

REMAINS OF THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURY RURAL SETTLEMENT  
IN THE SOUTHERN LITTORAL OF SYRIA  
(FIRST REPORT ON THE FIELDWORK)

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*"Planities ista multa habet casalia et pulchra nemora olivarum  
et ficuum et arborum aliarum diversi generis et multa ligna.  
Preterea habundat fluminibus et pascuis supra modicum."  
(Burchard of Mount Sion)*

### The area of research

The lines above were written by the Crusader pilgrim Burchard of Mount Sion praising the richness of the *Terre de Calife* a sub-region of the northern part of the Crusader County of Tripoli (Burchardus, *Descriptio* 29). The County has varied topographical features. It consists of a rather narrow coastal strip which gives way to a hilly region that finally ends in the high ranges of Mount Lebanon, and to the north, the Anṣāriyya Mountains. The two mountains are divided by the Gap of Homs, a natural passage between the ancient cities of Homs and Tripoli, dotted with hills and cut through by deep riverbeds, the most important one being the Nahr al-Kabīr that forms the boundary between present-day Syria and Lebanon<sup>1</sup>. The fertile area not only offered favourable settlement conditions through the millennia, but, being the only easily accessible natural highway between the interior of Syria and the coast, also possessed great strategical value. This latter role acquired additional importance with the establishment of the County of Tripoli, which was confined to the western side of the mountains. The Muslim armies would always approach Tripoli and Tortosa (today Tartūs), the main Crusader centres on the coast through the Gap. The increased menace to the area in Crusader times initiated a strategy which generated a strong architectural manifestation as well. A series of fortifications were built, the finest of them being Chastel Blanc (today Šāfītā) and the world-famous Crac des Chevaliers.

The above-mentioned area is still amongst the richest agricultural areas of the Levant and has preserved a good deal of those monuments which testify to its flowering in the 12th and 13th centuries too. The fieldwork of the summer of 2000 concentrated on sites of the region to the north of the Nahr al-Kabīr, that is present-day Syria. The work was done with the kind permission of the Directorate of

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<sup>1</sup> For the detailed geo-ecological description of the area of the Gap see: Maqdissi 1989 and Sapin 1989.

Antiquities and Museums of the Syrian Arab Republic and with the financial support of the Faludi Ferenc Academy of the Hungarian Jesuits.

### The subject of the research

The remains of the monuments concerned in this study owe their existence to the Crusader movement, or rather to the efforts of those Europeans drifted to the Levant by this movement who tried to settle outside the Crusader port towns. The starting point of the process was the taking of the city of Tripoli in 1109 and the rapid conquest of the area of the Gap of Homs. The counts of Tripoli, trying to introduce a feudal system similar to that of their homeland, enfeoffed large proportions of their newly acquired lands either to knights fighting in their retinue or to ecclesiastical organisations. Both of these groups tried to improve the infrastructure of their properties. In the heyday of the Crusader power, that is the first half of the 12th century, it was common practice for the European knights to settle in the center of their estates, where they built small donjons as their residence. We know that the ecclesiastical landowners also maintained some kind of presence, mostly by their lay representatives. Both the secular and the ecclesiastical powers were busy encouraging the settlement of European peasants. This commitment is well documented on the territories of the former Kingdom of Jerusalem (Prawer 1972 and Ellenblum 1998), but some scanty clues of Latin settlers in the rural areas of the County of Tripoli can be traced as well<sup>2</sup>.

It is widely accepted, that by the second half of the 12th century the settlement process gradually slowed down, and as a consequence of the growing Muslim pressure, collapsed in most areas, which meant that the overwhelming majority of the Latin population left the countryside and moved to the better defended coastal cities<sup>3</sup>. The defence of the lands left behind was taken over by the military orders – in this territory, by the Templars and the Hospitallers. Their presence at the vulnerable northern border of the County already started in the 1140's and by the end of the century all the strategic places of the region were in their hands. The area was devastated several times by raiding Muslim armies: however, the systematic Muslim recon-

<sup>2</sup> The most obvious proof is in the village of 'Asiba approximately 3,5 kms to the southeast of the Hospitaller castle of Margat (today Qal'at Marqab). The mosque here incorporates the remains of a 12th century church, its architectural details and the existence of masonry marks on its walls indicating Crusader origin. The village was identified by Dussaud with Soebe of the Latin documents (Dussaud 1927:131). A survey of the site will be made in another season.

