

MEDIEVAL 'AJLŪN

I. *The Castle.*¹ (*Qal'at ar-Rabaḍ.*)

TRANS-JORDAN never formed an integral part of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Content with Palestine, which made up the greater part of the land which they could regard as theirs 'by divine inheritance', the kings made no serious attempt to control the marches beyond the Jordan which would have secured their conquests by cutting off communication between Damascus and Egypt. The first generation had hoped to do so. The 'two lions' of Montreal (1115)² and Kerak (1142)³ controlled the fief of Syria Sobal (popularly known as *Outre Mer* because it lay east of the Dead Sea), and supported by a string of smaller posts reaching to the Gulf of 'Aqaba,⁴ they menaced the caravans passing up and down the *hajj* road some thirty miles to the east. A wild and difficult no-man's land, the Crusaders had found it empty and undefended. Farther north in the country vaguely known as *oultre le flum Jordan* they met with more resistance. For nearly thirty years after the first invasion they disputed it with Ṭughtakīn, the vigorous Atabak of Damascus who fought them so doggedly that he earned a nickname among them—'the Big Boor'.⁵

The part of his territory which they repeatedly attacked was the rich plain east of the lake of Tiberias, the Sawād,⁶ meaning here as in 'Iraq, the 'dark' tilth bordering on the desert.⁷ To the Crusaders it was the land of Suhitis, Suite, or Suet, which they not unnaturally confused with the country of Job's friend, Bildad the Shuhite.⁸ It ran south along the Jordan valley to meet the plain of the Balqā,⁹ north of Kerak, and embraced the mountains overlooking

¹ Works of clearance and conservation were carried out by the Department of Antiquities of the Government of H.H. the Amir of Trans-Jordan during three seasons, 1927-8-9, supervised by the late Signor P. A. Ricci, Engineer to the Department, until his death in 1928. The plan and sections were made by the writer in 1929 and the photographs taken by Mr. G. Horsfield, Inspector of the Department. To him I am indebted for the opportunity of undertaking this study as well as for many suggestions. I am also glad to acknowledge help from Mr. K. A. C. Creswell of Cairo, and M. Gaston Wiet, Director of the Arab Museum in Cairo, as well as from members of this Department.

² William of Tyre, lib. XI, cap. 26, in *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades Occidentaux*, Tome I.

³ William of Tyre, XV. 21.

⁴ Rey, *Colonies Franques de Syrie aux xième et xiième siècles*, 393 ff.

⁵ 'Grossus Rusticus prae nimia pinguique corpulentia et vili persona in qua totus rusticus esse videbatur', Albert of Aix, lib. VII, 16, *Rec. Hist. Occid.*, IV.

⁶ Sibṭ, 'Mir'āt az-Zamān' *Rec. Hist. Orientaux*, III, p. 529; 'ditissimam auro et argento, armentis fecundissimam', Albert, X, 5, van Berchem, *Journal Asiatique*, ninth series, XIX, p. 411.

⁷ Abu-l-Fidā', *Géographie* (Renaud), t. II, 67; II. ii. 64.

⁸ William of Tyre, XXII. 21.

⁹ Ibn al-Athīr, *Rec. Hist. Or.*, I, p. 88 and n. 2, p. 766.

the Jordan valley, west and south of Jerash, known to-day as Jabal 'Ajlūn and Jabal Jil'ad respectively. The latter corresponds to the medieval district of as-Salt, the former to Jabal Jarash,¹ which by the twelfth century had come to be known as Jabal 'Auf after a bedawi tribe who had invaded it in Fatimite times.² To the east lay the desolate lava country of al-Bathaniyya, centring at Ahrid'āt, the modern Der'ah.³ Towns which were flourishing in Byzantine times appear to have been abandoned after a series of devastating earthquakes in the late eighth century.⁴ Unprotected by the distant Abbasid government in Baghdad, they lay open to the predatory tribes in the neighbouring desert beyond the *hajj* road. In the twelfth century they were like Jerash, empty ruins which filled the Crusaders with amazement.⁵

Apart from inciting the bedawin to raid Frankish territory west of Jordan, the amirs of Damascus left the remoter parts of this territory very much alone. Most of the fighting between Ṭughtakīn and the Counts of Tiberias took place between Damascus and the Lake. At first Tancred had naïvely called upon Ṭughtakīn to give up Damascus as well as his religion, and go and live wherever else he chose.⁶ After ten years of almost annual raids Ṭughtakīn had at last to concede to Baldwin I one-third of the revenues of the region between the Ḥaurān and ash-Sharī'a or Outre-Mer, viz. the Sawād and Jabal 'Auf.⁷ To secure payment the Counts built a castle sixteen miles east of Tiberias, strongly placed on a cliff above an old laura.⁸ It changed hands more than once. Ṭughtakīn, 'mout disloiall et plein de grant felonie', retaliated by fortifying Jerash. Baldwin I captured this fort in returning from a raid on Damascus in 1121 but left no garrison behind him; Jabal 'Auf was too isolated.⁹ No other effort was made to hold it; though Baldwin again attacked Damascus in force in 1129.¹⁰ The second generation came to acquiesce

¹ Yāqūt, ed. Wüstenfeld, II. 61.

² See below, p. 24.

³ Abu-l-Fidā', *Géog.* II. ii. 30.

⁴ Crowfoot, 'Churches at Jerash', p. 5 (*B.S.A. Jerusalem, Supp. Papers*, 3, 1931.)

⁵ 'Civitatem quamdam mirabiliter et gloriose situ forti antiquitus fundatam, lapidibus magnis et quadris illuc erectum erat.' Fulcher, III. 10, *Rec. Hist. Occid.*, III.

⁶ Albert, VII. 16, 17.

⁷ Sibṭ, 537; Abū Shāma, 'Livre des Deux Jardins', in *Rec. Hist. Or.* IV, p. 277, writing of the fall of Tiberias, says they were halved at that time (1187) and drawn from a larger area which included as-Salt, al-Balqā, Jabal 'Auf, al-Ḥayyāniyyah, as-Sawād and also the Jaulān and the surrounding country as far as the Ḥaurān. According to Yāqūt, II. 374, al-Ḥayyāniyyah is part of the Sawād overlooking the Jordan valley, situated in Jabal Ḥirsh (جبل حرش) perhaps an error for Jabal Jarash (جبل جرش). Cf. Ibn al-Athīr, 315, reading al-Ḥayyāniyyah (الحيانية) for al-Jabāniyyah (الجبانية).

⁸ William of Tyre, XXII. 15; Sibṭ, 529, 530, 544; Ibn al-Athīr, 286, 315, and note pp. 781, 784; Yāqūt, II. 201. Sibṭ, p. 530 refers to it as 'Al; Ibn al-Athīr calls it Ḥabīs; Yāqūt, Ḥabīs Jaldik. It stood at al-Ḥabīs on the south side of the Yarmuk valley, opposite Shajara Sta. (Kilo, 119.5); cf. *Reichsamt für Landesaufnahme*, Berlin (1918), 37, 74-3500: *ZDPV*, XLIX (1926), 147 or *Steuernagel, Der Adschlun*, 531 ff., also *Tafeln* 80-2.

⁹ Fulcher, III. 10.

¹⁰ Stevenson, *Crusaders in the East*, 127 ff.

in the status quo. They did not whole-heartedly support Louis VII and Conrad in their siege of Damascus because they had come to rely upon the neutrality of the amirs. They continued to do so even after Nūr ad-dīn's capture of Damascus in 1154. Thus the *Banū 'Auf* kept their independence, and their territory remained a no-man's land.

