LAJJUN

Cr. Legio, Ligio, Ligum, le Lyon; Hebr. H. Kefar Otnay

The medieval village of Lajjun lay on the borders of Galilee and that part of Samaria which, in the twelfth century, formed the lordship of Caesarea. It occupied the site of the Roman city of Maximianopolis, which had developed from the camp of Legion VI Ferrata that had been established by the emperor Hadrian to guard the Wadi ‘Ara, a natural line of communication linking the coastal plain with the plain of Jezreel. Its Bronze Age and Iron Age predecessor, Tell al-Mutasallim, identified as biblical Megiddo, stands a kilometre to the north (Avi-Yonah 1940: 31; 1976a: 74; Abel 1967: 11, 175–6, 219; Aharoni and Yadin 1977). From the tenth century Lajjun was the centre of a district, and Arab geographers speak of a copious spring and a mosque built on the spot where Abraham had struck the rock and caused water to flow forth (Le Strange 1890: 492; Marmardji 1951: 189–90).

In the twelfth century it seems that a significant Frankish settlement developed at Lajjun. Although John of Ibelin does not include it in his list of places possessing a burgess court, he does record that the community owed the service of 100 sergeants (John of Ibelin, Livre, clxxxii (RHC Lois, i, 427)). A viscount is mentioned in 1187 (RRH, 177–8, nos. 665–6), and a market, ovens and other economic activities in 1161 (Delaborde, 82–3, no. 35; RRH, 98, no. 371). From 1147 we hear of a de Legione (de Lions, de Lyon) family (Beyer 1945: 232–3), though it seems that by April 1168 the village was being held by Payen, lord of Haifa (Strehlke, 5–6, no. 4; RRH, 116, no. 447).

Lajjun was raided by the Muslims in 1182 and fell to Saladin’s nephew, Husam al-Din ‘Amr, in 1187 (Imad al-Din (trans. Massé, 37, 99): de Expugnatione (RS, lxxvi, 228–9); Prawer 1975a: i, 602, 660). It was returned to the Franks in 1241 (Matthew Paris, Chron. majora (RS, lxxvi, 142); Beyer 1945: 215, 232–3, 256), but appears to have been effectively lost to Baybars in 1263, for the following January it was raided by a party of Templars and Hospitalers who escorted back to Acre some 300 prisoners of both sexes besides a quantity of animals (Sanudo, 11, 12, 7 (ed. Bongars, 222); Prawer 1975a: ii, 459 n.22). In the treaty concluded between Qalawun and the Franks on 4 June 1283, Lajjun was formally listed as belonging to the sultan (RRH, 378, no. 1450; cf. 337, no. 1446; Prawer 1975a: ii, 524). By the fifteenth century, Lajjun, with its fortified khan, was an important staging post on the postal route between Egypt and Damascus (Ariel 1967: ii, 219; Gaudefoy-Demomblynes 1923: 123–4).

Among the ecclesiastical owners of property in Frankish Lajjun may be noted the abbey of St Mary of Mount Sion, which in 1179 possessed two carucates of land, a mill, two gardens and a house (Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 284, no. 113; RRH, 153–4, no. 576).

As most archaeological interest at Lajjun has focussed on the tell, the site of the Roman and medieval settlements has received little attention. A field survey carried out by G. Schumacher in 1903–5 identified nothing diagnostically of the Frankish period, though the pottery that was collected and published includes twelfth- and thirteenth-century types, besides much from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. It is also possible that some of the Mamluk and Ottoman buildings, such as the water-mills, bridge and khan, will have incorporated remains of earlier structures (Schumacher 1904; 1908: 177–87, pl. 1; Palestine 1948: 33, 49). In 1948, the village was abandoned and most of its buildings were blown up; today the mosque, a mill and part of a medieval bridge survive, the rest of the site being planted with trees (cf. Khalidi 1992: 334–7).

No. 135 Priory/Parish Church (♀)167.220

History

In 1115, Bernard, archbishop of Nazareth, granted to the hospital attached to the abbey of St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat the tithes on Lajjun (Legio) and half of the tithes on all other properties that the abbey held in his diocese (Kohler, Chartes, 10, no. 6; RRH Ad, 6, no. 81a). In 1121, the bishop extended the terms of this grant to include the church of Lajjun, all its tithes and those of the neighbouring village of Trinnik (Thanis), on condition that he and his successors were remembered in prayers (Delaborde, 35–6, no. 9; RRH, 22, no. 97). This grant was included in confirmations of the abbey’s privileges made by Pope Anastasius IV in March 1154 (Delaborde, 63–7, no. 28; Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 205–8, no. 70), Hadrian IV in March 1155 (Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 209–12, no. 72), and Alexander IV in January 1255 (Delaborde, 101, no. 49).