<sup>3</sup> The examination of the extent of this process in the northern Crusader states is still an important task for future research. However, there are clear indication of its existence. The exposed border areas of the County, including the Crac des Chevaliers and its surroundings, began to revert to Hospitaller hands in the 1140s, soon followed by the city of Tortosa, whose bishop entrusted its defence to the Templars as early as 1152, after the devastating raid of Nūr ad-Dīn (Riley-Smith 1969:278-282). Most places mentioned in the charters, either castles or simple villages, were in the hands of the military orders by the 1180s.

quest started only in the middle of the 1260's and took more than two decades to complete<sup>4</sup>.

### The fieldwork (importance, aims and methods)

The archaeology of the European population that lived in the Levant for almost two centuries still concentrates on the large monuments, mainly on castles. In the past few decades an important progress was made in the research of lesser sites, but almost exclusively on sites of the former Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem (eg. Pringle 1994 & 1997, Ellenblum 1998). Practically no work was done on the remains of the medieval rural settlement in the Gap of Homs.

This neglect is all the more regrettable as written sources on the extent of the 12th- and 13th-century pattern of settlement, or about the presence of the European population are almost nonexistent, save some scanty details preserved in a few medieval documents. As opposed to the lack of written sources, the few old scholarly descriptions<sup>5</sup> and the recent field survey prove that both the concentration of the remains of the medieval settlement pattern and their state of preservation are quite unique in the Levant. These practically undocumented remains are our almost sole information on the subject and they are quite endangered<sup>6</sup>.

The nature of the subject implies that the research is going to be a long one, in which the processing of the well hidden sources (medieval, contemporary and cartographical) must be combined with an extensive fieldwork. Owing to the extent of the area, my two preliminary visits and a 7 day long first fieldwork can only be regarded as an introductory step.

The fieldwork was planned to complete several aims. Amongst the most important tasks is the basic documentation of the medieval remains and their immediate surroundings. It consists of a detailed written description, basic measurements (with a measuring tape and compass) accompanied by drawings of architectural details and photographic documentation. Besides completing the documentation of sites mentioned but never described in former works, the fieldwork aims to trace hitherto unknown remains of medieval infrastructure either in the vicinity of known sites or in new locations<sup>7</sup>. In both fields special use was made of the information derived from the inhabitants of the region. If handled with caution, it proved to be very

<sup>4</sup> For the Muslim military activities see: Major 1998:212-214. Some of the observations made in 1998 are further elaborated and if necessary corrected in this summary.

<sup>5</sup> Foremost the works of Rey 1871, Renan 1874, Dussaud 1927 and Deschamps 1973.

<sup>6</sup> The need of the rapidly growing population of the area for cheap building material, the great building projects in the area (eg. the dams), and the natural factors, all threaten the sites considerably.

<sup>7</sup> Special attention is given to remains of possible medieval storage structures, dams, wells, cisterns, mills, etc.

useful not only in reconstructing missing parts of buildings destroyed in the past decades, but also in finding new sites. Important aspects of the work are the mapping of the visibility between the different sites and the collection of masonry marks found on the ashlar of the buildings. Both can produce valuable additional information, the former on the defensive role of the sites and the latter on their building history.

The work of the famous scholar Paul Deschamps, who did the most valuable research on the Crusader remains of Syria and Lebanon in the 30's and 40's, proved to be a good point of departure (Deschamps 1973). Though the work, like the former ones, concentrates on the main sites, and the data on the lesser monuments of the Gap hardly exceeds a few sentences, it contains a map on which the majority of the known Crusader sites are indicated. After correcting a few inaccuracies<sup>8</sup>, the surveying of the sites (some never visited at all by Deschamps) and their surroundings was started. Parallel to checking the sites mentioned by Deschamps new sources and sites are already drawn in.

The following report is a brief summary on four important sites of the numerous ones visited, Burğ Mī'ār Šākīr, Qal'at Umm Hūš, Burğ Zāra and Burğ Maksūr<sup>9</sup>, supplemented with some preliminary remarks on other aspects of the fieldwork.

### Burğ Mī'ār Šākīr

The most characteristic remains of the Crusader settlement pattern in the rural areas of the region are the small donjons, just like the one in the village of Mī'ār Šākīr 14.5 kms to the southeast of Tartūs as the crow flies. It is situated on the top of a hill 139 m high above sea level with commanding views over the surrounding countryside.

The tower is amongst the few lesser sites mentioned only in the medieval Arab sources. Mī'ār was listed among the Muslim possessions in three texts of the treaties between Sultan Qalāwūn and the leadership of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the County of Tripoli after the 1270's (ʿAbdazzāhir, *Tasrif* 21, 38, 210; Gabrieli, *Arab Historians* 324).