A change came when Saladin finally returned from Egypt in 1182. Master of Egypt and so able to consolidate his position in Syria, he soon found that his most formidable adversary was Reginald of Kerak whose castles in Syria Sobal or Outre Mer were a standing menace to his communications. Saladin had narrowly escaped him on his march through to Damascus in 1182.¹ After Reginald's astonishing attempt to sack the Holy Cities of Arabia in the following year Saladin spared no effort to crush him.² He invested Kerak twice, in 1183 and 1184,³ and at this juncture took steps to establish himself farther north in Jabal 'Auf or 'Ajlūn, the territory which lay between Damascus and his implacable enemy. In 1184-5 'Izz ad-dīn Usāma, one of his ablest amirs was transferred to 'Ajlūn from Bairut and the building of the castle begun.⁴ It arose as a direct retort to the new Latin castle of Belvoir or *Kaukab al-Harwā*, 'Star of the Air', loftily placed on the escarpment on the opposite side of the Jordan valley, between Tiberias and Baisan. The new Moslem castle at 'Ajlūn might deter the Latins from raiding the Sawād as they had done in the year of Saladin's return, recapturing their outpost at Ḥabīs Jaldik and penetrating as far as Bostra and Damascus;⁵ but chiefly it served to check Reginald of Kerak by bringing northern Trans-Jordan under the control of Damascus.

The story of the building is most fully told by a thirteenth-century writer, Ibn Shaddād al-Ḥalabī;⁶ briefly followed in the fourteenth by Abu-l-Fidā' and extensively by al-'Umarī, author of the Chancery Manuals *Masālik al-Abṣār* and *at-Ta'rīf*, later summed up by Qalqashandī in a similar manual entitled *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*.⁷ To quote from van Berchem's abridged translation of Ibn Shaddād's unpublished manuscript:

'The castle of 'Ajlūn lies between the district of the Sawād, belonging to the Jordan

¹ William of Tyre, XXII. 15; Ibn al-Athīr, 651.

² Abū Shāma, *Rec. Hist. Or.*, IV. 230 ff.; Ibn al-Athīr, 660, cf. Stevenson, 228; Schlumberger, *Renaud de Châtillon*, Chap. VII.

³ William of Tyre, XXII. 28, 30; Ibn al-Athīr, 664, 666; Abū Shāma, 248, 250 ff.

⁴ Abu-l-Fidā', *Rec. Hist. Or.*, I. 70, 86, 143; Géographie (trans. Renaud), t. II, ii, pp. 6, 22; cf. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, pp. 76, 388, 389; for the date A.H. 580, Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, IV. 105; XII. 105.

⁵ William of Tyre, XXII. 20, 22.

⁶ Van Berchem, 'Arabische Inschriften aus Syrien, II', in *Mitteilungen und Nachrichten des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 1903, pp. 54 ff.

⁷ Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie à l'époque des Mamelouks d'après les auteurs arabes*, p. 66, for references and translation.

province, and the district of Sharāt. It is new and small and stands on a projecting spur overlooking the Jordan Valley, visible both from Jerusalem and from the Nablus ridge. Its longitude works out at 69°, its latitude 32° 10'.¹ The range on which it is built is called Jabal 'Auf, because a clan of the *Banū 'Auf* lived there under the early Fatimite khalifs. They had doughty and restless amirs who were at feud with one another because their families were at odds. So things stood until the time of Malik al-'Ādil Saif ad-dīn Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb (Saladin's brother) who gave the district as a fief to 'Izz ad-dīn Usāma, one of his chief amirs.² He at once began to build a castle to protect his governors from the *Banū 'Auf*. But they hindered him so much that he represented to them that he was building it merely to protect them against the Franks. Then they grew amenable and helped him to build it. When it was finished he invited the sheikhs of the *Banū 'Auf* to the castle and set a banquet before them. When they had eaten he ordered his young slaves to seize them and lock them up.

It is said that an ancient monastery once stood on the site, inhabited by a Christian named 'Ajlūn;³ the monastery falling into ruin, the castle took its place and the name of the monk. [An excursus follows in which mention is made of a book entitled *Kitāb al-Diyārāt*, "The Book of Monasteries"] . . .

The position was well chosen. Not only does it command an uninterrupted view of the whole length of the Jordan between the two lakes and of the Palestine ridge from Jerusalem to Tabor, Kaukab, and Safad, but it also dominates one of three valleys which lead straight up to the high land on the Transjordan side. This is the middle one, the Wādī Kafrinjī; to the south parallel with it runs the Wādī Rājib, the route by which the Hasmoneans used to raid the Hellenistic colonies later known as the Decapolis;⁴ to the north runs the Wādī Yābis by which the Roman road ascended from Pella (Fahl) to Jerash by way of Ba'ūn and 'Ain Jenni.⁵ These wadis fall rapidly to the Jordan; only a few miles from the watershed they are huge clefts sloping steeply on either hand to a depth of not less than 1,000 feet. Above such a valley stands the castle of 'Ajlūn. Its site is a round knoll at the western end of a projecting shoulder of the main range, its height not much lower than the watershed itself. The knoll is separated from the shoulder by a slight saddle, but unlike the majority of the mountain castles 'Ajlūn is accessible by an easy slope on all sides (fig. 1).⁶ Elsewhere a rock promontory was almost invariably chosen, protected by cliffs on three sides and cut off from the mountain on

¹ According to an Arabized version of the Ptolemaic system.

² Formerly governor of Bairut; not to be confused with 'Usāma ibn Munqidh of Shaizar, as Qalqashandī has in his *Dau*, p. 286; cf. R. Hartmann, 'Politische Geographie des Mamlūkenreichs' in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, LXX, 1916, p. 26.

³ But cf. Judges iii. 12. Yāqūt, II. 61, adopts a similar explanation for the name of Jarash, adding the genealogy of its patronymic.

⁴ Alexander Jannaeus died at the siege of Ragaba, cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* ed. Niese, XIII. 398 (= XV. 5).

⁵ Steuernagel, *Der 'Adschlun*, 1927, 396.

⁶ Cf. Dalman, *Fliegerbilder aus Palästina*, no. 86.

the fourth by a short rock-hewn fosse. At 'Ajlūn, for lack of a position of this sort, 'Izz ad-dīn Usāma chose the last high point on the north side of the valley and then isolated the castle by surrounding it with a rock-cut fosse.

As the building was adapted to the rock surface, the ground levels vary considerably (Plates XX–XXIII). The crest of the knoll occurs near the western angle of the castle and forms an upper platform, falling away on the south and east. It was scarped along all four sides, outside the western angle to form the fosse, and on either side of the eastern angle, to make two lower platforms. The general direction of the slope is shown by the ramp which ascends from the central tower (1) to the inner ward (5) (cf. A–B). Farther south it is so much steeper that the fosse was formed chiefly by embanking the counter-scarp. On the other three sides it was excavated in the rock; the height of the counter-scarp, naturally less than the scarp, varies from 5 to 10 metres, the width between the scarp and the walls from 15 to 20 metres, excepting where it was crossed. Here a tongue and a pillar of rock were reserved to carry the bridge over two spans of about 5 metres each (Fig. 2).

The upper platform is occupied by a quadrilateral of four square towers (1, 2, 3, 4) connected by curtain walls; only one tower (1) still stands at its original height; (2), (3), and the outer face of (4) have been ruined almost to their foundations and since rebuilt of smaller material, like the curtain walls between them (Fig. 6). Their height and the placing of their original doors and arrow-slits is therefore a matter of conjecture. This quadrilateral in the form of a *castellum*¹ seems to have been the nucleus of the castle and may be loosely called the keep. Its only entrance was in the east wall at (5), which was flanked by both of the corner towers (1) and (4), assuming that the present door into (4) is an enlarged arrow-slit. The arrow-slits in the east and south curtain walls, as well as in the towers (1) and (4) have mostly been masked by subsequent building, but the window openings are still to be seen on the inside. The original outer gate was probably at (6) bonded into the south-east tower (1) of the keep and connected with the north-east tower (4) by a wall which has slits now blocked by a mezzanine floor; the lower windows are of a later type and like the door are possibly alterations. The gate was protected by a *machicoulis* with two corbels (Fig. 5), which had to be removed after the earthquake of 1927 because they were cracked.

