

## 1. Introduction

The lands of the eastern Mediterranean headed towards drastic change with the advent of the Muslim conquest. In northern Syria—between Tigris and Euphrates—many cities existed as they have before, bound to the new rulers by treaties.<sup>1</sup> Renamed the Djazira by the Muslim rulers, the formerly Byzantine region Osroehne sees an intensification of agriculture and settlements during the Umayyad and the Abbasid era—often initiated by reforms or grants and rising demand of newly flourishing urban centers.<sup>2</sup>

During these times, a number of smaller towns flourished. While many can be found along the rivers of the Jazira, some lay in the steppe—away from waterways or the important centres like ar-Raḡḡa, Mossul or Harran.

Kharab Sayyar is located in the steppe between Khabur and Balikh and surrounded by arable land which during early Islamic times supported numerous smaller settlements. Let up in the tenth century AD it was not settled again until the 20th century. Today the modern village and the ruins share the name. While the larger ancient towns in the region, often the centres of power, have seen their share of research, only few smaller settlements saw prolonged periods of archaeological exploration. The ruins of Kharab Sayyar proved to be unique: a short-lived small-town, provincial, but enriched and influenced by people and politics from the larger centres of the era. With a good state of preservation and variety of built environment on such small space, the site provided a perfect setting for our investigation of such newly founded settlements in marginal areas. The term “small” might initially make one think of rural settlements, but I aim to show that towns in the periphery indeed yielded urban character including fortifications, markets, residences, mosques and large mansions. When more than ten years of research came to an end in 2011, some questions concerning the town had already been answered. Some of the history had already been explored based on numismatic evidence, one excavation area, some small-finds and the undecorated pottery had already been published. Other excavation areas and finds are currently being prepared for publication. From an archaeological perspective, there are still a lot of questions to answer in the field.

This work, named “Organizing an Urban Way of Life in the Steppe—Water, Agriculture, Townscape and Economy in the Early Islamic Town of Kharab Sayyar”, is looking join archaeological fieldwork with geography, ethnographic research and historical sources to show how a provincial centre in a marginal area was planned and built, how it functioned and evolved why it finally was abandoned.

A large part of the work is concerned with the natural surroundings and the most essential prerequisite and an crucial piece of infrastructure: water supply. Water was and is the most valuable source in the region, a substantial motor for agricultural economies and technological and architectural achievements. Access to water was and is the reason for conflicts and migration.

The natural environment, hydrology and hydraulic architecture are the topics of chapter 2, followed by the archaeology of hydraulic technology and architecture inside the town in chapter 3 and outside of Kharab Sayyar in chapter 4.

The impact of the towns fortification reaches beyond its defensive character—it has had a vital impact on the town structure, acted as an economic boundary and has been part of the water supply system. The excavation on the defences and the western gate are dealt with in chapter 6.

In chapter 7, the built environment and the urban form will be addressed. This part includes a reconstruction of the urban structure based on excavations and geomagnetic research. One question that drives this part of the work is to whether and how changes and breaks can be recognized by analysing the urban footprint. With the relatively short timespan of settlement but known structural changes, Kharab Sayyar proved to be great candidate for this research.

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1 Kennedy 2001, 63.

2 Kennedy 2001, 111. Ibid 134. Bartl 1994, 259–260.

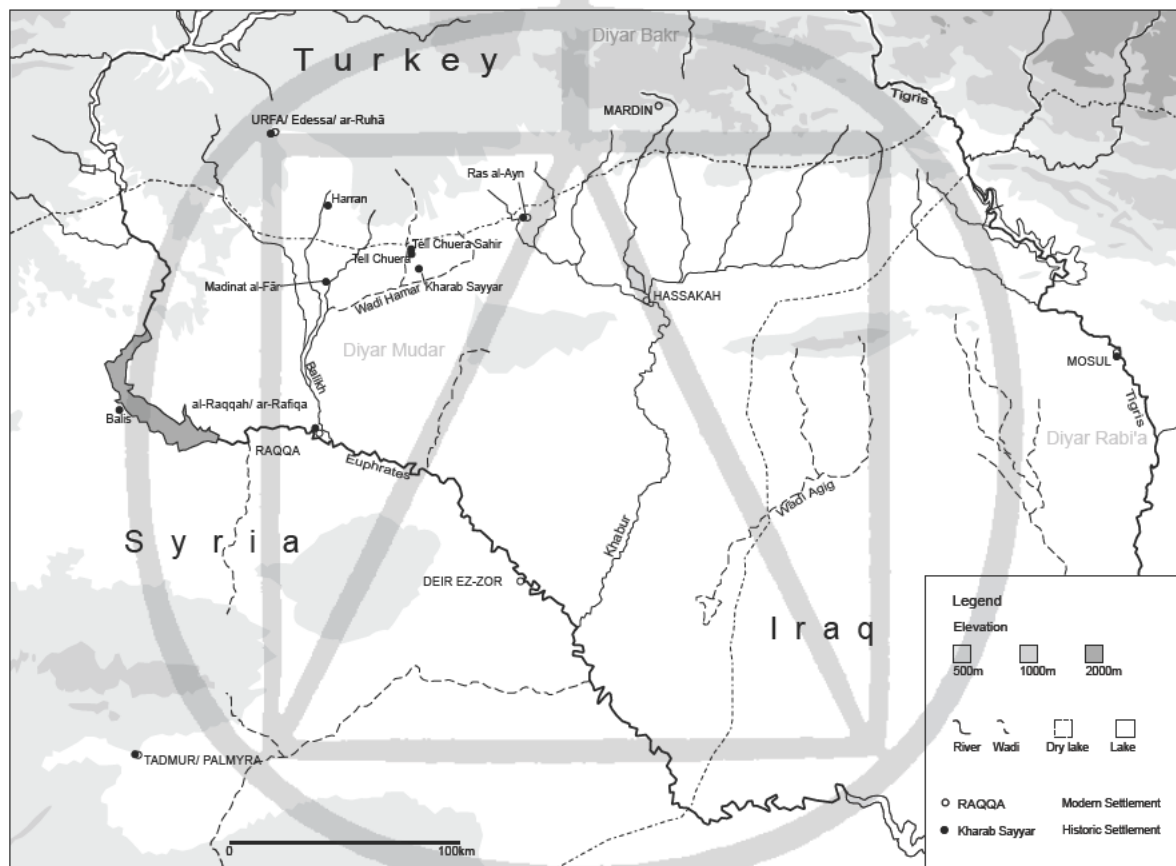
Ideally, a survey mapping all visible structure on the ground would have been added, but that had not been done before the abrupt end of the project. Nevertheless, the geomagnetic images provide a solid base—if constantly evaluated and checked against excavation results.

