

CRUSADER TOWERS OF THE *TERRE DE CALIFE* AND ITS VICINITY

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“My wellbeloved hath a vineyard
in a very fruitful hill:
And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
and planted it with the choicest vine,
and built a tower in the midst of it ...”
(Isaiah 5.1-2)

On the territory once called by the Crusaders the *Terre de Calife* and in the close proximity to it lie the remains of a special kind of Crusader settlement in the form of relatively small towers with subsidiary buildings adjoining them in some cases. The aim of this short study is to draft some general observations of these remains; their history, their structure and of the functions they once fulfilled, and so to attempt to shed some light on the area in the days of the Crusades.

This paper concentrates on seven towers: 1. Qal‘at Yahmūr (the Crusader Chastel Rouge) — 2. Burġ Mī‘ār — 3. Tuḥla — 4. Qal‘at Umm Ḥūš — 5. Burġ ‘Arab — 6. Burġ Zārā — 7. Burġ Maqṣūr. These towers belong to one specific group of Crusader structures. The remains of the seven towers concerned in this study I have visited in the summer of 1995, with the exception of the tower of Tuḥla which has documentation fairly enough to be incorporated.

Location and general historical background

The *Terre de Calife* lies in the southern littoral of present day Syria. The strategic importance of the area can hardly be overestimated. The Crusader states during the most part of their existence were concentrated mainly on the “*sāhil*”, the littoral area of the Levant. This territory has important natural defences: a long mountain range separates it from the interior of Syria as part of the western boundary of the East-African Rift System stretching from the Taurus Mountains of Southern Turkey to the Gulf of ‘Aqaba. One of the few easy ways of approach from the interior of Syria to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea is through the Homs - Tripoli gap; a plain some 10 km wide known by the name Buqay‘a in the Arab sources dividing the Anṣāriyya mountains from the Mountains of Lebanon (Van Berchem 1914: 42), thus providing a good road to the hearth of the smallest Crusader state; the County of Tripoli. Immediately to the north of the western side of the entrance of this gap lies the fertile area dotted with hills, which the Crusaders called the *Terre de Calife* deriving its name from the Nahr al-Ḥalīfa that flows through the territory (Dussaud

1927: 94). In the 12th and 13th centuries this area formed part of the County of Tripoli (Richard 1945: 1).

The location of the territory had heavy effects on its history in two ways. Above all, after the Crusaders acquired it around the year 1110 (Deschamps 1973: 307), it was exposed to the attacks of the Muslim powers of Syria.

It would be an impossible task to reconstruct the precise history of each tower individually owing to the lack of sources. Of the seven towers concerned, only two: Qal'at Yaḥmūr and Burġ Mī'ār are mentioned in the medieval sources, and only in the case of Qal'at Yaḥmūr do we know the Crusader name, which was Chastel Rouge¹. The other towers — equally evidently Crusader constructions — seem to be totally missing from the contemporary documentation. However the Arab sources make a few references to "towers" or to obviously less important "other castles" occupied together with the main castles of the area during Muslim military operations. As the towers usually had a series of buildings around them, often connected with a curtain wall to form one defensive unit, it is not surprising that they are no longer referred to as mere towers, but as castles. The indication of their reduced importance is in the fact that they are not named individually. While the muslim victory accounts of the age rarely miss to enumerate every castle of considerable size or importance taken from the enemy, they seldom mention lesser forts and towers, and the seven towers concerned fall to this latter category. The main castles nearest to these towers were the famous Crac des Chevaliers (today: Ḥiṣn al-Akrād), Chastel Blanc (today: Šāfītā), Arima (today: Qal'at 'Arīma) and Tortosa (today: Ṭartūs). When a chronicle tells us that these were occupied with a number of other castles, one might rightly suspect the forts of the *Terre de Calife* to be amongst them. Yet information is still too scarce to permit the drawing of at least general statistics on how many times these towers were affected by muslim military operations².

According to the contemporary sources we must count with more than a dozen of Muslim attacks directed against this part of the County of Tripoli during the nearly two centuries of its existence. The line was opened in 1137 by the Damascene *amīr* Baswāġ (Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Damascus Chronicle* 241). In 1138 'Imād ad-Dīn Zankī, (Ibn al-Aṭīr, *at-Tārīḫ al-bāhir* 57) in 1148 (Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Damascus Chronicle* 288; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *at-Tārīḫ al-bāhir* 90), 1152 (Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Damascus*

¹ In the contemporary latin sources Yaḥmūr is referred to as *Castrum Rubrum*, and it was E. Guillaume Rey who "invented" the Frankish name analogously to the preserved frankish place-name of the nearby templar fortress of Chastel Blanc (Deschamps 1973: 317).

² As the individual names are not mentioned, one cannot be entirely sure which towers were attacked and which remained safe during a raid. Furthermore towers could sometimes repel the siege and were not necessarily occupied. In addition to these, the sources are not consequent: sometimes they just mention "other forts", at other times they give the number of the occupied towers, or in the case of Chastel Rouge and Mī'ār even mention the name.

