

CRUSADER  
CASTLES



HUGH KENNEDY



This is a general account of the history and architecture of Crusader castles in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, County of Tripoli and Principality of Antioch between 1099 and 1291, the years during which the Crusaders had a permanent presence on the Levantine coast.

The book opens with a discussion of previous studies of the subject, and of fortification in western Europe and the Middle East before the Crusades. Subsequent chapters discuss the various types of castles built by the Crusader settlers, siege techniques and the ways in which castle builders tried to counter the improving technologies of attack, and the castles built after the disastrous defeat at Hattin in 1187 such as Crac des Chevaliers and Margat. Extensive use is made of contemporary chronicles to show the reasons why castles were built and how they were used in peace and war. The book is fully illustrated by photographs, drawings and plans, and contains a comprehensive bibliography.



## CRUSADER CASTLES



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HUGH KENNEDY

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For Xana, with love  
to remind her of Syrian days

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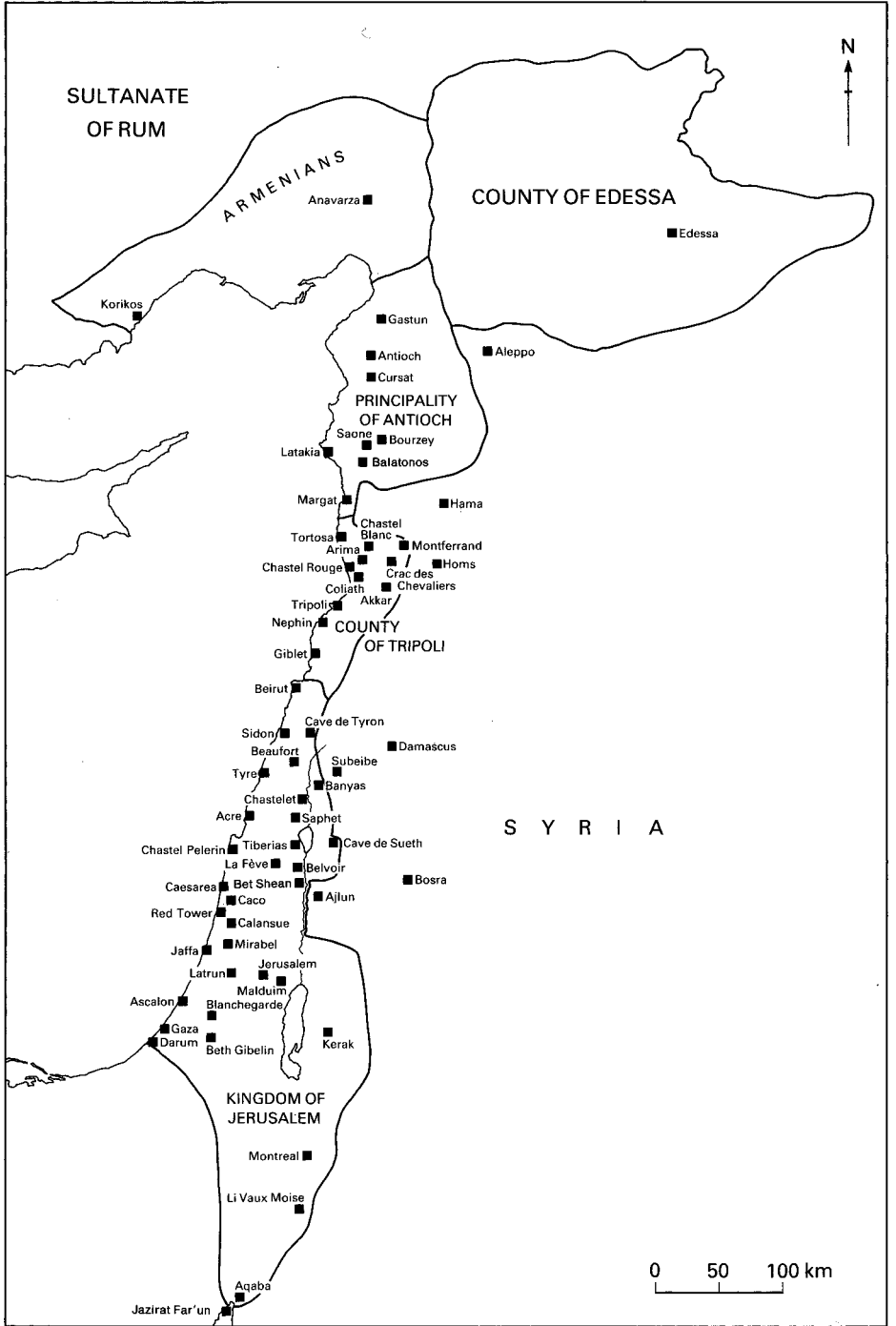
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## A NOTE ON NAMES

