

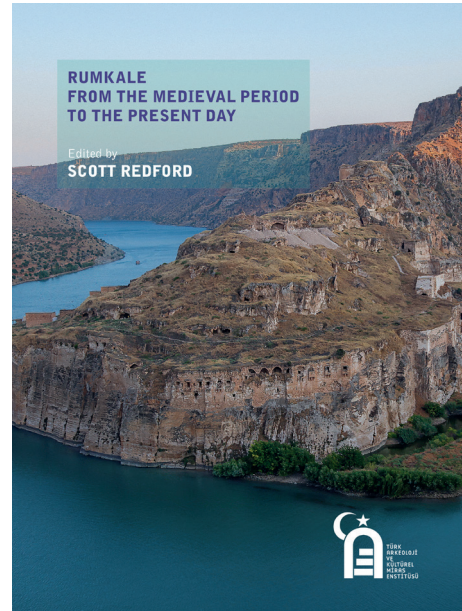
Redford, Scott, ed.
Rumkale from the Medieval Period to the Present Day.
 Istanbul: Ofset Yapımevi Yayınları, forthcoming.

Review by: **Pelin Kalafatoğlu-İslamoğlu¹**

This monograph, edited by Scott Redford, fills a significant gap in the scholarly research and documentation of the site known as Rumkale today (also known as *Hromkla* and *Qal'at al-Rum*) situated at the intersection point of rivers Euphrates and Merziman in Gaziantep, Turkey. The volume covers the period from the twelfth century CE until its current state, including future projects regarding the larger province.

Each chapter was penned by an author specializing in the specific period that the section entails. The chapters follow a chronological order starting with Christina Maranci's comprehensive description and analysis of the architectural remains, including some new discoveries. Then, Rachel Goshgarian examines Rumkale in medieval, early modern, and modern Armenian texts. In the following chapter, Iskandar Bcheiry investigates the Syriac sources for Rumkale to scrutinize Syrio-Armenian contacts in the region. In his chapter about the contemporary context and the aftermath of the Mamluk conquest of Rumkale in 1292, Angus Stewart comparatively discusses testimonies of Mamluk witnesses in Arabic until the early sixteenth century. For the Ottoman period, Muhsin Soyudoğan uses archives and documents and attempts to identify and locate buildings, some of which have not survived. Finally, in the last chapter, Pınar Özgüner discusses the changes in the topography in the twentieth century, especially the submersion of lower Rumkale suburbs due to the opening of the Birecik Dam and recent cultural projects involving the broader region that will affect Rumkale.

It is worth mentioning that the volume materialized during the worst conditions of the pandemic in 2020. Hence, as Scott Redford elaborates in the preface, several site visits had to be canceled, and some recent archival photographs could not be included in this publication. Yet, the most accurate topographic data (by using a geophysical laser scanner), the architectural drawings of fortifications, the intramural buildings published in this volume, and the evaluation of sources in historical context alone are a vast contribution to the pre-existing scholarship in a wholistic manner for students and researchers of the period and region. That said, as Redford notes in his introduction, the survey and excavation of previous periods (Roman, Hellenistic, Assyrian, etc.) are necessary to get a fuller picture of the site.



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In the first chapter, “The Architecture of Rumkale/Hromkla: Description and Remarks,” Christina Maranci carefully investigates the extant architectural remains of the upper intramural region, paying particular attention to gatehouses, inscriptions, masons’ marks, and architectural sculpture. She uses architectural drawings and site plans from previous publications and the most recent documentation, photographs, travelers’ accounts, and contemporary textual sources. The author first takes the reader through minute descriptions of the remaining structures (rock-cut and built). Then, she suggests interpretations of date and patronage using textual sources and makes stylistic comparisons with contemporary citadels and fortresses in Cilicia, southeastern Anatolia, Syria, and the Caucasus.

Maranci attributes the Armenian inscription found at the structure on the western side marked as the “fourth gatehouse” to Yovhannes of Sis, who sat as catholicos between 1203-1221 and therefore, dates this section to the Cilician Armenian period. Among the masonry marks that the author mentions, she pays attention to the triangle-shaped ones specifically on well-crafted and decorated walls such as the “east gatehouse, area Y/S.03” which has been attributed to the Monastery of Bar Sauma by others, and on the east tower wall where two inscriptionless and elaborately decorated *khachkars* have been inserted. She dates these stelae to the thirteenth century through parallels in Cilicia and eastern Anatolia. The author asserts that the east tower located below the “upper church” may have had different construction phases from the period of Grigor Dgha (catholicos between 1173-1193) to Yovhannes of Sis mentioned above. According to the author, the substructure near this church might have been built as the burial place of Armenian patriarchs. She supports this idea by comparing building practices from Cilician and Greater Armenian examples and the testimony of written sources.