Chronicle 312; Ibn al-Aṭīr, *at-Tārīḥ al-bāhir* 110), 1167 (Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* X, 5) and 1171 (Ibn al-Aṭīr, *at-Tārīḥ al-bāhir* 154-155) his son Nūr ad-Dīn conducted his armies against the Crusader territories behind the Buqay^a. The famous sultan Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn raided the coastal plain in 1180, (William of Tyre, *History* II, 447-449) then in 1188 his army marched through here during its victorious northern campaign (Abū Šāma, *Rawdatayn* II, 126). Two devastating raids were conducted by the latter Ayyubids, one in 1207 by al-Malik al-ʿĀdil (Ibn Waṣīl, *Mufarriḡ al-ḡurūb* III, 173), the other in 1218 by al-Malik al-Ašraf (*ibid.* III, 265). The last decade of the Crusader domination in the region was interrupted by the restless military activity of the Mamluk sultan Baybars. His attacks took place in the years 1260-61 (Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids* II, 45), 1266 (Ibn ʿAbdazzāhir, *Rawḍ* 252; Abū Šāma, *Dayl* 239-240), 1268 (Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids* II, 113-118), 1270 (*ibid.* II, 139-140) and finally in 1271 (*ibid.* II, 143-144). The detailed examination of these military movements is beyond the scope of this paper. Though it is sometimes hard to make clear distinctions, the majority of the attacks should be regarded as raiding expeditions, rather than major campaigns. Their main aim was the destruction of the resources of the enemy and not the permanent occupation of the territory. They rarely wasted time on besieging the main strongholds of the area, but the occupation of towers and less important castles was not infrequent. In 1137 the Damascenes "... captured the castle of Wādī Ibn al-Aḥmar amongst others." (Ibn al-Qalānīsī, *Damascus Chronicle* 241)³. In 1152 Nūr ad-Dīn having captured Tortosa, "... took possession of a number of other castles..." (*ibid.* 312). In the year 1166 Nūr ad-Dīn took a number of the important castles in the northern part of the County of Tripoli, including Chastel Blanc and Arima and his troops devastated the surrounding area (Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Kāmil* IX, 5). It was also him who in 1171 while besieging ʿArqa "... sent a part of the ʿaskar to the castles of Šāfītā (Chastel Blanc) and ʿArīma, and took them by force, and similarly he took others as well" (Ibn al-Aṭīr, *at-Tārīḥ al-bāhir* 154-155). During his campaign in 1188 Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn "... ordered raids to be started against the castle (the Crac des Chevaliers), against Šāfītā, ʿArīma and the like, and brought out what was stored in them. He took Ḥiṣn Yaḥmūr and the raids did not cease as long as they camped in this territory till the end of the month" (Abū Šāma, *Rawdatayn* II, 126). The next Arab report on the fall of less important forts (here expressly towers) comes from the year 1266, when the army of Baybars took three castles and no less than sixteen towers in the northern part of the County of Tripoli (Abū Šāma, *Dayl* 239-240). It was sultan Baybars who began the systematic reconquest of the region. The larger part of the area, together with the *Terre de Calife* reverted to Muslim hands in the beginning of the year 1271, when its major castles; Chastel Blanc and the Crac des Chevaliers fell. As

³ Jean Richard attempted to identify the castle of Wādī Ibn al-Aḥmar with Chastel Rouge (Richard 1945: 65, n. 2).

Ibn al-Furāt reported: "He then took over Safitha and its territory together with the forts and towers in the neighbourhood of Hisn al-Akrād, such as Tell Khalifa and others. God knows better" (Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids* II, 144). In all probability only one tower-fort escaped this fate in 1271. This was Chastel Rouge. It fell only in 1289, the year in which Tripoli was taken from the Crusaders by sultan Qalāwūn (Müller-Wiener 1984: 64).

The Gap of Homs was not only the clashing point of the forces of East and West, but it was also a point of collision between the African and Arabian Plates which manifested itself in the form of serious earthquakes, the most devastating ones being in the years 1157 (Ibn al-Aṭīr, *at-Tārīḥ al-bāhir* 110; Ṭalās 1990: 198-199), 1170 (William of Tyre, *History* II, 370-371) and 1202 (Abū Šāma, *Dayl* 29).

The structure of the towers

The Crusaders adopted several local practices during their long stay in the Levant, but they also brought the traditions of their homelands. This clearly manifests itself in their tower fortresses discussed here. Their prototypes are in all probability those castles of Northern-France which combined a tower-keep and a fortified enclosure. (Pringle 1986: 15).

Though the towers in the region of the *Terre de Calife* are uniform in general design, they show quite a diversity in their details; both in their architectural arrangement and in the masonry employed. The restricted length of this paper makes only a general description possible.