Even the most detailed former scholarly works confined themselves to merely mentioning the existence of the ruins of a tower (Rey 1871:70, Renan 1874:126, van Berchem 1914:97, Dussaud 1924:119, Deschamps 1973:323) and the confused sentences of a recent Syrian guide book (Hannā: 62-63) are not more informative either.

<sup>8</sup> Crusader Felicium is in fact to the south of the Nahr al-Kabīr, not to the north of the river on the Syrian side as the map of Deschamps indicated. Qal'at Yahmūr, present day name of Crusader Castrum Rubrum was put on the map beside "Bordj Milan", in fact Burğ Mī'ār or Mī'ār Šākīr.

<sup>9</sup> A detailed description of the well preserved Crusader tower in the village of Burğ 'Arab was published separately (Major 2001).

The only part that survived from the Crusader tower is the big hall of the ground floor with its slightly pointed barrel vault. The outer perimeter of the tower of Mi'ār is approximately 11.5 x 15 meters, the thickness of the surviving walls varies around 2 meters. The dimensions of the remains, specially the thickness data exclude the existence of more than one storey above the ground floor. The northern and western walls of the ground floor stand to full height. The upper sections of the eastern wall have disappeared from behind the vault having a north-south axis, and the southern wall has partly collapsed. Its standing parts are totally covered by the debris of the fallen parts and recent waste.

The walls of the tower are constructed by the solid Crusader method; the core made of rubble stone bounded by thick mortar, with a well executed ashlar facing. Most of the stones are of the so-called *hağar ramlī* (the sandstone consisting of sea-sand), but a few ashlars, especially those on the corners were carved of the much harder limestone. Some of these are bossed. Though there are blocks around the scale of the one with 68x81 cm facade, the majority are smaller and their dimension decreases at the higher ranges. The walls were strengthened with basalt and limestone column drums and basalt stone slabs, spolia from a former building of possibly antique origin.

According to the villagers there was a ground floor entrance opening on the southern wall of the tower, but, though it seems quite probable, the verification needs some clearing works to be done. Otherwise the partly filled up ground floor hall had two openings, one slit-window on the western and one on the northern facade, rather for ventilation than for defensive purposes.

The interior walls are built of the *ramlī* stone, and some scanty remains of plastering can still be seen on them. A row of putlog holes are preserved in the eastern and western walls. They might have been used for the wooden centering.

The old villager living beside the tower gave some useful details on the vanished elements of the tower. According to him the vicinity of the two-storey tower was deserted before 1935, the year people from the overpopulated village of Bayt Nūr Dīn began to settle it. The new inhabitants started to use the monument as a quarry around the year 1948 for the construction of their houses. At this time a still functioning cistern could also be seen under the ground floor, which was filled up later. Nobody in the village knew about subsidiary buildings or inscriptions on the tower<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> What they added was that according to the local legend the original lord of the tower was a certain Qadnūs al-Ġubbār, who was of foreign origin and possessed several other castles in the neighborhood. He was succeeded at a later point by a person called 'Ar ibn Sākir whose name became the name of the place Mi'ār Sākir. Nobody knew when.

## Qal'at Umm Hūš

The village of Umm Hūš is 6 kms to the south of Šāfitā as the crow flies. Its Crusader remains stand at the edge of a ridge 162 m high, overlooking the valley of the Nahr al-Abrāš from the south.

It is not mentioned in the historical sources, and until a brief description by Hugh Kennedy (1994:77-78)<sup>11</sup>, only its existence and its Crusader origin were noted (Renan 1874:126, Lammens 1900:284, van Berchem 1914:97, Dussaud 1924:119, Deschamps 1973:323).

The site consists of a ruined tower and the remains of some subsidiary buildings heavily built over in some parts. The survey could verify the existence of an enclosure (already presumed by Kennedy) with a vaulted range attached to it in the interior on at least three sides. The survey verified that in the research area this is the most extensive building complex besides the much better known Qal'at Yahmūr (thoroughly described in Pringle 1986:16-18) in the category of lesser-scale rural fortifications.

### *The tower*

The central element of the complex is the tower, which stands only partially. While its eastern facade is preserved to its full height with only the crenellation missing, the rest of the walls collapsed, save a short section of the northern and southern sides clinging to the eastern one. The tower consisted of two levels. The ground floor with a heavy barrel-vault which ran north-south might have fulfilled repository functions, while the much better executed first floor hall could have served as the living quarters of the owner. The surviving last section of a putlog hole for a wooden bolt in the fragment of the northern wall indicates that the ground floor had a separate entrance. The eastern wall of the ground floor preserved the putlog holes of the wooden centering and considerable remains of the plastering.

