhid Širkūh II (581–637/1186–1240).

of Shayzar was exerted by a member of the Banū al-Dāya,<sup>102</sup> that is, ‘Izz al-dīn Mas‘ūd, or, much more likely, Šihāb al-dīn Yūsuf, who was replaced four years later, in 630/1233, by the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-‘Azīz Muḥammad.<sup>103</sup>

It should be noted that Max van Berchem (and, consequently, the RCEA) does not specify on which bridge the inscription was found, a fact that makes it impossible to establish with any certainty whether the reference is to the bridge over the Orontes or to the slightly more distant one giving access to the citadel. We opt for the former hypothesis mainly because all the information provided by van Berchem in relation to a “bridge” seems to refer exclusively to the one over the river and also because there is no trace of this inscription on the bridge leading to the citadel.<sup>104</sup>

### 2.2.2 Access Bridge to the Citadel (CF28)

**Inscription 4.** On the upper span and on the eastern side of this bridge three epigraphic stone blocks have been identified in 2002,<sup>105</sup> (4a: L 53.5 cm., H 33 cm., H of letters 16 cm.; 4b: L 30 cm., H 21 cm., H. of letters 7 cm.; 4c: out of reach, H of the blocks of this front between 35 and 40 cm.), all of them having been reused and each of them containing a very brief part of an inscription (the same one?)<sup>106</sup> in Ayyubid *nashī* with diacritical dots, engraved in relief and placed on a single line with some breaks in the base line.

**4a.** On the first of the three blocks, found on the upper order of the first bay of the bridge, southern wall (US 5151, Fig. 12), the following word can clearly be read:

المظفر  
*al-Muẓaffar*

preceded by five or six letters, three of which almost certainly constitute the word:

<sup>102</sup> The progenitor of this family, al-Dāya, most probably of Kurdish origin, was the father of Majd al-dīn Abū Bakr, Nūr al-dīn's foster brother. Some members of this family – beginning with Majd al-dīn himself – exerted their control over the citadel as vassals first of Nūr al-dīn, then of Saladin, and finally of the Ayyubids of the Aleppo branch.

<sup>103</sup> van Berchem and Fatio 1914, p. 182.

<sup>104</sup> It should be noticed, however, that this bridge was significantly restored during the 1950s.

<sup>105</sup> Unpublished texts.

<sup>106</sup> On all blocks the inscription is delimited by the same type of frame in relief.

أبو  
Abū

The first two or three letters, on the other hand, are surely the ending part of a word that, in all likelihood, preceded the term *Abū*. What we apparently have is a *mīm* followed by a *yā'* and by a *nūn*.

The type of cursive allows us to date the fragment of this inscription to the Ayyubid era; the likely presence of the *kunya* Abū'l-Muẓaffar suggests the hypothesis that it is part of the protocol of the sultan al-Malik al-'Azīz Muḥammad of the Aleppo branch, which, as mentioned earlier, took control of the citadel in 630/1233. His *kunya* is also attested in three other epigraphic documents attributed to him: the first one is located on the southern complex CA1 of the citadel of Shayzar and is dated to the 21 *ḡū'l-qa'da* of the year 630 (29 August 1233);<sup>107</sup> the other two are an inscription carved on a marble slab placed above the entrance to the courtyard of the mausoleum of Abū'l-Rajā' in Aleppo (1st of the month of *ramadān* of the year 633/9 May 1236)<sup>108</sup> and another, particularly fragmented inscription, found in the courtyard of the Great Mosque of Manbij,<sup>109</sup> undated and attributed to 634/1237.<sup>110</sup> In the latter inscription, as well as in that of the southern complex (building CF2) of Shayzar, the word preceding the *kunya* is completely erased, whereas in the inscription of the mausoleum of Aleppo it corresponds to *al-muslimīn*, the last element of the *laqab* of *Sulṭān al-islām wa'l-muslimīn*. The group probably identifiable as *mīm-yā'-nūn* (مين) that can be seen before the word *Abū* on the epigraphic block under discussion might actually correspond to the last three letters of the word *al-muslimīn* (المسلمين) and perhaps belongs to the same *laqab*.<sup>111</sup> The portion of text may therefore be reconstructed as follows:

[... سلطان الاسلام والمسلمين ابوالمظفر] [رحمهم]  
[... the Sultan of Islam and the Muslim]ims Abū'l-Muẓaffar  
[r Muḥammad ...]

<sup>107</sup> See *infra*, inscription no. 11.

<sup>108</sup> RCEA XI, no. 4085.

<sup>109</sup> A town located about 80 km north-east of Aleppo.

<sup>110</sup> RCEA XI, no. 4123.

<sup>111</sup> It is however important to point out that the *kunya* of Abū'l-Muẓaffar is attested in the protocol of other Ayyubid sultans, in particular that of the sultan al-Zāhir, father of al-Malik al-'Azīz Muḥammad (see the inscription of the Bāb al-Naṣr of Aleppo dating at 607/1210; RCEA X, no. 3664A).

4b. A second epigraphic block (US 5151, Fig. 12) is located on the row beneath the one featuring block 4a, but unfortunately of the whole text only the tracing of a *wāw* can be discerned.

4c. The third block can be seen on the eastern side of the bridge (US 5130, Fig. 13) and preserves two words, the second one probably corresponding to the term *sana* (year, سنة)<sup>112</sup> and introducing perhaps the date of execution of the inscription.

### 2.2.3 The Northern Tower (CF8)

#### 2.2.3.1 The Facade

**Inscription 5.** The north facade of the northern tower, above the entrance (Fig. 14, Cpl. 8, US 646, 546), features two overlapping epigraphic bands (5a and 5b), of different sizes,<sup>113</sup> in Mamluk *nashī* carved in relief and accompanied by diacritical dots, vowels, and orthographic marks.<sup>114</sup>

5a. The first inscription contains some vegetal elements used as background filler or as termination of the letters. The central part of the text is very corroded:<sup>115</sup>

مما عمر في أيام مولانا / سلطان الأعظم مالك رقاب الامم / سيد ملوك العرب والعجم  
 سلطان الاسلام والمسلمين قاهر<sup>(a)</sup> الخوارج / والمتمردين كهف الضعفا والمساكين  
 فاتح القلاع<sup>(b)</sup> والامصار الملك المنصور سيف الدين ايو / الدين قلاوون<sup>(c)</sup> الصالحى اع  
 / عز الله انصاره

<sup>112</sup> With reference to the peculiar shape of the *tā' marbūṭa* see, by way of example, the ending letter *hā'* in the word *i'lāmī-hi* at the end of the second line of the upper epigraphic band in the southern tower of the citadel (inscription no. 11).

<sup>113</sup> The upper band is 815 cm. in length and 43 cm. in height. The second band is 389 cm. long and 30 cm. high.

<sup>114</sup> Littmann 1905, p. 211, no. 34a (text in Arabic, translation, comment, facsimile). The scholar points out that "this inscription was read by Dr. van Berchem by means of a telescope, whereas I with the naked eye copied only parts of it". In his *Voyage en Syrie* Van Berchem mentions only the existence of the inscription with the date of its execution and provides a general picture of the facade (van Berchem and Fatio 1914, I, p. 185; II, pl. XXVI). See also Shahada 1981, p. 116 (text in Arabic), Mouton 1997, p. 411 (mention) and Giunta 2006, pp. 63–64 (text in Arabic, translation, comment).

<sup>115</sup> In the Arabic text the ending of each epigraphic block is marked with a slash (/).

<sup>(a)</sup> Littmann 1905, Shahada 1981: قاتل

<sup>(b)</sup> Littmann 1905: الفتوح

<sup>(c)</sup> Littmann 1905: قلاون

*This was built in the days of our Lord, the great Sultan, Who owns the necks of the nations, the Ruler of the kings of the Arabs and the Persians, the Sultan of islam and the moslems, the Victor over the heretics and insurgents, the Shelter of the weak and needy, the Conqueror of the citadels (?) and military camps, the King assisted by God, the Sword of state and religion, Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī. May God make powerful his victories!*

**5b.** The second inscription is in a worse state of preservation:

عمل الاستاذ / المولى السيد<sup>(a)</sup> الفقير الى رحمة الله تعالى الى ابيك الخزندار<sup>(b)</sup> المنصوري

في / مستهل رجب سنة تسع وثمانين وستمائة ادام الله ايامه [...] <sup>(c)</sup>

<sup>(a)</sup> Shahada 1981: العبد

<sup>(b)</sup> Littmann 1905, Shahada 1981: الخندار

<sup>(c)</sup> Littmann 1905, Shahada 1981, Giunta 2004: the last part of the text is not decipherable

*In charge of the master, the freed, the lord, the servant needing God's mercy, Aybak, the treasurer, al-Manṣūrī, on the first day of rajab of the year 689 (10 July 1290). May God prolong his days [...]*!

The two epigraphic bands contain a text of construction or restoration of the building, which took place under the reign of the Bahri Mamluk sultan Qalāwūn (678–89/1279–90). The upper band is certainly the result of a specific epigraphic program, which was planned to be carried out during the reconstruction of the tower, as shown by its monumentality, its perfect proportions, the quality of the stone blocks on which it was carved and the elegant frame – made by alternating, quite regularly, the motif of a semicircle and that of a triangle – running along its four sides. The lower band was instead carved into the ashlar face after the implementation of the first one. It is in fact much shorter, slightly lower and visibly asymmetrical compared to the other one and its realization entailed the partial removal of the lower frame of the monumental band up to a length of 384.5 cm. A frame of the same type, though much less refined, was subsequently sculpted on part of the lower side of the second band. We also note that, certainly due to a mistake in the calculation of the size of the epigraphic field, the

beginning and the end of the text of this second band are engraved outside its limits.