At about the time that Archbishop Bernard was making his grant of the church and tithes of Lajjun, on 1 February 1121, William I of Bures, prince of Galilee, also granted the same hospital ‘four carucates of land in Lajjun and the right to live in the houses (mansio domorum) which Engelbert the Monk has constructed in
the same village', besides some other properties near Tiberias (Delaborde, 36, no. 10; RRH, 21, no. 92). This grant of secular property was subsequently confirmed by King Baldwin II in 1130 (Delaborde, 45–7, no. 18) and by Baldwin III in 1154 (Delaborde, 69, no. 29).

In May 1140, Pope Innocent II took under his protection those possessions of the abbey of St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat that were specifically intended for the service of the poor, including 'the church of Lajjun (Légio) with the parish and tithes of that place and the tithe of Tiinnik (Thantis)', for the token annual payment of an ounce of gold (Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 159–60, no. 45). This act was reissued in April 1142 (Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 166–8, no. 48; Delaborde, 54–5, no. 22; RRH, 51–2, no. 207), and again, by Eugenius III, in May 1145 (Delaborde, 58–9, no. 25; Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 181–2, no. 59; RRH, 52, no. 207 add.).

The need for papal protection is explained in a letter written by Abbot Guy, probably early in 1146 and apparently addressed to Pope Eugenius III. It seems that although the abbey had enjoyed free possession of the church, parish rights and tithes of Lajjun under Archbishop Bernard of Nazareth and his successor, William I (c.1128–32), a dispute had arisen with William’s successor, Robert I (1138–53). The new archbishop laid claim to the tithes and, dismissing the letter of Pope Innocent II which the abbott presented to him, gathered a band of his attendants, advanced on the church, broke the bars on the door, and ejected the monks and brothers. On hearing of this, the abbott complained to the patriarch, William I, who duly rebuked the archbishop and restored the status quo ante. But peace was to be shortlived, for at this point Pope Innocent II died (24 September 1143). Archbishop Robert thereupon took the opportunity to install his own chaplain in the church to say Mass for the soul of William I of Bures, granting him care of the parishioners and full parish rights, while prohibiting the monks from all the usual parish functions. Evidently the monks disregarded this instruction, for Abbot Guy next records that while one of his brothers was celebrating Mass and was holding the consecrated Host in his hands, a clerk of the archbishop grabbed his chasuble and tugged with such force that if the lay folk had not assisted him he would have been brought to the ground. The abbott again complained to the patriarch, but this time to no avail. Eventually he was forced to agree to pay the church of Nazareth annually on the feast of the Annunciation a mark of gold, a candle and a stick of incense, as well as to provide a day’s free hospitality in Jerusalem for the archbishop, his attendants and their horses (Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 183–4, no. 60; Delaborde, 56–8, no. 24; RRH, 60–1, no. 239; Hamilton 1980: 99).

Pope Eugenius III’s response to the abbott’s letter in March 1151 was to reissue the act placing the church of Lajjun and its tithe under papal protection (Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 199–201, no. 66). This action was repeated by his successor, Hadrian IV, in March 1155 (Hiestand, Vorarbeiten, iii, 213–14, no. 73; Delaborde, 70–2, no. 30). It seems, however, that these papal letters had little influence in Nazareth, for in 1161 Archbishop Lethard II formalized an agreement with the abbey that made few concessions. By this the archbishop was to retain the obedience of the chaplains appointed by him and his successors in the church of Lajjun, and receive annually from the abbey a quarter of the tithes, food and refreshment for twenty men and their mounts, and four candles on the feast of the Annunciation; in return the abbey retained the parish right, the residue of the tithes and absolute ownership of the fruits of its own work (Delaborde, 82–3, no. 35; RRH, 98, no. 371; Hamilton 1980: 99).

