

**IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca
Lucca, Italy**

**Crusader Heritage in Syria
Legacy, Ideology, and Management in Tartus
under the French Mandate**

**PhD programme in Cognitive and Cultural Systems
Track "Analysis and Management of Cultural Heritage"
XXXVII Cycle**

**By
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2026**

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To my family

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Alessandro Poggio, for his tremendous support. I am deeply grateful for all the guidance, encouragement, and patience. I would like to extend my thanks to Professor Maria Luisa Catoni for her insightful comments and guidance at different stages of this research as well as to all the professors and colleagues of the LYNX Research Unit and the wider IMT community.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Chiara De Cesari and Dr. Nour Munawar for their generous support during my research stay at the University of Amsterdam. My sincere thanks also go to Professor Patricia Antaki and Professor Lamia Hadda for agreeing to examine this thesis and for their careful reading of my work.

This research would not have been possible without the help of many institutions. I am particularly grateful to the staff of the *Centre des Archives diplomatiques* in Nantes and the *Centre des Archives diplomatiques du ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères* in La Courneuve for their assistance during my archival research. I also thank the staff of the archives of the American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University in Beirut for their assistance during my research. My thanks extend as well to the staff of libraries across Europe and the Levant, particularly in Paris, Amsterdam, Pisa, Brussels, Beirut, and Damascus.

I am deeply thankful to the colleagues and friends who accompanied me through these years. To Michal Lynn, Kristina, Matteo, Giulia, Rahaf, Pierre, Christel, Julien, James, and many others: thank you for the companionship, conversations, encouragement, humour, and patience. Your friendship and presence made these years lighter and more joyful.

My warmest thanks go to my family for their support and confidence in me. The love I received from my parents, Amal and Wafik, and sisters, Reem and Ranim, has remained with me throughout every stage of this work. I am especially thankful to Lisy, Alex, Inti and Lua, the family I got to have along the way.

Finally, I thank Charles Al Hayek for his immense generosity and constant presence. Thank you for being there at every step of this long and exciting journey.

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Publications

Rami Issa, “Dura-Europos and Heritage Narratives in Assad’s Syria: The Politics of Invisibility.” In *Re-Interpreting and Re-Assessing Difficult Heritage: A Study of Dissonances*, edited by Francesca Leonardi, Ginevra Ludovici, and Linda Bertelli, 64–79. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2026.

Rami Issa, “Disaster Risk Management Plan for the Crusader Citadel in Tartus, Syria.” In *Proceedings of UNESCO Chair Programme on Cultural Heritage and Risk Management: International Training Course (ITC) on Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage*, Ritsumeikan University in Collaboration with ICCROM, 94–98. Kyoto: HOKUTO Printing Co., Ltd., 2025.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the mechanisms through which changes in the understanding and interpretation of the past translate into the built environment. Focusing on the crusader heritage in the Syrian coast, it shows how heritage sites influence the development of an ideology and the construction of regional identities, and how these ideologies and narratives can in turn reshape the same heritage sites and their perception. Additionally, it explores the ways in which these sites become arenas where power dynamics of local and colonial institutions are manifested and negotiated. The geographical context of the research shifts in scale between the broader Levantine context and the Syrian coast, narrowing down to the main case study: the city of Tartus. The timeframe also extends on multiple periods; while the focus is on the colonial period under French rule (1918-1946), it also addresses relevant periods such as the crusader rule, the late Ottoman period and the early independence years. By focusing on urban planning, architecture and heritage preservation, this study shows how institutional inertia can continue to shape decision-making processes well after regime change. It also argues that the French experience in the coast of Syria was an anomaly within the French colonial empire; crusader heritage provided the colonial authorities with a sense of legitimacy and belonging not found elsewhere in the empire, which directly impacted the treatment of crusader heritage sites. In this sense, the dissertation contributes to broader debates on the entanglement of heritage management, ideology, narrative, and power.

Introduction

As this thesis is being completed in the spring of 2026, the war between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran on the other is ongoing, with devastating consequences across the region. In this context, Pete Hegseth, United States Secretary of War, called for what he described as an “American crusade”¹. On the other side of the conflict, the war is framed as part of a long tradition of Western aggression against Islam starting with the crusades². After almost a thousand years of their takeoff, the crusades are not a closed chapter of medieval history; their legacy has continued to shape modern political and spatial realities in unexpected ways. This is by no means a new phenomenon; modern interpretations of the crusades, and the projection of contemporary politics onto them, can be traced back at least to the eighteenth century, intensifying toward the end of the nineteenth century.

The crusades have had a distinguished place in modern scholarship both as medieval events and as powerful elements of historical memory in East and West. This thesis is intended to be a part of crusader studies; however, the research tries to focus on medievalism in a colonial context. More precisely, it tries to understand how the 19th century obsession with the crusades was practiced once crusader heritage sites came under the rule of

¹ Zachary B. Wolf, “Pete Hegseth Wanted an ‘American Crusade.’ Now He’s leading a war in the Middle East,” *CNN*, March 13, 2026, <https://edition.cnn.com/2026/03/13/politics/hegseth-iran-israel-war-american-crusade-analysis>

² Mahmoud Hadhoud, “‘Zionists Behind the Cross’: How Did American Policy Fall into Israel’s Grip?,” *Al Jazeera*, March 8, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2026/3/7/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AC-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A8-%D9%82%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%81> (in Arabic).

French colonial authorities. To explore these dynamics, this thesis adopts the built environment as a medium through which ideologies were materialized, but also contested, and negotiated. It is therefore situated at the intersection of medieval history, political agendas, and spatial transformation.

The research will take of the city of Tartus on the Syrian coast as the main case study, tracing its development from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, focusing on the period of the French mandate (1920-1946). The choice of the case study and the timeframe were also influenced by the political context in which this research started. The research started in 2021, when Syria was still under the rule of the Assad regime. Under Assad, all research, specifically in social sciences, were viewed with suspicion where accusations of collecting data for external agents can be brought up easily against researchers. The fact that I am from the city of Tartus gave me accessibility to the site and the concerned services without attracting unwanted attention. Prior to the doctorate, I was involved in a documentation project in Tartus's old city (the templar citadel). This provided me with a deeper understanding of the site and showed me how understudied it is. It also introduced me to professionals within the municipality involved in its management, as well as to members of the local community.

Additionally, the site of Tartus represents a unique opportunity to study colonial management of crusader heritage in an urban setting. Not only the crusader heritage is abundant and well preserved in the city, but structures from other periods are also significantly less in number and monumentality, making the involvement and interpretation of this site easier to detect. Secondly, the French decision to enlarge the city offers a richer perspective to the colonial policies since these medieval structures would be also relevant in the urban planning of the city. This would put the management of the crusader heritage in a more complex context than studying isolated crusader citadels in the mountains.

The timeframe of the study was also influenced by safety concerns; since politics were deeply connected to heritage management, it

was preferable to keep the endpoint of the timeframe to the 1960s for two main reasons. First, data collection was far safer in Syria once the research was framed in a colonial context; I had to present my research for some professionals in line with the dominant political discourse, i.e. exposing the colonizers' politics, in order to insure the smoothness of the work. Second, any scientific production which incorporated political criticism to the Assad regime would be too risky to publish in the future.

While these elements are pragmatic considerations, the significance of the site per se is difficult to exaggerate, yet it remains vastly understudied and unknown nationally. Throughout the life of the Syrian Republic after independence, crusader sites did not play a major role in the construction of national identity as did Ancient, Roman and Islamic sites. Only Crac des Chevaliers received national attention, echoing the international recognition of the iconic castle.

On the other hand, the urban configuration of the city ended up making the crusader citadel a segregated entity along sectarian lines. Prior to French arrival, the population of Tartus consisted of a Sunni Muslim community, concentrated in the citadel, with a Greek Orthodox minority. From the early 1920, the French put the city on its course to become a major urban center, a trend that continued far after their departure. The majority of the new residents were Alawites coming from the neighboring mountains, settling in new neighborhoods. By the second half of the 20th century, the Sunnis became a minority in the city. Since most houses in the citadel grew inside or on top of medieval structures, the living conditions in these houses were far from ideal. This pushed those who could afford to leave the citadel and settle in new modern neighborhoods. Therefore, the citadel, which was less than a century earlier the town itself, became an impoverished neighborhood segregated from the rest of the city along social, sectarian and physical lines. This led to further marginalization of the site and stigmatization of its inhabitants.

Against this backdrop, this thesis examines how an urban medieval site developed in the modern period, influenced by

political discourses before, during and after the French mandate. It tries to shed light on the dynamics in which ideologies, invented traditions and perception on the past materialized in the built environment, specifically when the heritage in question is symbolically charged with contemporary political allegories. In doing so, it tries to explore how colonial and local narratives were influenced by these historic sites and how these sites, in turn, were (re)shaped to serve evolving narratives.

Research gap

Examining recent scholarship, we find countless works on the crusades, their history, material culture, and their legacy. Research on colonial management of crusader sites, however, is scarce. The only work entirely dedicated for this topic we managed to find is an article by Prof. Astrid Swenson titled “Crusader heritages and imperial preservation” in which she examines four case studies in Malta, Cyprus, Palestine and Syria, focusing on the Crac des Chevaliers in the latter. The sharp contrast in the research interest between studies on the crusades and research on the colonial management is noted by Swenson as she notes:

“As a result, many chapters of colonial preservation are still unwritten, and the intra-imperial relations that framed them remain largely unexplored. [...] The rich literature on the reception of the crusades, which has drawn attention to the relationship between historiography and national and colonial projects, is relatively silent with regard to the treatment of sites and artefacts”³.

Even works that have focused on French colonialist policies in Syria and the attempt to cast a light on Western civilisation have frequently used the French involvement in Greco-Roman sites, through which they tried to depict the colonialist use of the past in French heritage politics⁴. Crusader sites, which offered a far

³ Astrid Swenson, “Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation,” *Past & Present* 226, suppl. 10 (2015): 28-29.

⁴ See, for instance: Nathalie J. Bussemaker, “Imperialism’s Stepchild: Dura-Europos and the Political Uses of Archaeology in the French

more immediate ancestry and relevance to the French were virtually absent from such studies.

We can confidently say that the only crusader site in Syria that has received scholarly attention was Crac des Chevaliers. In 2019, *Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine* in Paris made an exhibition on the monument that was followed by an edited volume, a collection of essays on the citadel and its recent history. To our knowledge, this is the only work that has attempted, at least in some of its articles, to explore the layers of French ideological involvement in the crusader heritage in Syria. The Crac des Chevalier, however, met a destiny similar to that of Roman Palmyra: complete evacuation of the inhabitants and a restoration to an imagined “original” form.

Tartus remains an unknown site and an understudied case. For instance, there is no reference to the Templar citadel of Tartus on the official website of the Syrian Ministry of Tourism. The fact that Tartus and its surroundings flourished particularly under the Phoenicians and the crusades made it largely irrelevant for the construction of a nationalist identity under the Arabist regime. The mobilization of Phoenician heritage in the construction of the Lebanese State further contributed to the marginalization of Phoenician sites outside Lebanon⁵. There is even a Lebanese scholar who worked on the Phoenician site of Amrit, south of Tartus, and who chose to provide its coordinates relative to Beirut,

Mandate of Syria, 1920–1939” (Kaplan Senior Essay Prize for Use of Library Special Collections, 2021); Sarah Griswold, “High-Tech Heritage: Planes, Photography, and the Ancient Past in the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon,” *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation History, Theory, and Criticism* 16, no. 2 (2019): 1–15; Daniela K. Helbig, “La Trace de Rome? Aerial Photography and Archaeology in Mandate Syria and Lebanon,” *History of Photography* 40, no. 3 (July 2016): 283–300; Jennifer A. Baird, “Photographing Dura-Europos, 1928–1937,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 115, no. 3 (July 2011): 427–446.

⁵ This is evident in ideas that have circulated in Lebanon at various levels, including within scholarly circles, where Phoenician sites outside Lebanon are often framed as “colonies”.

leading an uninformed reader to assume that the site is within Lebanese territory⁶. Consequently, with limited relevance to the Arabist discourse of the Assad regime, the city's heritage has remained on the margins.

Methodology

Conducting this research during the current geopolitical climate in the Levant posed methodological challenges on multiple levels, as I had to keep up with increasingly changing realities. The fall of the regime in Syria in late 2024 and the instability that followed prevented me from conducting fieldwork. At the same time, the fall of the regime also provoked a revival of the questions of identities: ideas and symbols that had developed under French rule started reappearing and new ways of interpreting the past emerged, with particular attention to the Umayyad period from the new administration and its supporters.

Regarding the sources used, literature on the crusades and their legacy is generally available. Accordingly, I familiarised myself with both the medieval events and their modern interpretations. Nevertheless, from then onwards, finding the proper sources became increasingly challenging. Since both the topic and the case study are understudied, I had to depend mostly on primary sources. Archival material dating back to the French Mandate was indispensable, particularly reports from the French intelligence services (*service de renseignement*) held at the *Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes*. This was complemented by journals and correspondence from both the Levant and the metropole, consulted at the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* in Paris, the *Bibliothèque Orientale* at *Université Saint-Joseph* in Beirut, the American University of Beirut, and the National Library in Damascus, as well as in various libraries in Paris, Lyon, Pisa, Florence, Amsterdam, and Brussels.

⁶ Labib Boutros, "The Phoenician Stadium of Amrit," *The Olympic Review*, no. 112 (February 1977): 120.

Travel accounts were also used as supplementary sources, offering valuable first-hand descriptions of the site and its surroundings, particularly in the 19th century. Photography, which began documenting the site from the late 1850s, was an invaluable source, helping with source triangulation and in filling gaps in the textual sources. I have tried to rely mainly on photographs with clear dating and provenance; however, some images available online were too valuable to dismiss. This was particularly the case of Facebook groups where members, often from wealthy local families, share photographs from their private collections. When dating was unavailable or uncertain, elements within the images with known chronological markers were used to establish an approximate timeframe.

Illustrations and plans were also consulted, obtained in part from the Municipality of Tartus during my last visit in July 2024. Additional material was gathered through earlier visits to the site, colleagues working on-site, and data collected during my master's studies and professional engagement I had in the old town in 2021. Interviews were conducted on a limited scale; nevertheless, I was able to meet with several local figures, as well as specialists, including both academics and professionals in Syria, Italy, and France.

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretative, and interdisciplinary approach, combining close readings of textual, visual, and material sources. It is situated at the intersection of medieval and modern history, architectural heritage studies, urban studies, political analysis, and colonial studies. The focus on the built environment stems both from my background in architecture and from its relevance as a domain in which ideologies and beliefs are materialised, translating the conceptual into the physical. As such, the built environment provides a particularly effective lens through which power imbalances and the colonial processes of selection and manipulation could be examined.

I have limited the use of artificial intelligence tools in this research to specific forms of technical and linguistic assistance, including

the recognition of handwritten texts, occasional translation support, and, in some cases, help with rephrasing complex sentences. All output produced with the assistance of these tools was reviewed and revised where necessary. The text in its entirety, as well as the interpretation of sources, the analysis, the arguments, and the urban plans drawn for this research, remain entirely my own.

The focus of this research will shift across geographical scales according to the topic. I will use the terms *Near East* and *Levant* interchangeably to refer to the eastern Mediterranean, roughly corresponding to the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine/Israel. Although the term *Syria* has historically been used in Western sources to designate the same region, I will use it exclusively to refer to the territories within the modern Syrian State. Narrowing further, the *Syrian coastal region*, or simply the *coastal region*, will be used as general terms. However, in the context of the French Mandate, it will be referred to by its official name, the *State of the Alawites* until 1930, and then the *Government of Latakia* until its annexation by the Syrian State in 1936.

Narrowing further, to avoid confusion, I will use the spelling *Tartus* for the city, regardless of the historical period during which it had different names. However, quotations will retain the original names and spellings. Finally, since the old town was built on top of the Templar citadel, I will use these terms interchangeably, while remaining attentive to contexts in which one may be more appropriate than the other.

In recent years, discussions have intensified around terms such as *Levant* and *Middle/Near East* in debates on coloniality and efforts to challenge it. Some argue that these terms carry a strong colonial charge due to their Eurocentric framing of the region as lying to the east of Europe. I do not deny the possible orientalist origins of such terminology; however, alternative designations proposed in this context, such as the *Arab World* or *West Asia* are either too broad or equally charged with political symbolism. Since geographical terms in this region inevitably carry political

connotations, and for the sake of clarity, I will use the widely recognized terms *Near East* and *Levant*.

It is important in this context to precise that by “colonial rule”, I will strictly be referring to French rule over Syria, starting with the military occupation of the coast in 1918, which was then “legalized” under the mandate system from 1920 to 1946. Here I wish to emphasize that I am not fully convinced by the designations such as “colonial” and “pre-colonial” in a region like the Near East, since they seem to be an application of an experience that had developed elsewhere. Such terminology risks implying that the region under Ottoman rule was “pre-colonial” or the “original” form that was disrupted by the arrival of a foreign colonial power, in a manner comparable to pre-Columbian America. Yet Ottoman rule in the Arab Near East is increasingly viewed as a colonial experience⁷, while the attempt to identify a pre-colonial “original” period will always be highly disputable and will mostly be ideologically influenced. For the sake of simplicity, however, this thesis will adopt the conventional use of the term “colonial” to refer to the period of Western rule.

Similarly, I wish to emphasize that this research is grounded in scholarly inquiry and scientific curiosity rather than ideology. With full recognition of the tragic consequences of colonization worldwide, my intention here is not to adopt an activist stance, but rather to understand the complexity of agency, power imbalances, and the processes of negotiation between the different actors involved. I acknowledge that the study of colonial heritage and legacy is never entirely “neutral”. Nevertheless, I have tried to remain attentive to potential biases and fallacies, and to avoid anachronistic readings and ideological projection onto the past.

The structure of the thesis had to be reconsidered frequently as the research progressed, before eventually being divided into five chapters. The first chapter focuses on the history of Tartus and its

⁷ Farouk Hoblos, “Public Services and Tax Revenues in Ottoman Tripoli,” in *Syria and Bilad al-Sham under Ottoman Rule: Essays in Honour of Abdul Karim Rafeq*, ed. Peter Sluglett and Stefan Weber (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 134.

architectural development from antiquity to the arrival of the French in 1918. Crusader history, both in general and of the city, is given primary attention for its relevance. The final subchapter explores how political events in the Near East were reflected in the built environment of Tartus and in the city's role in the broader context.

In the second chapter, the focus is on the crusader legacy in modernity. It examines the modern, mainly 19th century, memory of the crusades and its use in political contexts in both the East and the West, as well as its role in nation-building.

The third chapter focuses on the French Mandate and the application of a "crusader mentality" once the French took over Syria. It tries to uncover the complexity of the French colonial apparatus by focusing on different factions within the administration and their different agendas. It also explores the local response to French efforts to shape national identity.

The fourth chapter focuses on the application of these ideological currents to the built environment. It is divided into two overlapping categories: urban planning and architecture. The chapter analyses the French intervention methods in the urban space and their plans for the city and its crusader structures. It also situates urban planning practices within the broader topic of colonial urban planning within the French Empire.

The fifth and final chapter continues this examination by narrowing the focus to a single building: the crusader cathedral of Notre-Dame de Tortose. It examines the power dynamics between the French administration and local institutions regarding ownership, restoration, and adaptive reuse. Here, the cathedral serves as a key site in which competing currents and ideologies intersected among different actors, a dynamic that continued beyond the end of the Mandate in 1946.

1 From Antiquity to the Modern Era: The Historical and Architectural Development of Tartus

1.1 Historical overview of Tartus and its vicinity from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

Like most cities in the Near East, the city of Tartus has a deep history with urban and rural remnants witnessing to the diversity of civilizations to which it had belonged. The positioning of Tartus, as is the case for Syria in general, has frequently made of it a battlefield for crashing empires, usually centered faraway, such as Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Anatolian or Aegean centered civilizations. The region surrounding present day Tartus have witnessed human settlement that goes back at least to the Bronze Age⁸. These settlements, unlike other Canaanite sites to the south, seem to have experienced invasion and destruction in the end of the Bronze Age at around the 12th century BCE, although this did not result in abandonment of the site or a replacement of population⁹. To the contrary, these Canaanite Kingdoms seemed to have accelerated in development and expansion of commercial port cities along the coastline from the beginning of the Iron Age¹⁰. Four Canaanite kingdoms constituted what was referred to by the Greeks as Phoenicia, a culture commonly dated by scholars to the Iron Age, from the late Bronze Age until the Macedonian conquest, although its decline was gradual¹¹. The territory of each kingdom has fluctuated in surface area according to political

⁸Corinne Bonnet, *Les enfants de Cadmos: Le paysage religieux de la Phénicie hellénistique* (Paris: De Boccard, 2014 [2015]), 112.

⁹Carolina López-Ruiz, *Phoenicians and the Making of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 283.

¹⁰Ann E. Killebrew, "Canaanite Roots, Proto-Phoenicia, and Early Phoenicia: ca. 1300–1000 BCE," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Phoenician and Punic Mediterranean*, ed. Brian R. Doak and Carolina López-Ruiz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 44.

¹¹Sader, *The History and Archaeology of Phoenicia*, 1–2.

circumstances. Off the shores of Tartus, Arwad, the only inhabited island in the Levant, became the capital of a Phoenician kingdom that, at its maximum extent, stretched across most of what constitutes today the coast of Syria¹². Tartus was one among other continental sites, such as Amrit, that hosted Arwadian necropolis and places of worship¹³. As is always the case, the archaeological evidence is abundant in deserted sites, such as Amrit in this case while it is scarce in sites with urban continuity such as Tartus and Arwad¹⁴.

Around the year 333 BCE, the kingdom of Arwad was annexed peacefully to the Empire of Alexander the Great by submitting and avoiding an inevitable defeat such as the one of its southern fellow island Tyr¹⁵. After Alexander's death, Arwad shifted between Hellenistic powers before becoming autonomous in the third century BCE, expanding its mainland control and contributing to the gradual decline of its rival Amrit¹⁶. Amrit continued to be inhabited during the early Roman period and its gradual desertion was a result to the development of Tartus in the north.

Around the year 66 BCE, Syria was annexed to the Roman Empire by Pompey who established the province of Syria, which in the year 58 BCE had become a consular province and a base for further conquest against Parthia and Ptolemaic Egypt. The region suffered amid instability caused by the Parthian invasion and Roman civil wars in addition to rivalries among local dynasties¹⁷.

¹² Ibid., 62

¹³ Paolo Xella, "Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Phoenician and Punic Mediterranean*, ed. Carolina López-Ruiz and Brian R. Doak (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 277

¹⁴ Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000), 199

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Frédérique Duyrat, "Arados (Phénicie) au II^e siècle: Monnaie, expansionnisme régional et richesse," *Revue numismatique* 6, no. 168 (January 2012): 70.

¹⁷ Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.–A.D. 337* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 27.

During the Hellenistic and early Roman periods, there was no mention of Tartus. It is first mentioned by the Greeks as Antarados, from Anti-Arados, meaning in front of Arados, the Greek name of Arwad. Slight change occurred in the name of the two sites in the Roman period, becoming Aradus and Antaradus.

Under the reign of Septimus Severus, *Syria Phoenice* was established as a Roman province in 194 CE¹⁸. In the first half of the 4th century CE, Constantine launched a programme to rebuild Tartus, detached it from Arwad, gave it the rank of a city and called it the imperial name Constantia or Constantina¹⁹. It has been argued that the reason behind this action was that Tartus had become Christian while Arwad remained pagan; however, some scholars believe it was rather for practical reasons²⁰. The dependency of Arwad on natural defenses was no longer needed under the *Pax Romana*, while Tartus had room to expand²¹. The religious significance of Tartus, however, was indeed attested. It had an ancient shrine dedicated to the Virgin Mary, probably replacing an older Phoenician shrine, a shrine that will play significant role in the city's history both in the Middle Ages and in modernity.

Mentions of Tartus in later Roman period is scarce. This absence from the sources is clearly an indication of a decline of northern Phoenician ports since it is not attested in the southern part. The 6th Century has witnessed a series of devastating events that occurred in Byzantine Syria. The Persian invasion, the Justinianic plague, droughts and the decline in trade in the Mediterranean after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire are among the foremost factors behind a general decline and a demographic transformation of major urban centers in Byzantine Syria²².

¹⁸ Ibid., 266

¹⁹ Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 112 - 113

²⁰ Kevin Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (London: Getty Publications, 2003), 120

²¹ Ball, *Rome in the East*, 199.

²² Hugh Kennedy, "The Last Century of Byzantine Syria: A Reinterpretation," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10 (1985): 181 - 183

The only reference to Tartus that we could find from pre-Islamic late antiquity was in the 6th century's *Itinera Hierosolymitana et Descriptiones Terrae Sanctae*, where Arwad is presented as the Island of Antaradus (*insulam Antaradum*)²³. This does not give us any indication on the matter except that, by this time, Tartus had fully eclipsed Arwad. Although, not mentioned by name, it is very plausible the fate of Tartus in the 6th century resembles the one of the bigger cities to the north, Latakia and Antioch, and to the south, Tripoli and Beirut.

Since Alexander the Great, power in the eastern Mediterranean had been in the hands of Greek-speaking city dwellers who have contacts all over the eastern Mediterranean world, which changed only upon the new Islamic hegemony over the region²⁴. Early Islamic sources indicate that the Syrian coastal cities of Latakia, Jablah, Markyia, Balanias (Baniyas) and Antartus (Tartus), were conquered, evacuated, fortified and repopulated²⁵. This fortification and demographic reconfiguration on the coast during the early Muslim rule were a strategy to prevent Byzantine reconquest, leading to active Islamization of the coastal cities²⁶. This situation must have continued into the late 10th century, as described by Al-Muqaddasi (geographer d. 991), who reports that the cities close to Homs were less significant and the ones on the coast were fortified²⁷. Examining other early Islamic sources suggests that the coastal cities, and Tartus in particular, were of limited importance, being mentioned only rarely.

²³ Titus Tobler, ed., *Itinera hierosolymitana et descriptiones Terrae Sanctae* (Geneva: J.-G. Fick, 1879), 91.

²⁴ Kennedy, "The Last Century of Byzantine Syria," 142.

²⁵ Ahmad ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri, *Futuh al-buldan* (Beirut: Dar wa-Maktabat al-Hilal, 1988), 85 (in Arabic).

²⁶ Thomas A. Carlson, "Contours of Conversion: The Geography of Islamization in Syria, 600–1500," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135, no. 4 (2015): 798.

²⁷ Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Maqdisi al-Bishari, *Ahsan al-taqasim fi ma'rifat al-aqalim* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1991), 156 (in Arabic).

Western sources from late antiquity and early Middle Ages on the region are equally limited. Pilgrimage itineraries, however, provide some insight, since Tartus and its surroundings were situated along routes connecting Jerusalem to Antioch. According to the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, Saint Peter stayed in Tartus for a night on his way to Antioch²⁸. The same route was followed by Saint Paula of Rome, after she arrived in Antioch by boat from Cyprus²⁹. Some reports indicate that some pilgrim ships sailed directly to the Levant to dock in Tripoli or Tartus³⁰. An example of this is recorded in the eighth-century Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald, which recounts the saint's voyage from Cyprus to Tartus and his journey to inner Syria³¹.

What we can conclude from the present literary evidence is that Tartus was a fortified town of limited importance and modest scale. It was a stop on the pilgrimage routes on both the north south axis (Antioch-Jerusalem) or on the east west axis (Cyprus-Homs), more often than not too irrelevant to be mentioned. It definitely did not stand out among other ports, but it might have had some advantages for travelers heading to inner Syria, due to its position close to the Homs gap which separates the Syrian coastal mountains (the Alawite mountains) from Mount Lebanon.

After over three centuries of Muslim rule, the entirety of the Syrian coastal region went back into Byzantine hands, in what later came to be called *the Byzantine reconquest*. Emperor Nikephoros occupied the coastal cities Latakia, Jabla, Baniyas and Tartus, the southernmost city, in addition to Apamea to the east, a territory

²⁸ Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, *Arados et sa pérée aux époques grecque, romaine et byzantine: recueil des témoignages littéraires anciens, suivi de recherches sur les sites, l'histoire, la civilisation* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1974), 257

²⁹ *The Holy Land in the Middle Ages: Six Travelers' Accounts* (New York: Italica Press, 2016), 3

³⁰ Gaston Paris, "La chanson du pèlerinage de Charlemagne," *Romania* 9, no. 33 (1880): 27

³¹ Huneborc of Heidenheim, "The Hodoeporicon of St. Willibald, 8th Century," *Internet Medieval Source Book*, Fordham University, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/willibald.asp>

that was recognized by the Arabs in a treaty signed in the winter of 969-970³².

By 994, under Emperor Basil II, the empire had a firm control over the territory stretching from Alexandretta in the north to Tartus in the south, excluding the fortress of Markyya, which had remained in Fatimid hands. After an unsuccessful attempt to occupy Tripoli, Tartus was then the established southernmost city of the *doukaton*. While passing in Tartus after Tripoli, Al-Antaki recounts:

And then the king [Basil II] went to the fortress of Antartus and (re)built it in three days, and it was before that in ruins, and he stationed Armenian fighters in it and then he left to Antioch³³.

To a certain extent, the policy followed by Basil II in Tartus resembles the one followed by Muawya: a refortification of an old fortress and the placement of religiously and politically loyal group, prepared to fight a possible Byzantine invasion from the sea in the first, and a possible Fatimid invasion from southern Tripoli in the second.

Arab geographer of the period Ibn Hawqal (d. 988) describes the city in his encyclopedic geographic book the Image of Earth (*Surat Al-Ard*). He goes down in scale form the region of the Levant (*Iqlim Al-Sham*), describing its provinces, to the province of Homs (*Jund Homs*). After describing its capital Homs, he moves to Tartus:

Antartus is a fortress on the sea, an outlet to the people of Homs and in it is the Koran of Uthman b. Affan, and it has a wall of stone that separates its people from a field, and it was invaded by the Rum [the Byzantines] and they survived more the once from the Rum for their lack of interest in what there is in the country and

³² Georgios Leveniotis, *The Political Collapse of Byzantium in the East: The Eastern Frontier and Central Asia Minor during the Second Half of the 11th c.* (Thessaloniki: Centre for Byzantine Research, 2007), 372 (in Greek).

³³ Yahya ibn Said al-Antaki, *Tarikh al-Antaki al-maruf bi-silat Tarikh Utiyakhus*, ed. Umar Abd al-Salam Tadmuri (Tripoli, Lebanon: Jarrous Press, 1990), 230 (in Arabic).

the poverty of its people, and Nakfur [Nikephoros] did not stop for that reasons³⁴.

Ibn Hawqal later mentions briefly that what is north of Tripoli is in the hands of the Romans, hence Byzantines³⁵. Here it seems that Ibn Hawqal was blaming the fall of the city in the hands of the Byzantines to the carelessness and indifference of its people. He is the first geographer to our knowledge to give a physical description of Tartus.

