

# Early Islamic Settlement

Urban and Rural transformations

# Tropes of Early Islamic Settlement

- Bedouinization of the civilizations of antiquity
- Assimilation to the luxuries of civilized life
- Neglect and Disorder, Rupture and Decline

# Some historical realities in the settlement process

- Vast majority of Arab settlement was in Syria and Iraq
- Movement of peoples was closely associated with the conquests and the army
- The emergence of the *amsar* (s. *mistr*) as nodes for Arab/Muslim settlement
- Maintaining the productive capacity of the land was reflected in patterns of land tenure



# The Thundering Arab Hoards



مرد مولی  
زاد و  
زند از  
لشبه شدن  
ن با اول



41 CARTHAGE. - Un Gourbi arabe. - LL

Camelphotos.com



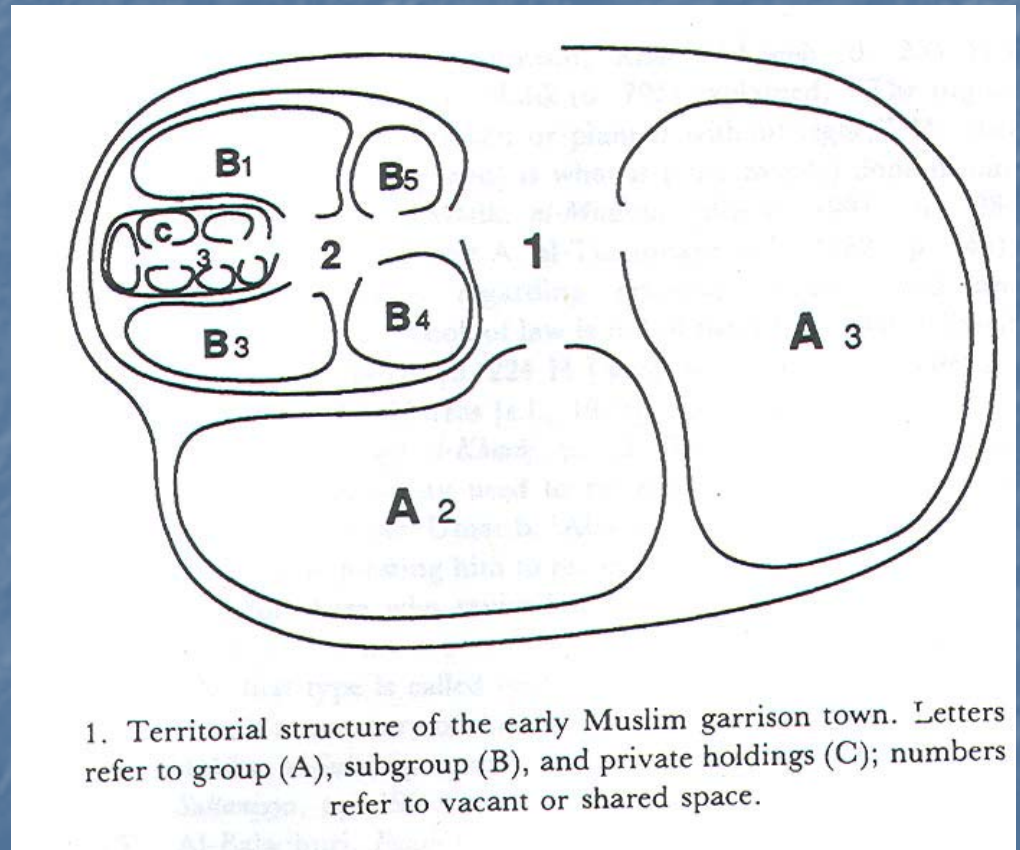


# Categories of Early Islamic Urbanism before the Abbasids

- *De Novo* cities
  - *Amsar*
  - *Qusur* and planned towns (e.g. Ayla, Anjar)
- Existing Cities
  - Resettlement within the existing towns
  - Building adjacent – variation of the *misr concept*
  - Defensive settlement - *Ribat*, *thughur* and *awasim*