On the lower platforms of rock under the eastern and southern sides of the keep were two baileys. The eastern was the larger and had corner towers (7) and (8), flanking the curtain walls (Figs. 2, 4). The eastern wall must have had arrow-slits, now ruined. The rock level here is low enough for a gallery to

¹ Daremberg-Saglio, *Dict. des Antiq. Grec. et Rom.*, s.v.

have been built without masking the east of the keep, as the upper galleries did later. When these were put on the towers were also raised; the original height of (7) is shown by the built-up crenellations just above the second floor (Fig. 2) which eventually led out on to the roof of the top gallery. Similarly the north tower (8) may at first have been one or two stories shorter (Fig. 4). Between the south tower (7) and the gate (6) there was presumably another curtain wall which was pulled down during later alterations. The southern bailey built above the steeper slope towards the wadi had no towers, and like the eastern it originally had no upper galleries above (11) and (12). The outer wall was pierced with arrow-slits of which two are still to be seen at the west end of the outer gallery (12); the others are conjectural since the rest of the gallery is choked with debris from the upper floors, while the south wall has been largely rebuilt and the north-eastern end refaced on the outside. The open roof of these galleries could be covered by the fire of the south side of the keep.

Completing the gap at the end of the inner gallery (11) we arrive at a possible plan of the castle built by 'Izz ad-dīn Usāma in the reign of Saladin. It is a structural whole; it contains five out of the six rock-hewn cisterns within the present walls including the largest; and it is distinguished from the newer part of the completed building by heavier and cruder work, and more particularly by its windows. These are of the simplest and strongest form, wedge-shaped in plan, narrowing to a slit on the outside and covered with a tapering arch (Fig. 7). These occur only in the parts already described, viz. the keep, the lower towers (7) and (8) and the outer south gallery (12), and nowhere else. Elsewhere, in the additional south tower (13) (Fig. 8), along the ramp (15) leading from the fosse to the first ward (14) as well as the upper stories of the older part, the typical window is of a more developed form. The slit is contained in a larger arched niche which takes up the greater part of the thickness of the wall (Fig. 7). Frequently the arrow-slit is made up of removable blocks inserted in a square opening which could thus be opened to the air in times of peace and clement weather. It partly resembles the intermediate form introduced by al-'Ādil into his brother Saladin's citadel in Cairo about 1200.¹ At 'Ajlūn it is distinctive of the large southern tower (13) which is precisely dated by an inscription to the year 611 = A.D. 1214-5.² It was put up by Aibak b. 'Abdullah, Mamluk and Major-domo (*ustādh ad-dār*) to al-Malik al-Mu'azzam, son of al-'Ādil.³ From its position half-way up the east

¹ Creswell, 'Archaeological Researches at the Citadel of Cairo' in *BIFAO*, XXIII (1924), 117, 118, 121, and Pl. XV; cf. also XIII, A.

² Van Berchem, 'Arabische Inschriften aus Syrien II' in *MuNDPV*, 1903, p. 53.

³ *The Encyclopaedia of Islām*, under *Aibeg*, p. 208.

face of the tower (Fig. 8: F on the second plan) it can hardly be a later insertion. To Aibak then is due not only the south tower and the two outer gates, but in all probability the heightening of the older part of the building as well.

He was a man of energy, especially in building, which was one of the functions of the *ustādh ad-dār*, or *magister palatii*.¹ His inscriptions are scattered from Tabor and Khān al-'Aqabeh by the Sea of Tiberias to the desert frontier, and they cover nearly thirty years in which he advances from a mere major-domo to amir and finally the self-styled title of 'the great amir'.² Most of his work was done in the marcher district of Salkhad and Dhur'a of which he was 'Lord' (*sāhib*) from 1211-12 until his banishment a little after 1238. To encourage traffic between Damascus, the Hijaz, and 'Iraq, he built the castles of Salkhad and al-Azraq near 'Ammān, founded khans and repaired pools along the *hajj* road. 'Ajlūn was one of his earliest works.

'Izz ad-dīn Usāma was arrested and his castles besieged in 1211-12 by al-Mu'azzam the son of al-'Ādil acting under his father's orders. He was then imprisoned at Kerak and deprived of his province, viz. the Balqā, as-Salt and Jabal 'Auf. He had taken al-Afdal's side against al-'Ādil after Saladin's death and was still under suspicion; 'with this Usāma', wrote Abu-l-Fidā, 'perished the last of Saladin's faction'. Kaukab (or Belvoir), which had been added to his province after its fall in 1188, was now rased to the ground; 'Ajlūn and the rest of Usāma's province was retained by al-Malik al-Mu'azzam, who then put 'Izz ad-dīn Aibak in charge of Sarkhad (or Salkhad).³ Al-Mu'azzam can have lost no time in strengthening and improving 'Ajlūn, the castle which he had himself captured, if the new tower was finished by his major-domo, Aibak, in 1214-15.

The new south tower (13) reinforced the older building where the siege had proved it to be weakest—the reflex angle between the two baileys or lower galleries. It is clearly an addition. Although the corners were bonded with the walls of the south bailey (12) it was built on a slightly different axis; the inner side of the south arm is a facing built against the outer wall of the gallery, as revealed by a straight joint in the L-shaped room on the first floor. A new ward (14) was built on at the north corner, joining it up with (7). Its outer gate (Fig. 9) was protected by a *machicoulis* looking down from the first floor. Each of the springers of the arch spanning the gateway has a device in relief; only one of them is at all recognizable, and seems to be a pair of

¹ Quatremère, *Histoire des Sultans Mameluks*, I. 2, 25.

² Van Berchem, *MuNDPV*, 1903, 33 ff.; 'Eine arabische Inschrift aus dem Ostjordanlande' in *ZDPV*, XVI, p. 85; Dussaud-Macler, *Mission dans les régions désertiques de la Syrie Moyenne*, pp. 326 ff.; 336 f.

³ Abu-l-Fidā', *Rec. Hist. Or.*, I. 86; *MuNDPV*, 1903, 55; *Journal Asiatique*, ninth series, III. 397, 465, IV. 298 ff. (n. 29).

fighting peacocks. A corridor along the south-eastern face of (7) protected the ramp ascending from the bridge. The outermost gateway was protected by a *machicoulis* of nine openings, four of which covered the archway (Fig. 3). At the same time both sets of galleries were raised, possibly to their final height of two floors. These upper galleries are now badly ruined; the level of the floors must be deduced from the doors communicating with the towers, or from the mortar adhering to their faces where the vaults abutted. The inner of the two tall galleries over (9) and the part west of (10) alone remains (Figs. 10, 12); here the more finished cutting of the voussoirs agrees very well with the arching and corbelling in the new south tower (13) (Fig. 7). The airy rooms above the south-western tower of the keep (2) at the highest point of the building—doubtless the Commandant's quarters—may also belong to Aibak's improvements. Though the roof of every tower has gone the earlier example preserved in (7) suggests that they were similarly embattled (Fig. 2), while a section of the western walls has been restored upon the analogy of the bailey wall at Kerak, which is thirteenth-century work. The two western towers of the keep (2) and (3) are also almost complete ruins; it is assumed that like (1) and (4) they were two floors high. Of the fosse three sides had no doubt been excavated when the castle was first begun, if only as a limestone quarry; the scarping of the south side however, with its vaulted cistern (16), must be Aibak's work since it follows so closely the line of his additions.

