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Original Research Article

A Review and Introduction of Ottoman Castle in Tabriz Based on Written Sources and New Archaeological Findings*

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Abstract

During their military campaigns to the borders of the empire, the Ottomans always followed a "fortress-centered" system. In this system, the progress of conquests and the road map for territorial expansion were based on the capture and reconstruction of castles to advance their military and political objectives. Through field and library research conducted by the authors, three castles in Tabriz and its surroundings have been identified as utilized by the Ottomans according to this method: 1-Rashidiyye Castle 2-Jafar Pasha Castle 3-Khameneh Castle. This research is based on a combination of library and field methods. The studied sources were compared with archaeological evidence obtained. From a theoretical perspective, Colin Renfrew's dominance theory (the relationship between political and military centers) was used to analyze the research findings. By examining the mentioned castles, it is concluded that each of these castles had specific political and military potential and influence on the developments of this period. This can be analyzed within Renfrew's theory of dominance, suggesting that although each castle operated as an independent political-military unit, it functioned as a coordinated system within the Ottoman political structure in the occupied northwestern regions of Iran. Thus, the Ottoman castles in Tabriz, operating within this castle-centered system, contributed to the 20-year political dominance of the Ottoman state in the occupied regions of Azerbaijan, particularly Tabriz, from 1585 to 1603 A.D.

Keywords: *Tabriz Castle, Khameneh Castle, Rashidiyye Castle, Ottoman Castles, Safavid.*

Introduction

The occupation of Tabriz by the Ottomans is considered one of the significant events in the history of Safavid Iran. Although this occupation spanned a relatively short

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period (1585–1603 A.D.), its impact on the policies of both the Ottoman and Safavid states and its influence on subsequent actions and relations between these powers is considerable¹. It is evident that from the mid-16th century, the Ottoman state adopted a policy of increased focus on the East. This policy resulted in the conquests of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, regions that the Ottomans held under their control for a limited time. Specifically,

from 1578 A.D., during the reign of Sultan Murad III, the Ottomans intensified their attention toward the east. Between this date and 1585 A.D., when Tabriz was captured, there were continuous wars between the Ottomans and Safavids along the western borders of modern-day Iran. These wars resulted in the Ottoman conquest of Azerbaijan and parts of the Caucasus (Fig. 1). According to Ottoman sources, the main reasons for these conflicts were the Safavids' incitement of Anatolian Qezelbash to join them and their promotion of Shia Islam in eastern Anatolia (Gelibolulu, 2020, 321a). However, as long as the Safavids adhered to the Treaty of Chaldaran, the Ottomans also honored it. After the death of Shah Ismail and the start of Shah Tahmasb's reign, during which the treaty was violated by the Safavids, Sultan Murad III issued the order for war (Kütükoğlu, 1993, 23). It is noteworthy that Ottoman incursions into Tabriz date back to much earlier times (1514 A.D.) during the reign of Yavuz Sultan Selim (Bilgili, 2011, 219). Between that time and 1585, when Tabriz was annexed to Ottoman territory, the city had been conquered by the Ottomans several times, but no annexation had taken place. Therefore, during the

1578 A.D. campaigns, as stated in Ottoman sources, the main goal was to counter the Shia-centric policies of the Safavids and to cleanse eastern Anatolia of the Qezelbash and nobles who were inclined toward the Safavids (Kütükoğlu, 1993, 23–25).

During the implementation of the policy to annex Azerbaijan to the Ottoman Empire, the primary objective was to capture Tabriz². Due to its central role in Azerbaijan and its title as the "Bride of the East," Tabriz was always a focal point for the Ottoman state. The history of their invasions, starting with Sultan Selim I (1514 A.D.), underscores the significance of Tabriz. The Ottomans understood that by controlling Tabriz, they could dominate the entire Azerbaijan region and, under favorable conditions, permanently annex it to the core territory of the Ottoman Empire. However, it should also be noted that the Ottoman focus on the east was not solely limited to the conquest of Tabriz or Azerbaijan. They had broader, long-term objectives that extended beyond the capture of Tabriz and southern Caucasia. A detailed discussion of these objectives falls beyond the scope of this text.