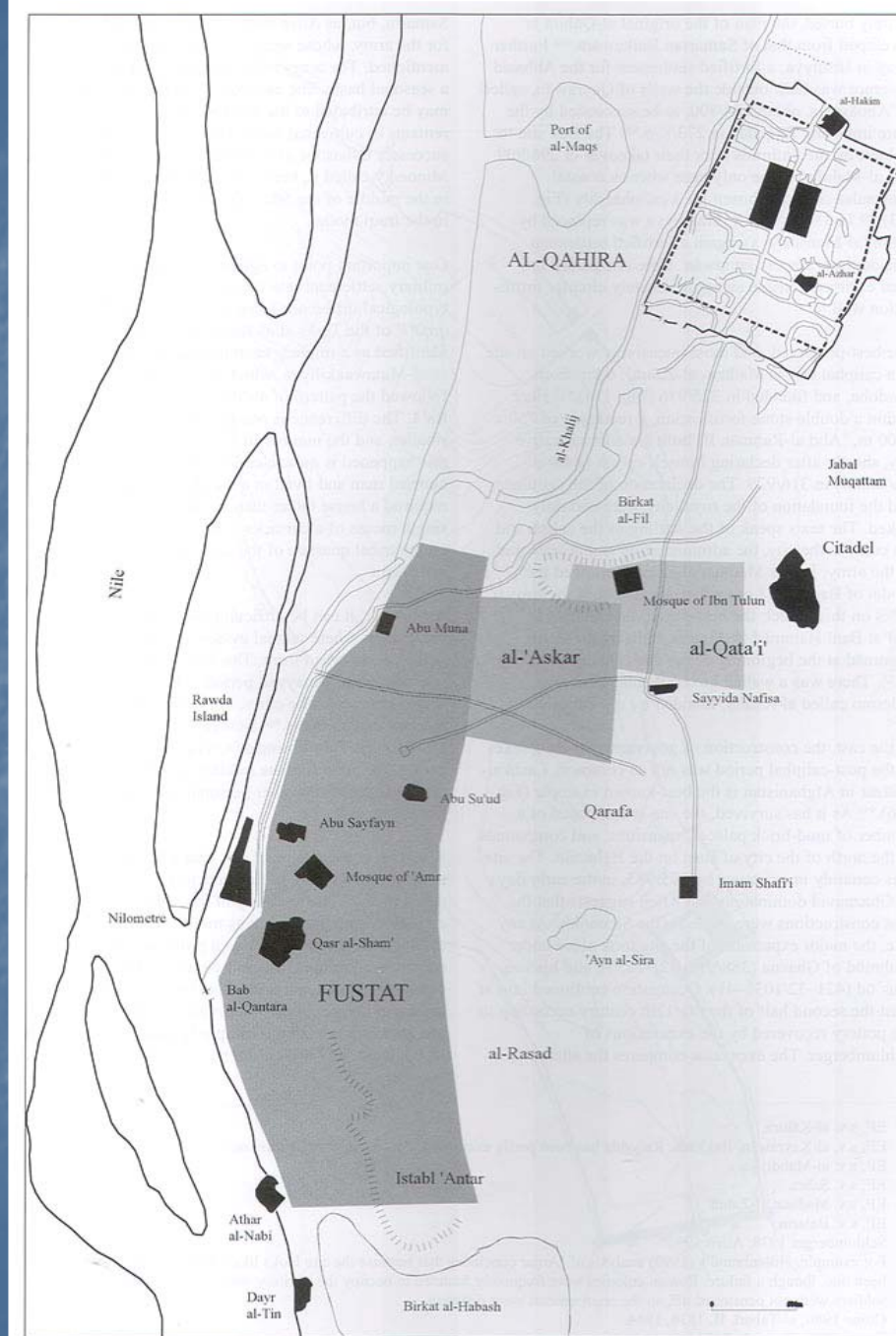
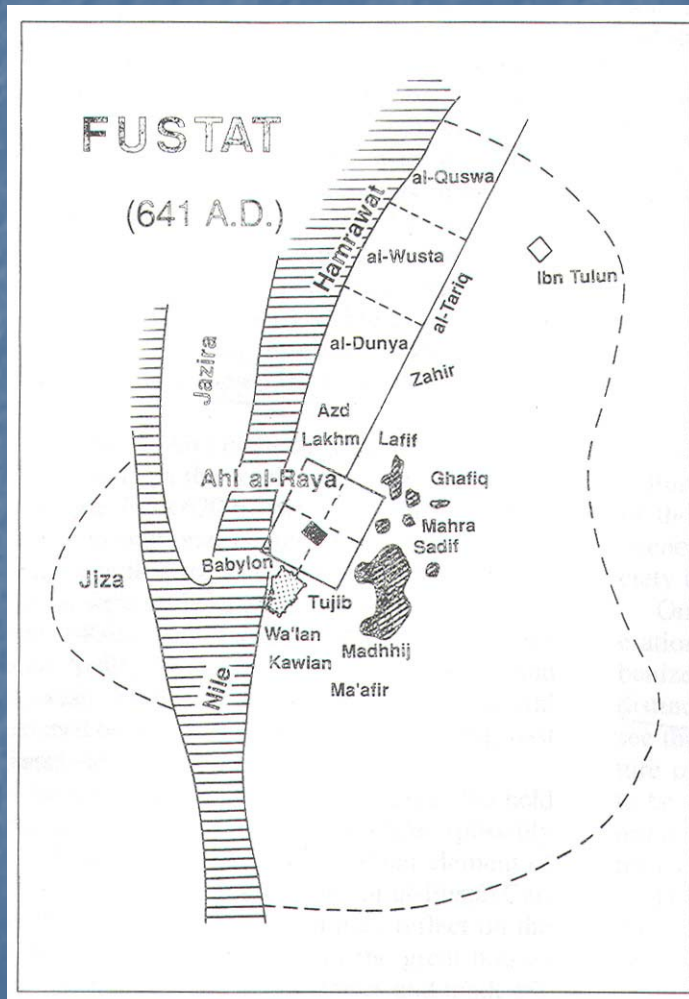
# Basra, Kufa and the earliest *amsar*

- Conventional designation is as “garrison towns”
- Served as foci of Arab/Muslim settlement that segregated them from indigenous populations
- Presumed tribal organization of the *khitta*
- What accounts for the absence of *amsar* in Syria?



