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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

EDNA J. STERN

The study of the material culture of the Crusader period in the Levant is a relatively new field. Archaeological research in the Latin East has focused primarily on studies of the architectural remains, mainly castles and churches. Gradually, the emphasis has shifted to the material remains relating to the daily life of the Frankish settlers:<sup>1</sup> their houses, the textiles and coins they used, the crops they grew, the food they ate and the vessels used to store, prepare and serve their food (Boas 1999).

The present study examines the latter aspect of the material culture of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, focusing on the ceramic finds that were unearthed in the Crusader-period levels of the large-scale excavations carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) in various sites at Acre since the early 1990s (E. Stern and Syon, in prep.)<sup>2</sup> These excavations have revealed a large amount and variety of local and imported pottery dating to the period of Frankish rule (the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE).<sup>3</sup>

This volume contains a detailed description of the local and imported pottery assemblages and discusses their implications for twelfth- and thirteenth-century Mediterranean trade and economic relations. The pottery that was found at Acre and designated 'local' includes simple, unglazed vessels that were produced in the city itself and in the northern part of present-day Israel, as well as plain wares, cooking wares and glazed wares that were apparently produced along the Lebanese coast, including Beirut and its close vicinity. Although the latter pottery was most likely brought to Acre by the short-distance trade ships that plied the Levantine coast (below, Chapter 8), and in this sense was an import to the city, it is considered local in the present study, since the Lebanese coast and Beirut were part of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem during the Crusader period.

The second and most outstanding component of the assemblage was the wide variety of ceramic wares imported from many regions throughout the Mediterranean, including pottery types from the western Mediterranean that were not previously identified in Crusader-period contexts in Israel or at other sites in the Levant. These consisted mainly of glazed table wares, but also included some unglazed plain wares, cooking vessels and transport amphorae. As will be seen in this study, pottery was imported to Acre from the area of present-day Syria, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Sicily, France, Spain, Tunisia and China.<sup>4</sup>

The preservation of many of the ceramic vessels unearthed in the excavations was extraordinarily good; many were whole or nearly whole, due both to the violent destruction of Acre in 1291 CE and to the practice of discarding broken vessels in domestic cesspits. The large variety of ceramic types that were so well preserved (an uncommon phenomenon at other medieval Mediterranean ports) facilitated the identification of the origin of the wares. Consequently, this is the first publication of a pottery assemblage from a single site that brings together imported wares from so many different provenances, alongside a rich corpus of local wares. The importance and centrality of Acre during the Frankish occupation of the East, combined with the rich and varied ceramic assemblage found in the large-scale excavations, make this an ideal case study for the trade and distribution of pottery in the Mediterranean in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As information regarding the trade of pottery wares in contemporary Christian or Muslim sources is very scarce and usually of an indirect nature (below, Chapter 8), the study of the imported wares found in the excavations at Crusader Acre contributes much to our knowledge of this subject.

## HISTORICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND

Acre (Hebrew, 'Akko; Arabic, 'Akka),<sup>5</sup> a Mediterranean coastal city, was one of the principle harbors of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. Following its conquest in 1104 by Baldwin I with the aid of the Genoese fleet, Acre emerged as a leading eastern Frankish port in the twelfth century. The presence of representatives of the three leading maritime cities (Genoa, Pisa and Venice), who resided in quarters within the town, contributed greatly to the city's growing commercial importance. As part of the royal domain of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, the port of Acre provided the king with a major income, in addition to revenue from the crops (mainly cotton, sugar, olives and grapes) produced in the fertile countryside around the city. Acre's role as the main port for Jerusalem made it the gateway for pilgrims who arrived there by sea on their journey to the holy places. The military-religious orders of the Templars and the Hospitallers, established to guard the pilgrims' main routes, also had quarters in the city of Acre, the Templars on the sea in the southwestern corner of the town and the Hospitallers further inland, near the northern city wall of the twelfth century.

Acre surrendered to Salāḥ ad-Dīn a few days after the defeat of the Crusader army at the Horns of Ḥaṭṭīn on July 4, 1187 and a few months later, the entire Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem was in Muslim hands, except for Tyre, Antioch, Tripoli and a number of castles. When the news of the fall of Jerusalem reached Europe, the Third Crusade was launched. After numerous sea and land battles and an intermittent siege that lasted for almost two years, the Franks, spearheaded by Richard I and Philip II, who came from Europe to assist the beleaguered city, finally recaptured Acre on July 12, 1191.