The Byzantines have paid great attention to the *doukaton* of Antioch and did all the possible to keep it. The control over the Levantine coast seems to have reached an equilibrium, with Tartus and Tripoli being the extreme coastal extant of the Byzantines and the Fatimids respectively. What disrupted this equilibrium was neither force, but rather a new one that was rising in inner Syria: the Seljuk Turks. After securing his position in Damascus, the Seljuk emir, Tutush I attacked the coast around the year 1079, annexing Sidon and Beirut, while Tartus and some other coastal garrisons were conquered in 1081³⁶. The military and commercial rivalry for the coast between the Turks and the Fatimids accelerated with the latter's counterattack in 1089 which was able to regain the southern part of coast³⁷. This rivalry will not continue for long; very soon after, the region will know a dramatic geopolitical shift in the last few years of the 11th century with the arrival of the first crusade to the East.

1.2 The crusaders and their rule on the Syrian coast

The transformation of political realities in the East in the late eleventh century created the conditions under which the centrality of Jerusalem in Christian Europe could materialize into the

³⁴ Muhammad ibn Hawqal, *Surat al-ard* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1938), 163 (in Arabic).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

³⁶ Kamal Salibi, *Syria under Islam, 634–1097*, trans. Kamal Jouly (Beirut: Hachette Antoine / Naufal, 2011), 213 - 214 (in Arabic).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 214-215.

crusades. The expansion of the Seljuk Turks in Syria and Anatolia at the expense of the Byzantines did not stop after the conquer of the Doukaton of Antioch. This has led the Byzantines to send envoys to the papacy to seek help in facing the Muslim expansion³⁸. Pope Urban II saw in this an opportunity to be the pope who ends the schism between eastern and western Christians, in addition to unifying western troublesome lords behind a common noble cause. In 1095, Pope Urban II gave his famous sermon in Clermont in France urging the faithful to take the cross and to pledge the participation in the *Passagium Generale*, or *Iter*, to the Holy Land.

In the following years, the crusading forces were able to conquer some major cities in Anatolia and northern Syria. The political fragmentation of Syria had a major role in the success of the first crusade³⁹. In 1098, both Edessa and Antioch fell to the crusaders. After the fall of the latter, the crusader forces decided not to siege any major cities before Jerusalem itself⁴⁰. Tartus was among the few cities that was captured by the crusaders on their way to Jerusalem⁴¹. After Antioch, the crusader armies split between the coast route and the inland route along the Orontes, and they reunited around Acra in northern Lebanon just to the south of Tartus (fig. 1). Two combatants from Raymond de Saint-Gilles's army, both also called Raymond, advanced to take Tartus, which fell for a trick. The anonymously written *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolomitanoorum*, describes the fall of the city that occurred on the night of 16 – 17 of February 1099 as follows:

Then Raymond Pilet and Raymond viscount of Tentoria left the army of count Raymond and came to the city of Tortosa, and they

³⁸ Geoffrey Hindley, *A Brief History of the Crusades: Islam and Christianity in the Struggle for World Supremacy* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2012), 17.

³⁹ Kevin James Lewis, *The Counts of Tripoli and Lebanon in the Twelfth Century: Sons of Saint-Gilles* (London: Routledge, 2017), 15.

⁴⁰ Philip Daileader, *How the Crusades Changed History*, audiobook, lecture 4.

⁴¹ Malcolm Barber, *The Crusader States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 86.

bravely attacked it. It was fortified by a multitude of pagans. Finally, when evening came, they pulled back into a corner and set up camp, lighting a lot of fires, as if the entire host [crusader armies] were there. The pagans, gripped by fright, secretly ran away during the night, abandoning the city, which was filled with all kinds of goods. It also had an excellent harbor right by the sea. When morning came, our men got ready to attack, but they found it empty. And they went inside and set up their quarters until the siege of Archa⁴².

As the text indicates, from the beginning, Tartus was called Tortosa by the crusaders. Although some texts still called it Anatardus, under various orthographies, considering the name Tortosa to be the common name, it is the latter that became the name of the city in official documents during and after the crusades. There is no evidence, however, that Tortosa was ever used by Muslims, who mainly called it Antartus or Antarsus.

The crusaders captured Jerusalem on the 15th of July 1099 and went on to conquer the rest of the Levantine coast and within a decade, they managed to capture all of it except for Tyr, which fell in 1124 and Ascalon which remained in Fatimid hands until 1153.

⁴² *The Deeds of the Franks and Other Jerusalem-Bound Pilgrims: The Earliest Chronicle of the First Crusade*, trans. Nirmal Dass (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), 98.



Figure 1. *The First Crusade: the march from Antioch to Jerusalem.* Source: Murray, *The Crusades An Encyclopedia*, 445.

The creation of the County of Tripoli

Raymond de Saint-Gilles, one of the main leaders of the first crusade had lost his chances in becoming the king of Jerusalem or the lord of Antioch, decided to shift his attention to Tripoli⁴³. After the fall of Tartus in 1099, it seems it has been taken again by Fakhr Almulk, the ruler of Tripoli. Raymond was accompanying a crusader force heading south from Antioch to Jerusalem when, with the help of the Genoese fleet they brought about the definite fall of Tartus in 1102⁴⁴. According to Albert of Aachen, the city was

⁴³ Lewis, *The Counts of Tripoli and Lebanon in the Twelfth Century*, 17-18.

⁴⁴ Alan V. Murray, ed., *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 307.

handed over to Raymond by 'common agreement'. However, Raymond decided to remain in this area and refused to continue to Jerusalem which caused considerable resentment towards him⁴⁵. With Tartus in his hands, Raymond was now able to focus on Tripoli. Alarmed by these developments, Tripoli's Muslim ruler Fakhr Almulk asked for help from Damascus and Homs but Raymond defeated the Muslim forces near Tartus in April 1102. Since 1103, he started referring to himself as the count of Tripoli and soon started capturing territories in the vicinity of Tripoli, such as Gibelet (Byblos) captured in 1104, rendering the city of Tripoli a Muslim enclave. Raymond de Saint-Gilles died in 1105 while besieging Tripoli and his territories in the east went to his cousin William Jordan. Raymond had two sons but was unable to pass his possessions to them as the first, Alfons Jordan, was a toddler, and the second, Bertrand, was too busy in the West and was not recognized as a legitimate son by many including the pope⁴⁶.

William Jordan extended further the territories of the new county but still was unable to take Tripoli. William Jordan's rule soon was challenged when Bertrand son of Raymond de Saint-Gilles arrived in the east asking for his father's inheritance. A dispute erupted and soon the king of Jerusalem had to intervene to settle it. The territories were split between northern and southern parts under the control of William Jordan and Bertrand respectively. Kevin James Lewis argues this division was not arbitrary, rather it is inspired by the division of the East prior to the crusaders where a river between Tartus and Tripoli divided the coast between the Byzantines in the north and the Fatimids in the south⁴⁷. William Jordan died and Bertrand immediately moved to take Arca on the borders. Tancred, prince of Antioch quickly moved to Tartus to prevent Bertrand from annexing further land. Tripoli fell peacefully to the crusaders in 1109 and three years later Bertrand died and was succeeded by his son Pons and prince Tancred of Antioch later granted him the fiefs of Tartus, Safita, Hisn al-Akrad,

⁴⁵ Barber, *The Crusader States*, 85–86.

⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Counts of Tripoli and Lebanon in the Twelfth Century*, 27- 28.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

which will later become Crac des Chevaliers, and Maraclea, all north of the previously established borders⁴⁸.

Although not yet an independent state, the territories that would later form the County of Tripoli came under one lordship. In the following decades, actions were taken by Pons, the count of Tripoli to detach Tripoli from Jerusalemite suzerainty. The county gradually became independent, making it the fourth independent Latin polity after the establishment of the County of Edessa, the Principality of Antioch and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The county of Tripoli had very well-defined geographical limits: it extended from *Passus Canis* in the south, also known as the Dog's river to the north of Beirut, to the river of Valania in the north, close to the Margat castle. The eastern frontiers were well defended since they constituted of mountain ranges, the Alawite mountains in the north and mount Lebanon in the south. These mountain ranges, however, are not connected; the gap between them is called the Homs gap and its position as an opening to inner Syria had a crucial impact on the fate of the county of Tripoli.

Tartus's strategic significance came from its position as the corresponding port of the Homs gap through which a major corridor to inland Syria passed⁴⁹. Nevertheless, Tartus's importance did not derive solely from its strategic position; the cathedral of *Notre-Dame de Tortosa* was an important pilgrimage site and the only cathedral shrine within the crusader states outside the kingdom of Jerusalem⁵⁰. The cathedral has received gifts from the faithful and in the 13th century there is evidence it even owned land in Europe in Treviso⁵¹. The establishment of this church as the first chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary by St. Peter on his way from Jerusalem to Antioch was repeated by chroniclers and travelers throughout the Middle Ages, including Wilbrand of Oldenburg, Philip of Savona, James of Vitry, and Marino Sanuto

⁴⁸ Barber, *The Crusader States*, 103

⁴⁹ Michael Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth* (London: Profile Books, 2008), 134.

⁵⁰ Bernard Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States: The Secular Church* (London: Variorum Publications, 1980), 143.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 285.

the Elder. This has given the bishops of Tartus a relatively significant power in several affairs in the crusader states. Christian medieval chroniclers have even documented that the cathedral became a site of pilgrimage for both Christians and Muslims alike due to its miraculous healing power⁵².



Figure 2. The county of Tripoli in the early 12th century. Source: Murray, *The Crusades An Encyclopedia*, 1195.

We conclude from this examination that soon after arrival of the crusaders, Tartus quickly became entangled in the process of establishment of the Latin states in the East. It was a base for Raymond de Saint-Gilles operations to extend his territories and then it became one of the most important urban centers in the

⁵² Malcolm Barber and Keith Bate, eds., *Letters from the East: Crusaders, Pilgrims and Settlers in the 12th–13th Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2016), 106.

county of Tripoli⁵³, perhaps second only to the city of Tripoli. The nature of the crusader states and their dependence on maritime forces have boosted the importance of coastal cities in general. In addition, a thrive in maritime trade between East and West meant that commercial needs required for conflict to be reduced since Tartus and Tripoli were the natural outlets for the cities of Hama, Homs and Baalbek⁵⁴.

In 1152, Nur al-Din, the Zengid ruler of inner Syria lunched an attack on the county of Tripoli from the Homs gap and took many castles on his way to Tartus which he captured and garrisoned. He did not have a fleet, so he depended on the land route to supply it from Homs and Hama⁵⁵. According to Steve Tibble, by taking Tartus and the lands that leads to it, after succeeding in capturing the short-lived county of Edessa in the north, Nur al-Din was planning to cut the crusader states in half⁵⁶. He then had to withdraw once the king of Jerusalem Baldwin III arrived in Tripoli, however the city was largely in ruin. This attack, despite its brevity, will change the fate of the city forever. The local lord, Raynard of Maraqqiyya, could not afford to restore the city after all the damage, thus it was transferred to the bishop, who also was unable to restore it. The final solution was to attribute the mission of fortification of Tartus to the Knights of the Temple, known as the templars.

The templars were one of the three main military orders that functioned in the Latin states, in addition to the Hospitallers and the Teutonic knights. Both the templars and the hospitallers had a crucial role in the defense of the Latin states, especially when the secular and ecclesiastical authorities were unable to face the

⁵³ Balázs Major, "Observations on Crusader Settlements Between the Nahr al-Kabir and the Nahr al-Sinn," in *Le comté de Tripoli: État multiculturel et multiconfessionnel (1102–1289)*, ed. Gérard Dédéyan and Karam Rizk (Paris: Geuthner, 2010), 121.

⁵⁴ Barber, *The Crusader States*, 90.

⁵⁵ Steve Tibble, *The Crusader Armies: 1099–1187* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 258.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

numerous challenges of the East⁵⁷. The history of the military orders in the county of Tripoli goes back to 1144 when large territories on the eastern frontiers of the county were granted to the Hospitallers who fortified the already existing *Hisn al-Acrad* (The Castle of the Kurds) and built the magnificent Krak des Chevaliers⁵⁸. This occurred as a reaction to the attacks of Zengi in the 1130s who took advantage of Homs gap, the county's main geographical vulnerability. The templars had been placed in the extremities of Latin states: The Syrian Gate to the north of Antioch, and in Gaza, on the way from Palestine to Egypt⁵⁹. Tartus was a major grant to the templars in the middle of the Latin states. Although it seems that neighboring *Chastel Blanc* was already in the hands of the templars by the time Tartus was granted to them⁶⁰, it did not take long for the latter to become the templar headquarter in the county⁶¹. With later grants, the templars and hospitallers managed to establish a network of visually connected castles on the crusader side of the Homs gap that extended from Krak des Chevalier in the east to Tartus and Margat to the west⁶².

Furthermore, the templars were granted lands right outside the city of Tartus, in addition to most churches all around the city. Therefore, the rule of Tartus became combined of the authorities of both the Bishop of Tartus and the templars⁶³. The templars in Tartus were also in charge of dealing with the neighboring Assassins. The Assassins were Nizari Isamilis who had a strong presence in the coast mountains in Syria, specifically in the castles of Masyaf and Qadmus. They belonged to a heterodox Islamic sect and they were known for their use of political assassination to

⁵⁷ Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth*, 128.

⁵⁸ Malcolm Barber, *The New Knighthood: A History of the Order of the Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 35.

⁵⁹ Haag, *The Templars: History & Myth*, 132.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Riley-Smith, "The Templars and the Castle of Tortosa in Syria: An Unknown Document Concerning the Acquisition of the Fortress," *The English Historical Review* 84, no. 331 (1969): 279.

⁶¹ Lewis, *The Counts of Tripoli and Lebanon in the Twelfth Century*, 162.

⁶² Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 81- 82.

⁶³ Hamilton, *The Latin Church*, 149.

target mostly Sunni Muslims but also some crusader figures and at some point, they paid tribute to the templars⁶⁴.

The county of Tripoli knew many calamities in the second half of the 12th century. Major earthquakes devastated the region in 1157 and 1170 in addition to Muslim raids by Nur al-Din and later by Saladin. Tartus is not recorded to have suffered from these earthquakes like its neighboring cities, however the raids were not as forgiving. A major attack took place in 1180 when Saladin, after signing a truce with the kingdom of Jerusalem, attacked the county from the east and ravaged the agricultural lands. He combined his assault in the land with another from the sea when he attacked the island of Arwad and from there his sailors crossed to Tartus and set fire to a house. Luckily for the inhabitants, he withdrew from the county after the count of Tripoli Raymond III agreed to sign a truce, which was possible the reason behind the assault⁶⁵. These calamities reinforced the authority of the military orders who bought or were granted further lands and fortresses.

In 1187, the crusader states faced the biggest existential threat since their establishment. After defeating the Christian army in Hattin in July 1187, Saladin went on to capture most of the lands of the Latin states. Cities fell to him one after the other and only some castles and a few major cities, namely Tyr, Tripoli and Antioch were able to remain in Christian hands. After conquering most of the kingdom of Jerusalem, Saladin attacked the south of the county of Tripoli from Beirut which was the northmost city of the kingdom of Jerusalem⁶⁶. In early summer 1188, he launched his attack on the county from the Homs gap. Tripoli being very strongly fortified and further defended by a newly arriving Sicilian fleet; Saladin reoriented his attack to Tartus⁶⁷. He avoided a confrontation with the castles along the Homs gap and arrived to Tartus on the 3rd of July 1188. A detailed description of the

⁶⁴ Gordon Napier, *A to Z of the Knights Templar: A Guide to Their History and Legacy* (London: Spellmount, 2008), 55- 56.

⁶⁵ Lewis, *The Counts of Tripoli*, 246-247.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 270-271.

⁶⁷ Barber, *The Crusader*, 316-317.

conquest of Tartus came from the account of Baha ad-Din ibn Shaddad, a scholar and companion of Saladin. He writes:

Saladin arrived at Antartūs⁶⁸ at midday on Sunday 6 Jumādā I [3 July] and halted opposite the place to inspect it. It was his plan to pass by, for he had business at Jabala, but he decided it was an easy target, so determined to attack. He sent people to recall the right wing and ordered it to camp beside the sea, while ordering the left wing to camp by the sea on the other side. He took up position where he was. The armies thus encompassed it from seashore to seashore. It is a city built by the sea and it has twin towers like two strong castles. The leader of the left wing was 'Imad al-Din, lord of Sinjar, and of the right Muzaffar al-Din ibn Zayn al-Din. The sultan mounted and, drawing near to the city, he ordered the troops to begin the assault. They put on their armour and the battle and the assault grew fierce. pressed the enemy hard and caught them unprepared. Hardly was the erection of his tent completed before our troops had scaled the wall and taken the city by the sword. They seized all that it contained, men and goods, as booty. Our men came out with their hands full of prisoners and money. The servants abandoned the putting up of his tent and busied themselves with pillage and looting. The sultan's word proved true because he had been offered lunch, but had replied, 'God willing, we shall lunch in Antartūs.' He returned to his tent happy and delighted, and we came to him to congratulate him on events. Food was provided and people came and took their regular meal. He organized the siege of the two remaining towers. One he entrusted to Muzaffar al-Din who continued to press it hard until he demolished it and took the defenders. The sultan ordered the city wall to be destroyed and allotted various parts to the emirs, who started on the demolition, while he turned to attacking the other tower. It was strong and defensible, built of dressed stone and encircled by a moat filled with water. The remaining knights and foot soldiers had gathered there. Many crossbows within were causing casualties to our forces at some distance, while no Muslim had the means of doing any damage. The sultan decided to postpone its fate and to concentrate on what was more important. He pressed on with the demolition of the city wall until it was all done, and then he demolished the church, an important one in their eyes and the object of pilgrimage from all over their lands. He ordered the city to be torched, and everything was burnt. Fire roared through the palaces and houses, while our voices were

⁶⁸ Written *Antarsus* in the original document.

raised in cries of 'There is no god but Allah' and 'God is great'. He stayed there, carrying out this destruction, until 14 Jumādā I [11 July], then he left for Jabala⁶⁹.

The texts shows that Saladin had avoided to clash with the military orders on his way but underestimated the templar citadel in Tartus leading him to take his anger on the city. The text also shows the renown of the cathedral shrine of Notre-Dame de Tortosa and its popularity among all Christians of the region.

Tartus was also where Saladin released the king of Jerusalem Guy de Lusignan after having exchanged his freedom for the submission of Ascalon, north of Gaza. According to Ibn Shaddad, Saladin made sure that Guy swears to cross the sea and never to hold a sword against him again and to be his servant, but Guy did not respect his word⁷⁰. The chronicles of Ernoul alleged that Guy took a boat to the island of Arwad off Tartus to technically keep his promise of crossing the sea⁷¹. Queen Sibylla who was in Tripoli, came to meet the king in Tartus. Geoffrey of Vinsauf described the meeting between the King and Queen in the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* as follows:

There is an island called Arados, having a city named Antharados, but commonly called Tortosa. Hither the queen came to meet the king; they kiss and embrace one another, shedding tears of joy, and rejoice at having escaped the calamities which had caused them so much grief. The king remained the following year, partly at Antioch, partly at Tripoli, waiting for the Christians who were preparing to come from beyond the sea to the succour of the Holy Land⁷².

⁶⁹ Baha al-Din Yusuf ibn Rafi Ibn Shaddad, *The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin, or, Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya wa'l-Mahasin al-Yusufiyya*, trans. D. S. Richards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 82.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 91.

⁷¹ Barber, *The Crusader States*, 317.

⁷² Geoffrey de Vinsauf, *Geoffrey de Vinsauf's Itinerary of Richard I and Others to the Holy Land* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014), 17.

The arrival of the 3rd crusade to the East helped the Latin states regain some vast territories, especially along the Levantine coast. By the time of this crusade, the land route had declined considerably in popularity due to the safety and speed of the sea route⁷³. Tartus was rebuilt and the templars resumed the reconstruction and recovery of the city. The first half of the 13th century does not seem very eventful in the history of the city or the surrounding area. In 1229, according to the treaty between Al-Kamil of Egypt and Emperor Frederick II to recover Jerusalem for the Christians, the military orders were forbidden from making any improvements to their castles in the county of Tripoli⁷⁴. The second half of the 13th century has witnessed an accelerated decline for the crusader states. The mamluks became the rulers of Egypt in 1250 and after their historic victory over the Mongols in 1260, they have unified Syria and Egypt and the Latin rule in Syria was coming to an end. Mamluk Sultan Baybars captured much of the inland crusader territories including key castles until a truce with Tripoli in 1271 and another with Jerusalem in 1272 postponed the mamluk expansion⁷⁵.

By that time, the crusader states were reduced to a narrow coastal line. In addition to external danger, what remained of the county of Tripoli got into a civil turmoil when in 1275 bishop Bartholomew of Tortosa, who was the vicar of the absentee Patriarch of Antioch, was appointed regent to the underaged Bohemond VII⁷⁶. Further quarrel developed between the bishop and the lord of Gibelet and soon later in 1277, an actual civil war occurred engaging secular and ecclesiastical leaders in addition to the templars, which did not end until 1282⁷⁷. New truces with the Mamluks were issued in 1281 and 1282 on the condition that no fortification or reconstruction of fortification to be carried out in or around Tartus. Qalawun still attacked and major cities fell to him; Latakia fell in 1285 and so did the Castle of Margat⁷⁸. Amid

⁷³ Barber, *The Crusader States*, 326.

⁷⁴ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 133.

⁷⁵ Hindley, *A Brief History of the Crusades*, 203-207.

⁷⁶ Hamilton, *The Latin church*, 237.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁷⁸ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, 175 - 178

this increasing danger, petty turmoil continued among what was left of the county. Bohemond VII died childless in 1287 and when there was a chance for Bartholomew of Tortosa to become the regent again, the dynasty was overthrown, and Tripoli became a self-governing commune headed by Bartolomeo Embriaco⁷⁹. However, this would not last for long as in 1289, Qalawun captured Tripoli with the smaller towns to the south, Botron and Nephin. Tartus remained in crusader hands, the last territory from the county of Tripoli, until the fall of Acre in July 1291. In August, Tartus and Atlit had to evacuate, and the crusaders were definitively expelled from the Levantine mainland.

The ultimate defeat of the crusaders resulted in some attempts to reconquer, the most serious of which was between 1300 and 1302 when an alliance was agreed upon between the Christians and the Mongols. A fleet from Cyprus attacked the coastal cities of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria which were just the introductory act to an organised attack to gain a foothold on the Syrian territory; the choice of this foothold laid upon Tartus. A force of the military orders and secular lords from Cyprus sailed to the island of Arwad and started attacking Tartus while waiting for the Mongols to arrive⁸⁰. According to Malcom Barber, the choice of Tartus is indicative of the templars influence over the decisions of the Christian forces. In addition, with Atlit, it was the last templar possessions to be evacuated from the East but unlike Atlit, it was not dismantled. Furthermore, the Island of Arwad could be used as a base and the templars immediately started rebuilding the island. However, the Mongols arrived too late; the Christian force had to retreat to Cyprus and those who were left were besieged into starvation by a Mamluk fleet from Tripoli until their submission followed by their slaughter or enslavement⁸¹.

It is interesting to notice that, long after the expulsion of the crusaders from the Levant, Cyprus still held the legacy of the Latin

⁷⁹ David Nicolle, *Acre 1291: Bloody Sunset of the Crusader States* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 42.

⁸⁰ Barber, *The New Knighthood*, pp. 293 – 284.

⁸¹ Peter W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191–1374* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 105.

states in the East. The descendants of the rulers of the Latin East kept their purely titular positions in the hope of regaining their ancestors' possessions in the East again. Some travellers in Cyprus in the 14th century were even told that women were wearing black to mourn the loss of the cities in Syria to the Muslims⁸². In fact, four years after the fall of the last cities in 1291, Pope Boniface VIII combined the diocese of Tortosa with Famagusta in Cyprus. Another noteworthy example is the establishment of monasteries with names from the East; after the fall of Jerusalem, an abbey called *Notre-Dame la Grande* moved to Tyr, and after the fall of the latter it moved to Nicosia to be known as *Notre-Dame la Grande* and *Notre-Dame de Sur* (the Arabic pronunciation of Tyr)⁸³. Another abbey was called *Notre-Dame de Tortosa* and it had a great renown attested by the people buried in it, however, it is probable these two abbeys were the same one and at some point, it changed its name from Tyr to Tortosa⁸⁴. What is interesting is that the name shifted from Tortosa to Tartusa which is very similar to the modern name of the city. Since Tyr was also called by its Arabic name, Sur, it is possible Tartusa was a pre-modern name of the city carried to Cyprus by many Syrian Christians who have also fled to Cyprus. However, the name later developed to Certosa in Cyprus and the abbey was given to the Armenian community after the Ottomans captured the Island in 1570⁸⁵.

Under Mamluk rule, the status of the city of Tartus shifted radically. From an important port in the county of Tripoli and a vital pilgrimage site into a small locality, rarely mentioned by chroniclers and travellers. In fact, to reconstruct the history of Tartus in this period, we had to rely on scarce literary, architectural, and archaeological evidence. Even when Tartus is mentioned in medieval writings in the 14th and 15th centuries,

⁸² Ibid., 109.

⁸³ Brunehilde Imhaus, "Un monastere feminin de Nicosie: Notre-Dame de Tortose," in *Dei gesta per Francos: Etudes sur les croisades dediees a Jean Richard – Crusade Studies in Honour of Jean Richard*, ed. Michel Balard and Benjamin Z. Kedar (London: Routledge, 2001), 391.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 394.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 391-392

whether in eastern or Western accounts, it is mainly in the context of narrating crusader history.

The Mamluks established an elaborate and well-organized administrative System in Syria, based on the Egyptian system⁸⁶. According to Egyptian scholar Al-Qalqashandi, Syria was divided into 6 “kingdoms” called *Al-Mamalik Al-Shamyia* (the Levantine kingdoms). Tripoli was one of these kingdoms; its territory was very similar to the county of Tripoli, however, it expanded further north to include Latakia⁸⁷. Tripoli was divided into 18 administrative units, 6 *niyabahs* (vicegerencies), 6 military *niyabahs*, and 6 *wilayahs* or provinces⁸⁸. The difference between these units is not clear, however, Elias Qattar indicates that the *wilayahs*, such as Tartus, were the small provinces. Although the Mamluks used the traditional name Antartus, under their rule we start seeing the city named Tartus in some sources. Due to confusion with Tarsus in southern Anatolia, both cities occasionally appear in sources in different spellings such as *Tartus*, *Tartus Antarsus* and *Antartus*.

After the expulsion of the crusaders, the Mamluks left destroyed coastal cities and did not fortify them in order to prevent the crusaders from returning and taking a foothold in the East⁸⁹. However, this destruction was not completed. While some cities were razed or rebuilt in a different location like Tripoli, some other were not fully destroyed and abandoned, despite being heavily damaged as it is proven by commercial documents⁹⁰. Tartus seems to have been from the latter type. The commercial activities

⁸⁶ Ilyas al-Qattar, *Niyabat Tarabulus fi ahd al-mamalik (688–922 H / 1289–1516 M)* (Beirut: Lebanese University Publications, 1998) (in Arabic).

⁸⁷ Ahmad ibn Ali al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-a'sha fi sina'at al-insha'*, ed. Muhammad Husayn Shams al-Din (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1987), 186. (in Arabic).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 241–242.

⁸⁹ Thomas A. Carlson, “Contours of Conversion: The Geography of Islamization in Syria, 600–1500,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135, no. 4 (2015): 808.

⁹⁰ Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 42.

suffered after the expulsion of the Latins from the East since their ports connected European merchants with the East.

In addition, from 1291 to the middle of the 14th century papal bulls were issued prohibiting Christian Europeans from dealing with Muslims, with each bull being stricter than the previous⁹¹. This obviously did not stop trade completely as the commercial powers were finding loopholes to get around this prohibition. However, in the second half of the 14th century the church became more tolerant with the trade with Muslims as long as it does not include selling them war material. In the 1360s, Peter, king of Cyprus which was by now the last outpost of Western Christianity in the eastern Mediterranean, launched a series of raids on the commercial cities facing Cyprus, Tartus included, which intensified from 1366 to 1369⁹². Despite the assassination of Peter in 1369, the raids reoccurred again the same year⁹³. Some Arabic sources mention that during these raids on Tartus, timber ready to be shipped to Cairo was burnt⁹⁴.

Furthermore, piracy soared in the Mediterranean. It was instrumentalized by the Hospitallers of Rhodes and the monarchy in Cyprus to weaken the Mamluks. Encouraged by the remnants of the crusaders in the Eastern Mediterranean, and later by the king of Aragon, Catalan pirates systematically raided Egyptian and Syrian coastal cities⁹⁵. Raids on the Levantine coast were made by other individuals, such as the French Marshal Boucicaut in

⁹¹ Ibid., 17-19.

⁹² Angel Nicolaou-Konnari, “‘A Poor Island and an Orphaned Realm ..., Built upon a Rock in the Midst of the Sea ..., Surrounded by the Infidel Turks and Saracens’: The Crusader Ideology in Leontios Makhairas’s Greek Chronicle of Cyprus,” *Crusades* 10, no. 1 (2011): 134.

⁹³ Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus*, 168-171.

⁹⁴ Sharif ‘Abd al-Hamid Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hadi, *Niyabat Tarabulus al-Sham fi ‘asr salatin al-mamalik (688–922 H / 1289–1516 M): dirasa tarikhiyya* (Beirut: University Education Press, 2018), 130 – 131 (in Arabic).

⁹⁵ Andreas Orphanides and Nicholas Coureas, “Piracy in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean during the Later Lusignan and Venetian Periods (15th–16th Centuries),” *Epetirida tou Kentrou Epistimonikon Ereunon* 33 (Nicosia, 2007): 121

1403, in addition to casual piracy that used to occur every now and then⁹⁶.

While the city of Tripoli witnessed unprecedented splendor under the Mamluks, documented in marvelous architecture still visible to this day in various projects the likes of which can only be seen in major cities such as Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem⁹⁷, Tartus, despite the proximity, lost its special status which it had enjoyed under crusader rule. The crusaders took care of the port cities which made up the backbone of their states due to the Latin dependence on maritime powers. In addition, the axis Antioch-Jerusalem, the most important cities for the crusaders, passing through other major cities including Acre, Tyr and Tripoli, was the spine of the elongated Latin states. This has changed under Mamluk rule; the major cities were all located inland, even Tripoli which was destroyed and rebuilt away from the sea. Now the coast belonged to a state where, at least for the Levantine part, the main axis is placed inland passing through Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus, and Jerusalem. This obviously does not mean the port cities weren't active, however, they did not have the same regional importance as before. This situation continued after the Levant came under Ottoman rule in the early 16th century. It is only in the 19th century when the city, with the rest of the Levant, have experienced pivotal historical events that its function and morphology changed considerably, as we will see in the next section.

⁹⁶ Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus*, 179.

⁹⁷ Nasser Rabbat, *Mamluk History through Architecture: Monuments, Culture and Politics in Medieval Egypt and Syria* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 20.