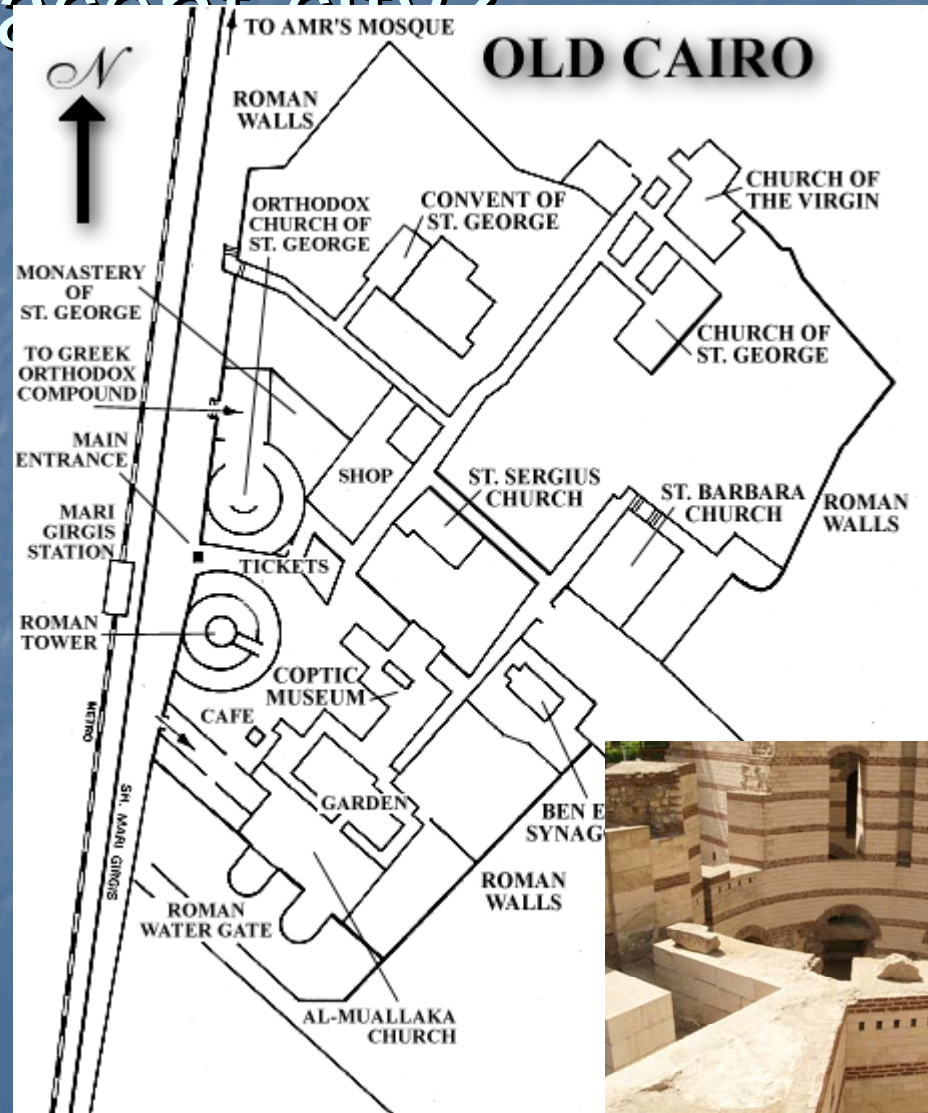
Model of the *khitta*

# Fustat: From Garrison town to Metropolis



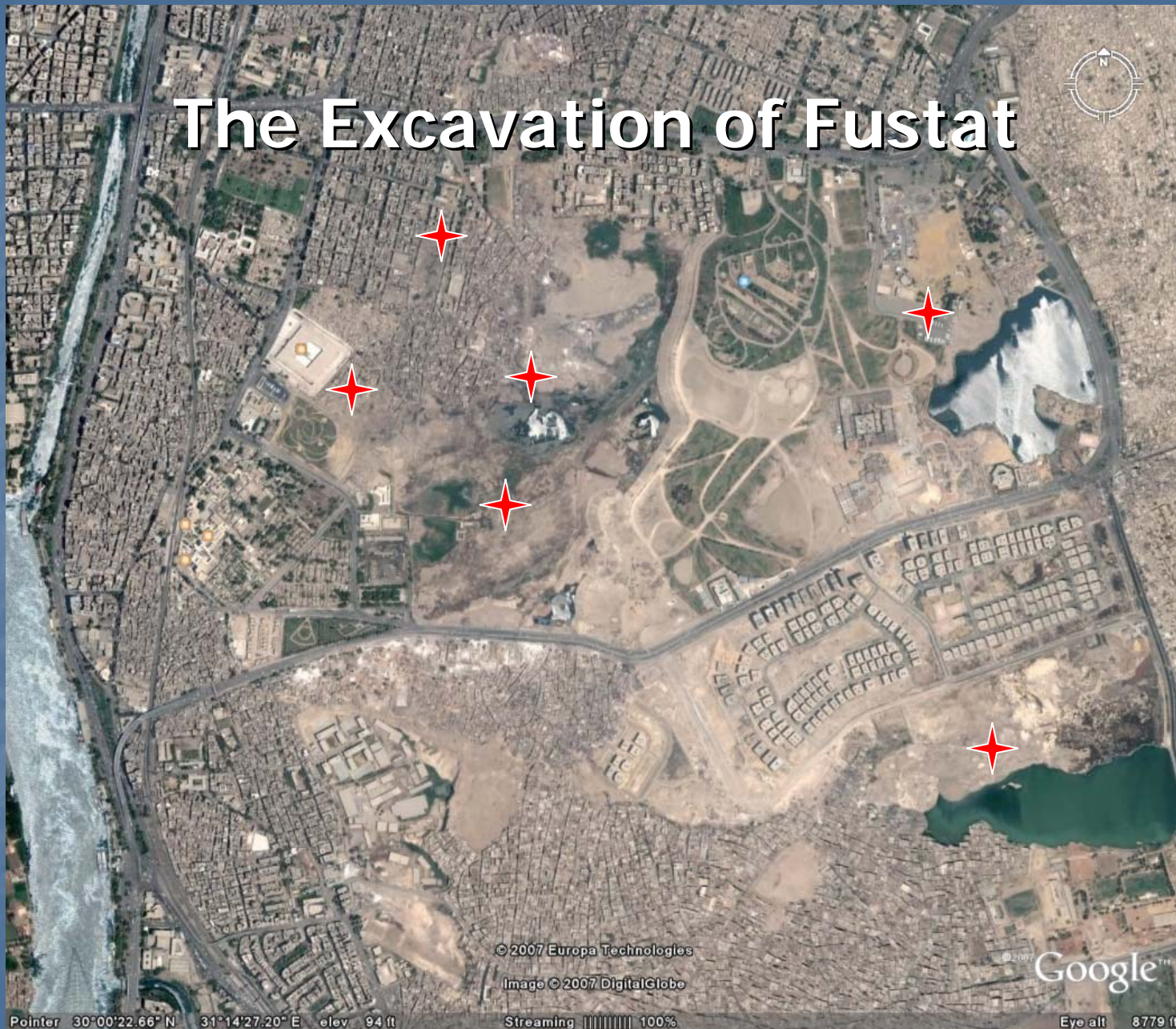


# Byzantine Babylon – Fustat an adjacent city?





# The Excavation of Fustat



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Google