Apart from the difference in the windows and in the finish of arches already referred to, the later construction is indistinguishable from the earlier; scarcely thirty years had elapsed. The external masonry of both periods was in the local rusticated style, *ṭubzī mazmūl* or quarry-faced, chisel-dressed a few centimetres deep around the margin (Fig. 11). In appearance it resembles the rectangular towers of al-'Ādil's time in the citadel at Cairo (1207-8),¹ or the contemporary work in the Jerusalem citadel such as the lower part of the Mosque tower which bears an inscription of al-Mu'azzam dated 610 A.H., a year earlier than Aibak's at 'Ajlūn.² These are only the two most accessible examples of many that exist; it is a robust and economical style of dressing that has been traditional in the country at least since Roman times, though there are still older examples. The present appearance of the western and southern angles of the castle (Fig. 6) is obviously due to a later repair. The main defensive walls were all from 2 to 3 metres thick, yet they were regularly bonded with through stones and well bedded; unlike the run of Byzantine and medieval work consisting of ashlar skins with a rubble filling,

¹ Creswell, loc. cit.

² Van Berchem, *CIA*, II, *Syrie du Sud*, I. i, no. 43, p. 131.

the 'Ajlūn walls seem to be almost solid masonry. The coursing is fairly even, varying from 70 cm. near the foundations to 60 cm. in the upper stories. The stones are generally 1½ to 2 metres long, 60 to 70 cm. wide, though the quoins of the south tower are as much as 2½ metres in length; the upper stones are naturally smaller, sometimes no more than half the size of the lower.¹ The quarry faces were hammered almost flat, and the margins worked flat with a pointed chisel (*shōkeh*) or comb-pick (*shaḥūṭa*); in the later work the voussoirs were chiselled all over with flat bosses projecting some 3 or 4 cms. from the margin. The vaults are all in the local tradition, most of them barrel-shaped ('*aqd 'enbūb*) built of tapering field stones set in lime mortar (Fig. 12); some diagonal groined vaults occur (*ṣalīb* = cross). They usually spring from the top of the ashlar, a metre or two from the floor, but in the newer work corbels were used (Fig. 7). They were usually rendered, together with the internal faces of the walls. Indeed the common tradition of the country runs through the whole building. A few relics of the Roman occupation survive. A well-cut limestone conch and some limestone mouldings were found in the top room of the new tower, mostly double cyma recta of shallow cut. A piece of boldly cut relief, a lintel crudely carved with a cross, and one or two finely dressed stones were also built in. With the possible exception of the mouldings this was secondary material taken from some ancient ruin either on the same site, or else from a Byzantine town in the valley on the site of modern 'Ajlūn. That an older building may have existed on the same site is suggested by some very fine masonry which was laid bare in the course of buttressing the southern angle (of 12). Of Crusading work, that is, of later Western influence, there is no trace apart from one or two stones with the characteristic diagonal chisel-dressing. If the village of Kafrinjī on the opposite side of the valley was really inhabited by Franks as its name suggests (Kafr al-Franj); and if they were prisoners who were forced to work on the building they contributed nothing distinctive such as the cut-stone vaulting which is common in the twelfth-century churches. Such Frankish features as the castle has, or such as modern travellers have detected,² were the fruit of local tradition and of common experience in the wars rather than of direct foreign influence.

Aibak then left the castle much as it is shown in the sections; it was afterwards restored but no important additions were made. By extending the outer defences he strengthened it where it was weakest, but in doing so he masked the keep and somewhat obscured the original plan. Apart from the long staircase returning from the wall of the eastern gallery (9') to the roof,

¹ Schumacher seemed to think that the difference in size represented two periods, *Steuernagel, Der 'Ajschlun*, 311. ² Cf. Le Strange, in Schumacher's *Across the Jordan* (1886), pp. 285 ff.

the keep remained a self-contained whole, yet it was less defensible on account of the surrounding galleries which shortened its field of fire. Aibak placed greater reliance upon the outer enceinte, principally upon the new south tower, a lofty bastion covering the whole of the south side, and next upon the two extra gates, each covered by a *machicoulis*, still a recent invention. Not that the castle had to withstand any determined siege. When the Latin kingdom and Kerak fell only a few years after its foundation it had outlived its strategic usefulness. In the thirteenth century it became an administrative centre in the south march of Damascus, the head-quarters of a governor (*nā'ib*) directly responsible to the royal *nā'ib* in Damascus.¹ The *nā'ib* had a resident warden (*wālī*) who was specially responsible for the maintenance and defence of the castle. *Nā'ib* and *wālī* are Mamluk ranks but their relationship is well illustrated by al-Mu'azzam and Aibak. Qalqashandī's compendium of Mamluk official procedure (*Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*) gives a typical warrant of appointment which specifies the duties of the two officials: to keep the castle in repair and guard it against all strangers, to collect revenues in kind in order to keep it provisioned in readiness for a siege and to do justice.² Thus 'Ajlun became an arsenal also; in 1217 for instance it was one of the centres where supplies were concentrated for the relief of Damietta.³ The long, gloomy galleries outside the keep were perhaps magazines rather than inhabited quarters, and timber, charcoal, and iron their particular stock. The pride of 'Ajlūn is still its trees, chiefly small scrub oak; thus charcoal was to hand. Good iron ore occurs near the surface at the southern end of the range, on the north side of the Zarqā valley.⁴ It was mined and smelted as late as the time of Ibrahīm Pasha, within the memory of families still living there. There must have been similar workings near 'Ajlūn which are now forgotten. The heaps of iron slag which are to be found all over the eastern and southern slopes of the castle hill, and in the modern village of 'Ajlūn where it has recently been used as road metal, point to a considerable number of small bloom furnaces. Nor is it likely that all the refined metal was sent to Damascus to be worked, since a small knife-making industry is still carried on in Kafrinjī. It is not surprising that an extensive suburb grew up round the foot of the hill, which was large enough to give the castle its later name, Qal'at ar-Rabaḍ, 'the castle with the faubourg'. From the archaeological evidence it was inhabited from the thirteenth until the end of the fifteenth century; the medieval town of 'Ajlūn two or three miles farther up the wadi, now the centre of the district, flourished at the same time. In

¹ Gaudefroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie à l'époque des Mamelouks*, 1923, p. 179. ² *Ibid.*, cviii, n. 5.

³ Röhricht, *Geschichte des Königreichs Jerusalem*, 1898, 726, n. 3.

⁴ Possibly the 'Iron Mountain' of Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* (Niese), IV. 455 (= viii. 2).

1355 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa found it 'a fine town with good markets and a strong castle. A stream runs through the town and the waters are sweet and good'.¹ Dimishqī who came about 1300 also found 'fruits of all kinds and provisions in plenty'.² He first saw the fortress four days' march away, or nearly fifty miles off, presumably from across the Ghor, i.e. the Jordan valley. Its exceptionally lofty position made it an excellent beacon-station; and in the shorter Mamluk geographical hand-book (*at-Ta'rīf*) 'Ajlūn is mentioned as a link between at-Ṭurra and Ṭayyibat al-Isim via Ibzīq in the chain of beacons and pigeon posts by which an alarm of the Euphrates frontier could be conveyed to the Sultan in Cairo between sunset and sunrise or sunrise and sunset. 'Ajlūn and Irbid picked up the south-bound signals from at-Ṭurra, a beacon on the *hajj* road a few miles west of Der'a, and passed them back to Ṭayyibat al-Isim just south of Shaikh Sa'd on the *hajj* road and actually farther north than at-Ṭurra. From there, however, they were visible at a special station situated on the hills overlooking Baisan and at the same time at points along the regular postal route which crossed the Jordan at Jisr al-Majāmi' and passed through Jenin, where the news could also be received via another beacon at Ibzīq north-east of Nablus. From Jenin the chain ran on to Gaza, thence to Cairo by pigeon post.³

The rulers of 'Ajlūn who followed al-Mu'azzam are given in the manuscript by Ibn Shaddād, already quoted in van Berchem's translation.

