



## EḲTĪĀR-AL-DĪN

**EḲTĪĀR-AL-DĪN**, the citadel of Herat (referred to in the sources as *qal'a*, *heṣār*), located on an elevation adjacent to the north wall of the old city (Esfezārī, I, p. 77), and actually consisting of two parts, the stronghold proper—a rectangle of fired brick measuring about 18 x 42 m, and a larger area to the west of unfired brick, roughly 60 x 25 m—that were originally buttressed by 25 towers (only 18 of which were recorded in the late 1970s), which reflect various periods of construction (Allen, pp. 34-35; O’Kane, pp. 115-118; Golombek and Wilber, I, pp. 301-02; Bruno et al., p. 11).

Its early chronology remains unclear. It was either built (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, I, p. 19; *Maṭla‘-e sa‘dayn*, ed. Šafī‘, II, pt. 1, p. 174; *Ḥabīb al-sīar* (Tehran), III, p. 371), or rebuilt (Sayf, p. 335, in 669/1270-1271 by an Ilkhanid governor of the city) on the southern section of the circular wall that preexisted the square (possibly Sasanian) city, by the Kartid rulers of Herat (see ĀL-e KART), notably Faḵr-al-Dīn Kart, who in 699/1299-1300 also reinforced it with towers, walls, ramparts, and a moat and built the western part (Ḥāfez-e Abrū, I, p. 19; Sayf, pp. 439-40), and Gīāt-al-Dīn Kart (d. 728/1328), who built two palaces inside the eastern part, one on the south side, and another on the north, which was noted for its magnificent wall paintings depicting on opposite walls the armies of the Ilkhanid Abū Sa‘īd (q.v.) and of the rebellious Chaghatayid prince, Yasa‘ūr (Sayf, 747-50). While some scholars maintain that the citadel was named after a Kartid military commander (Allen, 34), others have simply regarded EḲtīār-al-Dīn as a fanciful epithet (Masson, 125).

In 818/1415, the stronghold was enlarged and reinforced in stone and brick by



the Timurid Šāhroḡ (Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, I, pp. 19-20). The entire façade was at that time probably covered with glazed tile revetements, only a small portion of which have survived on a northwest tower and on an adjoining wall that still bears fragments of the Timurid inscriptions (Golombek and Wilber, I, p. 302; O’Kane, p. 116 and pls. 1.1-1.4; Bruno et al., pp. 75-86, 91-92). Over time, the structure was periodically altered and reinforced, but essentially retained its Timurid form.

Apart from its primary purpose as a stronghold in the event of siege, it was also used at various times as a royal residence, a treasury, and as a prison, particularly for important political figures (*Ḥabīb al-sīar (Tehran)* III, pp. 617, 639). Severely damaged during several sieges in the first part of the 19th century (e.g., in 1838 and 1856), it was no longer considered an effective part of the defenses of the city and was replaced by a new citadel, the Arg-e now. At the end of the century, the eastern part of the old citadel served as the residence of the commander-in-chief, and the western part contained the main magazine of Herat (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan* III, pp. 177-78).

Several archaeological missions conducted under the auspices of Unesco reported on the state of preservation of the citadel during the 1960s and early 1970s (e.g., Lézine, pp. 129-133 and pls. III-VI) and excavation and restoration work was conducted during the period 1976-79 as a joint undertaking of the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Unesco, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This project, cut short by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, yielded much valuable data that has yet to be seriously analyzed (for details, see Bruno et al., pp. 11-15, 19-25). It has not been possible to assess fully the condition of the citadel since the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

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