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Buránszki Nóra

Margat Castle – Pottery and Economic History

Phd Dissertation – Thesis Booklet

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1. Research Background and Problem Statement

In my dissertation, I examined the medieval, particularly the 13th-century ceramic material from the excavation at Margat Castle, which began in 2007, and the castle's role in the commercial and economic historical relations of the era. Although the research on the Crusader Age has long been a popular topic of both international and domestic interest, relatively few works have been written that deal with the ceramic craftsmanship of the period, especially the material culture of a castle. Although the architecture, military character, and fortification of the Crusader castles are well known, we have significantly less data on the finds unearthed during the research of the castles, especially the ceramic material. Edna Stern carried out the most extensive such work in the early 2000s; in her dissertation, she published the Crusader finds of the Crusader Castle of Acre. Additionally, scholars studying the ceramic art of the period have access to more minor excavations and material publications. In this respect, Mariam Avissar and Edna Stern's *Pottery of Ayyubis, Crusaders, and Mamluks*, published in 2005, is also a gap-filling and unavoidable work, which can serve as a good starting point and handbook. However, the processing work related to the excavations at Margat Castle and the periodisation of the individual spaces within the castle made the systematic processing and evaluation of the castle's ceramic material also essential.

The large amount of ceramic material excavated did not allow for the examination of the entire material. During the processing, there was also a lack of early material that could be clearly traced back to the 12th century. Hence, the focus

of the dissertation was on two periods of the castle: on the one hand, the late Crusader and 13th-century relics related to the Johannite construction of the castle.

On the other hand, the landscaping after the castle's occupation in the Mamluk era and the rearrangement of sites can be linked to the finds dated to the end of the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century, when these areas were filled.

The geographical and historical framework of the dissertation is contained in Chapters I and II. In contrast, the literature review on ceramics research in the region is presented in Chapter IV.

2. Structure and Methodology

Recently, there have been a few systematic and analytical works on Syria that have dealt with the material of a Crusader castle; however, relatively few publications are known in connection with Crusader materials. Thus, in addition to the systematic processing of the material, the question arises as to how this material can be integrated into the existing known Crusader materials, and how similar or different it is in this regard. Within the framework of the dissertation, approximately 30,000 fragments were examined, of which about 850 fragments were inventoried and drawn, forming the basis of the ceramics database that serves as the foundation for the thesis.

During the processing, the selection criteria for the sets of finds were the following:

The closed, well-dated finds that can be clearly linked to the 13th century (outer suburbium (OSC – sections XXII, XXIV, XXV and XXVI), the castle courtyard (X1 – section 2016/I), the part of the kitchen excavated in 2009 (section D -2009/XXVI), the part of the MB5-7 building excavated in 2008 (2008.III.1.A), the area in front of the donjon in the southern part of the castle (U - section 2018/I).

material from the period following the occupation of the castle in the Mamlú Age MB5 – Excavation of 7 buildings in 2011 (section 2011/XXX), and detail of the residential house excavated in the inner suburbium (section 2022/XXVII)

Mixed material that is difficult to date (M2 – 2008/XII-XIII. section)

The selection criteria can be subjective in a certain sense, but the systematic processing of the entire material would have gone beyond the framework of the doctoral dissertation. However, I hope that in the future, the materials that have been left out can be reviewed, and the material can also be examined in natural science, which can clarify the current conclusions and help the material to be incorporated into international research. Despite all this, however, the now processed and presented findings were a good representation of the material culture of the castle under Johannite rule, as well as the changes in the period following the Mamluk occupation.

After presenting the chronological and geographical environment (Chapter I) and the history and construction

periods of the castle (Chapter II), the dissertation examines the finds through three main topics. First, I presented the circumstances of its discovery (Chapter III), which can aid in dating the material and the eradication of individual layers and phenomena. The interpretation of the fragments was also aided by the review of earlier historical research data, as well as the presentation and systematisation of typological aspects (Chapter IV).

The majority of the thesis consisted of the typological systematisation of the processed ceramic fragments and vessels, as well as the conclusions that can be drawn in the case of certain types of objects (Chapter V). At the end of this chapter, the material was compared with the finds from the well-known Johannite castles of the region (e.g., Arsuf, Acre, Crac des Chevaliers), and the chronological changes observed in each type were summarised.

The next unit of the thesis was the conclusions that could be drawn from the processed finds, as well as an examination of the castle's economic role through the analysis of the ceramic fragments. On the one hand, I attempted to integrate the findings I examined into the material of the well-known Levantine pottery workshops, examining their distribution and presence within Margat Castle (Chapter VI). After that, I mapped the commercial relations of the castle based on the ceramics, thus forming a picture of the castle's economic role in the region's life.

The dissertation was closed by the catalogue and pictures of the presented finds (Volume II).

3. New results

The primary result of the dissertation is that based on the finds of the Margat Castle dating back to the beginning of the 13th and 14th centuries, a typochronological system was prepared that can be used for the ceramic material of the castle and the region, which can help both the processing of the further material of the castle and the dating of the ceramic material found in the region. As a result of the processing, it was possible to identify the characteristics of the Johannite castles (the large proportion of unglazed soup bowls), the ceramic groups or types characteristic of the region (the high degree of uniformity of the finds of the castles of the Holy Land), or the typical vessels of Muslim origin that have already appeared in the Crusader material (keys and geometrically painted jugs). However, he also pointed out that the survival of Eastern traditions can be observed in the pottery of the region, either in the form of specific vessel shapes (such as amphoras and large bowls) or in the technical characteristics, including the widespread use of foot rings. At the same time, in this Near Eastern ceramic tradition, the tastes of the newcomers can also be well identified. One of the most spectacular examples of this is the polychrome sgraffito ornate bowls, which feature both heraldic representations (coats of arms, shields) and human representations (knightly figures) in their motifs, clearly associated with the newly arrived Frankish inhabitants and indicative of a Western taste.