The second Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem that was then established was much smaller than the first. It did not include Jerusalem and consequently, Acre became the capital city. For the next one hundred years, Acre was the seat of the Crusader government, as well as of the Patriarch of Jerusalem (for most of this period) and of the heads of the military orders. These functions, in addition to the thriving commerce of its busy port, made Acre the most important and cosmopolitan city in the Frankish East, playing a pivotal role in the maritime trade with Europe, the Muslim states and the Byzantine Empire, as well as continuing to serve as a gateway for pilgrims to the Holy Land until the

fall of the Latin Kingdom in 1291 CE. New quarters were established in the city at that time and in the mid-thirteenth century, King Louis IX of France, who came to the Levant on the Seventh Crusade, reinforced the existing walls.

Acre was extensively documented in thirteenth-century written sources that include descriptions of the city by historians and pilgrims, legal documents and maps. Among the many travelers to the east was Ibn Jubair, a Spanish Muslim who arrived at Acre with merchants from Damascus in 1184 and left the port on a Genoese ship carrying Christian pilgrims. His journal gives a vivid description of the city, comparing it to Constantinople in its grandeur, stating that the crowded city of Acre was a meeting point for ships and caravans and for Muslim and Christian merchants from all over (Broadhurst 1952).

## ACRE AND MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN TRADE

Coinciding with the establishment of the Crusader states, a new maritime trade pattern developed between the Frankish ports in the eastern and western Mediterranean. The maritime technology of the period necessitated that most of the ships (which were not large) stop at various ports along the way, resulting in their economic and cultural flourishing. Merchants, predominantly those from Genoa, Pisa and Venice, who had assisted the Crusader armies in capturing the coastal cities of the Holy Land, constituted the main parties involved in this trade network. During the thirteenth century, merchants from southern France and Catalonia joined in the bustling commercial activity (below, Chapter 8, for a detailed discussion).

Among the various goods that came by sea and land to the markets of Acre from the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean was pottery, including glazed table wares and cooking wares, as well as amphorae and other containers that contained an array of foodstuffs, such as wine, oil, grain, ground sesame, salt and fruits. Although pottery was not the most important or frequently traded product, it is representative of a wide range of medium- or low-priced bulk items that usually do not survive in the archaeological record or whose provenance is more difficult to trace, such as cloth, glass or metals. Understanding the trade patterns of these bulk products, in addition to staple foods (mainly grain, oil and wine), provides a deeper comprehension of the economic systems of Acre, the Latin Kingdom

of Jerusalem and the Mediterranean during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Various studies of medieval pottery from excavations at Mediterranean coastal sites in present-day Israel, Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus that were under Frankish control during the Crusader period show that they contained many imported types similar to those found at Acre (Pringle 1986a), demonstrating the wide distribution of pottery throughout the Mediterranean basin (below, Chapter 7). Pottery imported from the eastern Mediterranean was found in western Mediterranean ports, for example, Venice and Marseilles, which were active in the trade with the Levant and served as ports of call for the main maritime powers of the time (for Venice, see Saccardo 1998; for Marseilles, see Marchesi and Vallauri 1997:57–92). The arrival of glazed ceramic wares from the eastern Mediterranean to these ports prompted the manufacture of similar glazed vessels in the western Mediterranean. These, in turn, were exported to the east at the end of the thirteenth century (Berti and Gelichi 1997:94; Abulafia 2000:356). This process reflects the commercial and cultural interaction that was typical of this period. A number of provenance studies devoted to medieval pottery have identified possible production centers of pottery types found at various twelfth- and thirteenth-century sites around the Mediterranean basin, including Acre (below, Chapters 2, 5 and 6; Goren 1997; Waksman et al. 2008), enabling an informed analysis of trade patterns at this time (below, Chapters 7 and 8).

### BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE EXCAVATION RESULTS

The rich and varied ceramic assemblage described in this volume was recovered from three excavations—the Hospitaller Compound, the Knights' Hotel and the Messika Plot (Fig. 1.1).<sup>6</sup>

The Crusader-period architectural remains in the Hospitaller Compound (see Plan 3.1; identified as such by contemporary written sources, maps and seventeenth-century depictions; see Pringle 2009:82–92), were well preserved, in most cases up to the ceiling, having been buried under a *c.* 12.5 m deep fill and buildings dating to the Ottoman period. The main components of the excavated compound consist of a central courtyard with water installations (wells and pools), which is surrounded by vaults (Fig. 1.2). In an east–west line running north of the courtyard are

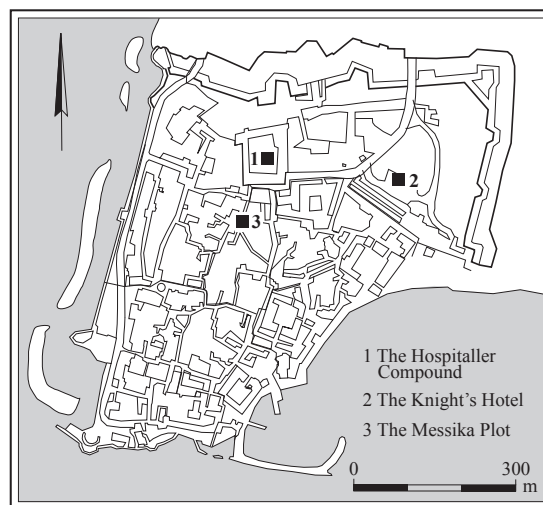
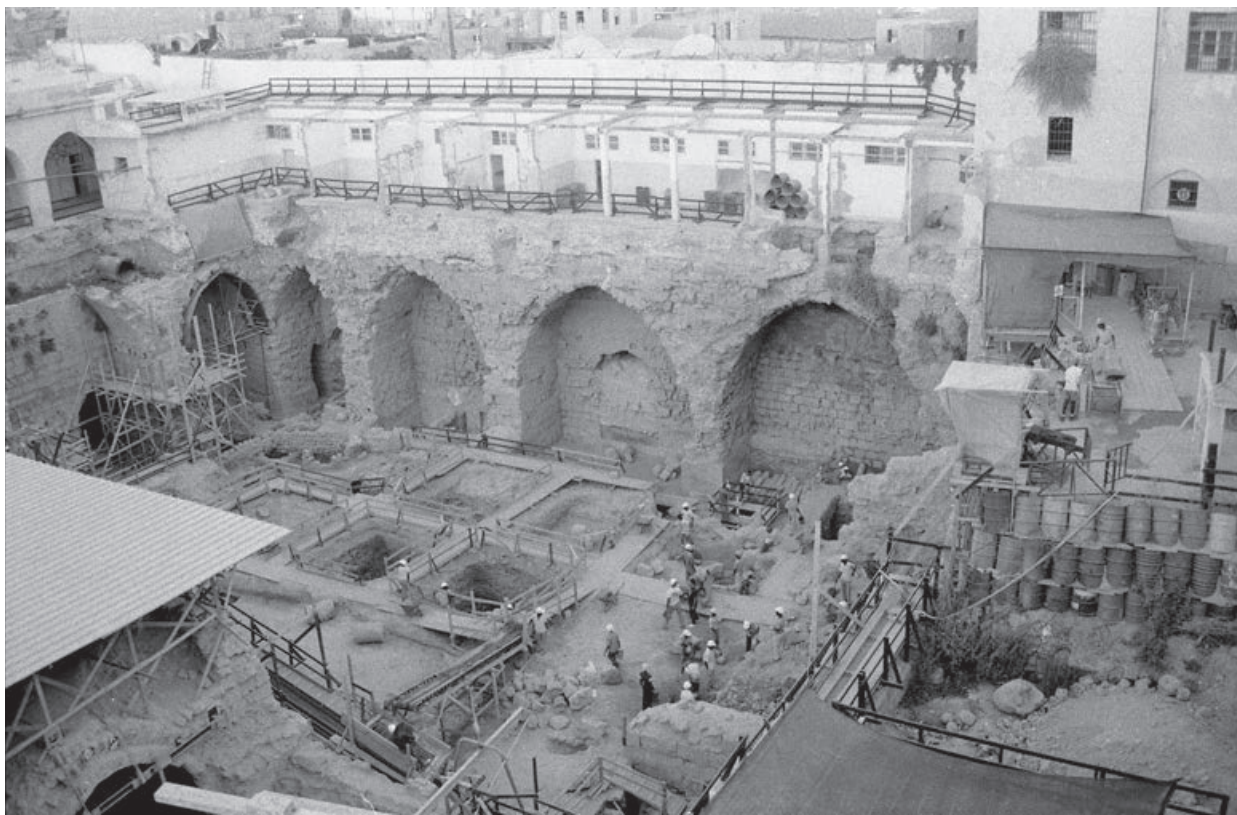