Like the naming of cats, the naming of Crusader castles is a complicated problem. Most sites have at least three names, an Arabic one, a Crusader French one and a Crusader Latin one. Some, like Sidon, also have conventional English names while others, like Crac des Chevaliers, have French names which date from the nineteenth century. In general I have preferred Crusader French names but this does not solve the problems entirely. Crusader scribes were untroubled by the need for consistency: the word for castle itself is variously *chastel* or *chastiau* while the little keep I have called *Calansue* (Arabic *Qalansuwa*) is also recorded as *Calanchun*, *Calanson*, *Calanthone*, *Calanzon*, *Calenchun*, *Calenson*, *Calenzon*, *Calenzun*, *Calumzum*, *Kalenson*, *Kalensuu* and *Kalensue* in Crusader sources, and each one is as correct as any other. Sometimes I have used alternative names to avoid confusion: *Kerak* in Jordan I have referred to by the modern Arab name rather than the Crusader *Crac* to avoid confusion with *Crac des Chevaliers*. *Bourzey* was probably the Crusader *Rochefort* but I have used the Arabic to avoid uncertainty. This has led to a certain arbitrariness in the choice of names but I am not convinced that there is any satisfactory alternative and I hope readers will bear with me.



# I

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## PROLOGUE TO THE STUDY OF CRUSADER CASTLES



**T**HE memory of the Crusader occupation of the Levant did not die when the last Franks were driven from the Holy Land in 1291. The ideal of crusading remained alive into the fifteenth century and revived, in a rather different form, with the sixteenth-century wars between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. Memories of lands held and lost were kept alive in Du Cange's *Lignages d'Outremer*, and the Cartulary of the Knights of St John survived as a witness of the properties they had once held. Even today there is a titular king of Jerusalem.

Nonetheless, acquaintance with surviving Crusader monuments was increasingly rare. The pilgrims of the late Middle Ages were concerned with finding the Holy Places not the traces of Frankish occupation, and the travelers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when they noticed ancient monuments at all, devoted their attention to Roman antiquities. It is especially frustrating that we have no detailed descriptions of Crusader castles before the Palestine earthquake of 1837 which did such damage at Chastel Pelerin and Saphet and the contemporary campaigns of Ibrahim Pasha in 1840 which resulted in extensive damage to Sidon, Chastel Pelerin, Saone and Antioch among others.

The scientific examination of Crusader castles was pioneered by Emmanuel Guillaume Rey (1837–1916). Rey's work was the product of a growing French interest in the Crusades in the first half of the nineteenth century. This had been stimulated by the publication in 1822 of Michaud's *Histoire des Croisades* and in 1829 of the same author's *Bibliothèque des Croisades* which included translations of Arabic chronicles by M. Reinaud.<sup>1</sup> The availability of Crusader texts improved further with the publication of the *Recueil des historiens des Croisades* under the auspices of the prestigious Académie des

Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, which began in 1841 though it was not finally completed until 1906.<sup>2</sup>

The study of the Crusades became at once a scientific discipline and a patriotic duty, since, of course, the vast majority of the Crusaders came from France and French interest in Syria was rapidly growing. Disputes over the protection of Christian churches in the Holy Land had been the ostensible reason for the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854. Concern about the fate of local churches reached fever-pitch after Christian–Muslim violence in the Lebanon and the massacre of Christians in Damascus in 1860; the press called for Syria to be occupied by the French and the government of Napoleon III showed considerable interest. In this climate, a scholar who showed how lords from Champagne, Burgundy and the Ile de France had once ruled in Syria, and had, furthermore, left magnificent castles to prove it, was sure of a ready hearing.

The other important intellectual influence was the growing interest in medieval archaeology and warfare. The Emperor himself caused a replica trebuchet to be constructed to investigate the power of medieval artillery. The principal authority in France was the architect and historian, Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79). Both as scholar and as restorer, he presented his ideas with clarity and conviction (even if he did not show the restraint and self-questioning now considered desirable in these callings), and he drew like an angel. In his *Essai sur l'architecture militaire au moyen-âge* (1854)<sup>3</sup> Viollet-le-Duc had produced the first sustained discussion of the development of medieval fortification from late Roman times to the fifteenth century, complete with plans, line drawings and discussions of siege warfare. Castle studies were now scientifically respectable and had an intellectual framework in which to develop.