The entrance of the first floor hall opened on the southern facade<sup>12</sup> and was defended by a stone machiculis, one corbel of which is still hanging out from the roof. The door could be reached by a wooden stairway of some kind, and was connected to it by a drawbridge, as indicated by the remains of the two hollow corbels under the line of the door once holding the axle of the bridge. The eastern wall of the first floor was pierced by an arrow slit.

<sup>11</sup> The remains dealt with appear in his book under the name Burg 'Arab, but both the text and the two photographs accompanying it, make evident that it is the site of Umm Hūš. The village of Burg 'Arab lies 4,5 kms to the southeast and contains an almost totally intact Crusader tower.

<sup>12</sup> Kennedy took it for a large window (Kennedy 1994:78), but its dimensions, positioning and the corbels underneath clearly prove that it was a door.

The walls of the tower are mainly constructed of limestone, but in the upper parts smaller basalt ashlar become more common. The size of the ashlar diminishes as they approach the top. While most of the external walls were constructed of roughly cut local stones held together by large quantities of cement, the majority of the well cut cornerstones were marginally drafted. This was typical of twelfth century Crusader buildings (Ellenblum 1992:171-172). The walls contain some spolia, the most beautiful being the basalt stone slab over the interior of the first floor entrance, with grape and wineleaf motives of possibly Byzantine origin. The basalt stone architrave of the same door on the facade preserves a simple equal armed cross in a circle-shaped depression probably of Crusader origin<sup>13</sup>. Close observation of the ashlar of the exterior produced two Crusader masonry marks. There might have been more, but were wiped off from the quickly deteriorating surfaces of the limestone.

### *The enclosure*

The rectangular enclosure surrounding the tower seems to have been a substantial structure. Its best preserved western side measures 45 meters and the remains of the northern section of the walls can be traced down to the length of 41,5 meters. Even the preserved walls are badly effaced in most parts, but enough can be seen to conclude that their facades were constructed of very crudely cut or uncut stones bonded together with thick mortar. The blocks employed are mainly limestone with a few basalt insertions. Their size varies, the largest ashlar being employed at the base-ments and the corners. Some scanty remains indicate that the gate of the enclosure opened in at the northern end of the western wall. This section preserved the remains of a putlog hole for a bolt. Both this and the unusual concentration of six arrow slits on the western wall guarding the line of approach seem to be convincing enough. The southern perimeter of the wall has only one arrow slit in its first section, but more might be found if the obstacles hindering the approach can be overcome in the next season.

There are substantial and well preserved remains of vaulted halls on the inner side of the enclosure wall. The southern section of the 6,6 m wide hall is partially blocked and hard to approach, but enough could be seen to confirm that the vault continued behind the eastern wall. A long stretch of the vault is preserved at the western side as well. No trace of vaulted structures remains on the northern side of the enclosure, which had become filled in with houses at a later time.

The existence of the old village inside the enclosure is both confirmed by the name of the settlement and the local tradition. The name Umm Hūš derives from this fact, as *hūš* means enclosed area. It raises the possibility that the original name of the place might have been something else unlike in the case of Mī'ār, which still

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<sup>13</sup> Similar crosses were detected at the nearby tower of Burg 'Arab (Major 2001:173).

preserves the name by which it is mentioned in the medieval Arab sources. This settlement was left only about 15 years ago (one helpful villager was still born in the vaulted structures) and only the vaulted ranges were kept in use as sheds and storage facility, which neither helps the precise documentation nor the preservation of the monument. The tower has been in its ruined condition so far as the memories could recount.

### Burġ Zārā

Burġ Zārā is a lonely tower on a 338 m high hill 16 kms to the southeast of Saġfita as the crow flies. There is no considerable perennial watercourse in its vicinity. The nearest village az-Zārā is about a kilometre to the east of the tower, which prevented its becoming a cheap quarry for the villagers. In spite of its relatively good condition, barely more was mentioned in former works than its existence and origin (Rey 1871: 102, Renan 1874:126, Dussaud 1924:93, Deschamps 1973:327).

The external dimensions of the tower measure approximately 11.5 x 11.4 m. From the two floors of the tower the ground floor is almost totally intact while the measurements in the first floor were greatly hindered by the missing facings. Therefore some parts of the plan of the first floor had to be postulated relying on existing details.

The ground floor of the tower can be approached through the door on the northern facade of the tower. The door could be blocked by a wooden bolt, its 2 m long hole from which the wooden beam of the bolt could be pulled out is still intact in the western side of the entrance passage. The defences of the door were further strengthened by a slot machiculis opening on the inner side of the vault of the passageway. The 30 x 30 cm channel of the slot machiculis could be operated from the first floor room. The ground floor hall of the tower is covered by a slightly pointed barrel-vault with a north-south axis. It has collapsed partially at the northern end. The debris of the vault makes further speculations on the inner structure of the tower quite risky yet. The only opening giving light and ventilation for the ground floor is the small slit window at the top of the southern wall just below the vault.

