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Original Research Article

The Relative Dating and Function of the Southwest Entrance of Rab'-e Rashidi*

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Abstract

Problem statement: Dating, function, and founder of the SW entrance in Rab'-e Rashidi seems problematic: is it from the 14th CE or the 15th-17th CE? Is its purpose as a fortification gate or a civil entry? The abductive hypothesis of the authors explains this structure as the gate to the fort of Rashidiyya built by the order of Ottoman Jafar Pasha Frenk during the Roman Gap of Tabriz.

Research objective: Rab'-e Rashidi has three periods of occupation during the 14th-17th CE. The recognition of function and dating of their architectural periods is effective on planning of restoration & tourism.

Research method: The structure of the SW entrance was surveyed, documented, and its plan and the role of the structure were drawn by the methods of field archaeology and a quadcopter. Historically, then after, six first-hand resources from the 16th-17th CE on the fort of Rashidiyya and the Roman Gap of Tabriz were studied: "History of Osman Paşa" (1585), "Şeca'atname" (1585), "Tebriziyye" (1585), "Campagne Histories of Sultan Murad III" (1587), "Histoire des Kourdes" (1597), and "Alamārā-ye 'Abbāsī" (1632).

Conclusion: The stitching of the SW entrance to the structure of the rampart of Rashidiyya, as well as the similarity of its building materials and manner with the southern outwork, indicate that it was built by the Ottoman Jafar Pasha Frenk during the Roman Gap of Tabriz. Only the brick and mud parts of the rampart are remnants of those quick repairs carried out by the Great Shah Abbas Safavid in the spring of 1610. The simple structure of the vestibule behind the bastions also explains that it had a formal function and a public entrance as well.

Keywords: *Rab'-e Rashidi, Rashidiyya fort, Ilkhanid period, Roman gap of Tabriz, Ottoman Jafar Pasha Frenk.*

Introduction

Khawāja Rashid-al-Din Fazl-Allah Tabib Hamadani (K'āja Rašid-al-Din Faẓl-Allāh Ṭabīb Hamadāni), the physician, famous sage and vizier to the Ilkhanid

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court, built an endowment and public benefit complex in the NE Tabriz, at the foot of Mt. Sorkhāb, in 1271-1299. Several historical books have described this architectural complex under the names of Rab'-e Rashidi, Rashid Ābād, and the Township/ County of Rashidi, including: "Al-Waqfiyya al-Rashidiyya Be Khatt-e al-Wāqef Fi Bayān-e Sharāyet-e Omūr-e al-Waqf va al-Masāref" known as "Al-Waqfiyya al-Rashidiyya" (1309) in Rashid-al-Din's own

handwriting (Hamadāni, 1977) and “Nuzhat-al-Qulūb” (1340) composed by H. Mustawfi (1919), and “The History of Öljeitü” (1317) written by Abu Al-Qāsim Kashani (2012), and poetry diwans of “Jām-e-Jam” (1336) of Ohad-al-Dīn Isfāhani Maraghi (1961), and “Shahanshāh-Nāma” composed by Ahmad Tabrizi (2018), and the “The Poetic Ghāzān-Nāma” of Nour-al-Dīn Azhdarī Tabrizi (2023). Dawlatshah of Samarqand (1900) in his “The Tadhkiratu Sh-Shua’ra” (1487) exaggerated the splendor and beauty of Rab’-e Rashidi: “it is much more difficult to destroy it than to build”. Historically, based on the endowment book of Rab’-e Rashidi, its usage is known as the Abwāb- al-Berr (the charitable foundation) and a seminary. In addition to teaching jurisprudence, theology, and Sharia’, the complex also provided medicine, pharmacy, and social public services (Hoffmann, 2000, 2013, 2014, 2021). These 13 hectares of ruins that are located in the Kanānkūh suburb of Tabriz, and registered in the national monuments list of Iran in 1975 under the name Rab’-e Rashidi (No. 943), are only a small leftover part of the large complex of Ilkhanid Abwāb- al-Berr-e Rashidi (Ayorloo, 2021; Roshan & Ayorloo, 2019; Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024; Roshan et al., 2025). That part of Rab’-e Rashidi that remains today in the Kanānkūh suburb of Tabriz was converted into an Ottoman fortress during the years known as the Roman Gap of Tabriz (1585-1602). The Ottomans built a new curtain wall with several bastions and an outwork around it (Fig. 1). Subsequently, the name Fortress of Rashidi became popular. Nader Mirza Qajar (2014) referred to the Rashidi’s fortress in his book, “Tārīkh o Joghrafiyāy-e Dār-al-Saltanat-e Tabrīz”. It is also typed as the fortress of Rashidi in Qajarid maps of Tabriz. Finally, the fortress of Rashidi was destroyed and abandoned forever after the 1635 campaign of the Ottoman Sultan Murad Khan IV (Ayorloo, 2021; Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024; Roshan et al., 2025).