1.3 Urban development of the site from the Middle Ages to the French mandate

Although the history of Tartus reaches back to the Phoenician kingdom of Arwad, no structures survive from before the Middle Ages, most probably as a result of crusader reconfiguration of the city and their reuse of the existing material. Nevertheless, the Roman period left its mark on the built environment by shaping patterns of orientation that later constrained urban planning strategies⁹⁸. As mentioned earlier, early Islamic sources indicate that Tartus was a fortified town. After the Byzantine reconquest, it was rebuilt and 10th century Muslim travellers such as Al-Antaki and Ibn Hawqal described it as a “fortress”.

The crusader agglomeration was combined of the walled episcopal city and the Templars’ citadel in the northwest corner (Fig. 3). Mathias Piana argues that the fortifications built by pre-crusader rulers served as a foundation for the crusader structure built in the 12th century⁹⁹. He argues that the entirety of the pre-crusader town became the templar castle and a nearby urban center developed around the cathedral, both made up the crusader city which was fortified by walls¹⁰⁰.

Medieval Syrian scholar Abulfeda gives the first brief description of post-crusader Antartus in his book *Takwim Al-Buldan* (Locating the Lands) written in 1321. After giving its coordinates, he mentions that the Muslims conquered it and destroyed its walls

⁹⁸ Giulia Annalinda Neglia, “The Multicultural Fabric of the Crusader Citadel of Tartous in Syria,” in *Beyond the Wall: Notes on Multicultural Mediterranean Landscape*, ed. Attilio Petruccioli and Adriana Sarro (Bari: Publishing Typographic Union, 2009), 41-48

⁹⁹ Mathias Piana, “A Bulwark Never Conquered: The Fortifications of the Templar Citadel of Tortosa on the Syrian Coast,” in *Archaeology and Architecture of the Military Orders*, ed. Mathias Piana and Christer Carlsson (Ashgate, 2014), 160.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

and now it is inhabited¹⁰¹. However, the physical configuration of the city in the decades following the crusader expulsion is difficult to reconstruct.

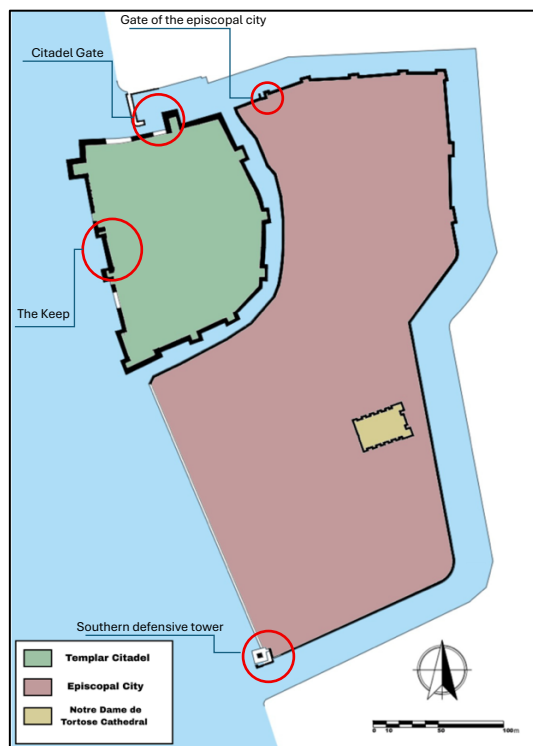


Figure 3. The crusader city and its main components. Source: drawn by the author, based mainly on Paul Deschamps, *Les châteaux des croisés*, 1973.

The cathedral of Notre-Dame de Tortosa can give some indication about the fate of the city, although it will be examined in further detail in the last chapter. The only indication of a medieval conversion of the cathedral into a mosque comes from the mid-19th century when American Protestant missionary William McClure Thomson passed through Tartus. He visited the cathedral and reported two inscriptions, both documenting its

¹⁰¹ Abu al-Fida' Isma'il ibn 'Ali, *Taqwim al-buldan* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1990), 229, (in Arabic).

conversion into a mosque but with a time gap between the two. One conversion took place in 655 Hijri (1257 CE), which is doubtful since the city was fully under crusader rule, while the second took place in 782 Hijri (around 1380 CE). We can also find a graffiti in Arabic made by a visitor in Ramadan 756 Hijri, which should be around September 1355¹⁰². We can conclude that during the 14th century, the cathedral was used and frequented, meaning it was still somehow within the urban fabric of the city.

With the available data, we might be able to piece the history of the city after the expulsion of the crusaders. It seems that Tartus was never abandoned but was not fortified again. At first, it appears that it continued to be inhabited and the main cathedral was transformed into a mosque as had happened to most remarkable buildings once the rule changed, whether from Christianity to Islam or vice versa. However, frequent raids and piracy must have had an impact on morphology of the city. It seems that in the second half of the 14th century, the inhabitants started moving into what remained of the templar citadel as, despite losing its function as a citadel, it remained relatively safer. This is similar to the phenomenon of *encastellation* that occurred in Europe in the 10th and 11th centuries when scattered rural inhabitants moved into the fortified site of a village as a result of lack of stability amid Hungarian, Viking and Arab invasions. This might explain why, after transforming it into a mosque, the cathedral was abandoned and used for storage as it lost its daily religious function. Soon after, state-sponsored projects such as a hammam and the congregational mosque were built in the center of the citadel¹⁰³.

The urban configuration of the city remained unchanged for centuries of Mamluk and later Ottoman rule. The earlier testimony we have was given by Flemish traveler Joos van Ghistele who traveled throughout the Near East in 1480s. His reports:

¹⁰² Michael Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien (648/1250 bis 923/1517): Chronologische Liste der mamlukischen Baumassnahmen*, Teil II (Verlag J. J. Augustin, 1992), 71.

¹⁰³ Neglia, "The Multicultural Fabric of the Crusader Citadel of Tartous in Syria," 44.

Around Tortosa is a fertile land with many good meadows for the animals, orchards with a lot of different fruits, a lot of springs to irrigate all these crops in the orchards and gardens. Also outside this city, when one takes the way to Antioch, there used to be a beautiful church on the same place where the very first chapel was built in honour of Our Lady the Virgin Mar¹⁰⁴.

This was the first text to our knowledge to describe the cathedral as being *outside the city*, to the opposite of the crusader city when the cathedral was placed within the city. It means that at some point, the citadel became the city itself and what was outside the citadel was abandoned.

In early Ottoman sources, the city is described as a *kharab* (ruins); this is evident in the 1525 map of the Ottoman cartographer Piri Reis, where it is named “Antarsus Kharab” and illustrated with drawings of ruins, in contrast to his depiction of the flourishing city of Tripoli to the south (fig. 4).

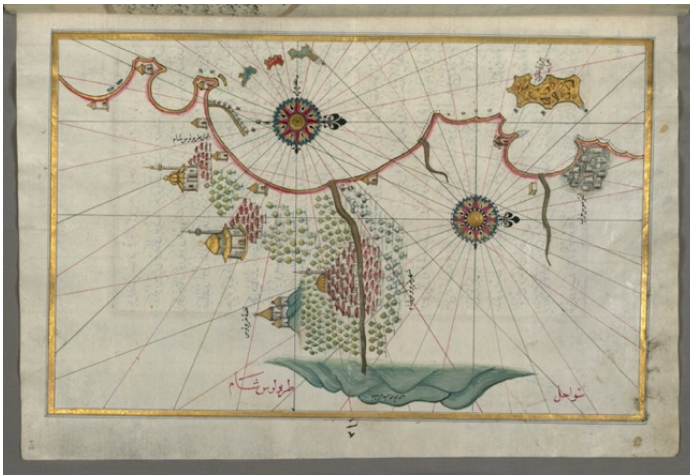


Figure 4. Ottoman cartographer Piri Reis map depicting a ruined Tartus compared to a flourishing Tripoli to the south (North pointing to the right). Source: The Walters Art Museum.

¹⁰⁴ Ambrosius Zeebout, *Tvoyage van Mher Joos van Ghistele* (Uitgeverij Verloren, 1998), 285; translation from Old Dutch with the help of Prof. Jan Dumolyn.

One of the most important sources from the Ottoman period were Western travellers who visited the region throughout the centuries and wrote about their travels. They generally expressed nostalgia, comparing the city's former greatness with a deteriorated present. Only a few visitors had described the site in earlier centuries, but their number began to rise in the nineteenth century and grew substantially toward its end. These accounts allow us to trace the city's development throughout this period and the change in its physical structure. The following section examines a selection of these travel narratives written by different observers who visited the city prior to the French arrival in 1918, in order to identify recurring themes and patterns of change that reveal the broader trajectories of its urban evolution. We will then use this examination to situate these transformations within the wider political context of the region.

From the Middle Ages to early 19th century, different accounts described the city similarly: the crusader episcopal city was deserted, and the small population lived in the templars' citadel, starting from Flemish traveller Joos van Ghistele who was mentioned earlier. In the late 17th century, English clergyman Henry Maundrell writes in his influential Easter journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem in 1697:

What remains of it is the Castle, which is very large and still inhabited. On one side, it is wash'd by the Sea; on the others, it is fortified by a double Wall of coarse Marble [...] Round the Castle on the South and East sides, stood anciently the City. It had a good Wall and Ditch encompassing it, of which there are still to be seen considerable remains. But for other Buildings, there is now nothing left in it, except a Church¹⁰⁵.

A similar description comes about forty years later when Richard Pococke published his travel account describing the city in detail. Interestingly, the author distinguishes between the "city" and the "town", referring with the former to the crusader city though

¹⁰⁵ Henry Maundrell, *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, at Easter, A.D. 1697* (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1823), 17–18.

empty, while using the latter for the inhabitations that took place into the templar citadel¹⁰⁶.

This did not change much by early 19th century as evident in the account of traveller James Silk Buckingham who visited Tartus in 1816 and mistakenly identified it with the ancient Orthosia, a common confusion at the time. Buckingham's account is particularly valuable because it gives more details about the inside of the citadel; he gives indications that by that time the town had grown considerably inside the citadel to the point where the plans of the crusader structures could no longer be traced. When it comes to urban space and its population, Buckingham writes:

The whole of the modern town of Tartoose is within the walls of the ancient fort. Its habitations are of the ordinary kind. It has a new mosque with a minaret near an open square, and a coffee-house, but neither manufactories or public bazars. The population are estimated at about 500, wholly Moslems, and the Aga who governs the town has merely a personal guard of about twenty men¹⁰⁷.

Thus, so far, since the 14th century, according to various accounts, the sites did not witness major changes that disturbed the social and spatial configuration of the city: empty episcopal crusader city, abandoned cathedral and a citadel inhabited by a Muslim population.

It is not until the 1840s that we start to perceive signs of transformation in the city's fabric. This observation starts with an account by William McClure Thomson, an American Protestant missionary who worked in the Levant for 25 years. In a trip that Thomson did from Beirut to Aleppo in 1845, he passes through the Syrian coastal region, spends time in Tartus and gives a very detailed description of the city and its surroundings:

¹⁰⁶ Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East, and Some Other Countries*, vol. II, part I: *Observations on Palestine or the Holy Land, Syria, Mesopotamia, Cyprus, and Candia* (London, 1745), 201-202.

¹⁰⁷ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels among the Arab Tribes Inhabiting the Countries East of Syria and Palestine* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), 522.

Once a large city, now a village of 241 taxable moslems and 44 Greeks... The inhabitants of Tortosa live mostly within the castle or strong hold of the city, which was defended by a double wall [...]¹⁰⁸.

These numbers probably reflect a percentage rather than a population count, since they are only of the “taxable”. In any case, to our knowledge, this was the first time a Christian population living in the city is mentioned since the crusader rule. It is also the first account to hint to the fact that, while most of the inhabitant live in the citadel, some live outside. This will be the beginning of a trend that would become more evident further throughout the century: a growth outside citadel and a substantial orthodox Christian population.

In the late 1850s and 1860s, Emmanuel Guillaume-Rey would make his visits in the region and write his many influential works on the crusades mainly: *Essai sur la domination française en Syrie durant le Moyen Age*, published in 1866, *Etude sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire des croisés en Syrie et dans l'île de Chypre*, published in 1871, and *Les colonies franques de Syrie aux XII^{me} et XIII^{me} siècles* published in 1883. From Rey's first trip in 1859, published in 1866, we get the first detailed study of the crusader military architecture, but we do not get much about the town. We know that the moat around the episcopal city was still recognisable in the time of the study. We also know that the chapel of the citadel was by that time “cluttered” with “Arab houses”¹⁰⁹.

In his later study published in 1871, Rey, while keeping his focus on medieval architecture, presents a site plan of the entire crusader city in which the modern town seems to be included (Fig. 5). The plan does not have a legend, but it is clear that what is marked with pink is modern construction, clearly indicating the urban sprawl spreading south. The density is not indicated but he

¹⁰⁸ William McClure Thomson, “Article II. Tour from Beirût to Aleppo in 1845,” in *Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review*, vol. 5, ed. B. B. Edwards and E. A. Park (Andover: William H. Wardwell; New York and London: John Wiley, 1848), 247.

¹⁰⁹ Emmanuel-Guillaume Rey, *Essai sur la domination française en Syrie durant le Moyen Âge* (Paris: Imprimé par E. Thunot et Cie, 1866), 35.

mentions that around a hundred houses are erected¹¹⁰. Though useful to indicate the direction of the growth, the limit of the urban sprawl in Rey's plan is inaccurate. The northern sections of the citadel are not marked with the hatching Rey used to indicate new constructions, suggesting the presence of empty areas around crusader buildings. Nevertheless, accounts by other travellers, both before and after his visit, confirm that the crusader structures in the northern part of the citadel were in fact surrounded by modern additions.

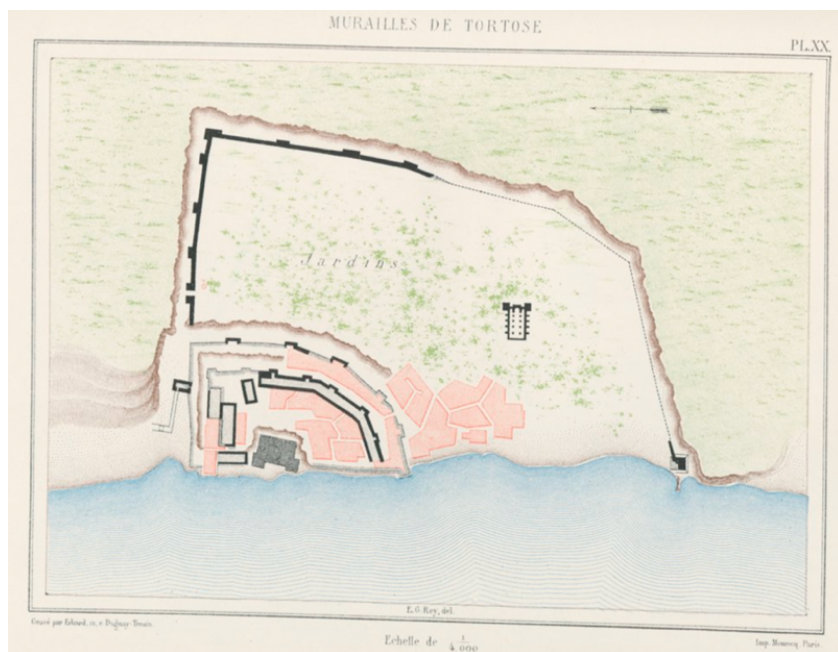


Figure 5. Crusader Tartus as depicted by Rey. Source: Rey, *Étude sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire*, pl. XX.

In the same study, Rey gives an interesting account on the wall surrounding the episcopal city. Already by that time, while the northern part with its gate were still visible and intact, the eastern

¹¹⁰ Emmanuel-Guillaume Rey, *Étude sur les monuments de l'architecture militaire des croisés en Syrie et dans l'île de Chypre* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1871), 79.

wall had only half while for the other half and the southern parts had disappeared and traceable only by the moat which was three quarters filled. Only the tower where the southern wall meets the sea still stood from the southern defence system of the episcopal city¹¹¹. This suggests that the physical separation of the crusader episcopal city from its surroundings was gradually diminishing.

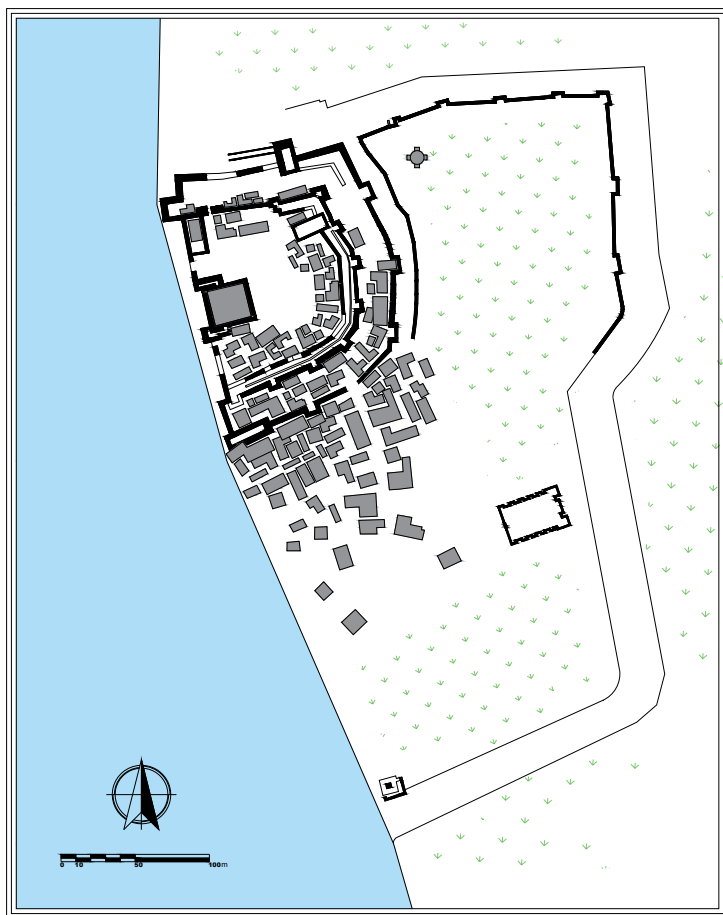


Figure 6. Tartus in the 1870s, overlapping various travel accounts and observations. Source: drawn by the author.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 211-214

Contemporary with Rey, Ernest Renan carried out his renowned archaeological *mission de Phénicie*, during which he focused on the Phoenician sites around Tartus while giving brief comments about sites from other periods. Renan himself provides little information about the city, yet his companion, Édouard Lockroy, gives a valuable account. Lockroy stands out as the first to focus on the modern town rather than on its medieval or ancient buildings. He describes Tartus at the time as a vast citadel dipping her feet in the water and behind her double walls poor Arab houses cling to the walls. He is also the first to refer to the fact that a part of the empty episcopal city was then a cemetery in which the famous cathedral was located¹¹². Lockroy describes how the topology of the crusader structures were being adapted to the needs of the growing city within the citadel; the inner moat between the two walls of the citadel had become a street for the modern town, and the square formed between the keep and the inner wall had become surrounded with small shops where merchants smoke their pipes¹¹³. He estimates that the population of the city is around 600 hundred people.

Lockroy describes Tartus as a “*a small, dying city: the number of its inhabitants is decreasing day by day. It has no industry or commerce.*”, comparing it to the neighbouring island of Arwad, which is full of life and activity. Yet this seems to contradict the image he later paint of the city, describing how it functions as a hub for commercial exchange for its surroundings. We can only speculate that this depiction refers to specific days when it functions as a sort of “forum” for the neighbouring villages. He writes:

On Sundays, the Ansaris [Alawites] come there to do their shopping. On that day, it is full of noise and movement: donkeys, horses, camels, and peasants crowd the small square, clog the passages, and climb up and down the wide staircase leading to its gate in a jumble...The city is not, like Djebel, agitated by factions; everyone there lives in good harmony¹¹⁴.

¹¹² Édouard Lockroy, “Voyage en Syrie. Mission de M. Renan en Phénicie,” in *Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau journal des voyages*, ed. Édouard Charton (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie, 1865), 50.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

From 1881, we have an account written by protestant missionary Reverend Henry Harris Jessup in which he describes a journey that he made with some companions from northern Phoenicia to the south. The date of the trip is not mentioned but judging by the content and the date of publication, these trips must have occurred in the 1870s. Jessup writes:

[...] we came upon the modern town of Tartûs, the ancient Antaradus of the Phoenicians. The town contains about one thousand five hundred people, four-fifths Muslims and one-fifth Greek Christians. The majority of the people live within the walls of the castle, an immense structure, whose vaulted halls and chapels, built by the Crusaders, are still in excellent preservation. The castle stands on the seashore, protected from the waves by a massive sloping buttress. On the land side the castle was surrounded by two walls and two moats, one between the walls and one beyond. These are in fine preservation, especially on the north-east side. The ancient structures are solid and beautiful, the modern of the most abject character¹¹⁵.

Compared with the previous account of Lockroy, it is evident that the city's population had increased. He also confirms the presence of houses outside the citadel, notes a growing Christian population, clearly larger than in Thomson's account, and repeats the contrast between the city's glorious past architecture and the miserable modern one. French explorer Victor Guérin, in a travel account he made in 1884, notices that the crusader episcopal city was mostly gardens. He also notes that the modern town spread in the southern part of the citadel and its population consists of around a thousand Muslims and some Christian families¹¹⁶.

In 1895, Swiss historian Max van Berchem visited Tartus and took some very valuable pictures from the site with description of each one (Figs. 8, 10 and 11). He notices that from the time of the field

¹¹⁵ Samuel Jessup, "Phœnicia and Lebanon," in *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt*, ed. Charles Wilson, vol. III (London: J. S. Virtue and Co., 1881), 4.

¹¹⁶ Victor Guérin, *La Terre sainte. Deuxième partie: Liban – Phénicie – Palestine occidentale et méridionale – Pétra – Sinai – Égypte* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1884), 82.

studies conducted by Rey in the 1860s to that point, crusader structures never ceased to be exploited by the inhabitants for their stones.

In 1906, Père Joseph Goudard published a highly emotional article discussing the devastating destiny of the Syrian coastal region after the fall of the crusaders. Goudard describes Tartus as:

the small town of Tartous, a poor locality, suffering, sorrowful, tended by administrative venality, and which owes its grandeur only to the remains of the heavy citadel with which it is enveloped, like a child lost in an ancient suit of armour¹¹⁷.

While his focus is on the famous cathedral, he provides some valuable photographs of the site. In one of the pictures featuring the city of Tartus from the sea, we can clearly see that the cathedral on the right still dominated the skyline of the city (Fig. 7). It is also a clear indication that the urban fabric had already spread south of the crusader citadel reaching the cathedral's surroundings.



Figure 7. Tartus viewed from the sea in the early twentieth century. Source: Goudard, 1906, p. 714.

The last account that we have from before the arrival of the French, an extremely valuable study done by two Arab officials Muhammad Rafiq Bek and Muhammad Bahjat Bek in the Ottoman Vilayet of Beirut, sponsored by the Wali of Beirut to investigate the southern and northern parts of the Vilayet of which Tartus was a part. The study appears to have taken place during the first years of World War I and published in 1336 Hijri, which mostly overlaps with the year 1918. Tartus is referred to as both the town and the district, to which 4 neighbouring villages are

¹¹⁷ Joseph Goudard, "Un sanctuaire des croisades," *Le Mois littéraire et pittoresque*, 8e année, t. XVI (juillet 1906): 719.

attached. The town is described twice in the book, the first time an outdated description with great emphasis on the crusader past¹¹⁸, which is clearly a translation of previous travelogues. The second time the town is evidently described after a thorough visit and examination to its people and physical structure.

The authors state that the town contains between 400 and 500 houses divided on four neighbourhoods, the middle ones correspond to the citadel and are called *Al-Saha* (the public square) and *Al-Khandaq* (the moat), the southern neighbourhood was called *Al-Khrab* (the ruins) or *Al-Nasara* (The Christians), the northern part was called *Al-Baraniyya* (the outer one), which is the newest and smallest among them¹¹⁹. The same names are used for these neighbourhoods to this day, only difference is that the *Khrab* had become divided between a Muslim part, *Khrab Islam*, and a Christian part, *Khrab Masihih*. This is the earliest account we have to indicate a settlement north of the citadel. It is unclear when this suburb developed, but it must have started in the late 19th century; one of the pictures taken by Van Berchem from 1895 of the gate of the episcopal city clearly shows a road in front of it (fig. 8). He indicates that the same gate was restored at some point, meaning it had a function and not simply a marginal ancient structure¹²⁰.

¹¹⁸ Muhammad Rafiq Bek and Muhammad Bahjat Bek, *Wilayet Beirut: The Northern Part, Provinces of Tripoli and Latakia*, vol. II (Beirut: Lahd Khater Publication House, 3rd ed., 1987), 199.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 368.

¹²⁰ Max van Berchem and Edmond Fatio, *Voyage en Syrie*, tome I (Le Caire: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1914), 321-322.



Enceinte de Tortose, porte nord.

Figure 8. The gate of the episcopal city in 1895. Source: van Berchem, *Voyage en Syrie*, pl. LXXIII.

A major change that occurred in the late 19th century and early 20th century, was the main entrance of the citadel/old city. Since the crusader period, the entrance to the citadel was through the gate tower in the north. A drawbridge was still in use in the 17th century connecting the gate tower with the exterior of the citadel¹²¹. In the early 19th it had been replaced with a “ruined paved way”¹²², and by the middle of the century a “substantial stone arch” connected the citadel with the outside¹²³. This arch appears in one of the earliest photographs ever taken in the city by Louis de Clercq, whom Rey had invited to accompany him on his first mission (Fig. 9)¹²⁴. The picture also shows the gate tower with upper part damaged enough that the upper structure of the vaults is showing.

¹²¹ Maundrell, *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem*, 18 - 19.

¹²² Buckingham, *Travels among the Arab tribes*, 520 - 521.

¹²³ Thomson, *Tour from Beirût to Aleppo*, 247 - 250.

¹²⁴ Louis de Clercq, *Voyage en Orient. Villes, monuments et vues pittoresques de Syrie* (Paris, 1858-1859), Pl. 12 and 13.

In the 1860s, it was still used as the entrance to the town, and it was additionally hosting blacksmith, and the shoemaker shops¹²⁵.



Figure 9. The citadel gate tower around 1859. Source: Louis de Clercq, *Voyage en Orient*, pl. 12.

At some point in the late 19th century, a neighbouring spot in the citadel's wall was demolished in order to create a new connection with the outside. The gate tower, no longer functioning as the entrance to the town, was restored; its arched door was shut down by a stone frame with two shutters placed beyond the crusader arch, the arrow slits were enlarged and made into windows, and

¹²⁵ Lockroy, *Voyage en Syrie*, 50 - 51

a new floor was built on top as evident in two pictures taken by Max van Berchem in 1895 (Figs. 10 and 11). Van Berchem mentions that it had become a house¹²⁶, however, we later know that it became a mosque, which it remains to this day. The first evidence we have about this was in picture from 1919 when a minaret was evidently placed on the building (Fig. 35).

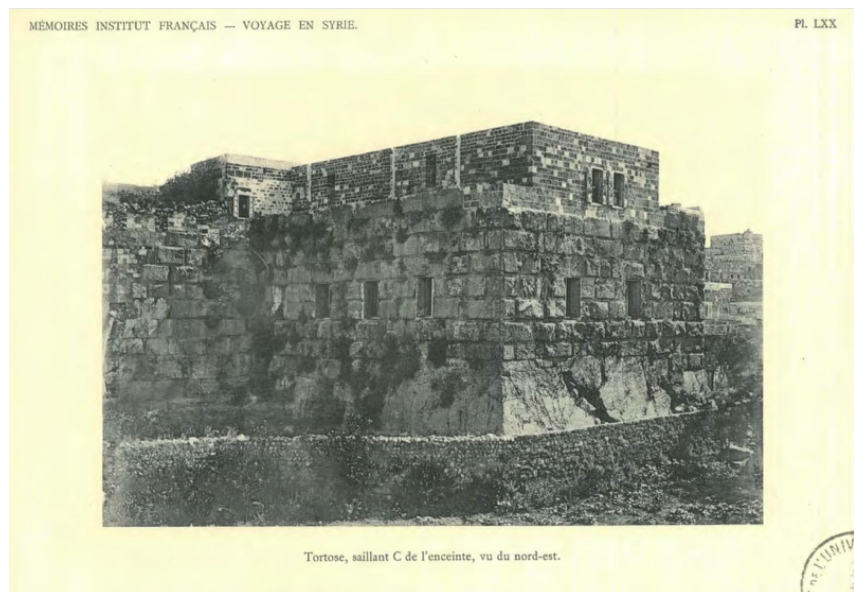


Figure 10. The citadel gate tower in 1895 after its recent restoration, a shot from the northeast showing the windows and the new added level. Source: van Berchem, *Voyage en Syrie*, pl. LXX.

¹²⁶ van Berchem and Fatio, *Voyage en Syrie*, I: 320



Figure 11. The citadel gate tower in 1895 after its recent restoration, a shot from the northwest showing the restored gate. Source: van Berchem, *Voyage en Syrie*, pl. LXX.

To summarize, using different accounts and photographs, we can rebuild the history of the city up until the arrival of the French in 1918. From the 14th century to around the 1820s, the city's social and spatial organization did not witness remarkable changes: the crusader city was abandoned, including the cathedral, and a small Sunni Muslim population lived inside the crusader citadel. From the 1840s, we start seeing changes; a Christian population shows up and new churches were erected¹²⁷, the city starts expanding beyond the citadel's borders, and the ruins started getting exploited for building material, a practice that had certainly existed before but has accelerated towards the end of the century.

The physical barriers that once isolated the citadel and the expanding modern town began to disappear, allowing for better connection with the surrounding area. We start to see emerging

¹²⁷ Rafiq and Bahjat, *Wilayet Beirut*, II: 368

signs that the city was playing the role of commercial hub for travellers and for neighbouring villagers. The first urban sprawl spread out of the citadel, growing attached to its urban fabric and expanding further south, where a new Christian population settled and where their churches were erected. The other direction of the growth was in the north; this time the neighbourhood was physically detached from the citadel and houses were scattered and modern.

Overlapping these changes with the political climate of the time, this transformation appears to be triggered one way or another by the Egyptian rule of the Levant (1831-1840) under Ibrahim Pasha, son of Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt, which ended with the intervention of the great powers but had fundamentally left its mark on the region's social and political landscape. This event, with its direct and indirect consequences, marked the break of the modern era in the Near East¹²⁸. Prior to Egyptian rule, differentiation between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman empire was manifested in different aspects, the built environment was one of them. Religious identity was considered in urban planning to facilitate the taxation of non-Muslims, whose houses had to be erected shorter than those of the Muslims and new churches were not allowed to be built except in places with an already existing concentration of Christian population¹²⁹.