'After his [al-Mu'azzam's] death in Dhu-l-Qa'da, 624 [1227], it fell to his son Malik Nāṣir Dāwūd, who held it along with Damascus, Kerak and Shaubak. When Malik Kāmil came into possession of Damascus and handed the city over to Malik Ashraf, the former left to Malik Nāṣir Kerak, Shaubak, and the lands of the Jordan Valley, but 'Ajlūn fell to Malik Ashraf until his death on 4 Muḥarram, 635 [1237]. Then the Amir Zāhir ad-dīn ibn Sunqur al-Ḥalabī, who was in the Malik Nāṣir's service at Nablus, entered into correspondence with the then governor of 'Ajlūn and offered him 40,000 dirhams, a robe of honour, a riding horse and various stuffs, in order that the latter should hand over the castle to the officers of Malik Nāṣir Dāwūd. When Dāwūd took the Amir Saif ad-dīn 'Alī ibn Qilij Nūrī into his service in Dhu-l-qa'da in 639 [1242], he gave him the castle to hold; he held it until Malik Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb [of Egypt] occupied it in the year 643 [1245-6]. When the latter died on the 15 Sha'bān 647 [1249] it remained in the hands of the representative of his son Malik Mu'azzam [Tūrān-Shāh] until his death in Muḥarram 648 [1250]. Then Malik Nāṣir [Yūsuf], lord of Aleppo, put himself in possession of Damascus and 'Ajlūn. . . . When the Tartars conquered Syria and brought Nāṣir's reign to an end the latter fled from Damascus. His governor in 'Ajlūn had refused the castle to the Tartars until Malik Nāṣir took refuge there and himself surrendered it in Rajab [658 = 1260]. The enemy consumed

¹ Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 389.

² *Ibid.*, 388.

³ Trans. R. Hartmann, *ZDMG*, Vol. LXX, 1916, pp. 503 ff.

all the provisions and stores there . . . threw down the battlements, but kept possession until they were routed at the battle of 'Ain Jālūt in Ramaḍān 658 [1260]. Then Malik Muzaffar [Qutuz of Egypt] gained possession and had it put in order. When he was killed in Dhu-l-Qa'da and Malik Zāhir [Baybars] became ruler of Egypt and Syria, he made for 'Ajlūn as soon as he had entered Damascus in Ṣafar, 659 [1261], put the castle in order, revictualled it and appointed 'Izz ad-dīn Aibak 'Allānī as governor. The latter looked after it until he was offered the newly captured castle of Safad and was replaced here by the Amir Saif ad-dīn who is warden at the present day, that is, at the time when we began to write this book [about 674 (1275-6)]. When Malik Zāhir died on 28 Muḥarram 676 [1277] it went to his son Malik Sa'īd Muḥammad Barakat-Qān, then on the 18 Rabi' II. 678 [1279] to his brother Malik 'Ādil Salāmish . . ., then on the 25 Rajab of the same year to Malik Maṣṣūr Qalāwūn, who sent there his governors, and it is still in his possession.'

In 1288-9 twenty-eight years after his first appointment 'Izz ad-dīn Aibak b. Abdallāh [al-'Allānī] formerly *mamluk* of Malik Maṣṣūr [Qalāwūn], amir, general, still describes himself in an inscription as warden or military governor (*mutawallī*) of 'Ajlūn.¹ About the same time the commissioner (*nā'ib*) of the province was the amir Rukn ad-dīn Mankūwīresh, a former page of Malik Maṣṣūr.² A civil governor (*ḥākim*) of the early fourteenth century is also known, an Egyptian judge, Tāj addīn Muḥammad al-Ikhnā'ī.³

The history of the fabric since the first Aibak's extension is mostly conjecture. Restoration was certainly carried out shortly before the Tartar invasion; the work is recorded in an inscription recovered in 1927.⁴ It took place 'in the time of our lord the Sultan al-Malik an-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ ad-dīn Yūsuf, son of al-Malik al-'Azīz, God be praised, may He preserve his kingdom'. It was done 'under the direction of Muḥammad Zaid, lord of 'Aintāb' who had presumably followed his lord, 'Malik Nāṣir, lord of Aleppo' of the previous extract, southwards when he made himself Sultan of Damascus in 1250. Al-Malik an-Nāṣir surrendered 'Ajlūn to the Tartars early in 1260 and died the same year;⁵ the work must therefore have been done some time between 1250 and 1260, probably between 1253 and 1260 since the lord of 'Aintāb before 651 was not Muḥammad Zaid.⁶ The inscription lay on the vault of the outer eastern gallery at (E) on the plan and sections, having fallen from one of the walls. Burckhardt may have seen it in position as late as 1812; 'as

¹ Inscription commemorating restoration of *wali* of Shaikh 'Alī of Mashhad on a peak west of 'Ajlūn, *MuNDPV*, 1903, pp. 61 ff.

² Inscription from northern suburb of castle, from mosque, *MuNDPV*, 1903, p. 58.

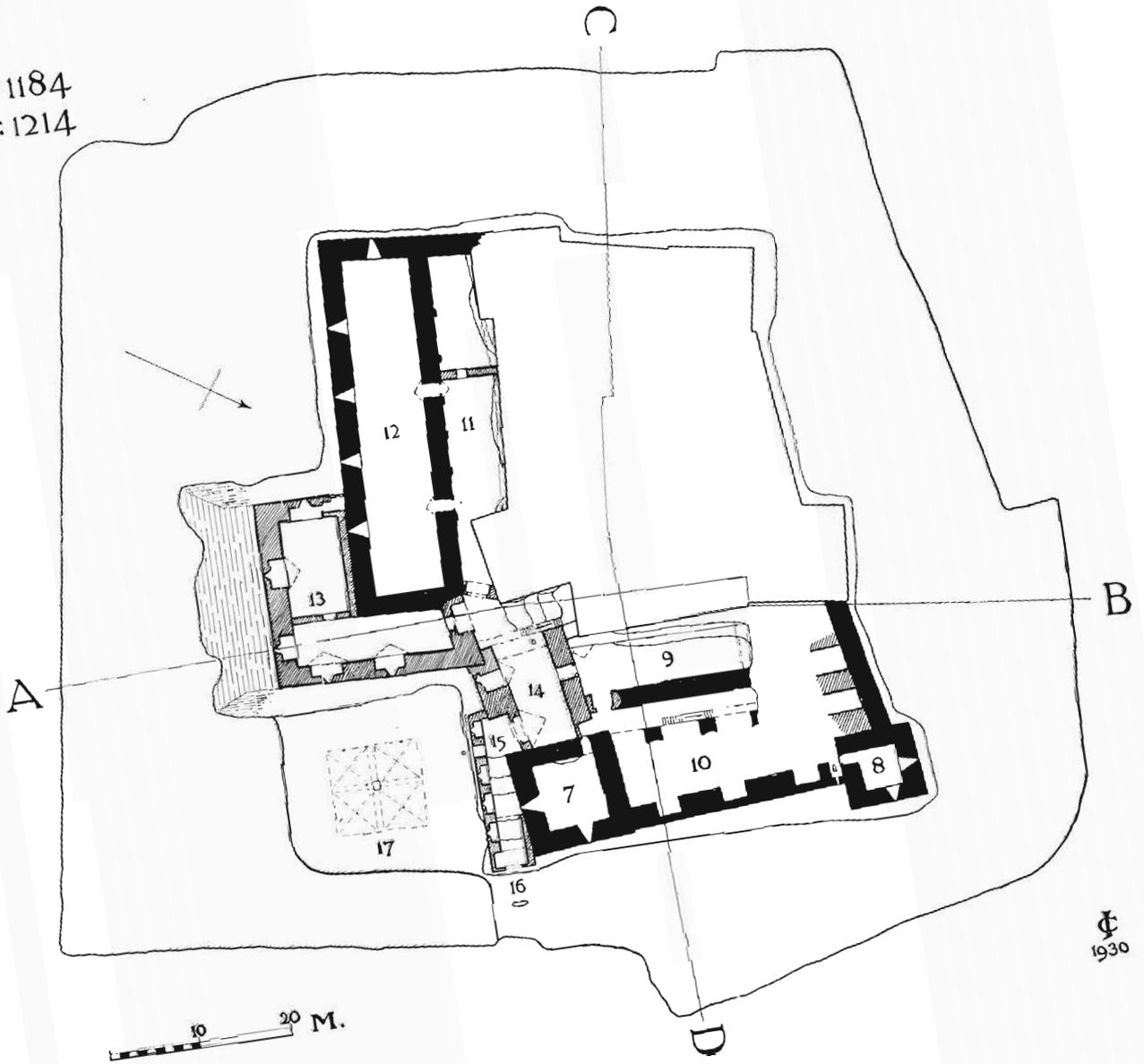
³ Inscription beside door of 'Ajlūn mosque, *MuNDPV*, 1903, p. 66.