This was not to be the end of the affair for the dispute over tithes resurfaced following Lajjun’s return to Frankish control in 1241. On 30 September 1262, Henry, archbishop of Nazareth, and Peter, abbot of St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, agreed in Acre to submit their differences regarding the tithes of Lajjun and Tiinnik to the arbitration of the papal legate, Thomas, bishop of Bethlehem (Kohler, Chartes, 80–1, no. 79). On 12 February of the following year, the delegate pronounced in favour of the abbey (Delaborde, 112–15, no. 55; RRH, 345, no. 1320; 346, no. 1323); and, on 23 February, the power of levying the tithes was formally remitted to the abbott’s procurator and two brothers in the two villages concerned by Albert, prior of St Mary Latin (Kohler, Chartes, 81–3, no. 80; RRH Ad, 86–7, nos. 1323a, 1323b). The legate’s decision was also confirmed by Pope Urban IV in November 1263 (Delaborde, 115–16, no. 56; RRH, 346, no. 1323 add.; Hamilton 1980: 294); but by this time, both villages were in the hands of the Mamluks and the church of Nazareth itself destroyed.

Discussion

The ecclesiastical establishment at Lajjun put in place in 1121 with the help of Archbishop Bernard and William I of Bures, prince of Galilee, appears to have been a priory including both monks and lay brothers, dependent on the abbey of St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and intended to provide income for the work of its hospital. It seems possible that it superseded an earlier
attempted monastic establishment, in which the monk Englebert had played a part. Although the character of the buildings that Engelbert had constructed is unclear, it seems likely that they would have formed the nucleus for the priory. It may be assumed that the church, which apparently also already existed by 1121, would have stood near by. The precise location of these buildings, however, remains uncertain, and it seems unlikely that they will be found until extensive archaeological survey and excavation takes place on the site.

**Visited 12.4.95.**

**Sources**

Delabarde, 35–6, nos. 9–10 (1121); 45–7, no. 18 (1130); 54–5, no. 22 (1142); 56–8, no. 24 (1146); 58–9, no. 25 (1145); 64, no. 28 (1154); 67–70, no. 29 (1154); 70–2, no. 30 (1155); 82–3, no. 35 (1161); 101, no. 49 (1255); 112–16, nos. 55–6 (1263); Hiestand, *Vorarbeiten*, iii, 159–60, no. 45 (1140); 166–8, no. 48 (1142); 181–2, no. 59 (1145); 183–7, no. 60 (1146); 188–201, no. 66 (1151); 209–14, nos. 72–3 (1155); Kohler, *Charts*, 10, no. 6 (1115); 80–3, nos. 79–80 (1262–3); *RRH*, 21, no. 92 (1121); 22, no. 97 (1121); 51–2, no. 207 (1142, 1145); 60–1, no. 239 (1146); 98, no. 371 (1161); 345, no. 1320 (1262); 346, no. 1323 (1263); *RRH* Ad, 6, no. 81a (1115); 86–7, nos. 1323a–1323b.


**LATRUN**

*Cr. Torum, Turo(nem) Millitum, le Toron des Chevaliers, Toron de los Caballeros, Turris militum, Turun as Chivalers, Med. Ar. al-Natrún*

**No. 136 Castle Chapel 1485.1375**

**History**

The remains of the castle of Latrun cover the summit of a low hill in the Judaean foothills lying 1 km south of ‘Amwas and commanding the Abbassid road from Ramla to Jerusalem at the point where it prepares to enter the hill country through Bab al-Wad. The earliest mention of it is made by Benjamin of Tudela (1169–71), who although writing in Hebrew calls it in Spanish *Toron de los Caballeros* (trans. Adler. 26n.; trans. Asher. 87; cf. Prawer 1988: 62–3).

The knights in question were evidently the Templars, who in September 1187 surrendered the castle to al-Âdîl along with Gaza in return for the release of their grand master, Gerard of Ridefort (*Gesta Henrici II* (RS, XLIX–II, 23); *Ralph of Dissor* (RS, LXXVIII, 56); Heralcius, *Epistola* (ed. Kedar, 121); ‘Imâd-al-Dîn (trans. Massê, 100); Bahâ’ al-Dîn, *XXXV* (PPTS, XIII, 117); Abû Shâmâ (*RHC* Or, iv, 312–13); Ibn al-Athîr, *al-Kâmîl* (*RHC* Or, 1, 697); Abûl-Fida (*RHC* Or, 1, 57); Lyons and Jackson 1982: 272).

