II. THE CHANGING FACE OF BAGDAD

The above description by Ibn 'Aqil gives a bird's-eye view of Bagdad at some point during his lifetime. It may be used as a reliable sketch of eleventh century Bagdad within which to place the historical data of that period concerning its topography.

We have already noted that the important changes in Bagdad during Ibn 'Aqil's lifetime (431-513/1040-1119) took place after the arrival of the Salğûqids. These changes were the result of political as well as physical factors. The politically-strong asserted their strength by pulling down palaces and making use of their materials to build their own. They appropriated certain areas and surrounded them with walls. Two such walls are reported as being built in Ibn 'Aqil's lifetime. The most important physical causes of change were the floods and fires. The changes they brought about were important, but not always permanent. Homes which were flooded or burned were often reconstructed and inhabited again. The chronicles, especially the Muntazam of Ibn al-Gawzi, and the Mir'āt al-zaman of his grandson, Sibt Ibn al-Gawzi, report many fires, floods and demolitions throughout the lifetime of Ibn 'Aqil, as will be seen in the following pages.

These historical reports are given in chronological order; but it will be noticed, on close examination, that the significant periods of change fall into three different periods. First, the decade between 448 and 458 (1056-1066) in which two important events took place: the creation of what came to be known as Madinat Țuğril, or „Țuğril City”, following upon the destruction of the riverside palaces. Second, the decade of the 460's (1066-1076), during which no less than four floods worked havoc, especially with the city's east side. And finally, the third period, between 485 and 513 (1092-1119),
during which almost all the reports speak of destruction. It is in
this last period that frequent mention is made of a new type of
quarter in the east side of the city, appropriately called Ḫarāba,
that is, ruin, such as Ḫarābat Ibn Garada, quarters of the city which,
once of importance, were during the last two periods, though still
populated, reduced to a mere shadow of their former selves.

The most striking over-all feature of change, according to these
reports, is the destruction in the east side, though the west side was
not completely spared.

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The study of these changes in Bağdād provides a basis for the
understanding of the political scene at the time: the desire for the
control of Bağdād on the part of the Salğūqids, especially Țuğrīl Beg
and Malik-šāh, and an attempt to retrieve it on the part of the
Caliphs. This contention for the supremacy of power in Bağdād,
between Caliph and Sultan, has for sometime been evident to me,
on the basis of other research the discussion of which, reserved for
another more appropriate occasion, cannot and needs not be at-
ttempted here. This contention is sufficiently evident, I believe, in
the pulling down of the riverside palaces first by the Sultan Țuğrīl
Beg, then after his death, by the Caliph al-Qāʾim, for the appropria-
tion of their materials; it is also evident in the construction of
Țuğrīl’s Wall in 448 and that of the Caliph Mustazhir in 488, when
the “great Salğūqids” had passed away, and in the subsequent
history of both walls.

Following now are the reports in chronological order 1.

DEMOLITION AND CONSTRUCTION ON THE EAST AND WEST SIDES IN 448. 2 —
In this year the Salğūqid Sultan Țuğrīl Beg, who had entered Bağdād the
previous year and replaced the Buwayhid Sultan, began the construction of a
broad wall around his palatial residence 3, on the east side, in which he included
most of the Muḥarrim and Dār al-Fil 4. He intended to build a palace of

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1. These reports are not exhaustive; they are mainly those given separately
by the chroniclers in which an important change took place, especially
where names of places are given.
2.  Muntazam, viii, 169; Mirʾāt al-zamān, fol. 12b-13a; Bidāya, xii, 68.
3. Cf. Zubdat al-nusvr, 241, l. 8, where there is mention of “the Gate of the
Sultan’s Wall” in the year 550/1155: ... ʿabarā bihi bāba sūri l-suflānī
wa-anzalahu bi-Dār al-Safīnā.
4. Elephant Palace (between D and E). See: Le Strange, 270-271, and
Map VIII, ref. no 10; Streck, 128; Salmon, s.v.; Canard, 173 (situates Dār