The towers are in most cases entirely stone structures with quite similar external dimensions. Deschamps gave the basic area of three towers; that of the tower of Tuḥla is 14 m x 12.8 m, the tower of Burğ ʿArab is 14 m x 13.4 m, and the tower of Chastel Rouge is 15 m x 14 m (Deschamps 1973: 328). These proportions⁴ show a marked preference for the square or almost square plans, over elongated ones⁵.

As nearly all the Crusader towers of the Holy Land, the towers of the *Terre de Calife* and its vicinity consist of two vaulted levels⁶. The ground floor is always barrel vaulted, with the only exception of Chastel Rouge which has groin vault. The first floors are vaulted with groin vault, except in the case of Burğ Maqṣūr, having a simple barrel vault on both its ground and first floors. In Tuḥla and in Chastel

⁴ There is no data on the basic area of the other towers of which Burğ Zārā is the only well preserved one. It clearly belongs to the group of towers with a square or almost square base. In the case of the remaining three towers, all of which lack at least one of their facades, only excavations could produce the lacking data.

⁵ It supports the argument of Denys Pringle, who was the first to verify this tendency on the Crusader towers of Palestine (Pringle 1994: 339).

⁶ At Burğ Mīʿār all that remains is the vaulted undercroft of the tower, but given the surviving remains, its very improbable to have consisted of three vaulted levels.

Rouge there were also wooden floors — as can be clearly detected from the putlog holes in the walls and from the positioning of some of the openings — dividing the large internal space and creating an additional floor. Tuhla had this wooden mezzanine floor on both levels (Rey 1871: 101, fig. 29), while the tower of Chastel Rouge had it only on its first floor. This seems to be a local device as no examples of it are found outside Syria (Pringle 1994: 339). These two towers are exceptional amongst the concerned ones in other respects as well. Below Tuhla one can find a cistern carved into the rock, and in Chastel Rouge the four bays of groin-vaults on each floor spring from great central piers. Probably every tower had some kind of crenellation.

The positioning of the doors and the connection between the two levels of the towers is quite various on those, that have sufficient remains or records to inspect. In Chastel Rouge the two levels were reached by individual doors, opening on two opposite sides of the tower. There was no internal connection between the ground and first floors, while the roof could be reached by an internal staircase, running in the thickness of the north wall⁷. A very similar arrangement of the entrances can be seen in Burġ ‘Arab⁸. Though its only a hypothesis, and an excavation will provide the definite answer, Qal‘at Umm Hūš might have had the same arrangement as Chastel Rouge and Burġ ‘Arab. In my opinion the large opening of the first-floor on the south wall was the entrance of the towers main living area, and there must have been another entrance to the basement, opening on the northern side of the tower⁹. The tower of Burġ Zārā had only one entrance, and that was on the ground floor. The first floor could be reached by an internal staircase. The communication between the different levels of the tower of Tuhla was rendered by a combination of wooden ladders and staircases running in the thickness of the walls (Rey 1871: 102).

The masonry construction of the seven towers follows the usual Crusader practice: the thick walls of the towers were built with two facings of limemortared ashlar enclosing a rubble core bonded with plentiful mortar. The rusticated ashlars so popular in the 12th century Crusader architecture are totally missing or are restricted to the quoins of the towers, which latter fact is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the 12th century Crusader rural structures (Ellenblum 1992: 171–172). The stone types employed, generally follow the geological conditions of the area (Richard 1945: 2)¹⁰, they are either limestone (Chastel Rouge, Burġ Mi‘ār and Tuhla) or

⁷ Further examination is needed to resolve the questions which the positioning of this stairway poses (Pringle 1986: 17).

⁸ I could not enter yet the first floor of the tower still used for domestic purposes and I have no information on how the roof could be reached.

⁹ For explanation see the paragraph on the residential and administrative functions of the towers.

¹⁰ See the geological map of the County of Tripoli: Deschamps 1973.

basalt stone (Burğ Zārā and Burğ Maqṣūr), and in the walls of Qalʿat Umm Hūš and Burğ ʿArab the two types are mixed. The quality of the masonry shows significant differences giving some indication on the financial capacities of the owners. While the keep of Chastel Rouge and Burğ Mīʿār is built of very finely cut ashlar, the same can't be told about Burğ ʿArab built in a much poorer quality¹¹.

The masonry of the towers of Qalʿat Umm Hūš, Burğ Zārā and Burğ Maqṣūr shows differing parts indicating more than one construction phase, or perhaps re-buildings after the earthquakes or the demolitions of the enemy raids and campaigns so frequent in this area. In the walls of Burğ ʿArab and Burğ Zārā some byzantine spolia can be detected in the form of huge ashlar, well cut stone frames and the cover of a sarcophagus (Deschamps 1973: 327).

The settlement

The presence of the towers of the *Terre de Calife* and its vicinity with their distinctively Crusader features described above is clearly indicating some form of Crusader presence in the countryside. The building of these towers might have been evoked by two factors.