Problem Statement

Archaeologically, the 2017-2025 excavations indicate that Rab’-e Rashidi at least had three periods of occupation and usage during the 14th-17th CE: the

periods of Ilkhanid, post-Ilkhanid, and Safavid (Ayorloo, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2025; Ayorloo et al., 2018, 2019, 2020; Fuchs, 2021; Korn & Heidenreich, 2021; Lorain, 2021; Lorain et al., 2022; Fuchs & Ayorloo, 2023; Gholdori & Ayorloo, 2023; Lorain et al., 2023; Sarabi, 2024a, 2024b; Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024; Roshan et al., 2025). Therefore, the archaeological problem of the Rab’-e Rashidi is to recognize the function, typology, relative chronology, and periodization of the architectural structures of each of these three periods. To answer the question of the chronology and function of the large entrance located in the SW corner of the current rampart (Fig. 2) gives direction to the restoration and tourism planning of Rab’-e Rashidi: Is such a portal structure built during the Ilkhanid period? And is it a remnant from the Age of Khwāja Rashid or from the 16th-17th CE? Was it a gate to the fortification or the entrance to a civil building? To answer these questions, the hypothesis of the present researchers, based on their abductive argument, explains that the large entrance structure in the SW corner of the Rab’-e Rashidi is the gate to the fortress of Rashidiyya, and this gate was built by the order of the Ottoman Ja’far Pasha Frenk in the later years of the Roman Gap of Tabriz.

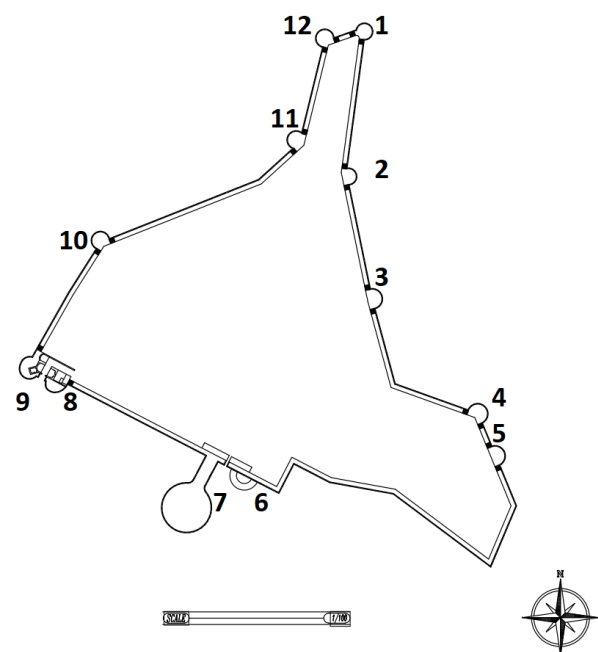


Fig. 1. The plan of rampart, S. outwork, and bastions of the fort of Rashidiyya. Source: Ayorloo, 2025.



Fig. 2. The S-N drone image (180o) of the SW gate of Rashidiyya: The tower known as the dovecote is visible behind the E. bastion (8), and the remnants of the clay wall from the quick repairs by the Safavid Shah Abbas are visible behind the W. bastion (9) and on the W. rampart. Source: Ajorloo, 2025.