The first important work on the Crusader archaeology of the Holy Land was de Vogüé's *Les Eglises de la Terre Sainte*, published in the same year as the massacres of the Christians, 1860.<sup>4</sup> The Marquis Melchior de Vogüé (1829–1916), scion of an ancient and distinguished French aristocratic family, was an elder contemporary and friend of Rey's. His work showed that a number of churches from the Crusader period survived and that their architecture was based on medieval French styles, affirming the antiquity of France's position in the area. De Vogüé went on to produce his *Syrie centrale* in 1868 in which he revealed, for the first time, the great richness of late antique architecture to be found in the interior of Syria.<sup>5</sup> He later became French ambassador to Constantinople and Vienna but he never lost his enthusiasm for the Crusaders: in 1873, as ambassador to Constantinople, he secured French possession of the fine twelfth-century church at Abu Ghosh<sup>6</sup> and later became one of the founders and editors of the *Revue de l'Orient Latin*.

Rey's life is something of a mystery. Henry Bordeaux, writing in the 1920s, found that he had already disappeared almost without trace.<sup>7</sup> He seems to have been a gentleman of means with aristocratic pretensions and properties around Le Mans and Chartres, where he was a member of the local Société Archéologique. How he became interested in the Crusader east is quite unclear but he travelled extensively in the Levant as a young man. There is a hint that he had government support but he may well have been simply a private scholar. He made three journeys to Syria between 1857 and 1864, visiting almost all the major fortifications except those in the lordship of Oultrejourdain. He developed twin interests in Crusader genealogy and military architecture which were to last all his life. In 1869 he produced his edition of Du Cange's *Familles d'Outremer*<sup>8</sup> and so laid the foundations for the study of Frankish genealogies, and in 1871 he published his *Etudes sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire des Croisés en Syrie et dans l'île de Chypre*.<sup>9</sup> Looking at this ancient volume, it takes something of an effort of imagination to realise how pioneering a work it is. Viollet-le-Duc's *Architecture militaire* is innocent of all knowledge of Crusader fortification. Rey had virtually nothing to go on except a few narrative accounts of medieval chroniclers and pilgrims yet he identified, planned and drew almost all the most important monuments including such complex structures as Margat and Crac des Chevaliers. Of course much of his work has now been superseded: the proportions of some of his plans, like Saone for example, are clearly wrong, and excavation has revealed much more about Chastel Pelerin than he was able to guess. Yet some of his drawings, like the section of the keep at Chastel Blanc for example, have never been surpassed for elegance and clarity and he preserves details long since gone, like the appearance of Crac des Chevaliers before the Syrian villagers occupied it. When Deschamps began his investigations at Crac in 1927, he and the architect François Anus, with whom he was working, used Rey's drawings as their starting point and designated the towers with the same letters as he had.

He never returned to Syria but went on to write his *Les colonies franques de Syrie aux douzième et treizième siècles* (1883),<sup>10</sup> part history and part gazetteer, another pioneering work, and continued to produce articles on Crusader genealogy and lordships until 1900. After that he seems to have retired into rural obscurity. He never held a formal position or membership of any prestigious academy. Profound deafness following an accident increased his isolation and his death in 1916 was not noticed in any obituaries, but his work survived to inspire subsequent generations of scholars in France and abroad long after the writings of his more honoured contemporaries were forgotten.

The late nineteenth century saw a considerable amount of survey work, mostly in Palestine. In the main, these surveys were more interested in the biblical and classical past but Crusader remains were recorded where they

occurred. The most far-reaching of these was C. R. Conder and H. H. Kitchener, *The Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs of the Topography, Orography, Hydrography and Archaeology* (1881–3).<sup>11</sup> As the catch-all subtitle suggests, this was intended as a general survey of the area. In the 1870s and 1880s, Charles Clermont-Ganneau (1846–1923) produced a considerable volume of work on Crusader remains, including a fundamental account of masonry marks.<sup>12</sup>

In 1895 the Swiss Orientalist Max van Berchem (1863–1920) and his companion Edmond Fatio undertook an expedition to northern Syria covering the area between Aleppo and Tripoli. The stated objective was to acquire inscriptions for van Berchem's *Corpus inscriptionum arabicarum* but, besides being a brilliant epigrapher, van Berchem also had an enquiring mind for archaeology and history. As well as recording the Arabic inscriptions found at many Crusader sites, including Crac des Chevaliers, he also published a wealth of more general archaeological detail and some important Arabic texts describing the eventual taking of these castles by the Muslims. The discussions of Crac des Chevaliers and Margat, as well as smaller sites like Coliath, are still of considerable value.<sup>13</sup>