To the contrary of the European practice, the overwhelming majority of the Crusader society was living in the well fortified towns, most of which was to be found in the coastal area (Praver 1972: 66–67). Yet in the formative period of the Crusader states; that means the first decades of the 12th century, the Europeans tried to introduce a system familiar to that of their homeland (*ibid.* 65). The seigneurs of individual territories enfeoffed certain proportions of land to their followers especially in fertile areas like the *Terre de Calife*¹². Chastel Rouge in our territory was in the hands of the Montolieu family, provençal vassals of the count of Tripoli when the Hospitallers received it in the year 1177 (Deschamps 1973: 317; du Cange 1869: 557). The knightly families built small defensive structures in the centres of their estates, just like the remains described above.

There was a parallel move to this. As it is documented in some areas of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (Praver 1980: 120–142) authorities made serious attempts to settle certain areas with European population. The European rural settlements were fortified some way (Praver 1972: 83)¹³. Amongst the simplest methods was the construction of a tower serving as a place of refuge in times of danger (Pringle 1997: 398).

These attempts however ended in failure (Praver 1980: 142). The majority of these lesser vassals became bankrupted in the "land of perpetual war". By the second

¹¹ It must be kept in mind of course, that volcanic stones are much harder to work, than the limestone.

¹² See the case of the Plain of Sharon (Pringle 1986).

¹³ al-Bīra can be taken as the typical case for a Frankish 'new town' (Pringle 1985: 147–148).

half of the 12th century their castles were usually taken over by the Military Orders, which possessed the resources to cope in an increasingly hostile environment. After the victories of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn it became very risky for any part of the European population to live in the countryside, away from the centres of the coast. Towers like the ones considered “went out of fashion” and though not all of them was abandoned, they remained a reminiscence of a 12th century project in the Levantine landscape¹⁴.

The establishment of the military orders took place quite early in the northern part of the County of Tripoli which became — with some exaggeration — the lordship of the Orders; the Hospitallers’, centred on their mighty castle of the Crac des Chevaliers¹⁵ and the Templars’¹⁶ with their headquarters based in Tortosa. It is almost sure that the 12th century towers of the *Terre de Calife* also formed an integral part of the Hospitaller and Templar possessions, as this was the case with nearly all the forts and casals of the area, of which Crusader documentation survived¹⁷.

Functions

Though these tower fortresses seem to be extremely small compared with the nearby fortification complexes of the Military Orders, they fulfilled several important functions.

1. Defensive function:

Naturally the most important function any fortress fulfilled was the defensive role it played in providing refuge to the inhabitants of a certain region. These small towers were not impregnable at all, but they offered useful protection against the countless raiding expeditions their territories were exposed to. Mounted warriors usually didn’t waste their time besieging towers which took precious time so diminishing the surprise nature of the raids. There was also the danger that a relieving force might appear meanwhile. But if the attacking force decided to begin a siege the defenders

¹⁴ Apart from the typology, the way of execution and the historical context, another fact supports the dating of at least one tower to the 12th century; the engraving of a cross on one of the blocks of Burğ ‘Arab, the parallel of which can be found on the wall of the Frankish church of Amioun, dated to the 12th century (Deschamps 1973: 327).

¹⁵ For the acquisition of the castle and the lordship around it in 1142 see Richard 1945: 62; Röhrich 1887: 259–260.

¹⁶ The templars acquired the city of Tortosa which became the nucleus of their properties in 1152 (Riley-Smith 1969: 278–287).

¹⁷ See the map entitled “Carte des environs du Crac des Chevaliers” which shows the distribution of the properties of the Military Orders in the area extending from Valenie to Tripoli (Deschamps 1973).

couldn't hope to resist too long¹⁸. The best example for the vulnerability of the towers can be quoted from Abū Šāma, whose report tells that in the year 1266 the raiding forces of Baybars took no less than 16 Frankish towers in the area of the Gap of Homs (Abū Šāma, *Dayl* 239–240).

Though the architects tried to employ much of the possible defensive devices they could on this small scale, the nature of defence these towers possessed remained passive. The defenders relying on their supplies accumulated in the tower waited until the marauders left. As the main strength of the towers lay in the thickness of their walls, broken by only a few openings (not to weaken the wall too seriously) they could not put up a much harder resistance even if they wanted to¹⁹.

An additional element of defence was the employment of the machiculis above the main openings of the towers. The defence of the entrance of Tuḥla was strengthened this way, and the corbels still hanging over the ground-floor entrance of Chastel Rouge and over the first-floor opening on the south wall of Qal'at Umm Ḥūš indicate the existence of box-machicolations in these cases as well. At the first-floor entrance of Chastel Rouge and at the entrance of Burğ Zārā one can find a slot-machicolation above the entrances in the thickness of the wall.