Finally, in chapter 8, considerations on history, morphology and dating of the historic town are interwoven with the findings presented throughout the previous chapters to illustrate what happened in Kharab Sayyar and its surrounding lands during the last quarter of the 1st millennium AC. As tightly as the agricultural performance of the region is bound to water it is interwoven with politics—so is the economic history such region until today. The political entities that control the region, the security and funds they provide, shape the landscape and are the variable to the landscape's economic output. The conclusion will assess if and how outside influences and historical events can be related to specific findings in the archaeology of Kharab Sayyar.

The remaining paragraphs of this Introduction provide preliminary information, a historical framework and outline the state of research. Plates are included at the end of this volume, as is a plan of Area F, the excavations on the gate and the fortification. Catalogues of built structures and hydraulic architecture are included in the second volume.

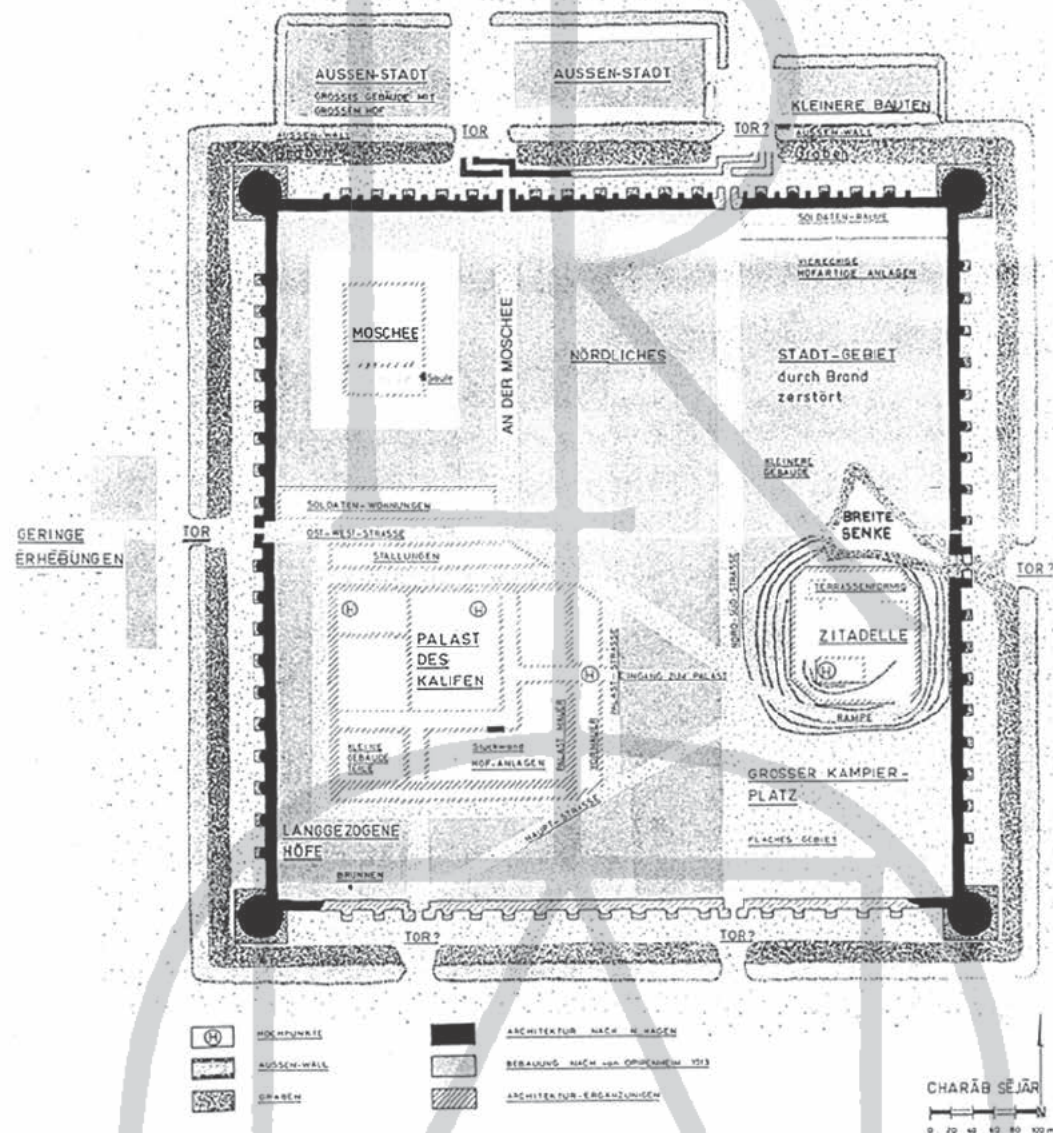
### 1.1 History of Research

The site of Kharab Sayyar, along with its modern day settlement, is located in the semi-desert of northern Syria, in a landscape called the Jazira, namely the “island” between Euphrates and Tigris. The earliest known report of a western traveller on the ruins of Kharab Sayyar is that of Max Freiherr von Oppenheim. While the excavations in Tell Halaf have recently brought von Oppenheim back into the public's eye, it is his travels throughout the Jazira in the 1920s that are of interest for this work.<sup>3</sup> One of his journeys took him from



*Fig. 1: Map of Northern Syria and relevant places.*

<sup>3</sup> See website of the project for details and literature: <http://www.grabung-halaf.de/pdfs.php?l=ger>; On his travels: Moortgat-Correns 1992, 66.



