

AL-FUṢṬĀṬ, IN THE SHADOW OF AL-QĀHIRAH

The lower architectural phase at Qūṣ is strikingly similar to the houses at al-Fuṣṭāṭ, best exemplified in the early excavations of Bahgat and Gabriel in the 1920s. Al-Fuṣṭāṭ has received much more intensive and recent archaeological research at the hands of George Scanlon. It is not the intention here to critique these excavations but briefly to describe the nature of the Mamluk occupation and its relevance to Cairo in the Mamluk period. Al-Fuṣṭāṭ continued from the early Islamic period into the Ayyubid period, when it had become the habitat of "an easygoing middle class."¹²

One reason for discussion of al-Fuṣṭāṭ is the important corpus of documentation generically known as the Cairo Geniza documents. While most of the dated documents belong to the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, some indications of the social history in the Mamluk period should be reflected and relations to archaeological evidence should be invaluable. Goitein states a desire to coordinate these sources of information, yet his first consideration, that of topographic elements, explicitly leaves aside archaeological evidence. A separate study of Cairo by Staffa comes to the same conclusion, that social history does not need careful consideration of archaeological evidence. Both Goitein and Staffa were particularly impressed with the discovery and description of the sophisticated water supply and sewage networks revealed by the excavations.¹³

On the other hand, domestic architecture should have been a natural subject of archaeological research, yet Goitein states that "the results of the Fustat excavations are not as helpful for the interpretation and testing of the Geniza documents as one might expect."¹⁴ He goes on to explicate contributory factors of archaeological deposition which account for this situation. This does not dissuade him from observing the "blatant discrepancy between the findings of excavators and competent [medieval] observers" concerning multi-story dwellings. These are related to pre-Islamic Arabian tower structures as evidenced in Yemen and brought to al-Fuṣṭāṭ by Arab settlers; he later suggests these might have functioned as apartment buildings analogous to Classical *insulae*.¹⁵

Goitein's volume on daily life contains extensive, detailed consideration of virtually every artifact used by these people. This wide-ranging scholarship contains virtually no reference to actual objects unearthed in the great piles of well-preserved trash in al-Fuṣṭāṭ. This is not to criticize Goitein, the excavators have a responsibility to take the lead in interpreting the artifacts recovered. Yet the fragments of textiles, which would be of great value in explicating household furnishings and clothing, were not systematically collected until 1982 and the archaeological report appears innocent of acquaintance with the Geniza descriptions.¹⁶ The accomplishment of Goitein was to construct a picture of medieval social

¹²See S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 4: *Daily Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 11.

¹³*Ibid.*, 4:36; the reference is to George T. Scanlon, "Housing and Sanitation, Some Aspects of Medieval Islamic Public Service," *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*, ed. Albert H. Hourani and S. M. Stern (Oxford: Cassirer, 1970), 179-194. S. J. Staffa, *Conquest and Fusion: The Social Evolution of Cairo, A.D. 642-1850* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).

¹⁴Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 4:53.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 4:53-59. One might also suggest a relationship to the *uṭum* (pl. *āṭām*) of Yathrib/Medina. One may note that only a small portion of the early Islamic city has in fact been excavated and that portion excavated is mostly suburbs developed in the late eighth and ninth centuries.

¹⁶Louise W. Mackie, "Textiles," in *Fuṣṭāṭ Expedition Final Report*, vol. 2: *Fuṣṭāṭ-C*, by Władysław Kubiak and George T. Scanlon, ARCE Reports 11 (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns for the American



history from difficult fragments of written evidence; the archaeologist also has his multitude of fragments (sherds of many different materials) available for analysis and interpretation.

BILĀD AL-SHĀM, THE MIDDLE ISLAMIC LEVANT

Turning to Syro-Palestine, one may begin to understand the problems confronting Mamluk archaeology by noting the origins of archaeology in Biblical (and Classical) studies. Thus, Kenyon's popular account of excavating Jerusalem has about 200 pages, of which three deal with the Crusaders, and half a page with the Mamluks. Such Eurocentrism has lessened; still, a recent issue of *'Atiqot*, devoted to Islamic archaeology, contains nine articles on early Islamic (read Umayyad), one on Fatimid, and two on Crusader subjects.¹⁷