The issue addressed in this article is the examination and

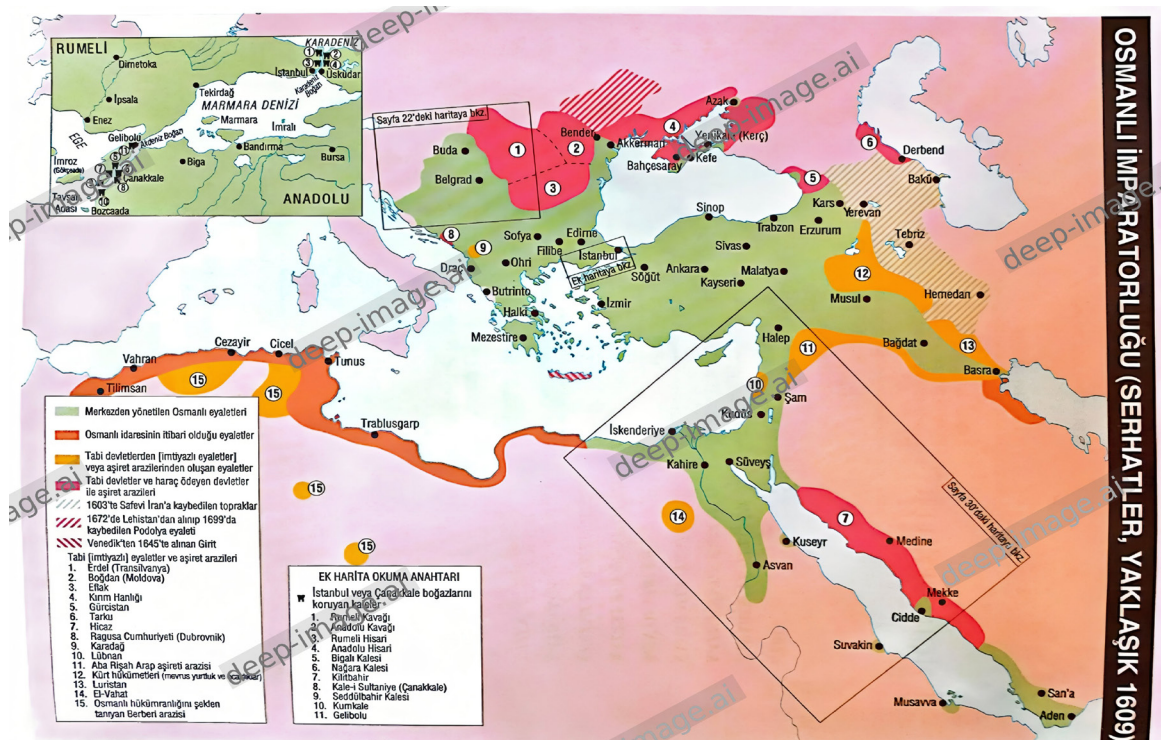


Fig. 1. The extent of the areas occupied by the Ottomans in Azerbaijan. Source: Nicolle, 2019, 4.

introduction of Ottoman castles in Tabriz, from the time of its conquest to its recapture. For the Ottomans, castles were the primary cornerstone of any military campaign. Given their comprehensive familiarity with the structure and function of castles, the Ottomans organized their eastern campaigns based on a “castle-centered” system. In this system, castles were utilized according to their strategic location and size during the campaigns and afterward.

Thus, the foundation of Ottoman military planning and execution revolved around castles. The conquest of cities depended on the capture of the region’s castles. Before advancing from one castle to another, they meticulously calculated the distance, weather conditions, and the needs of their massive army. Additionally, no further military action was taken without securing support from the castles behind them. A clear example of this strategy is the support provided by the Castle of Van to Ottoman military operations in Azerbaijan. Even after capturing Tabriz, a logistical connection was maintained between the Castle of Van, Khameneh Castle, and Jafar Pasha Castle. Especially during Safavid attempts to recapture Tabriz, logistical support, reinforcements, and supplies were immediately requested from the Castle of Van, which was the center of governance (Beylerbeylik) for the Van region.

Similarly, the Castle of Van maintained southern connections with the Castle of Diyarbakır and northern connections with the Castles of Gars and Erzurum. This castle-centered system extended to the empire’s center in Istanbul, ensuring its continuity.

In this context, the castles connected to this castle-centered system within the vicinity of Tabriz will be examined in our research. Based on the authors’ field and library studies, three castles in and around Tabriz have been identified as utilized by the Ottomans. Each of these castles has a distinct status, which will be addressed within the framework of the article. These castles are: 1- Rashidiyye Castle 2- Jafar Pasha Castle (Tabriz) 3- Khameneh Castle (referred to as Hamana in Ottoman sources). By analyzing the role of these castles during the process of Tabriz’s conquest and occupation in the late 16th century, which lasted for approximately twenty years, it becomes evident that each

of these castles had unique political and social potential. They played a significant role in shaping the developments of this period and ultimately influenced the fate of Tabriz and the Azerbaijan region.