Research Background

After the report of N. M. Qajar (2014), the ruins of Rab'-e Rashidi received the attention of Iranologists. After a field visit to these ruins, D. Wilber, together with M. Minovi (Wilber & Minovi, 1938), drew for the first time a simple plan of the towers and ramparts of the fortress of Rashidiyya, which shows only eight towers and the N. gate. Incorrectly, he remarked the S. great outwork as the remnant of an Ilkhanid observatory (Wilber, 1955, 129-131). After Wilber, W. Kleiss from the German Archaeological Institute conducted the first archaeological surface survey in 1969 (Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024). Except for archaeological excavations, the basis of most of the research that has been conducted so far on the Rab'-e Rashidi and its architectural structures is conjecture as well as imaginary recreations. Among such non-objective research, far from the objective architectural-archaeological realities, it should be referred to S. Blair (1984), who, based on Wilber's work, imagined the tower and rampart of the fortress of Rashidiyya as Ilkhanid civil structures. She even placed the architectural structures described in the endowment book of Rab'-e Rashidi within the rampart of this stronghold. Another study noted that Safavid Shah Abbas built the tower and rampart of

the Rashidiyya. However, according to the text of "Alamāra-ye 'Abbāsi" (1632), it can be inferred that it is impossible to build such a large fortress in less than 40 days (Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024). It should be noted that after the commence of the international archaeological and the conservation project of Rab'-e Rashidi, such conjectures and imaginations, far from objective realities, are invalid (Ayorloo, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021, 2025; Ayorloo et al., 2018, 2019, 2020; Fuchs, 2021; Korn & Heidenreich, 2021; Lorain, 2021; Lorain et al., 2022; Fuchs & Ayorloo, 2023; Gholdori & Ayorloo, 2023; Lorain et al., 2023; Sarabi, 2024a, 2024b; Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024; Roshan et al., 2025). One of the architectural structures studied within the framework of the 4th season of archaeological excavations and conservation studies in Rab'-e Rashidi is the SW gate of the fortress of Rashidiyya (Fig. 3). After a preliminary field study of this gate, reported that it dates back to the Ilkhanid period and was built on an earlier plastered structure. Therefore, the SW gate has two architectural phases (Fuchs, 2021, Fig. 14; Fuchs & Ayorloo, 2023, 854, Fig. 8). In 2021–2025, field research on the fortress's bastions and curtain wall continued in collaboration with the universities of Tabriz Islamic Art and Ege in Izmir and the National Cultural Heritage Research Base of Rab'-e Rashidi.

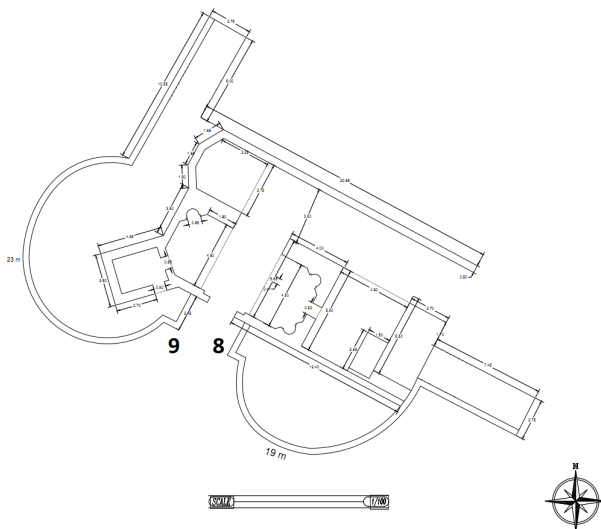


Fig. 3. The plan and rolevle of the SW gate of Rashidiyya. Source: Ajorloo, 2025. So, the study of the SW corner entrance is part of this collaboration.

Methodology

The approach of this research is the archaeology of buildings. Such an approach practices field archaeology and historical accounts. Methodologically, first, the SW entrance structure of the fortress of Rashidiyya was surveyed and documented by field archaeology methods, and its plan and the roleve of the structure were drawn and photographed using a quadcopter (Figs. 1 to 4). Meanwhile, six historical preliminary resources, on the fortress of Rashidiyya and the Roman Gap of Tabriz, all of them written by the Ottoman and Safavid chroniclers during the 16th-17th CE, were reviewed: The 1585 works of “Tārih-i Osman Paşa Özdemiroğlu (History of Osman Paşa)” (Zeyrek, 2001), “Şecā’atnāme” (Çelebi, 2007) and “Tebriziyye” (Ta’likizade, 2005), and the 1587 book of “Tevārih-i Gāzāvāt-i Sultān Murād-i Sālis” (Vefāyi, 2019), and the 1597 “Scheref-Nameh ou Histoire des Kourdes” (Bidlisi, 1860), and the 1632 Safavid work of “‘Alamārā-ye ‘Abbāsī” (Torkamān, 2011). The hypothesis of the present researchers is based on abductive reasoning. This means that the hypothesis with the most evidence seems acceptable as a valid conclusion (e.g., McCain & Poston, 2017).

