



BURBUR CASTLE

BURBUR CASTLE, a fortified architectural complex in Hamadān Province, situated 52 km southeast of Hamadān and 33 km northeast of Malāyer (lat 34°33.5′ N, long 48°59.6′ E, elevation 1678 m). The complex consists of two separate buildings. The old castle is variously named as Burbur Qalʿa, Qalʿa-e Burburhā, and Qalʿa-e Solaymān Khan Burbur (the last custodian of the property). It is located in the village of Kordkord (now Eslāmābād), between three significant geographical features: Rumiya Mountain on the northwest, a stream on the south, and Āq-gōl Lake on the southeast. A road from the northwest of the village leads to the Hamadān-Malāyer highway. Kordkord (Buckingham [“Kerdakhourd”], I, pp. 304-6, and plate, before p. 297; Zāhir-al-Dawla, pp. 77-78; Bourbour, p. 30) and its surrounding villages, which belonged for centuries to the Burbur clan, are strategically placed between Hamadān, Tuyserkān, Nehāvand, and Malāyer, where the tribe controlled the Zagros east-west route to the south of the mount Alvand.

The village has changed hands several times between Burbur family members, the Qajar aristocracy, and the central government in the last few centuries. In the 1840s, Esmāʿil Khan Burbur bought back the estate from ʿIsā Khan Biglarbegi Qajar, the governor of Malāyer, Nehāvand, and Tuyserkān, for 36,000 tomans (Bourbour, p. 30). The ownership must have once more been lost to the Burbur family, as it was returned to Ḥasan Āqā Burbur again by an edict in 1886 (according to Nāṣer-al-Din Shah’s *farmān* to Amin-al-Solṭān, dated Rabiʿ II 1304/1886 [courtesy of the heirs to Noṣrat-allāh Khan Burbur, Tehran]).

The exact dates of construction of the fortifications are not known, but Zāhir-



al-Dawla (pp. 77-78), who visited Kordkord in June 1906 on his way to Hamadan, already talks of several existing castles “with strong fortifications.” Consequently, the construction of the fortifications of the old castle shortly after purchase (1840s) by Esmā’il Khan probably replaced an older castle (‘Abbās Mirza’s *hokm*, dated Šafar 1249/1833 [courtesy of the heirs to Nošratallāh Khan Burbur, Tehran]; Bourbour, p. 30)).

The old castle is 102 m by 128 m, covering an area of 11,265 m². The surrounding, fortified walls are constructed with layers of beaten, sun-dried mud mixed with straw (*čina*, *pise*) inlaid at vertical intervals with sun-dried bricks and horizontal wood plank bracings, with average height of 5.5 m, including ten circular bastions 7 m high and 8 m diameter (Figure 2).

The internal construction of the old castle comprised three interconnected mansions within the fortification, carried out in late nineteenth century by the three eldest grandsons of Esmā’il Khan, sons of Ḥasan Āqā, the aide de camp of Nāšer-al-Din Shah. These were Mo’tamed-al-Solṭān, Mehdi Khan Qawām Homāyun; Mošṭafā Khan; and ‘Ali Khan Eżām-al-Molk Burbur (Możafar-al-Din Shah’s *farmāns* of Rabi’ II 1324/1906 and Jomādi I 1324/1906 [courtesy of Moḥammad Khan Burbur, Tehran]; Mehdi Khan Qawām Homāyun’s letter to the minister of war, 9 Moḥaram 1325/1907 [courtesy of the heirs to Cyrus Borbor, Geneva]). Mehdi Khan and Mošṭafā Khan shared a common external entrance from the center bastion of the eastern wall of the fortification, while ‘Ali Khan had a separate entrance from the south. Each of the allotments included a *biruni* and an *andaruni*, a bathhouse, stables, and a courtyard with a decorative pool at the center (Figure 1).

The architecture of the three mansions is plain and elegant with meritorious proportions. The facades were of painted stucco and baked bricks with sparse and simple decorative elements. The interiors had well-designed stucco decorations and paintings. The overall features of the buildings suggest the employment of a company of architects and construction workers from Yazd (Figure 5, Figure 6). Some of the structures of particular architectural merit are as follows: (1) in the Qawām Homāyun mansion, the main *hašti* entrance to the private courtyard (Figure 6), the portal connecting the services courtyard to the private courtyard, the bathhouse (Figure 7), and the stables (Figure 4); (2) in the Eżām-al-Molk mansion, the *andaruni* (Figure 5) and the stables; (3) in the Mošṭafā Khan mansion, the portico to the *biruni* quarter (Figure 3).

The construction of the fortifications of the New Castle by Ḥasan Āqā Burbur for his two younger sons, Morteżā Khan and Najafqoli Khan (Bourbour, pp. 30-31), must have started shortly after 1887, when the estate of Kordkord was returned to his possession by a royal decree (see above). The type of construction of the fortifications is identical with that of the old castle (Figure 8).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Parts of the information in this article come from fieldwork and interviews.

Ġolām-‘Ali Burbur (Bourbour), *Zendagi-nāma wa tabār-nāma-ye šāka’i az il-e Burbur*, Isfahan, 1974.

James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media and Persia ...*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., London, 1830.

Ebrāhim Khan Ṣāhir-al-Dawla, *Asnād o kāterāt-e Ṣāhir al-Dawla*, ed. Iraj Afshar, Tehran, 1972.

Search terms:

گوله بربر ghaleh ber ber ghale berber