On the ground, the Egyptian rule, which arrived with a much more egalitarian approach to different religious communities, has considerably benefited Christians, already enjoying privileged relations with the European powers¹³⁰. From the beginning of his rule in Syria, Ibrahim Pasha sought to win favour among urban Christians with a variety of gestures, while replacing indirect

¹²⁸ Stefan Winter, "La révolte alaouite de 1834 contre l'occupation égyptienne: perceptions alaouites et lecture ottomane," *Oriente Moderno* 18 (79), no. 3 (1999): 61.

¹²⁹ Filiz Çalışlar Yenişehirlioğlu, "Urban Texture and Architectural Styles after the Tanzimat," in *Economy and Society on Both Shores of the Aegean*, ed. Lorans Tanatar Baruh and Vangelis Kechriotis (Athens: Alpha Bank Historical Archives, 2010), 490 – 500.

¹³⁰ Winter, *La Révolte Alaouite*, 61.

Ottoman rule with a centralized Egyptian one¹³¹. Additionally, the Alawite region saw many changes: cotton presses were set up in Latakia, timber from the mountains was exploited, and Alawites were given equal legal status with others¹³². However, conscription and disarmament of rural communities in Syria and Lebanon were the prime reason behind a series of revolts that weakened the Egyptian rule. Taking advantage of these revolts, British, Ottoman and Austrian forces intervened and defeated the Egyptians and Ottoman rule was restored over Syria¹³³.

The emergence of the Christian community in Tartus could be understood in this context. It is unclear what was the reason behind this shift, it could be escaping from the turmoil and revolts in the Syro-Lebanese rural areas, it could be motivated by new opportunities but regardless of the reason, the Christians were now able to construct churches even in predominantly Muslim areas, which positively impacted their mobility whether through space or social classes, as the privileged relations with the West granted them economic advantages in the new system¹³⁴.

The urban fabric of Tartus was affected by the Egyptian rule in other ways. Travellers and scholars of the 19th century have documented some of the impacts of this turbulent period. Previously mentioned American Protestant missionary William McClure Thomson, while describing the grand hall of the citadel in Tartus, he mentions that it had been hit by many balls, one of which was still stuck in the wall, during the English bombardment of 1940 against the Egyptian army. He mentions that it had started to be inhabited by "several Arab huts, miserable and mean..."¹³⁵. This partial destruction seems to have triggered the residential takeover of the hall, which is still divided into residential units to this day.

¹³¹ Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 52.

¹³² Winter, *La Révolte Alaouite*, 63

¹³³ Makdisi, *the Culture of Sectarianism*, 51.

¹³⁴ Yenişehirlioğlu, *Urban Texture*, 504.

¹³⁵ Thomson, *Tour from Beirût to Aleppo*, 249.

The reuse of a structure with a different function was also accompanied with the reuse of construction material for new buildings with new functions, a trend that will drain the crusader structures until the arrival of the French in 1918. An example of this exploitation was given by Rey after his field visits in the late 1850s and 1860s. He remarked that the top level of the crusader tower built on the meeting point between the episcopal city's wall and the see had been recently demolished by the Egyptians in 1840 in order to repair the fort on the neighbouring island of Arwad¹³⁶.

The shock of the Egyptian invasion of the Levant pushed the Ottoman authorities to modernize their army. At the same time, European pressure forced them to address the legal inequality of non-Muslims. In 1839, Sultan Abdülmecid issued the *Gülhane decree*, which launched the *Tanzimat* and promised equal rights before the law for Muslims and non-Muslims, mainly to address European calls for the protection of Christians¹³⁷.

The Tanzimat period, which was in a way a continuation of the modernization effort established under the Egyptians, also left remarkable impacts on the region, even if the Tanzimat period officially ended in 1876. Before the Tanzimat, most structures and public works were built by Ottoman patrons¹³⁸. After the Tanzimat, land could be owned and sold and taxation was individual rather than collective and religion based. We could not find sources on Tartus in this period, but it is possible to analyse the context in which it is situated. In this period, port cities developed both through new urban regulations introduced by imperial reforms and through the reintegration of the Mediterranean into global trade routes and markets¹³⁹. Beirut thrived exceptionally in the second half of the 19th century to the point where the wilayat of Beirut was created in 1888 to associate

¹³⁶ Rey, *Etudes sur les monuments*, 211-214.

¹³⁷ Makdisi, *the Culture of Sectarianism*, 57.

¹³⁸ Yenişehirlioğlu, *Urban Texture*, 488.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 490-491.

the flourishing city firmly with the Ottoman capital¹⁴⁰. Improving connections from Mediterranean ports to inland cities became a top priority, usually by widening and paving existing roads for carriage traffic. By the early twentieth century, routes linked Damascus to Beirut and Haifa, Aleppo to Tripoli, and Jaffa to Nablus and Jerusalem. The last connection was the Tripoli–Homs line of 1911, designed to channel Aleppo’s trade through Tripoli at the expense of Beirut¹⁴¹.

Although the direct impact of the Ottoman reforms on a town like Tartus is not always easy to trace, the prosperity of neighbouring coastal cities, most notably Beirut and Tripoli, certainly reverberated there. Tartus was never an isolated town; the growth of trade, improved transport links, and the rising prominence of Beirut as a hub of commerce and administration inevitably reached even smaller coastal settlements. By the final decades of Ottoman rule, Tartus had already begun to show signs of transformation: Christians constituted roughly a quarter of its 5000 inhabitants¹⁴², a modern neighbourhood had been established beyond the city’s old walls, and more than 300 shops were active within its limits, compared to very few in the early 19th century where it has no business¹⁴³.

Additionally, the arrival of powerful families from Lebanon helped reshape local society introducing new networks of influence and tying the town more firmly into the wider currents of coastal life. Rafiq Bek and Bahjat Bek mention that in 1916 Tartus seemed like a “*neglected neighbourhoods of Beirut ... This resemblance is felt vividly in their houses, their shops, and all their social life, even in their accent*”¹⁴⁴. In this case, the reforms were neither immediate nor dramatic but instead indirect, slow, and subtle,

¹⁴⁰ Zeynep Çelik, *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French–Ottoman Encounters, 1830–1914* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 106.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27–31.

¹⁴² Rafiq and Bahjat, *Wilayet Beirut*, II: 369.

¹⁴³ Buckingham, *Travels among the Arab tribes*, 522.

¹⁴⁴ Rafiq and Bahjat, *Wilayet Beirut*, II: 371.

filtering into local life through the mediation of larger urban centres.

1.4 Conclusion

The urban development of the city throughout its over 2000 years history indicates that only under the crusade the city has experienced significant prosperity, which is easily traceable through its urban fabric. Under the crusades the city expanded and became associated with the powerful order of the Temple and became a centre for Maryan pilgrimage. The pre-crusader town became the basis for the templar citadel, meaning that the entirety of the town was needed under the crusades to become once specialized structure consisting of several components, while the inhabited city more than doubled the size of the original town. It is particularly interesting that, after two centuries of crusader rule, the city restored its original size as the small population abandoned the crusader city and went back to live in the templar's citadel. These two centuries of prosperous crusader rule left most of the city's pre-modern structures.

This pattern started to change in the 19th century, as the Ottoman Empire, and the region with it, witnessed major events that gradually reshaped the morphology of coastal Levantine cities, including Tartus. The urban fabric of the templar citadel was reused organically and specialized spaces were mainly converted into residential units. This reuse, of both spaces and materials, increased in the 19th century, accelerating towards the end of the century. It was only with the collapse of Ottoman rule at the end of World War I and the arrival of the French Mandate that Tartus experienced a decisive break. No longer a peripheral town receiving delayed echoes of change from Beirut or Tripoli, it now became the subject of direct attention in urban planning and administration under the new authorities. The abundance of crusader heritage in Tartus will be a crucial element in the city's understanding, interpretation and management once the French arrive. By the time of the French Mandate, the crusades had already been the subject of more than a century of intense European fascination, shaping modern historical memory in both East and West.

2 The Modern Legacy of the Crusades: Appropriations and Counter Narratives

2.1 The crusades in modern historical memory in the West

“Since the crusades, people there [the Middle East] have every reason to be sick of the sight of us” declared Irish MEP Clare Daly in a speech condemning what she described as the long history of Western intervention and destabilization in the Middle East¹⁴⁵. In recent decades, references to the crusades have resurfaced across the political spectrum. Left-wing critics link Western colonialism to crusading origins, far-right nationalists adopt crusader imagery to promote an agenda of superiority, and jihadist Islamists label Western intervention as a continuation of the crusades¹⁴⁶. Framing the crusades as the beginning of an ongoing clash between the Christian West and Muslim East is, however, far from new.

The beginning of the crusading movement is clearly defined and agreed upon by historians, with no major disputes regarding the numbering of the early crusades. The end of the crusades, however, remains a subject of considerable debate. While many view the fall of Acre in 1291 as the definitive conclusion, others have marked later historical events as symbolic endpoints, such as the colonization of the Americas, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Napoleon’s invasion of Malta and the surrender of the

¹⁴⁵ European Parliament, *Verbatim report of proceedings*, 22 November 2022, item 22 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2022-11-22-ITM-022_EN.html

¹⁴⁶ Mike Horswell, “Introduction: Crusade and Nation,” in *Nationalising the Crusades*, ed. Mike Horswell, *Engaging the Crusades*, vol. 8 (New York: Routledge, 2023), 3.

Knights Hospitaller, or the French and British control of the Levant after World War I. The continued use of crusader rhetoric and imagery in modern politics suggests that the crusading spirit never fully disappeared. For centuries after their military defeat in the Levant, the crusades kept cultural and political significance among European elites, serving as a symbolic repertoire for both domestic and foreign agendas. Their meaning has been continuously reinterpreted, with public and scholarly attitudes shifting between admiration and condemnation.

In the West, the crusades were certainly a source of pride in the Middle Ages and early modern period. During the enlightenment in the 18th century this attitude changed, perhaps as a result of protestant influence, who viewed the campaigns as indicative of the immoral nature of the papacy¹⁴⁷. Consensus between historians from the late 18th century was that the Crusades were religious fanatics of the unenlightened dark ages¹⁴⁸. The debate over the morality of the Crusades can be traced back to the Middle Ages, it intensified with the protestant movement to be picked up later by the philosophers of the enlightenment when, despite some references to their honour and courage, they were the target of widespread criticism¹⁴⁹.

The rapid political and societal changes of late 18th-century Europe sparked a renewed interest in the crusades and a broader nostalgia for the Middle Ages. This shift was driven by the rise of romanticism and increased access to the Levant for Western travelers. Romantic tales of chivalry and faith began paving the way for a more idealized reinterpretation of crusader history. Some scholars trace this trend back to the writings of Scottish pastor and philosopher William Robertson in the 1760s, who

¹⁴⁷ Roni Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth Siberry, "Images of the Crusades in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 365-366.

¹⁴⁹ Jean Richard, "National Feeling and the Legacy of the Crusades" in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades*, ed. Helen J. Nicholson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 208.

framed the crusaders' expeditions as a civilizing force¹⁵⁰. The romanticization of the crusades was further popularized by Sir Walter Scott's novels, particularly *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *The Talisman* (1825), which played a key role in shaping the 19th-century imagination of the medieval past¹⁵¹.

This growing interest soon extended into scholarly circles, as academic studies on the crusades intensified. In 1808, the Académie Française held a competition inviting researchers to explore the practical or utilitarian aspects of the crusades¹⁵². Around the same time, major scholarly works were undertaken in Germany and France by Friedrich Wilken and Joseph François Michaud, respectively. While these studies reflect a rising scholarly fascination with the crusades, they do not appear to have been driven by nationalistic motives yet¹⁵³.

The crusades began to take on new meaning as symbols of what was increasingly viewed as European cultural superiority¹⁵⁴. In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Empire's collapse, French interest turned to earlier periods of history in search of noble and pious achievements¹⁵⁵. The crusades, particularly under the legacy of the sainted King Louis IX, were embraced by the political right as a way to justify the aristocracy's claim to power¹⁵⁶. Over time, the reputation of the crusades improved, and references to crusader courage and morality gained renewed popularity. Moreover, by the 1830s, debates over the morality of the crusades began to fade as rising nation-states started to appropriate crusader history. From that point on, crusader historiography was reshaped, with

¹⁵⁰ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 9.

¹⁵¹ Christopher Tyerman, "Historiography, Modern," in *The Crusades: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Alan V. Murray (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 584-585.

¹⁵² Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 9-10.

¹⁵³ Richard, *National Feeling and the Legacy of the Crusades*, 209.

¹⁵⁴ Tyerman, *Historiography, modern*, 585.

¹⁵⁵ Richard, *National Feeling and the Legacy of the Crusades*, 209.

¹⁵⁶ Adam Knobler, "Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past: The Modern Uses of Medieval Crusades," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 2 (April 2006): 295.

narratives retroactively rewritten to serve national histories, replacing the earlier view of the crusades as a unified, pan-European expedition¹⁵⁷.

2.2 Nationalization of crusader history

In the early 19th century, perceptions of the crusades in Europe began to change, increasingly reframed through a nationalistic lens. All throughout Europe, crusader rulers who were born within the territories of what later would become an independent nation were appropriated by that nation as “national heroes”¹⁵⁸. Despite numerous historical inaccuracies and anachronisms, figures such as Richard the Lionheart, Godfrey of Bouillon, and Frederick Barbarossa were recast as national heroes, claimed respectively by England, Belgium, and Germany¹⁵⁹. In the 19th century, the history of the crusades became a reservoir to imageries ready to be adapted to the contemporary political and cultural scene¹⁶⁰. Certainly, there were already some references to the “national” or more accurately regional aspect of the crusades here and there prior to the 19th century, especially with “crusades” taking place within Europe against other European powers, however it was subtle and without much seriousness¹⁶¹.

The precise origins of the nationalization and appropriation of the crusades are debated among scholars, but there is broad consensus that the process began in France in the 1830s. According to Ronnie Ellenblum, a pivotal shift in the image of the crusades, from a pan-European endeavor to a narrative appropriated by emerging nation-states, can be traced to a specific historical moment. He identifies this turning point as the return of above-mentioned French scholar Joseph-François Michaud from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he witnessed the French fleet

¹⁵⁷ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 17

¹⁵⁸ Richard, *National Feeling and the Legacy of the Crusades*, 210.

¹⁵⁹ Nikolas Jaspert, “Ein Polymythos: Die Kreuzzüge,” in *Mythen in der Geschichte*, ed. Helmut Altrichter (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 2004), 224 – 226.

¹⁶⁰ Knobler, *Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past*, 294.

¹⁶¹ Richard, *National Feeling and The Legacy of The Crusades*, 204-208.

preparing to conquer Algeria. Michaud's interpretation, linking the crusades to French national identity, was soon embraced by the French government, transforming the crusades into a foundational episode of French historical memory¹⁶². Ellenblum identifies this shift within Michaud's own work. Between 1817 and 1822, Michaud's *Histoire des Croisades* lacked explicit nationalistic sentiment. However, in a later revised edition adapted for younger readers, Michaud introduced the claim that France was not only the instigator and leader of the crusades, but also their rightful proprietor, depicting them as "entirely French wars" and as the most heroic chapter in the nation's historical and civilizational mission, to which colonization was a continuation¹⁶³. This revised version of Michaud's work occurred after his pilgrimage trip to Palestine, financed by the French prime minister Jules Polignac¹⁶⁴.

Jean Richard examines the same period but focuses on a different key moment and figure in reshaping attitudes toward the crusades: King Louis-Philippe. In 1833, Louis-Philippe launched a project to transform the *Château de Versailles* into a museum, aiming to unite the French people by celebrating "all the glories of France." As part of this vision, a hall dedicated to the crusades was created, completed in 1837. Unlike earlier philosophers who had criticized the crusades, Louis-Philippe's advisors viewed them as a source of national pride, rich with glorious events. Originally intended as a single room, the Crusades' Hall was later expanded, reflecting the growing emphasis on their historical significance¹⁶⁵. These halls contained paintings representing crusader victories in addition to shields with coat of arms of families that had participated in the crusades. This led countless French noble families to present documents, the vast majority of which were forgeries, to get their coat of arm represented¹⁶⁶. This was a clear sign of how popular the crusades had become among the French nobility. From then on, and for at least a century, French historians

¹⁶² Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 287-288

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 19 – 21.

¹⁶⁴ Richard, *National Feeling and the Legacy of the Crusades*, 210.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 211-214.

and scholars would see the crusades as a key part of France's own history.

According to Adam Knobler, the nationalization of the crusades under King Louis-Philippe was a deliberate strategy to distance the crusading legacy from the recently overthrown Bourbon dynasty and reframe it as part of a broader national heritage. Crusader imagery was actively employed in the context of the Algerian invasion to evoke historical continuity and heroism. However, following the July Revolution of 1830, glorifying the crusades while maintaining their association with the Bourbons became problematic. As a result, the focus of crusader glorification shifted toward the French nation, a transformation most visibly reflected in the conversion of the Palace of Versailles into a national history museum¹⁶⁷.

Knobler also argues that the glorification of medieval warriors could have served 19th century rulers assert their power by linking themselves to these noble warriors and by so legitimize their rule in a period where their legitimacy is always called into question¹⁶⁸. By the mid-19th century, historical scholarship had taken on a nationalistic tone across much of Western Europe, with nations turning to the past to find justification for their identity and legitimacy¹⁶⁹.

Despite various nations attempting to appropriate and highlight particular heroes or episodes from the history of the crusades for their own contemporary agendas, France possessed an exceptional share in crusading history, one that allowed its scholars and politicians to claim the crusades in their entirety as a fundamentally French enterprise. The appropriation of Crusader imagery, which began and gained momentum under King Louis Philippe, reached unprecedented levels under Napoleon III. During his reign, the use of such imagery surged. The first major

¹⁶⁷ Knobler, *Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past*, 296.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 307.

¹⁶⁹ Neil Asher Silberman, *Between Past and Present: Archaeology, Ideology, and Nationalism in the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 1-3.

military operation under his rule arose from a dispute over the holy sites in Palestine among Christian denominations, which ultimately sparked the Crimean War. While Napoleon III did not initiate the obsession with the holy sites in the Levant, his policies certainly intensified this fixation¹⁷⁰.

It is therefore not surprising that during the Second Empire, the French national anthem chosen was *Partant pour la Syrie*, a patriotic song popular during the First Empire and composed by Hortense de Beauharnais, queen of Holland, stepdaughter of Napoleon Bonaparte, and mother of Napoleon III¹⁷¹. The song tells the story of the handsome Dunois, a timeless young crusader; some interpret him as a soldier in Bonaparte's army to the Levant, others as a medieval crusader. Crusader rhetoric became especially pronounced after the French military intervention following the massacres against Christians in the Levant in 1860. The emperor addressed the troops headed to the Levant:

You leave for Syria... to that distant land, rich in great memories... you will prove yourselves to be the worthy descendants of those heroes who had gloriously carried the banner of Christ to those [same] lands¹⁷².

Britain did not have the same historical level of engagement with the crusades. The Victorian era was, nonetheless, a period of fascination in medieval chivalry and the Crusader past. There were even some attempts to revive the military orders that were created in the Latin states¹⁷³. British fascination with the Crusades was mainly expressed through the appropriation of Richard the Lionheart as a national hero, despite the very small "English" element to him. He had been a legend already for centuries but in the mid 19th century, he gained a nationalistic dimension. The statue of Richard, by sculptor Baron Carlo Marochetti, stood outside the Houses of Parliament since 1861 and in 1927 a painting

¹⁷⁰ David M. Goldfrank, *The Origins of the Crimean War* (London: Longman, 1994), 272 – 273.

¹⁷¹ John Bierman, *Napoleon III and His Carnival Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 101.

¹⁷² Knobler, *Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past*, 297.

¹⁷³ Siberry, *Images of the Crusades*, 369-371.

of the same king was unveiled in the St Stephen's Hall, in a series meant as milestone moments in British history. Richard I was presented as the first step of British imperialism and Britain's ambition for power¹⁷⁴. This parallels the French perception on Godfroy of Bouillon as the French hero whose courage ushered the age of French colonialism.

The reinterpretation of the crusades to fit into the 19th century British political landscape proposed a dilemma for a state that has until short before viewed the crusades a barbaric catholic mischief¹⁷⁵. A linkage to the crusades was used in asserting the right of the aristocracy to rule when the bourgeoisie was gaining increasing powers and fortunes, thus the crusades went into a process of "de-catholicization" and the became common symbols in imperial politics, with WWI heroes often hailed as modern crusaders in the press often compared to Richard the Lionheart¹⁷⁶. Authors from the Victorian and Edwardian periods tended to use the crusades as a reservoir for imagery to educate and influence young Britons of the higher classes in concepts like chivalry, militarism and heroism¹⁷⁷. Elizabeth Siberry argues that the exposure of British elite youth to crusader literature likely shaped their broader cultural understanding of the East and the crusades¹⁷⁸.

A similar development soon appeared in Germany. According to Christopher Tyerman, while the conditions were ideal for promoting crusader history, a parallel nationalization of the

¹⁷⁴ Horswell, Introduction: Crusade and Nation, 1.

¹⁷⁵ Knobler, Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past, 309.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 310 - 312

¹⁷⁷ Mike Horswell, "Creating Chivalrous Imperial Crusaders: The Crusades in Juvenile Literature from Scott to Newbolt, 1825–1917," in *Perceptions of the Crusades from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Mike Horswell and Jonathan Phillips, *Engaging the Crusades*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2018), 27.

¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth Siberry, "Nineteenth-Century Readers' Perspectives," in *Perceptions of the Crusades from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Mike Horswell and Jonathan Phillips, *Engaging the Crusades*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2018), 7-20.

crusades unfolded there with the publication of Heinrich von Sybel's *Geschichte des ersten Kreuzzuges* in 1841. Tyerman argues that this development was closely tied to the political climate of the time and the rise of national identities across Europe. He further notes that the relative absence of major European wars after 1815 led to a growing fascination with warfare itself, romanticizing battles, heroism, and chivalry, which in turn shaped historical interpretation¹⁷⁹. Although von Sybel's earlier work on the crusades lacked nationalistic overtones, just like the academics in France, he began to project contemporary political dynamics onto medieval history. He also contributed to the emerging trend of claiming crusader figures as national heroes, a pattern soon mirrored by other nations¹⁸⁰.

Jean Richard argues the Napoleonic wars had a great impact on the revival of German patriotism that led to an increase the study of German history. In fact, Count Paul Riant founded the Society of the Latin Orient as a direct response to German dominance in the field, aiming to counterbalance the exclusivity of German scholarship on the topic of the crusades¹⁸¹.

In Belgium, crusader leader and the first Western ruler of Jerusalem Godfrey of Bouillon was appropriated as a national hero. This was after the announcement of a competition by the Academy of Ghent on the role of the Belgians in the crusades as early as 1826¹⁸². The newly established nation-state was trying to reclaim retrospectively crusader heroes from territories that now belong to it in order to reinforce a catholic narrative as opposed to neighboring Protestant Holland. Godfrey of Bouillon's statue by Belgian sculptor Eugène Simonis in 1851 now stands in la Grand Place in Brussels.

The 19th-century crusade mania also reached Spain, but it was adapted to fit the country's medieval history, particularly through the lens of the *Reconquista*. Like in other places in Europe, history

¹⁷⁹ Tyerman, *Historiography, modern*, 586.

¹⁸⁰ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 25 – 26.

¹⁸¹ Richard, *National Feeling and the Legacy of the Crusades*, 216 – 217.

¹⁸² Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 26.

was used to resist the new norms imposed by the Napoleonic regime. While traditionalist press addressed the higher classes of society against these norms, rural clergy popularized the concepts of holy war among the masses¹⁸³. Interestingly, the term '*Reconquista*' itself was not a medieval concept but rather a 19th-century nationalist invention. It gained widespread usage by the late 19th century and was officially defined by the Royal Spanish Academy in 1936 with overtly nationalist connotations. This framing of Spain's past as a Christian national struggle against Islam helped legitimize the new Spanish nation, and the idea's influence would continue well into the 20th century, even extending into today's conservative circles¹⁸⁴.

The Italian states took great pride in their connection to the crusades. Although the armies of the French Revolution ultimately ended their autonomy, the regional sense of pride in this legacy remained strong. Even after the unification of Italy, these local identities and their admiration for the crusades continued¹⁸⁵. Tommaso Grossi's *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata*, an epic poem that later inspired Verdi's opera and numerous other works of art, evoked a sense of pride in the Italian participation in the crusades¹⁸⁶.

A particularly interesting example of the national perception of the crusades in the 19th century is Greece. Although some Greek nationalists have pushed for a 'crusade' for the resurrection of a Greek Empire, the Fourth Crusade and its devastating impact on Constantinople left a lasting bitterness among the Greek population toward the Latins, which lasted for generations. This resentment was still evident in the early 19th century when Greek restorers, tasked with repairing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre after a massive fire, deliberately destroyed the tombs of the Latin

¹⁸³ Knobler, *Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past*, 297.

¹⁸⁴ Alejandro García-Sanjuán, "Weaponizing Historical Knowledge: The Notion of Reconquista in Spanish Nationalism," *Imago Temporis: Medium Aevum*, no. 14 (2020): 135 – 140.

¹⁸⁵ Richard, *National Feeling and the Legacy of the Crusades*, 216.

¹⁸⁶ Siberry, *Images of the Crusades*, 381.

Kings¹⁸⁷. This sentiment was adopted by modern Greek scholars, particularly Konstantinos Paparregopoulos, who depicted the crusaders as greedy fanatics. Their rule over Greek territory in the 13th century, they were portrayed as oppressive, while the revolts against them were framed as expressions of Greek nationalism. This perspective persisted throughout the 19th and much of the 20th century until Greece's integration into Europe, when more nuanced studies began to explore the complexity of the topic¹⁸⁸.

The use of the crusades in nationalist rhetoric became so widespread that it almost became a requirement for nations, even those that had never participated in the crusades, to claim a connection to a crusader past. This was for example the case of Emperor Tewodros II of Ethiopia who declared an eventual goal to liberate Jerusalem and defeat the Turk¹⁸⁹. Ferdinand I of Bulgaria has heavily used imported Western crusader rhetoric even though Bulgaria haven't been part in crusader tradition, declaring he shared blood with St. Louis¹⁹⁰. Other countries like Poland, Russia and Denmark also used crusader related foundational myths within the building of their national identity¹⁹¹.

It is noteworthy that during the 19th century, European powers began establishing consulates in the Holy Land, each competing for influence and asserting historical claims rooted in the legacy of the crusades. Between 1838 and 1854, consulates representing Britain, France, Sardinia, Prussia, Austria, and Spain were established in Palestine, marking the beginning of intensified European involvement in the region¹⁹².

¹⁸⁷ Hindley, *A Brief History of the Crusades*, 157.

¹⁸⁸ Eleni Sakellariou, "Byzantine and Modern Greek Perceptions of the Crusades," in *Palgrave Advances in the Crusades*, ed. Helen J. Nicholson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 261-263.

¹⁸⁹ Knobler, *Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past* 306.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 318

¹⁹¹ Jaspert, *Ein Polymythos: Die Kreuzzüge*, 226 – 227.

¹⁹² Siberry, *Images of the Crusades*, 369.

2.3 Crusader sites material culture

The material remnants of the crusades gained exceptional importance during the 19th century. However, the ways in which self-identified crusading nations treated these remnants remain significantly understudied¹⁹³. Pilgrimage trips to the East intensified during the 19th century and some standardized rituals concerning the crusades were popular among prominent European figures, including paying homage to Godfrey de Bouillon's weaponry¹⁹⁴.

Perhaps the French were the most invested in crusader structures in the East. Trips to the Levant intensified during the 19th century; however, in the second half of the century, organized missions began arriving in the region, whether for the excavation of ancient sites, such as the renowned *Mission de Phénicie* led by Ernest Renan in 1860, which accompanied French troops during the Second Empire, or for the study of classical and medieval sites, as seen in the work of archaeologist Charles Jean Melchior de Vogüé. One of the most influential studies were those conducted on crusader states and on military fortifications in the Near East by Emmanuel Guillaume Rey. In his *Essai sur la Domination Française en Syrie dans le Moyen Âge*, Rey finishes with the following remarks:

Only two [crusades] were carried out according to a plan of conquest and colonization: that of Godfrey of Bouillon and that of Saint Louis, both of which are essentially French. Upon seeing on Syrian soil the traces of this glorious domination, I admired the craftsmanship and, despite the painful impression left by the sight of an unfinished enterprise, I recognized with pride that the crusades which were great and had tangible outcomes form an integral part of our national history¹⁹⁵.

Similar trends to nationalize medieval and crusader architecture occurred in Germany where the gothic style was claimed to have a German influence, challenging the dominant narrative of its French origin. The completion of the Cathedral of Cologne came

¹⁹³ Swenson, *Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation*, 29.

¹⁹⁴ Siberry, *Images of the Crusades*, 367.

¹⁹⁵ Rey, *Essai sur la domination française en Syrie durant le Moyen Âge*, 49.

as a fruition to this trend. The German fascination with the crusades also materialized in the Holy Land as German key figures were responsible with directly or indirectly of new projects taking place in Palestine. Lobbying for further involvement in the crusader archaeology resulted in German led excavations in the site of the cathedral of Tyr. Chancellor Bismarck was convinced by an advisor of the baseless claim that the Frederick I Barbarossa's remains were buried there, and they should be transferred to the Cathedral of Cologne in order to symbolize the German reunification¹⁹⁶, a failure was pleasantly received by the French and British. The excavations in Tyr were simultaneous to the German excavations at Olympia in the 1870s when a certain European ancestry was being resurrected in Ancient Greece¹⁹⁷.

In 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany made a visit that included a dramatic entry into Jerusalem on horseback requiring part of the city wall to be torn down, wearing a Field Marshal's ceremonial white uniform to amplify the crusader imagery. In Damascus, he placed a bronze wreath on Saladin's tomb inscribed "*from one great emperor to another*", which was later stolen and brought to Britain as a war trophy by T.E. Lawrence¹⁹⁸.

British travelers shared similar claims to the sites, mainly through the figure of Richard the Lionheart. Ruling in Malta since 1814, they did not show immediate interest in the crusader legacy of the recently defeated Knights Hospitaller. The order's buildings were inherited by the British Crown, but they were not handled with great appreciation until the 1930s when preservation efforts intensified to counter claims of fascist Italy to the island¹⁹⁹, however, it seems that their association with the crusades in the Holy Land before the mandate was limited.

It is interesting to notice that many British and French travelogues from the second half of the 19th century have attributed the destruction and deterioration of crusader structures in the East to

¹⁹⁶ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 33-35.

¹⁹⁷ Silberman, *Between Past and Present*, 5.

¹⁹⁸ Siberry, *Images of the Crusades*, 368-369.

¹⁹⁹ Swenson, *Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation*, 31-35.

the neglect of local authorities and populations and to their inherit hatred for the Western civilization. While in fact, although some of this destruction occurred after the final defeat of the crusades in the 13th century, most of the damages was inflicted by the bombardment by the British navy during the Egyptian-Ottoman War (1839-1841).