On 17 November 1191, Saladin established his camp on a hill beside Latrun (‘Imâd-al-Dîn (trans. Massê, 354); Lyons and Jackson 1982: 345), but on 2 December, having already destroyed Ramlâ and Lydda, he gave orders for the castle to be demolished (‘Imâd-al-Dîn (trans. Massê, 348); Bahâ’ al-Dîn, *CXXIII* (PPTS, XIII, 303–4); Ambroise, line 6858; *Itin. Ríc.* iv, 23 (RS, XXXVIII, 280); Prawer 1975a: 11, 83). Latrun was used thereafter as a camp by Richard I at Christmas 1191 and on 9 June 1192 (Itin. Ríc. v, 49 (RS, XXXVIII, 368); Roger of Howden (RS, I, iii, 174–5; 179); ‘Imâd-al-Dîn (trans. Massê, 354, 379); Bahâ’ al-Dîn, *CLXII–CLXIV* (PPTS, XIII, 340–1)), and then by Saladin until the signing of the treaty of Jaffa in October 1192 (Bahâ’ al-Dîn, *CLXVII–CLXVIII*, *CLXXII* (PPTS, XIII, 376, 377, 390); ‘Imâd-al-Dîn (trans. Massê, 386); *Cont. de Guillaume de Tyr* (ed. Morgan, 149)).

In March 1229, as a result of Frederick II’s treaty with the Ayyubids, the Templars were once more granted Latrun and its appurtenances, but on condition that they did not fortify it (*MGH* Epist, 1, 292–303, no. 384; Prawer 1975a: 11, 200 n.40). In late 1243, however, a letter from the grand master, Armand of Périgord, to the order’s preceptor in England made clear that by then the Templars were intending to build a strong castle ‘near Jerusalem above Toron’ (*prope Jerusalem supra Toronum*) if sufficient help could be obtained from the barons of the kingdom (Matthew Paris, *Chron. maj.* (RS, VII, 149, 290)). It may be assumed that Latrun was the intended location (cf. Prawer 1975a: 11, 309 n.44; Barber 1994a: 144, 361 n.106); but in August 1244 the Khwarizmians sacked Jerusalem and, sweeping through Palestine from Latrun (*a Nirone militum quod viii® militariis distat a Jerusalem*) to Gaza, combined with the Egyptians to impose such a crushing defeat on the Franks at *la Forbie* on 17 October that no such plan had any chance of being put into effect (*Melrose Chron.* (ed. Stevenson, 157; trans., 70); Prawer 1975a: 11, 310–13; Runciman 1951: ii, 224–7).

None the less, Joinville tells us that in 1253 King Louis IX considered fortifying a hill between Jaffa and Jerusalem on which there had formerly been a castle at
the time of the Maccabees; but he was dissuaded by the barons of the kingdom, who pointed out the difficulty of holding a place five leagues from the sea (Joinville, cvii. 552–3 (ed. de Wailly, 232–3; trans. Shaw, 303–4)). For reasons that will become apparent below, this site also seems likely to have been Latrun. It seems, however, that the castle never was rebuilt after 1191; and in June 1283 Latrun was formally included in the sultan’s possessions in the treaty made between Qalawun and the Franks of Acre (RRH, 378, no. 1450).

Joinville’s allusion to the Maccabees echoes a tradition, found in Latin sources of the early twelfth century, which placed Modein, the city of the Maccabees, in the vicinity of Lydda–Diospolis and Emmaus (Amwas) (cf. William of Tyre, vii. 1 (CCCM, lxiii. 381); Fulcher of Chartres, i. 25 (RHC Occ. iii. 354; trans. Ryan, 115); Descriptio locorum (1131–43). xiii (IHC, ii. 106; PPTS. v. 44)). The tradition was evidently derived from Jerome, who in 387–9 described *Modaim* as ‘a village near *Diospolis* from which came the Maccabees, whose tombs are shown there to this day’ (Liber locorum (ed. Klostermann, 133, lines 17–19)). But although the site to which Jerome was referring may reasonably be identified with al-Midiya, a village lying 9 km east of Lydda and the same distance north of ‘Amwas (Grid ref. 150.149; Abel 1967: ii. 391; Avi-Yonah 1976a: 81), it is uncertain which particular hilltop settlement, if any, the twelfth-century writers had in mind. What is clear is that later texts, probably influenced by the development of an alternative location for Emmaus at Abu Ghosh, closer to Jerusalem (see Vol. i. no. i), preferred to locate the hill, or hills, of Modein (*mons*/*montes* *Modin*) in that general area too (e.g. Fretellus (1137), lxix (ed. Boeren, 39); Eusebius (c.1148) (PG, cxxxi. 1002–3); John of Würzburg (c.1160–5), xxiii (CCCM, cxxix, 108); Oliver of Paderborn, Descriptio (1196–1227), xiv (IHC. iv. 398); Philip of Savona (1283), iv (IHC. iv. 246); Burchard of Mount Sion (1283); x (IHC. iv. 202). Theodoric (1169–72) goes as far as to identify Modein with the site of the hilltop castle of Belmont (Suba), built by the Hospitals by 1169 between Abu Ghosh and ‘Ain Karim (ch. xxviii (CCCM, cxxxix, 184); Harper and Pringle 1988: 101–2).