Research Data

Field surveys and archaeological research show that the curtain wall of the fortress of Rashidiyya has a circuit length of 1204 m and three portal structures (Figs. 1 & 3): 1. the small N. entrance, 2. the S. gate located on the right side of the S. outwork, and 3. the large entrance in the SW corner of the fortress, which was surveyed by the present research project. The large SW entrance structure of Rashidiyya is a gateway with two bastions on either side and a vestibule behind them (Figs. 3 & 4). A staircase must reach the height of the gateway and these bastions and the corridor behind the vestibule, relative to the ground in front. However, no trace of a staircase is visible today. Conceivably, in future excavations, signs of such a staircase may be unearthed. The grand SW entrance structure in the vestibule and bastions should be surveyed:

Vestibule (Figs. 3 & 4): This antechamber is accessed through a 3.80-m-wide doorway. The vestibule roof and its corridors have collapsed. The back corridor of the vestibule turns right and leads to what is now known as the Rashidi dovecote. This dovecote is at a higher level north of the gate, and its roof is the highest point on Kanānkūh and the entire Rashidiyya fortress. According to the “Waqf-Nāma-ye Rab‘-e Rashidi”, several dovecotes (Hamāyem-al-Borūj) were built throughout this Abwāb al-Berr complex. The L-shaped corridor behind the vestibule is 3.80 m wide, and its exit is on the right, facing east. The remains of an old plaster-clad structure reported by C. Fuchs can be seen on the right, facing south, of this corridor (Fuchs, 2021; Fuchs & Ajorloo, 2023). The vestibule measures 12 x 23 meters. On the left and right sides of the vestibule, two semi-octagonal brick chambers with niches have been built, whose height from the floor of the entrance corridor is 70 cm (Figs. 3 & 4). Behind each of these brick spaces, two other brick chambers have been built, which are connected to each other by a corridor (Figs. 3 & 4). The area of the right brick space, located behind bastion No. 8, is 25 m² and is connected to the back chamber by an 85 cm wide corridor; the width of the walls of the first and second spaces is 150 and 120 cm, respectively; the same arrangement is repeated



Fig. 4. A drone image (90°) of the SW gate of Rashidiyya: 1. Gate, 2 & 3. Guardhouses, 4. Right back chamber/ embrasure, 5. Left back chamber/ embrasure, 6. Corridor, 7. Remains of the clay wall from the quick repairs by the Safavid Shah Abbas, 8 & 9. Bastions. Source: Ajourloo, 2025.



Fig. 5. An image depicts the usage of an Ilkhanid tombstone in the vestibule of the SW gate of Rashidiyya. Source: Ajourloo, 2025.

on the western side. Here, there is another brick space measuring 15 m² and with walls 130 cm wide as well, which leads to a back chamber by a corridor. The vestibule is built on a stone bed with lime mortar, which has the appearance of rough-hewn red stone. Here, 14th CE tombstones, as second-hand building materials, are visible (Fig. 5). The building materials of the walls are made of 20×20 cm bricks with a mortar mixed with gypsum, sand, and fine gravel.

Bastions (Figs. 1 & 6): The twin bastions on the right

(8) and left (9) of the entrance to the SW gate of Rashidiyya are solid. These bastions, which face south, are attached to the main rampart, and the building materials and masonry techniques of both are similar to those of the large S. outwork of the fortress (cf., Ajourloo & Moradi, 2020; Ajourloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024). In other words, these bastions are smaller versions of the great S. outwork: the body of both bastions is made of rubble stones, used building materials, and lime mortar. The building technique should be mentioned: First,

the bed is constructed of big rubble with lime binding materials. Then, a rubble wall is erected on this stone bed. Finally, as a façade of bastions, skirting is made of rough-hewn red stones up to 2 m high, which are plastered using the Roman-Byzantine technique of Pietra-Rasa. Excluding the 14th CE tombstones, these bastions are similar to the S. outwork in terms of the usage of wooden tie beams. Because their size, volume, and height are less than those of the S. outwork. The remaining height of the right bastion is 6.16 m, and that of the left bastion is 5 m, and their diameters are 10 and 11 m, respectively.