The increasing interest in crusader history was simultaneous to colonization. The link established by the French between medieval rulers and contemporary colonizing authorities led to a projection of the *mission civilisatrice* onto the crusades themselves. 19th-century scholars depicted the motivations and impact of the crusades as strikingly similar to modern French colonial propaganda: local populations were rescued from Turkish and Arab rulers, flourished under the tolerant French governance, and were given a fair role in managing these prosperous territories²⁰⁰. The previously mentioned archaeologist Rey argued that the Concentric Castle design originated in the Latin East, blending Western and Byzantine-Oriental elements, as seen in Tortosa, Krak, and Margat. He saw this as a symbol of harmony between Western settlers and the local population.

It has been argued that many notions and questions asked by scholars of the crusades today are in fact influenced by the memory of the crusades, shaped during the 19th century²⁰¹. Ronnie Ellenblum's work has done a great effort to shed light on some of these instances. He argues that since the 1870, there has been a scholarly obsession over the dichotomy of pure versus fusion architectural element, such as the case of the gothic style²⁰². He also argues that the most iconic of the Crusader castles, Crac des Chevaliers is to this day perceived as a pure European production, despite most of its outer layer was built under Muslim rule after the expulsion of the Crusaders²⁰³. In addition to the idea that the Crusader "states" had well-defined borders was a 19th-century

²⁰⁰ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 45-49

²⁰¹ Horswell, Introduction: Crusade and Nation, 4.

²⁰² Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 70-71

²⁰³ Ibid., 85.

construct, shaped by the realities of that time²⁰⁴. However, Ellenblum himself could not avoid falling into some of the 19th century notions. In his *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*, very often he confuses the Latin East with the Kingdom of Jerusalem, at times using both terms interchangeably. Since the 19th century and continuing to the present, studies on the crusades have been heavily concentrated on the 12th-century Kingdom of Jerusalem, even though some of the most well-preserved sites date to the 13th century and are located outside the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

The use of the crusades took a different form once the confrontation became with the Muslim Turks during World War I, specifically concerning the Holy Land. Although the official discourse tried to suppress these claims and keep a secular discourse, after a century of using crusader imagery, it was too present and popular among the masses and politicians alike, since this time it was a dispute between Muslims and Christians over the same territories of the Middle Ages²⁰⁵. British General Allenby, whose entry into Jerusalem in 1917 was met with great romanticization, even though many of his soldiers were Muslims. Nevertheless, the crusader mania proved difficult to silence, despite official efforts to avoid the use of crusader rhetoric²⁰⁶. On the other hand, the French official discourse did not suppress crusader rhetoric. Instead, it was embraced by many politicians and became an important element in the vision for the Mandatory states of Syria and Lebanon, as we will see in the next chapters.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 144

²⁰⁵ Knobler, *Holy Wars, Empires, and the Portability of the Past*, 315 – 316.

²⁰⁶ Siberry, *Images of the Crusades*, 383.

2.4 The modern legacy of the crusades in the East

Just like in the West, the crusades have recently been increasingly used in the political landscape in the East. From the nationalist totalitarian regimes that controlled the political scene in the Arab world in the second half of the 20th century, to the radical Islamist groups that challenged these regimes, accusations of “crusader” towards one’s enemies were widespread²⁰⁷. Images, battles, figures, and cities associated with the crusades are frequently evoked to draw parallels with contemporary events. These references often carry some optimism, suggesting that the current enemy will share the same fate as the crusaders. It is commonly believed that the crusades left a bitter legacy in the East, remembered with deep resentment since the Middle Ages. The 19th century witnessed a notable resurgence of interest in the crusades across various forms of media. However, the extent to which the crusades were present in Eastern collective memory prior to this period remains debated. It is also unclear whether this renewed interest was primarily a response to the growing prominence of the crusades in European discourse, or the result of an independent development within the region.

The popular narrative of a continuous bitterness since the Middle Ages caused by the crusaders in the East is certainly incorrect; this bitterness is a form of an “invented tradition” that has developed in the modern times. However, the opposite position claiming a complete oblivion of the crusades is equally inaccurate. Heroes that defended Islam against the crusaders were remembered for their great deeds, primarily Mamluk Sultan Baybars and Saladin to a lesser degree²⁰⁸. Parallelism between the crusades and

²⁰⁷ Chiara De Cesari, “Post-Colonial Ruins: Archaeologies of Political Violence and IS,” *Anthropology Today* 31, no. 6 (December 2015): 24 - 25.

²⁰⁸ Stefan Heidemann, “Memory and Ideology: Images of Saladin in Syria and Iraq,” in *Visual Culture in the Modern Middle East: Rhetoric of the Image*, eds. Christiane Gruber and Sune Haugbolle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 59.

contemporary politics were made in the East as early as the 17th century by Ottoman historian Mustafa Naima (d. 1716), who used the crusades to refer to their defeat in an analogy to contemporary war with Russia and Austria²⁰⁹. The Napoleonic campaign in Egypt and Syria in the late 18th century caused the recalling of the defeat of the crusader forces led by French King Louis IX²¹⁰.

Up until the mid-19th century, there was no coined term for the crusades in Arabic, as they were not perceived as a series of one major event. The first known use of a single term for the crusaders, *al-Salibiyyun*, appears in what is considered the earliest Arabic work on the history of the crusades. Aleppine Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch Maximos III Mazloum translated a French account of the crusades into Arabic in 1841 while he was in Paris, though it was not published until 1865 in Jerusalem. The title of the translation was: *The History of the Sacred Wars in the Orient Called the War of the Cross (Min Tarikh al-hurub al-muqaddasa fi al-mashriq al-mad'u wa harb al-salib)*²¹¹. The French origin *Les guerres saintes d'outre-mer ou Tableau des croisades, retracé d'après les chroniques contemporaines* by French scholar Maxime de Mont-Rond was published in 1840, one year before the Patriarch translates it into Arabic. De Mont-Rond's work was largely inspired by Michaud's *histoire des croisades* and, just like Michaud's version for the French youth, de Mont-Rond's work was mainly meant to target a juvenile public to educate the young generation on national heritage and defend the crusades from a bad reputation that was attached to the ancestors of the French²¹².

²⁰⁹ Jonathan Phillips, "Unity! Unity between all the inhabitants of our lands! The Memory and Legacy of the Crusades and Saladin in the Near East, c.1880 to c.1925," in *Perceptions of the Crusades from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Mike Horswell and Jonathan Phillips, *Engaging the Crusades*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 2018), 87.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

²¹¹ Maximos III Mazloum, *From the History of the Sacred Wars in the Orient Called the War of the Cross* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Monastery, 1865) (in Arabic).

²¹² Iris Shagrir and Nitzan Amitai-Preiss, "Michaud, Montrond, Mazloum and the First History of the Crusades in Arabic," *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 24, no. 3 (2012): 310.

This reflects the long-lasting and far-reaching influence of Michaud's work, which had begun to make its way into the Near East. Around the same time Patriarch Mazloum's translation was published, other direct translations of Michaud's work appeared in Turkish. These translations helped inspire the Ottoman intellectual Namik Kemal to write the first modern biography of Saladin in the Near East, conceived as a response to Michaud's claims. Published in 1872, Kemal's work was met with considerable enthusiasm²¹³.

Saladin started to become the crusader defeater Muslim hero par excellence, overshadowing the Mamluk Sultan Baibars who had been known by that for centuries²¹⁴. Saladin's victory in Hattin and the subsequent capture of Jerusalem became the most iconic moment from the crusades. The shift in focus from the once more admired and widely remembered Baibars to Saladin was not arbitrary. As Western narratives began to infiltrate the East, they provoked negative public sentiment, stirring resentment and resistance. Yet, elements of these narratives were also selectively adopted. Saladin, portrayed in the West as a noble and virtuous adversary, came to the fore as a celebrated Islamic hero, largely legitimized by Western recognition. Saladin was looked upon favorably in the West since the Middle Ages. In Dante's *Divina Comedia*, Saladin was placed in Limbo since he was a virtuous non-Christian. However, it is in the 19th century that his reputation as a chivalrous ruler accelerated, mainly due to featuring him in crusader literature, particularly the work of Sir Walter Scott²¹⁵, earning the medieval hero a spot in the Scott monument erected in to honor the writer in Edinburgh²¹⁶.

²¹³ Phillips, 'Unity! Unity between all the inhabitants of our lands!', 87.

²¹⁴ Werner Ende, "Wer ist ein Glaubensheld, wer ist ein Ketzer? Konkurrierende Geschichtsbilder in der modernen Literatur islamischer Länder," *Die Welt des Islams* 23–24 (1984): 82.

²¹⁵ Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination, 8 November 1898–11 September 2001," *Crusades* 2, no. 1 (2003): 153.

²¹⁶ Heidemann, Memory and Ideology: Images of Saladin in Syria and Iraq, 60 – 64.

From the 1860s well into the 20th century, newspapers in the Arab and Muslim world played a major role in popularizing Saladin, whose image came to dominate public discourse on various levels. The Wali of Damascus Diya Pasha ordered the excavation and reconstruction of Saladin Mausoleum in 1876. Two years later, Sultan Abdulhamid II ordered the installation of a lavish marble cenotaph next to Saladin's tomb²¹⁷. Abdulhamid needed a boost for his image in Syria after the defeat in the Russian Turkish war in 1878 by tying himself to a hero of the Islamic past²¹⁸. A portrait of Saladin probably dates to the same period, a portrait that would later be copied multiple times during the 20th century as a representation of Saladin. Around this time, Saladin's grave started attracting more visitors than that of Sultan Baibars. Sultan Abdulhamid frequently accused Europe of waging a modern "Crusade" against the Ottoman Empire, turning the crusades into a powerful metaphor within the political consciousness of the Middle East²¹⁹.

Further European literary works were translated into Arabic, including Walter Scott's *The Talisman*, which appeared in the periodical *Al-Muqtataf* in 1887²²⁰. The Arabic translation was titled *Qalb al-Assad (Lion's Heart) and Saladin*, which placed significantly more emphasis on Saladin than the original. Like Michaud's work, the translation of Scott's novel had a substantial influence on literary production on the crusades in the Arab world.

The image of Saladin was about to receive a major boost when in 1898 Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany visited the Levant. As mentioned earlier, after a highly orchestrated, eventful, and crusader-themed visit to the Holy Land, he went to Damascus to pay tribute to the "Hero Sultan Saladin", to order later the restoration of Saladin's mausoleum and the construction of a new tomb adjacent to the older one. The Kaiser's attitude towards the memory of Saladin resurrected the medieval leader in the collective memory of the Muslim population after he had been

²¹⁷ Ibid., 61

²¹⁸ Phillips, 'Unity! Unity between all the inhabitants of our lands!', 88.

²¹⁹ Riley-Smith, *Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination*, 160.

²²⁰ Phillips, 'Unity! Unity between all the inhabitants of our lands!', 81.

overshadowed for centuries by more influential Muslim leaders²²¹. Prominent Egyptian poet Ahmad Shawqi, who had extensively written on Saladin, wrote a poem glorifying the Kaiser for his noble gesture.

A year after the Kaiser's visit, the first Muslim-authored history of the crusades was published in 1899 by the Egyptian scholar Sayyed Ali al-Hariri. Despite its overtly anti-crusader tone, evident from the preface, the influence of European historiography is clear in the structuring of events, the numbering of the crusade campaigns, and the way the narrative is framed with contemporary political concerns in mind²²².

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Muslim intellectuals increasingly emphasized historical heroes to strengthen Islamic identity in response to European dominance. Syrian scholar Rafiq al-Azm argued that Europe's power lay in honouring its heroes. He urged Muslims to revive their own historical figures to inspire the youth, warning that admiration for European leaders like Napoleon would weaken cultural and national pride²²³. This enthusiasm was not limited to Arab Muslims; Christian Arabs, mostly Levantines living in Egypt, were also active proponents of Arab nationalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They contributed to the glorification of Saladin, often praising his tolerance in plays and publications that were heavily inspired by European literature²²⁴. Jurji Zaydan, a Lebanese Christian, made significant efforts to popularize Arab and Islamic heritage through both fictional and non-fictional works. His writings often portrayed Western Christians in a negative light and emphasized the unity and strength of Arab and Muslim rulers, at times with little regard for historical accuracy²²⁵.

²²¹ Riley-Smith, *Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination*, 152.

²²² Sayyed Ali al-Hariri, *al-Akhbar al-saniyya fi al-hurub al-salibiyya*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Al-Zahraa for Arabic Publication, 1985), 5 (in Arabic).

²²³ Ende, *Wer ist ein Glaubensheld*, 70-71.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

²²⁵ Phillips, 'Unity! Unity between all the inhabitants', 82.

By the late 19th century, theatre had become a powerful cultural medium in the Arab world. Najib Haddad's 1895 play featuring a highly idealized Saladin, heavily influenced by Walter Scott's *The Talisman*, achieved widespread success and continued to be performed into the 1930s. In 1914, Lebanese Christian writer Farah Antun presented *The Sultan Saladin and the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, portraying Saladin as a unifying and heroic figure with strong Islamic overtones, culminating in a call for regional unity that was censored by British authorities. In 1915, Egyptian dramatist Ibrahim Ramzi wrote *The Heroes of Mansoura*, depicting the 1250 defeat of French crusader King Louis IX. The play's nationalist message, resonating with opposition to British colonial rule, led to its suppression until 1918²²⁶.

By the onset of World War I, the figure of Saladin had become a powerful symbol, serving as a unifying emblem against the crusaders and embodying the Muslim counterpart to all the European crusader heroes combined. Nevertheless, Saladin's image was not universally celebrated across the Arab world. In fact, the earliest example of modern Arabic literature on the crusades, Patriarch Mazloun's translation, reveals a clear animosity toward Islam and Muslims rulers. Some scholars have argued that Mazloun, fully aware of the political and social dynamics of his time, aligned his work with the Catholic Church's historical narrative at a time when Protestant missionary activity was increasing in the Middle East. They suggest that he also attempted to soften the French source text's hostility by replacing terms like "infidels" with "Muslims" or "Arabs"²²⁷. However, this interpretation is inaccurate. Throughout his translation, Mazloun repeatedly uses the term "unbelievers" to refer to Muslims and expresses sorrow over crusader defeats, clearly reflecting a pro-crusader and anti-Muslim stance, despite using Islamic terms to refer to Western notion such as occasionally calling the crusades *Jihad* and calling Louis IX the Sultan of France²²⁸.

²²⁶ Ibid., 83 – 86.

²²⁷ Shagrir and Amitai-Preiss, Michaud, Montrond, Mazloun and the First History of the Crusades in Arabic, 311 – 312.

²²⁸ Mazloun, *From the History of the Sacred Wars*, 200.

It is unclear how widely read or impactful Mazloum's translation was, but the adoption of the term he coined to refer to the crusaders [*Salybyun*] suggests that his work did, in fact, exert some influence. This period coincided with the intensification of Christian missionary activity in the Near East, particularly by the Jesuits, and the growing prominence of French schools, especially in Lebanon. These institutions played a key role in promoting a French and Western interpretation of history within the Christian communities, a phenomenon that Ossama Makdisi has referred to as "the Gentile Crusade"²²⁹. Additionally, Saladin's deeds against the Shia Fatimid were also brought to the surface by some Shia scholars, whether to "expose" him or to reconcile him with their dominant narrative such as by some Ismailis²³⁰.

The memory of the crusades never completely vanished, but it lacked strong presence in Islamic historical consciousness, especially when compared to other major episodes such as the Mongol invasions, which occurred around the same time. It was in the 19th century that the crusades were actively revisited, reinterpreted, and mined for political symbolism. This revival appears to have been both directly and indirectly inspired by the West. Direct influence came through translations and various forms of cultural transmission that brought the Western crusader obsession into the Arab world. Indirectly, the growing Western interference in the region, especially following the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, prompted a renewed examination of past encounters with Europe, leading back to the crusades. Several key events helped revive and reshape this memory, portraying the crusades as a historical precedent for Western aggression: Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, the French conquest of Algeria, increasing Western presence in the Holy Land, and the French intervention following the 1860 massacres in Syria and Lebanon.

Despite their resistance to the European narrative of the crusades, Muslim and Arab authors were nonetheless deeply influenced by European historiography. They adopted key elements such as the heroic cult surrounding figures like Saladin and the framing of

²²⁹ Makdisi, *the Culture of Sectarianism*, 15-27.

²³⁰ Ende, *Wer ist ein Glaubensheld*, 89-94.

virtues associated with chivalric leadership. Additionally, they adopted the Western notion that the historical confrontation between East and West began with the crusades, whereas earlier Muslim narratives had typically traced this conflict back to the Arab conquests of the 7th century. Ironically, it was European pride in the crusades during this period that would later become a central point of critique in anti-crusader rhetoric within the Arab world. Western self-identification with the crusaders only reinforced prevailing Muslim and Arab perceptions of Europeans, not as triumphant invaders, but as ultimately defeated ones. It was not the memory of the crusades themselves that survived most powerfully, but rather the memory of their downfall.

This period also marked the crystallization of crusader memory within the Arab collective consciousness. The ideas developed at this time are clearly reflected in the 1988 Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). The charter references the crusades ten times, consistently portraying them as the historical forerunners of contemporary colonial powers²³¹. Saladin is mentioned six times, depicted as the sole figure who confronted and ultimately expelled the crusaders from the East, despite the fact that crusader presence in the region continued for more than a century after his death.

The end of World War I ushered in a new chapter for the region. With the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Mandate period in the Levant, the crusader past, already rich in symbolic meaning, took on new significance. Crusader sites now came under direct European control, following a century of growing fascination with crusade history. Yet this shift occurred in the very same lands where resentment toward the crusades had been steadily developing. During the Mandate period, these two opposing sets of memories, European romanticization and local hostility, were destined to collide, and crusader heritage sites

²³¹ *Hamas Covenant 1988: The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, 18 August 1988, The Avalon Project, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/21st_century/hamas.asp

became the physical spaces through which this confrontation of narratives was expressed and negotiated.

3 Mobilizing the Crusades on the Ground: French Policies, Ideologies, and Alawite Particularism

The fall of the Assad regime in Syria in late 2024 has caused the question of identities in Syria to be mobilised intensely. The Alawites, the community to whom the Assad family belongs and who have been frequently accused of being the major supporters of the regime, were systematically targeted. Social media were the primary platform where these debates took place; they offered a space for enthusiasts to the new administration to attack Alawites, but also a space for Alawites to discuss and defend their identity. Amid debates and virtual content fuelled with hate speech and verbal hostilities, two videos from around the same period caught my attention. The first features a woman calling for the “liberation” of Damascus from the Alawites who have inhabited it under Assad. This anti-Alawite sentiment is not unusual at all after the collapse of the regime. However, her accusations were particular; she described Alawites as “the crusaders’ bastards”, pointing to their alleged widespread European physical features as proof of a foreign and illegitimate origin historically and biologically. In another video, shared by a page dedicated to defending Alawite identity, we see an elderly Alawite woman reciting several sentences in French. While tracing the sign of the cross, she pronounces the following words: *Au nom du Père et du Fils, ainsi soit-il. Je vous salue Marie, pleine de grâce, le Seigneur soit avec vous, et avec votre esprit.* She then recites verses from the Quran, saying it is the Arabic translation of what she had said in French²³². The Alawite faith does contain some Christian elements

²³² @alawites1, “Kind people, dear Umm Ali, may God protect you....,”

Instagram reel, December 27, 2025,

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DSwpnn0JBKf/>. Unfortunately, we could not find the first video, probably it was removed from the platform for hate speech.

and proximity to Christians in some areas results in some syncretism, however this formulation, in French and deeply Catholic, differs noticeably from those traditionally used by local Christian communities.

In the first video, the woman's remarks were not her invention, they rather echo a set of ideas that have developed mainly under French rule to promote claims of Alawite particularism. These claims remained present in some circles and were reused by advocates of anti-Assad and anti-Alawite views, becoming public after the collapse of the regime. While, in the second video, the recital of Catholic prayers is but one element of the legacy of French missionary activities in the 1930s. It has been reused by Alawite content creators and presented as a proof of Alawite religious tolerance and acceptance of others. These two elements, alleged "white" features and religious particularism, did not develop separately. They both draw on representations inherited from French colonial differentiation policies in the Syrian coastal region, predominantly inhabited by Alawites. Under French rule, physical traits, religious practices, and historical narratives were repeatedly mobilized to frame Alawites, among others, as a distinct population, set apart from their surroundings by origin and belief.

Here we will examine how Alawite particularism was constructed under French rule and the role played by the mobilization of the past, crusades in particular, in this construction. We will try to explore the complexity of colonial agency by focusing on three domains of the French administration military and political personnel; religious missionary activity; and civil functionaries. References to the crusades were common in all these spheres, though used with different intensity and purposes. Although colonial agendas often overlapped, on many occasions they were conflicting; the production of exceptionalist narratives emerged through collaboration but also dispute. Alawite responses to these representations were also complex according to political and historical contexts and actors involved. This chapter explores how crusader legacies were appropriated by different colonial factions, the purposes they were made to serve, and the ways in which

these discourses were exported to the metropole, where they were reframed and communicated to a French public.

We will focus on three individuals whom we consider exemplify the influence of distinct spheres of authority: General Henri Gouraud in the political and military domain; Father Henri Lammens within religious institutions, particularly the Jesuits; and Paul Deschamps among civil functionaries. It goes without saying that the degrees of involvement of these groups were uneven. The Jesuits, for example, had major influence on the educational system that contributed to the longevity of their influence, as will be seen below.

3.1 The colonial apparatus and the instrumentalization of the crusades

3.1.1 Military and political authority: the crusades as a tradition of superiority and submission

During the First World War, France and Britain had intensive communication over how to divide the domination between them over the Ottoman territories, in order to avoid a possible return to rivalry between two nations put together after the defeat of their common enemy. These negotiations resulted in the treaty that later came to be called “Sykes-Picot” (Fig. 12). The French and British took military control of the Levant after the defeat of the Ottomans in 1918, but it is in 1920 in San Remo Conference where both countries were officially granted the mandate over the Near East, a new system that attempted to reconcile the French and British expansionism with American president Woodrow Wilson's advocacy for self-determination²³³.

As seen earlier, the rise of romanticism in the 19th century reawakened a French interest, which resulted in an increasing French presence in the Levant towards the end of the century. French speaking catholic institutions had spread significantly in a

²³³ Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 22.

form of a “gentle crusade”²³⁴ and Syria had become “a colony without a flag”²³⁵. When the victorious Western powers were splitting the territories in the Near East, the British had the upper hand in choice of the land that would be under their influence; while consideration was given to some historical references, such as biblical definition of the land of Palestine, they chose the territories primarily according to pragmatic considerations²³⁶.

The French claims of Syria on the other hand were far more influenced by romanticism and historical rights. French officials of all levels have frequently depended on history to legitimize French claims in the Levant²³⁷. The crusades were often seen as the first episode of French influence in the Levant, a glorious event that reverberated in the modern times. It has even been suggested that the region intended to be under direct French rule in the Sykes-Picot accords was inspired by the map of the crusader states in the Levant²³⁸. While the British insisted on controlling the land south of Tyre to guarantee the control of the Suez Canal²³⁹, the rest of the Latin states did overlap mostly with the area claimed by France, both maps taking over the coastal Levantine region and mushrooming into Anatolia (Fig. 12). Since the alleged “thousand years tradition” of France in the Levant was an idea adopted by top French diplomats, the intentional overlap of these maps seems plausible. In fact, when T. E. Lawrence, better known as *Lawrence of Arabia*, saw how frequently the French used the crusades to legitimize their control over the Levant, he had to bitterly remind

²³⁴ Makdisi, *the Culture of Sectarianism*, 15.

²³⁵ Onésime Reclus quoted by Henri Lammens, *La Syrie: Précis historique*, vol. 1 (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1921), 198.

²³⁶ James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: The Anglo-French Struggle for the Middle East, 1914–1948* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 81.

²³⁷ Idir Ouahes, *Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate: Cultural Imperialism and the Workings of Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 9.

²³⁸ Jean-François Deniau, preface to Philippe Gouraud, *Le Général Henri Gouraud au Liban et en Syrie, 1919–1923* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), 8; Philippe Gouraud, *Le Général Henri Gouraud au Liban et en Syrie, 1919–1923*, 24.

²³⁹ Barr, *A Line in the Sand*, 81.

them that “the Crusaders had been defeated; the Crusades had failed”²⁴⁰, despite being a great crusader enthusiast himself.

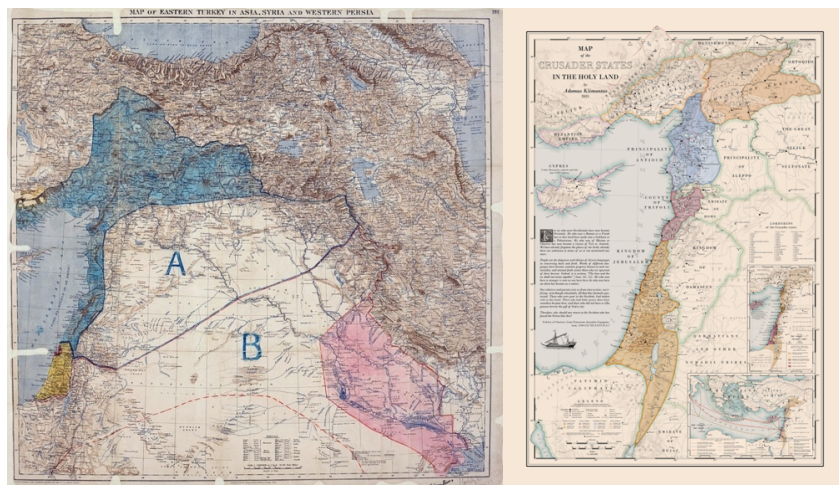


Figure 12. Left: the Sykes-Picot agreement, signed by Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot, 8 May 1916. The blue intended as a region of direct French rule. Source: Royal Geographical Society. Right: Right the crusader states in the 12th century. Source: Adomas Klimantas, Wiki Commons.

The early years of French mandate set the tone for the rest. In 1920, the short-lived Kingdom of Syria and king Faysal at its head was toppled by the French, who took control over the entire country. In September, they declared the establishment of five states in the territories under their control in the Levant: Greater Lebanon, the Government of Damascus, the Government of Aleppo, the Jebel Druze in the south, and the Alawite territories along the Syrian coast, which will be the focus of this research (Fig. 13). The early years of the mandate were marked by inconsistent French policies, during which the Alawite territories alternated between autonomy and annexation. In 1924, the Alawite State “*État des Alaouites*” was established as an autonomous entity. It became the “Government of Latakia” in 1930 and was united with the rest of Syria in 1936. Briefly regaining autonomy in 1939, it was

²⁴⁰ Tyerman, *Historiography, modern*, 585.

reabsorbed permanently in 1942 as the province of Latakia²⁴¹. Syrian independence was a gradual process that unfolded in several phases, culminating in the evacuation of the last French soldier on 17 April 1946, a date celebrated as the national day. In this study, the *State of the Alawites* and the *Government of Latakia* will be used to describe the same political entity; the former term applies to most of the 1920s, while the latter corresponds to the 1930s.

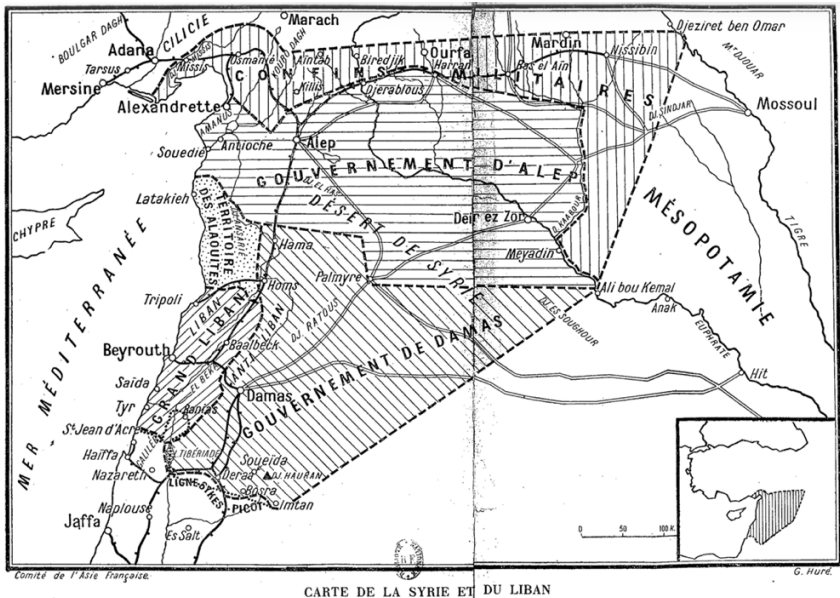


Figure 13. Political territories in the Levant under French rule in 1922. Source : *Conférences de la Foire-Exposition de Beyrouth*, 335.

When it comes to the political framework of the French authorities in the Levant, no man's impact is comparable to the second and most influential French high commissioner General Henri Gouraud (1919-1922). We will be examining several military and political personnel in this section and the following chapters;

²⁴¹ Paul van Caldenborgh, *Savage Human Beasts or the Purest Arabs? The Incorporation of the Alawi Community into the Syrian State during the French Mandate Period (1918–1946)* (PhD diss., Radboud University Nijmegen, 2005), 155.

however, the focus will remain on Gouraud because of the scale and longevity of his influence. The deeply catholic general's views on history were frequently incorporated in his strategies since his arrival to Beirut. It has been discussed that the rushed conquest of Damascus to topple king Faysal and to take over the city was primarily to recover crusader pride after being defeated by the "unconquered fortress"²⁴². After the Maysaloon battle in which the Syrian army was defeated and the French occupied inner Syria, Gouraud made a visit to the old city of Damascus where he visited the tomb of Saladin and allegedly said "*Awake, Saladin. We have returned*", a sentence that has been used against the French authorities by Arab nationalists and anticolonial figures to this day.

Gouraud's self-identification as a crusader is demonstrated clearly in a highly romanticized biography written by his nephew, Philippe Gouraud. An army general himself too, he dedicates his work to his son the namesake of Henri Gouraud and refers to France by "*nous*". From the very first sentence of the book, the author establishes the claim that France's return to the Near East was to reestablish strong bonds that started during the crusades²⁴³.

For Gouraud, the Syrian coastal region held a distinguished place because of its rich crusader history. The establishment of the State of the Alawites on the coast in 1920 was a decision by Gouraud, to appease Alawite rebellious activities in the mountains. The French arrived in the region with an impression on the Alawites based largely on the writings of orientalist such as Ernest Renan, René Dussaud, and Father Henri Lammens, a Belgian Jesuit priest and historian of Islam, whose influence will be studied further later. To the shock of the French who assumed Alawites would be favourable to French presence compared to hostile Sunnis, a major Alawite rebellion took place as early as 1919 and lasted for two years with the support of the Arab government in Damascus and the Kemalist forces in Türkiye²⁴⁴. After the creation of the Alawite

²⁴² Barr, *A Line in the Sand*, 87.

²⁴³ Gouraud, *Le Général Henri Gouraud au Liban et en Syrie*, 23.

²⁴⁴ Stefan Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis: From Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 249-254.