Pointer 30°00'22.66" N 31°14'27.20" E elev 94 ft

Streaming 100%

Eye alt 8779 ft

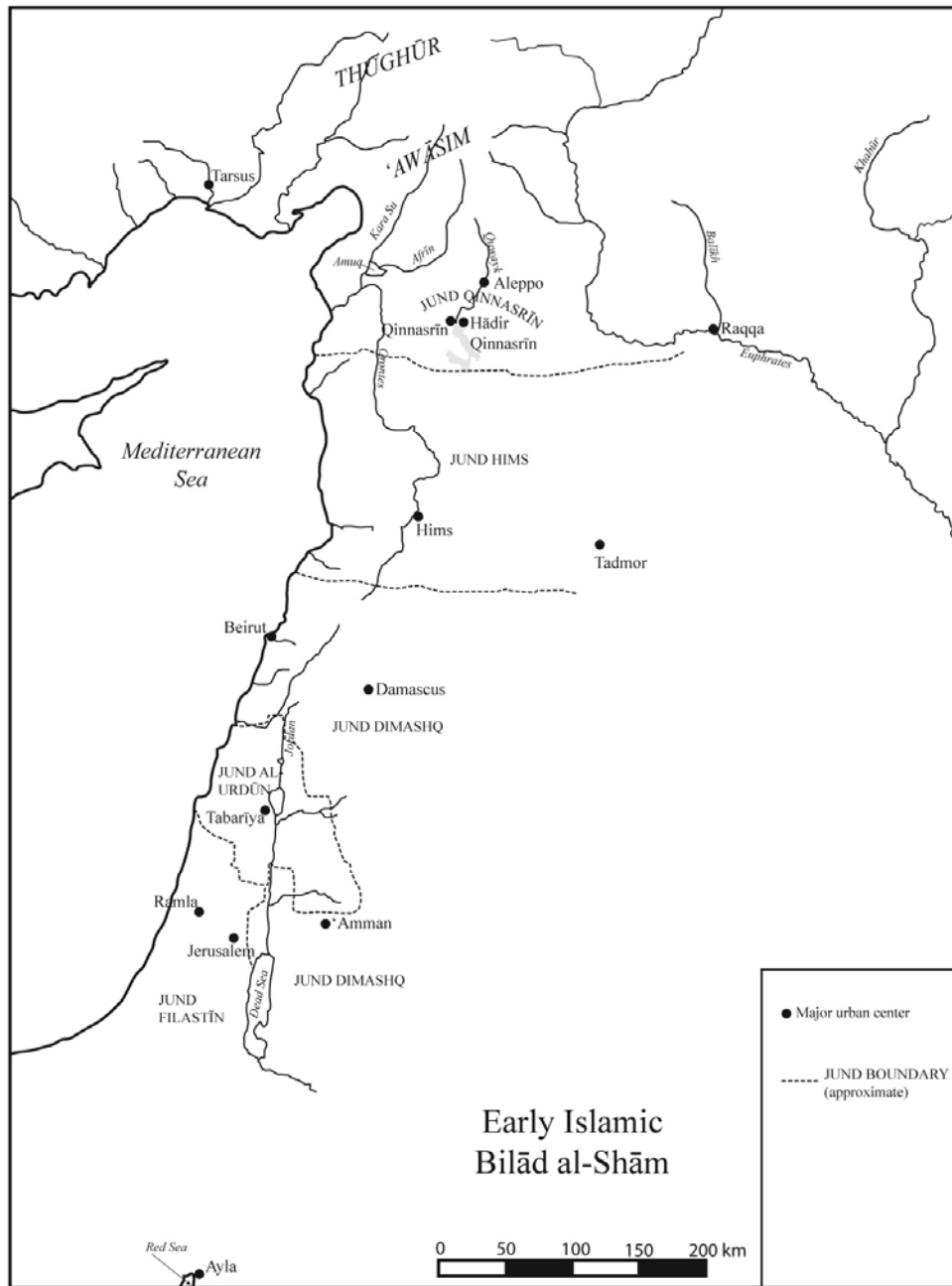
## The Attraction of Syira/*Bilad al-Sham*

"The region of Syria is splendid! Syria is the abode of the Prophets, the habitation of the righteous, the home of the successors of the Prophets. It is the destination sought by the upright. It contains the first qibla [direction of prayer, i.e. Jerusalem] the scene of the Day of Resurrection, and of the Night Journey of the Prophet; the Holy Land, caravanserais most excellent, frontier posts most commanding, mountains most eminent..."