Discussion

Architecturally, the building technique visible at the SW entrance to the fortress of Rashidiyya, including the usage of used building materials, skirting made of rough-hewn red stones, and Pietra-Rasa plastering, seems Roman-Byzantine. Based on the archaeological records from the 2nd and 3rd seasons of the international expedition to Rab'-e Rashidi, the facades of these bastions were formed by two levels of lower red stones (skirting) and upper red bricks, respectively (Ayorloo, 2018, 2019). Archaeologically, therefore, the restorations that were carried out in previous years by extending the red stone facade from the bottom to the top of the bastions seem invalid. However, according to the recent field research, what is visible from the remains of the adobe plastering/ clay & straw (Figs. 2 & 4) are remnants

of the same quick repairs carried out by the Safavid Shah Abbas in the spring of 1610. Eskandar Beg Monšī Torkamān (2011) reported that Shah Abbas the Great, to appreciate the victory of his general of the army, Sardar Imam Gholi Khan Sultan Ajorloo, over the Ottoman Murad Pasha on November 22, 1609, in the decisive battle of the Ājīchāy bridge in Tabriz, intended to visit the mausoleums of Sheikh Shahāb-al-Dīn Aharī and Sheikh Safī-al-Dīn Ardebilī. However, he learned of the Ottoman Murad Pasha's counterattack plan and ordered Manouchehr Beg Eshīk Aghasī to repair the fortress of Rashidiyya quickly. These repairs are completed in less than 40 days (cf., Ajorloo & Moradi, 2020; Ajorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024). Despite its Roman origin, the Pietra-Rasa plastering technique became more popular during Byzantine and medieval Europe (Flüge, 2012; Weyer et al., 2015). In the Pietra-Rasa technique, joints, seams, and smooth parts of roughly-hewn stone pieces are plastered and covered by gypsum, and unhewn parts are left with no plaster. Such a technique creates a contrast to give a visual effect to the wall (Fig. 7). This masonry technique, including the usage of used building materials, is also visible at the S. outwork of the fortress of Rashidiyya, dating back to the Roman Gap of Tabriz (Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024). The term 'Roman Gap of Tabriz', coined by E. B. M. Torkamān (2011, 1082), the author and chronicler of the court of the Safavid Shah Abbas, refers to the years of Ottoman rule over

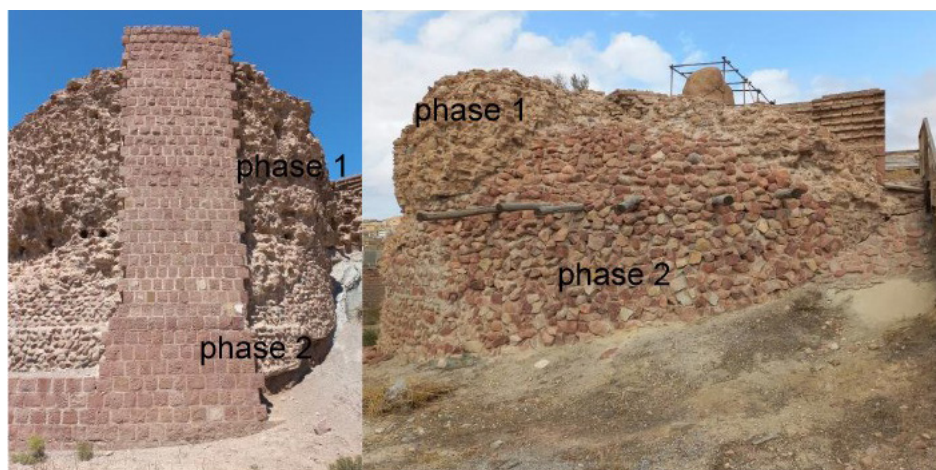


Fig. 6. A drone image (1800) shows the twin bastions, SW gate of Rashidiyya, and their rough-hewn facades, rubble stones, and lime mortar. The holes in the E. bastion are left after the rotten wooden tie beams. The continuation of the rough-hewn facade after the skirting to the top of the bastion and the removal of the Pietra-Rasa plastering indicate the inaccuracy of the restoration during the previous years. Source: Ajorloo, 2025.