Study of the Middle Islamic period in the Levant thus turns around appreciation of the Crusader occupation. In her summary of the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods in Palestine, Rosen-Ayalon could make no more reliable reference than the excavations at Abu Ġôsh.¹⁸ This site centers on the Crusader church of St. Jeremias, which incorporated part of an Abbasid caravanserai. The archaeologists found the structures reverted to a *khān* in the Mamluk period, dated 1250-1500. The nearby site of al-Qubeibah produced the same two Islamic periods of occupation, this time framing Crusader occupation of a castle.¹⁹ The same pattern is found in Pringle's more recent excavations at al-Burj al-Aḥmar (the Red Tower).²⁰ Beginning with a survey of the Sharon Plain (between Caesarea and Apollonia), the discussion turns around its structure (settlements and roads) in the Crusader period. The contribution of archaeological evidence is seen to be a refinement of dating and thus any assessment of the settlement system for this and later medieval periods.

Description of the excavations naturally focuses on principal occupation of the castle (al-Burj al-Aḥmar, phases B, C). Subsequent phases are labeled Destruction (D, D1) and Later and post-Medieval (E, E1). Pringle cautions that "strata were too confused . . . to allow any more precise definition of the exact phases of occupation."²¹ When he turns to the ceramic evidence, these phases become more interesting. The evidence describes the characteristics of "an agricultural village settlement, to which for a period of 150 years . . . were added Frankish residents of the castle."²²

The Crusader castle was in fact one of many rural *burgi*, part of a process called "incastellamento" in the contemporary Mediterranean world. Such *maisons fortes* were analogous to manor houses as the core of agricultural reorganization. Ronnie Ellenblum has analyzed the locations of such "castles" and suggests extensive integration in settlement

Research Center in Egypt, 1989), 81-97.

¹⁷Kathleen Kenyon, *Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 Years of History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967); *'Atiqot* 26 (1995).

¹⁸Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, "Between Cairo and Damascus: Rural Life and Urban Economics in the Holy Land during the Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman Periods," *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (London: Leicester University; New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1995), 512-523.

¹⁹R. de Vaux and A.-M. Steve, *Fouilles à Qaryet el-'Enab, Abu Ġôsh, Palestine* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1950); and Bellarmino Bagatti, *I monumenti di Emmaus al-Qubeibeh e dei dinatorni*, *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*, 4 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1947).

²⁰Denys Pringle, *The Red Tower (al-Burj al-Aḥmar): Settlement in the Plain of Sharon at the Time of the Crusaders and Mamluks, A.D. 1099-1516* (London: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1986).

²¹*Ibid.*, 129-130.

²²*Ibid.*, 136.



during the latter century of Crusader occupation (1187-1291).²³ This would indicate both change within the Crusader period and continuity into the succeeding Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, at least as far as archaeological indicators are concerned (one of the reasons the periodization of Middle Islamic 1 begins ca. 1200; see chart following text).

Other excavations in Islamic sites have focused on standing architectural monuments of the Umayyad period. In the process most of these sites have revealed Ayyubid/Mamluk occupation. One of the most prominent was the palatial complex outside of Jericho, Khirbat al-Mafjar, in which the latest phase (Phase 4) is Mamluk.²⁴ The extensive burnt material suggests that the building was still carrying a wooden roof at the end of occupation. The ceramics have the very distinctive geometric painted juglets and slip painted glazed wares, that is, a balance between hand-made and glazed wares, culminating in a limited number of finely decorated frit wares, typical of Mamluk occupation. A rather similar early Islamic complex with an Ayyubid/Mamluk reoccupation was Qasr al-Hayr East (Period II). Around the standing monuments, the large and small enclosures, was the mounding of an extensive mud-brick settlement; walls within and between the earlier structures also belong to this resettlement. Grabar described the site as a small bidonville-like settlement, the "rather primitive small town" of 'Urd, beginning with Nūr al-Dīn's redevelopment of Raqqa.²⁵ In a shift from this focus on standing monuments, the excavations at Khirbat al-Fāris in southern Jordan have mapped and excavated a medieval and Ottoman village. Likewise, the excavations at Tell Ti'innik have advocated a "reverse chronology," working back from the Ottoman to Mamluk and earlier (see below).²⁶

ARTIFACTS AND SOCIAL HISTORY

The phenomenon of the twelfth through fourteenth centuries in northern Bilād al-Shām continues to be treated by archaeologists as a monolithic entity with fuzzy edges, usually labeled Ayyubid/Mamluk. The pattern was set with the publication of the Hama excavations by the Danish team in the 1930s. While the actual stratigraphic data has never appeared, the pottery was presented in great and influential detail.²⁷ Among the many types

²³Ronnie Ellenblum, "Settlement and Society Formation in Crusader Palestine," in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. Thomas E. Levy (London: Leicester University; New York: Facts on File, 1995), 502-511.