⁴ To be published in a later number.

⁵ Zambaur, *Manuel de Généalogie et de Chronologie pour l'Histoire de l'Islam*, 1927, p. 100.

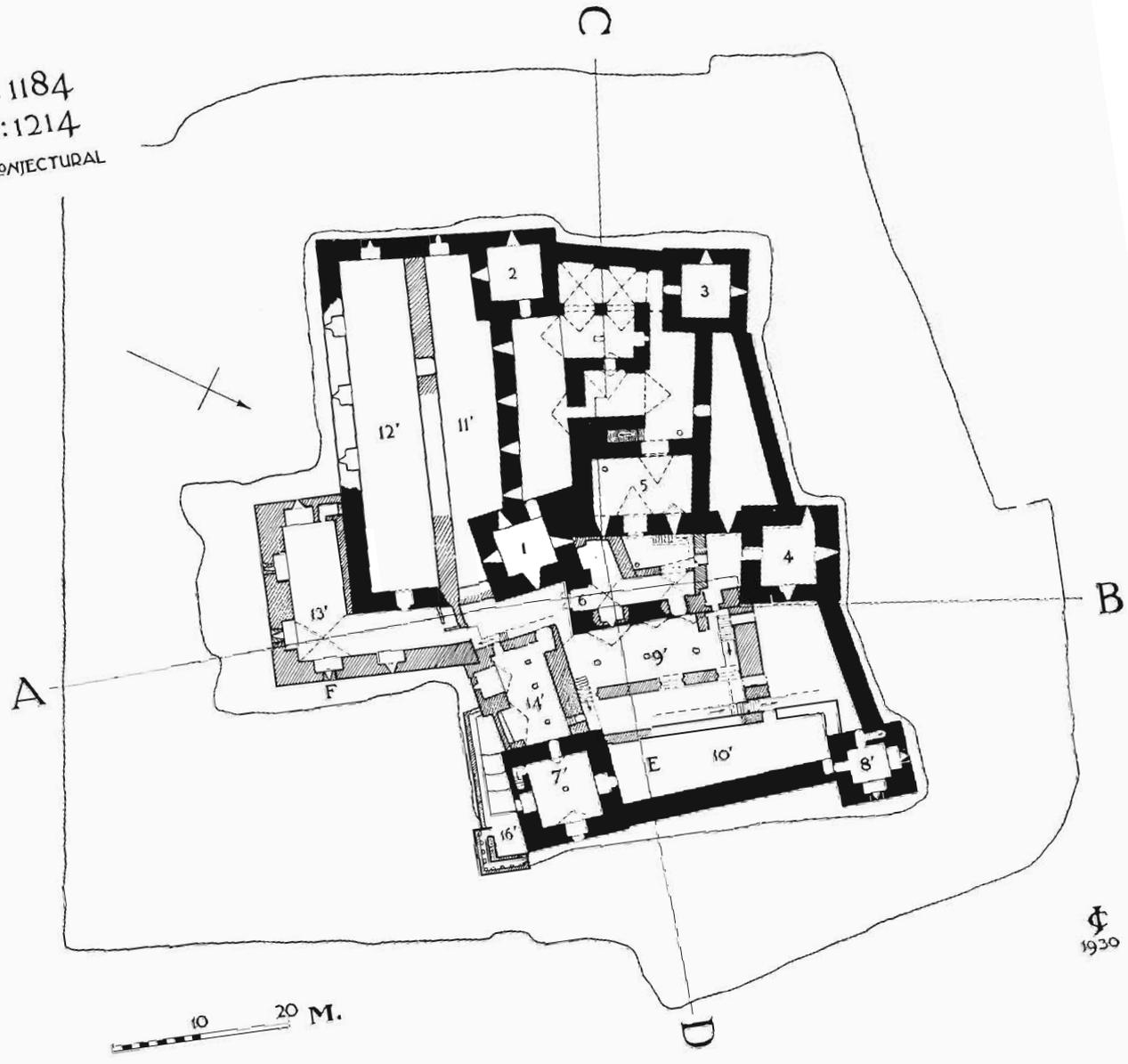
⁶ Ṭabbākh, *A'lām an-nubalā'*, IV. 331.