The first floor hall of the tower can be reached through a stairway that starts at the eastern end of the door-passage and cuts through the vault. The stairway makes a right angle turn in the southern direction before reaching the level of the first floor and is lit by a slit window cut into the eastern wall of the stairway.

The first floor hall was once covered by a neatly executed groin-vault, the springings of which still cling to the corners. Though the walls of the first floor room still stand to the original height in several places, with special regard to the northern part, the inner facings are much worn away. This is especially true for the arrow slits. Formerly there was a pair of them on every side of the hall, but now only one on the northern wall stands relatively intact, the rest missing partially, or entirely. Their existence could be verified from the details, except the southern one on the eastern

wall. Its case is further complicated by the fact that no trace of the former stairway to the roof was found during the first survey. If there was any (and there must have been), then it had to be in the southeastern corner, where nothing remains of the original masonry. The existence of a stairway could have contributed well to the total collapse of this corner section, because it would have run in the thickness of the wall weakening its structure. As we do not know anything yet about the stairway, we cannot be sure whether it ran in the western or the southern wall, and if it ran in the latter, whether the southern loophole was built at all, further weakening the already hollowed fabric of the eastern wall<sup>14</sup>.

The walls of the tower follow the usual Crusader practice described at the former sites, with the exception that here the outer facings of the wall are made of the local basalt stone. The lower parts are of rudely cut or uncut stones, the facades of the first floor level are made of neatly cut basalt ashlar of much smaller size. The corner stones of the tower are huge and well dressed limestone ashlar, and many similar but smaller ones are employed around the long arrow slits as well. None of them is marginally drafted and all seem to be spolia of the antique temple the scattered remains of which can still be seen beside the southern side of the tower<sup>15</sup>.

### Burğ Maksūr

The small village of Burğ Maksūr lies on a western extension of the Ġabal al-Halw 14,5 kms to the southeast from Šafitā (*Mu'ğam 2*). The remains of a Crusader tower stand on the western edge of the village on a small rising ground in the valley of a stream.

Rey mentioned the existence of a tower in his list at a place called "Bordj-Mak-sour" but Lammens just noted having passed by this place without giving any details on the ruins (Rey 1871:102, Lammens 1900:284). Deschamps (1973:327) found the tower to be almost totally ruined, but could trace the remains of a fosse around.

The remains are scanty indeed, but the surviving section of the tower (practically the northwestern corner) can still give a fair amount of information regarding its former structure. Similarly to the rest of the towers of the region, this one also consisted of two levels, but had a quite unique vaulting system. Instead of being barrel-vaulted on the ground floor and groin-vaulted on the first, or barrel-vaulted on both floors but the axes of the barrel-vaults standing at right angles to each other, both floors of this tower were barrel-vaulted and both running north-south. This arrangement posed a serious weakening factor, and no doubt it greatly contributed to the present ruined state of the tower. What remains of the ground floor is choked by the

<sup>14</sup> The plan drawn during the survey shows both loopholes on the eastern wall.

<sup>15</sup> Already noted by Deschamps (1973:327).

collapsed vaults and other debris, except the upper section with a slit window cut through the wall approximately 2,8 m thick.

The first floor of the tower seems to have been better lit. The surviving section of the northern wall preserved two casemates from which the outer faces and embrasures have been robbed, and the short stretch of the western wall has another one almost intact. Here the embrasure cuts through the curve of the vault and ends in a long arrow slit, with a steeply sloping base. There was at least another similar loophole cutting through the western wall, which is now several meters from its original position in a fallen piece of the wall.

The walls of the tower were built of the local basalt stone, the majority of the facings being neatly cut, small sized ashlar. However, in the upper section of the western facade there is a wide section of rubble stones employed with some galleting of stone chips between them, possible remains of a construction season. The corners were constructed with elongated ashlar, some of it crudely rusticated, especially the bigger ones in the lower section. The cone of the wall was made of rubble stone bonded together by great quantities of mortar.

The weakening effects of the special vaulting, the numerous openings in the walls and the now tracelessly disappeared doorways and stairways proved too much for the tower and it literally crumbled to pieces. Large sections of the thick walls lie scattered, sometimes upside down in the immediate vicinity of the surviving north western corner. According to the local children, this happened about a century ago due to a thunderstroke. The original name of the tower was Burg az-Zuhūr (the Tower of the Flowers), but its collapse resulted in its renaming Burg al-Maksūr (the Broken Tower). Whatever happened, the place was already mentioned by Rey as "Bordj-Maksour" and the original name of the place must have been something else, just as in the case of Qal'at Umm Hūṣ, which will make future identification with possible historical data much harder.