The texts of the inscriptions are independent one from the other, a fact which further confirms that their realization was carried out at two different times, although almost certainly within a short period: the text in the upper band contains the *incipit* of the inscription, the protocol of *Qalāwūn* – including the official title of *al-Sultān al-a'zam*, a sequence of eight *laqab* and the *ism* – and an invocation to God for the benefit of the sultan; the text in the lower band reveals the name of the man responsible for the works followed by the date (*rajab* 689/ July 1290), which actually corresponds to only five months before the death of the Mamluk sultan. We have traced the available information about the person responsible for the works and thus know that he became governor (*nā'ib*) of the province of Tripoli between 693 and 694 (1293–95), was one of the emirs (*umarā'*) of the Mamluk sultan Lājīn between 696 and 698 (1296–99), and died in Tripoli, where he was buried, in 698/1299.<sup>116</sup> He also bore the *laqab* of *'Izz al-dīn* and the *nisba* of *al-Mawṣilī* (from the town of Mawṣil/Mossul), both of them being absent, however, in the inscription of Shayzar.

#### 2.2.3.2 The Vaulted Entrance (CF8, Sp. 38)

**Inscriptions 6, 7, and 8.** The wall to the right of the vaulted entrance (Sp. 38, CF8, US 663) features three large overlapping epigraphic stone blocks in different sizes. The upper block bears a five-line carved inscription (6), in *nashī* with diacritical dots, which is unreadable due to the poor state of preservation, but seems to have been executed after the fall of the Mamluks.<sup>117</sup>

The central and lower blocks (Figs. 15 and 16) bear a decree in Mamluk *nashī*, carved in relief with some diacritical dots and many vowels.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Maqrīzī, I.III, pp. 712, 769, 782, 809, 821, 865, 886, 922, 932, 940; van Berchem 1894, p. 221; van Berchem and Fatio 1914, p. 119; Wiet 1932, no. 570, pp. 82–83; Sauvaget 1950, p. 39; Giunta 2006, p. 64.

<sup>117</sup> There is no reference to this inscription in any study, maybe precisely because it was realized more recently.

<sup>118</sup> Littmann 1905, p. 210 (text in Arabic, translation, comment, facsimile, and picture). The scholar points out that "the reading of this inscription is almost entirely due to Dr. van Berchem; when I copied it, I understood only a few words". See also Shahada 1981, p. 116 (text in Arabic) and Giunta 2006, pp. 64–66 (text in Arabic, translation, comment, picture).

The beginning of the decree (**inscription 7**) appears on the first of the two blocks (43×47 cm.), surrounded by a rectangular frame and distributed on three lines:<sup>119</sup>

١ رسم بالامر الشريف العالي المولوي

٢ السلطاني<sup>(a)</sup> الملكي<sup>(b)</sup> الاشرفي السيفي

٣ برسباي خلد الله ملكه

(a) Shahada 1981: السلطان

(b) Shahada 1981: المخدومي

1. *It was ordered by the sublime and high decree of our Lord*
2. *the Sultan al-Malik al-Ašraf al-Sayfi*
3. *Barsbāy. May God prolong his reign!*

The final part of the text (**inscription 8**), carved on the second block (77×58 cm.), is distributed on four lines and surrounded by a rectangular frame:<sup>120</sup>

١ بابطال الحيف<sup>(a)</sup> والمظالم<sup>(b)</sup> المحدثه الذي كان

٢ نائب<sup>(c)</sup> شيزر يتناولها وكان الساعي باطلها<sup>(d)</sup>

٣ المقر السيفي [اينال؟]<sup>(e)</sup> شاه الظاهري نائب<sup>(f)</sup>

٤ شيزر عز نصره وختم له بخير وملعون من يجددها<sup>(g)</sup>

(a) Littmann 1905: الحق

(b) Shahada 1981; Giunta 2004: المظلمة

(c) Shahada 1981: قائد

(d) Littmann 1905:<sup>121</sup> باطل

(e) Littmann 1905: unidentified word; Shahada: اينال

(f) Shahada 1981: قائد

(g) Littmann 1905:<sup>122</sup> يجدده

1. *For the abolition of the injustice and of the recent illicit measures that*

<sup>119</sup> Littmann (1905, p. 210) mentions also the size of the inscribed area: 40×37 cm.

<sup>120</sup> The first cartouche is slightly taller (12.5 cm.) than the three following ones (11.5 cm.).

<sup>121</sup> On the facsimile provided by Littmann (1905, p. 210, Fig. 174), however, the expression correctly corresponds to *bi-ibtālī-hā*.

<sup>122</sup> The form readable on the facsimile (Littmann 1905, Fig. 174) is the correct one (see also the previous note).



2. were established by the governor of Šayzar. He who carries out their abolition is
3. his excellency al-Sayfī [Īnāl?] Šāh al-Zāhirī governor of
4. Šayzar. May his triumph be glorious and his end be excellent! Cursed be the one who will restore (it) (who will restore this injustice)!

As is rather often the case, due to a lack of space, the decree is divided into two uneven sections carved on as many media. It was issued on the order of the Mamluk sultan Barsbāy (825–41/1422–38) with the express purpose of repealing some unfair measures arbitrarily imposed on the residents of Shayzar by their own government. He who sees that the order of the sultan is carried out is again the governor of Shayzar, but since his name is only reported in the section about the repeal it is difficult to determine with any certainty whether they are one and the same personage. His title (*al-maqqarr*),<sup>123</sup> his *laqab* (*al-Sayfī*, contracted form of *Sayf al-dīn*) and his *nisba* (*al-Zāhirī*) emphasize the relationship of dependence on the Mamluk sultan Sayf al-dīn al-Zāhir Ṭaṭār (824/1421). Yet, deciphering his name raises some problems: despite some anomalies in the *ductus*, we believe he can be identified as Īnāl (or Aynāl)<sup>124</sup> Šāh since we know that one Īnāl al-Zāhirī was appointed governor (*nā'ib*) of the town of Šafad by Ṭaṭār during the few months of his sultanate and later – during the short reign of his ten-year-old son (Muḥammad III b. Ṭaṭār: 824/1421) – was made governor of the entire province of Ḥamā.<sup>125</sup> We also know that, having remained faithful to the old sultan, this governor was never able to establish good relations with Barsbāy, who came to power with general consensus in 825/1422, that is, a few months after the death of Ṭaṭār.

#### 2.2.4 Gallery (Sp. 27, Northern Area)

**Inscription 9.** An inscription in *nashī* with some diacritical dots, much fragmented and scarcely legible, is carved in relief within two overlapping epigraphic bands adorning the arch of one of the galleries

<sup>123</sup> On the use of this title – which since the beginning of the second half of the XIII century has almost exclusively been attributed, in monumental inscriptions, to the governor of a province – see Wiet 1925, pp. 158–159.

<sup>124</sup> Shahada (1981, p. 116) propounds the same reading. On the etymology of the name and its two possible readings see Sauvaget 1950 p. 40.

<sup>125</sup> Maqrīzī, IV.II, pp. 576–577, 601, 614.

(Fig. 17).<sup>126</sup> The lower band (L 585 cm., H 21 cm.) runs along the profile of the arch, while the upper one occupies only its central part (L 146 cm., H 19 cm.). Some vegetal elements are used as fillers of the epigraphic field and can be seen especially at the beginning of the lower band where the text, which occupies 17 blocks of stone, seems to start. To the right, on the first block, it is possible **clearly** to read the expression introducing a text of construction (or reconstruction):

امر بعمارة

*Has ordered the construction (or reconstruction) of*

where the last letter of the second word (the *tā' marbūṭa*) is carved higher up, above the *rā'*. This expression is followed, as usual, by the object of the construction, which in this case is **certainly introduced** by a demonstrative pronoun, probably in a feminine form since, as in the previous case, the final *hā'* seems to be carved higher up. Early in the second block the presence of an isolated *wāw* suggests that the object of the construction works is twofold. We cannot propound any deciphering for the first of the two terms, which apparently consists of no more than five letters (including the two constituting the definite article *al-*) and ends, at the beginning of the second block, with a *tā' marbūṭa* (which would justify the feminine demonstrative pronoun), one of its two diacritical dots being still visible. The *ductus* of the part of the second term carved at the end of this block certainly corresponds to

المار

with a big dot carved above the letter **م**. The final part of this word is carved on the following block, but is unfortunately completely eroded. Between the only two deciphering options for this term

المنارة or المبارك

*al-manāra* ("the minaret") or *al-mubārak* ("the blessed")

it seems reasonable to choose the former, given the presence both of the conjunction *wāw* (which, as mentioned before, suggests a second object of the construction) and of the dot (which in all likelihood served as a diacritic).