After the end of the Latin kingdom, although the identification of Modein with Suba persisted as late as the eighteenth century (Oderic of Friuli 1330: 153; Porocoke 1743: ii. 46; Mariti 1769: iv. 324–6), the earlier and more correct tradition which located it near Lydda also reasserted itself. One site now favoured by Western pilgrims, however, was that of the ruined castle of Latrun. In the fourteenth century Nicolas of Poggi-bonsi even claimed that the tombs of the Maccabees were still visible there, though in fact, like other medieval writers, he was simply quoting from Jerome (1346–50: 8).

In the seventeenth century, an etymological confusion gave rise to the belief that Latrun was the castle of the Good Thief (*castrum Boni Latronis*) who had been crucified with Christ, though opinion was divided as to whether it was so called because the thief had come from there or because a church had been built there in his honour. Francesco Quaresmi claimed that the remains of a large ruined church occupied the centre of the castle (1626a: ii. 12; 1626b: 108–10), and remains of a church are also noted by M. Nau (1679: 45–6), E. Zwinner (1661: 40), P. Mariano Morone (1669: i. 62) and J. Goujon (1670: 109; cf. Neret 1725: 97; Mariti 1769: ii. 263; Bagatti 1979: 147; Buschhausen 1978: 62). An engraving by J. Zvallart (1585a: 113; cf. Dapper 1677; Kootwyk 1619: 142; Buschhausen 1978: pl. 22) is unfortunately too imaginative to allow one to confirm the identification of any church; and by the time that Cornelius van Bruyn produced his more prosaic representation a century later it seems that most of the castle’s superstructure had gone (1725: ii. 167, 239, pl. opp. p. 239; cf. Schiller 1981).

The castle was dismantled still further by Ibrahim Pasha in the 1830s (de Hamme 1897: i. 123; Bagatti
1979: 147), but in the 1860s V. Guérin was still able to state:

In the midst of the accumulated debris and tall plants that cover this plateau one observes the remains of a church three-quarters destroyed. (1868: i, 309)

In 1910, two triple capitals, finely carved from marble in the so-called 'Temple workshop' style, were discovered in the castle by monks from the nearby Trappists monastery (founded in 1890). Some thirty-five years later, the abbot related to C.N. Johns that he found them in one of the village dwellings actually loose and not built in, as if they were being hidden until an opportunity came to sell them; consequently he is not sure that they came from this site but thinks it possible that the peasant who had them may have obtained them from somewhere else in the vicinity. (Johns 1945: 15 Dec. 1945)

The capitals were taken to the monastery for safe keeping, but in 1917 they were removed to Istanbul by the retreating Turks (Boase 1977: 90–91; Buschhausen 1978: 62).

**Description**

Latrun began as a keep-and-bailey castle, with a central tower (some 14 m square with walls 3–4 m thick)
remains of this floor. In December 1945, C.N. Johns recorded in his notebook:

Of the upper level on the platform towards the west hardly anything remains save one or two courses of ashlar, large and well cut. The Abbot remembers more of it forty or fifty years ago and says that the Turks took stone from here during the war of 1914–18. At the west, at the place which the villagers called El Kanisah (the church) is the finely cut, chamfered base of a small wall respond on the scale of the fine marble capitals of the 'Temple' school which were taken to Istanbul during that war. They belong to a recessed doorway, which may well have been the doorway of the castle chapel. (1945: 15 Dec. 1945)

Johns subsequently communicated this discovery to T.S.R. Boase, who published the following note:

In the upper story of the ruins of the castle at Latrun there is the base of a wall respond which may be the doorway of the castle chapel and would correspond in scale with the capitals. This part of the ruins is known by the villagers as al-Kanisah, 'the church'. (Boase 1977: 91 n.12)

The wall respond in question is still apparent (see fig. 2). The late Fr B. Bagatti, however, who evidently also saw it, concluded that the so-called church could not be identified as such, since it was not liturgically orientated (1979: 147–8). In this he was wrong. However, the shape of the door respond seems to rule out its direct association with the capitals in Istanbul, though they may possibly have come from a structure inside it (see below).