*Fig. 2: Plan of Kharab Sayyar by Moortgat-Correns based on notes of von Oppenheim*

Djabal Abd al-Aziz, Djebelet el-Beida to ar-Raqqa, after which, in order to get back to Tell Halaf near Ra's al-'Ain at the headwaters of the Khabur, he crossed the plains that stretch between the Euphrates' tributaries Balikh and Khabur. After visiting Hammam at-Turkman and Medinat al-Far he went east to cross the north Syrian steppe towards Ra's al-'Ain.<sup>4</sup> On the way, in May 1913, he visited Tell Chuera und Kharab Sayyar, situated halfway between Tell Abyad and Ra's al-'Ain and close to today's Turkish border.<sup>5</sup> Some decades later Ursula Moortgat-Correns gained access to what was left of the otherwise lost or destroyed notes of von Oppenheim. She published a plan, accompanied by von Oppenheim's descriptions in her book "Charab Sejar: Eine frühabbasidische Ruinenstätte in Nordmesopotamien".<sup>6</sup> In his descriptions, von Oppenheim

4 Moortgat-Correns 1992.

5 Moortgat-Correns 1992, 66. A full account of the places Max Freiherr von Oppenheim visited can be found here, as well as a map of his travels. The ruin is located at: 36°35'29.21"N 39°33'49.64"E. The modern settlement belongs to the administrative district of Raqqa, but is closely located to its eastern border and the adjacent district Hassaka.

6 Moortgat-Correns 1992, 58–65. Plan: Moortgat-Correns 1992, Abb. 4.



refers to a local tale,<sup>7</sup> according to which the town had been a station on the route between Baghdad and Raqqa and, more illustriously, Hārūn ar-Rashīd was said to visit the town as a refuge from Raqqa or Baghdad, to enjoy the climate of the steppe.<sup>8</sup>

The Islamic town of Kharab Sayyar is, for the most part, enclosed by an almost rectangular fortification (pl. 1) measuring approximately 700 m on its north-south stretch and 680 m in east-west direction. The only known gates are one in the north and one in the west. The results of the excavation on the western gate and fortification are included in this book. A number of larger buildings were built along the outside of the northern stretch of the fortification. These buildings will hereafter be referred to as “the northern annex”. A circular mound, called a tell, is located in the south-eastern part of the walled city, and is primarily made up of settlement debris dated from the third millennium BC, with an Islamic settlement making up its top layer.<sup>9</sup> Von Oppenheim compares what he calls the citadel in Kharab Sayyar to those in Homs and Aleppo and points out the absence of slabs in Kharab Sayyar, likely referring to slabs of stone used on the glacis of the citadels in aforementioned Homs or Aleppo.<sup>10</sup> The northern plateau of the citadel is rather flat. Excavations in area B, primarily to examine the third millennium settlement, revealed very few traces of Islamic architecture such as a canal and a toilet<sup>11</sup>. The southern part of the citadel’s plateau is dominated by the remains of massive buildings. Partially excavated in 2010 by Imad Mussa, they follow the common blueprint observed in buildings of the town below and consist of rooms grouped around courtyards. In most cases, the walls are well preserved with estimated heights of up to 2 m. A step trench explored the layers of the third millennium settlement on the north-western side of the tell. In its topmost layers the excavations revealed Islamic architecture leading right up to the edge of the tell’s plateau.<sup>12</sup> In the terrain that stretches to the west and north of the mound, the most noticeable structures are those of the “palace” in the south-western part of the ruin and the *bazaar*. The *bazaar*, leading from the northern gate to about the centre of the town, is still visible today, as is the road leading from the western gate into the centre. Other streets are less well visible and easy to be confused with modern driveways crossing the ruin. The modern settlement of Kharab Sayyar is situated in the south-western corner.

During his visit, von Oppenheim examined the ruin closely and it is a small book published by Moortgat-Correns which provides insights into the remainder of his notes. With the book a map of the site (Fig. 2) has been published, drawn by Moortgat-Correns based on von Oppenheims diary entries. The map provides stunning resemblance with many features detected by our work. Oppenheim pinpoints quite accurately and delivers fitting interpretations for numerous structures, foremost the mosque, the *bazaar* road named “An der Moschee”, the northern gate and the “palace”. The latter had his special attention and most of his diary entries on the second day are concerned with the compound he refers to as the palace.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, other features or in cases their interpretation, such as the orthogonal street roster and buildings named “Soldaten-Räume (transl: soldiers-quarters)”, seem to reflect personal views rather than actual fact. Von Oppenheim’s descriptions are all the more valuable since erosion, traffic, settlement activity and modern agriculture haven taken their toll and left parts of the ruin in a condition far worse than that which von Oppenheim must have seen it in, with some of the features he described virtually rendered invisible on today’s surface. This is especially true for parts of the northern annex and the south of the ruin, where the modern village is located. Nevertheless, most of the ruin is still in good condition, mostly due to absent or infrequent settlement activities. In those areas the ancient topography is clearly visible; in some places the ground-plan of complete buildings can be traced on the surface, as the upper edges of walls usually resist erosion better than the surrounding soil, particularly walls built from backed brick or stone masonry. The best-preserved and most visible buildings found by walking the surface are the larger, probably public or official, buildings. One of these is the aforementioned compound called the “palace” as well as the buildings along the *bazaar* or the towers of the fortification. Furthermore, certain patterns can be recognized throughout the city in which certain sectors or areas (quarters) are characterised by a certain type of build-

<sup>7</sup> The exact source of this tale is not given.