The part of the text carved on the third and fourth blocks is completely abraded and must have featured the beginning of the protocol of the patron of the works, of which unfortunately only the marking

<sup>126</sup> Unpublished inscription discovered in 2002 by the Mission directed by C. Tonghini.

of some letters is still visible on blocks 5–7. Only the portion of the text carved on the four following blocks (8–11) is clearly legible. The eighth block features:

والدين  
and religion

even though the letter *wāw* might have been used as a conjunction since it seems to be connected to a “tooth-shaped” letter<sup>127</sup> preceding it:

بوالدين

On the other three blocks it is still possible to read with certainty:

ركن الاسلام والمسلمين  
the Pillar of Islam and of the Muslims A

but, unfortunately, the text of blocks 12 and 13 is missing and that of the four following ones, that is, 14–17, cannot be easily decoded. On the latter, there seems to be an *ism* (مسعود, Mas‘ūd?) followed by a *nasab* (بن الجدة...?, b. al-Jad ...?) that apparently have no connection with the title preceding them and could therefore refer to the name of a second personage.

Similarly, it is difficult to identify the relationship existing between the text of this epigraphic band and that of the band carved on top of it. The latter develops only on the four central blocks (7–10), but the poor state of preservation prevents us from propounding its deciphering.

In all likelihood the text celebrates the construction (or restoration) of a minaret, which might perhaps correspond to the small tower CF13 – some traces of which still remain – incorporated into the western encircling wall, in the immediate vicinity of the gallery (BW 3, 39–40).

The type of writing allows the dating of the inscription to the period comprised between the VI/XII and the first half of the VII/XIII century, that is, the years during which the citadel was, first, under the direct control of the Zangid ruler Nūr al-dīn, later, of some vassals of Saladin, and finally, of the Ayyubid sultan al-‘Azīz Muḥammad. As we said before, the only element providing a clue as to the patron of the works is the title of *Rukn al-islām wa’l-muslimīn* (“Pillar of Islam and the Muslims”) that can still be distinctly read near the center of the

<sup>127</sup> That is, a letter of the group *bā’/tā’/ṭā’*, a *nūn* or a *yā’*.

lower band. This *laqab* – attested perhaps for the first time in an inscription of Aleppo dated 480/1087<sup>128</sup> and containing the protocol of the Seljuk sovereign Malik Šāh (465–85/1073–92) – is featured in many inscriptions of Nūr al-dīn beginning from 549/1154–55,<sup>129</sup> but only in one of those bearing the name of the Ayyubid sultan – namely, an inscription made in Aleppo and dated 631/1234<sup>130</sup> – who, unlike Nūr al-dīn, also had the title of *Sulṭān al-islām wa'l-muslimīn*.<sup>131</sup>

In the nearly thirty inscriptions of Nūr al-dīn known to us so far,<sup>132</sup> the title of *Rukn al-islām wa'l-muslimīn* is attested nine times<sup>133</sup> and is always immediately preceded by the *laqab* Nūr al-dīn with which the sovereign is generally known. At least in one case<sup>134</sup> this title is followed by the *kunya* Abū'l-Qāsim.

In the inscription of Aleppo bearing the name of the Ayyubid sultan al-'Azīz the title of *Rukn al-islām wa'l-muslimīn* is instead preceded by *Giyāṭ al-dunyā wa'l-dīn* ("the Help of state and religion") and followed by that of *Sayyid al-mulūk wa'l-salāṭīn* ("Lord of kings and sultans").

In the portion of protocol of the inscription we are documenting, the *laqab* and *kunya* of Nūr al-dīn can be recognized to the left and to the right of the title of *Rukn al-islām wa'l-muslimīn* respectively. In fact, the curvilinear segment whose faint trace can be detected before the word *al-dīn* and above the letter *wāw* could authorize the reading نور الدين (*Nūr al-dīn*); the letter *alif*, clearly legible after the word

<sup>128</sup> RCEA XI, no. 2764.

<sup>129</sup> The oldest one seems to be that of the Māristān Nūrī of Damascus (RCEA VIII, no. 3164); other, more recent ones come from the Bāb Ṣaḡīr of Damascus (551/1156; RCEA IX, no. 3216), the Jāmi' Nūrī of Ḥamā (558/1162–1163 and 559/1163–64; RCEA IX, nos. 3248, 3256), the mosque of Raqqā (561/1165–1166; RCEA IX, no. 3269), the mosque of al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem (564/1168–69; RCEA IX, no. 3281), the Madrasa Nūrīyya of Damascus (s.d.; RCEA IX, no. 3310), the Māristān Nūrī of Aleppo (s.d.; RCEA IX, no. 3312), and the minaret of the Qal'a Ja'bar (s.d.; RCEA IX, no. 3314). See also Elisséeff 1952–54, pp. 179–180.

<sup>130</sup> RCEA XI, no. 4067.

<sup>131</sup> Above all, this title is used in the only inscription of Shayzar that certainly mentions his name (see *infra*, inscription no. 11), dated at 630/1233, as well as in that of the mausoleum of Abū'-Rajā' in Aleppo of 633/1236 (RCEA XI, no. 4085). It is also worthy of notice that the same *laqab* can also be found in an inscription of Aleppo dated at 581/1185 bearing the name of the second Ayyubid ruler of the Aleppo branch, al-'Ādil (579–82/1183–86; RCEA IX, no. 3401) and in another one of Konya bearing the name of Qīlīj Arslan II, son of Mas'ūd (551–88/1156–92; RCEA IX, no. 3455).

<sup>132</sup> Elisséeff 1952–54.

<sup>133</sup> RCEA VIII, no. 3164; IX, nos. 3216, 3248, 3256, 3269, 3281, 3310, 3312, 3314.

<sup>134</sup> RCEA VIII, no. 3164.

*al-muslimīn*, could be the first letter of the word *Abū*. We would instead dismiss the hypothesis that the two above mentioned *laqab* of the Ayyubid sultan may be featured in the inscription of Shayzar.

We therefore consider it quite plausible that the few readable elements of this inscription correspond to the following text:

امر بعمارة هذه [...] والمنار/ [ ... ] نور الدين ركن الاسلام والمسلمين ا[بو]  
القاسم [...] [ ... ]

*The construction/reconstruction of this [...] and of the minare/[t ...] was ordered by Nūr al-dīn, the Pillar of Islam and the Muslims A[bū'l-Qāsim ...]*

and that it may then date back to the Zangid ruler whose *ism* (*Maḥmūd*)<sup>135</sup> perhaps followed the *kunya* on the twelfth and thirteenth block. However, it should be pointed out that the abrasion of the blocks featuring the beginning of his protocol makes it impossible to verify the presence of the official title of *al-malik*, which he received from the Caliph of Baghdad at the time of the recognition of his role as a sovereign.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, the marks left by the few words that can be identified in the first part of the epigraphic band seem to bear no relation to the elements that most frequently, beginning from 551/1156,<sup>137</sup> introduce his main *laqab* (*Nūr al-dīn*), such as *al-ʿālim* ("the wise"), *al-ʿādil* ("the righteous"), *al-mujāhid* ("the fighter for the faith"), *al-muʾayyad* ("he who is assisted by God"), *al-muẓaffar* ("the victorious"), and *al-manṣūr* ("the winner").<sup>138</sup>

Finally, specific difficulties are raised by the interpretation of the final part of the text on the lower band, where there seems to be the name of one Masʿūd, with regard to which the only plausible hypothesis is that it is the name of the supervisor of the works.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Attested in almost all his inscriptions (Elisséeff 1952–54).

<sup>136</sup> van Berchem 1907, pp. 266, 274; Elisséeff 1952–54, p. 169. The first attestation of this title – followed by *al-ʿālim* – can be found in the Ḥalawiyya mosque of Aleppo dated at 543/1149 (Elisséeff 1952–54, no. 2, pp. 157–158).

<sup>137</sup> Elisséeff 1952–54, no. 4, p. 158.

<sup>138</sup> Hardly ever are these epithets in the same order. We notice, however, that in ten inscriptions *al-mujāhid* precedes the *laqab* *Nūr al-dīn* (see RCEA IX, nos. 3220, 3248, 3256, 3262, 3263, 3268, 3274, 3283, 3314; Elisséeff 1952–54, no. 6, p. 159).

<sup>139</sup> The only Masʿūd about whom it is known that he was in close contact with *Nūr al-dīn* was the Seljuk sovereign of Rūm, Masʿūd I b. Qilīç Arslan (510–51/1116–56), the Zangid having married one of his daughters in 545/1150. At the beginning of the following year the two kings joined forces and inflicted a resounding defeat on the

## 2.2.5 Building CF1 (Southern Area)

**Inscription 10.** In the upper right and upper left sections of the entrance to CF1 – located within the CA1 palatine complex – there are two frames of equal size, each of them consisting of six blocks of stone (Cpl. 16). The frame on the right still preserves an epigraphic block (L. 80 cm., H 58 cm.), though in a very poor state of conservation (Fig. 18).<sup>140</sup> The inscription – of which only a few letters can be discerned – is carved in relief, in cursive writing,<sup>141</sup> and is distributed over (seven?) horizontal lines. The concise reading proposed by Shahada<sup>142</sup> is as follows:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 نور الدين بن عماد الدين زنكي  
 سنة ... وخمسين وخمسمائة

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful,*

*Nūr al-dīn b. 'Imād al-dīn Zankī*

*year ... fifty and five hundred (55x/1156–1164)*

We can hypothesize the presence of the *basmala* in the first line. Shortly after the beginning of the second line there are two letters (an *alif* followed by a *mīm*) and it is possible to discern the mark left by some of the following letters. There is a chance that this is the expression introducing a construction/restoration text:

امريعةارة  
 or  
 امريعمل

Byzantine armies (Elisséeff 1967, II, pp. 455, 460, 461). However, we do not believe the inscription of Shayzar refers to this sovereign, nor to 'Izz al-dīn Mas'ūd, who for a few years, between 582/1186 ca. and 630/1233, was entrusted with the control of the citadel. No inscription bearing the name of this personage is in fact known and it seems quite unlikely that he might have been attributed such an important *laqab* as that of *Rukn al-islām wa'l-muslimīn*.