Decoration and Furnishings

The two capitals consist of triple arrays of small corinthianesque capitals intended for colonnettes and with attached abaci, arranged to an L-plan. The abaci measure 61 by 42 cm overall, and 19 cm on the shorter sides, while the height of abacus and capital combined is 35 cm (Burgoyne and Folda 1981: 322 n.2). Both are finely decorated: one with eagles and a she wolf on the capitals and fruiting acanthus on the abacus (pl. 1); the other with no animate representation on the capitals, but with human and animal masks on the acanthus-decorated abacus (Enlart 1925: II, 271–2, pl. 120; Deschamps 1930a: 110–13, fig. 12; Boase 1971: 118, pl. 83: 1977: 90–1, 112, pl. xi; Buschhausen 1978: 62–5, pls. 1–21; Jacoby 1982a: 334–5, 337, 344, figs. 25–6, 39; Kühnel 1994: fig. 34).

The second capital is decorated in the round, and was evidently intended to be seen from all sides. On the first, however, the side equivalent to the base of the L is flat and bears the diagonal tooling characteristic of Crusader masonry, suggesting that it was meant to be set against
a wall. This seems to rule out the interpretation of the capitals as having come either from a door-way or from the corner responds of a cloister (cf. Enlart 1925: II, 271–2). A more plausible interpretation is that they represent two out of an original four such triple capitals forming part of a rectangular aedicule attached to a wall, such as a porch or a baldacchino similar in plan to that constructed over the Cave of Machpelah in the cathedral in Hebron (see Vol. I, p. 236 (no. 100), pls. CLXXI–CLXXII). Whether such a structure belonged to the chapel or some other part of the castle, such as the chapter house, remains unknown.

Discussion

H. Buschhausen has argued that the castle was rebuilt between 1229 and 1245, and that the capitals should be interpreted as having come from a church or chapel built at the same time (1978: 61–2). The documentary evidence reviewed above, however, suggests that although refortification was considered in 1243–4 and 1253, it was never carried out; it seems highly implausible that a church would have been built within a ruined castle if that was not itself to be refurbished. This would not necessarily exclude the possibility of another church having been built or rebuilt near by. An obvious candidate might be ‘Amwas (no. 10), which seventeenth-century sources refer to as the church of the Maccabees (see Vol. I, p. 53). However, there is no archaeological or historical evidence for any thirteenth-century rebuilding at ‘Amwas, nor any obvious context for such capitals there. Furthermore, it seems inherently much more likely that they originally came from Latrun, where they were found, than from a neighbouring village. Thirdly, a more convincing context for the stylistically similar sculpture in the Haram ash-Sharif in Jerusalem, which Buschhausen dates to the thirteenth century, can be found in the late twelfth (Jacob 1982a: 1986; 1987; Pace 1981: 1984b; Burgoyne and Folda 1981). The documentary, architectural and art-historical evidence all therefore leads to the conclusion that neither the castle nor its church or chapel was rebuilt following their destruction by Saladin in December 1191.

Visited 6.5.79, 3.8.79, 21.5.80, 20.1.82, 23.5.84, 17–18.8.89, 22.8.89, 14.9.94.

Sources


LYDDA

Cr. Lydde, Lydda, uilla S. Georgii; Byz. Diospolis, Georgiopolis; Ar. Lyddie; Hebr. Lod

No. 137 Cathedral Church of St George 1405.1511

History

The history of Lydda in the Middle Ages is intimately connected with that of the church of St George. The origins of the church and of its cult, however, are equally obscure. Although a later tradition identifies George, amongst other things, as a soldier-saint and native of Lydda who was martyred at Nicopolis under Diocletian (see Hoade 1967; Leclercq 1924), the earliest clear reference to his association with Lydda comes around 518, when the pilgrim Theodosius writes:

Twelve miles from Emmaus to Diospolis, where St George was martyred; and there is his body and many wonderful things are done. (ch. iv (CCSL, CLXXV, 116; trans. Wilkinson, 65))

The cult site is also mentioned in 570 by the Piacenza Pilgrim (ch. xxv (CCSL, CLXXV, 142; trans. Wilkinson, 84)), and some of the miraculous happenings associated with it were repeated to Bishop Arculf in Constantinople around 685 (Adornmän, III, 4 (CCSL, CLXXV, 229–33; trans. Wilkinson, 114–15)). A large building, apparently the church of St George, is represented in Lod (Lydea, or Diospolis) on the sixth-century Madaba mosaic map (Avi-Yonah 1954: no. 62; cf. Wilkinson 1977: 155).