It were also the children of this little village who drew attention to the source of the small stream that flows beside the tower. The area in the vicinity of the source that is called 'Ayn at-Tīna (the Spring of the Fig) contained some curious remains. The lower courses of the rectangular basin constructed around the main source - still used by the villagers as the main water source - were executed in a similar way as the tower. 17 meters to the southeast of this source, beside another stream, were the clear remains of a channel, made of ceramic pipes laid between rubble stones in mortar bed. The short stretch of the channel makes a 90-degree turn in a round basin, which also served as the place of deposition for the waste in the water. The precise direction and length of the channel is still unclear, but some additional information was provided by a peasant, who told that while digging a deep trench in his garden halfway to the tower, he has found pieces of a similar channel. Inspecting the given place, a short stretch of an almost completely buried vault was found. All that

is sure in this early phase of the survey is that the valley of the springs and its entire vicinity need more work to solve some of the questions its remains pose.

### Some other aspects of the fieldwork

As it was partly mentioned in the first pages of this summary, the fieldwork conducted in the Crusader monuments in the southern littoral of Syria can be divided into several different areas, most of it still in its initial state, but which, elaborated, will need separate studies, and will be published separately. This contains such areas as the comparative analysis of the structural peculiarities of the monuments, ranging from vaulting techniques to the arrow slit types, or the question of the stone quarrying and the origin of the spolia. There are two important fields that should be mentioned here briefly. The first is the study of the masonry marks, the second, the mapping of the visibility lines between the different sites.

The Crusader buildings in this area, especially the large castles abound in the marks of the medieval masons. Only the marks in the famous castle of the Crac des Chevaliers were collected in an exemplary way by Deschamps (1934:241-250). The collecting of these marks is a very slow process, partly because of the quantity and the often bad visual conditions, and partly as a consequence of the fragmentary nature of the material. The analysis of the material can be done only in case everything that can be collected is collected, from the walls and vaults of the gigantic castles to the reused ashlar of small rural sites. During the fieldwork, effort was made to have all the masonry marks of the following sites to be collected: the cathedral of Tartūs, the Templar castle of Tartūs, the Templar chapel of Tartūs, the inner enclosure of the castle of ʿArīma, the templar donjon of Sāfītā. Hitherto unknown masonry marks were recorded at Qalʿat Yahmūr, which make clear that the stairway together with the western vaulted range was built in the Crusader period; and the recording work was begun in Qalʿat Marqab. The survey could detect 113 clearly distinguishable masonry mark types, from which only 29 occurred on the walls of more than one site. Comparing them with the material collected on Crusader monuments of Palestine (Pringle 1981:187), one finds that more than 80% of the masonry marks collected in the above-mentioned Syrian sites have no clear parallels with those employed in Palestine. However, the more than representative quantity collected at the Syrian sites still needs completion and a thorough analysis before a detailed study with remarkable conclusions.

The precise mapping of the visibility between the Crusader sites of the region is not a rapid process either, due to the often unfavourable weather conditions. The proximity of the sea results in the high humidity of the air, and the weather is often misty or foggy even in the middle of summer. This also means that one has to be rather cautious with fabricating far-reaching theories relying on the visibility lines only. Though the visibility map is still not complete, it already indicates, that the

visual center of the Gap of Homs was the Templar fortress of Šāfītā, which can be seen from the majority of the sites even in unfavourable weather conditions.

I hope that this brief enumeration of a section of the work done in the southern littoral of Syria testified convincingly to the potential richness of the area, and that it is truly worthy for further research and surveys.

*The last words of this report must be the words of gratefulness to all those helping in the years preceding the research and in the course of it. To Dr. Tamás Iványi, Dr. József Laszlovszky, Dr. László Tüske, and Gergely Buzás, my teachers in Hungary, and Dr. ‘Abdarrazzāq Mu‘ād, my professor at the University of Damascus, Department of Archaeology, since director of the General Directorate of Antiquities. To the General Directorate of Antiquities of the Syrian Arab Republic for providing all the necessary permissions for the fieldwork, and Haytam Hasan a faithful supporter and friend. I am also indebted to the director of antiquities in the Tartūs Governorate and to the director of the Museum in Tartūs, Dr. Rāmiz Hūš and his colleague Dāwūd Ġimāl. Someone has to hold the other end of the measuring tape; if it was not Dr. ‘Alī Muhammad, gynaecologist in the hospital of Tartūs and a faithful friend of the Hungarians, then the ever interested village boys did the job. I am greatly indebted to the Hungarian Embassy in Damascus, especially to former ambassador Zoltán Pereszlényi. Magnanimous financial support for the work was provided by the Faludi Ferenc Academy of the Hungarian Jesuits.*