²⁴See Donald S. Whitcomb, "Khirbat al-Mafjar Reconsidered: The Ceramic Evidence," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* no. 271 (1988): 51-67. The dichotomy of identifications into Umayyad/Abbasid and Ayyubid/Mamluk is a problem in classification yet to be systematically addressed by Islamic archaeologists.

²⁵See Oleg Grabar et al., *City in the Desert: Qasr al-Hayr East*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 160-161. Grabar states that this upper phase was excavated in "arbitrary levels of 50 to 100 cm." One section claimed more careful attention by Robert Adams, see p. 81. The evidence of Ayyubid/Mamluk occupations in the Euphrates region deserves separate consideration. One may note the potential of the Bālis excavations, for which the historical setting has recently appeared: A. Raymond and J.-L. Paillet, *Bālis II: Histoire de Bālis et des îlots I et II* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1995).

²⁶Jeremy Johns and Alison McQuitty, "The Fāris Project: Preliminary Report upon the 1986 and 1988 Seasons," *Levant* 21 (1989): 63-95; idem, "The Fāris Project: Preliminary Report on the 1989, 1990, and 1991 Seasons," *Levant* 25 (1993): 37-61. Ghada Ziadeh, "Ottoman Ceramics from Ti'innik, Palestine," *Levant* 27 (1995): 209-245.

²⁷The main information on these excavations is in Harald Ingholt, *Rapport préliminaire sur sept campagnes des fouilles à Hama en Syrie (1932-1938)* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1940). See also Poul Jørgen Riis and Vagn Poulsen, *Hama, fouilles et recherches 1931-1938*, vol. 4, pt. 2: *Les verreries et*



of ceramics in this site, one may examine two types as holding possible relevance as reflections of social organization: geometric painted pottery and slip-painted glazed ware.

Geometric painted pottery is also known as pseudo-prehistoric ware and, more formally and recently, as hand-made geometric painted ware (HMGPW). This ceramic features an often elaborate decorative scheme, sometimes with multiple colors, on a crude, ill-fired ceramic. The ware has often been associated with domestic production by women (as opposed to industrial wheel-made wares by men in urban settings). Following these assumptions, the ware is usually considered a devolution of an important Islamic craft, indicative of decline in the late Mamluk and Ottoman periods.²⁸

In Syria, the existence and dating was signaled at Hama, where the collection includes extremely rare vessels with animal and human figures.²⁹ An intensity and variety of production is revealed in its occurrence in surveys and rural sites suggesting a popular craft with an important meaning and/or function. When one plots temporal and regional distribution, one sees a surprising fit with the Crusader occupation in Bilād al-Shām. This is not Crusader ware but possibly a reaction to this occupation, a reaction which continued as a popular symbol through the Mamluk period.

The Hama excavation report also describes slip-painted glazed ware as a Syrian product.³⁰ Rogers, in a brief discussion of its occurrence at Apamea, calls it "gamma" ware and suggests a distribution in Syria.³¹ This ceramic is usually a red ware upon which a design in white slip is painted; the designs and distribution are strongly reminiscent of the geometric wares, a sort of up-scale domestic ware. The vessel is then covered with a yellowish clear lead glaze turning the decoration yellow and the remainder a glossy red-brown. The technique and elements of its style continue into the Ottoman period and extend into Spain and the New World, where descendants of slip-painted glazed ware were most popular in the Spanish and English colonies. Slip-painted glazed ware is a prominent product of Mamluk Egypt where it occurs as a specialized goblet form.³² The village of al-

poteries médiévales (Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1957). A final presentation of the archaeology of the Islamic levels has been announced by P. Pentz.

²⁸There is a roughly contemporary phenomenon in North Africa, Nubia, and Iran/Persian Gulf; such a widespread style would be labeled an archaeological "horizon," had it occurred in a prehistoric or early historic period. A similar type of ceramic has been linked with medieval transhumance in southern Iran; see Donald Whitcomb, "Pseudo-Prehistoric Ceramics from Southern Iran," *Golf-Archäologie: Mesopotamien, Iran, Bahrain, Vereinigte Arabische Emirate und Oman*, ed. K. Schippmann et al. (Buch am Erbach: Marie L. Leidorf, 1991), 95-112.

