

The Italian quarters of Frankish Tyre: mapping a medieval city

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Abstract

The study of the urban history and topography of the Italian quarters in Frankish Tyre is presented through detailed analysis of medieval texts, charters and inventories. The thirteenth-century report and inventory by the Venetian official Marsilio Zorzi is given particular attention due to its elaborated descriptions of several parts of the city. This is the first attempt to map Frankish Tyre and study its commercial quarters. The reconstruction of each quarter is followed by a discussion of the role played by the commune in the Frankish city and its contribution to it. It is demonstrated that the Venetian, Genoese and Pisan communes contributed significantly to the urban design of the city, incorporating the existing markets, bakeries and bath-houses, adding others and supplementing them with new churches and *loggias*.

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Tyre has a special place in the history of the crusades and the Latin East. It played its most significant role in 1187 when it provided a safe haven for the Latin refugees who escaped Saladin. Later, it was the benchmark for the warriors of the Third Crusade. In peaceful times it was a commercial and cultural hub; an Arab city which went through many alterations during the two decades of Frankish rule. This is the first attempt to study the layout of the city and map three of its major commercial zones, the semi-autonomous Italian quarters. The analysis and maps draw on a variety of documents, windows to the topography of the city as well as many other aspects of life in the medieval city. One particularly

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useful source is a thirteenth-century report and inventory by the Venetian official Marsilio Zorzi.¹ His descriptions are rich and detailed, and hence provide a cornerstone for the mapping of the Venetian quarter and the rest of the city. The visual outcomes, a series of schematic maps, throw light on various cultural and architectural questions and invite further studies into the role played by the Italian communes in the urban history of the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem.

Extensive research of the layout of other Frankish cities, and of Acre in particular, has inspired this work.² It is surprising that, despite its economic and military significance, Frankish Tyre has been largely overlooked by historians. The most comprehensive study to date was published in 1979 by the Lebanese archaeologist Emir Maurice Chéhab. He gathered archaeological evidence and many historical documents. The part of his work dedicated to the analysis of the city's layout, however, suffers from severe confusion and misinterpretation of some of the Latin texts and should be used with caution.³ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeological missions from France, Germany and Britain had carried out surveys containing important information about the defences of Tyre.⁴ They are supplemented by a number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century drawings, which are useful in identifying some of the medieval ruins.⁵ Fig. 1 is a modern map of Tyre indicating the location of some of the major archaeological remains gathered from these surveys, including

¹ For the first publication of Zorzi's report see *Urkunden zur älteren Handels und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levant vom Neunten bis zum Ausgang des Fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts* ed. Gottlieb L.F. Tafel and George M. Thomas, 3 vols (Vienna, 1856–7; repr. Amsterdam, 1964) (hereinafter cited as TTh), vol. 2, docs 299–300, 351–416. A more recent, critical, edition is Oliver Berggötz, *Der Bericht des Marsilio Zorzi* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991). All references in this paper are to Berggötz's edition with indication of page numbers and lines (hereinafter cited as Zorzi).

² David Jacoby, 'Crusader Acre in the thirteenth century: urban layout and topography', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 20 (1975), 1–45; David Jacoby, 'Montmusard, suburb of crusader Acre: the first stage of its development', in: *Outremer: studies in the history of the crusading kingdom of Jerusalem, presented to Joshua Prawer*, ed. B.Z. Kedar, H.E. Mayer, R.C. Smail (Jerusalem, 1982), 205–17; Benjamin Z. Kedar, 'The outer walls of Frankish Acre', *Atiqot*, 31 (1997), 157–80; Robert Kool, 'The Genoese quarter in thirteenth-century Acre: a reinterpretation of its layout', *Atiqot*, 31 (1997), 187–200; Denys Pringle, *Secular buildings in the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem. An archaeological gazetteer* (Cambridge, 1997); Jonathan Riley Smith, 'Guy of Lusignan, the Hospitallers and the gates of Acre', in: *Dei gesta per Francos. Crusade studies in honour of Jean Richard*, ed. Michel Balard, Benjamin Kedar and Jonathan Riley Smith (Aldershot, 2001), 111–5; Adrian Boas, 'Some reflections on urban landscapes in the kingdom of Jerusalem: archaeological research in Jerusalem and Acre', in: *Dei gesta per Francos*, ed. Balard, Kedar and Riley Smith, 241–60; David Jacoby, 'New Venetian evidence on crusader Acre', in: *The experience of crusading, II: defining the crusader kingdom*, ed. Peter Edbury and Jonathan Phillips (Cambridge, 2003), 240–56; Jonathan Riley Smith, 'Further thoughts on the layout of the hospital in Acre', in: *Chemins d'outre-mer: Etudes d'histoire sur la Méditerranée médiévale offertes à Michel Balard*, ed. Damien Coulon, et al. (Byzantina Sorbonensia 20, Paris 2004), 753–64.

³ Maurice H. Chéhab, *Tyr à l'époque des croisades*, 2 vols (Paris, 1979). In discussing the Venetian quarter in Tyre, Chéhab mistakenly used a description of the Venetian part of Acre, which led to many confusions in his analysis.

⁴ The French study was carried out by Count Jules de Bertou, who also produced the most detailed excavation map of Tyre: Jules de Bertou, *Essai sur la topographie de Tyr* (Paris, 1834). The Germans sent a mission to search for Frederick Barbarossa's tomb. The results, however, were disputed and published in two separate books: Hans G. Prutz, *Aus Phönizien: geographische Skizzen und historische Studien* (Leipzig, 1876); Johann N. Sepp, *Meerfahrt nach Tyrus zur Ausgrabung der Kathedrale mit Barbarossa's Grab* (Leipzig, 1879). The English survey was carried out by the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) and published in Claude R. Conder and Horatio H. Kitchener, *The survey of western Palestine: memoirs of the topography, orography, hydrography and archaeology*, 3 vols (London, 1881), vol. 1, 72–81. An amended article and map were published two years later: *The survey of western Palestine*, 3 vols (London, 1883), vol. 3, appendix 1, 423–35.

⁵ See Patricia Bikai and Pierre Bikai, 'Tyre at the end of the twentieth century', *Berytus* 35 (1987), 67–83.

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