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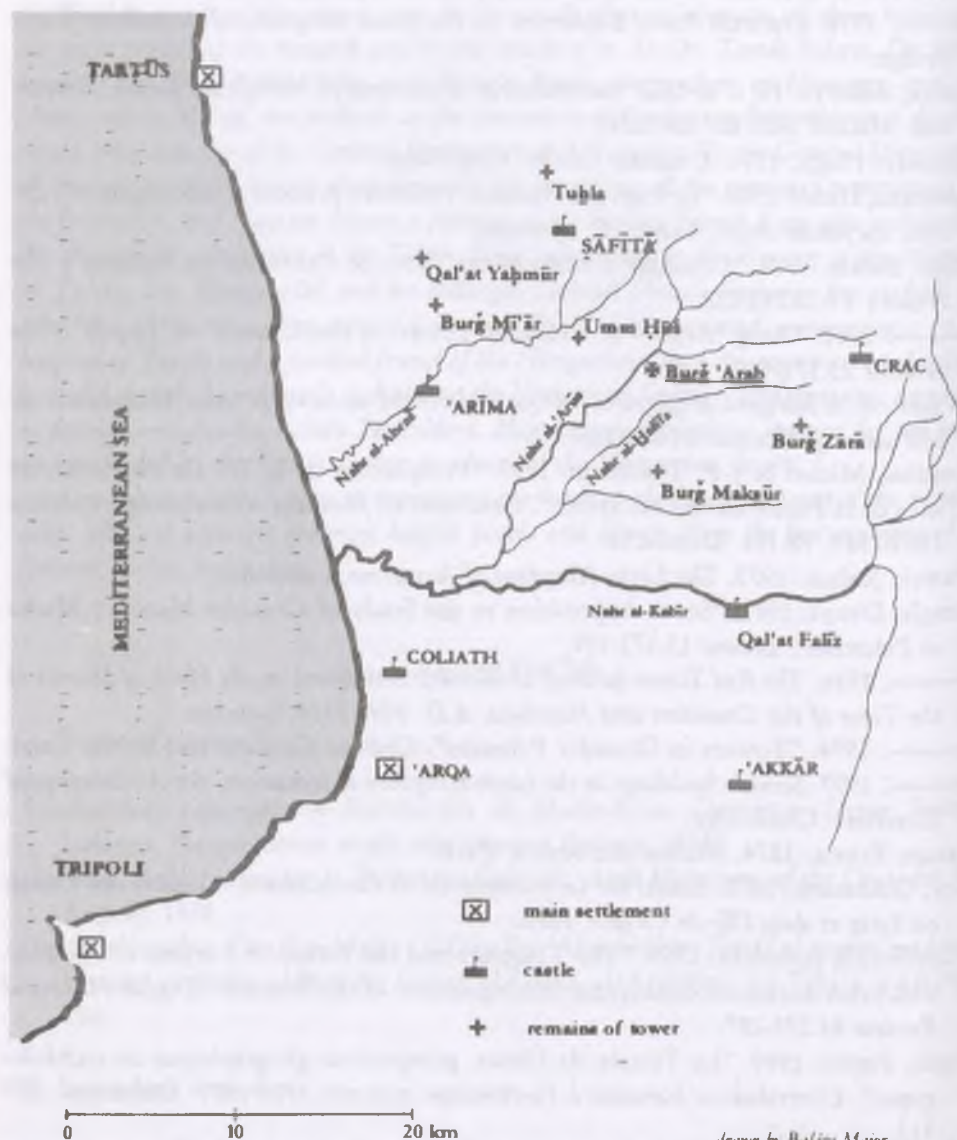
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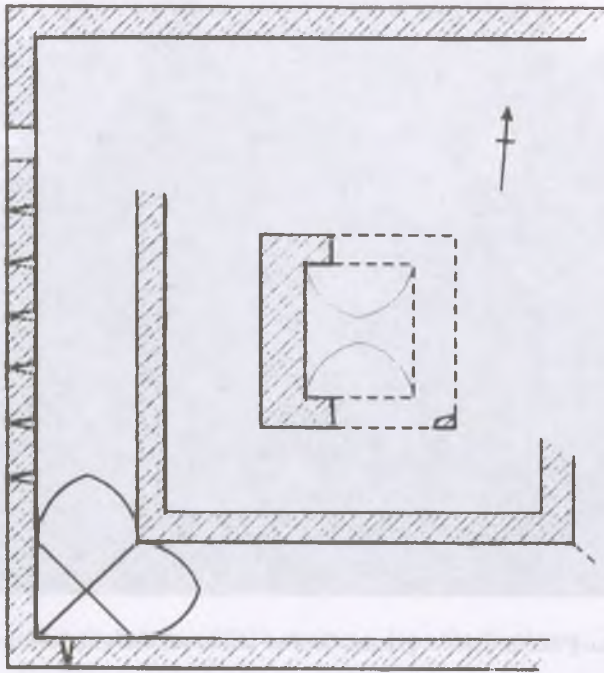
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## The Northern Part of the County of Tripoli