At certain sites the towers don't stand alone. The best preserved example of a curtain wall surrounding the tower can be seen at Chastel Rouge. The careful interrelation of the tower and enclosure is proven by the positioning of the arrow slits as well. They are highly concentrated on the southern side of the tower, facing the only gate of the enclosure. In the first half of our century Deschamps noted the traces of trenches around Burğ Maqšūr (Deschamps 1973: 327) and its very probable, that the subsidiary buildings around Qal'at Umm Ḥūš were connected into a defensive line by means of a curtain wall²⁰.

2. Residential and administrative functions:

In all probability this category of towers — with regard to the function — were also built to fulfil the residential and administrative needs of a lesser vassal in the centre of his estates. The towers were built by vassals of a seigneur as was outlined above, but it seems very probable that most of these knights and their families lived

¹⁸ The tower of Būria in Palestine fell to the ground in the space of four hours, after the Muslims "put up mighty efforts to undermine it" in the year 1182 (William of Tyre, *History* II, 470).

¹⁹ On the ground floor the number of surviving openings is divided between few real arrow-slits and windows for admitting light and air. In the case of the surviving first floor rooms the tendency seemed to have no more than one arrow-slit on one surface of each floor, like at Tuḥla, Qal'at Umm Ḥūš, Burğ 'Arab. At Burğ Zārā we find a pair of symmetrically arranged arrow-slits in each wall of the first-floor. First-floor arrow-slits are quite concentrated at Chastel Rouge, on the south wall, which faces the gate of the enceinte. See the plans and cross sections of Chastel Rouge: Pringle 1986: 16.

²⁰ Kennedy registers that Tuḥla is surrounded by outbuildings (Kennedy 1994: 77).

only for a short period here or never moved to the countryside at all (Marshall 1992: 127). In some cases we have data from the Kingdom of Jerusalem of stewards using these towers as the administrative centre of the surrounding district (Pringle 1997: 398), but in our territory this type of documentation is missing, and one has to rely mainly on the architectural analysis.

However, it was not only the adjoining vaulted halls in the centre of an estate that could fulfil repository function. In many cases these outbuildings never existed or left no trace at all. The basements of the towers could also serve as stores (Pringle 1994: 340). These ground-floor halls are very badly lit. Their few, small slit windows are just enough to provide a minimal light and some ventilation needed for the accumulated crops, but not enough to serve as living-quarters in contrast to the better-lit first-floor rooms. Accepting the repository function of the ground-floors of the towers and the residential of the first-floors, we might find a possible solution for the puzzling fact that in spite of all defensive deliberations, at the relatively small towers of the considered region either there are two entrances; one on the ground-floor and one on the first-floor²¹ or there is only one entrance, but that only entrance can be found exclusively on the ground-floor, and not higher. It was more practical to move the goods directly into their final destination, than to lift and carry it on a longer way, through the living quarter of the owner or his steward down to the basement. Having an entrance on the ground-floor would solve this problem. Could the administrative, repository function of a tower be so important as to counterweight the requirements of defence to this extent?²²

Though indirectly, both one Latin and some Arab sources confirm to some extent the repository function of the towers of the *Terre de Calife* and its wider vicinity. A letter of the papal legate, Simon reports that during the raiding expedition of Baybars against the County of Tripoli in the year 1266, the marauders destroyed houses and the local mill in a village belonging to Simon, but they did not attempt to break into a tower in which his goods were stored (Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids* 211, n. 3). In 1188 the Muslim raiders "...brought out what was stored in..." the forts occupied (Abū Šāma, *Rawḍatayn* II, 126). In 1207 the soldiers of al-ʿĀdil got into the tower of Aʿnāz in the Buqayʿa and "took five hundred men plus great quantity of goods and arms" (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarriġ al-kurūb* III, 173).

In contrast to the simple execution of the ground floors, the first-floors are more suited for everyday living. The cross-vaulted chambers are more spacious and have

²¹ The weakening static effect of this was reduced by the architect in the simplest way; he placed the two entrances on the opposite sides of the towers, as can be seen on the two surviving examples of Chastel Rouge and Burġ ʿArab.

²² This assumption and the new questions which it evokes need to be answered in a detailed study after a longer visit to all the sites of the region, and a more thorough study in the written sources.

more openings to admit light. The size of the first-floor living areas of the towers may give some indication on their possible uses, and professor Pringle performed the comparison of the Palestinian crusader towers (Pringle 1994: 341–347). Though only Chastel Rouge, Tuhla and Burg ʿArab are measured, and in the latter case only externally, it is worth to consider the data. The internal area of the first-floor of Chastel Rouge is about 129.5 m², Tuhla's is around 56 m² and as the external dimensions of Burg ʿArab are almost identical to that of Tuhla, we might suppose that the internal ones can't be very different either. Using the breaking-point of 61–70 m² established by Pringle between the so called hall-keeps and the much smaller solar keeps it is clear that Chastel Rouge was a hall-keep. We must remember however, that both Chastel Rouge and Tuhla had a mezzanine floor which doubled the basic area, making it possible to record Tuhla among the hall-keeps. Whether Burg ʿArab had such a device, only an internal inspection can answer²³.