The series of events in Tabriz began with its conquest in 1585 A.D. In this year, Sultan Murad III ordered the Ottoman forces to march eastward to conquer Azerbaijan and capture Tabriz, appointing Özdemirzade Osman Pasha for this mission. Osman Pasha, with a large and well-equipped army, set out in 1585 A.D. to conquer all of Azerbaijan and Iraq. Iskandar Beyg Turkman elaborates on this: Osman Pasha captured all the provinces of Shirvan and Shaki, entrusted them to his trusted ones, and then returned to Istanbul. There, he pledged allegiance to the Sultan, was appointed as the minister and commander, and was tasked with the conquest of all of Azerbaijan and even Iraq. With an immense and boundless army, he advanced toward Arzrum for the conquest of Azerbaijan (Turkman, 2011,377). After a decisive battle with the Qezelbash forces near Tabriz, Osman Pasha emerged victorious and entered Tabriz in September 1585 A.D. following a brief siege (Kütükoğlu, 1993, 145; Şeyh Vefayi, 1a–13a)³. In his book Şecaatname, Mehmed Chelebi described the events of 1585 A.D. and depicted a miniature of Osman Pasha’s camp in Tabriz. This miniature illustrates the scene where Osman Pasha granted the governorship of Tabriz to Khadem Jafar Pasha⁴. The camp shown in the miniature was likely located near the Sham Ghazan neighborhood of Tabriz. Alternatively, the Sahib Abad Square, due to its proximity to the Dar al-Emara (governor’s palace) of Tabriz, could have been a suitable location for the camp, as Ottoman forces reportedly advanced as far as Sahib Abad Square (Çelebi, 2008, 286a). However, since the battle between the Safavids and Ottomans took place outside the city, it is plausible that there was no need for the entire camp to enter the city, and most of the Ottoman forces remained stationed near the western neighborhoods of Tabriz. Ottoman sources also reveal that, first, before abandoning the city, the Safavids burned down markets and destroyed the shops and homes of fleeing residents. Second, after the city’s capture, some Ottoman soldiers looted homes. Upon

hearing of this, Osman Pasha issued an order to stop such actions (Rahimizade, 2010, 81b; Kütükoğlu, 1993, 156).

Necessity and Purpose of the Research

The subject of this article holds importance in two aspects- Historical 2- Political. The historical significance lies in the often-overlooked role of military castles and border posts in the study of Iran's historical events. Historically, castles were central to all military activities and played a decisive role in the outcome of wars. By examining the history of castles and the events that unfolded within them, one can also understand the resilience and determination of the people who inhabited them. Therefore, castles should not be considered separate from political and military events. This is particularly significant in the context of the Ottomans, given their specific reliance on castles during their military campaigns. From a political perspective, archaeological theories provide valuable insights. Archaeological theorists argue that political rivalries can be studied through material evidence. Since warfare represents a violent form of political rivalry, castles are among the most important archaeological records in this regard. Additionally, from the perspective of social archaeology, castles, while serving military functions, also played political roles. Many castles simultaneously functioned as administrative centers, such as Jafar Pasha Castle in Tabriz. Another political importance of castles stems from their role as venues for signing treaties, and agreements, and issuing political decrees. Furthermore, based on archaeological approaches, artifacts discovered within castles provide evidence that can serve as archaeological documentation (Dark, 2000, 45). By examining artifacts found in castles and understanding their interconnections, new historical truths can be uncovered, especially those not mentioned in written sources. Among these castles, Rashidiyye Castles contains valuable data and evidence from the period of intense Safavid-Ottoman relations. Thus, the significance and role of castles in administrative and military systems were far greater for the Ottomans compared to the Safavids.

As Iskandar Beyg Turkman states, "Among the Ottomans, construction of castles was considered the cornerstone of conquest and governance, and a place without a castle was not regarded as part of their realm" (Turkman, 2011, 844). According to Turkman, the Ottomans' first action after conquering any city or region was to construct a castle suitable for governance in that area. Given the lack of attention to this subject in studies of Ottoman-Safavid relations, there is a need to address this issue within the framework of their interactions, particularly in the second half of the 16th century, and to present various aspects of this topic to new researchers as a distinct field of study. The main research question is: Where were the Ottoman castles in Tabriz and its surroundings located, and what role did they play in the political and military developments of the late 16th century? Furthermore, to what extent did these castles contribute to the survival of Ottoman political rule in Tabriz? In response to the first question, it can be stated that Jafar Pasha Castle played a decisive role for the Ottomans in both political and military contexts. The issuance of government decrees for the continuous repair of this castle indicates its status as the primary administrative center for Ottoman rule. In contrast, the Rashidiyye and Khameneh Castles primarily served military purposes due to their strategic locations (Fig. 2). Regarding the second and third questions, Jafar Pasha Castle was the main factor ensuring the survival of Ottoman rule in Tabriz. This was crucial since the Ottomans lacked local support in Tabriz, and without such a stronghold, they could not have maintained their rule in the city for twenty years.