A comparison of the material with the material of other castles in the Holy Land, such as Acre, Arsuf or Crac des Chevaliers, has shown not only that despite the long distances, the material of the individual castles shows a high degree of similarity, but also, primarily through the examination of the individual workshop districts, that there is a high degree of specialisation between these workshops, which reveals the lively trade relations between the Holy Land states. Thus, in the case of the Margat material, it was possible to examine its role not only within the immediate environment of the castle, but also more broadly, within the East-Mediterranean region. Future scientific studies of the material complement the latter research.

The results of the current research indicate that the chronological characteristics observed in certain types of ceramics can serve as a valuable complement to the information on the architectural history and chronological observations of the castle. There are only a few castles known from the territory of the Crusader states where architectural and ground plan research has been supplemented with data on material culture, which helps to clarify the picture of the Crusader material culture and to examine the regional role of individual castles.

In addition to the ceramics processing, the other main result of the dissertation was the mapping of the economic historical connections of the Margat Castle. Based on the workshop area and distribution of each type of ceramics, it was also possible to examine the commercial relations of the castle. As a result of the research, it was clear that the castle had a lively trade not only with the neighbouring states of the

Holy Land but also with the Muslim territories. Based on the ceramic material, the main direction of trade may have been primarily coastal shipping; the products of almost all the main workshops of the coastal regions could be identified in the Margat finds. The golden age of this period can be dated to the end of the 12th and 13th centuries, when almost all the types of pottery known from the Johannite castles of the region were found in the Margat finds. However, examining the later fragment of the Mamluk period, these economic relations, albeit with less intensity, may have persisted into the 14th and 15th centuries as well.

These economic relations may later complement the picture of everyday life in the castle during the Crusader period and its aftermath, further nuancing the significance of Margaret in the line of castles in the Holy Land.

1. Publications Related to the Topic

Publications:

I. Published Papers

2019

A 13th century Pottery Assemblage from Margat Castle.

In: *Bridge of Civilizations. The Near East and Europe c. 1100 – 1300*. ed: P. Edbury, D.Pringle, B. Major, Oxford, 2019, p: 260-271

2024

Plain Bowls from Crac des Chevaliers.

Proceedings of the Postgraduate and Early Career Conference in Medieval Archaeology. MERC Papers vol 1. ed.: Jakub Sawicki, Mária Vargha (Prague 2022), p. 27-38

II. Under Publications

Sphero-conical vessel fragments from two Crusader Castles in Syria. Case studies from Margat (Q'alat al- Marqab and Krak des Chevaliers (Q'alat al- Hosn).

In: Studies in the Archaeology of the Late Antique and Medieval Levant (vol. 1) 8 p + 5 plates

Everyday Life Aspect in a Crusader Castle. Some Thought about Medieval Pottery from Crac des Chevaliers

In: Studies in the Near Eastern Archaeology I. ed Vass, Lóránt
14 p + 18 plates

III. Selected Conference Presentations

1. In Hungarian

2023: Higiénia és hulladékkezelés a keresztes kori várakban, avagy miről árulkodnak a csatornák és a szemétdödrök (Hygiene and waste management in medieval castles, or what sewers and rubbish pits reveal)

A várak mindennapi életének tárgyi emlékei. A

Castrum Bene Egyesület XXVII. vándorgyűlése.

Veszprém, 2023. július 8.

2019: Egy különös tárgy a Közel - Keletről, avagy az „antióchiai szent kézi gránát” (A curious object from the Near East, or the "holy grenade of Antioch")

*Fiatal Középkoros Régészek XI. Konferenciája,
Veszprém, 2019. november 22.*

2019: Étkezés és anyagi kultúra a keresztiskori Margat várában (Food and material culture in Margat Castle during the Crusades)
*Középkorral foglalkozó doktoranduszok konferenciája,
Budapest, 2019. június 13.*

2018: Keresztes anyagi kultúra: a margati tál
(Crusader material culture: the Margat bowl)
*Fiatal középkoros Régészeti 10. Konferenciája,
Orosháza, november 24.*

2016: Keresztesiskori ciszterna Margat várából
(Cisterna from the Margat Castle dating back to the Crusader period)
*Fiatal középkoros Régészeti VIII. Konferenciája
Sátoraljaújhely, 2016. november 17.*

2015: Keresztesiskori lakóház és emlékanagya Margat várából
(Residential building and its finds from the Margat castle dating back to the Crusader era)

*Fiatalközépkorosi Régészeti V. Konferenciája,
Szentendre, 2015. november 21.*

2. In English

2022: Behind Ceramics: Medieval Mediterranean Trade Routes and Pottery Distribution in Crusader Margat
From Late Antiquity to the Ottoman Period in the Levant" Conference on Near Eastern Archaeology, PPKE, Budapest, 2022. szeptember 27.

2022: Plain Bowls from Crac des Chevaliers.
MERC Postgraduate & Early Career Conference in Medieval Archaeology, Prága, 2022. május 12.

2020: Between East and West: Typology and Functionality in Crusader Ceramics
European Association of Archaeologist (EAA) 2020 Virtual #Networking session: Ceramic is Fantactoc! The Life-cycle of pottery through cross-disciplinary studies, online konferencia, 2020. augusztus 28.

2019: Medieval Pottery in the Outer Suburb of Margat Castle,

Syria

*MERC Postgraduate & Early Career Conference in
Medieval Archaeology*

Pula, Horvátország, 2019. április 26

2018: Medieval Pottery in Margat Castle and its Suburbs

Bridge of Civilisations. The Near East and Europe c.

1100-1300 (poszterelőadás) Esztergom, 2018. május 5.