<sup>140</sup> In all likelihood, the block on the left also had an epigraphic inscription originally.

<sup>141</sup> The state of preservation of the text does not allow to verify the presence of diacritic dots.

<sup>142</sup> Shahada 1981, p. 119. To this inscription probably refer also van Berchem (van Berchem and Ratto 1914, p. 187, note 5) and the RCEA (XI, no. 405 bis). See *infra*.

("has ordered the construction"); the rest of the line has been completely erased. It is quite safe to assume that in the third and fourth line there were the titles and the name of the patron: the final part of both lines and the residual mark of a couple of letters early in the fourth can in fact be identified. Though the hypothesis cannot be propounded with any degree of certainty, the final part of the third line might be occupied by the first part of the *nasab*, as suggested by Shahada:

بن عماد

("son of 'Imād"), but neither the *laqab* Nūr al-dīn nor the *ism* of his father, Zankī, can be read. In the fourth line we can identify with a certain confidence a letter *wāw* and, close by, at the end of the line:

[... -حي العدل

The first word might be interpreted as "*muḥyi*" ("the reviver"), the second one as *al-'adl* ("justice, fairness"). These terms are both contained in title *muḥyi al-'adl al-'ālamīn* ("the Reviver of justice of the two worlds") which Nūr al-dīn obtained – along with two other *laqab*<sup>143</sup> – after ordering the construction of the Palace of Justice (*dār al-'adl*) in Aleppo (543/1149) and Damascus (549/1154).<sup>144</sup>

The only part of the sixth line that is still readable corresponds to the letters

لمحر

perhaps referable to the name of the month *al-muḥarram* (المحرم), since the last line of the inscription contains the date of execution of the works. The reading of the year proposed by Shahada includes only the tens and the hundreds because the scholar does not attain the identification of the units

سنة ... وخمسين وخمسمائة

"year ... fifty and five hundred"

We do not agree with the identification of the word "year" at the beginning of the line. Of the three figures (units, tens and hundreds), we quite distinctly read the first and last one: as for the first figure we

<sup>143</sup> Namely, *Nāṣir* (or *Naṣir*) *al-ḥaqq bi-l-barāhīn* ("the Defender of truth through proofs") and *Muraṭif al-maẓlūmīn min al-zālimīn* ("the Protector of the oppressed against the oppressor"). See Elisséeff 1952–54, p. 181.

<sup>144</sup> Elisséeff 1951, nos. 5 and 14, pp. 8, 20. See also Elisséeff 1952–54, pp. 181, 182.

are quite confident it refers to the units rather than to the tens, as suggested by Shahada (that is, خمس, *ḥams* “five”, instead of خمسين, *ḥamsīn* “fifty”); as for the last one (that is, the hundreds), we agree with the reading خمسمائة, *ḥamsumāya*, (“five hundred”). More problematic, however, is the deciphering of the word indicating the tens, certainly introduced by the conjunction wāw which follows “five”. The word is almost completely abraded and could actually correspond both to “fifty” and to “sixty”.

[... ] خمس و [خمسين أو ستين] وخمسمائة  
 “[...] five and [fifty or sixty] and five hundred  
 (555/1160 or 565/1169–70)”

The inscription dates back to the time of Nūr al-dīn and probably contains the text of construction/reconstruction of the southern building CF1, as suggested by the readable first part of the text.<sup>145</sup> Still to be determined is the time when the works were carried out. Two earthquakes hit northern-central Syria in 552/1157 and 565/1170.<sup>146</sup> After the first earthquake – which caused the destruction of the citadel and the death of the Banū Munqid family which controlled it – Nūr al-dīn took possession of Shayzar and commissioned the first restoration; further restoration works, ordered by the same ruler, became necessary after the second and probably just as devastating earthquake. If the date stated in the inscription is the hijra 555, it is then quite likely that the month might actually have been that of *muḥarram* and that the works were undertaken about three years after the first earthquake. If the date corresponds instead to 565 the inscription should be attributed to the same year during which the second earthquake (and therefore the second reconstruction) occurred, but in this case, the reference to the month of *muḥarram* is to be excluded since the earthquake devastated the area on the 12th of *ṣawwāl*.<sup>147</sup>

Most probably this is the inscription about which Max van Berchem wrote in the first volume of his *Voyage en Syrie*, stating that “dans un coin de l’enceinte voisin du donjon D, nous avons relevé un fragment

<sup>145</sup> Among the about thirty inscriptions bearing the name of Nūr al-dīn known so far there are twenty-six texts of construction/reconstruction (Elisséeff 1952–54, nos. 1–3, 5, 6, 8–26, 28, 29). In most cases they are introduced by the expressions “*amara bi-‘imāra*” (Id., nos. 5, 10, 13, 14, 18, 21), or “*amara bi-‘amal*” (Id., nos. 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 20, 25, 28).

<sup>146</sup> Elisséeff 1967, p. 223.

<sup>147</sup> *Muḥarram* is the first month in the Muslim calendar, *ṣawwāl* is the tenth.



d'inscription que nous croyons pouvoir attribuer à ce Chihāb al-dīn Yūsuf qui livra Chaizar au sultan Muḥammad. Mais cette attribution fût-elle certaine, **ce texte n'aurait pas grande valeur archéologique**, la partie de la forteresse où il se trouve étant en ruine".<sup>148</sup> The inscription examined by van Berchem is also mentioned by the *RCEA*, which lists it among the documents of the year 630/1233.<sup>149</sup> The "donjon D" is the building located to the south of the citadel (CF2) and the "coin de l'enceinte voisin" refers to the angle resulting from the building of the north wall of the building CF1 against the western curtain wall: in this area there is no trace of other epigraphic inscriptions beside the ones we present here.

Despite the fact that he had no opportunity to examine the text of the inscription carefully (and in fact he does **not report** it), van Berchem was able to infer that it dated back to a period preceding the time of the seizure of power by the Ayyubid sultan al-'Azīz Muḥammad, which took place in 630/1233, and suggested that it could be attributed in fact **to one** of the vassals of Saladin and date back to a period between the end of VI/XII and the first decades of the VII/XIII century. Though very partial, the reading of this inscription and the identification of the date – already proposed by Shahada – allow us to reject this attribution.

## 2.2.6 Building CF2 (Southern Area)

**Inscription 11.** A long inscription is carved on the north wall of the large southern building CF2 and is divided into five parts enclosed in as many overlapping rectangular bands of different sizes (Fig. 19, Cpl. 17).<sup>150</sup> The first part of the inscription (11a) is located in the long rectangular top band (L 730 cm., H. 53 cm.)<sup>151</sup> occupying thirteen blocks.<sup>152</sup> The text is written in Ayyubid *nashī* with some diacritical dots, vowels and orthographic marks, and is distributed over two lines. Some additional graphic elements fill in the empty spaces between the letters, especially in the upper section of the epigraphic field. The sec-

<sup>148</sup> van Berchem and Fatio 1914, p. 187, note 5.

<sup>149</sup> *RCEA* XI, no. 4056 bis.

<sup>150</sup> An overall picture of the epigraphic bands is published in van Berchem and Fatio 1914, II, pl. XXVII. A deciphering of the inscriptions can be found in *RCEA* XI, no. 4057 and in Shahada 1981, p. 123.

<sup>151</sup> The size of the bands is given in *RCEA*.

<sup>152</sup> As for the inscriptions nos. 5a and 5b, here as well we mark the end of each block in the Arabic text with a slash (/).

ond part (11b, running along four stone blocks), also in *nashī* with diacritical dots, but occupying only one line, is carved into a small rectangular band engraved on the central section of the bottom side of the frame containing the above-mentioned text (L 255 cm., H 16 cm.). The third part (11c), placed below the second, is inside a band carved on two stone blocks (L 111 cm., H 39 cm.). The text is in Ayyubid *nashī* of the same type as the one in 11a and like the latter is distributed over two lines. The fourth part (11d) is enclosed within a second rectangular band and is written in a type of *nashī* comparable to that of 11b (L 62 cm., H 9 cm.). The last part of the inscription (11e) is located in the lower band and is distributed over two lines (L 134 cm., H 42 cm.). The writing is similar to that of the texts in 11a and 11c.