Theoretical Foundations

Since the discussed castles are considered archaeological evidence (Dark, 2001, 45), they can be analyzed within the framework of Colin Renfrew's "Dominance Theory." Renfrew examines the relationships between various political-military centers in this theory. According to Renfrew, the territorial scope of military or

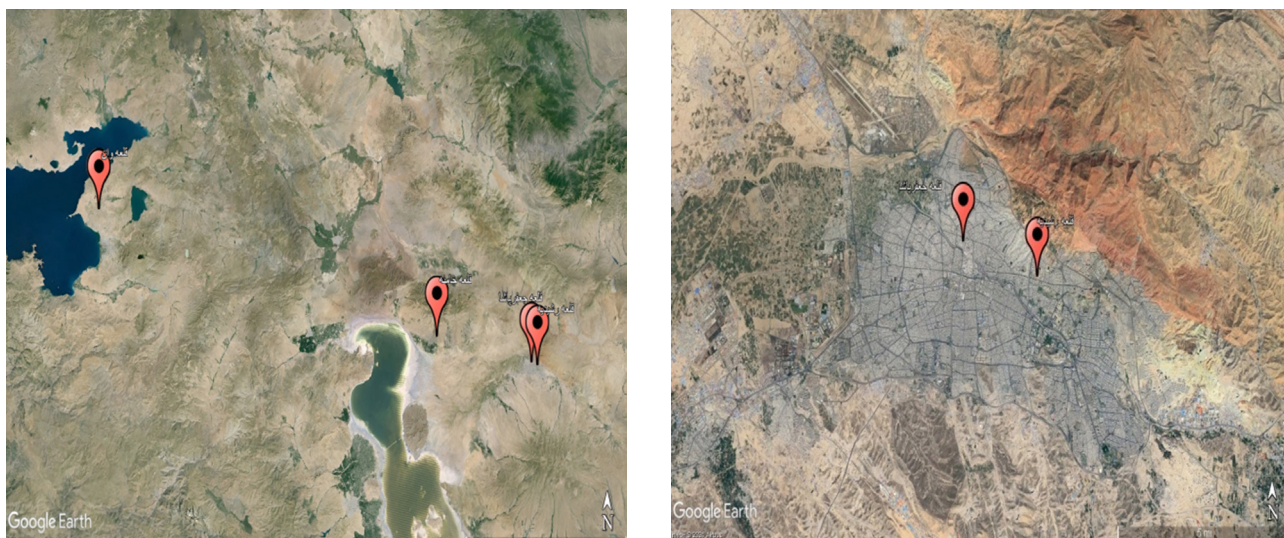


Fig 2. Location of Ottoman castles along the route from Tabriz to Van. Source: Google Earth.

political centers is not significant; instead, their connections with one another are evaluated (Renfrew & Cooke, 1979; Renfrew, 1984). Therefore, within this framework, it is possible to assess the interrelations of the castles, their influence on the political and military developments in Tabriz, and their connections to the eastern castles within Ottoman territories. The research methodology for this study is based on a historical-archaeological approach. Within this framework, both primary historical sources related to the subject and new archaeological findings from the authors' field research will be analyzed comparatively using the dominance theory of archaeology. In this approach, the castles under study are treated as historical materials, and the aim is to identify their connections with one another.

Literture Review

The topic of this article is relatively novel. In this study, an attempt has been made to establish a logical connection between historical written sources and material archaeological evidence. As such, archaeological records and historical documents are used in an integrated and interconnected manner. Regarding the site of Rab'e Rashidi, historiographical and archaeological studies are highly limited. Historical research has primarily focused

on the study of Rab'e Rashidi based on its Waqf Nama document. For instance, Sheila Blair, relying on the Rab'e Rashidi Waqf Nama, considered the site to include an Ilkhanid castle (Blair, 2008), a theory that modern archaeological findings from recent excavations and field studies have entirely refuted (Ayorloo & Moradi, 2020; Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024; Roshan et al., 2025). Others have attempted to analyze Rab'e Rashidi within the framework of the Azeri architectural school (Habib, 2010), but such studies, due to their idealistic nature, must be approached with caution. Some researchers have limited their work to merely describing this archaeological site based on the Waqf Nama (Rajabzadeh, 2004; Karang, 1972; Farahani & Tarom, 2005). Additionally, some scholars have sought to architecturally recreate the site using information from the Waqf Nama document (Shekari, 2004; Saeednia, 1999; Soltanzadeh, 2011). However, these reconstructions are based on limited historical knowledge derived from the Waqf Nama document, which does not provide detailed information about the structures within Rab'e Rashidi. Recent archaeological studies (Ayorloo & Moradi, 2020; Ayorloo, 2018; Fuchs & Ayorloo, 2023). have disproven these reconstructions. The latest research on this subject is an article by Bahram Ayorloo and Behzad Mahdizadeh, which examines the large tower of Rashidiyye Castle and its stylistic features (Ayorloo & Mahdizadeh, 2024).

Based on the architectural findings of this article, the Ottoman origin of Rashidiyye Castle is evident. However, no research has been conducted to date on the other two castles, Jafar Pasha Castle and Khameneh Castle.