²⁹The type was labeled simply Geometric ceramic, type D XX, figs. 1000-1046, in Riis and Poulsen, *Hama*, vol. 4, pt. 2.

³⁰*Ibid.*, type C XVI, figs. 821-832.

³¹The origin of this name remains a mystery; the presentation of the Apamea ceramics remains an unstratified puzzle; see J. M. Rogers, "Apamea, the Mediaeval Pottery: Preliminary Report," *Apamée de Syrie: Bilan des recherches archéologiques, 1969-1971*, ed. Janine and Jean C. Balty (Brussels: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1972), 253-270; and *idem*, "Mediaeval Pottery at Apamea in the 1976 and 1977 Seasons," *Apamée de Syrie, Bilan des recherches archéologiques, 1973-1979*, ed. Janine Balty (Brussels: Centre belge de recherches archéologiques à Apamée de Syrie, 1984), 261-285.

³²See George T. Scanlon, "Some Mamluk Ceramic Shapes from Fustat: 'Sgraff' and 'Slip'," *Islamic Archaeological Studies* [Cairo] 2 (1980): 59-145; *idem*, "Mamluk Pottery: More Evidence from Fustat," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 115-126. Also, Donald S. Whitcomb, "Islamic Ceramics," *Quseir al-Qadim 1980*, ed. Donald S. Whitcomb and Janet H. Johnson (Malibu: American Research Center in Egypt 1982), 132-



Burj al-Aḥmar used quantities of both hand-made painted pottery and glazed slip-painted ware during the first century of Mamluk rule (1265-1390). Both the household ceramic and the finer glazed ware are described as local Palestinian products.³³

SPECIALIZED CERAMIC ARTIFACTS: GRENADES AND PIPES

There are two classes of ceramic artifacts which bear special consideration for Mamluk studies. The first are grenades, a specialized vessel firmly established in Mamluk and contemporary assemblages for which no persuasive utilization is known. The other is the ceramic pipe bowl, for which use is apparently agreed but association with Mamluk archaeology sadly misplaced.

The so-called grenade, or better, spherico-conical vessel, is a hard well-made ceramic (usually approaching a stoneware) with a very small opening at the rounded end. The surface usually has a glaze (often a firing by-product) and impressed or stamped decorative elements.³⁴ Traditional identifications of these spherico-conical vessels has been as fire-throwers, based on the superficial similarity to modern grenades. Other popular identifications are perfume or mercury containers, to which may be added postulated uses as hanging lamps, water pipes, or aeliopiles. Most recently, some currency has been granted the idea of beer or alcohol bottles; this last identification relies on unique and undocumented examples from Iran and the evidence solely poetic in form.³⁵ What is certain is a wide distribution from Khorasan to Egypt during the Mamluk period; one may suggest that a search of Turkic or even Mongol paraphernalia might yield a cultural usage.

By way of contrast, there is little doubt of the use of clay pipe bowls, moulded, decorated, and burnished. This is a common element of paraphernalia in depictions of the Ottoman period and indeed maintains a formal similarity with original (stone) pipe bowls of native American usage. Excavated examples from Tell Ti'innik in Palestine have been used to shift the hand-made geometric painted ware to the Ottoman period, a radical revision in dating.³⁶ When Pringle found pipes at al-Burj al-Aḥmar, he considered the testimony of Hama and Tell Qaimun (Tel Yoqne'am)³⁷ where pipes were dated to the Mamluk period; in the end he followed his own stratification to post-Mamluk occupation (phase E, 17-19th

192, pl. 36; and Kawatoko, *al-Ṭūr*, pl. 21.7.

³³Pringle, *The Red Tower*, 135-36, 149-150.

³⁴There is an extensive literature treating grenades, beginning with Hama; Riis and Poulsen, *Hama*, vol. 4, pt. 2, type DXXI, figs. 1047-1058. Recently Peter Pentz has offered new archaeological evidence from Hama, claiming to strengthen the traditional identification as "grenades," in "A Medieval Workshop for Producing 'Greek Fire' Grenades," *Antiquity* 62 (1988): 89-93.

³⁵A. Ghouchani and C. Adle, "A Spherico-Conical Vessel as *fuqqā'ah*, or a Gourd for 'Beer'," *Muqarnas* 9 (1992): 72-92.

³⁶Ziadeh, "Ottoman Ceramics."