State by General Gouraud, initially called "*Territoires Autonomes des Alaouite*", in 1920, and the "pacification" of Alawite region in 1921, major effort was made by the French to promote a discourse of Alawite particularism and the abundance of well-preserved crusader sites in the region would play an important role in the process of creating a national narrative.

Gouraud expressed his understanding of the region which would make up the Alawite State in an interview made in January 1922 and published in the journal *Revue Correspondance d'Orient* titled "*la Syrie décrite par le Général Gouraud*", where the General talks to journalist Jean Lefranc about his time in Syria. When it comes to the Alawite territory, Gouraud states:

Between the valley of the Orontes and the sea, Frankish castles are seen here and there, reminding the French that their ancestors already loved this country where they left the trace of their genius, courage and good deeds²⁴⁵.

This was right after the surrender of the rebellion leader Shaykh Saleh Al-Ali. When arriving to the Alawite region, Gouraud wanted Al-Ali to come and offer submission, and he even asked that the submission be marked with a ceremony. The place chosen for this ceremony was a crusader castle, since, as expressed by Gouraud, "*Les fils chez nous valent leurs pères*" ("For us, sons measure up to their fathers")²⁴⁶. The fort is not mentioned in the interview, but it is probably Sahyoun next to Latakia which he visited and asked the Alawite population there to follow him to the castle²⁴⁷.

Although in the same interview Gouraud repeatedly invokes biblical and classical references in Syrian history, none approach the number or intensity of the crusader references. It is possible that Gouraud was even more radical in his orientalist view than is depicted in Lefranc's interview; at the beginning of the text of the

²⁴⁵ "La Syrie décrite par le Général Gouraud," *Correspondance d'Orient: revue économique, politique & littéraire*, no. 283–284 (15–30 April 1922): 221.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Gouraud, *Le Général Henri Gouraud au Liban et en Syrie*, 122.

interview, the journal's editors admit that they have deleted some parts that the journalist had certainly "misunderstood" and that they would have shared these parts if the Arab journals would not exploit them against the French rule.

Gouraud's enthusiasm to make reference to history was not unusual in the army. Throughout the mandate, many figures have expressed their understanding of the Levant depending heavily on historical legitimacy, some even having direct impact on the conservation of sites as we will see in the next chapter. One event where top figures of the early mandate administration gathered to express their vision for the Levant was during the conferences of the Exposition of Beirut that took place in 1921, an event ordered by Gouraud and executed with the purpose of introducing French and Levantine commerce to each other. Lieutenant-Colonel Goudot, *Chef d'Etat Major* in the Armée du Levant, in his speech revisited the victory of the Allied Powers reminding that "...Jerusalem, where General-in-Chief Allenby made his solemn entry on December 11, 1917, having on his right Lieutenant-Colonel de Piepape, representing France, 819 years after Godefroy de Bouillon"²⁴⁸.

In the same event, former Commander of the Alawites territory Colonel Nieger gives a speech where he highlights the material legacy left by the crusaders in the Alawite region:

Although it belongs to a different sphere, I cannot pass over in silence the mark left by our ancestors who, for nearly two centuries, occupied this entire region and left behind an imperishable memory, along with moving monuments of their architecture. In the modest Alawite territory, whose archaeological inventory is far from complete, we have identified twenty citadels or fortified castles, some of which are still perfectly preserved and can be compared to the finest examples among those we admire at home. Having been led by a local chief to the ruins of one of these *qala'at*, whose majesty and elegance confound our modern imagination, I asked him who their builders were.

²⁴⁸ Lieutenant-Colonel Goudot, "Les Opérations de l'Armée Française du Levant," in *La Syrie et le Liban en 1921: La Foire-Exposition de Beyrouth. Conférences. Liste des récompenses* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1922), 74.

With a smile of pity at my ignorance, he replied that such a construction could only be the work of the Franks, and without hesitation advised me to occupy it²⁴⁹.

This extended period of crusader rule, according to Nieger, did not pass without leaving its mark on the population, as he stated:

We often hear it repeated that the Alawite is Aryan and the fact is that in the mountains we find a very large majority of blue eyes and blond hair. It is also true that this population lived in constant contact with our ancestors for almost two centuries²⁵⁰.

While five formative years of the mandate (1920-1925) are the most thoroughly documented, thus the richest in historic material, crusader references kept their relevance throughout the mandate period. In fact, as late as 1945, while France was struggling to maintain its presence in Syria after the Second World War, Charles de Gaulle had to invoke France's "thousand-year tradition" in Syria to legitimize its continued presence²⁵¹.

In summary, the rhetoric of early French political and military figures, most notably General Henri Gouraud, was built around a narrative of military and technological superiority over the local population dating back to the crusaders. References to the crusades were not random; military figures repeatedly emphasized the longevity of Frankish presence in the region and its material legacy, particularly the fortifications and castles that continued to dominate the landscape. Crusader heritage sites functioned as visible markers of this superiority, claiming the local population acknowledged and admitted French dominance. This emphasis was especially pronounced in the State of the Alawites, whose territory contained a concentration of crusader heritage sites. These references provided historical legitimacy for French territorial claims and military presence. By framing modern occupation as a continuation of the Middle Ages, the French

²⁴⁹ Colonel Nieger, "Le Territoire des Alaouites," in *La Syrie et le Liban en 1921: La Foire-Exposition de Beyrouth. Conférences. Liste des récompenses* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1922), 283.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 278.

²⁵¹ Barr, *A Line in the Sand*, 284.

administration sought to present the mandate as territories inherited from the ancestors. In this sense, the crusades were an anecdote telling a tradition of French domination and local submission.

3.1.2 Functionaries: A medieval *mission civilisatrice*

[...] In 1516, Syria falls to Turkish domination. She gets rid of it in 1918 through a new crusade, like the old ones, coming from the West, the Crusade of the Allies... In both cases, French soldiers get on board to save the miserable populations, whether the soldiers of Christ or the soldiers of humanity²⁵².

These lines were part of a speech given by a physician named Jules Emily who was Inspector General of Health, Hygiene and Public Assistance Services in the French administration in the Levant. Throughout his speech, he gives some of the most ferocious references to the glory of the crusades and the inferiority of the successive eastern rules, very similar to the narrative of the political and military personnel. Despite episodes of dispute over differing priorities, the lines often blur between civil services and the military. This overlap is evidently seen when it comes to functionaries of heritage services, where the military had a strong presence in archaeology, from aerial scanning of historic sites to participation in excavations.²⁵³ This was also the case in the State of the Alawites, where the French rule was more direct than the Syrian interior, and the dense presence of crusader sites encouraged further entanglement between the two entities. In 1923, the French authorities ordered that copies from the works of the 19th century French archaeologist Emmanuel Guillaume-Rey on crusader archaeology and architecture to be distributed to the heads of the eight districts of the State of the Alawites, to help them identify crusader structures in their territory²⁵⁴.

²⁵² Jules Emily, "L'assistance Française en Syrie," in *La Syrie et le Liban en 1921: La Foire-Exposition de Beyrouth. Conférences. Liste des récompenses* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1922), 123.

²⁵³ Bussemaker, *Imperialism's Stepchild*, 13.

²⁵⁴ Ouahes, *Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate*, 50.

French interventions in the built environment will be the topic of the next two chapters, taking the city of Tartus as a case study. At this point, the focus will be on a deliberately extreme and therefore particularly sharp example in order to demonstrate the romantic and orientalist dimension at work among French functionaries: the involvement of the French scholar Paul Deschamps and his personal quest of what was considered the most famous and illustrious example of medieval architecture, the Crac des Chevaliers. The first systematic study of the citadel was by Camille Enlart, who arrived in the Levant in 1921 and started his work on Frankish architecture²⁵⁵. Enlart was in fact invited by non-other than General Henri Gouraud to conduct this survey²⁵⁶. Following the sudden death of Enlart in 1926, Deschamps met the Crac des Chevaliers in the same year, and he dedicated all his energy for it, starting his mission in late 1927²⁵⁷.

Deschamps adopted the idea that the crusades were an exclusively French project, referring to the Latin states in some instances as *la France du Levant*²⁵⁸, and in others referring to the crusaders as *nos compatriots*²⁵⁹, giving to them the credit in establishing France's first colonies. By the late 1920s, he started intense lobbying campaigns for French acquisition of the citadel, an effort

²⁵⁵ Edmond Pottier, "Rapport sur les travaux archéologiques du service des antiquités de Syrie et sur la fondation de l'école française de Jérusalem (1920–1921)," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 66e année, no. 5 (1922): 365.

²⁵⁶ Florian Besson, "Actuel Moyen Âge : le Crac des Chevaliers, histoires d'un château fort," *The Conversation*, October 4, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/actuel-moyen-age-le-crac-des-chevaliers-histoires-dun-chateau-fort-103870>.

²⁵⁷ Maxime Goepp, "Une redécouverte archéologique," in Jean-Marc Hofman and Emmanuel Pénicaut, eds., *Le Crac des Chevaliers: Chroniques d'un rêve de pierre* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2018), 52.

²⁵⁸ Paul Deschamps, *Les Châteaux des Croisés en Terre Sainte, III: La Défense du Comté de Tripoli et de la Principauté d'Antioche* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1973), 179.

²⁵⁹ Paul Deschamps, "Les Croisades et la Première France d'Outre-Mer," *Revue des questions de Défense nationale* 1re année, t. III, no. 1 (January 1940): 282.

supported by General Henri Gouraud, although he was no longer the High Commissioner²⁶⁰. In his effort to convince the French government to purchase it, he presented two threats to this “French national heritage”, the first being the indigenous populations and the second is Italy through the Knights of Malta who might try to put their hands on it²⁶¹.

The Italian propaganda in the Alawite State was not an invented threat; many reports from the period show a growing interest of Fascist Italy in Syria. An intelligence report from 1928 indicates that a local journal in Latakia published an article rejecting speculation about an Italian takeover or a possible transfer or sharing of the Mandate between France and Italy²⁶². Another report in late 1929 indicates that three months after opening a branch of Banco di Roma in Latakia, the consul general of Italy in Beirut came to Latakia to install a vice-consulate in Latakia, a hospital and a school with Italian teachers²⁶³. By March 1930, a fully-fledged propagandistic campaign had developed, as reported in another report:

For some time now, one has observed in Latakia a veritable Italian propaganda, in the form of prospectuses, tourist postcards, advertisements for insurance companies, for navigation, for automobiles, which are distributed in cafés and shops or displayed there²⁶⁴.

Deschamps’s fears of an Italian takeover of Crac des Chevaliers was certainly an exaggeration in his efforts to convince the French government to acquire it. The only evidence of a possible interest we managed to find was a visit made by an Italian plenipotentiary Minister named Harold Manacorda, who visited the region in

²⁶⁰ Jérôme Tharaud and Jean Tharaud, “Souvenir d’épopée au Liban,” *Le Figaro*, April 24, 1946, 1.

²⁶¹ Swenson, *Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation*, 43.

²⁶² Report, July 27, 1928, Folder 1SL/1/V/1986, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, (Appendices, plate 1).

²⁶³ Report, November 12, 1929, Folder 1SL/1/V/1987, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (Appendices, plate 2).

²⁶⁴ Report, March 1, 1930, Folder 1SL/1/V/1987, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (Appendices, plate 3).

1930. A report indicates that, coming from Aleppo, Manacorda went to Latakia and then depart to Crac des Chevaliers²⁶⁵. This visit was not a unique move, since Crac des Chevaliers was a main attraction to Western visitors, however, perhaps because of its timing after the rise in Italian propaganda, it was instrumentalized by Deschamps in his lobbying campaign.

On the 16th of November 1933, the Government of Latakia, formerly the State of the Alawites, ceded to the French Republic the Crac des Chevaliers, for a price of one million francs, making the citadel officially a French territory²⁶⁶. In an emotional article published in *Le Monde colonial illustré*, Deschamps describes how the purchase of the Crac des Chevaliers brought back to France a French monument, describes other structures arguing that they “allow us to evoke, in a precise and vivid manner, the oldest testimony to French expansion”²⁶⁷. The restoration of the castle was significantly telling, even for the criteria of the time. The efforts to bring it back to its “original” state led the site to become an example in restoration closer in approach to mid 19th century rather than to the interwar period²⁶⁸. Restoring its shape was accompanied by a restoration to its “spirit”. After the acquisition, a mass was held during Palm Sunday in which French soldiers did a procession holding palm branches, fusing the religious with a military in an image that recalls the hospitallers, the medieval religious military order that built the castle (Fig. 14).

²⁶⁵ Report, April 3, 1930, Folder 1SL/1/V/1987, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (Appendices, plate 4).

²⁶⁶ Emmanuel Pénicaut, “Quand la France achète le Crac, un épisode des relations Franco-Syriennes (1928–1949),” in Jean-Marc Hofman and Emmanuel Pénicaut, eds., *Le Crac des Chevaliers: Chroniques d’un rêve de pierre* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2018), 67.

²⁶⁷ Paul Deschamps, “En Syrie avec les Croisés: Châteaux et Citadelles,” *Le Monde colonial illustré*, no. 130 (June 1934): 87–88.

²⁶⁸ Swenson, Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation, 43.



Figure 14. French soldiers celebrating the Palm Sunday mass at the Crac des Chevaliers, On the reverse: "On the trail of the crusaders... the ramparts of the ancient fortress of the Franks." The first mass there since 1271. Source: Hofman and Pénicaud, *Le Crac des Chevaliers*, 98.

The French press covered the acquisition of the Crac des Chevaliers with great enthusiasm. In an article written in *le Monde Illustré* titled *Un Magnifique Cadeau Fait à la France*, the author gives an introduction of the Western history of Latakia, *la donatrice* of Crac des Chevaliers²⁶⁹. *La Croix* celebrated this event depicting it as an enrichment of the French national heritage, framing it as a continuation of France building efforts which were interrupted for 600 years²⁷⁰. Another article published in *Le Temps* was titled *Le Crac des Chevaliers chez soi*, with the double meaning of bringing it to the reader through Deschamps's book and that the castle is finally "at home" in French possession. The author describes Deschamps as one of the crusader warriors who saved the

²⁶⁹ Gilles Sardant, "Un Magnifique Cadeau Fait à la France," *Le Monde Illustré*, no. 3972 (February 3, 1934): 90.

²⁷⁰ Marc-André Fabre, "La France achète à la Syrie le « Krak des Chevaliers », " *La Croix*, no. 15629 (February 2, 1934): 3.

monument from what it had become, filled with donkeys, goats, and camels²⁷¹.

Deschamps's commitment for Crac des Chevaliers was a patriotic, personal and religious endeavour. His personal involvement was remarkable; he treated the site as being a personal matter, going as far as referring to it as *my* Crac²⁷². Deschamps described his joy when the French flag was hoisted on one of the citadel's towers in the presence of several high-ranking personalities of the French mandatory administration, in addition to Émile Eddé, the president of the Lebanese Republic, on the birthday of one of his seven children²⁷³. The personal claim over the castle was publicly acknowledged by his peers when he was elected to the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* in 1942. On that occasion, he was presented with a sword bearing iconography referencing the citadel, during a ceremony in which the French art historian Marcel Aubert declared: "*your* Crac, the one you have acquired for France and whose beauties you have so well described"²⁷⁴.

As stated earlier, Deschamps's case was an extreme example that helps illustrate the extent of French scholars' involvement in claiming crusader sites. However, it inspired other instances of French appropriation of crusader sites in the Syrian coast. In 1942 or 1943, despite the weakening of the French due to the World War II, three more sites were ceded to France: the Margat castle, the Sahyoun castle, and the Cathedral of Tartus²⁷⁵.

²⁷¹ E. H., "Le Crac des Chevaliers chez soi," *Le Temps*, no. 26909 (May 6, 1935).

²⁷² Besson, "Actuel Moyen Âge : le Crac des Chevaliers".

²⁷³ Tharaud, "Souvenir d'épopée au Liban," 1.

²⁷⁴ Jean-Marc Hofman and Emmanuel Pénicaut, "Au chevet du Crac. Rencontre avec trois pionniers," in Jean-Marc Hofman and Emmanuel Pénicaut, eds., *Le Crac des Chevaliers: Chroniques d'un rêve de pierre* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2018), 82.

²⁷⁵ Tharaud, "Souvenir d'épopée au Liban," 1.

3.1.3 Missionary activity: resuming the message

Missionary activity in the Alawite region started as early as 1820s on the hands of American Protestants' mission to extend a hand to the heterodox communities in Syria marginalized by the Sunni Ottomans. The mission perceived them as non-Muslims and closer to Eastern Christianity than Islam, sometimes even considered lost Christians²⁷⁶. By the 1860s, Protestant schools have managed to convert only very few Alawites and in the 1880s their activities started to be blocked by the Ottoman authorities. The missionaries tried to argue with the Ottomans on the basis that Alawites were pagan and not Muslims so their activity is not targeting Muslims, a claim that the Ottomans rejected, despite still considering Alawites deviant. Central and regional Ottoman powers started trying to attract Alawite with counter-propaganda to include them in Islam²⁷⁷. Protestant missionary activity in the Alawite region was not successful since converts were too few, yet, according to geographer Fabrice Balanche, there is still a small "Protestant Alawite" community in one of Latakia's neighbourhoods, a small group that have been practicing their religion quietly²⁷⁸.

Nevertheless, no missionaries had such an impact in the Alawite region as did the Jesuits, an extremely influential actor within the French colonial apparatus in Syria. Information about Jesuit involvement and agenda in the Alawite region is abundant and fairly accessible, firstly, through the journal *Jésuites Missionnaires* the mouthpiece of Jesuit activity worldwide, but also the extensive writings of all the major Jesuit fathers such as Lammens, Janot, and Mouterde have left, offering firsthand accounts on their experience. While Lebanon was the main sphere of influence for Western catholic missionary activity in the Levant, specifically the Lazarists and the Jesuits, the latter showed an increasing interest in the Alawite territories. Although Jesuit involvement differed

²⁷⁶ Necati Alkan, "Fighting for the Nuṣayrī Soul: State, Protestant Missionaries and the 'Alawīs in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Die Welt des Islams* 52 (2012): 37-40.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 41-43.

²⁷⁸ Fabrice Balanche, interview by author, Lyon, France, September 4, 2025.

according to time, place, and the people involved, it is possible to trace the main lines of a relatively uniform Jesuit agenda for the Alawite region and its population even before the French Mandate.

The crusades were a source of inspiration through which Jesuit priests understood not only the past and the present of the region, but also its future. References to the Latin states were brought to the foreground in discussions ranging from the formation of an independent coastal state to the resolution of interpersonal quarrels. They were certainly not the only actors promoting an exceptionalist discourse about the Alawites; however, they contributed to this narrative at a different scale, while also significantly popularising it. Simply put, the Jesuit agenda consisted of selecting elements from the Alawite region that most attach Alawites to the West: physical appearance, name, some Christian traditions and crusader sites to shape a narrative that the Alawites were remnants of the crusaders, a belief that would, according to Jesuit agenda, result in the ultimate goal which is the mass conversion of the Alawites into Catholicism.

The earliest substantial contact between the Jesuits and the Alawites appears to have been through the work of Father Joseph Barnier, who made of the region of Safita in the southern part of the Alawite region his main field work in the last decade of the 19th century²⁷⁹. Around the same time, Lammens started to get involved further in the Alawite community. He did some trips to the region and started to form an opinion that will prove to be everlasting. Around the turn of the century, Lammens and French archaeologist René Dussaud entered a debate over the origin and identity of the Alawites, when the latter published a contribution on the Alawites, then known as Nosairi, in *La Grande Encyclopédie* in 1899²⁸⁰. In the same year, Lammens published an article “Les

²⁷⁹ Pierre Finet, “La Mission,” *Jésuites Missionnaires*, no. 7, “Chez les Alaouites” (July–August 1937): 199.

²⁸⁰ René Dussaud, “Nosairi,” in *La Grande Encyclopédie: inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres, et des arts*, vol. 25 (Paris: Henri Lamirault, 1899), 57–59.

Nosairis Notes sur leur Histoire et leur Religion", in the Jesuit review *Les Études*, where he challenges some of Dussaud's claims²⁸¹.

The main disagreement between the two is the "original" faith of the Alawites; while Dussaud claims that Alawite faith is influenced by memories of Phoenician beliefs, Lammens argues that Alawites were Christians whose faith changed gradually but remained largely Christian. In 1900, Dussaud published his massive study *Histoire Et Religion Des Nosairis* in which he defended his views that paganism survived in Syria far into the Middle Ages and that Alawites changed from paganism to Islam without a Christian intermediary period²⁸². A claim fiercely rejected by Lammens in an article published in *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* titled "*Les Nosairi furent ils chrétiens?*"²⁸³. Interestingly, both authors treat Alawites as being an ethnicity rather than a faith, talking about "Christian Alawites" and "pagan Alawites". Most notably, in about 20 years from this debate, the two men would become key figures in the French mandate on Syria and Lebanon.

The insistence of strong Christian presence in Alawite faith and overlooking clear Islamic beliefs in Lammens work was certainly not an objective academic observation of a historian, but rather an early attempt to implement his Jesuit agenda. This becomes clear in an exchange he had with an Alawite Shaykh and his son in the vicinity of Antioch in 1903. When the Shaykh, seeking protecting complains about the sufferance and injustices under the Ottomans, Lammens does not hesitate to propose conversion as a solution, since it would immediately give the French an excuse to intervene to protect them²⁸⁴. When the two men ask about what

²⁸¹ Henri Lammens, "Les Nosairis: notes sur leur histoire et leur religion," *Études publiées par des Pères de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 36e année, tome 80 (July 5, 1899): 461–493.

²⁸² René Dussaud, *Histoire et religion des Nosairis* (Paris: Librairie E. Bouillon, 1900), 19–20.

²⁸³ Henri Lammens, "Les Nosairis furent-ils chrétiens? À propos d'un livre récent," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 6 (1901): 34–50.

²⁸⁴ Henri Lammens, "Une visite au šaiḥ suprême des Nosairis Haidaris," *Journal Asiatique*, 11e série, tome 5 (1915): 144.

would happen to their religion, Lammens warns them that the “plans of Istanbul” will leave them with no choice, adding that Alawites are already close to Christians, sharing rituals, saints, and even names with them²⁸⁵.

By the beginning of the French mandate, Lammens had become a distinguished scholar of Arab history and Muslim culture. His influence, ideological inclination and familiarity with the region’s history promoted him to be commissioned to produce the history of Syria by non-other than the French High Commissioner General Henri Gouraud. Gouraud did not want his orientalist understanding of history to be exclusive to the French political elite in Syria, but also to be defused throughout society. Education was the main tool disposable to achieve this aim. For this regard, he hired Lammens who published his two volumes work *La Syrie, Précis Historique*, in 1921. The book was way more than a scholarly study on the history of Syria, but rather a political project to shape the historical narrative in the Levant. In the very first line in the preface, Lammens admits that the book was General Gouraud’s idea:

In 1920, the High Commission of Syria planned the creation, in Ba'abdà (Lebanon), of a school intended to prepare administrative officers. In the aftermath of the victory at Khan Maisaloun, General Gouraud kindly entrusted me with the task of composing, to be taught in Ba'abdà, a series of lessons covering 1) the history of Syria, 2) that of Arabia, 3) the evolution of Islam, and 4) the French expansion in the East. I requested about forty lectures. They granted me twenty. The opening of the courses was scheduled for December²⁸⁶.

The book is a series of naïve and anachronistic depiction of Levantine history. In a nutshell, according to Lammens, Syria is a nation separated from the Arab world that thrived when independent. He offers two episodes of Syrian history as being the glorious ones: the first is Umayyad rule, which according to him is when Syrian Christians ruled Syria with small Muslim elite deeply christianized. The second is when Syria was under

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 145.

²⁸⁶ Lammens, *La Syrie: Précis historique*, preface, I.

crusader rule and when the Syrians and the French created a harmonious society together. The book draws heavily on parallelisms between the medieval crusader mission and the contemporary League of Nations French mandate on Syria. This interpretation of Levantine history was adopted officially; however, practically, it was mainly applied on Lebanon and Syrian minority territories.

What is surprising is that the hardline crusader rhetoric in Lammens's *Précis Historique* is virtually absent from his earlier works on the Alawites, despite several mentions of the crusades. In his first article on the Alawites, he even blames the crusaders for having unintentionally triggered a conservative Sunni reaction that led the latter to become the masters of the Near East²⁸⁷. He even mentions how limited their influence was on the population, arguing they were based mainly in some castles and on the coast²⁸⁸. Even when he was talking with the Shaykh near Antioch trying to convince him to convert, he does not mention the crusades or any connection with the Alawites, not as subordinates, nor as descendants. One could argue that during this time period Lammens changed his opinion and got more radical; World War I might have stimulated his patriotism and the eventual domination of France over Syria could have opened his eyes to a seemingly repetition of history. Nevertheless, the more likely scenario is that *Précis Historique* was written according to the instructions of its commissioner, Henri Gouraud.

In 1924, Lammens collaborated with two other Jesuit priests: Father René Mousterde and Father Ferdinand Taoutel to produce a shorter version, which, updated in 1939 by Mousterde, was "intended for any reader seeking reliable and rapid information, as well as for candidates preparing for official examinations"²⁸⁹. These works show the central role that history played for colonial

²⁸⁷ Lammens, "Les Nosairis," 474.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 479.

²⁸⁹ René Mousterde, *Précis d'Histoire de la Syrie et du Liban* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1939), 5.

authorities, who sought to disseminate their understanding of the past through education, whether among officers or students.

Alawite identity and Jesuit involvement

Some sources indicate that, as early as the crusader period, Alawites were known to Westerners under the name *Vannini*²⁹⁰. Western scholars started showing scholarly interest in the Alawites since the 18th century²⁹¹. With the rise in travels to the Near East in the 19th century and the establishment of Western educational institutions, particularly in Mount Lebanon and Beirut, curiosity about the Alawites rose. This interest increased after the famous “*Mission de Phénicie*” led by French archaeologist Ernest Renan in the early 1860s, cumulating towards the end of the century in the debate over Alawites between Lammens and Dussaud as seen earlier.

The secrecy and “mystery” of the Alawite belief system made their identity malleable to be moulded into the political agenda of the dominant political discourse. An ideal example in this context are the Alawites inhabiting the regions that were annexed by the Turkish Republic. Here, Alawites were assimilated to the Turkish society with a set of *invented traditions* completely different from the ones applied in Syria. The new Turkish Republic, trying to distance itself from Ottoman past and at the same time unable to use Greek Byzantine past in national construction, restored to the Bronze age Hittite civilisation, going as far as to design public buildings in Ankara with Hittite architectural elements²⁹². In this context, Alawites of the Alexandretta district, which was annexed in 1939, were not Arabs but the purest of the Hittites, even the historic name of their district had to be changed from Alexandretta to Hatay to match this new identity²⁹³.

²⁹⁰ Denys Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291* (London: Routledge, 2016), 251, 316.

²⁹¹ Winter, *A History of the ‘Alawis*, 3 - 4.

²⁹² Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, 29.

²⁹³ Winter, *A History of the ‘Alawis*, 264.

The Alawites were therefore framed as Hittites, pagan Phoenicians, Christian Crusaders, Greek Gnostics, or Arab Muslims, according to the viewpoint of the observer and the political circumstances in which these classifications were produced. This “mysterious” aspect, sometimes used to promote tourism, also caused the widespread of obscene accusations of sexual practices behind all the secrecy, allegations to this day are still heard in anti-Alawite discourse. Since the 19th century, orientalist helped shape some of the most shocking images of the Alawites such as the worship of the sun, dogs, and female genitalia, even engaging in nocturnal sexual orgies as part of their rites. These claims were not purely invented by European travellers, they were rather rooted in the prejudice that has developed among communities neighbouring the Alawites, which Europeans used as a source of information²⁹⁴. Some of these claims persisted into the Mandate period, using fake etymologies of terms in the Alawite belief system to link them to some ancient sexual practices²⁹⁵.

The start of the French mandate was a pivotal moment in the development of an Alawite identity, with the most decisive impact: the institutionalization and popularisation of the community’s new and unifying label: Alawite. The pre-modern name of the Alawites, mostly used by others, was Nusayri, after Muhammad Ibn Nusayr, a ninth century scholar attributed with the creation of the belief system. In 1920, the term Nusayri was abolished and replaced with the term Alawite, which started to appear in official documents and academic works almost instantaneously, both in the West and nationally. From that moment onward, “Nusayri” has been viewed as a pejorative term used almost exclusively in anti-Alawite discourse. The origin of this shift is not clear, but there are indications that some Alawites were already calling themselves with that name long before the mandate, as demonstrated by the Shaykh that Lammens

²⁹⁴ Sabrina Mervin, “L’entité alaouite’, une création française,” in *Le choc colonial et l’islam: Les politiques religieuses des puissances coloniales en terre d’islam*, ed. Pierre-Jean Luizard (Paris: La Découverte, 2006), 345.

²⁹⁵ Jehan Cendrieux, *Al-Ghadir ou le Sexe-Dieu* (Paris: Eugène Fasquelle, 1926).

interviewed in 1903²⁹⁶. However, the use of the term by the French authorities in the creation of *L'État des Alaouites*, together with its adoption by local intellectuals such as Mohamad Amin Ghalib Al-Tawil in his influential history book *Tarikh al-'Alawiyyin*, consolidated the use of the term to this day.

While the etymology of the term Nusayri (Nosairi or Anasariéh in French) is well-established as to be derived from Muhammad Ibn Nusayr, Westerner scholars tried to find alternative etymologies to accommodate to their imagined origin of the Alawites. René Dussaud, who tried to link Alawites to pagan Phoenicians, proposed that the term derives from *Nazerini* an ancient Levantine people mentioned by Pliny the Elder²⁹⁷. A much more lasting alternative etymology proposed that Nusayri was a diminutive form of Nassara (little Nazarenes), a proof of a Christian identity. To our knowledge, it was Ernest Renan in his *Mission de Phénicie* published in 1864 who was the first to propose this idea:

We did not have the opportunity to become well acquainted with the Nosairis or Ansariès, who appeared to us to be by far the most downtrodden population of Syria. They have much greater affinity with Christians than with Muslims, and without doubt their name of Nosairis (little Christians) has some basis. They worship Saint Maroun as a god, the patron of the Maronites, who, like Mar-Antoun, has become a wonder-working spirit of great renown in the beliefs of all the sects²⁹⁸.

Based on the available evidence, the only Jesuit to defy this idea was Henri Lammens, despite being a fierce supporter of the Christian origin of Alawites, describing this previous passage by Renan as “impossible to accumulate more errors in fewer lines”²⁹⁹. As for the rest of the Jesuits, this etymology proved too appealing to be ignored as it aligned perfectly with their agenda, whose aim was to reinforce Alawite particularism, eventually leading to their conversion. The very influential Father Émile Janot approved this

²⁹⁶ Lammens, *Une visite au šaiḥ*, 146.

²⁹⁷ Dussaud, *Histoire Et Religion Des Nosairîs*, 17.

²⁹⁸ Ernest Renan, ed., *Mission de Phénicie* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1864), 114.