•Rashidiyye Castle

What remains today of Rashidiyye Castle in the foothills of the Surkhab Mountain, in the Valyankuh neighborhood northeast of Tabriz, are the ruins of a citadel with towers and walls. However, according to Hamd-Allah Mostawfi in his book *Nazhat al-Qolub*, Rab'e Rashidi was a small town inhabited by scholars and doctors (Ayorloo & Moradi, 2020, 45). Yet, there is no mention of a castle in the *Waqf Nama* of Rab'e Rashidi or in the *History of Öljeitü* (Ayorloo, 2013). On the other hand, the Rab'e Rashidi complex, due to its scale and unique features, had significant physical and spatial impacts on the structure of Tabriz during the Ilkhanid period (Mehdizadeh, 2013, 160). The complex described in historical sources must have been much larger than the current ruins of the towers and walls. Moreover, its scale and nature must have had widespread social and political influences on the urban structure of that time, contributing significantly to Tabriz becoming a full-fledged capital during the Ilkhanid era (Karimian & Mehdizadeh, 2017, 144). This indicates that we are dealing with a large complex that, based on historical reports and archaeological data, spans two different periods: the Ilkhanid and Safavid eras. Therefore, what is referred to as Rab'e Rashidi or Rashidiyye Castle belongs to the Safavid phase. According to recent studies, during the Safavid period, the Ottomans initially and later the Safavids constructed defensive fortifications in this area. Archaeological studies have revealed that the Ottoman phase of the citadel involved the construction of stone fortifications, including the southern stone tower and a large wall, during their 20-year rule in Tabriz (1585–1603) (Ayorloo, 2020, 47; Fuchs & Ayorloo, 2023, 857). However, their main administrative center was Jafar Pasha Castle near Sahib Abad Square in Tabriz, which served as a castle-palace. This issue is also stated

in the treatise “Tabriziyye” by Sobhi Talikizadeh. (Rahimizade, 2010, 86a). According to Tavernier, the Ottomans built several other defensive fortifications within the city, on surrounding heights, and along the intercity routes (Tavernier, 1990: 70). It is likely that the construction of Rashidiyye Castle was also part of this Ottoman policy. One of the main reasons for building this castle east of Tabriz was that, in the early years of the Ottoman occupation, Qezelbash forces frequently ambushed Ottoman troops from the slopes of the Sarab Mountain, where Rashidiyye Castle is located, and carried out harassment operations (Kütükoğlu, 1993, 157). This made the fortification of this part of the city unavoidable. On the other hand, new archaeological data from joint studies conducted by the Iran-Germany archaeological team (Islamic Art University of Tabriz and the German Archaeological Institute) confirm the Ottoman origin of the stone towers and walls of Rashidiyye Castle. Among the remains of Ottoman constructions, the protruding southern tower of the castle wall is particularly noteworthy. Studies indicate that it has no equivalent in Iran and is considered an imported technique (Ayorloo & Moradi, 2020; Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024; Roshan et al., 2025). Fully comparable examples have been found in Anatolia, such as the protruding towers in Bodrum Castle, Kilid al Bahr Castle, Mamoure Castle, and Iasos Castle, most of which are Byzantine-Ottoman in origin. It is therefore likely that this military technique was employed by the Ottomans in the construction of Rashidiyye Castle in Tabriz as well (Ayorloo & Mehdizadeh, 2024, 54). Given the castle's geographical location on a rocky elevation, it most likely served logistical and surveillance functions. The castle provided a commanding view of much of the northern and eastern parts of the city and the roads exiting the city in these directions. It was likely used as a garrison, especially since the Safavids often attacked the city from this front. The presence of this castle would have posed a significant obstacle to their advances (Fig. 3). Archaeological studies indicate that there were not many structures within the castle. On the other hand, the reference

in 'Ālamārā-ye Abbāsī to a beautiful palace inside the castle pertains to limited Safavid-era constructions, which were intended for the residence of the city governor and administrative purposes (Turkman, 2011, 843). This account suggests that the Safavids' objective in Rashidiyye castle was its restoration and preparation for the temporary settlement of the Safavid governor of the city. Consequently, the presence of the massive southern tower in the castle wall could not have been the work of the Safavids, and it was most likely constructed by the Ottomans. In any case, after the recapture of Tabriz by Shah Abbas I in 1603, Rashidiyye Castle was rebuilt and used for a short period (ibid., 843–844). This is also confirmed by recent archaeological findings. Based on archaeological studies, the stone phase of the castle walls and towers is attributed to Ottoman constructions, while the Brick phase of the walls corresponds to additions and renovations made by Shah Abbas after the city's recapture (Ayorloo & Moradi, 2020). This indicates a structural and historical difference in the materials used for the castle walls and towers. Given the lack of references to the castle in sources following Shah Abbas's era, it can be concluded that the castle was used only during the reigns of Shah Abbas and Shah Safi and was gradually abandoned thereafter. In conclusion, Rashidiyye Castle primarily served as a garrison and logistical center, used for monitoring and controlling the northeastern part of the city. However, during the Safavid phase, the castle briefly had a governmental and administrative function. Distinguishing between these two

functions based on the materials and construction phases of the castle walls and towers is not an easy task and can only be fully understood through detailed archaeological research.