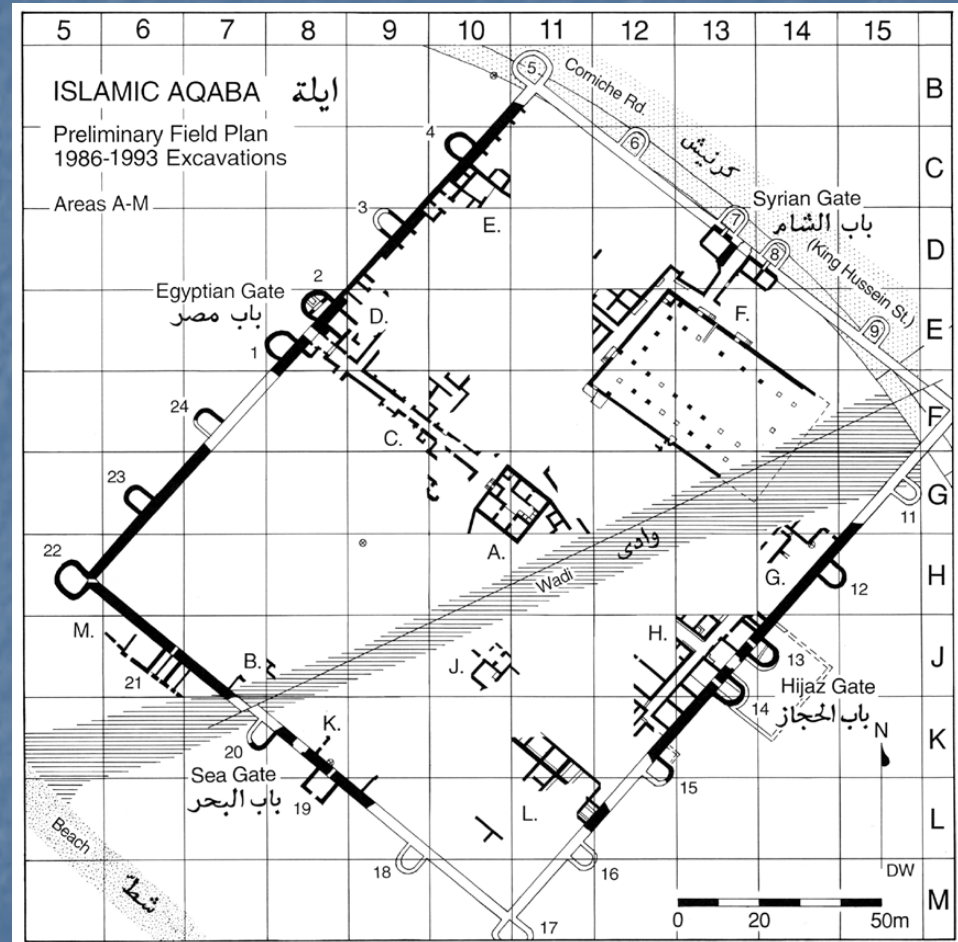
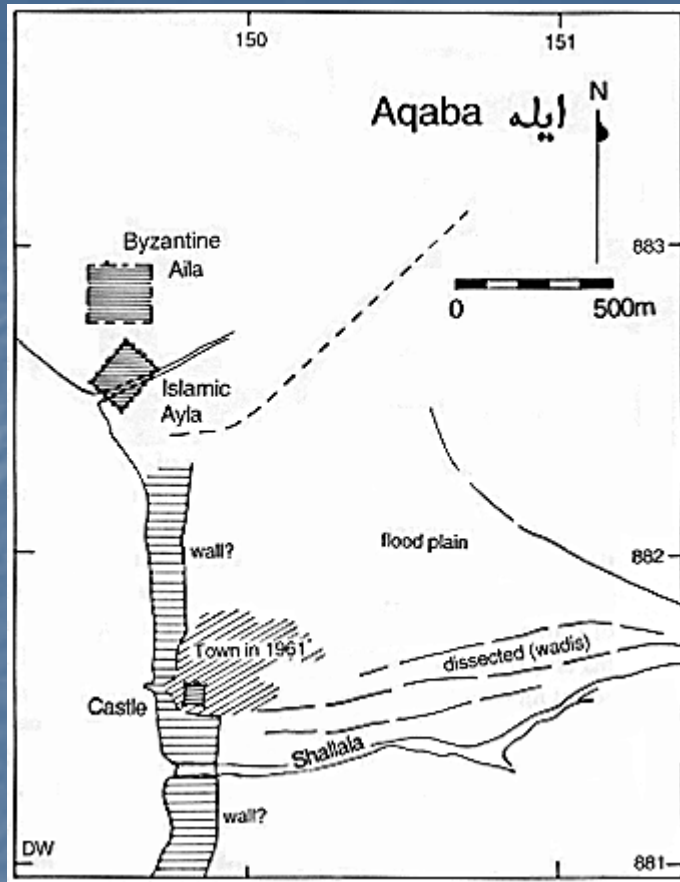
"This land provides for the needs of this world and the next; for here the heart is cheered and worshippers extend their bodies in prayer. Then of course there is Damascus, the paradise of this earth, and Sughar which is like a miniature Basra; beautiful Ramla, with its white bread, and Jerusalem the splendid, without tribulation; Hims is famous for low prices and excellent air; the mountain of Busrā with its vineyards should not be forgotten; nor Tiberias, renowned for its crops and its villages."



Where is the *misr* of Syria?