■ C: 1184
▨ C: 1214



Ⓒ
1930

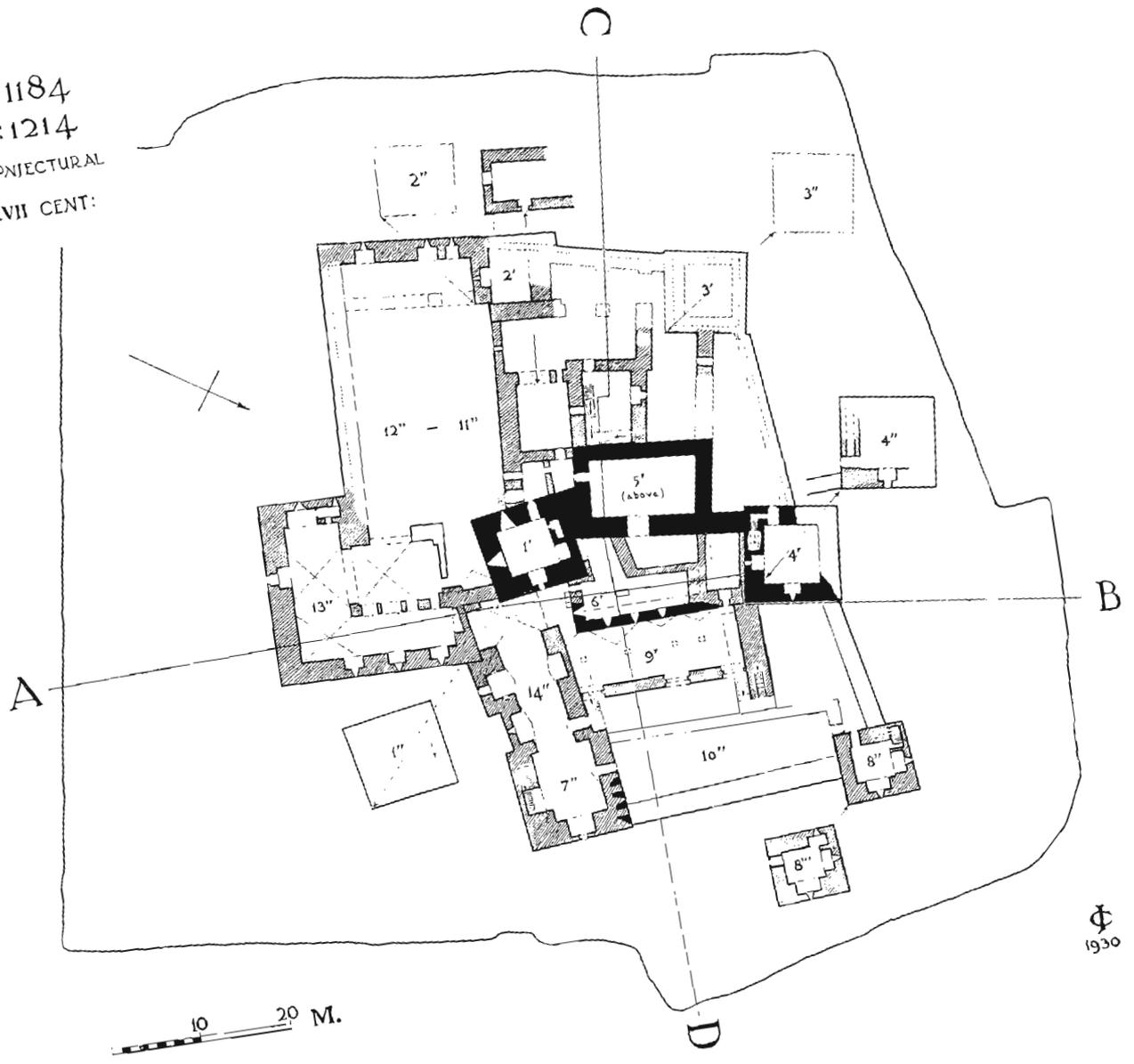
- C:1184
- ▨ C:1214
- CONJECTURAL

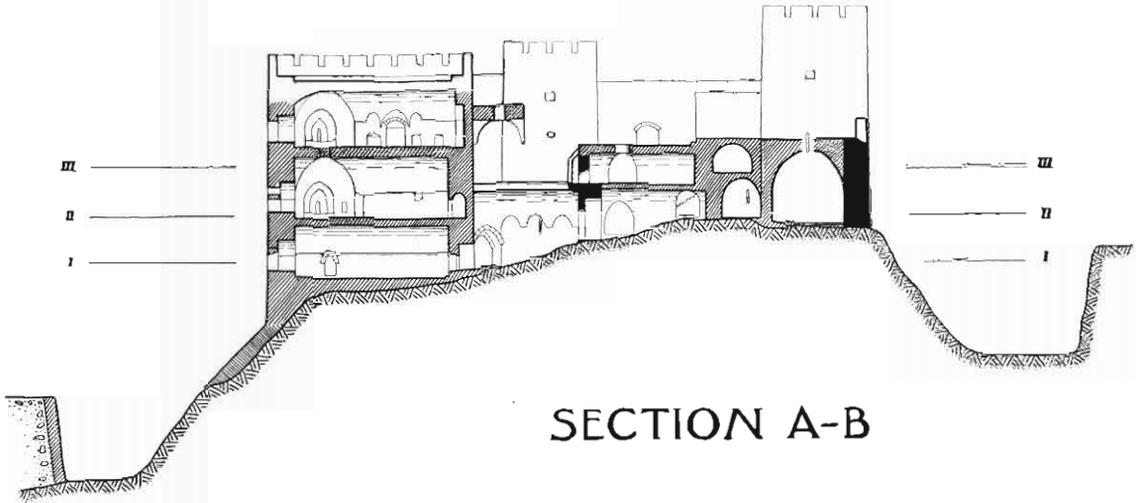


10 20 M.

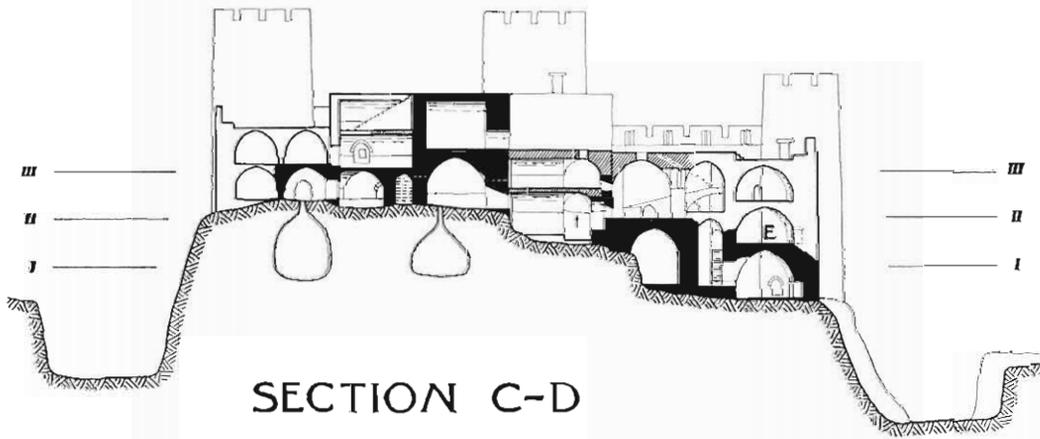
1930

-  C: 1184
-  C: 1214
-  CONJECTURAL
-  XVII CENT:





SECTION A-B



SECTION C-D

0 10 20 M.



FIG. 1. The Castle from the north-east



FIG. 2. The entrance from the north showing blocked battlements on the north side of the tower (7)