<sup>8</sup> Moortgat-Correns 1992, 58.

<sup>9</sup> Hempelmann 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Moortgat-Correns 1992, 58.

<sup>11</sup> Biedermann 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Hempelmann 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Moortgat-Correns 1992, 63–65.



ing and building material. These can be distinguished even without the help of the geophysical images. On the other hand, the destruction of features is obvious in those areas exposed to recent settlement activity and traffic, especially in the south of the ruin. The fortification is the most affected structure there, having been diminished to a small rise along its southern stretch. According to Oppenheim, the ruin was frequently used as a campground by Bedouins named the “Söhne Ibrahim Paschas” (“The sons of Ibrahim Pascha”) in more modern times. This group is also said to have conducted small soundings, some of which are still visible today and mostly located in the northwest of the ruin.<sup>14</sup> These soundings are seldom larger than 4x4 m.<sup>15</sup>

Michael Meinecke suggested resuming work in Kharab Sayyar again at the end of the 80s.<sup>16</sup> Following Meinecke’s proposal that, Jan-Waalke Meyer and Thomas Leisten initiated the project and led a first excavation in 1997, as a joint venture between Goethe University of Frankfurt and from Princeton University. The aim of these excavations was structures along the edge of the plateau from the third millennium *tell*, an area later named area A<sup>17</sup>, and the building that von Oppenheim referred to as “the palace” that is clearly visible against the more modest architecture surrounding it. The next season followed in 1999, this time conducted as a joint venture between Frankfurt University and the DGAM in Damascus, and was followed by a series of 11 excavations until the research in Syria was ended by the civil war in 2011. During these years, the congregational mosque, a bath, a residential quarter, buildings of and around the *bazaar*, the western gate and fortifications and buildings on the *tell* were excavated<sup>18</sup>. In addition to these larger scale excavations, numerous water-related structures located throughout the town have been unearthed. Excavations in the town of Kharab Sayyar were supplemented by a large-scale site survey, covering a circular area 10 km in diameter around the site. During this survey, more than 50 Islamic sites of various sizes were discovered.<sup>19</sup> Finds from the excavations have been handled by specialists and will appear in separate publications. Research on unglazed ceramics was carried out by Dr. Christian Falb and published in 2012.<sup>20</sup> Glazed wares were studied by Dr. Martina Müller-Wiener, but her work has not yet been published. Müller-Wiener published some of the small-finds.<sup>21</sup> The excavations were complemented by a hydraulic survey, research on geomorphology, and research on archaeobotanics. Research on geomorphology is based on the surroundings of Tell Chuera, but some basic information is also applicable for Kharab Sayyar.<sup>22</sup> Prof. Dr. Stefan Heidemann was in charge of the first coins found and has since published a first outline of the history of the site.<sup>23</sup> Angela Koppel has both worked on and restored most of the stucco finds. Koppel is in the process of preparing her research for publication. Her findings will include the preliminary work done on the stucco decoration found in the mosque by Baris Ciftci.<sup>24</sup> These decorations are dated between ninth and the middle of the tenth century AD based on their similarities with those of Sāmarra’, and are the best known finds from Kharab Sayyar.<sup>25</sup> Yet, the occupation during the Sāmarra’era represents only the latest urban phase at Kharab Sayyar. Coin evidence in Kharab Sayyar spans from the 8th century AD to the middle of the tenth century AD. After being abandoned in the middle of the tenth century AD, Kharab Sayyar was, save a few squatters and a little modern village, never settled again. This occupation history means it provides a rare opportunity for such a project, since the remains of a relatively small timeframe are all in a good condition.

14 Moortgat-Correns 1992, 59. It remains unclear to me whether the mentioned soundings were made under Oppenheim’s supervision during his stay.

15 Moortgat-Correns 1992, 58ff. Von Oppenheim refers to the sounding on the mosque as a search trench of the local Bedouins, however, this as well as other soundings throughout the city seem to have been systematic. They are mostly confined to specific parts of buildings, such as the gate of the western *khan*.

16 Meyer 2001, 189.

17 Hempelmann 2013.

18 See preliminary reports: Würz 2008. Concerning the residential buildings see Würz 2014. The publications on the mosque and the *hammam* are pending, they are the subject of a PhD thesis by Natascha Mathyschok submitted in 2016. The publication of the mosque and the *bazaar* are in the hands of Imad Mussa in Damaskus.