Finally, in the last section of the chapter, Maranci notes the close stylistic similarities of Rumkale fortifications and gatehouses with that of Crac de Chevaliers (Hospitallers Castle in Syria) and the citadel of Aleppo while underlining differences with contemporary castles in Armenian Cilicia. Moreover, she coins the term “modular style” of building fortifications which she describes as “using squat square ashlar piers or pilasters carrying angled corbels which support pointed or rounded vaults” (p. 60). She finds this building method in Cilicia, the Antep citadel, Harran, Saone, and Crac de Chevaliers. Hence, she dates the sections where this method occurs in Rumkale to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries and, overall, shows Rumkale’s connection with the building trends in the eastern Mediterranean.

The second chapter by Rachel Gosgharian, titled “Hromkla/Rumkale in Armenian Sources: The Unreachable Fortress of Ecumenism and Cultural Production,” shows how even after the Mamluk conquest in 1292, Rumkale remained an important inspiration for devotional, literary, and artistic production for the Armenian community. The author discusses several aspects of the “multi-faceted fortress” (p.95) using historical sources, manuscript illuminations, and a reliquary object whose colophon was, Gosgharian professes, “another iteration of ... a site of reverence, cultural production and layered spiritual and intellectual memory” (p. 106).

Firstly, the author points out that Rumkale had both protection by, and a certain independence from, the Armenian royalty in Cilicia, and according to textual evidence, a spiritual authority, too, due to the secluded and well-fortified location outside the actual political reach of the kingdom. Moreover, being the burial place of several catholicos (according to textual evidence, also discussed by Christina Maranci) adds to the site’s significance. The author describes Rumkale as an ecumenical center for Armenians where church leaders at Rumkale, such as Nerses of

Lambron (1153-1198), discussed unity with the Roman and Byzantine churches at different times. Goshgarian also points out that according to historical sources, Lord Levon of Cilicia imprisoned the catholicos in Rumkale.

Moreover, the author portrays the scriptorium of Rumkale as a cultural hub and the highest point of manuscript illumination for the medieval Armenian tradition. This is mainly owed to Toros Roslin, who worked there at the end of the thirteenth century, reflecting the west-oriented political and religious developments in his art and was followed by the generations of illuminators to come, as the author exemplifies.

In the third chapter, titled “Rumkale in Syriac Sources in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” Iskandar Bcheiry uses Michael the Syrian’s chronicle and the Ecclesiastic Chronicle of Bar Hebraeus to examine the Armeno-Syriac relationship during the development of Rumkale as the Armenian Catholicate and discover clues about the layout of the site. The chapter has an appendix where the author displays the differences between Michael the Syrian’s chronicle in Syriac and its Armenian translation, which he also refers to in the chapter.

Bcheiry first cites passages from Michael the Syrian and concludes that the increasing Armenian presence in the region (Cappadocia, Cilicia, and north Syria) starting from the eleventh century was not well-received by the Syriac ecclesiastics. According to the author, the dedication of a monastery to the Syriac saint Bar Sauma was an attempt to win them over by the Armenian clergy and lords in the region. He also notes that, according to Michael the Syrian, some Armenian groups turned to banditry and pillage in the area, attacking Syrian monasteries, described by the author as an end effort of “assimilation” (p. 120). The conflict with the Turkic invaders was another source of disagreement between the two parties which caused some Armenians to seek Turkic support.

The author observes that Barhebraeus’ narration indicates a *modus vivendi* between the Armenian and Syriac communities and mutual respect. According to the source, the Syriac patriarch visited the Armenian catholicos and was received well. Bcheiry also extracts information about the location of the main Armenian church in the upper citadel of Rumkale, the presence of an older Syriac church in the lower section, gardens, fields, caves, as well as a guesthouse and a cemetery where the Syriac patriarch was buried. Finally, the author argues that the region’s changing social and political climate brought on the difference between the two authors’ attitudes.

Angus Stewart, in his chapter titled “‘One of the Most Glorious Fortresses’: Rum Kale in the Sultanate of Cairo,” begins by explaining the geo-political situation of the thirteenth century on the broader region and describes the relationship between Cilician Armenia, Mamluks, Crusader states (Franks) and Ilkhans, leading up to the final Mamluk conquest of Rumkale in 1292. Then, he visualizes the conquest day from the viewpoint of different Mamluk sources (in Arabic) who were first-hand witnesses of this campaign and Syriac, Cilician Armenian, and Mongol sources.