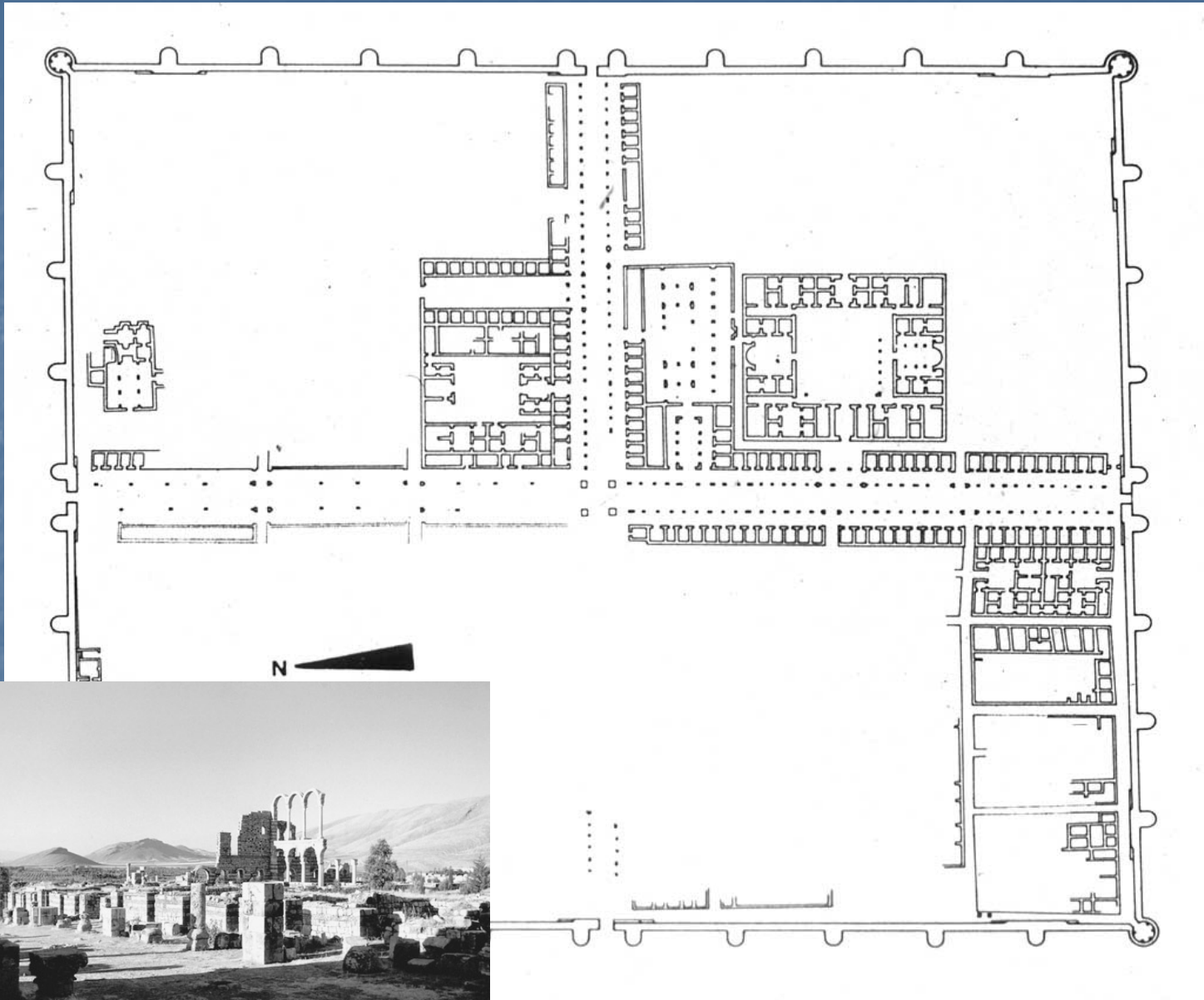


# Ayla (Islamic Aqaba)



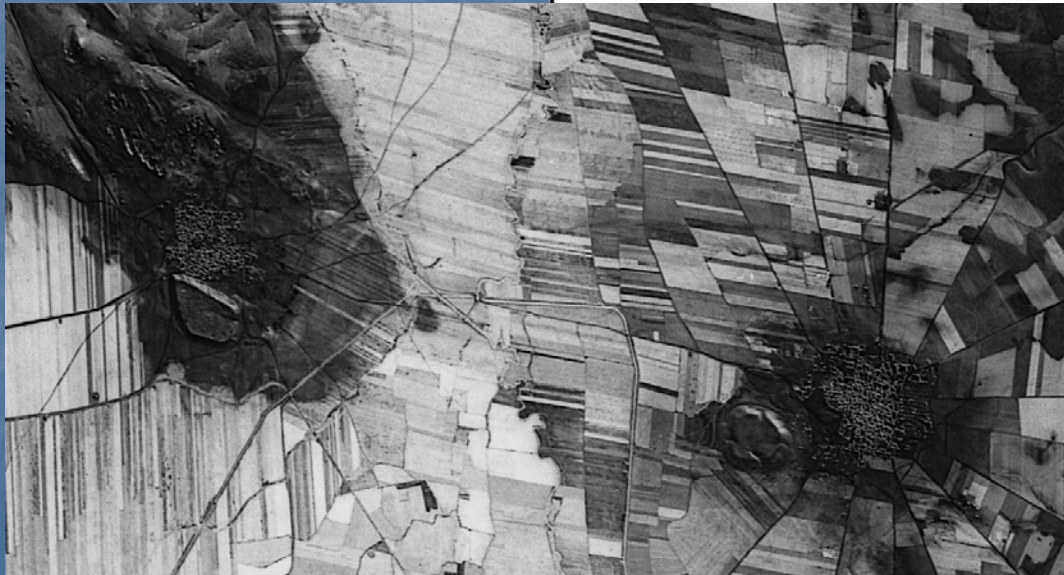
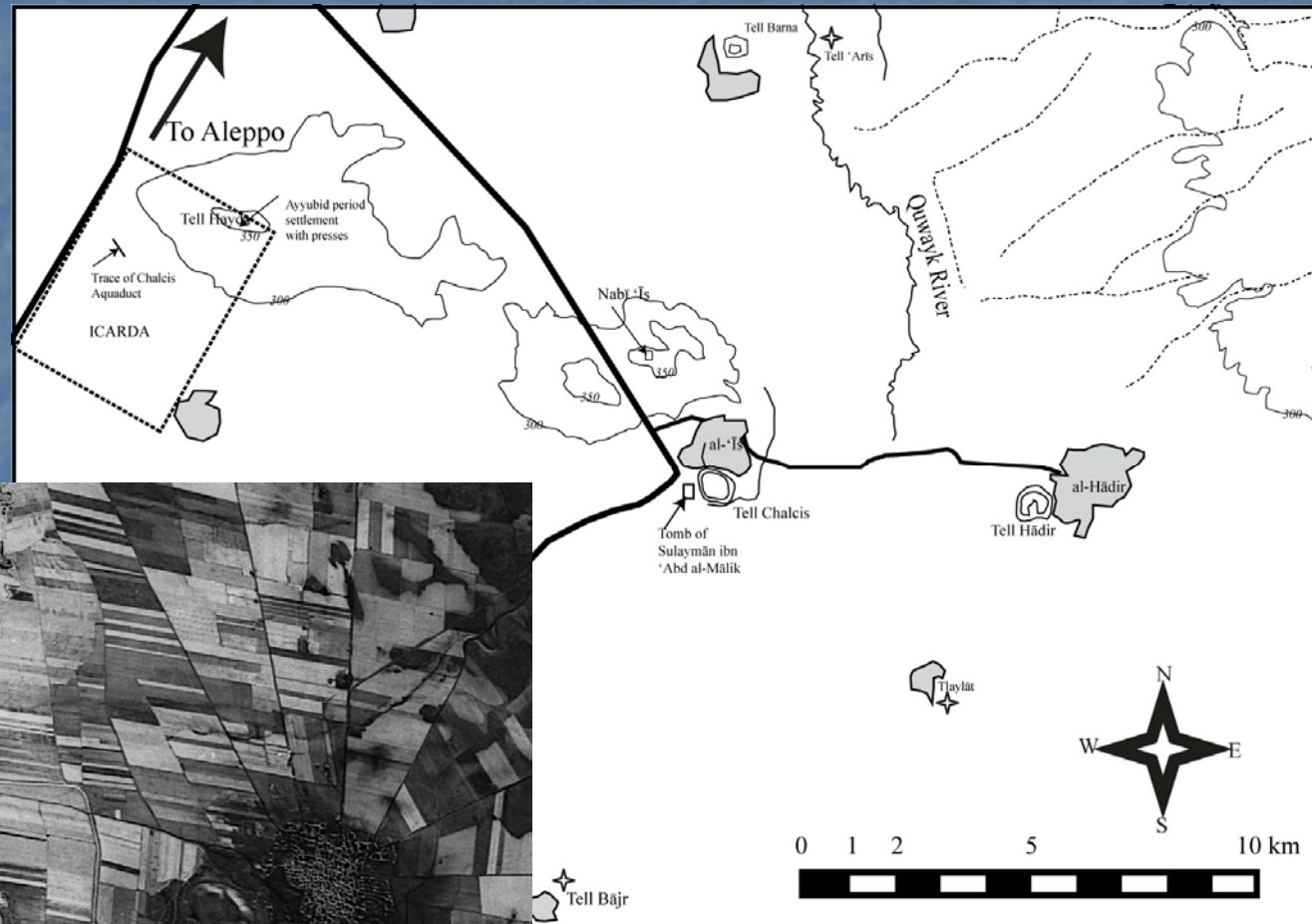
source Whitcomb (1994)





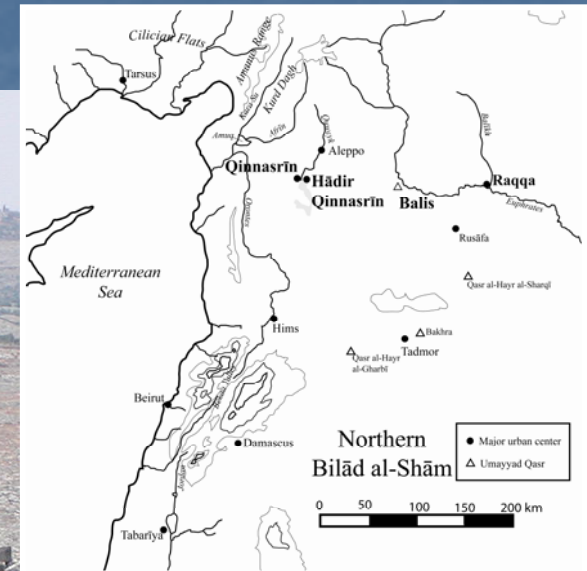
Anjar

# The evolution of the *hadir*





# A Picture of the countryside: The Dead Cities of Northern Syria





# In the Arid Margins



The Late Antique site of Andarin



# Bringing Fertility to the Steppe



The site of Balis and its Environs,  
Syria, Middle Euphrates



# Frontiers: *al-thughur*, *al-awasim* and the *ribat*



Monastir – a *ribat* on the Tunisian coast