•Tabriz Castle (Jafar Pasha Castle)

Jafar Pasha Castle was one of the urban castles located near the Sahib Abad complex and the Hasht Behesht Mansion in the northwest of the city. The most important Ottoman sources referencing this castle are Evliya Çelebi's Travelogue and The Conquests of Sultan Murad III (Çelebi, 2008; Şehy Vefayi, 2019). Evliya Çelebi visited Tabriz during the reign of Shah Safi and mentioned Jafar Pasha Castle and its palace in his travelogue. Interestingly, no traveler or source prior to him had mentioned this castle within Tabriz, even though it dates back to the period of Ottoman presence in Tabriz, which was twenty years before Shah Abbas's era. Other Ottoman sources including Ottoman archival documents mostly referred to this structure as "Tabriz Castle". Since the castle was constructed under the order and supervision of Jafar Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Tabriz, it was also called Jafar Pasha Castle⁵.

This castle served as the administrative and command center for the Ottomans in Tabriz, with all Ottoman administrative and military operations in the city concentrated there. Ottoman sources frequently reference activities carried out in Tabriz Castle, particularly government orders and decrees, which are the primary documents related to this castle. These Ottoman decrees repeatedly mention the



Fig. 3. The remains of the walls and towers of Rashidiyye Castle in Tabriz. Source: Mahdizadeh & Roshan, 2023.

dispatch of military equipment and reinforcements to Tabriz Castle. This is especially notable during the period around 1590 when Farhad Pasha, as the commander of Ottoman forces in the eastern empire, was preparing for a military campaign in the east, particularly in Tabriz. Additionally, government decrees which exists in Ottoman period documents consistently include reports and updates about events in Tabriz.

According to Bidlisi in *Sharaf nama*, this castle was located near the Hasht Behesht Mansion (Bidlisi, 1860, 275). The Hasht Behesht Mansion was the Dar al Amara (administrative palace) of Tabriz, and Jafar Pasha Castle was built on this site (Fig. 4). Although Jafar Pasha Castle no longer exists, and its remains have likely been destroyed, recent studies have roughly identified its approximate location on a Safavid-era map of Tabriz. Reports from various sources place the castle near four key sites: Sahib Abad Garden, Hasht Behesht Mansion, the Armament Square (Meydan-e Taslihat), and Hasan Beyg's Palace (Belilan Asl, 2016, 56).

•Khameneh Castle

Khameneh Castle, referred to as "Hamana" in Ottoman sources, was a roadside castle near Tabriz. It was likely located in the present-day city of Khameneh, approximately 72 kilometers from Tabriz. During Farhad Pasha's military campaign to Tabriz, this castle was captured, renovated, and used by the Ottoman forces. Its importance lies in its position on the Tabriz-Van route, making it the only roadside castle after Van Castle before reaching Tabriz. Most of what we know about Khameneh castle comes from Ottoman sources (Rahimizade, 2010). It is unclear whether the castle was originally built by the Ottomans or the Safavids, but it is known that during Farhad Pasha's attack on Tabriz, the castle was under Safavid control. After a brief siege, it was captured by the Ottomans. This also implies that, prior to Farhad Pasha's attack and during Hamza Mirza's siege of Tabriz, the Ottomans had retreated into the city.

In any case, during Farhad Pasha's military campaign to Tabriz in 1586, this castle was first captured by him and, after renovation, was used as a roadside (transit) castle. Farhad Pasha, after repairing the castle, stationed a sufficient number of cannons and soldiers there (Kırzioğlu, 1976, 357).

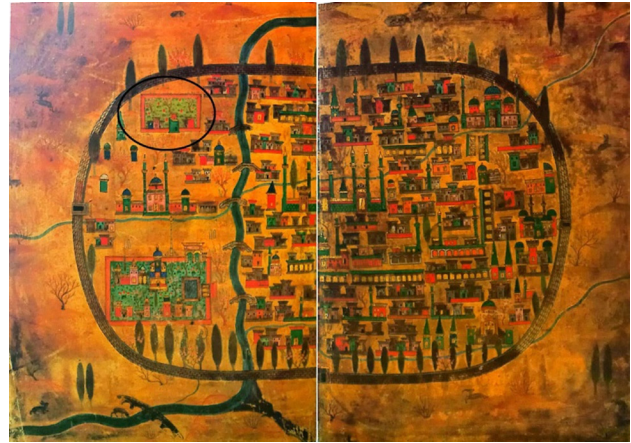


Fig. 4. The location of Jafar Pasha Castle in Matrakçı's depiction of Tabriz
Source: Matrakçı, 2014.