Fig. 1.1. Map of the Old City with location of excavation areas.

six large barrel-vaulted halls connected to each other by vaulted openings in the side walls and two more halls ('Sugar-Vessel Halls'; see Chapter 3) that were apparently added later on the west. To the west of the halls is a vaulted passage that leads to a gate. West of this passage is a massive tower, with a latrine on its first floor and an impressive underground sewage system. On the eastern side of the courtyard is a broad staircase that leads to a second floor, and east of this is a large pillared hall, consisting of twenty-four groin-vaulted connected bays. To the south is another large hall, smaller than the eastern one, with groin-vaulted bays supported by three massive round piers. This was identified as the refectory of the Hospitaller Compound. The excavations in this compound yielded many finds from the Crusader period, including pottery, glass, coins, architectural fragments, sculptures and various other small artifacts (Avisar and Stern 1994, 1998; E. Stern 1999, 2001, 2002; E. Stern and Syon, in prep.).

The Hospitaller Compound was part of a larger quarter occupied by this order. Within the boundaries of this quarter, just east of the Church of St. John the Baptist, remains of a building from the Crusader period were excavated at a site named the Messika Plot (Fig. 1.3; E. Stern and Syon, in prep.). This building includes a water cistern and a few rooms of a domestic building, one with water installations and pipes, which was identified by the excavator as possibly a kitchen. The Crusader-period finds in this area included pottery, glass and coins.

The large salvage excavation carried out in 1995 in the northeastern corner of the Old City in an area



*Fig. 1.2. The Hospitaller Compound, 1992 excavation season. General view of the central courtyard, looking east.*



*Fig. 1.3. The Messika Plot excavations. A cistern in the left foreground and various water installations.*

known as the the Knights' Hotel (Figs. 1.4, 1.5; see Plan 3.2) revealed a large domestic quarter that remained undisturbed, as this part of the city had been covered

by wind-blown sand and was sparsely occupied in the Ottoman period. Thus, the buildings from the Crusader period were quite well preserved, including



*Fig. 1.4. The Knights' Hotel excavation, Area A. General view of the well-preserved buildings, looking west.*



*Fig. 1.5. The Knights' Hotel Excavation, Area E. Courtyard with cistern, well (foreground) and a double doorway and stairs leading to the courtyard.*

walls standing to a height of two meters above the floors (Fig. 1.4). The remains in this area were part of a residential quarter that was also used for trade and light industry. The house plans include inner courtyards with wells (Fig. 1.5), staircases leading to second floors and several rooms that have been identified as facing the street, apparently used as shops and workshops for the tenants. On the floors of the buildings are remains of a fierce conflagration which occasionally included arrowheads, attesting to the violent capture of the city in 1291. Underneath the houses are a very well-organized water system and cesspits for drainage, indicating that much attention was paid to the subject of water supply and waste removal in the city. The sudden violent destruction of this quarter yielded much archaeological material, including architectural and sculptured fragments, a mold for a statue, molds for pilgrims' ampullae, jewelry, coins, glass, glazed ceramic tiles and a great deal of restorable pottery, clearly dated to the last occupation of Crusader Acre (Syon and Thatcher 1998; E. Stern and Syon, in prep.).

#### GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of the present study is two-fold: (1) the archaeological study of the pottery itself and its production centers and (2) the study of the maritime trade and the distribution of pottery in the Mediterranean in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as reflected by the pottery imported to Acre. The study of these two aspects helps to obtain a thorough understanding of the various local and imported pottery vessels that were in use by the inhabitants of Crusader Acre and sheds light on other economic and cultural issues. One such issue was the assessment of the consumer population of Crusader Acre through their daily activities, such as the storing, preparing, cooking and serving of food, since the types of vessels they chose to make, purchase and use reflect on their social status and ethnic attribution, among other parameters. Another issue was the socio-

economic significance of the production modes of the local pottery, and of the provenance and patterns of distribution of the imported pottery, as well as the interaction between these two ceramic groups.

The method used to study the Crusader-period pottery of Acre was based on the quantitative-typological approach, generally used for pottery assemblages of earlier periods in Israel and only recently applied to a more in-depth and comprehensive analysis of medieval pottery (Pringle 1984, 1985, 1986b; Boas 1991, 1994; Avissar 1996a, 2005; Arnon 1999, 2003, 2008; Stacey 2004; Avissar and Stern 2005).

The large pottery assemblage recovered from the excavations in the Hospitaller Compound, the Knights' Hotel and the Messika Plot, briefly described above, significantly expands the initial corpus of Crusader pottery excavated in the Courthouse Site at Acre (Hartal 1997; Stern 1997) that comprised the kernel of the typological study in this volume. The pottery was sorted and counted by the author according to types, with a large selection of sherds and vessels drawn (see Chapter 3 for results of the pottery quantification and Chapter 4 for the typological analysis). These served as the basis for the inclusive typology in the present study. Research entailed an extensive comparative survey of published pottery from other sites in the Mediterranean basin (below, Chapters 2 and 4) and provenance analyses (below, Chapters 5 and 6; Waksman et al. 2008).

The Acre ceramic typology is based primarily on provenance, with function, form and decoration being secondary definitions, as a result of the importance of the former feature for our understanding of the broader implications of the local and imported assemblages. In order to more concisely present the complex ceramic data, a system of abbreviations was devised that is organized according to production regions, arranged in geographical order and further subdivided into types according to decoration techniques, fabric groups and/or vessel forms (see details in Chapters 3 and 4, and the concordance; the pottery plates appear in *'Akko I*, Part 2).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 'Franks' is a term used to describe the European population that settled in the Latin East. Although not all of these settlers were of Frankish origin, this epithet (Arabic, *Franj*) was used by the local population (Boas 1999:7).

<sup>2</sup> These excavations revealed a large part of the Hospitaller Compound, following the initial clearance of the Crusader-period remains between 1955 and 1964 by Z. Goldman on behalf of the Israel National Parks Authority and the Department of Antiquities (Goldman 1966; 1994). Further excavations were conducted at the Hospitaller Compound from 1999 to the recent present (E. Stern 2007a, 2007b; E. Stern and Abu 'Uqsa 2008, 2009), and another excavation was conducted at the Knights' Hotel in 2007 (Syon 2010). Although the ceramic finds from these later excavations will appear in subsequent publications, it was decided while preparing the material for this volume to include selected imported vessels from the 1999 excavations at the Hospitaller Compound (see Chapters 5 and 6 below and *'Akko I*, Part 2). This decision allowed us to extend the range of

pottery forms and decorations found at Acre, as well as their provenance analyses, and to increase the breadth of information in the syntheses provided here.

<sup>3</sup> All dates are CE unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>4</sup> Modern geographic names are used throughout the text to denote the areas from which pottery was imported to Acre.

<sup>5</sup> The name Acre will be used consistently throughout this study as it is used almost exclusively by scholars writing about the city during the Crusader period (for example, see Boas 1999; Jacoby 1982, 2005; Pringle 2009). This name apparently derived from the medieval name St. Jean d' Acre (or Acri). The name used by the Frankish (European Christian) population during the Crusader occupation was Acco or Accon, as this form was used in contemporary documents and on coins, inscriptions and most seals.

<sup>6</sup> The IAA license and permit numbers for these excavations are: Hospitaller Compound—G-102/1992, G-52/1993, G-34/1994, G-30/1995, G-14/1996, G-12/1997, G-14/1998; G-10/1999; Knights' Hotel—A-2244/1995; Messika Plot—A-2218/1995.