Fig. 7. The Roman technique of Pietra-Rasa plastering. Source: Flüge, 2012; Weyer et al. 2015.

Tabriz (1585-1602). These years began with Osman Pasha's victory over the Safavid prince Hamza Mirza and ended with the victorious return of Shah Abbas the Great to Tabriz. Defeating Hamza Mirza was so difficult. Quickly, to prevent the Safavid prince's counterattack, the Ottoman Ja'far Pasha, who succeeded Osman Pasha, had to build a rampart around the Hasht Behesht (8 Paradises) palace and the Nasriyya district in Tabriz, famed as the Fort of Tabriz. However, the Safavid Qizilbash warriors surrounded this fort (Torkamān, 2011, 381-395; Bidlisi, 1860; Çelebi, 2007; Vefāyi, 2019; Zeyrek, 2001). Before his death, Osman Pasha ordered his Ottoman generals to build a fortress in Rab'-e Rashidi of Tabriz (Torkamān, 2011, 1019) as "they had found Rab'-e Rashidi, at the foot of Mt. Sorkhāb, so suitable to build a fortress." This is the same Ottoman fortress recorded by Tavernier (1677, 55). According to Torkamān (2011), Osman Pasha, before his death, promoted Ja'far Pasha Frenk as the Ottoman governor of Tabriz and commander of the 'Roman Soldiers'. He also reported that Ja'far Pasha's five-month siege was finally broken by the counterattack of the Ottoman Farhad Pasha in 1586. After that, Ja'far Pasha "settled in the royal office and the palace of 8 paradises and on behalf of the Roman (Ottoman)

king ruled over Tabriz" until 1591. In addition to Osman Pasha's order, Ja'far Pasha's five-month siege in the fort of Tabriz was the second reason to build an Ottoman fortress at the "foot of Mt. Sorkhāb". According to the Ottoman chroniclers, Farhad Pasha was accompanied by 17 engineers and architects, all of whom were selected by Mimar Sinan, the famous chief architect of the Ottoman court, during his counterattack on Tabriz. According to Ottoman chroniclers, Ja'far Pasha Frenk, the admiral, whom E. B. M. Torkamān (2011) called "Eunuch", was a newly Muslim sailor of European descent who had entered the Ottoman court and was decorated by the Ottoman sultan as the Admiral of the Seas and Khadem (the noble servant). He had fought under the command of Osman Pasha against the Safavid prince Hamza Mirza in the 1585-1586 battle of Tabriz. He was also highly regarded by the Ottoman generals. In addition to being the governor of Tabriz, Ja'far Pasha also held the positions of Ottoman admiralty in the Mediterranean Sea and Cyprus and the governor of W. Tripoli and E. Tripoli for several years (Aydar, 2022; Bidlisi, 1860, 293 & 334; Çelebi, 2007; Özçelik, 2021; Ta'likizade, 2005; Vefāyi, 2019; Zeyrek, 2001).

The hypothesis that the architects and engineers

missioned by Mimar Sinan to Tabriz built the fortress of Rashidiyya in the years of the Roman Gap of Tabriz explains the similarity of the SW portal structure of this fortress with the Roman-Byzantine samples. For example, the typological similarity of the form and building technique of this structure with the Lefke Kapisi Gate of the city of Iznik is outstanding. Lefke Kapisi follows the Roman architectural pattern (Fig. 8). The Lefke Gate, built during the reign of Hadrian (117-138), was also used during the Byzantine and Ottoman periods (e.g., Ermiş, 2009; Kuleli, 2023). Lefke Kapisi has two solid bastions on its left and right sides made of rubble stones, used materials, lime mortar, and Roman concrete. While their stone facades have Pietra-Rasa plastering. The building technique of the gate and rampart of Lefke is also the same. The twin bastions of Rashidiyya in Tabriz, in terms of form and plan, solid body, wooden tie beam technique, and used materials, are completely similar to the Roman and Byzantine types, such as Lefke. But Roman concrete has not yet been reported from Rashidiyya. For example, the Roman tradition of a vestibule for guards and visitors behind the bastions of Lefke is also observed. The design of the vestibule at Rashidiyya is also similar to that of the Roman antechambers: The servants and guards greeted the guests in the antechamber before they entered the interior space, or they inspected the