19 Meyer 2006, 52–53.

20 Falb 2012.

21 Müller-Wiener 2003.

22 Krätschell 2009 and Singer 2009.

23 Heidemann 2003a.

24 Ciftci. Unpublished manuscript. As topic of his M.A..

25 Koppel 2015. Unpublished manuscript.

## 1.2 Bani Sayyar, al-Jarud and the Problem of Historical Identification

Theories regarding the identification of the ruin with a historically known name are divided. On one side, Meyer has identified the ruin with the historically attested town of Tall Bani Sayyar, an assumption mostly based on the similarity with the modern place name and its geographic location.<sup>26</sup> According to an account of Yāqūt referred to by Meyer and Haase, Tall Bani Sayyar is located en route from Ra's al-'Ayn to ar-Raqqā near Tall Mauzan.<sup>27</sup> In Ibn Ḥawḳal, the site is noted and mapped as a station between Ra's al-'Ayn and Ḥarrān and said to be a distance of one day's travel from Ra's al-'Ayn.<sup>28</sup> It is described as a small town going back to al-'Abbās b. 'Amr al-Ghanawī<sup>29</sup> and was in ruins at the time of the visit of Ibn Ḥawḳal in the tenth century AD.<sup>30</sup> Stefan Heidemann, however, rejects this and identifies the town as that of Al-Jarud.<sup>31</sup> One

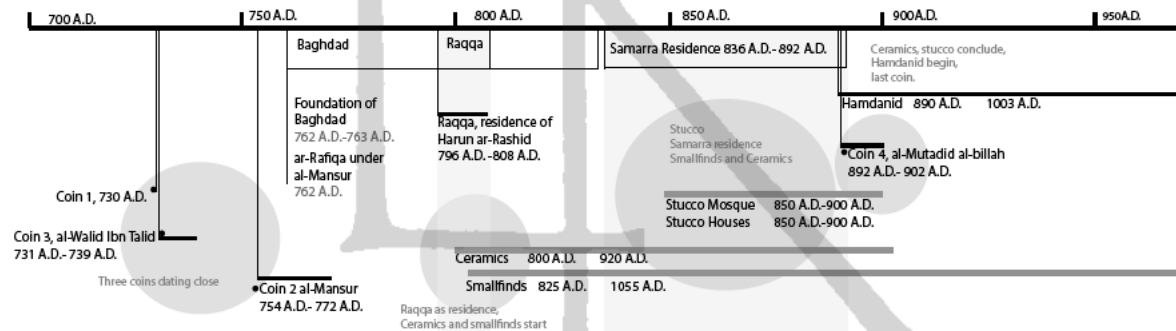


Fig. 3: Timeline of dateable finds in Kharab Sayyar and historic events.

of his arguments against Meyer's identification is based on the fact of a repopulation that occurred in the region during the late 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, which, according to Heidemann, makes the continuity of names and, therefore, the possible identification with the town of Bani Sayyar with Kharab Sayyar unlikely.<sup>32</sup> He further states that names such as Bulaid Bani Sayyar or Kharab Sayyar are likely to refer to a ruin used as a campsite by nomadic people. Such use of the ruin has been documented by archaeology for, supposedly, a period close to the end of settlement, and by the accounts of von Oppenheim for the early 20<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>33</sup> The use of better preserved parts of residential area C was not a singular instance but occurred throughout various houses and other areas.<sup>34</sup>

## 1.3. Historic Framework

The following historical overview is not intended to be a complete or new account of events but to provide an abbreviated introduction to the timeframe needed to put the following research into perspective. A further discussion on the dating the phases of settlement will follow in the conclusion.

Lacking a definite identification with an historically mentioned place-name that could be found in historical sources, the most relevant and detailed information for dating the ruin so far has been provided by coins (Fig. 3).<sup>35</sup> Roughly, those coins might imply settlement activities on Kharab Sayyar in a timeframe

26 Meyer 2001 191–192. Also: Meyer 2002 und 2004.

27 Meyer 2001 192, f.n. 7.

28 List of places shown in the map in Ibn Ḥawḳal, 2001, 201 and map on page 204. The description of the town can be found here: Ibn Ḥawḳal 2001, 224; see also: Haase 2008, 395.

29 Ibn Ḥawḳal 2001, 224.

30 Ibn Ḥawḳal 2001, 224.

31 Heidemann 2003a, 103; Heidemann 2011, 45.

32 Heidemann 2003, 103/104.

33 Moortgat-Correns 1992, 59. Referring to the original manuscripts of von Oppenheim.

34 See Würz 2008 for details on the end of the settlement as well as archaeological details on settlement reuse.

35 Heidemann 2003a, 103–112.

ranging from the 730s to 892 until 902 AD.<sup>36</sup> Two coins published by Heidemann are dated to Umayyad times.<sup>37</sup> The oldest coin, found on the surface in the *bazaar* during the geomagnetic survey roughly dates to the early 800s.<sup>38</sup> The later of the two Umayyad coins has been dated to the time of governor al-Walid ibn rālib (732–739). This coin was minted during the reign of caliph Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik from 724 until 743 during which ar-Ruṣāfa was also used a residence.<sup>39</sup>