In 1909 T. E. Lawrence (later famous as Lawrence of Arabia) visited many of the Crusader castles of Syria on foot, though he never visited Oultrejourdain: ironically, in view of his later military exploits, he only failed to reach 'Amman in Oultrejourdain because of 'the unthinking activity of some local Bedawin in tearing up the Hedjaz railway'.<sup>14</sup> His *Crusader Castles* (now republished with an excellent preface and additional notes by D. Pringle) was only an undergraduate dissertation. It is full of ideas and opinions, notably on the relationship between Crusader castles and those in western Europe (which he knew from lengthy bicycle trips around France in the previous two years). He stressed the western nature of Crusader architecture and discounted Byzantine or Muslim influence. The photographs are interesting but the plans are all based on Rey or the unpublished sketches of Pirie-Gordon. As an undergraduate dissertation it is excellent, and tribute to both the intelligence and endurance of its author. To be fair to Lawrence, he never intended it for publication in its present form so it would be wrong to place much emphasis on its scholarly imperfections.

The next major boost for the study of Crusader castles was provided by the establishment of the French Mandate in Syria in 1921. This led to the setting up of a French administration in Syria and Lebanon with an antiquities service. It also meant that archaeologists could count on government support, up to a point, for supplies, equipment and aerial photography. The mandate may not have been a happy period politically but it saw an unparalleled explosion of archaeological activities, among them the excavations at Ugarit and Byblos, the aerial survey of the Roman desert frontier by Poidebard and the

study of the antique villages of the limestone plateaux of the north by Tchalenko. Crusader studies too benefited from this interest, especially as the presence of Franks in the area in the twelfth and thirteenth century could give a sort of legitimacy to their presence in the twentieth.

This activity was presided over by a pupil of Clermont-Ganneau's, René Dussaud (1868–1958). The classic figure of an old-school French academic with his close-cropped hair, toothbrush moustache and gold-rimmed pince-nez glasses, Dussaud had begun his career as an engineer but, after a visit to Smyrna, had become fascinated by the antiquities of the Levant. He travelled extensively in Syria before the First World War and returned to Paris where he eventually became head of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the Louvre. Here he constantly encouraged expeditions to the Middle East and, in 1920, he was one of the founder editors of the periodical *Syria* in which so many of the results of this activity were published. In 1927 he published his *Topographie historique de la Syrie antique et médiévale*,<sup>15</sup> a fundamental contribution to historical geography.

The first major publication of Crusader antiquities was a direct result of this patriotic urge: 'The war of 1914–1918', wrote Deschamps, 'brought our troops to those shores where so many good Frenchman had previously fought.' In this spirit, General Gouraud, the first Haute-Commissaire in Syria and Lebanon, invited Camille Enlart to record the Crusader monuments. Enlart (1862–1927) had the right qualifications. Apart from his work on medieval French architecture, he had, in 1899, produced his *Art gothique et de la Renaissance en Chypre* which had showed how French art had spread in the Eastern Mediterranean. Enlart investigated the ecclesiastical monuments of the Crusader Levant which were published as *Les Monuments des Croisés dans le royaume de Jerusalem: architecture religieuse et civile* (1925).<sup>16</sup> He had intended to move on to cover the military architecture as well but in February 1927, at the height of his powers, he suddenly dropped dead in a Paris street.

Only a few days later, Dussaud entrusted the task of completing Enlart's work to a pupil of his, the young Paul Deschamps (1888–1974) who was to be the greatest of all students of Crusader castles.<sup>17</sup> Deschamps had been educated in the Ecole des Chartes and had specialised in medieval French art and architecture. He had never, it seems, taken any particular interest in the Middle East before but by December of that year he, the architect François Anus and an army officer called Frederic Lamblin, who acted as photographer, were ensconced in a small and bitterly cold chamber in a tower of the inner court at Crac des Chevaliers. Here they remained until March, exploring, drawing and photographing: Lamblin's pictures of Crac in the snow survive to show how bleak it was.

Deschamps' mission was to investigate all the castles of the Crusaders and he began with the finest of them. Crac became a much bigger project than he

had previously anticipated. Since Rey had visited, a village of some 500 people had been established inside. While the basic structure remained largely intact, the villagers had destroyed much of the crenellation and the vast underground vaults were almost completely full of rubbish. Anus and Deschamps began clearance work on a small scale but it soon became apparent that this was a major undertaking. Fortunately two army inspectors came to look at the work with the result that General Gamelin assigned a detachment of sixty Alawite soldiers of the Armée du Levant, commanded by a French lieutenant called Poussin, to help with the work; in the old photographs, they stand there smartly in their shakoes, military tunics and long puttees, probably completely mystified about the purposes of their labours and the mad ways of the foreigners. The work was continued when Deschamps returned from France again in the spring of 1929 when he had another season with Anus and Lamblin. Numerous discoveries were made as a result of the cleaning, including wells and ovens hitherto completely covered. There remained, however, the question of the villagers whose houses prevented any overall appreciation of the architecture. Inevitably too, the building and extension of the houses was damaging the fabric of the castle.