### 11a

١ هذا / ما امر<sup>(a)</sup> بعمارته مو / لانا السلطان الملك العزيز / [...] السيد<sup>(b)</sup> الاجد / ل  
الكبير العالم العادل المجاهد / لمرابط<sup>(c)</sup> المثارغ الموي / لد المظفر المنصور / رغايات  
الدنيا / والدين سد / سلطان (لا)  
٢ سلام<sup>(d)</sup> و / المسلمين سيد<sup>(e)</sup> / لملوك والسلا / طين قاتل الكفرة والم / شر [كين ...]  
ابوال / مظفر محمد بن الملك الظاهر / غازي بن الملك الناصر / يوسف بن ايوب ناصر امير /  
المومنين خلدا / لله<sup>(f)</sup> ملكه وادار<sup>(g)</sup> ن / صرا الويته واع / للامه

### 11b

[مما<sup>(h)</sup> في / حادى وعشرين ذو / القعدة سنة ثلثين و / ستمائة

### 11c

١ بت / حولى العبد الفقير الى رحمة

٢ الله / له ابو بكر بن عثمان بن ردل ؟ بن

### 11d

عمره<sup>(i)</sup> رحمه الله

### 11e

١ صنعه الاستاذ علي رحمه الله

٢ [...] ]

<sup>(a)</sup> RCEA: [امر]

<sup>(b)</sup> RCEA: [السيد]

(c) Shahada 1981: missing word

(d) Shahada 1981: لا سلام

(e) Shahada 1981: مقدم

(f) Shahada 1981: missing word

(g) Shahada 1981: ادام

(h) Shahada 1981: وذلك

(i) RCEA, Shahada 1981: عمر

11a

1. *This is what was ordered to be built by our Lord, the Sultan al-Malik al-‘Aziz [...], the illustrious Lord, the Great, the Wise, the Just, the holy warrior, the Fighter on the border, Who is supported by God, the Triumphant, the Victorious, the Help of the state and religion, the Sultan of (I)*
2. *slam and the Muslims, the Lord of kings and sultans, the One who kills infidels and polythei[sts ...] Abū l-Muẓaffar Muḥammad b. al-Malik al-Zāhir Ġāzī b. al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf b. Ayyūb, the Defender of the Prince of Believers. May God prolong his reign and head (?) the victory of his banners and his emblems!*

11b

*This (happened) on the 21st of dū ‘l-qa‘da of the year 630 (29th August 1233).*

11c

1. *under the administration of the servant needing the mercy*
2. *of God, Abū Bakr b. ‘Uṭmān b. Radl ? b.*

11d

*‘Amr. May God have mercy on him!*

11e

1. *Work of the master ‘Alī. May God have mercy on him!*
2. [...]

The inscription commemorates, in very general terms, the work of construction/reconstruction commissioned by the Ayyubid sultan of the Aleppo branch al-‘Azīz Muḥammad in the same year when he took control of the citadel, succeeding Šihāb al-dīn Yūsuf. As for the northern tower CF8,<sup>153</sup> the epigraphic bands are not the result of a single project: the first two (nos. 11a and 11b) clearly belong to the

<sup>153</sup> See *supra*, inscriptions nos. 5a and 5b.

same phase as the reconstruction of the building, whereas the other three (nos. 11c-11e), which are shorter and asymmetrical compared to the previous ones, were carved on the bossed surface slightly later. In this case too the content of the texts supports our hypothesis: the monumental band and that carved on the lower section of its frame are entirely dedicated to the sultan and the date of execution of the works; the small lower band and the smaller one carved inside its frame reveal the name of the administrator of the works while the last band, very poorly preserved, bears that of the mastermason. It may be assumed that only after the implementation of the monumental band was a decision made to add additional information concerning those who were in charge of the execution of the works; unfortunately, no biographical information about these personages is available.

The Ayyubid sultan bears a long list of titles, comprising the official titles of *Sulṭān* and *al-Malik al-ʿAzīz* accompanied by a sequence of thirteen *laqab* and the name of his father, the sultan al-Zāhir. The RCEA enumerates some ten inscriptions bearing the name al-ʿAzīz, which, with the exception of those in the citadel of Shayzar and in the great mosque of Lattakiya,<sup>154</sup> all come from the city of Aleppo.<sup>155</sup> The inscriptions of this sultan feature only texts of construction and date mainly to the period between 615/1218 and 625/1228. The object of the construction – usually a *masjid* – is always specified, with the sole exception of a text of the citadel of Aleppo dated 631/1234 featuring a formula, *mimmā amara bi-ʿamali-hi* (“this is what he ordered to be built”), similar to that of the inscription presented here.<sup>156</sup> None of these inscriptions features a list of titles as rich and elaborate as that of this building of Shayzar: in the most ancient inscription bearing his name (615/1218), al-ʿAzīz is simply defined as *Mawlānā al-Malik al-ʿAzīz* (“our Lord al-Malik al-ʿAzīz”), whereas in the next four – starting from the following year – the title of al-Malik al-ʿAzīz is preceded only by that of *Sulṭān*. The first of the *laqab* attributed to this sultan is that of *Ġiyāṭ al-dunyā waʾl-dīn* (“the help of the state and religion”), attested in the inscription of the Madrasa Zāhiriyya in Aleppo dated at 620/1223.<sup>157</sup> This *laqab* is followed by those of *Rukn al-islām wa al-muslimīn* (“the Pillar of Islam and the Muslims”) and *Sayyid al-mulūk wa al-salāṭīn* (“the Lord of kings and sultans”) in the

<sup>154</sup> RCEA XI, no. 4083.

<sup>155</sup> RCEA X, nos. 3823, 3824, 3833, 3870, 3892, 3895, 3988; XI, nos. 4067, 4083, 4085.

<sup>156</sup> RCEA XI, no. 4067.

<sup>157</sup> RCEA X, no. 3895.

inscription of the citadel of Aleppo carved one year later than that of the citadel Shayzar. In the latter, the relationship of al-'Azīz with "Islam" and "the Muslims" is defined using the term *Sulṭān*<sup>158</sup> instead of *Rukn*.<sup>159</sup> The epithets *al-'ālim* ("the wise") and *al-'ādil* ("the righteous") used in the inscription of Shayzar seem to be attested only in the epigraphic text of the *jāmi'* of Lattakiya dating at 633/1236.<sup>160</sup>

### 2.2.7 The Mosque (Lost Building)

**Inscription 12.** Max van Berchem reported the existence of an epigraphic band (215 cm. long, 45 cm. high) on the lintel of the west side of the minaret of the mosque of the citadel bearing an inscription carved in relief, in *nashī* writing with some diacritical dots, distributed over three lines (Fig. 20):<sup>161</sup>

١ بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم \* انما يعمر مساجد الله من امن بالله واليوم الآخر واقام الصلوة  
واقى الزكاة ولم يخش الا الله فعسى  
٢ اولئك ان يكونوا من المهتدين \* انشأ هذه المنارة المباركة في ايام السلطان الملك الظاهر  
ركن الدنيا والدين بيبرس قسيما مير المومنين  
٣ [العبد ؟] الفقير الى الله الراجي رحمة ربه [القدير ؟] سنجر ابن عبد الله الشيزري تغمده الله  
[برحمته] واسكنه بحبوحة جنته ورحم الله من ترحم عليه سنة اثنين وستين وست مئة

1. In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. \*Will only visit the Temples of God those who believe in God and the Last Day, and observe the Prayer and pay the Tithe, and fear anyone but God. These perhaps
2. are by God guided to the Good\* (Cor. IX, 18). This blessed minaret was built during the days of Sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir, the Pillar of the state and religion, Baybars, Fellow of the Prince of Believers.
3. [The servant ?] needing God, who is confident in the mercy of his Lord [the Almighty?] Sanjar b. 'Abd Allāh al-Šayzarī, may God protect

<sup>158</sup> See also the inscription of a mausoleum in Aleppo dated at 633/1236 (RCEA XI, no. 4085).

<sup>159</sup> With reference to the presence of the title *Rukn al-Islām wa'l-muslimīn* in the epigraphic inscriptions of the citadel of Shayzar see *supra*, inscription no. 9.

<sup>160</sup> RCEA XI, no. 4083.

<sup>161</sup> Van Berchem 1963, pp. 57–58 (text in Arabic, brief comment and graphic reproduction in Fig. 43). The facsimile allows the identification of Mamluk *nashī* accompanied also by vowels and orthographic marks.

*him [with His mercy], let him live in His Heaven, and have mercy on him who begs His compassion! Year 662 (1263–64).*

Of this inscription, documented only by van Berchem,<sup>162</sup> there is no extant trace, as there seems to be no trace of the mosque of the citadel. The text celebrates the construction of its minaret by the Bahri Mamluk sultan Baybars (658–76/1260–77) and reports some information about the personage who supervised the works, namely *ism* (Sanjar), *nasab* (son of ‘Abd Allāh) and the *nisba* defining him as a native citizen of Shayzar (*al-Šayzarī*).

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In order to propose a chronological classification of the *corpus* of inscriptions of the citadel of Shayzar, we considered it appropriate to present the epigraphic documents in connection with the major historical events that affected the site<sup>163</sup> and that we schematically present here.

Epoch	Dynasty	Event
474/1081 ca.	Banū Munqid	Seizure of the citadel that belonged to the Byzantines
25 <i>jumādā</i> I, 4 <i>jumādā</i> II 552 (4 and 17 July 1157)	Banū Munqid	A first violent earthquake (two devastating earth tremors in ten days) hits the area
<i>rajab</i> 552/ August 1157	Banū Munqid	A third earthquake causes severe damages to the citadel and the death of all the members of the dynasty, gathered in the castle to attend a performance
<i>ramaḍān</i> 552/ October 1157		Nūr al-dīn is seriously ill
Immediately after 552/1157		The Crusaders and the Isma‘ilits try to conquer the citadel
	Zangids	Nūr al-dīn conquers the citadel, restores especially its northern side and builds the structure in the southern area. <sup>164</sup> The control of the citadel is then entrusted to his foster brother and governor of Aleppo, Majd al-dīn Abū Bakr b. al-Dāya
12 <i>šawwāl</i> 565/29 June 1170	Zangids	A second devastating earthquake hits northern-central Syria
565/1170	Zangids	Beginning of the second reconstruction phase of the buildings of the citadel severely damaged by the second earthquake

<sup>162</sup> Curiously enough, the inscription is not mentioned in *RCEA*. With regard to the citadel of Shayzar, the relating *Index Géographique* (1975, p. 146) only mentions the inscriptions bearing the number 2, 9 and 10 in the present study. See also *infra*.