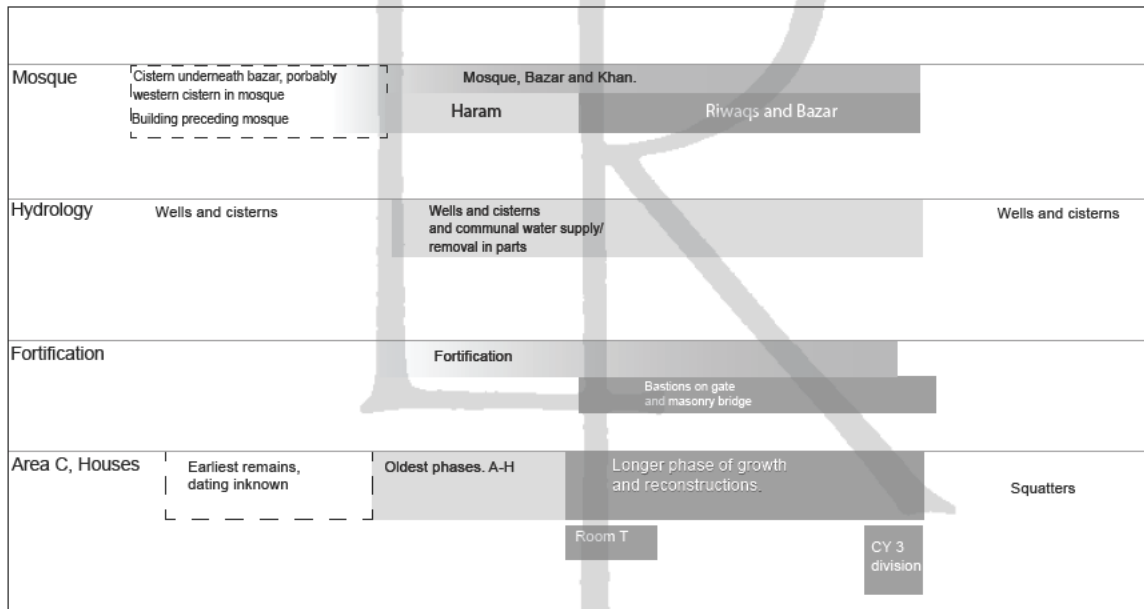


Fig. 4: Timeline of structures found in the excavation areas, without definite dating, but correlated to each other.

Also, two coins, including one Umayyad piece, have been found in the excavations of the residential housings in the northeast and stem from a stratified context. In this context it should be mentioned that, in contrary to the knowledge on which Heidemann based his report, today we know that the coin dated to the times of al-Walid ibn Tālib (732–739) does not stem from the phases associated with the stucco, but to the earlier phase. The coin has been found in the debris of walls belonging to earlier phases.<sup>40</sup> This does fit the conclusion of Heidemann, that the coins resemble the typical coin usage of the time and was brought there during Umayyad times, not later.<sup>41</sup> It is particularly interesting that, according to Heidemann, the geographic connections to southern Syria and Mosul indicated by the coins in Kharab Sayyar are similar to those found in other excavations.<sup>42</sup>

When Syria, specifically the region of the middle Euphrates and Balikh, became the geographic centre of the Umayyad powers, the region entered into an economic boom. The Umayyad rulers invested in the cultivation of lands, especially along the rivers where groundwater and irrigation could be used.<sup>43</sup> According to Karin Bartl, who conducted a large scale survey along the Balikh river, the rise in the number of settlements in comparison to the Byzantine times is not typical of other regions, and as such most likely a direct result of the Umayyad economic policy and the garrison in ar-Raḡḡa.<sup>44</sup>

36 Heidemann 2003a, 109–110; on the Umayyad coin dated to al-Walid ibn Tālib (114–121/732–739) see Heidemann 2003a, 105–107; for the ‘Abbasid coin of al-Mutadid al-billah see Heidemann 2003a, 108–109. Heidemann 2003a, 109–110.

37 See Heidemann 2003a on numismatic dating.

38 Heidemann 2003a, 109–110.

39 Sack 1996, 155; Sack et al. 2010, 102.

40 Würz 2014, 39–42.

41 Heidemann 2003a, 105.

42 Heidemann 2003a, 105.

43 Heidemann 2002, 271; Bartl 1994, 249.

44 Bartl 1994, 245; Bartl 1994, 246–248.



In 639 AD, Muslim troops crossed the Euphrates in a reaction to a breach of treaty by the Byzantines, successively taking over Osroene and Mesopotamia.<sup>45</sup> Following a reform by ‘Abd al-Malik during the later part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, the region now called the al-Djazīra was divided into sub districts named after Sasanian tribes settling there—the Diyār Bakr, Diyār Rabī‘a and the Diyār Muḍar in which Kharab Sayyar was located.<sup>46</sup> The western limits of the Diyār Muḍar roughly followed the Euphrates; the eastern border is an irregularly shaped line in the steppe between the rivers Balikh and Khabur.<sup>47</sup> After being taken by Arab troops in 640 AD, ar-Raḡḡa continues to be an important settlement in the region in the following centuries during Umayyad and Abbāsīd times<sup>48</sup>—and eventually becoming the caliphal residence, seat of governors, and industrial centre.<sup>49</sup> Ar-Raḡḡa is situated on the confluence of Balikh and Euphrates, both of which are important trading and transportation hubs. About halfway upstream from Raqqa (fig. 1) on the eastern side of the Balikh lies a ruin called Madīnat al-Fār, which is associated with the early Islamic settlement of Ḥiṣn Maslama.<sup>50</sup> The town is thought to have a foundation going back to a member of the Umayyad family, Maslama b. ‘Abd al-Malik.<sup>51</sup> Further north, in what is now modern Turkey, lies Ḥarrān which, an important town already during the Roman era, becomes the temporary Umayyad capital and residence under Marwān II. (744–749 AD)<sup>52</sup>. From the Balikh, a trading and postal route crossed the steppe to Ra’s al-‘Ayn, which is situated on the springs of the Khabur.<sup>53</sup> On this route, a journey from Raqqa to Ra’s al-‘Ayn, according to Ibn Ḥawḳal, takes four days<sup>54</sup>. It is the stretch between Baḍjadda or Madīnat al-Fār and Ra’s al-‘Ayn on which Kharab Sayyar, about 40 km west of Madīnat al-Fār, might have served as a staging post.