It may be assumed that some form of church building would have existed in Lydda by 325, when the first historically attested bishop, Aetius, was listed among the participants at the Council of Nicaea (Höschler 1927: Schwartz 1991: 125–8). Whether Aetius’s church was already associated with St George, however, is unknown. At a much later date, William of Tyre considered the church of St George in Lydda to have been
built (or perhaps rebuilt) by the emperor Justinian (ch. vii. 22 (CCCM. lxiii. 373); cf. Benedict de Accoltis (RHC Occ. v.ii. 600); and although this attribution cannot be confirmed by any earlier source and the building is not included by Procopius in his list of those erected in Palestine by Justinian (de Aedificis. v. 9. 1–22 (Loeb. 356–8)), the tradition need not be dismissed simply through lack of evidence. Procopius's list is in any case far from complete. What is certain is that by the time Lydda fell to the Muslim Arabs under 'Amr Ibn al-`As in 636, an impressive basilica stood over the site of the martyr's grave.

The Byzantine church of Lydda is represented on the eighth-century mosaic pavement of the church of St Stephen at Umm ar-Rasas (Mefaa) in Transjordan (Piccirillo and Alliata 1994: 182–3, pl. xiv); and it may have been one of the twenty-four principal churches of Palestine shown on a late sixth- to early seventh-century mosaic pavement at Ma'in (de Vaux 1938: 245–6, pl. xii.1: Crowfoot 1941: 145).

The church in Lydda evidently continued to stand even after Ramla had replaced Caesarea as capital of Filastin around 715. One of the stories related to al-Muqaddas (c.985) by his uncle, for example, tells how the caliph Hishâm Ibn 'Abd al-Malik (724–43), the builder of the White Mosque in Ramla, heard that the Christians possessed columns of marble, which they had prepared for the Church of Bâll'ah, lying buried beneath the sand; thereupon Hishâm informed the Christians that they must either show him where the columns lay, or that he would demolish their church at Lydda (Ladd). In order to employ its columns for the building of his mosque. The Christians accordingly unearthed their columns. (trans. Creswell 1969: ii. 483; cf. Marmardji 1951: 81–2; Le Strange 1890: 305)

A redaction of the description of the Holy Places by the monk Epiphanius (639–89), made after the foundation of Ramla and before c.1000, also describes the remains of St George resting in the church in Diospolis:

The church is very large, and in its chancel lies the torturer's wheel. And on the right side of the nave stands a column to which the wheel is tied. On the day of his [St George's] memory blood flows for three hours. (ch. iv–v (trans. Wilkinson, 119))

Around 870, Bernard the Monk mentions 'the monastery of Blessed George the Martyr, in which he lies buried' (ch. x (ed. Tobler and Molnîer, 314; trans. Wilkinson, 142)).

By the end of the tenth century, there existed a Muslim hadith, repeated by al-Muqaddas, that, at the gate of what he describes as 'that wonderful church' in Lydda, Christ would appear and slay the dajāil, or forerunner of the End of Days (PPTS. iii. 59; cf. Clermont-Ganneau 1896: ii. 108–9; Gil 1992: 64 n.69). In this period the church must still have been an impressive sight. In another of the stories told him by his uncle, al-Muqaddas relates how the caliph al-Walid Ibn 'Abd al-Malik (705–15) had been inspired to build and decorate the Great Mosque in Damascus by the many beautiful Christian churches that he had seen in Syria, 'so renowned for their splendour, even as are the Kumâmah [the church of the Holy Sepulchre], and the churches of Lydda and Edessa' (Le Strange 1890: 117; PPTS. iii. 22–3; cf. Creswell 1969: i. 66, 151, 234). This passage does not necessarily mean that al-Walid had actually seen the church of Lydda, though this is the meaning conveyed in the translation by Marguerite Van Berchem (in Creswell 1969: i. 234; cf. Crowfoot 1941: 116).