In 1929 the Haute-Commissaire Ponsot suggested to Deschamps that the castle should be taken under the care of the French Administration des Monuments Historiques. With the support of Dussaud in Paris and a motion in the French Senate, Crac was finally ceded to France on 16 November 1933 and placed in the charge of the Beaux-Arts. The State of Lattakia, from whom the purchase was made, was paid a million francs to compensate the inhabitants. The villagers were then moved out and a work force of 120 spent two years cleaning up and restoring the fabric. The castle, meticulously restored, joined Palmyra, Baalbek and Qal'at Sim'an among the great tourist attractions of the French Levant. As Deschamps wrote in the spirit of the time, 'Crac des Chevaliers, which is so closely linked to the history of our country, should attract numerous French [visitors] because of the memories it evokes.' All these arrangements came to an end with Syrian independence in 1946 but the castle remains much as they left it, in a sense a memorial to both the crusading Franks and the twentieth-century French.

An equally impressive memorial is Deschamps' book *Le Crac des Chevaliers* (Paris, 1934) which formed the first volume of his trilogy *Les Châteaux des Croisés en Terre Sainte*. With Anus' meticulous plans and drawings, Lamblin's photographs and Deschamps' careful descriptions, it has claims to be the finest monograph ever produced on a single medieval castle.

Deschamps did not restrict his investigations to Crac des Chevaliers. In 1929 when he was still busy at Crac he visited Beaufort in Lebanon, Chastel Pelerin in Palestine and Kerak in Jordan, where Anus produced the first accurate plan of the castle, a plan which has served as the basis of all subsequent

ones. In 1936 Deschamps made another extensive trip accompanied this time by the architect Pierre Coupel (1899–1983); with the aid of sixty-five soldiers from the Chasseurs Libanais, led by Commandant Bigeard, they cleared much of the inner court and donjon at Beaufort. Deschamps left Syria in 1936, never to return, but Coupel remained in Syria until 1946, making new discoveries at Saone and undertaking extensive repairs at Chastel Blanc (Safita) where the great tower was in serious danger of collapse.

Deschamps produced two further volumes. The first of these, *La Défense du Royaume de Jerusalem* (Paris, 1939), deals with a number of major castles, including Kerak, Subeibe (which he believed to be Crusader) and Beaufort, where his descriptions and plans record a building which has probably been mutilated beyond recognition by recent military activity. He also recorded the two cave castles at al-Habis Jaldak and Tyron but many lesser monuments were not noticed and, for all its interest, it remains a very partial record. It was not until 1977, three years after the author's death, that the final volume, *La Défense du comté de Tripoli et de la principauté d'Antioche*, appeared. It was almost forty years since Deschamps had visited the castles he describes and the descriptions lack the clarity and immediacy of his earlier work. Some sections, like the plan of Margat, are confused and inadequate, there is no plan of Akkar, and the description of Bourzey clearly shows that the author had never visited it. He compensates for this thinness by producing a long historical section on the northern Crusader principalities. Despite its shortcomings, however, the work remains fundamental and the discussion of the major monuments at Giblet (Byblos), Chastel Blanc and Saone are of the usual high standard.

Deschamps remained a Parisian all his life. He examined the Crusader castles as he might have done the châteaux of the Loire. He seems to have had no interest in Muslim fortifications of the period and obviously felt that the independent Syrian Arab Republic was not a congenial place to work in; for men like Dussaud and Deschamps, the loss of the Syrian Mandate must have meant the end of so many of their dreams, but his observation, his scholarship and his enthusiasm remain unsurpassed.

Perhaps because the surviving monuments were so impressive, neither Deschamps nor his contemporaries under the French Mandate undertook any archaeological excavation of Crusader sites (except incidentally at Byblos, where the excavator, Dunand, was largely concerned with the ancient city). In Palestine, where the castles were much less well preserved, the Department of antiquities of the British Mandate government sponsored an excavation at Chastel Pelerin, conducted by C. N. Johns between 1930 and 1934.<sup>18</sup> Chastel Pelerin had been severely damaged by natural causes and the activities of Ibrahim Pasha who removed much of the masonry. Earlier commentators, including Deschamps, had been unable to make much of the interior. Johns'