³⁷Pringle, *The Red Tower*, 142. The Tell Qaimun evidence is often cited but the extant reports do not offer details necessary for independent stratigraphic contribution. See Amnon Ben-Tor and Renate Rosenthal, "The First Season of Excavations at Tel Yoqne'am, 1977: Preliminary Report," *Israel Exploration Journal* 28 (1978): 57-82; and Amnon Ben-Tor, Yuval Portugali, and Miriam Avissar, "The Second Season of Excavations at Tel Yoqne'am, 1978: Preliminary Report," *IEJ* 29 (1979): 67-83. Another nearby site, this time with a Crusader castle, is 'Afula, with no better contexts or reportage; see M. Dothan, "The Excavations at 'Afula," *Atiqot* 1 (1955): 19-74; and more recently, Benjamin Z. Kedar and Denys Pringle, "La Fève: A Crusader Castle in the Jezreel Valley," *IEJ* 35 (1985): 164-179. Yet another site with published potential is Buṣrā (Bostra), see Sophie Berthier, "Sondage dans le secteur des thermes sud à Buṣrā (Syrie) 1985," *Berytus* 33 (1985): 5-45.



centuries).³⁸ Ever since Hama, pipes have been suggested to have fourteenth century associations, but St. John Simpson has carefully refuted this association as, in a large number of cases, the result of faulty stratigraphy.³⁹ This should raise a red flag for readers of archaeological reports: isolated artifacts (or special types) should fit with the remainder of the assemblage or, put another way, archaeological evidence comes in repeating patterns.⁴⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The preceding discussion of Mamluk archaeology has not touched on many places and monuments which are usually considered important for an understanding of Mamluk history; the architecture of Cairo or Jerusalem are two obvious beginning points.⁴¹ Study of such monuments falls into the realm of art history, which runs on parallel tracks but employs a very different methodology from archaeology. Archaeology is suited for inquiry into long-term change. One may seek in archaeological research patterns of land use (historical geography) and social organization (settlement systems), or rather ecology and economy in human development. Archaeology also provides information about the characteristics/functioning of particular places and periods, e.g., the dramatic change observed in the beginning of the Middle Islamic period induced by a new mix in the Middle East, the long-term affects of Crusaders and Mongols on early Islamic civilization.

Since an understanding of Mamluk culture must take into account the changed nature of social organization in its rural and urban settings, the primary evidence from the archaeological record must be integrated with that from the documents. One might well return to a description of the Egyptian scene:

Besides being a highly centralized country with an administration organized to maximize royal revenues, Egypt was and remained a traditional peasant society in which primary social relations, those of family and friend, of patron and client, remained of supreme importance. The focus of loyalty was the village. . . .⁴²

This description, actually applied to Ptolemaic, not Mamluk, Egypt, is advanced here not for some vague romantic sense of continuities, but to draw a parallel between two societies in multi-cultural transitions, in which ethnic origin became less important than

³⁸*The Red Tower*, 142.

³⁹The Hama references are: Riis and Poulsen, *Hama*, vol. 4, pt. 2, type D XXII, figs. 1069-1082. The refutation is found in St. John Simpson, "Ottoman Clay Pipes from Jerusalem and the Levant: A Critical Review of the Published Evidence," *Society for Clay Pipe Research, Newsletter 27* (October, 1990): 6-16. An example of such stratigraphy with pipes is in G. J. Wightman, *The Damascus Gate, Jerusalem*, BAR 519 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports International, 1989), pl. 63.

⁴⁰Likewise, the evidence of coin finds must be treated as only one element of a large pattern; like C14 samples, there is an unavoidable sampling error which requires rejection *unless* the interpretation fits all other lines of evidence.

⁴¹See Michael Meinecke, *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, 2 vols. (Glückstadt: J. J. Augustin, 1992), and Michael H. Burgoyne and D. S. Richards, *Mamluk Jerusalem, an Architectural Study, with Additional Historical Research* (Jerusalem: British School of Archaeology, 1987).

⁴²Dorothy J. Crawford, "The Good Official of Ptolemaic Egypt," *Das Ptolemäische Ägypten*, ed. Herwig Maehler and Volker Michael Strocka (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1978), 199-201.



contemporary cultural sphere. Definition of such cultural spheres is more diffuse in the archaeological record than in some documentary evidence, but it is more readily discernible in the material record of daily lives as they gradually unfolded over time.