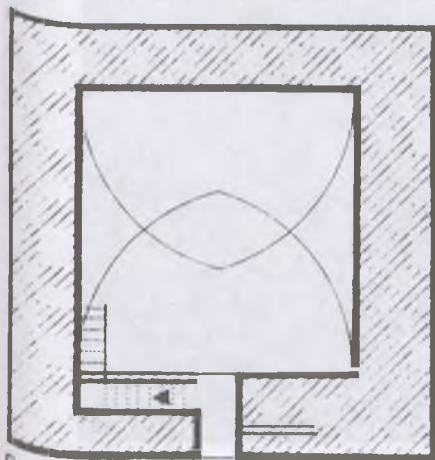


0 10m

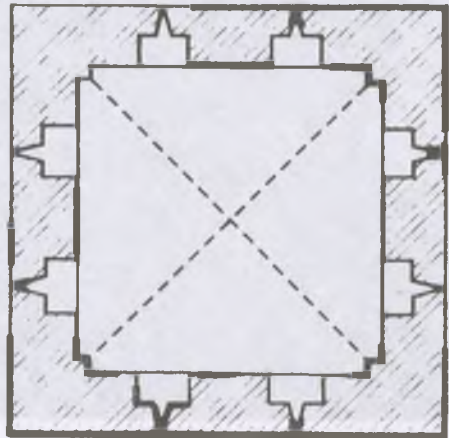
**QAL'AT UMM ĤUṢ**

*Drawn by Balázs Major*

**BURĜ ZĀRĀ** 0 5m



**Ground floor**



**First floor** (reconstruction - existing facings indicated by thick line)

*Drawn by Balázs Major*



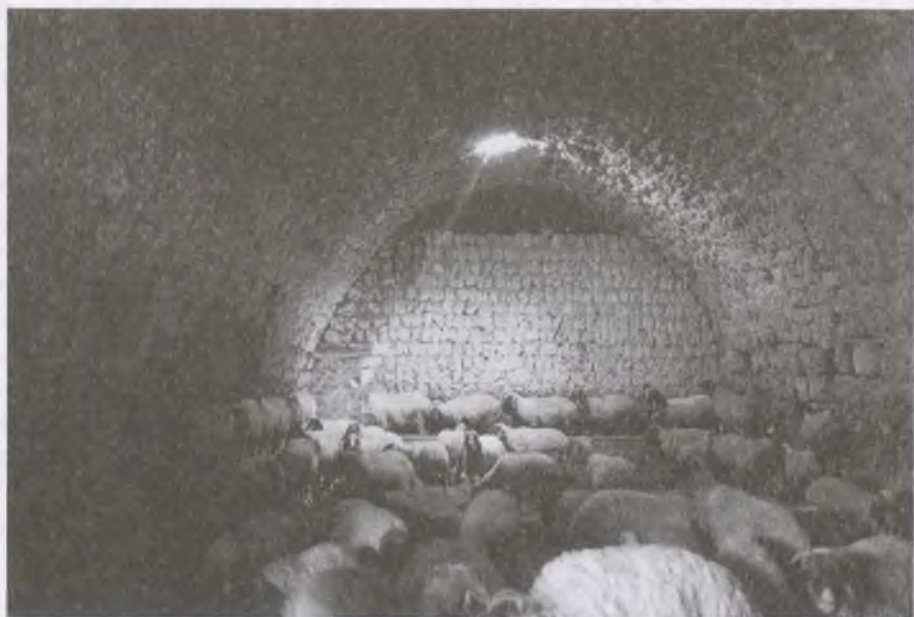
1. Burğ Mi'ār Šākir – ground floor of the tower from the southeast



2. Burğ Maksūr – remains of the tower from the southeast with embrasures of the first floor



3. Qal'at Umm Hūš - the tower from the southeast



4. Qal'at Umm Hūš - the western vault of the enclosure



5. Burğ Zārā – the tower from the northwest



6. Burğ Zārā – interior of the first floor hall with remains of embrasures