FIG. 3. The entrance from the east

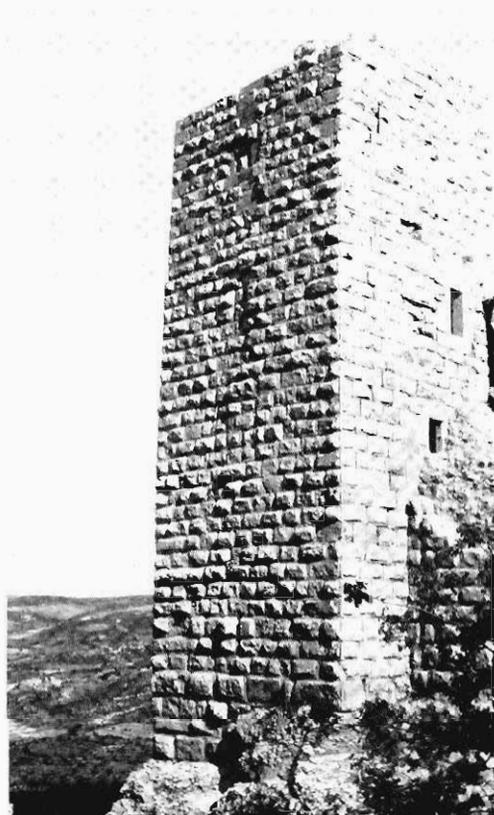


FIG. 4. Tower (8) from the west



FIG. 5. Finial of corbel formerly at (6), on end

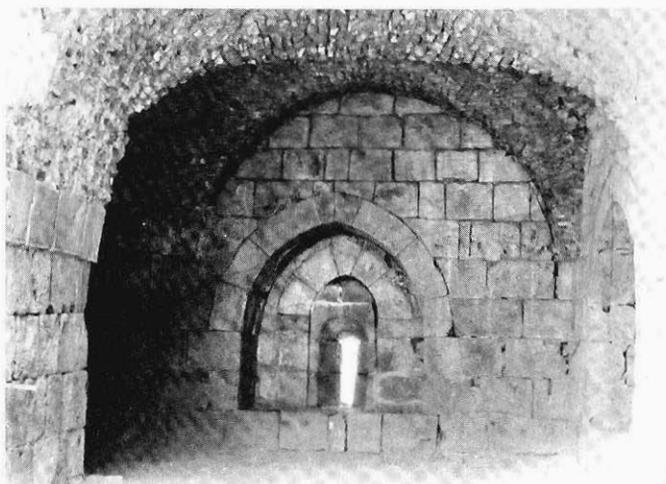


FIG. 7. First floor of the new tower (13), showing later type of window



FIG. 6. Tower (4) from W. showing bonded column, and 17th cent. repairs

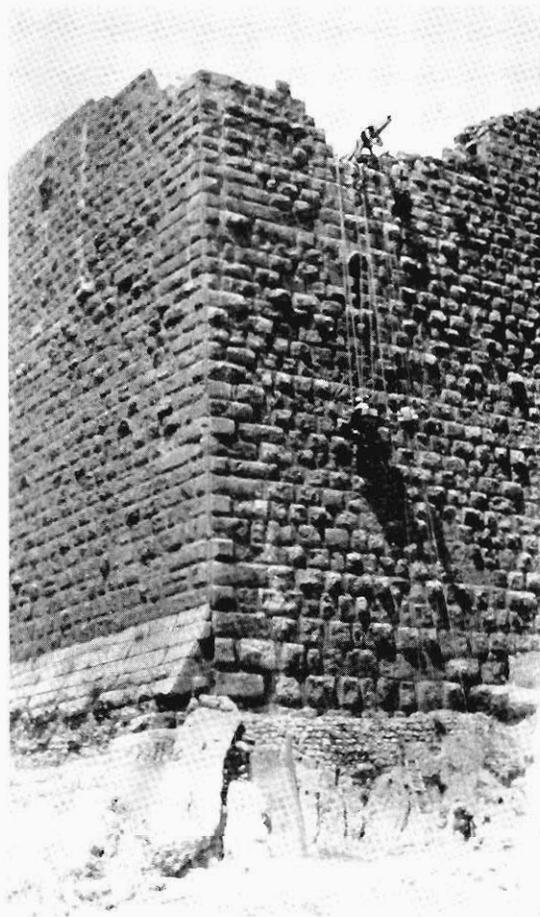


FIG. 8. New tower (13) from E. Taking a squeeze of the inscription



FIG. 9. Inner entrance to the new ward
(Pl. XX, r4)



FIG. 10. Upper gallery (Pl. XXI) between 9' and 10'



FIG. 11. N.E. face of tower (Pl. XXII, r') showing
older stone under window



FIG. 12. Upper gallery (Pl. XXI, 9') showing
staircase at north end

appears from several Arabic inscriptions', he wrote '[the castle] was built by Sultan Szelah-eddyn', confusing the greater Saladin with the lesser.¹ How far the castle was damaged by the Mongols and to what extent it was altered in the course of repairs it is hard to tell. During their rapid sweep through the country in the spring and summer of 1260 they cannot have had much opportunity for destroying at all thoroughly the nine castles which they captured. Fourteenth-century travellers were as much impressed as ever with the impregnable strength of 'Ajlūn. It can hardly have been in the sorry state which called for such hasty rebuilding as the patchwork of smaller masonry along the western faces of the keep, or at the south-west angle of the castle. This corner was so shattered that it has had to be heavily buttressed. Masonry of this sort cannot compare with the Mamluk additions to Kerak. On general grounds the suggestion that it belongs to Fakhr ad-dīn, the seventeenth-century pasha of Acre, is not unlikely.² Or perhaps it represents nothing more than local efforts on the part of the inhabitants to make good the effects of earthquakes, the common doom of the best buildings of the country.

The castle seems to have suffered heavily in the great earthquake of 1837. Before the recent work access was difficult, yet when Burckhardt visited the castle in 1812 it was still inhabited 'by about forty persons of the great family of Barekat'. His experiences with the residents are perhaps more remarkable than his observations on the building itself. He wrote:³

'It is the residence of the chief of the district of Adjeloun. The house of Barekat, in whom the authority has for many years resided, had lately been quarrelling about it among themselves; the chief, Yousef al-Barekat, had been besieged for several months in the castle; he was now gone to the Aga of Tabaria, to engage him in his interests; and his family were left in the castle with strict instructions not to let any unknown person enter it, and to keep the gate secured. I had letters of recommendation from Yousef, the Mutsellim of Damascus; when I arrived at the castle gate all the inhabitants assembled upon the wall to enquire who I was and what I wanted. I explained to them the nature of my visit, and showed them the Mutsellim's letter, upon which they opened the iron gate, but continued to entertain great suspicion of me until a man who could read having been sent for, my letter was read aloud; all the family then vied in civilities towards me, especially when I told them I intended to proceed to Tabaria. . . .'

C. N. J.

¹ J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land*, 1822, p. 267.

² *Revue Biblique*, 1928, p. 432, where a small garrison of Ibrahim Pasha is also mentioned.

³ *Travels*, 1822, p. 266.

(To be continued.)

A FATIMID COIN-DIE

IN October 1926 the Museum acquired a coin-die (Inventory No. 1. 1070) reported to have been found at Amman. It consists of two cylinders made of bronze, now slightly corroded. Their total height is 117 mm., and the diameter of each face measures 28 mm. The bottom of the pile has been cut into a tooth-shaped form probably for the purpose of driving it into a wooden stand. The top of the trussel is slightly spread as from the blows of a hammer. The designs are engraved in both trussel and pile.

The inscriptions on the coin-faces read as follows:

Obverse (produced by the pile):

First margin: Apostolic mission up to ولو كره ال

Second margin: illegible.

In centre: محمد رسول الله
على ولي الله

Reverse:

First margin: بسم الله ضرب هذا الدينير بمصر سنة اثنى وسبعين وثلثمائة⁽¹⁾

Second margin: عبد الله ووليه نزار الامام العزيز بالله امير [المؤمنين]

In centre: pellet within circle.

The die served, therefore, in the production of gold coins of the Fatimid Khalif Abū Manṣūr Nazār al-'Azīz billāh in the year 372 H. (A.D. 982-3) in Cairo.

'The subject' of coin-dies 'is one in which it is particularly desirable to guard against forgeries.'¹ Bearing this warning in mind, we examined our coin-die with special care before it was acquired. There is no doubt that the die is an ancient object, but the problem that does arise is whether it was actually used in the official mint (*dār al-darb*), or in the workshop of some forger.

Comparing the coin-face of our die with two dinars of Nazār struck in Cairo in 372, casts of which are reproduced on Pl. XXVII, fig. 3, 4,² we note two points of difference. One of these is an addition to the text, the words

¹ Hill, 'Ancient Methods of Coining', *Numismatic Chronicle*, 1922, p. 13 n. 33. Similar warnings in Kubitschek, 'Münzstempel des Nationalmuseums in Sofia', *Numismatische Zeitschrift*, N.F., Vol. XVIII, 1925, pp. 133-5.

² Lane-Poole, B.M. IV, No. 58, p. 15; Lavoix, *Catalogue, Égypte et Syrie*, No. 145, p. 62.