<sup>163</sup> The information are taken mainly from van Berchem and Fatio 1914, pp. 180–187, Elisseeff 1967 and Lo Jacono 2003.

<sup>164</sup> Elisseeff 1967, p. 717.

Epoch	Dynasty	Event			
<b>Insc. no. 10</b>	<i>Location</i> Entrance hall of the southern building	<i>Type of text</i> constr./rest.	<i>Date</i> 555 or 565 (1160 or 1169–70)	<i>Literature</i> van Berchem, Fatio 1914, p. 187, note 5 RCEA XI, no. 4056 bis Shahada 1981, p. 123	<i>State of preservation</i> very poor
<b>Insc. no. 9</b>	<i>Location</i> Arch of one of the galleries	<i>Type of text</i> constr./rest. of a minaret	<i>Date</i> s.d.	<i>Unpublished</i> (pictures Tonghini Mission 2002)	<i>State of preservation</i> quite poor
565/1170	Zangids	Death of the governor Majd al-dīn Abū Bakr b. al-Dāya. The control of the citadel is entrusted to his brother Šams al-dīn 'Alī			
569/1174	Zangids	Death of Nūr al-dīn			
After 569/1174	Zangids/Ayyubids	The control of the citadel is transferred to Šābiq al-dīn 'Uṭmān (brother of Majd al-dīn and Šams al-dīn), but in his capacity as vassal of Saladin			
582/1186 ca.	Ayyubids of Aleppo	The citadel becomes the property of the Ayyubid branch of Aleppo. This happens probably in the year when the sultan al-Zāhir Gāzi ascends to the throne of Aleppo (582–613/1186–1216)			
Between 582/1186 ca. and 630/1233	Ayyubids of Aleppo	Control over the citadel is exerted by two other members of the Banū al-Dāya: first, 'Izz al-dīn Mas'ūd, and later Šihāb al-dīn Yūsuf			
<b>Insc. no. 3</b>	<i>Location</i> Bridge over the Orontes	<i>Type of text</i> unknown	<i>Date</i> 626/1229	<i>Literature</i> Van Berchem, carnet IX, p. 56 RCEA X, no. 3998 Shahada 1981, p. 124	<i>State of preservation</i> text lost
630/1233	Ayyubids of Aleppo	The sultan al-Malik al-'Azīz Muḥammad takes control of the citadel taking the place of Šihāb al-dīn Yūsuf			
<b>Insc. nos. 11a–11e</b>	<i>Location</i> Facade of the southern building CF2	<i>Type of text</i> constr./rest.	<i>Date</i> 21 dū'l-qa'da 630 (29 August 1233)	<i>Literature</i> RCEA XI, no. 4057 Shahada 1981, p. 123	<i>State of preservation</i> fair
<b>Insc. nos. 4a–4c</b>	<i>Location</i> Access bridge to the citadel	<i>Type of text</i> unknown	<i>Date</i> s.d.	<i>Unpublished</i> (pictures Mission Tonghini 2002)	<i>State of preservation</i> fragmented text
658/1260	Ayyubids of Aleppo	The sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir II Yūsuf (634–58/1236–60) leaves Aleppo due to the arrival of the Mongol hordes			
657/1259	Mongols	The Mongol forces raid Syria			
658/1260 ca.	Mongols	Destruction of the Syrian fortifications			
659/1261 ca.	Bahri Mamluks	The sultan Baybars I (658–76/1260–77) commissions the restoration of many fortifications in Syria (including that of Shayzar), destroyed by the Mongol raids			

Epoch	Dynasty		Event		
<b>Insc. no. 12</b>	<i>Location</i> Minaret of the mosque	<i>Type of text</i> constr./rest.	<i>Date</i> 662 (1263–64)	<i>Literature</i> van Berchem 1903, pp. 57–58	State of preservation text erased
678–79/1279–80	Bahri Mamluks		In this year, during the reign of the sultan Qalāwūn (678–89/1279–90), the citadel is taken by the rebel emir Sunqur al-Aṣqar, who proclaimed himself Sultan of Damascus		
Between 679/1280 and 792/1390	Bahri Mamluks		Shayzar is closely controlled by the dynasty		
<b>Insc. nos. 5a–5b</b>	<i>Location</i> Facade of the northern tower CF8	<i>Type of text</i> constr./rest.	<i>Date</i> 1 rajab 689 (10 July 1290)	<i>Literature</i> Littmann 1905, no. 34a van Berchem, Fatio 1914, p. 185 Shahada 1981, p. 116 Mouton 1997, p. 411 Giunta 2004, pp. 63–64	State of preservation Fair
From 792/1390	Burji Mamluks		Shayzar is under the control of the new branch of the Mamluks; it is the beginning of its decline		
Between 825/1422 and 841/1438	Burji Mamluks		The sultan Barsbāy seizes power and tries to deal mainly with economic and administrative problems		
<b>Insc. nos. 1a–1b</b>	<i>Location</i> Bridge over the Orontes	<i>Type of text</i> rest. of the bridge	<i>Date</i> 13 šawwāl 834 – 30 ramaḍān 835 (24 June 1431 – 31 May 1432)	<i>Literature</i> Picture van Berchem no. 2993 Littmann 1905, no. 34c (only for text 1a)	State of preservation text lost
<b>Insc. no. 2</b>	<i>Location</i> Bridge over the Orontes	<i>Type of text</i> decree	<i>Date</i> s.d. (IX/XV s.)	<i>Literature</i> Littmann 1905, no. 34b	State of preservation text lost
<b>Insc. nos. 7–8</b>	<i>Location</i> entrance to the northern tower CF8	<i>Type of text</i> decree	<i>Date</i> s.d. (IX–XV s.)	<i>Literature</i> Littmann 1905, p. 210 Shahada 1981, p. 116 Giunta 2004, pp. 63–64	State of preservation Good
After 923/1517	Ottomans		Conquest of Shayzar		
<b>Insc. no. 6</b>	<i>Location</i> entrance to the northern tower CF8	<i>Type of text</i> unknown	<i>Date</i> s.d.	<i>Unpublished</i> (picture Tonghini Mission 2002)	State of preservation Very poor; text unreadable

None of the inscriptions attested in the citadel of Shayzar seems to date from before the period of the reconstruction works commissioned by the Zangid sovereign Nūr al-dīn following the destruction caused by two devastating earthquakes in thirteen years, that is, in 552/1157 and 565/1170 respectively. After some surveys in the area of



Shayzar van Berchem too pointed out that: “Nous en relevons les parties les moins ruinées, et j’y copie quelques inscriptions en cherchant la trace d’Ousâma, le héros dont M. Derenbourg a raconté l’histoire. Mais aucun de ces textes ne fait allusion à la famille des Mounkidhites”.<sup>165</sup> The famous Swiss epigrapher assumed that the most ancient texts could date back to the period in which the Ayyubid branch of Aleppo, through the Banū al-Dāya, took control of the citadel, yet still from before the arrival in Shayzar of the sultan al-Malik al-‘Aziz Muḥammad, that is, between 582/1186 ca. and 630/1233. On the basis of this preliminary analysis of the documentation examined, the inscription on the bridge dating from 626/1229 (inscription no. 3) turned out to be the oldest one dated so far and was considered more or less coeval with the one located above the entrance to the southern building (inscription no. 10); however, no deciphering of the latter was proposed.

Indeed, at the current state of our research it is possible to hypothesize that inscription no. 10 constitutes the first epigraphic document of the entire *corpus* since it is the only one dated to the sixth century of the *hijra* (XII century).<sup>166</sup> It is also possible to ascribe to the same period the inscription executed on the arch of one of the galleries of the north-central area (no. 9) – which was discovered only in 2002 – where one of the main *laqab* attributed to Nūr al-dīn (*Rukn al-islām wa’l-muslimīn*) is still legible. If our interpretation of these two documents were to be correct, then two other inscriptions bearing the name of the famous Zangid ruler would be identified, both written in cursive, a style introduced for the first time in Syrian monumental epigraphy just by Nūr al-dīn between 543/1148 and 549/1155.<sup>167</sup> Both inscriptions contain a text introduced by the expression “ordered the construction of” but, given the ambiguity of the term *‘imāra* (or even

<sup>165</sup> Van Berchem 1895, p. 496.

<sup>166</sup> It would also be one of the most ancient epigraphic attestations of the citadels of the *Bilād al-Sām*.

<sup>167</sup> Nūr al-dīn’s main inscriptions come from Aleppo, Ḥamā, Damascus, Baalbek, and Jerusalem, and some of them are in kufic writing (van Berchem 1897). Among the earliest cursive inscription there are the one in the Madrasa Ḥalawīyya of Aleppo dated at 543/1148 and that of the Māristān of Damascus dated at 549 (Ibid., pp. 35–37). The cursive style fully asserted itself in Syria only after the death of the Zangid sovereign, which occurred in 569/1174, and with the arrival of the Ayyubids who introduced it in Egypt. Van Berchem mentions how the epigraphic cursive had already been introduced in the Eastern Islamic territories by the Seljuks during the V/XI century (Id., p. 34). However, recent studies on the epigraphic documentation from Ghazni show how in the Ghaznavid court (366–582/977–1186) the cursive style was already used between 421/1030 and 447/1055 (Giunta 2001).