The numbers are just indicators, and the possibility that certain solar-keeps were used as the residences of vassals of poorer status can't be excluded. Chastel Rouge however illustrates how well the theory accords with the historical reality. The owners of the enormous hall-keep; the Montolieu family produced members of rank for the aristocracy of the county (du Cange 1869: 557).

3. Policing function:

The sources concerning the Crusader period are witnesses to a quite peaceful co-existence of the different races of the Crusader states during most of their existence. However it is a proven fact that an unbridgeable gap existed between the ruling Frankish society and the conquered Muslim population, which often manifested itself in times of stress. The danger of uprisings existed (Prawer 1985: 59–115). The towers of the *Terre de Calife* spreading between the major castles of the area could also have served to keep the Crusader control tighter and help the process of taxation. As small control-posts some of them might have kept a check on the trade passing between the *sāhil* and the interior of Syria. According to the map of Dussaud which attempts to reconstruct the medieval routes, Chastel Rouge lied directly on the road that led from Hama to the coast town of Tortosa (Dussaud 1927: map XIV).

4. Centres of colonization?

Attempts of colonizing the desolated countryside with settlers from Europe is relatively well documented in some areas of the Kingdom of Jerusalem (Prawer 1980: 102–142), but this activity is still doubtful in the *Terre de Calife* owing to the lack of sources. The rural settlements of the Europeans were always fortified in some way.

²³ It seems from the positioning of the first-floor door that the internal height of the room is quite large, and the existence of a mezzanine floor can't be excluded altogether.

Either they had some kind of curtain wall, or had a fortified tower, yet not every tower can be interpreted as the remainder of a latin village. A far better indicator is the existence of latin churches. According to the testimony of the agreement between the master of the Templars Everard de Barres and Bishop Wiliam of Tortosa in 1152, the existence of such churches cannot be denied in the region. The names enumerated in the document are identified with places other than the seven towers, but one place-name: *Castrum Novum* is still unidentified (Riley-Smith 1969: 285).

The tower forts once conquered by the enemy could also serve as bases of his settling the area with the appropriate population (Marshall 1992: 206). In Palestine the fortresses of Qāqūn, the Red Tower and Calansue fulfilled this function (*ibid.*). On our territory Burğ Mī'ār might have had a similar task after it fell to the Muslims. The fort of Burğ Mī'ār of which only a vaulted undercroft of a tower can be seen today²⁴, was listed among the muslim possessions in 3 texts of the treaties between sultan Qalāwūn and the leadership of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the County of Tripoli ('Abdazzāhir, *Taşrīf* 21; 38; 210; Gabrielli, *Arab Historians* 324). It could have been a frontier post of considerable importance as Chastel Rouge a few kilometres away was still held by the Crusaders at that time.

5. Parts of a signalling system?

It has been proved and is generally accepted, that the defensive system of the Crusaders does not reflect a homogenous conception, above all because there was no power in these states to carry through such (Smail 1956: 204–208). The towers of the *Terre de Calife* were also built by individuals acting to their own will, building their towers wherever they wanted to. But once they were built they could have been used for observation and signalling as well, especially when they were possibly concentrated in the hands of the Military Orders. Most of them command the surrounding area in 360 degrees. It would be an important project to make a carefully detailed study of the area both on the field and both from the surviving sources) to answer the question; to what extent were these towers used as parts of a signalling system?

Though my visit to the area was short and more work on the sources may yield interesting results in the future, some preliminary observations might be ventured. As was stated most of the towers are in a good position of observation, but the best observation point in the region is the dungeon of the once enormous templar castle of Chastel Blanc, which is situated 380 metres high on the emergence of a long spur.

²⁴ The tower had at least a first-floor room, which collapsed around the year 1914. (Hannā: 63).

As one can experience, Chastel Blanc can be seen from all the seven towers, with the exception of Chastel Rouge²⁵.

From Chastel Blanc one can even see the peaks of the Lebanon in good weather conditions. However this is not entirely characteristic of the region receiving very high humidity from the neighbouring sea. Even in the middle of summer it is not surprising to meet haze or fog. Another factor makes indispensable to have more observation points than a few castles scattered in a vast territory. The majority of the raiding parties departed in the evening to reach its target at dawn, travelling at night making use of the covering of darkness and the low night temperatures (Marshall 1992: 197). In this case the commanding position of Chastel Blanc alone was of little use, but it was harder to bypass the environs of the densely placed towers without being noticed. Noticing the approaching enemy in time was not of minor importance. Time was needed to accumulate the goods of a given region into the safety of a tower²⁶. If the area of the towers was attacked directly the population taking shelter in a tower could ask for a relieving force to be sent from the numerous garrison of Chastel Blanc²⁷.

The signalling could be done either by fire or by the way of pigeons. Several examples demonstrate, that the Crusaders used both (Deschamps 1973: 155). One report of the Crusader pigeon post in action comes just from the territory of Chastel Blanc (*ibid*)²⁸.