With the arrival of the ‘Abbāsīds in power, there was a shift from regions of Syria that were formerly preferred by the Umayyad caliphs, towards the east. Nevertheless, while Medīnat as-Salām, and later Sāmarrā’, were the new capitals in the east, the al-Djazīra remained economically and strategically relevant. A large number of newly founded sites might be a sign of these times.<sup>55</sup>

It is the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Manṣūr (754–775) who initiated the foundation of ar-Raqqas twin city ar-Rāfiqa shortly after Baghdad (Madīnat as-Salām) was founded in 762.<sup>56</sup> The times of al-Mansur are represented in Kharab Sayyar by a coin minted between 759 and 772, during the reign of al-Mansur in Ḥarrān<sup>57</sup> by al-‘Abbas ibn Muhammad al-‘Abāsī, a brother of al-Mansūr, and governor of al-Djazīra from 759 until 771.<sup>58</sup> It was during this period that Ḥarrān served as the capital of the province al-Djazīra.<sup>59</sup> Between 796 and 800, ar-Raḡḡa became the caliphal residence of Hārūn ar-Rashīd, who expanded the city and used it as his residence until 808.<sup>60</sup> In 836, al-Mu‘taṣim moved the caliphal residence towards the east, and lastly to Sāmarrā’ in modern Iraq, which would be the caliphal residence until 892.

While artefacts dating into Umayyad times are rare in Kharab Sayyar, dateable finds from ‘Abbāsīd times are numerous, including coins, stucco decorations found in situ and pottery. The finds mostly stem from the later, final phases of occupation in Kharab Sayyar. It is the ‘Abbāsīd era that makes up the topmost layers of the city and the activities of the ‘Abbāsīd era gave the town its final shape before it was abandoned.

45 For John Kateas and Ptolemaios see Kaegi 1992, 160, for the following conquest of Mesopotamia see Kaegi 1992, 172.

46 LeStrange 2011, 86–87; Ibn Ḥawḳal 2001, 202, map on page 205; Balādhuri 1916, 278; Muqaddasi 2001, 117.

47 EI2, Canard 2012.

48 See Balādhuri 1916, 269–273 for details on the conquest.

49 Ibn Ḥawḳal 2001, 101; Heidemann 2003b, 3–17.

50 Haase 2008.

51 Haase 1996, 165; Ibn Ḥawḳal 2001, 224; LeStrange 2011, 105.

52 Jong 2011, 269–270.

53 LeStrange 2011, 104–105. For example the route connecting the Balikh valley and Mosul via Ra’s al-‘Ain. Bosworth 2003, 58; Heidemann 2002, 271–272.

54 Ibn Ḥawḳal 2001 204.

55 Heidemann 2009, 501: Including towns like Ḥiṣn Maslama (Madīnat al-Fār), al-Djarūd (Kharab Sayyar), Tall Mahrā and Baḍjaddā.

56 Heidemann 2009, 501–502; Heidemann 2003b, 23; Bosworth 2003, 59. Bosworth mentions ar-Raqqā / ar-Rāfiqa as an important garrison for troops en vie to the border; LeStrange 2011, 101.

57 Heidemann 2003a, 106.

58 Heidemann 2009, 501–502.

59 Heidemann 2003a, 110.

60 Bosworth 2003, 59; Heidemann 2002, 272.

Specifically, the time between during which the caliph resided in Sāmarrā' is best represented in the archaeological material of Kharab Sayyar. It has to be emphasised that this is due to the fact of it being the last, mostly undisturbed, urban settlement phase and most of the excavations in Kharab Sayyar have dealt with these layers, which leads to an overrepresentation of Sāmarrā' period material. The underlying, older layers have only been explored in a few sections in two areas, the mosque/*bazaar* and the residential area. In both areas the phase contemporary to the Sāmarrā' caliphate is the last phase of urban activity and preceded by at least one older phase (Fig. 4).

The dating of panels and pieces of the stucco decoration is more precise. The largest number of plates and fragments stem from the residential buildings in area C, the mosque. The decorations in the houses of area C seem to be based upon the style, or to be copies of, those found in the 'Abbāsīd houses in Sāmarrā'.<sup>61</sup> Yet, because of these similarities and comparisons to Tulunīd stucco decorations, Meyer favoured a dating that claims the Kharab Sayyar stucco decorations are slightly younger than those from Sāmarrā'.<sup>62</sup>

Angela Koppel who worked on both the fragments and plates of the houses in area C as well as those of the mosque provides a dating of the decorations falling within a timeframe from 850 AD to 900 AD.<sup>63</sup>

With the dating of the stucco relatively secure, the building activities associated with the latest phase of the residential area C can be dated to the time of the Sāmarrā' caliphate, as can central parts of the mosque.<sup>64</sup> The small numbers of panels and fragments from area A have not yet been published while those found in the excavations on top of the *tell* conducted in 2010 by Mussa are included in Koppel's work.

Small finds and ceramics cover a wider timeframe than stucco decoration, and do include other phases than those of the Sāmarrā'-caliphate era represented by the stucco. A typology of undecorated pottery presented by Falb is based on the material found up until the 2007 campaign. The pottery mostly stems from the debris found in the rooms of houses 1 and 2, but also includes pits, installations and wells, dating mostly to the latest phase of the settlement.<sup>65</sup> Falb draws similarities to most larger sites dated to early Islamic times in the region including ar-Raḡḡa, Sāmarrā' and Madīnat al-Fār. Based on comparison of form and materials with samples from other places, he concludes that the largest amount of material can be dated to the time of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate, or more precisely between the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 10<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>66</sup> While the 'Abbāsīd ceramics make up the bulk of the material, a small number of samples can be, mostly by form, traced back as far as Umayyad or late Roman times.<sup>67</sup> For the glazed wares, Müller-Wiener proposes a preliminary dating within a timeframe from 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>68</sup> Only few small-finds from Kharab Sayyar have been published to date. Of those published by Müller-Wiener, the dating provided covers a rather wide timeframe. A stone jar found in a residential house in Kharab Sayyar, does have parallels in both 'Abbāsīd and Umayyad times. Some jar lids found in Kharab Sayyar are comparable to pieces from ar-Rusafa dated to the local period 2 (825–1055 AD).<sup>69</sup> The latest precisely dateable find from Kharab Sayyar is an 'Abbāsīd coin, found on the surface in the area of the mosque and dated to the time of the reign of the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mu'taḍid Bi'llāh between 892 to 902 AD.<sup>70</sup> It dates back to a time in which, Heidemann suggests, smaller towns in the *Djazīra*, including Ḥiṣn Maslama and supposedly also Kharab Sayyar, seem to have been abandoned.<sup>71</sup> Archaeology in Kharab Sayyar supports the idea of emigration as a reason for abandonment of the ruin since there are no signs of conflict—in contrary, the rooms seem to have been cleaned, only broken vessels, deposited in the corners of rooms, remained. It is obvious that the population