This section expands and details Stewart’s book chapter in another volume² on the same subject and concludes that this conquest was primarily for the personal propaganda of the Mamluk sultan of Cairo, al-Ashraf Khalil. Moreover, the author underscores the significance of Rumkale’s position as a Christian stronghold and Armenian Catholicate surrounded by Muslim-Mongol territories, hence its importance as a political ally for the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia and a spi-

² Angus Stewart, “Qal’at Al-Rūm/Hromgla/Rumkale and the Mamluk Siege of 691AH/1292CE,” in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 269–80.

ritual center for Armenians. Finally, Stewart walks the reader through the aftermath of the siege -the Mamluk period of Rumkale. He uses various Mamluk texts to identify Mamluk governors and their political history until the Ottoman takeover of Rumkale in the early sixteenth century.

The fifth chapter by Murat Soyudođan, titled “Fetihten Yıkıma: Osmanlı Rumkale’si,” examines the Ottoman period of Rumkale through the sixteenth century until the twenty-first using archival sources such as foundation documents and tax registers (*tahrir defterleri*). In the first part, he tries to locate and identify the Ottoman neighborhoods and their respective buildings in present-day Rumkale and nineteenth-century photographs. He suggests that the *masjids* mentioned in Ottoman records were converted churches from the Armenian period; therefore, four neighborhoods corresponded with four recorded churches.

In the second part, Soyudođan explains the economic developments in the sixteenth-seventeenth century when Rumkale changed its frontier status and became a safe citadel within Ottoman lands. Moreover, the Euphrates transformed from a natural border to a venue of trade and production, supporting trade logistics, political control over southern territories, and campaigns into Iran. The author discusses the effects of these changes on the demographics of Rumkale, such as an increase in the suburban population who were forced to work in the production of potassium nitrate (*güherçile*) used in gunpowder. Finally, he examines different phases of the Ottoman administration throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when local unrest damaged the already deteriorating inner citadel and the houses inside it. The local administration was relocated to nearby Halfeti, and consequently, the settlement was abandoned, leading to its present state.

In the sixth and final chapter, titled “Rumkale’nin Dünü, Bugünü Ve Yarını: Rumkale Arkeolojik Peyzajı Üzerine Bir Deđerlendirme,” Pınar Özgüner aims to document the change in the topography and the built environment of Rumkale. She draws urgent attention to the human-made changes to nature, such as the Birecik Dam that flooded the suburban section of the settlement in 2001 before there was a chance to conduct an archaeological survey. Moreover, the author underscores the reuse of the materials from the abandoned buildings on site for the nearby settlements. Modern interventions also include recent administrative plans to rehabilitate the region for culture and tourism, which previously focused only on the better publicized Zeugma, also affected by the dam. Özgüner’s primary sources are aerial photos from the National Defence Ministry’s Mapping Directorate dating from 1956 to 2017. She superposes these photos with high-resolution satellite photos by identifying buildings, walls, paths, etc. that have survived through this period. The secondary sources are archival photos from the nineteenth century forward in Abdulhamid II albums, those of T.E. Lawrence from the Liddell-Hart Archives, and photographs by Hasan Yelken published in his *Fırat’ın İncisi Rumkale*.

Özgüner explains several projects organized by the local governments of Gaziantep and neighboring Şanlıurfa involving Rumkale. She points out that these projects assume Rumkale as a part of the scenic vista but do not fully acknowledge its cultural and devotional significance for the Armenian community in Turkey. Moreover, she argues that interventions such as a teleferic line between the mainland and the citadel will damage the integrity of the site and the visual link to the medieval character as a hardly accessible and impregnable fortification. According to the author, these projects cover the area around the dam project and along the Euphrates, which draws interest to multiple municipalities and creates competitive tension between them.

In the last section of her chapter, the author suggests a roadmap for future archaeological research and plans for the site. She underscores that Rumkale calls for a holistic research

collaboration of disciplines such as archaeology, epigraphy, history, and anthropology to cover all aspects of the site. As the region increasingly becomes a focus of domestic and international tourism projects, the first step should be the scientific documentation of all remains as a guide for further restorations and preservation. Moreover, Özgüner suggests that oral history should be a part of this documentation concerning the region's recent history. Finally, the author advises the foundation of an area presidency to protect the cultural heritage more effectively and as support for the UNESCO Cultural Heritage process as a long-term objective.

As this monograph unravels, the reader discovers different aspects of Rumkale for various communities – occupants of the region and beyond – from the medieval period until today. As a fortified stronghold and a monastic center, it reflects the layered character of the area from the Middle Ages until the present. The book follows a chronological order, but the reader does not have to do the same since the chapters complement each other in the architecture, history, and conservation of the site, speaking to different research interests. The volume takes the complex subject beyond the books published for the general audience, generates scholarly interest, and supplies the researcher with different perspectives by using a rich variety of sources and bibliography.