As in the case of several points in the military architecture and military sciences the parallels of the signalling system in the form of watchtowers can be found on the muslim side as well. One noteworthy example was established to the east of the Buqay'a just opposite to the *Terre de Calife*. Ibn Wāṣil notes in his necrology of al-Malik al-Muḡāhid, the ruler of Homs that the *amīr* who had much trouble on account of the raids of the Hospitallers of the Crac des Chevaliers, ordered towers to be built

²⁵ In this respect Chastel Blanc gains much more importance than the famous Crac des Chevaliers from which one can see Chastel Blanc but cannot see the majority of towers concerned, because of a neighbouring ridge that closes down the view. See the map attached to the study which contains the visibility list of Deschamps (excluding the visual connections of the castle of 'Akkār), and my personal observations, concentrating on the visibility between the towers. The map naturally is far from complete, and more visibility lines can be drawn, including more places after longer journey to the area.

²⁶ Lingering could result in the serious weakening of a regions economic potential; examples quoted by Molin (1997: 380).

²⁷ Ibn al-Furāt's account indicates, that the garrison of Chastel Blanc was numerous enough to conduct sallies against the raiding detachments of Baybars' in the year of 1266 (Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids* II, 86).

²⁸ Its interesting to note that while Baybars had to build several watchtowers with pigeon posts on the highway between Damascus and Homs, his improvement of the pigeon post system in the northern territories of the county of Tripoli is recorded only in 'Akkār (Ibn Šaddād, *Tārīḥ al-Malik az-Zābir* 357).

between them and the Muslims, to prevent the Franks from reaching the territory of Homs unnoticed (Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarriḡ al-kurūb* V, 254).

I hope that in this short paper I could provide some general sketches on the *Terre de Calife* and its vicinity and could direct the attention to a territory which deserves more elaborate research programs and study.

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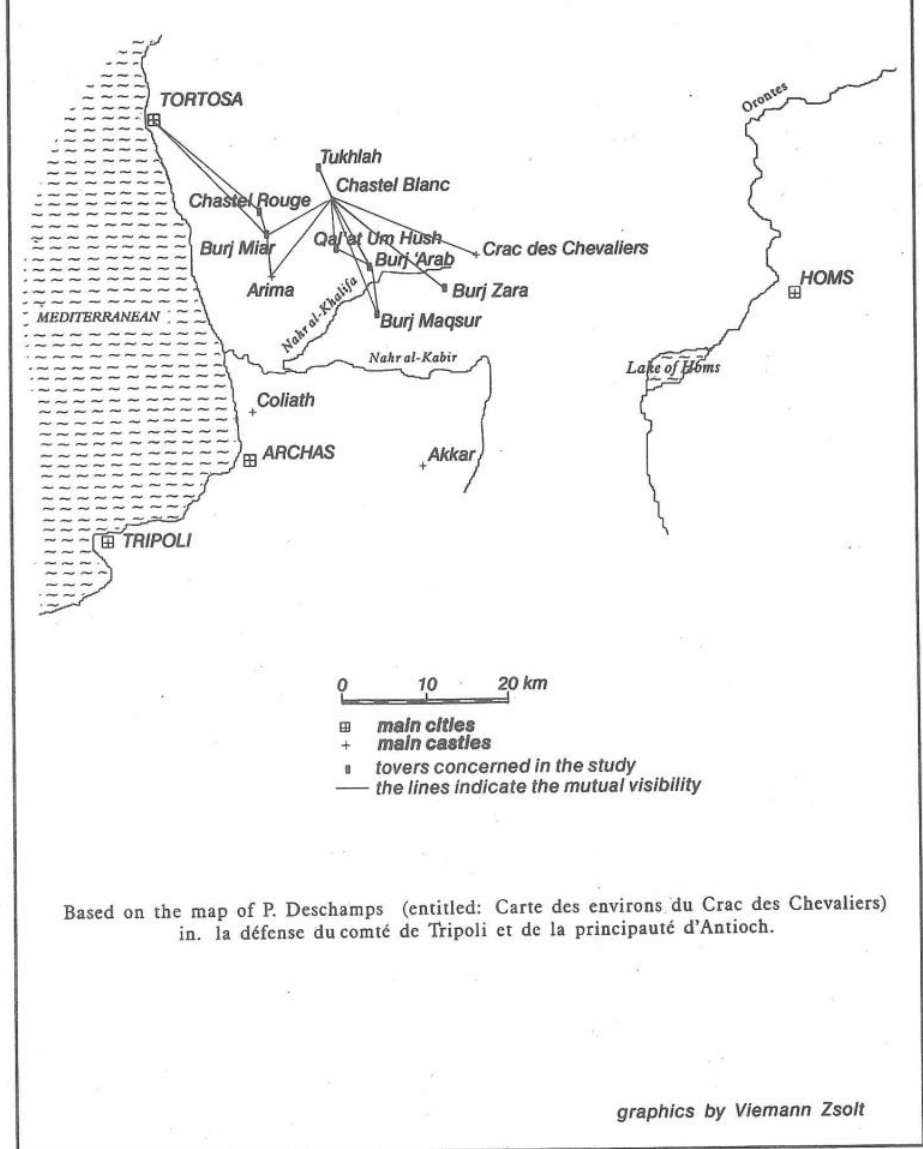
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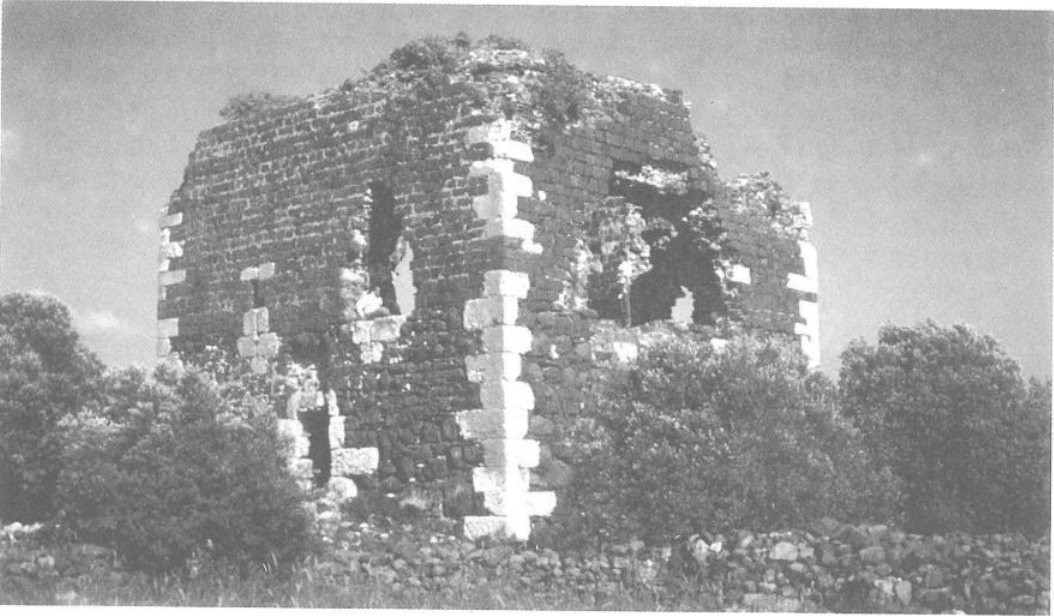
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THE TERRE DE CALIFE AND ITS VICINITY