61 Koppel 2015. Unpublished manuscript.

62 Meyer 2000, 307. See also Meyer 2001, 197–200.

63 Koppel 2015. Unpublished manuscript.

64 Koppel 2015. Unpublished manuscript.

65 Falb 2012.

66 Falb 2012, 62–63 and 64–67.

67 Falb 2012, 63–64.

68 Müller-Wiener, pers. comm.

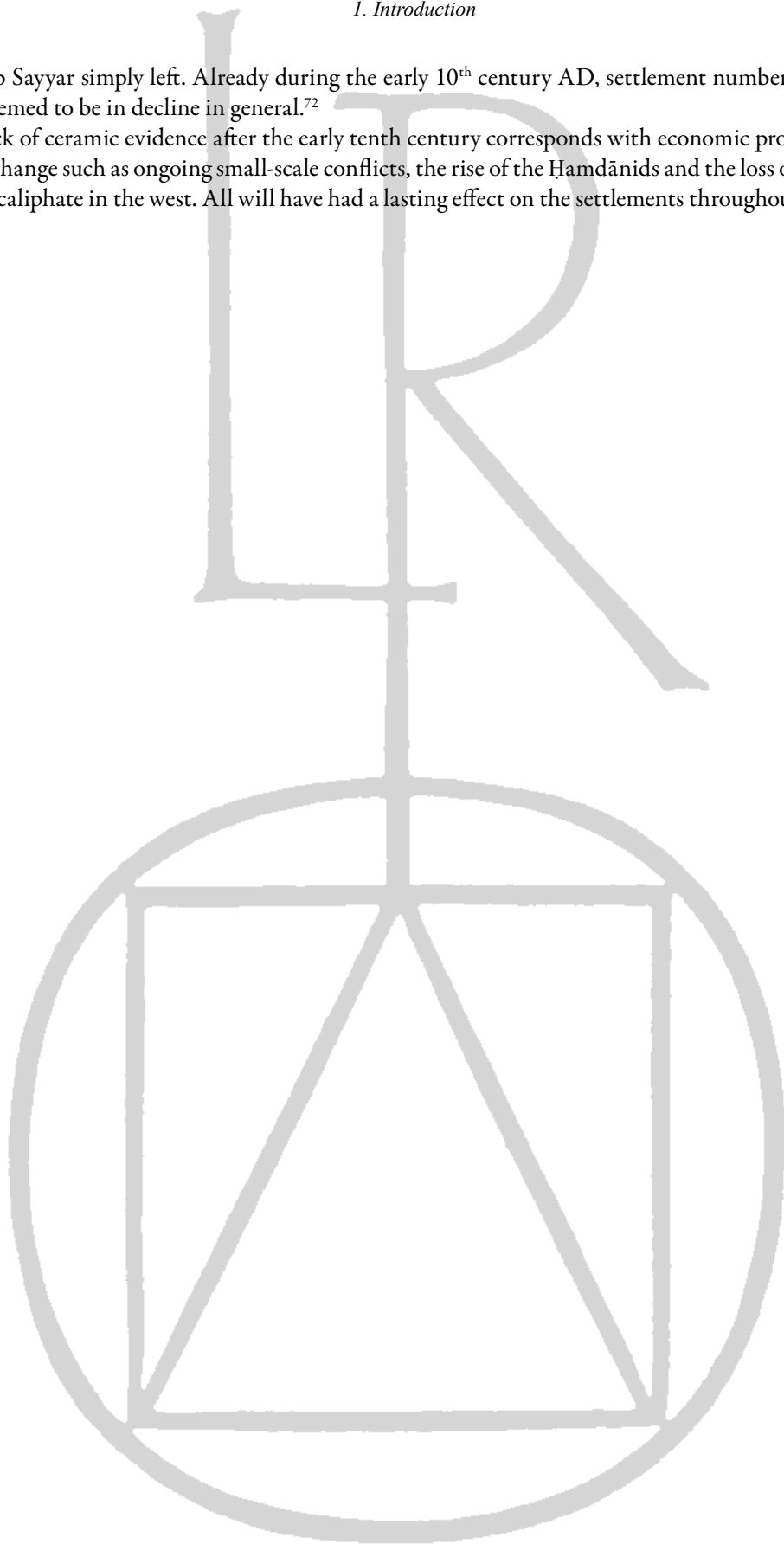
69 Müller-Wiener 2003, 113–120.

70 Heidemann 2003a, 108–109.

71 Heidemann 2006, 44, See Heidemann 2002, 30–31 on the effects of Ḥamdānīd rule on the economy. See also Heidemann 2002, 46–53.

of Kharab Sayyar simply left. Already during the early 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, settlement numbers in the Diyār Mudar seemed to be in decline in general.<sup>72</sup>

The lack of ceramic evidence after the early tenth century corresponds with economic problems and the political change such as ongoing small-scale conflicts, the rise of the Ḥamdānids and the loss of power of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate in the west. All will have had a lasting effect on the settlements throughout the region.<sup>73</sup>



<sup>72</sup> Bartl 1994, 259–260.

<sup>73</sup> Heidemann 2008, 348.