Rahimi-zade, an Ottoman chronicler, included a miniature in his book *Ganjineh'e Fath'e Ganja* (The Treasure of Conquest Ganja) depicting the siege of Khameneh Castle by Farhad Pasha and his forces, which might be the only visual evidence of the castle's existence (Rahimizade, 2010). Due to its proximity to Tabriz, the castle could have played a role in providing logistics and transferring equipment and supplies from Van to Tabriz. It seems that during the Safavid and Ottoman wars, the battle over this castle served as a serious test for the forces of both sides. Whoever controlled this castle demonstrated their military superiority to the opponent and gained an upper hand in psychological warfare. Therefore, the battle for Khameneh Castle was also a means of assessing the strength of the opposing side. Additionally, due to the castle's proximity to the northern shores of Lake Urmia, controlling it also meant gaining control over the coastal strip of the lake.

In the miniature of Khameneh Castle, two different inscriptions can be seen at the top and bottom of the image, written in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic script, providing a brief report of the castle's battle (Fig. 5). The upper inscription refers to Farhad Pasha preparing to attack the castle, mentioning that he entrusted his family to the guards and got ready for the assault, and continues by describing the gathering of the army and stating that the attack would be carried out in a single strike. The lower inscription in the miniature first mentions the destruction of parts of the castle and the capture of its inhabitants, then refers to the repair of the damaged sections of the castle by architects accompanying

Farhad Pasha, and finally notes that Farhad Pasha appointed one of his commanders to lead the castle, provided sufficient supplies and soldiers, and departed for Tabriz. To what extent the miniature's few lines have managed to narrate the events of the battle cannot be determined. However, based on what is visible in the image and a comparison with historical reports, some points can be made about the importance of the castle and its connection to the Ottoman conquest of Tabriz: first, this castle was equipped with military weaponry (firearms) by Safavid forces before the Ottomans, as evidenced by the presence of “fortress gun” (Heydari & Farhangi, 3733) protruding from windows built into the castle walls. This indicates that the castle held particular strategic importance, warranting the deployment of heavy military equipment. The Safavid soldiers were also armed with muzzle-loading wick rifles (Shamkhali), showing that they were prepared for a gunfight within the castle. Safavid-era sources confirm the use of firearms in castle defense (Valeh Isfahani, 1993, 329). Additionally, in the miniature of the battle for Khameneh Castle, soldiers can be seen behind the battlements, armed and shooting at the enemy forces⁶. Another detail in the miniature is the distinct

headgear of both sides, subtly differentiating them. The Safavid hats are tall and crowned, while the Ottoman hats are all pointed. Analyzing the crown of the Qezelbash hats shows that Rahimi-zade's depiction of Safavid Qezelbash headgear is close to reality, as the Qezelbash crowns were always tall and thick, with twelve cracks symbolizing the twelve Shia Imams (Seyyed Bonakdar, 2016, 198), a distinction clearly visible in the miniature. Another point in the miniature is that in hand-to-hand combat, bows, and swords were still used, as Shamkhalis alone were not fully effective in such battles or, at least, were not widely utilized in the siege of this castle.

Discussion and Conclusion

The impact of castles on the Ottoman conquests in the eastern parts of the empire is undeniable. In this study, this impact has been described as a “Castle-centered policy,” where the progress and roadmap of Ottoman conquests were based on capturing and rebuilding castles to advance their military and political objectives. In this system, the priority was capturing the castles in each region, and the Ottoman forces moved according to this castle-centered policy. Therefore, castles held significant importance for the Ottomans. For instance, Farhad Pasha, an Ottoman commander, undertook two military campaigns to the east in 1586 and 1590, specifically focusing on recapturing Tabriz. During both campaigns, he demanded numerous architects from Sinan Pasha, the renowned Ottoman court architect, to accompany him on his military expeditions. Although this policy might not have been exclusive to the Ottomans, the reconstruction and re-equipping of all captured castles indicate that they had a specific strategy concerning castles. In the 1583 campaign aimed at capturing Revan (modern-day Yerevan) and other areas in the southern Caucasus, Farhad Pasha was accompanied by 17 master architects in addition to skilled masons. This highlights the importance of castles for the Ottomans. Historical accounts and Ottoman miniatures repeatedly reference the reconstruction and repair of castles such as Revan, Tumanis, Lori, Khameneh, Gori, and Ahiska, all of which can be explained within this military strategy. This strategy can also be imagined for Khameneh,

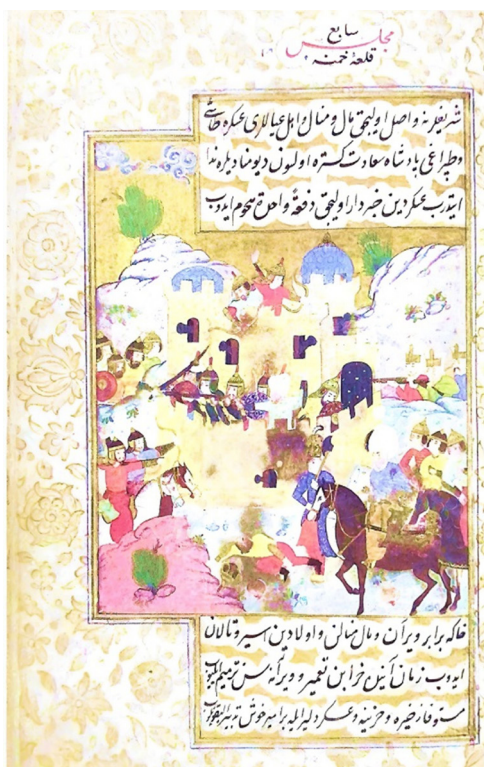


Fig. 5. The miniature of Khameneh Castle. Source: Mehmed Çelebi, 2007.