(*amal*), we cannot determine whether these are new constructions or reconstructions, commissioned perhaps by the Banū Munqid family and destroyed by the two earthquakes. With regard to the inscription no. 10, it is unfortunately impossible to identify the nature of the building, whereas in the case of inscription no. 9 we know that it was almost certainly a minaret.

Following a chronological sequence, the third inscription known to us should date back to about sixty years after the death of Nūr al-dīn (569/1174), as can be evidenced by the date of epigraph no. 3 (626/1229) reported by van Berchem. The limited information about this inscription, its loss and the few extant lines do not allow identification of its precise location nor of the nature of the text. Almost certainly it was located outside the citadel, on the bridge over the Orontes river, and in all likelihood, it marked its restoration, which took place at the time when the area was under the control of Šihāb al-dīn Yūsuf in his capacity as vassal of the Ayyubid sultan of the Aleppo branch.

Four years after 626/1229 the citadel became the property of the sultan al-Malik al-'Azīz Muḥammad, son of al-Zāhir Ġazī, the dedicatee of an inscription that is still visible today on the big southern building (no. 11) and is actually the longest and most complete epigraph preserved in the site. It runs along several overlapping rectangular bands of different sizes: the first part (no. 11a) – contained in the main band – is entirely dedicated to the sultan. The long protocol of the ruler contains his titles (*mawlānā al-sultān al-malik al-'Azīz, al-sayyid al-ajall, al-kabīr, al-'ālim, al-'ādil, al-mujāhid, al-murābiṭ, al-muṭāḡir, al-mu'ayyid, al-muḡaffar, al-manṣūr, ḡiyāt al-dunyā wa'l-dīn, sultān al-islām wa'l-muslimīn, sayyid al-mulūk wa'l-salātīn, qātil al-kufra wa'l-mušrikīn*), the kunya (Abū'l-Muḡaffar), the ism (Muḥammad) and a sequence of three *nasab* (the father's name – *al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf* – the grandfather's – *al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf* – and the great-grandfather's – *Ayyūb*), the final one referring to the founder of the dynasty bearing the title of *Nāṣir Amīr al-mu'minīn*, that is, the "defender" of the Caliph of Baghdad, who was at the time Abū Ja'far al-Mustanṣir (623–40/1226–1242). Two invocations to God for the benefit of the sultan conclude the first part of the text. The second part (no. 11b), which is closely related to the first, is devoted to the date and specifies the day, month and year (21 *dī dū l-qa'da* 630). The third and the fourth part (nos. 11c and 11d) are occupied by the information on the administrator of the works, while the fifth sec-

tion (no. 11e), which is unfortunately only partially legible, comprises information about the supervisor.

The absence in this text of any reference to the object of the construction, the presence of the name of the first three sultans of the Aleppo branch of the Ayyubid dynasty, and the correspondence between the date of the inscription and the year when al-ʿAziz Muḥammad dethroned Šihāb al-dīn Yūsuf and took control of the citadel<sup>168</sup> allow us to advance the hypothesis that the inscription was also meant to celebrate a definitive seizure of power. If the brief text of the three epigraphic fragments currently reused on the bridge giving access to the citadel (nos. 4a-4c, and in particular no. 4a) features part of the protocol of this sultan, it can be assumed that the name of the Ayyubid sultan al-ʿAziz was also celebrated in the northern area of the town, although not necessarily outside it.

The later inscriptions of Shayzar are attributed to the time of the Mamluk rule; more specifically, two of them are ascribed to the sultans Baybars I (658–76/1260–77) and Qalāwūn (678–89/1279–90) of the Bahri branch, and three to Barsbāy (825–41/1422–38) of the Burji branch.

The inscription bearing the name of Baybars (no. 12) constitutes a quite interesting case since Max van Berchem, who provides a good graphic reconstruction and the deciphering of the text, identifies it as originally belonging to the mosque of the citadel, though strangely no archaeological evidence of the latter has been found in about a century. The inscription contained a text of construction, perfectly preserved and clearly legible, in which the *basmala* introduces a Koranic verse,<sup>169</sup> the formula generally used to refer to a construction or a reconstruction, the object of the works (the minaret), a short list of titles of the ruler (*al-Sulṭān al-malik al-Zāhir, Rukn al-dawla waʾl-dīn*),<sup>170</sup> his *ism* (Baybars), and the important title of *Qasīm amīr al-muʾminīn* emphasizing the good nature of his relationship with the Caliph, who in those years, Baghdad having fallen to the Mongols in

<sup>168</sup> In all likelihood this shift of power was made necessary by the alliance established by Šihāb al-dīn with the Ayyubid sultan of Damascus, al-Malik al-Muʾazzam (see Mouton 1997, p. 411).

<sup>169</sup> This is the only epigraph of Shayzar whose text is introduced by the *basmala*, as well as the only one featuring a Koranic verse.

<sup>170</sup> An interesting study on the titles of this sultan has been carried out by D. Aigle (2003).

656/1258, had found refuge at the Mamluk court in Cairo.<sup>171</sup> The third and last line of the inscription is devoted to the supervisor of the works and the date of their execution; only the year is mentioned and corresponds to 662/1263–64.

A few years earlier, in 657/1259, Syria had been invaded by the Mongol hordes who raided the country with the precise goal of reaching Egypt and brought death, devastation and plundering; as a consequence of the destruction of a large number of towns Baybars I, who had come to power in 658/1260–77, had to promote a large-scale reconstruction project. These activities allowed the Mamluk sultans to restore a large number of fortifications and to re-establish their control over them, despite some brief interruptions, such as the one attested in Shayzar, which, between 678–79/1279–80, was taken by the rebel emir Sunqur al-Aṣḡar, who proclaimed himself sultan of Damascus. As for the inscription commissioned for the Ayyubid sultan al-ʿAzīz in the summer of 630/1233, we believe that the one built by the Mamluk sultan Qalāwūn in the summer of 689/1290 (nos. **5a** and **5b**), a few months before his death, was not only meant as a commemoration of the actual construction/restoration, but also as a celebration of the definitive conquest of the site. It is no accident that highly prominent positions were chosen for both inscriptions, allowing them to be seen even from a considerable distance, since the sultanic protocol is engraved on large epigraphic bands carved on the facades of two of the main buildings, that is, the southern and the northern tower. It should be also pointed out that the texts of each of these inscriptions contain some additional information which was added only after the implementation of the main monumental bands.

Other epigraphic documents are more recent, dating from about 140 years later, a circumstance showing how, after the death of Qalāwūn (689/1290) – the phase of economic prosperity being over and followed by one of inexorable decline – the Mamluk sultans devoted much less attention to the Syrian fortifications and, more specifically, to that of Shayzar. The reign of Barsbay, who ascended to power in 825/1422 and managed to overcome several economic problems, was marked by a brief recovery. Since the time of van Berchem's surveys in Shayzar, as many as five inscriptions have been found which

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<sup>171</sup> The dynasty of the Abbasid caliphs of Cairo ruled from 659/1261 to 923/1517, the year of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt. The Caliph referred to in Baybars' protocol in the inscription of Shayzar is al-Ḥākim I (661–701/1262–1302).

can be ascribed to this sovereign, even though none of them refers to any architectural activity inside the citadel. In fact, the only construction works carried out affected the bridge over the river, which had been partially destroyed: inscriptions nos. **1a** and **1b** bear witness to the fact that between 834 and 835 (1431–32) restoration and enlargement works were carried out at the expense of the Treasury of the state. At the same time, the repeal of some illicit taxes with which the people of Shayzar had been burdened could no longer be procrastinated. Evidence of the sultan's commitment in this sense is found in three epigraphic blocks containing two decrees: the first block was found by van Berchem, again on the bridge over the Orontes, in the wall of the bridge-house, and is currently lost (inscription no. **2**), while the other two can still be seen at the entrance of the citadel (inscriptions nos. **7** and **8**).<sup>172</sup>

Unlike almost all the known decrees ascribable to Barsbāy,<sup>173</sup> those located in Shayzar do not feature the **date**, which is usually specified at the beginning of such texts.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, in both decrees the nature of the injustice calling for the abolition remains unclear: in the first, fragmented text, the part that could give such information is missing, while in the second, undamaged one, it seems to have been deliberately omitted. Darrag puts forward a very plausible hypothesis according to which the latter decree had been issued in order to repeal taxes that people were forced to pay collectively for the maintenance of a guard;<sup>175</sup> while as regards the one carved on the bridge, Wiet assumed that it provided for the lifting of a heavy tax on legumes arbitrarily fixed by the governor of Shayzar.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>172</sup> The two blocks feature a single decree.

<sup>173</sup> Among the main decrees issued by this sultan we mention: those of Damascus, of which one is in the Jāmi' Yilbuḡā (decree dated at 826/1423; Sauvaget 1932b, pp. 11–15, no. 4), two are in the Jāmi' Manjak (an earlier one, dated at 834/1431, and a later one that can be dated at the second quarter of the IX/XV century; Ibid., pp. 15–22, nos. 5 and 6), two are in the great mosque dating back to the Omayyad era (837/1434 and 838/1435; Sauvaget 1947–48, pp. 7–14, nos. 38, 39), and one is on the Bāb al-Salām (840/1437; Ibid., pp. 15–16, no. 40); the decree of the great mosque of Arṭā near Aleppo (between 833 and 835/1430–1432; Ibid., pp. 42–43, no. 53) and of Hamā dated at 836/1433 (Sauvaget 1933, pp. 1–2, no. 17).