²⁹⁹ Lammens, *Les Nosairis Notes sur leur Histoire*, 475.

etymology and popularised it³⁰⁰. For this reason, many Jesuit priests were not happy about the change of the name from Nusayri to Alawite. Father Pierre Finet expressed his sorrow since “Nusayri” keeps the distinction from the rest of Syria while Alawite makes them associated with an Islamic figure³⁰¹. This view was also shared by the delegates of *L'Œuvre d'Orient*, the journal of an association intended to support Eastern Christians, who, after visiting the Alawite region under Jesuit guidance, wrote:

Until the French occupation, the inhabitants of this region were called the Nosairis or Ansariehs. The Muslims of Damascus wanted to call them Alaouites, in order to link them to Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet. In this way, it was thought, it would be less difficult later to claim them as Muslims!³⁰²

Lammens also expressed his sorrow for this change, noting his concern for scientific integrity, as he wrote in 1921:

But historians will regret the disappearance of the traditional appellation “Nosairis,” popularized by all writers, both Eastern and Western, who have concerned themselves with the mysterious Syrian sects, among which Nosairi syncretism unquestionably presents the most original character³⁰³.

The differentiation in name was meant to indicate a deeper distinction of the Alawite community. Alawites did certainly differ in belief from mainstream Islam, whether the Sunni or the Shia branches, although they remain in the family of the latter. The beliefs and practices on which the Jesuit priests focused their entire engagement at the expense of all other beliefs were certainly the Christian elements. The Alawites do celebrate Christian fests like Christmas and Saint Barbara Day in addition to some others,

³⁰⁰ Jean Émile Janot, *Des Croisades au Mandat* (Lyon: Imprimerie L. Bascou, 1934), 3.

³⁰¹ Pierre Finet, “Les Alaouites,” *Jésuites Missionnaires*, no. 7, “Chez les Alaouites” (July–August 1937): 196.

³⁰² “L’Œuvre d’Orient,” by délégué de l’Œuvre d’Orient, *L’Œuvre d’Orient*, December 1, 1938, 181.

³⁰³ Lammens, *Précis historique*, vol. 2, 265.

the Jesuits however, readily deployed these elements for the promotion of a Christian root of the Alawite faith. Ultimately, the goal was to further support the claim that the Alawites were remnants of the crusaders, a dormant identity that is bound to re-emerge. Even when it comes to non-Christian beliefs, often they were stressed out as anti-Islamic making it easier to pull Alawite identity away from the surrounding Islam. In the article published in *L'Œuvre d'Orient*, the association's delegates wrote:

[...] the two hundred and fifty thousand Alawite mountaineers have nothing to do with orthodox Islam; they profess that their supreme God is another Ali, who, in a previous incarnation, was Jesus, son of Mary! Belief in metempsychosis, veneration or worship of the stars, the abode of the ancestors, an ill-defined pantheism in which everything is God except divinity itself. Along with these darknesses of the mind comes moral disorder: polygamy, in which woman is stripped of human dignity and has no more value than livestock. Alongside this, the cross drawn on houses, on clothing; Christian feasts celebrated, the names of our saints and our martyrs used: such is the monstrous assemblage of coarse superstitions and reminiscences of the Gospel that is found among this poor people³⁰⁴.

The religious distinction and the alleged links to Christianity, hence the West, that the missionaries tried to promote, was supported by the addition of a biological Western origin. The presence of some fair skinned and blue-eyed people among Alawites was frequently perceived as a proof of crusader descent. The percentage was exaggerated and the presence of the same traits in other communities was overlooked, despite these ideas being ridiculed by contemporary academics³⁰⁵. One of the most prominent voices in the link between Alawites to the crusaders, reinforced with physical appearance, was Jesuit Father Jean-Émile Janot. This association is evident in the very titles of his works on the subject, such as his book *Des Croisades au Mandat, Notes sur le Peuple Alaouite* and his article *Au pays des Alaouites où vécurent les Croisés*. He writes in 1936:

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Jacques Weulersse, *Le pays des Alaouites* (Tours: Arrault & Cie, 1940), 45-46.

For the Jebel Ansariyeh, which extends the Lebanese mountain range to the north, allowed them [the Alawites], just as Lebanon did for the Maronites, to preserve the remnants of a meager life, a liberty ever more restricted, an oppressed yet always pure and proud race, and a religion that is enigmatic, yet still scented with Christian memories [...] Indeed, certain traditions are passed down which seek to portray the blue-eyed, fair-skinned mountaineers as forgotten sons of crusaders who once settled in these mountains³⁰⁶.

In his book on the Alawites, a detailed study of Alawite culture, social and economic life, Janot, described the community as:

[...] a people very different from their neighbours. Their neighbours, Syrians, Lebanese, Bedouins from the interior, have the very marked Semitic type: brown complexion, olive-shaped black eyes, black hair. Among the Nosairis [Alawites], on the contrary, blonds were not rare, with white or pink skin, and blue eyes with little or no slanting³⁰⁷.

Such ideas were widely spread within the Jesuit circles, as evident in many issues of their journal *Jésuites Missionnaires*. The entirety of the July-August issue of the year 1937 is dedicated to the Alawite mission, titled "*Chez les Alaouites*". The appearance of this issue in 1937 is no coincidence; it is the same year the Alawite State was annexed to the Syrian Republic, to the shock and sorrow of the missionaries. The issue tries to communicate to the French readers the Jesuit perception of the Alawite community while asking them to contribute if not with a donation with a prayer for the small mission. The cover features a little girl carrying a water jar on her shoulder; a comment on this picture on the first page reads:

The Alawite type is very different from its Syrian, Lebanese, Bedouin neighbours of the interior, with brown complexions, black eyes and hair. Here, blond people with white or pink skin

³⁰⁶ Jean-Émile Janot, "Au pays des Alaouites où vécurent les croisés," *Jésuites missionnaires*, "À travers le Proche-Orient" (May 1936): 11–13.

³⁰⁷ Janot, *Des Croisades au Mandat*, 4.

and large blue eyes are not rare. Where does this different race come from? Are they the sons of the Crusaders, as they claim?³⁰⁸

In the first article of the same issue, Father Pierre Finet asks if they are sons of the crusades since they are “neither Lebanese, nor Turks, nor Arabs, nor what until now were called Syrians”. He goes on to describe how the Frenchmen are surprised when they arrive and see children with rosy cheeks, blond hair, blue eyes, and once they grow older the population looks imported from *Ardèche*, a department in southern France³⁰⁹. The question of white appearance reoccurs often in other issues, one of the most noteworthy of which is in the fall issue of 1938. In this issue, Father Joseph Vexivière writes a very emotional letter to the French readers thanking them for their donations while giving news on the new generation of *Christian Alawites*, children of converts. The author shares a list of names of the newborns: Geneviève, Bernard, Henri, Joseph, Marie, Elisabeth, François, Pierre, Jacques, Jacqueline, Xavier, Marc, Noëlle, Marcelle, Marthe, Madeleine, Bernadette, Jean-François-Régis, Pierre, Jean-Paul³¹⁰. Three pictures of Alawite children are published with the article, clearly selected for their white European features. Provoking the sympathy from French readers, the author asks in the caption: “will this little child be able to remain Christian?” (Fig. 15).

The endgame of Jesuit missionary was the eventual creation of a Christian community, though *ethnically* Alawite, within the Latin rite in the Alawite mountains. The Jesuits were able to convert tens of families in the village of *Jnainet Reslan* and two other smaller neighbouring villages *Toffaha* and *Kfar Tallech*. Jesuit missionary activities were slowly growing into other corners of the Government of Latakia, moving into new locations in the East and the North of the government. Just like in the villages where they had established their presence, their strategy was to find those who are in poor conditions, due to oppression by local or external landowner notables, and support them and offer them services in

³⁰⁸ “Chez les Alaouites,” *Jésuites missionnaires* (July–August 1937): 195.

³⁰⁹ Finet, *Les Alaouites*, 196.

³¹⁰ Joseph Vexivière, “Le Merci des Berceaux,” *Jésuites missionnaires* (September–October 1938): 249–250.

exchange for their conversion³¹¹. The memory of the crusades in the region was too strong to be ignored, as it played a distinguished role in the Jesuit efforts. It is perhaps unsurprising that the chosen patron saint for this new catholic community was none other than the French crusader king Louis³¹².



Figure 15. A “Christian Alawite” child with blond hair, taken by Father Vexivière, Source: *Jésuites Missionnaires*, Sep-Oct 1938, 250.

The question of Alawite conversion to Catholicism is a significant episode of the community’s modern history, one largely overlooked, even intentionally dismissed, by Syrian intellectuals, notably Alawites. The victory of the pan-Arabism ideology in the 1950s and the presence of Alawites in the political and military elite under the Arabist Baath party which took over since 1963 led

³¹¹ Mohammad Hawash, *On the Alawites and their Independent State* (Casablanca: The New United Printing Press Company, 1997), 285–286 (in Arabic).

³¹² Janot, “Au pays des Alaouites où vécurent les croisés,” 12.

to attempts of erasure to any sort of Alawite particularism. The last mention of funding to the Jesuit mission in Tartous's countryside appears in a 1954 allocation report of the *Conseil Central de l'Œuvre pour les Établissements d'Orient*, concerning subsidies to religious orders and congregations working with the Eastern Churches³¹³. In 1961, an article from the same journal claims that, after the French evacuation in 1945, and the control of Damascus over the Alawite mountains, under the United Arab Republic, which resulted from the union between Syria and Egypt from 1958 to 1961, further Islamisation happened in the Alawite mountains by commissioned clergy from the Al-Azhar Islamic university in Cairo³¹⁴.

For this reason, the Alawite conversions, viewed already as shameful in their time, gradually became a stigma, hastily swept under the rug under the new paradigm. Unfortunately, due to the recent events and instability in Syria, I could not visit the site. I managed however to get in touch with an ex-colleague from the village of *Toffaha* to ask him about local perceptions of this episode. He confirmed to me that the descendants of converts were still stigmatized; he told me a story of a young boy in his class who was harassed by being called *Hanna* (Arabic for John, meant as a cliché of a Christian name) because his grandmother was baptized and was married in a church ceremony. Nevertheless, weeks later, he reached out to me to inform me that after our conversation he talked about it with his father and was shocked to know that many more people were converted, including immediate members of his family, all of it was later treated with secrecy and talked about in whispers.

The conversions, despite being ephemeral and of limited reach, were significant, as they represent the first success of the Jesuit mission among non-Christian population³¹⁵. The change in tides

³¹³ *Œuvre d'Orient* (Paris: Bureau de l'Œuvre d'Orient, April 1955), 45.

³¹⁴ *Œuvre d'Orient*, no. 527 (September–October 1961): 100.

³¹⁵ Chantal Verdeil, "Une 'révolution sociale dans la montagne': la conversion des Alaouites par les jésuites dans les années 1930," in *L'Islam des marges: mission chrétienne et espaces périphériques du*

and the treaty signed between the French and the Syrian State in 1939 brought an end to Alawite separatism and with it the attempts to promote Alawite particularism gradually faded away. The everlasting impact of the Jesuits, however, was made through their contributions to the educational system, mainly as seen in the works of Lammens and Mouterde. This is certainly not unusual; the Jesuits have always given particular importance to education as a central part of their mission worldwide³¹⁶.

3.2 North Africa as a precedent: exceptionalism and the search for ancestors

The policies of differentiation followed by the French were neither new nor exclusive to the Levant. Elsewhere in the French Empire, across the Mediterranean, the North African context offers striking parallels in the territories that would later form Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, colonised in 1830, 1881, 1912 respectively. These cases reveal elements that can be seen as precedents for later policies in the Levant. In this context, the heritage in question was Roman remains, which for many French officials represented not only a model or symbolic origin, but a proof of direct ancestry³¹⁷. This was understood and expressed through nineteenth-century ideas of race and genealogy. This attitude was equally reflected in the treatment of Roman remains, particularly in Algeria; for instance, at the site of Lambaesis, French troops used Roman

monde musulman, XVIe–XXe siècles, eds. B. Heyberger and R. Madinier (Paris: EHESS, 2010), 81.

³¹⁶ Cristiano Casalini, “Rise, Character, and Development of Jesuit Education: Teaching the World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jesuits*, ed. Ines G. Županov (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 170.

³¹⁷ Matthew M. McCarty, “French Archaeology and History in the Colonial Maghreb: Inheritance, Presence, and Absence,” in *Unmasking Ideology in Imperial and Colonial Archaeology: Vocabulary, Symbols, and Legacy*, ed. Bonnie Effros and Guolong Lai (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press at UCLA, 2018), 362.

fortresses as shelter and marched along ancient Roman roads as a way of affirming a perceived lineage with the Romans³¹⁸.



Figure 16. Medallion commemorating Charles V's conquest of Algiers (July 1830), incorporating Roman coin iconography, depicting Marianne as Rome. Source: Effros, *Incidental Archaeologists*, 11.

In a manner similar to the Alawite region, French intervention was framed as an attempt to revive the glory of a distant past³¹⁹, while invoking examples of Arab acknowledgment of this lineage³²⁰.

³¹⁸ Bonnie Effros, *Incidental Archaeologists: French Officers and the Rediscovery of Roman North Africa* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 150.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

³²⁰ McCarty, "French Archaeology and History in the Colonial Maghreb: Inheritance, Presence, and Absence," 364.

The most noteworthy similarity, however, is in how this heritage was mobilised to construct a narrative of ethnic and religious exceptionalism for a specific group, in this case the Berbers, in what later came to be known as the *Kabyle myth*. Within this framework, Kabyle people, Berberophone populations of North Africa, were attributed European origins, described as Germanic Vandals, Celtic, or Roman, who had adopted Christianity and preserved it beneath a thin and superficial layer of Islam. This understanding appears frequently in French writings, one example being a work authored by two French army officers, Eugène Daumas and Paul-Dieudonné Fabar, and published with the authorization of the Governor-General of Algeria. The authors state:

[...] the deeper one digs into this old trunk, the more, beneath the Muslim bark, one finds Christian sap. One thus recognizes that the Kabyle people, partly autochthonous, partly of Germanic origin, formerly entirely Christian, have not been completely transformed in their new religion. Under the blow of the scimitar, they accepted the Koran, but did not truly embrace it; they clothed themselves in the dogma as in a burnous, yet underneath they retained their earlier social form, and it is not only in the tattoos on their faces, which display before us, without their awareness, the symbol of the Cross³²¹.

The Kabyle Myth dominated French Algerian discourse on the Berbers in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was notably popularised by Father Charles Lavigerie, appointed archbishop of Algiers in 1867³²². In 1868, he founded the Missionaries of Africa, better known as the White Fathers (Pères Blancs), a Catholic missionary order that would play a crucial role in shaping and disseminating the Kabyle myth. Lavigerie's project ultimately aimed at the Christianisation of the Kabyle population, arguing

³²¹ Eugène Daumas and Paul-Dieudonné Fabar, *La Grande Kabylie: Études historiques* (Paris and Algiers: L. Hachette et Cie, 1847), 77.

³²² Karima Direche-Slimani, *Chrétiens de Kabylie (1873–1954): Une action missionnaire dans l'Algérie coloniale* (Paris: Éditions Bouchene, 2004), 9–10.

that their alleged European ancestry, perceived similarities with Europeans, and the legacy of Christianity in North Africa meant that they were still essentially Christian, with this identity only waiting to reemerge³²³. The White Fathers' missionary activity did not begin in a vacuum; important groundwork had already been laid by the Jesuits, who trained early missionaries and established stations later taken over by the White Fathers³²⁴. Ultimately, attempts to convert Algerians, whether Arabs or Kabyles, to Catholicism were largely unsuccessful³²⁵.

Another case, which can be seen as a continuation of French strategies in Algeria, is Tunisia, colonised by France in 1881. The perception of Roman legacy developed in Algeria carried over strongly, and by the early twentieth century Roman archaeology in Tunisia had become a powerful symbolic tool for reviving the genius of the "Latin race"³²⁶. The White Fathers were deeply involved in archaeology, with the Christian remains of Carthage receiving particular attention; in some cases, they were reconstructed for use in Christian ritual and even became sites of pilgrimage³²⁷.

It is unclear whether the transmission of such strategies to the Levant was intentional and planned ahead by French officials, or whether similar settings led to similar results. The only contemporary comparison we managed to find was by Colonel Marcel Garchery, commander of the troops in Greater Lebanon and the Alawite region in a foreword that he writes for a tourist guide on the Alawite State published in 1929. Garchery writes:

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ugo Colonna, "La compagnie de Jésus en Algérie (1840–1880): L'exemple de la mission de Kabylie (1863–1880)," *Monde Arabe* 1992/1, no. 135 (Paris: La Documentation française), 68–78.

³²⁵ Effros, *Incidental Archaeologists*, 218.

³²⁶ McCarty, *French Archaeology and History in the Colonial Maghreb: Inheritance, Presence, and Absence*, 364–366.

³²⁷ Ibid. 368–370.

Among the states of the Levant placed under the French Mandate, that of the Alawites constitutes, in relation to the rest of Syria, an ethnic and geographical enclave, whose specific characteristics offer a rather marked analogy with those of Kabylia, when compared to the rest of the Maghreb³²⁸.

In any case, despite similarities in attitude, the case of the Alawite region remains exceptional. The narrative there was far more consistent and was also embedded in the policies of the central authorities. In North Africa, by contrast, attributing a “European” label to the Kabyle people on the basis of archaeology and history led to contradictions, as these supposed European origins were far from uniform. While some suggested a Roman lineage, others proposed a Germanic one, implying identification with those who had in fact destroyed Rome³²⁹. The Roman claims were also too broad, could be easily claimed by Italy or any other nation and the legacy of Christianity in the region was well gone. The attempts to identify French colonialism with Rome were not adopted by the Ministry of War and remained to the judgement of individual French officers, making it largely inconsistent across the territories³³⁰. On the other hand, for French authorities, whether in the Levant or in the metropole, it was the crusades, rather than Roman expansion, that were seen as the first stage of French colonialism, despite the distinguished place of classical history in France (see, for instance, Fig. 18).

The crusades in the Levant offered a more consistent narrative: a concentration of crusader heritage that is less abundant elsewhere than Roman remains; it is also more recent, more closely affiliated with the French, and undeniably Christian. In the Alawite region, there seemed to be more “evidence” of affinity with the claimed origin, whether through physical appearance or the presence of Christian elements in their belief system.

³²⁸ Paul Jacquot, *L'État des Alaouites: terre d'art, de souvenirs et de mystère. Guide* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie catholique, 1929), Foreword, XI.

³²⁹ Effros, *Incidental Archaeologists*, 132.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

Regarding archaeological sites, as we have seen and will see in the following chapters, French interventions at crusader sites in the Alawite region, despite being charged with symbolism, remained far more limited and controlled than in the North African context. This may represent one aspect in which the Mandate system that developed in the aftermath of World War I constrained French power in Syria. French officers frequently complained about the constraints imposed by the Mandate system, often blaming other powers for limiting France's authority.

3.3 Local echoes of identity discourse

Examining how local populations, Alawites among them, understood and articulated their own identities is a methodological challenge. In the long term, Arabism and assimilation into Islam emerged as the dominant discourse. Unity with Syria became definitive in 1942, and this trajectory was later reinforced by the rise of Hafez al-Assad to power in 1970, who actively promoted a discourse of religious and national assimilation, attempting to present both himself and the Alawite community from which he emerged as undeniably Muslim. Hafez Al-Assad's rule has always been viewed with suspicion from the Sunni majority, which led him to systematically depict Alawites as being conventional Muslims, going as far as building mosques in Alawite villages and towns for this end³³¹. In this context, Alawite intellectuals writing in the second half of the twentieth century retrospectively portrayed the period of the French mandate as a period of resistance and consistent support for Syrian unity³³², an invented tradition that has always denied and tried to erase the diversity and complexity of Alawite self-identification under the French mandate. Nevertheless, we managed to find some elements that might help us reconstruct a nuanced image of the identity landscape of the time.

³³¹ Fabrice Balanche, *Les Alaouites, l'espace et le pouvoir dans la région côtière syrienne: une intégration nationale ambiguë* (PhD diss., Université François Rabelais - Tours, 2000), 80.

³³² van Caldenborgh, *Savage human beasts*, 7.

The first element we will focus on is Alawite affiliation to Islam. Using the Jesuit sources, we get an image that far before the mandate, the Alawites refused to be labelled as Muslims. Lammens recounts the sharp rejection to Islam by his two interlocutors, already in 1903, quoting them saying “*we hate the Muslims*”³³³. This is certainly a key element in Jesuit propaganda, that would evolve and ripe under the French. What is particularly interesting is that very often, elements from the identity that the Jesuits wanted to project on Alawites would be expressed through Alawite individuals. In other words, these Western elements were expressed in Jesuit sources as original Alawite claims. One of these claims was the alleged crusader origin of the Alawites. In his book, Janot reports that when the Alawites reached out to Christians seeking conversion, they expressed their admiration for the religion of priests and nuns, adding: “we know that it was the religion of the crusaders from whom we descend,” ending the sentence with “*(sic)*”, as if to distance himself from any responsibility for this claim³³⁴. This is also seen in the issue of the *Jésuites Missionnaires* dedicated to the Alawites titled “*Chez les Alaouites*”. From the comments on the first page, the author tries to evoke the readers’ curiosity by asking: “Are they the sons of the Crusaders, *as they claim?*”³³⁵. Later, Father Pierre Finet claims that when the French arrive and are surprised to see blue eyes and blond hair, the Alawites respond by saying “*We are the sons of the Crusaders*”, a statement that is repeated throughout Finet’s article, without his direct endorsement³³⁶.

These claims, not only clearly exaggerated, might be accurate for the small community of Alawite converts who appear to have shown no resistance to the Jesuit effort. It is hard to believe that such a conviction gained popularity among the Alawite masses. It is fruitful in this context to examine literature produced by Alawites. The earliest modern historiographical study of the Alawites written by an Alawite author was Mohamad Amin Ghalib Al-Tawil when he published “the History of the Alawites”

³³³ Lammens, *Une visite au šaiḥ*, 145.

³³⁴ Janot, *Des Croisades au Mandat*, 90.

³³⁵ Finet, *Les Alaouites*, 195.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

in 1924. This book has popularised many ideas that became accepted facts, mainly the popularization of the term Alawite itself. Al-Tawil affirms that Alawites are Shia Muslims and do not constitute a separate religion or sect. Their distinctiveness lay only in their choice of a spiritual path, characterised by obedience and asceticism³³⁷. In the 1920s, Shaykh Sulayman al-Ahmad began to approach the Shiia of southern Lebanon and adopted their jurisprudence for the Alawites. He subsequently became the first Grand Mufti of the Muslim Alawite community, the two terms appearing together for the first time in an official document³³⁸.

The rise in education under the French mandate was the main factor behind the development of a new class of young educated Alawites, which would enjoy increasing influence towards the end of the Mandate. Generally, Alawite intellectuals tended to be in favour of the unity with Syria and adoption the label "Muslim". An example is the *Alawite-Muslim Youth Association*, created in 1936³³⁹. Another class with a similar agenda was the growing Alawite diaspora in Latin America, specifically in Argentina. Multiple French intelligence reports indicate the seizure of issues of prohibited journals such as *Renovacion* and *Natura*, produced in Bueno Ayres and found in the State of the Alawites promoting unionist anti-French propaganda³⁴⁰. Other reports describe the activity of a group titled *Alawite Association for the Syrian Unity*, based in San Juan in Argentina. Therefore, the refusal of a Muslim identity and an attachment to France was not unequivocal among Alawites as depicted by the Jesuits. After the annexation of the government of Latakia to Syria in 1936, in this turbulent period and for a verity of political motives, the mufti of Palestine, issued a Fatwa officially recognising the Alawites as Muslims³⁴¹.

³³⁷ Mohamad Amin Ghalib Al-Tawil, *The History of the Alawites* (Latakia: Al-Taraqi Publishing House, 1924), 474 (in Arabic).

³³⁸ Mervin, *L'entité Alaouite*, 350.

³³⁹ van Caldenborgh, *Savage Human Beasts*, 107-108.

³⁴⁰ Report, June 29, 1929, Folder 1SL/1/V/1837, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (Appendices, plate 5).

³⁴¹ Fabrice Balanche, *Les Alaouites un Secte au Pouvoir*, 74-75.

Nevertheless, it would be reductive to describe this matter in a colonial vs. native dichotomy. Alawite rejection of an Islamic identity can be spotted in many instances. For the political climate of the time, Alawites being Muslims or not depended on the stance between being unionist with Syria or separatist from it, being anti French mandate or in favour of “French protection”, a matter on which Alawites were divided. Several congresses were held by the political and cleric Alawite elite figures in the early 1930s to unify the Alawite voices; yet a matter of conflict caused the rifts among the attendees between some calling for the adoption of the title “Muslim Alawite” and others firmly rejecting the inclusion of the word Muslim³⁴².

A key figure in relation to Alawite identity under the mandate is poet Muhammad Sulayman al-Ahmad (1903-1981). Al-Ahmad, known in the Arab World by his penname “Badawi Al-Jabal” (*the Bedwin of the Mountain*), is considered one of the major contributors to neo-Classical Arabic poetry, and his work is well recognized throughout the Arab world. Born into an educated Alawite family in Latakia, he became involved in politics at an early age. By the mid 1930s, he had become a ferocious separatist, and after the signature of the Viénot accords (Franco-Syrian Treaty of Independence), which included the annexation of the State of the Alawites into Syria, Al-Ahmad sent a letter “in the name of the Alawite people” to the French Prime Minister Léon Blum, urging him to annule the annexation and keep the Alawites independent under French protection. Here are some passages from the letter:

The Alawite people [...] are a people who differ by their religion, their customs, their traditions, and their history from the Syrian Sunni Muslim people. They were never at any time subject to the authority of Damascus or of the cities of the interior ... The Alawite people refuse to be incorporated into Muslim Syria. The Muslim religion is the official religion of Syria; it considers the Alawite to be an infidel: his blood, his property, and his honour are at the mercy of the Sunni; his testimony before religious tribunals is inadmissible [...] The spirit of hatred rooted in the soul of Arab Syrian Muslims toward everything that is not Muslim is a spirit maintained by religion.

³⁴² Hawash, *On the Alawites and their Independent State*, 281-282.

[...]

We have no more striking and more palpable proof of the violence of religious hatred among Arab Muslims toward everything that is not their religion than the situation of the Jews of Palestine. The latter came to bring fortune, civilisation, and peace to the Arab Muslims; they sowed gold, progress, and benefits on the soil of Palestine; they harmed no one; they took nothing by force; yet despite this, the Arab Muslims declared Holy War against them and did not hesitate to massacre them, even women and children, and this despite the presence of England in Palestine and of France in Syria. What fate will await the Jews and the other minorities in the event of the suppression of the Mandates and the unification of Arab Muslim Syria with Arab Muslim Palestine, their supreme ideal?³⁴³

The points made by Al-Ahmad to defend Alawite separatism mirror strikingly the narrative of Alawite particularism promoted by the French administration, whether Jesuits or orientalist scholars. The elements of this narrative are mainly that the Alawites are not Muslims or Arabs, the Arab Muslims are Islamist fanatics intolerant toward people of other religions. The mention of the Jewish settlers in a positive tone and depicting them as victims of Arab Muslim fanaticism would prove to be a stain too difficult to wash from Al-Ahmad's reputation. Once the new paradigm settled in Syria and Alawite annexation was no longer arguable, Al-Ahmad apologized for the letter, and later became a cabinet minister and a member of parliament in the new state³⁴⁴.

Regarding the crusades, we managed to find one instance of Alawite self-identification with the crusaders in trying to make a case for Alawite independence. This claim appears in a petition submitted by the autonomist party to the French minister of foreign affairs. In making their case for Alawite separatism, 12 autonomist members, 9 Alawites and 3 Christians, wonder why Lebanon gets to keep its independence while the Government of

³⁴³ Yaron Friedman, "The Separatist Alawi Petition to the French Prime Minister Léon Blum (1936): Reliability, Background and Aftermath," *Middle Eastern Studies* 60, no. 3 (2024): 459–462.

³⁴⁴ van Caldenborgh, *Savage human beasts*, 110.

Latakia gets annexed to Syria? Objecting to the special treatment of Lebanon, they argue:

What human logic and international law would allow such injustice? Is it because Lebanon is the traditional friend of France? Or are the French unaware today that the crusades did not last long, did not build castles, did not mix with the people except in the northwestern region of Syria, which is the territories of the current Government of Latakia and that we are the most loyal to France among all the peoples of Syria³⁴⁵.

Here we see that the autonomists reappropriated the narrative developed by the French on the Alawites. Not only that the crusaders mixed with the population and built castles, but that they did so exclusively in the Alawite region. In doing so, they transformed a colonial narrative into a competitive claim of distinction, proximity to the West and loyalty to France. Crusader heritage sites were once again the material evidence that testify for these claims, this time mobilized by local aristocrats and intellectuals. This seeming rivalry with Lebanon, soon turned into an attempt to join the Lebanese solution. When sensing that independence is no longer an option, the autonomists proposed a compromise suggesting the unity with the Lebanese Republic rather than the Syrian one, also evoking historic ties, but to no successful end³⁴⁶.

The presence of these ideas in the discourse of a famous Alawite intellectual on the one hand and in the claims made by Alawite notables on the other means that this version managed to infiltrate to a certain degree into the collective conciseness of the Alawite elite. Certainly, a link between the Alawites and the crusaders was intended as a tactic to strike a chord among the French for political purposes. However, considering the presence of the crusader narrative in the French administration, and the Jesuit involvement in the educational system, one cannot rule out the fact that these ideas were developing into foundation myths for the independence of a state on the Syrian coast.

³⁴⁵ Hawash, *On the Alawites and their Independent State*, 252.

³⁴⁶ van Caldenborgh, *Savage human beasts*, 112.

3.4 Producing Syria for France: Bringing the crusades home

The French presence in Syria was covered by an array of media, ranging from newspapers, travel guidebooks, scientific publications, art exhibitions, and much more. These different platforms functioned as means to paint an image of Syria in accordance with views of the actors involved. As seen earlier, the Jesuits through their journal depicted the Alawites as being white catholic crusaders, asking the French readers to contribute to save this endangered community. Here we will see other instances of communication deployed by the French to present Syria, and more specifically the Alawite region, to the French Public.

One of the most powerful tools on which we will focus are colonial expositions. They were a very popular tool for the French authorities in the Metropole to introduce the French public to the colonies. We will focus on two major colonial expositions that took place during the French mandate on the Levant: *Exposition Nationale Coloniale de Marseille* in 1922 and the *Exposition Coloniale Internationale de Paris* in 1931. In the 1922 exposition in Marseille, a pavilion included four halls dedicated to Syria and Lebanon; the presentation was made by the High Commission under Gouraud and the pavilion was designed in the “most pure Arab style”³⁴⁷.

For Gouraud, the concern behind the participation of the Levant in this exposition was to justify the mandate to the French public. The main argument is that the climate in Syria is similar to the one in France allowing it to produce commodities considered strategically important to the French economy³⁴⁸. References to

³⁴⁷ Adrien Artaud, *Rapport général: Exposition nationale coloniale de Marseille, 16 avril–19 novembre 1922* (Marseille: Commissariat général, 1924), 269.