Jafar Pasha, and Rashidiyye Castles. It demonstrates that the Ottomans aimed to govern the occupied territories by connecting and linking castles. In Tabriz, for example, the Ottoman rulers never abandoned the castle, and their central power was always concentrated within Jafar Pasha Castle.

Within the framework of Renfrew's dominance theory in archaeology, it can be said that the discussed castles, although each an independent political-military unit, can also be analyzed and interpreted within the centralized political structure of the Ottomans. Therefore, their military function was primarily significant during wars and sieges, while their political role became more prominent during times of peace. Rashidiyye Castle primarily had a military function and was effective in controlling the roads to the east and northeast of Tabriz, which can be inferred from the quality and quantity of the structures built within it⁷. The Ottomans' main focus in this castle was on its surveillance and control capabilities, highlighted by the large protruding tower in the south, with a diameter of 27 meters and a height of 12 meters, demonstrating the castle's strategic utility. This castle could also oversee the Mehran River, located 360 meters away. Jafar Pasha Castle, on the other hand, served primarily as the Ottoman administrative center, giving it a predominantly political function. However, during sieges and wars, it took on a defensive and military role. An example of this is the Safavid attacks on the castle during the siege of Tabriz in 1578, which occurred 18 times, with Ottoman forces defending the castle from within during all these assaults. As for Khameneh Castle, situated outside Tabriz, its situation was somewhat different. This castle served as a logistical fortification, primarily facilitating the transportation of supplies and equipment between Van Castle and Tabriz Castle. Additionally, it could exert control and authority over trade routes and ports leading to Lake Urmia.

Based on Renfrew's dominance theory in archaeology, these three Ottoman castles formed a communication link between the political-military units of the Ottoman castles from Tabriz in Iran to the city of Van in Turkey, with other Ottoman castles also connected to this chain. Therefore, it can be said that the Ottomans used the castle system to exert their political dominance over the Azerbaijan region and the

southern Caucasus. However, it seems that the role of these castles was more significant in administering and controlling the occupied territories of Azerbaijan than in their conquest. Neither during the Ottoman capture of Tabriz nor during its recapture by Shah Abbas I's forces were these castles able to pose a serious obstacle. Even during Osman Pasha's capture of the city, the main battle took place outside the city, and there was no need for a siege of Tabriz Castle⁸. Similarly, during the city's recapture, no significant resistance occurred in the castle. Additionally, smaller castles and watch posts likely existed near Tabriz and on the surrounding heights, connected to this network of castles. In this context, Tavernier, in his travelogue, mentions the presence of numerous Ottoman towers and fortifications around Tabriz.

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Endnotes

1. This historical period was marked by the signing of multiple peace and ceasefire treaties, starting in 1585 and continuing until 1603 and even beyond.
2. The mission of Ozdemirzade Osman Pasha was primarily the conquest of Tabriz. Thus, the state that conquered Tabriz was effectively considered the ruler of all Azerbaijan, bringing the entire region under its authority.
3. According to another account, Osman Pasha entered Tabriz on the 30th of Ramadan, 993 A.H. (Bilgi, 2011, 220).
4. Jafar Pasha, who was in charge of the Diyarbakir region during the conquest of Tabriz, later expanded his jurisdiction to include Azerbaijan and Tabriz. Due to the importance of protecting Tabriz, he settled in the city and took direct charge of its administration.
5. Jafar Pasha was the Ottoman governor of Tabriz during that period and was appointed as the governor of Tabriz and the overall ruler of the Azerbaijan region by Ozdemirzade Osman Pasha.
6. According to contemporary sources, during the Safavid siege and attack on Tabriz Castle (Jafar Pasha Castle), they used a "kalle goosh" cannon, which caused significant damage to the castle but failed to capture it (for more details, see Fallahi and Rahimi, 1396).
7. Surface architectural studies and exploratory excavations suggest that no large structures existed within this castle. Whatever structures existed were limited to small garrisons and watchtowers atop the towers and castle gates (see the results of joint Iranian-German archaeological excavations at Rab'-e Rashidi).
8. Based on available data and evidence, it is likely that before the Ottomans entered Tabriz, there was no castle within the city, and Iranian sources do not mention the existence of such a castle.

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