visitors there (e.g., Kleiner, 2010). As mentioned, two semi-octagonal brick chambers are also visible in the vestibule of Rashidiyya, which are higher than the floor of the gate. It seems that these chambers were for guards and sentries, and administrative formalities for elites or inspecting the visitors to the fortress were carried out here (Figs. 3 & 4). Furthermore, it seems that the brick chambers behind these guard posts were the dormitories of guards and embrasure; the brick window or aperture seen on the S. side of the left chamber - behind bastion No. 9 - at least indicates the presence of an embrasure (Figs. 3 & 4). From examining the vestibule of Rashidiyya fortress, one learns that the L-shaped corridor that turns to the right behind the vestibule and the two guardian chambers to the left and right of the entrance were spatial elements that served to maintain order and discipline among visitors to the fortress and prevent crowding and disorder. The location of the SW gate relative to the S. outwork is such that the guards and musketeers on top of the great outwork have offensive and defensive control over the access route to this gate. In addition, the vestibule of this structure is a suitable space for welcoming guests and inspecting the visitors, and its location on the hill of the SW corner of the fortress, facing the view of Tabriz and Rashidi county, and of course parallel to the outwork, creates a strong visual presence. It should be noted that these



Fig. 8. The Roman gate of Lefke, Iznik. Source: Texier, 1862.

spatial and visual features are not seen in the two small southern and northern doorways (Figs. 1 & 9): Recent archaeological excavations prove that the small, simple southern portal, located to the right of the outwork, is a remnant of the Ilkhanid period, and of course, it was renovated in the later years of the Roman Gap of Tabriz, by the technique of red rough-hewn facade and Pietra-Rasa (Ajourloo, 2018, 2019). This simple gateway does not have suitable architectural spaces for welcoming and serving guests or creating a visual impression, and is only for the passage of servants and Janissaries (Fig. 9). It seems that the small N. entrance – facing Mt. Sorkhāb – built on a very steep slope and having only two simple solid bastions and a narrow corridor without a vestibule (Fig. 1) was used only for emergencies, and distress logistics.

Conclusion

It is impossible to build a fortress, including 12 towers, of stone, brick, and lime mortar, with a 1204 m rampart circuit in 40 days. Consequently, the fortress of Rashidiyya, at the foot of Mt. Sorkhāb, cannot be built by the Safavid Shah Abbas, but the Ottoman Ja'far Pashah Frenk/ Khādem, according to Osman Pashah's will. Abductively, the present authors, based on the continuity and stitching of the structure of the SW gate with the curtain wall of Rashidiyya, as well as the

similarity of its masonry and building materials with the large S. outwork and rampart, argue that this gate was also built by Ja'far Pasha during the years of the Roman Gap of Tabriz. Of course, one should keep in mind that the Ottomans built it after destroying a structure from the Rab'-e Rashidi Abwāb-al-Berr complex. Their abductive reasoning also explains the similarity of the masonry and building materials of the Rashidiyya fortress with some Ottoman examples, which have Roman and Byzantine patterns: historically, according to the Ottoman archives, Mimar Sinan had missioned 17 engineers and architects to Azerbaijan under Farhad Pasha. It should be remembered that the Lefke Gate in Iznik is not the only pattern for the SW gate of Rashidiyya. In this study, it is only presented as an Ottoman example, the heir of Roman-Byzantine architecture, to visualize, illustrate, and understand their similarities. Not only the location of the SW gate, which is located at a high level and under the direct defensive cover of the huge S. outwork, but also the structure of the vestibule behind the bastions, explains its usage of administrative formalities and public entrance. As the small S. doorway, on the right side of the S. outwork, is only suitable for the passage of the servants and Janissaries. On the other hand, the steep slope of the small N. entrance of the fortress, which faces Mt. Sorkhāb, does not allow easy daily passage. So, it seems that its usage was only military and



Fig. 9. A photo depicts the small S. doorway, to the right of the huge S. outwork, and the technique of skirting by Pietra-Rasa plastering and rough-hewn. Source: Ajourloo, 2018.

in emergencies of the fortress. The SW gate, which has a gentle slope to the east, is suitable for the movement of pedestrians and horsemen. Hence, the administrative formalities and reception or inspection of visitors to the fortress can be carried out in its vestibule. Consequently, it seems that future archaeological expeditions to the fortress of Rashidiyya should search the command alcove somewhere behind the vestibule and around the tower known as the dovecote.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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