<sup>174</sup> Most decrees dating back to this period begin with the *basmala*, followed by the expression *lammā kāna bi-ta'riḥ* ("this happened on the following date"), or, more simply – but more rarely as well –, *bi-ta'riḥ* ("on the date").

<sup>175</sup> Darrag 1961, p. 63. See also Wiet 1939, no. 47.

<sup>176</sup> Wiet 1939, no. 46. See also Darrag 1961, p. 76. Such information, however, is not in the decree. For a comment on these two decrees see also Giunta 2006, pp. 65–66.



10. The Greek inscription no. 2 (Ch. 2.1) reused in the wall US 821 of gallery Space 4c, complex CA2 (2004). Photo L. Finocchietti



11. Inscription 1 (Ch. 2.2), lost. Photo Max van Berchem, no. 2993, Courtesy Max van Berchem Foundation, Geneva

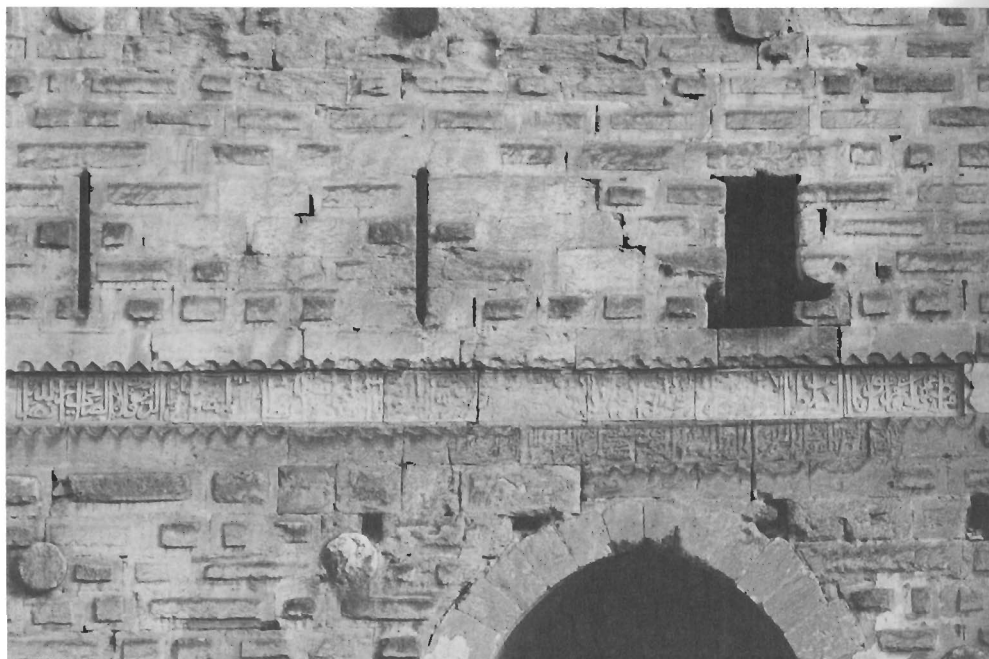


12. Inscriptions 4a and 4b (Ch. 2.2), reused in the bridge, in the northern face of the southern wall of the second order, first bay (US 5151, Period V, Ph. N5\*); from the N (2003)



13. Inscription 4c (Ch. 2.2), reused in the bridge, in the eastern face of the first order, first bay (US 5130, Period V, Ph. N5\*); from the E (2003)





14. Inscriptions 5a and 5b (Ch. 2.2), on tower CF8 (P. V, Ph. 4\*, A. 173 and 156), from the N (2003)



15. Inscription 7 (Ch. 2.2), carved on the flanking wall (US 663) of the gate of Period IV, Ph. N1; from the N (2003)





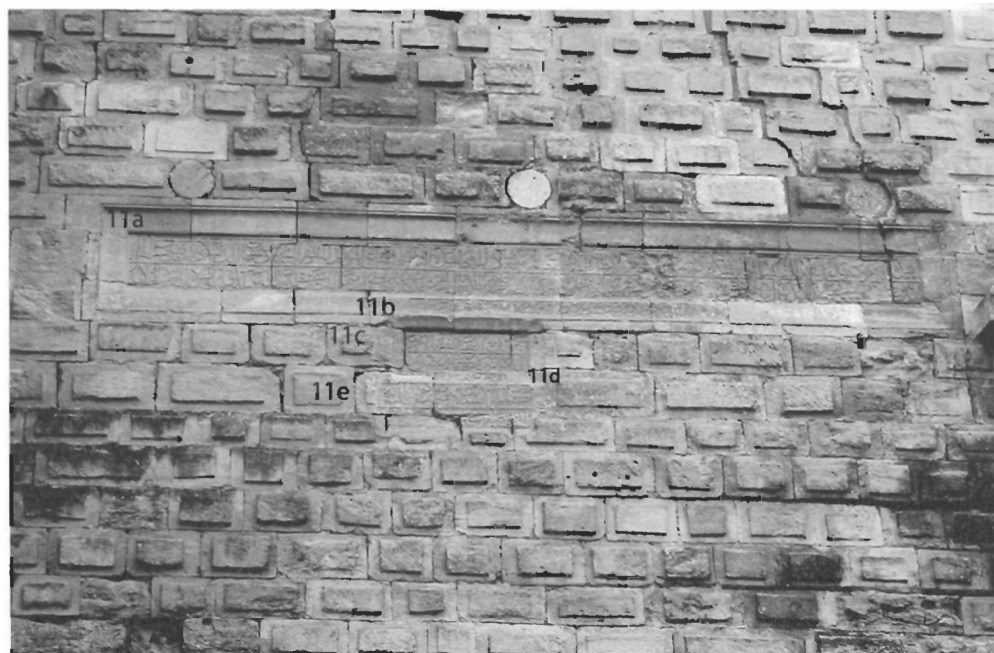
16. Inscription 8 (Ch. 2.2), carved on the flanking wall (US 663) of the gate of Period IV, Ph. N1; from the N (2003)



17. Inscription 9 (Ch. 2.2), carved on arch US 6014 of gallery Space 27 (Period IV, Ph. N1); from the N (2004)



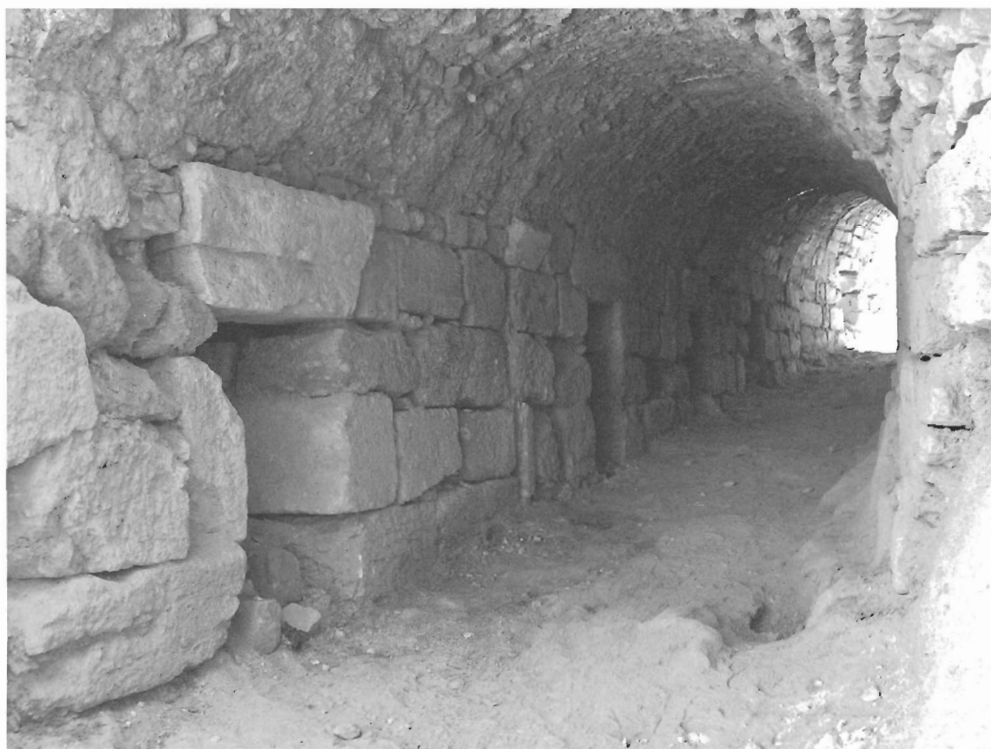
18. Inscription 10 (Ch. 2.2), US 57, on the northern wall of CF1 (Period IV, Ph. S2); from the N (2004)



19. Inscriptions 11a-e (Ch. 2.2), on the northern wall of CF2 (Period V, Ph. S1), US 10, 11, and 12; from the N (2002)



20. Facsimile of the inscription drawn by Max van Berchem (1903, p. 57) (Ch. 2.2)



21. Gallery Sp. 26, Eastern Front (P. I, Ph. N1-N3\*), from the NW (2004)

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