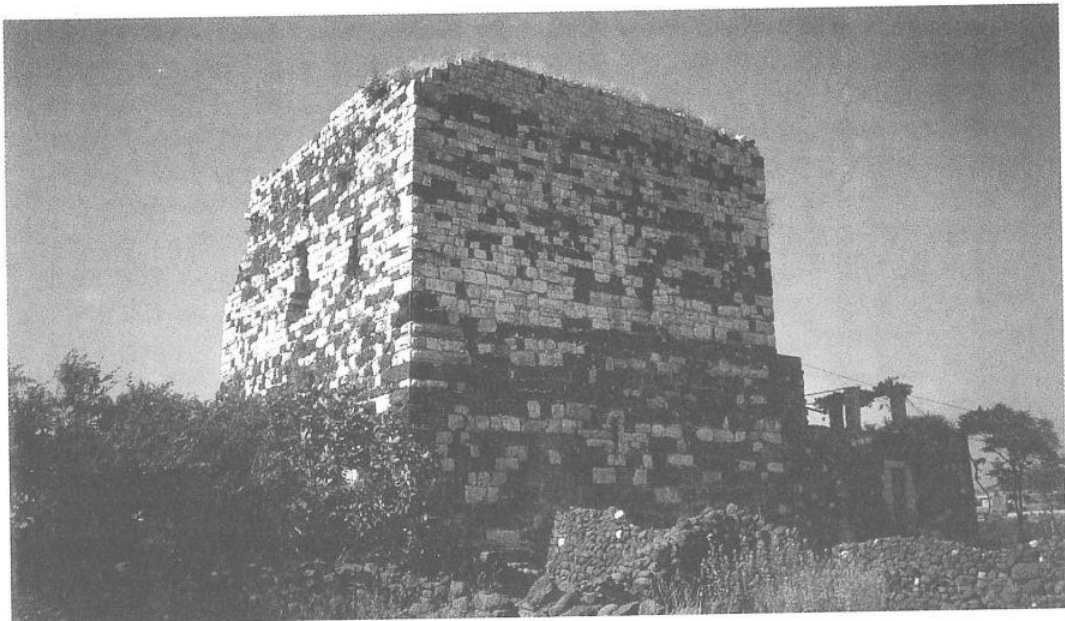




Burg Zārā



Qal'at Umm Hūš



Burg ʿArab



Burg Miʿār