Muslim respect for the church of St George in Lydda ensured its preservation for over three and a half centuries. In 1010, however, it was destroyed along with the church of the Holy Sepulchre and other Christian buildings in Palestine, on the orders of the deranged caliph al-Hākim (Glaber (RHGF. x. 34; ed. France, 132–5); Aymar of Chabonoi (RHGF. x. 152)). The church was returned to Patriarch Nicephorus in November–December 1020 (Gil 1992: 464). It seems likely that some attempt would have been made to restore the building during the course of the eleventh century, perhaps after 1027 when the emperor, Constantine VIII, obtained permission to rebuild the church of the Holy Sepulchre, or after 1042 when that work actually began under Constantine IX Monomachus. Indeed, one source credits the restoration of the church of St George to King Stephen of Hungary, which would suggest a date between 1022 and 1038, the year of the king's death (AA SS. Sept., i. 533; cf. Guérin 1868: i. 327). Additional difficulties, however, may also have beset the builders. In 1033, one-third of Ramla including the White Mosque was destroyed by an earthquake; and another tremor in 1067–8 is reported to have killed 25,000 people in the town and left only two houses standing (Creswell 1969: i. 182; Kallner-Amiran 1950–1: 227). In 1071, Ramla fell to the Seljuks and some ten years later was depopulated (Prawer 1975a: i. 115–17, 219–21). None the less, some kind of church building seems still to have existed at Lydda in the 1090s, when reference is made to the body of St George resting beneath its main altar (History of the Patriarchs. ii.iii. 358).

The approach of the army of the First Crusade towards Lydda on 3 June 1099 is described by William of Tyre:

And so . . . they came to Lydda (Lidda), which is Diospolis, where is shown to this day the tomb of the illustrious martyr.
Lydda (nos. 137–8) 11

Fulcher of Chartres, however, presents a fuller and more sober account:

Moreover, they [the Muslims] attempted to seize the bishop of the town [Ramla], who was staying with his household (clientela) in the church of St George. On a certain day, with a threatening attack they encircled the monastery; but having taken note of the strength of the place they returned to Ramla. The bishop, however, when he saw the smoke and flames from the fires that they had by now lit in the stubble, feared that he would be blocked if they returned there. (ch. ii, 15, 3–4 (ed. Hagenmeyer, 426–7; trans. Ryan, 163–4))

Bishop Robert therefore sent word to King Baldwin in Jaffa, and later made his own way there in safety (Fulcher, ii, 19, 3 (ed. Hagenmeyer, 443; trans. Ryan, 169); cf. Hagenmeyer 1908: 162–6; Prawer 1975a: 1. 268–9; Runciman 1951: ii, 76–80). Fulcher’s account therefore suggests it is unlikely that the church or monasterium of St George was seriously damaged on this occasion.

Albert of Aachen’s confusion was probably caused by the failure, common in twelfth-century sources, to distinguish between the church and the town of Lydda, both of which are often referred to simply as ‘St George’ (cf. Theodoric (1169–72), XXXIX (CCCM, cxxxix. 185); Anon. v (c. 1180), 6, 1 (IHC, I, 42); Aymar the Monk (1199), v (IHC, III, 174); Eusebius PG (PG, cxxxiii, 1003); James of Vitry, Hist. Or, 57 (IHC, III, 328; PPTS, xi, 34–5)). Little is known of the town of Lydda at the time of the Crusader Kingdom. It seems, however, that in comparison with nearby Ramla (q.v.), it would have been relatively small. Although in June 1099 Bishop Robert had been left in control of both settlements, by the time of Baldwin I’s accession the following year Ramla and its territory had been incorporated into the royal domain, later becoming an independent lordship. Lydda, on the other hand, together with a reduced territory surrounding it, remained part of the bishop’s lordship, which John of Ibelin tells us owed service of ten knights and twenty sergeants (Livre, cclxxi–cclxxii (RHC Loci, 1, 422, 427); on the bishop’s lordship, see Mayer 1985: 546–52). The town had its own bourgeois court (Livre, cclxx (RHC Loci, 1, 420)), and two viscounts are mentioned by name in the twelfth century (Mayer 1985: 547). Benjamin of Tudela records a Jewish dyer living there, presumably with his family, in 1169–71 (ed. Adler, 32; trans., 20).

By September 1110, Bishop Roger had granted the Hospital some houses in Lydda (RRH, 12–13, no. 57; cf. 74–5, no. 293 (1154)); and in 1115 he granted to the abbey of St Mary in the Valley of Jehoshaphat a house below his own castle, four carruccates of land in front of the castle, and another house located in the Mahumerie