³⁴⁸ Capitaine Bêlandou, “Les Intérêts Français en Syrie et dans le Liban,” in *L’Exposition nationale coloniale de Marseille, 1922* (Marseille: Commissariat général de l’Exposition coloniale de Marseille, 1922), 208-209.

history are abundant but they do not seem to be deployed in the political claims, only some references to France's old ties with the Levant. Interestingly, this similarity in the climate produced a similar people as well. On the reports of the exposition, Capitaine Béliandou writes describing the encounter between French visitors and the Syrian soldiers in the pavilion:

[...] these soldiers were a true surprise for many visitors. How many time were heard them [the visitors] astonished to see in the Syrian pavilion soldiers like ours, men resembling our men: they expect to find black soldiers like the Nubians or coppery like the Indo-Chinese!³⁴⁹

The author later reports that the visitors were equally shocked to see the same products consumed in France in the Syrian Pavilion. Therefore, this pavilion was intended to legitimise French presence in Syria using both history and economy.

The element of the French colonial narrative will not ripe and be visible until the 1931 exposition in Paris. For this major event, a Syro-Lebanese pavilion was constructed with element of traditional architecture in Damascus and Mount Lebanon. The pavilion was split into two sections, one was dedicated to common themes throughout the Levant, while the other features the particularity of each region or territory³⁵⁰. Crac des Chevaliers and Sahyoun castle were the representative of the Alawite region, the former also features on one of the posters promoting tourism in Syria (Fig. 17).

In the context of this exhibition, the *Musée des Colonies* (currently *Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration* in the *Palais de la Porte Dorée*) was established dedicated to France *colonisatrice et civilisatrice*. It was then when the crusades were adopted as the first episode of French colonialism. This adoption was commemorated on the west wall of the museum on which is inscribed a list of the founders of the French empire in chronological order, a genealogy of the "grands coloniaux" that

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 206-207.

³⁵⁰ "Les territoires sous mandat, Syrie et Liban," *Annales coloniales*, 31e année, no. 1 (January 1930): 19.

traces back to the crusaders (Fig. 18). The names are inscribed under a sentence that reads:

“A ses Fils qui ont étendu l’Empire de son Génie et fait aimer son nom au delà des Mers, la France reconnaissante”.

Not only this list starts with the crusaders, but also the permanent museum; the visitor needs to start the tour in the hall of the crusaders where the model of the Crac des Chevaliers is placed in the centre (Fig. 20). The accounts are conflicting whether the models of the Crac des Chevaliers and Sahyoun Castles were placed in the Musée des Colonies or the Pavilion of Syria and Lebanon; it is possible that they alternated between the two sites. In any case, after the end of the exposition, they both ended up in the *Musée des Monuments français* (formerly *Musée de Sculpture Comparée*), where they were placed in the section of the crusades, created by the museum’s new director, none other than Paul Deschamps³⁵¹.

The photograph we have of the exhibition display (Fig. 20, right) shows the model of the Crac des Chevaliers at the centre of the space. To the right are photographs and plans of crusader structures in the East, along with castings of inscriptions and column capitals. On the left side of the photograph, however, there are castings of elements from medieval architecture in France, including a cast of a pillar depicting Saint Trophime from the Church of St. Trophime in Arles, dating to the twelfth century. By placing the Crac des Chevaliers and other elements of crusader architecture within a setting of contemporary medieval French architecture, Deschamps sought to situate these sites within the “correct” context of French medieval heritage and to reaffirm French possession of them.

³⁵¹ Jean-Marc Hofman, “Quand le Crac des Chevaliers s’expose à Paris,” in *Le Crac des Chevaliers: Chroniques d’un rêve de pierre*, eds. Jean-Marc Hofman and Emmanuel Pénicaut (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2018), 100.

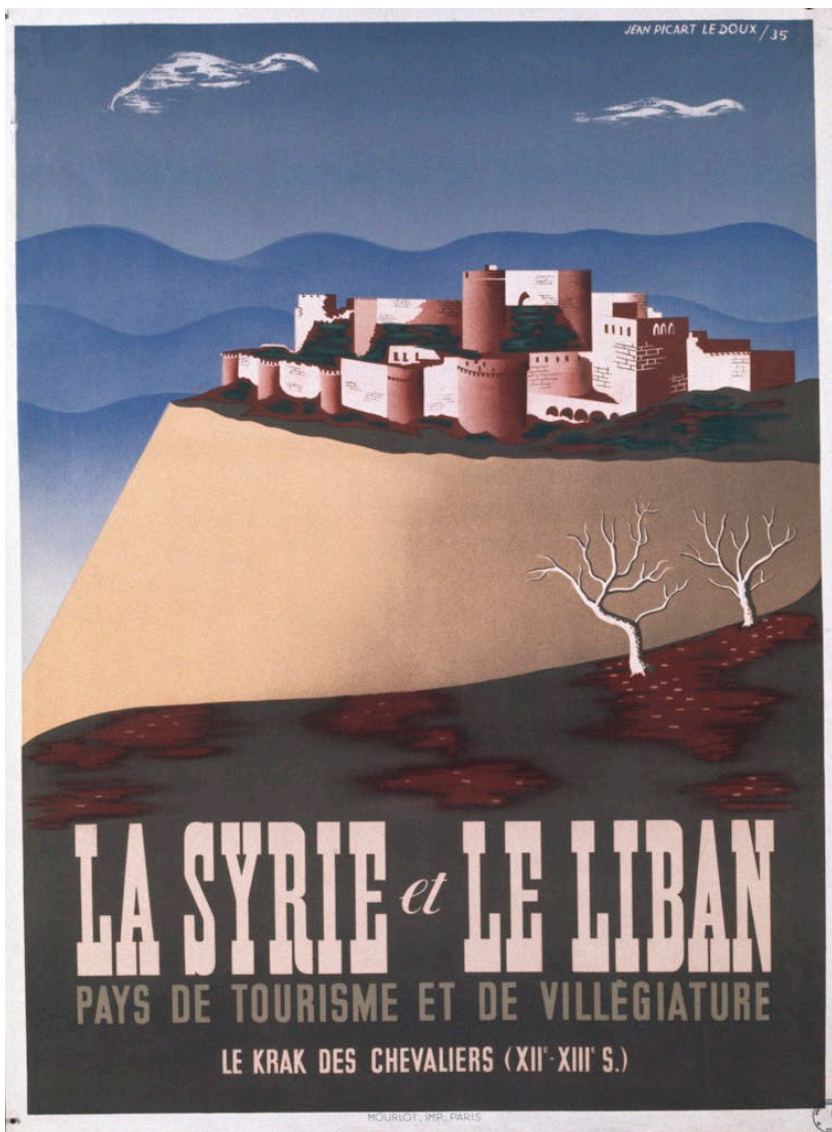


Figure 17. Poster from the 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris. Source: Besson, *Actuel Moyen Âge*, *The Conversation*.



Figure 18. Wall commemorating the founders of the French colonial empire, beginning with crusader leaders, in the Musée des Colonies (now Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration). Source: photograph by the author.



Figure 19. Models of Sahyoun Castle (Château de Saône) (left) and Crac des Chevaliers (right), as exhibited in the Pavilion of Syria and Lebanon. Source: Ministère de la Culture, "La redécouverte du château".



Figure 20. Left: Crac des Chevaliers in the Hall of the Crusades in the Musée des Colonies, Right: Crac des Chevaliers in the Crusades Section in the Musée des Monuments français (formerly Musée de Sculpture Comparée). Source: Hofman and Pénicaut, *Le Crac des Chevaliers*, 101.

While colonial expositions tried to bring the crusader heritage, among others, to the French public, a growing effort by the French authorities was made to encourage the French public to visit these sites in person. Tourism promotion became increasingly tied to the production of a curated historical image of the region, supported by investments in transport infrastructure, hospitality, and the restoration of archaeological sites. For the Alawite region, crusader sites joined elements of Alawite enigmatic beliefs and medieval stories of the Assassins and the Frankish kings to trigger a sense of nostalgia, curiosity and adventure among the French,

with the “mysterious” dimension of the Alawites being always brought to the foreground³⁵².

As discussed in the previous chapter, literature had an extremely influential impact on the French public and their reception of the crusades and the Middle Ages. This genre of literary production continued well into the French mandate, gaining another dimension once the territories in question became under French rule. An influential figure, particularly among French youth, was novelist Maurice Barrès who was a leading voice of French patriotism and traditionalism. In 1914, he visited the Levant and published his travel account just before his death in 1923. In it he makes many references to the Crusades linking it to the French mission to protect the Christians of the East³⁵³. References to the heroic crusades are made in his work such as in *La Coline Inspirée*³⁵⁴, but it was in 1922 when he published his “crusader novel” *Un jardin sur l’Oronte*, a novel taking place during the crusades. Barrès was also involved in the French politics in the Levant; in 1923, as a member in the *Chambre des députés*, he fiercely advocated for Alawite independence from the Syrian federation³⁵⁵.

Another conservative novelist who contributed to this genre, and a sort of disciple of Barrès, was Pierre Benoit, mostly famous for his work *L’Atlantide*. In 1939, Benoit published his novel *Notre-Dame de Tortose*, in which he brought the monument to the attention of a wider French readership.

Certainly, knowledge of crusader heritage in the Alawite region circulated in France through many other channels. There has even

³⁵² See for instance : Paul Jacquot, *L’État des Alaouites: terre d’art, de souvenirs et de mystère. Guide* (Beyrouth: Imprimerie catholique, 1929); *Syrie–Palestine, Irak–Transjordanie*, Les Guides Bleus (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1932).

³⁵³ Maurice Barrès, *Une enquête aux pays du Levant*, vol. 1 (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1923), 71.

³⁵⁴ Maurice Barrès, *La Colline inspirée* (Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1913), 37-39.

³⁵⁵ “L’Orient au Parlement: Les Crédits pour la Syrie,” *Correspondance d’Orient*, no. 312 (December 1923): 720–724.

been a chocolate company which distributed collectible cards featuring images and descriptions of sites from the Levant. Three of these cards were from the Alawite state, one featuring the flag of the State of the Alawites, the other featuring two crusader monuments: the Crac des Chevaliers and the cathedral of Tartus (Fig. 21). Such representations extended the visibility of these sites beyond academic, literary or colonial circles. Tartus and its cathedral, although not as acknowledged as the Crac des Chevaliers, played a significant role in the development of the colonial crusader narrative, a role that deserves closer examination.



Figure 21 Collectible cards by the chocolate company Chocolat Puihier featuring elements from the State of the Alawites. Source: private collection.

3.5 Tartus in the making of the narrative

While the Ottomans did not evacuate Syria until their defeat by the end of World War I, as early as 1915, the French secured a

foothold on the small island of Arwad off the coast of Tartus, from which communication with the Maronites in Lebanon was secured. Arwad was the last foothold the crusaders held in the Levant before their ultimate defeat in 1302. Therefore, the “return” to Arwad was viewed with great symbolism³⁵⁶. From this moment onwards, Tartus started gaining a significant historic dimension. For the military personnel, Tartus was an almost obligatory stop for the significant symbolism of its cathedral. From Henri Gouraud in the early 1920s to Charles de Gaulle in the early 1940s, the site was the perfect setting for welcoming ceremonies of French generals and officials (Fig. 22). When de Gaulle visited Tartus, the account of his visit presented the city as the “ancient capital of the Crusaders.” A similar description was made by French geographer Jacques Weulersse who described it as the capital of the Templars³⁵⁷. Functionaries, mainly archaeologists and architects, took an exceptional interest on the site as well, yet this will be covered in further details in the next chapters.

The Jesuits, however, took this interest to another level. To our knowledge, Father Joseph Goudard, known mostly in Lebanon for his book *La Sainte Vierge au Liban*, was the earliest Jesuit to give a detailed account on the city. He wrote in 1906 an emotionally charged essay lamenting over the memory of the crusades on the Syrian coast and the glory of Syria under their rule compared to the misery of the people under the Turks³⁵⁸. Under the mandate, Tartus happened to be the closest city to their missionary activities, therefore, it constituted a base for their mission, sometimes performing marriages and baptisms in Tartus for the new converts in the mountains³⁵⁹. For the Jesuits, the cathedral was not treated as a historical monument but as an active spiritual actor helping them in their mission. This is evident in the article of Father Finet in *Jésuites Missionnaires*:

³⁵⁶ See for instance : Emily, “L’assistance Française en Syrie,” 130. Also Weulersse, *Le pays des Alaouites*, 92.

³⁵⁷ Weulersse, *Le Pays des Alaouites*, 100.

³⁵⁸ Goudard, *Un sanctuaire des croisades*, 707-720.

³⁵⁹ Vexivière, *Le Merci des Berceaux*, 250.

[...] under the benevolent gaze of Our Lady of Tartous, who had once protected the departure of the last Hospitallers leaving Syria for Cyprus, and who today guided us in the opposite direction toward the heights of the Mountains³⁶⁰.



Figure 22. Ceremonies of French officials in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Tartus. Top left: General Henri Gouraud, 1922. Source: Abbé E. Wetterlé, *En Syrie avec le général Gouraud*; top right: High Commissioner Gabriel Puaux, 1940. Source: Archives de La Courneuve; bottom: General Charles de Gaulle, 1942. Source: Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD).

³⁶⁰ Finet, *Les Alaouites*, 202.

In several issues of the *Jésuites Missionnaires*, a map of the French controlled territories in the Levant is shown. The different regions are represented by the most recognizable monument or feature in each region (Fig. 23). Notre-Dame de Tortose was chosen as the representative monument for the Syrian coastal region, hence the Alawite State. What is exceptionally interesting here, unlike all other monuments in the map which are faithfully depicted, the cathedral has a different form than reality. What is different is that the cathedral in the illustration is “restored” to its original form. The little minaret is removed, and two giant belltowers are added to both sides of the main façade. This restoration in shape is accompanied by a desire to restore its function: in several issues we also notice the explicit wish of Jesuit priests to turn the basilica once again into a centre of a Marian pilgrimage³⁶¹.

Thus, Tartus’s legacy was well known and understood by the different factions of the colonial apparatus. Even for geographer Jacques Weulersse, whose thesis on the Alawites remain one of the earliest balanced accounts on the region and the Alawite community, Tartus’s crusader heritage and legacy was too strong to overlook. When describing the cities of the coast, almost the entirety of the section on Tartus is on this matter, even with a sense of romanticism unusual in his works. He writes:

Its [Tartus] principal interest lies in providing us with another example of that survival of the past in the present which characterizes the country. At Latakia we encountered the Hellenistic city; at Tartous it is the Frankish city of the Crusades. Not only can one still see the remains of the episcopal town intact, the celebrated basilica of Notre-Dame of Tortose, which is undoubtedly the most perfect Frankish monument of the Orient; but everywhere in the old town the plan of the great castle of the Templars is found unchanged ... At every step, memories: doors, windows, fragments of ogives, arches, keystones, towers and entire sections of ramparts; and this makes this very small town one of the most evocative places in Syria³⁶².

³⁶¹ Janot, *Des Croisades au Mandat*, 20–21; “Chez les Alaouites,” 196.

³⁶² Weulersse, *Le pays des Alaouites*, 290.

The significance of crusader heritage in Tartus was known to the French far before the mandate. As expressed by Ernest Renan in his influential *Mission de Phénicie* in 1864:

Medieval archaeology will find in Tortosa the undoubtedly most interesting field in all of Syria. Besides the three enclosures of walls, the city offers at every step beautiful buildings which attest to how solid and durable the Frankish establishment was here. The materials of these buildings are, like those of the walls, large and well-kept. Near the walls, to the southeast, stands a very beautiful church, well preserved, the most beautiful Gothic monument in Syria³⁶³.

In fact, Tartus was the only one among the region's cities and towns to be occasionally referred to by French scholars and journalists by its crusader name *Tortose*, alongside its modern name, spelled Tartous in French.

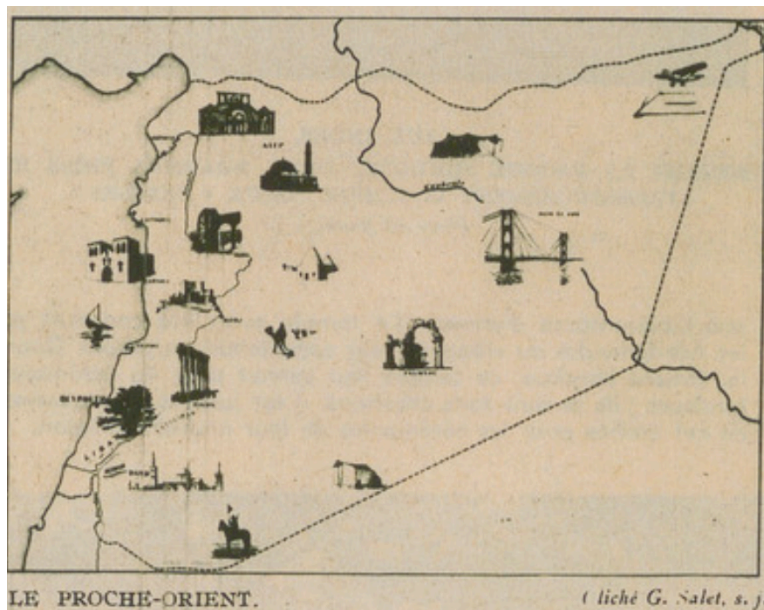


Figure 23. Map showing heritage sites throughout the Levant. Source: *Jésuites Missionnaires*.

³⁶³ Ernest Renan, *Mission de Phénicie*, 54.

3.6 Conclusion

Crusader nostalgia was present at various levels of the French administration in Syria, most notably through High Commissioner Général Henri Gouraud, who set the tone for French policies in the Levant. The authorities, well aware of the concentration of crusader sites along the Syrian coast and fueled by a century-old fascination with the crusades, sought to instrumentalize this romanticism for political purposes. It is worth asking to what extent this idea was intended as a founding myth for the independence of the French-created Alawite state. Just as Phoenicianism in Lebanon provided an exceptionalist discourse that legitimized Lebanese independence from the rest of Syria, an idea that also circulated in francophone circles, “crusaderism” could have served as a cornerstone for shaping a Western-oriented identity in an independent Alawite state.

From the start, the French colonial apparatus in Syria depended heavily on history to justify its presence and legitimize its domination. While the crusader anecdote was popular and useful for different factions of the French administration, a closer look indicates that its use differed in time, space and the actors involved. For the political and civil administration, the crusades provided a convenient framework for a narrative of domination; they helped construct an invented tradition of timeless Eastern submission to Western might. The crusader sites were regarded as inheritance by the crusaders, the first colonisers, and crusader heritage was claimed, first metaphorically and later legally. They became French territory, treated like any site in the metropole, perhaps even more cherished. The locals were portrayed more like serfs who admit the French ownership of the site, and when they rebel, it is in a crusader site that they would offer their surrender.

This image differed considerably in the Jesuits’ account, who took the crusader narrative much more seriously. They also perceived the crusades as a glorious event that brought prosperity, but they extended the narrative to include the local population. Unlike the depictions popular among the military circle of local inferiority, the Alawites were viewed as proud descendants of the crusaders, linked to them by a shared land, appearance and fragments of

Christian beliefs. A simple yet powerful analogy by a Jesuit priest summarises how the Jesuits viewed the Alawites. In the issue of the *Jésuites Missionnaires* dedicated to the Alawites, a picture of a wall from the Crac des Chevaliers is published showing Arabic calligraphy engraved after the expulsion of the crusaders. The author makes the parallel between this case and Alawite lands: beneath a superficial Islamic decor, both the land and the souls are Christian³⁶⁴.

The rift between the political authorities and the Jesuits reached its peak in the mid 1930s, as the activity of the latter became a source of trouble that needed to be controlled³⁶⁵. The French authorities wanted to make a deal with the nationalists of Damascus, in which scarifying Alawite independence was but a tactic to score a favourable deal. The Jesuits on the other hand, were very serious in defending the Alawite cause as for them, Alawite independence supported by Alawite particularism was essential for their mission, while a rule from Damascus would mean the end of their influence. This fear proved to be legitimate; new legal frameworks meant that new converts were no longer able to be registered as Christians, and soon after, Jesuit centres were closed and their activity was limited to the Christian community.

Alawite identity was therefore moulded to fit various agendas: for the Jesuits, they were the only blue-eyed blond-haired population in the Levant, undistinguishable from the French hence the proof of their crusader descent. In contrast, the Gouraud administration applied the same characteristics to all Syrians and Lebanese at the 1922 *Exposition Coloniale* in Marseille, arguing that similarities in physical appearance stemmed from similarities in climate and agricultural production, thereby defending the utility of the mandate for the French economy. The local populations were not passive subjects in the identity discourse. The matter did not hold much relevance for the illiterate farmers who constituted the vast majority of the Alawite population. Yet, for the aristocracy and a consistently growing number of Alawite intellectuals, the identity

³⁶⁴ Chez les Alaouites, 194.

³⁶⁵ Verdeil, Une révolution sociale, 89-90.

landscape was complex, heterogenous and dynamic. The “Arab Muslim” label was adopted by some and fiercely rejected by others depending on the political context. The “crusader” label was used in limited Alawite circles: by the newly converts to Catholicism, as reported by the Jesuits, and by members of the autonomist party who tried to persuade the French officials by using a narrative they had frequently repeated.

Additionally, the glory of the crusades as experienced in the colony was exported to the metropole for French consumption through a verity of channels. It was tailored to present the Syrian coastal region with nostalgia, romanticism and mystery, which helped develop an industry of tourism that grew exponentially towards the end of the mandate.

The significance and abundance of the crusader heritage in Tartus, and the French decision to make it a principal city in the State of the Alawites, second only to Latakia, are the main reasons behind taking it our case study. In the next chapters, we will examine how ideologies whether of the French administrators or the local populations would contribute to the restoration, formation and interpretation of the crusader-built heritage in the city.

4 From ideology to reality, translating thought into action: the case of Tartus

Prior to the arrival of the French, the entirety of the Syrian coastal region, which later became the State of the Alawites, constituted the bulk of the northern part of the Ottoman Vilayet of Beirut, established in 1888. Latakia was by far the biggest urban settlement of the coastal region and a centre for the province of Latakia. All other cities were small towns with populations that did not exceed a couple of thousands of inhabitants. Although the southern part of the coastal region ran in the orbit of Tripoli in Northern Lebanon, Safita was the main centre for tax collection in the city while Tartus was a dependency of the latter since at least the 17th century³⁶⁶.

From the first days of the French mandate, Tartus was chosen to become the State of the Alawites second city after Latakia. This is evident from the get-go by the administrative division of the newly established State of the Alawites which was divided in two provinces or *Sandjaks*, the Sandjak of Latakia in the North and the Sandjak of Tartus in the south. Thus, Tartus became the centre of a province divided itself into the Caza of Tartus, the Caza of Safita and the Caza of Tal Kalakh.

We could not find any contemporary French sources on the reason behind the choice of Tartus to be a major city in the new state. French geographer Fabrice Balanche argues another major urban centre was required in the south to balance Latakia in the North; although Safita enjoyed a greater importance than Tartus before

³⁶⁶ Winter, *A History of the 'Alawis*, 87–91.

the arrival of the French, a coastal city was favoured since the state would need a second port, which would also be easier to control³⁶⁷.

It is unlikely that the abundance of crusader heritage in Tartus played a decisive role in choosing it to become a major city. Nevertheless, this abundance seems to have been a major bonus; on the one hand it was charged with symbolism and on the other it imposed a physical reality for the French project in the city. Therefore, it is crucial to study the levels of French intervention in the built environment to understand how the crusader heritage shaped and in turn was shaped by the French understanding of history and how it was incorporated in the plans for the city. These interventions in the city's built environment can be grouped into three intersecting themes: urban planning, architecture, and heritage management. Although these categories largely overlap, this division provides a useful way to trace how the French projected their vision onto the city's urban fabric, and how these changes were received and negotiated by local populations and institutions.

4.1 Urban planning: the city redefined

The French sources on the urban planning of Tartus, though valuable, remain limited and leave major gaps in our understanding of both the decision-making process and the broader context in which these policies were taken, particularly for the 1930s, where textual documentation is scarce. For this reason, it is necessary first to situate the case within the wider framework of imperial French policies in the colonies in general and particularly in the Levant. We will then examine French urban planning policies in the cities of the State of the Alawites, and then focus on Tartus. By integrating archival and photographic sources, we will try to gain a more nuanced understanding of the overall strategy, trace how these policies evolved throughout the mandate and trace the city's development more clearly.

³⁶⁷ Fabrice Balanche, interview by author, Lyon, France, September 4, 2025.

Urban planning in the colonies was one of the main elements through which the general approach of the French authorities was followed in a given colony. Historians have divided these approaches in two categories according to time they occurred in and strategies followed: assimilation and association³⁶⁸. The nineteenth-century colonial policy of assimilation came from republican ideologies and the French conviction of their cultural superiority, based on the belief that colonized peoples would benefit only by adopting French civilization and abandoning their own³⁶⁹. Association, however, came later to promote a more inclusive discourse, advocating for respecting the costumes and beliefs of the indigenous population, including respect for their built environment and the creation of *villes modernes* outside the traditional urban fabric. Algeria is often given as the example of the assimilation approach while Morocco is seen as the ground where the association approach was developed, specifically under the rule of Maréchal Hubert Lyautey.

It had been agreed upon by historians that the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon was modelled on the Moroccan experience. Additionally, most French officers that formed the French administration in Syria went there after serving in Morocco, most famously General Henri Gouraud. Urban planning efforts in major Syrian cities therefore have mirrored the Moroccan experience in limiting the intervention in the old *médina* and focus on the development of new districts outside the traditional centre. This was notably the case of Damascus and Aleppo where the lack of intervention was justified as preserving the charm of the old city that was the result of interaction between the indigenous architecture and the environment³⁷⁰.

Our main source for understanding the colonial urban planning strategies in mandated Syria during the first decade of the

³⁶⁸ Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 73.

³⁶⁹ Patricia A. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 184.

³⁷⁰ Neep, *Occupying Syria under the French Mandate*, 152.

mandate is found in the proceedings and reports of the *International Congress on Urbanism in the Colonies and Intertropical Countries*, held in Paris at the Colonial Exhibition in Vincennes in October 1931. Contributions from the top administrators across the French empire were collected in a book titled *Urbanisme aux Colonies et aux Pays Tropicaux*, published in two volumes in 1932 and 1935. The preface of the first volume is written by non-other than Maréchal Lyautey, who orchestrated the new approach of association in Morocco.

Urban planning in the Syrian coastal cities was covered in an article written by the *Bureau politique du Gouvernement de Lattaquié*. This report provides valuable insight of French urban and regional planning policies in the State of the Alawites, which was recently renamed Government of Latakia, and the process of decision making and motivations in the first decade of the mandate.

The report, just like all other French authors on the matter, dwells long on the fundamental transformation in every aspect of the cities and towns in the territories of the Alawites, often quoting travellers' opinions on the cities before and after the French interventions:

In 1920, the cities of Lattakia, Tartous, Djéblé, Massyaf, Banias, Haffé, Safitah, Tell-Kalakh, and Rouad were lit only by small lamps (quinquets); they were all devoid of piped drinking water, sewers, slaughterhouses, carriage roads, or municipal buildings. The school establishments, often rented by religious communities, were located in the least desirable places: hygiene, disinfection services, and police surveillance were unknown there. There was no public square or open space, and no tree planting³⁷¹.

The article then describes the French interventions in each one of these cities, beginning with those considered most important, where the involvement was greatest, and moving gradually to

³⁷¹ Bureau politique du Gouvernement de Lattaquié, "L'Urbanisme en Syrie (Gouvernement de Lattaquié): développement des municipalités, efforts faits et réalisations dans le domaine de l'urbanisme," in *L'Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, ed. Jean Royer, vol. 1 (1932), 245.

lesser ones. A brief overview of the French action in the cities of the coastal region show that, contrary to major cities like Aleppo and Damascus, the principles of association were not practiced. In Latakia, the classical plan of the city was revived even if it was at the expense of traditional urban fabric. Jacques Weulersse notes:

After more than 20 centuries, Western influence manifests itself through the application of the same rules of urbanism: major straight thoroughfares, geometric grid planning, overall planning, and directed development. To such an extent that, unconsciously taking up the rectilinear vestiges of the ancient plan, it is that very plan which the new administration is reviving before our eyes [...] The first major road opened through the inorganic mass of the oriental city was the Rue de France [...] along the route of one of the great ancient avenues: several granite columns still emerge from the pavement. Then, at a right angle to it, came the Rue de la Municipalité, following the old Christian souk, itself heir to a Roman avenue³⁷².

Similar approaches were followed in the towns of Jableh, Safita and Banias, where not much attention was given to the old town or for the creation of new modern cities. It has been argued that the rupture with the assimilation approach was not as radical and universal as has been thought earlier³⁷³, and urban planning in the capital of the State of the Alawite and in its cities have been a case in point.

Tartus, however, marks the anomaly in this pattern. Like the cases of Aleppo and Damascus, Tartus had a well-defined walled old city, although the agglomeration had grown out of the walls by the arrival of the French. Nevertheless, unlike Damascus and Aleppo, the old city was not a foreign oriental entity, but a familiar and even nostalgia provoking one. The crusader identity of the city was highlighted repeatedly in the article of the *Bureau politique* from the very first line³⁷⁴. This becomes central when the article

³⁷² Weulersse, *Le pays des Alaouites*, 271.

³⁷³ Wright, *The Politics of Design*, 74.

³⁷⁴ Bureau politique du Gouvernement de Lattaquié, "L'Urbanisme en Syrie (Gouvernement de Lattaquié)," 248.

addresses the question of the roads. After describing how the citadel and its spaces and morphology were reused and reconditioned by the inhabitants, it states that it was a complex task for the administration to balance between preserving the medieval structures and offering new roads. The article states explicitly that it is in this context that the north African model had to be the source of inspiration, where a new modern city should be created and connected with the old one which in turn would get inspired by the comfort of modern life and improve slowly³⁷⁵.

Despite the overlap of the old city with the crusader citadel, the abandoned crusader vestiges outside the citadel were not neglected. In fact, the nostalgic sentiment towards the memory of the crusaders was not explicitly expressed in the article of the *Bureau politique*. It was, however, expressed in a simultaneous contribution by architect Maurice Pillet which was published in the monthly review *Urbanisme*. Pillet had worked previously in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria and was responsible for the reparation of the crusader cathedral in Tartus in 1926. This article is, to our knowledge, the only explicit expression of French military intervention to intentionally revive the crusader memory in the urban planning in the city of Tartus. After enumerating all significant crusader vestiges in the city, Pillet explains that:

[...] the French military under the wise direction of commandant Anfré, worked on clearing the northern side of the external wall of the crusader city and creating a large boulevard adjacent to it so that the city, with no major spending, could become one of the most beautiful testimonies of the epoch of the crusades, just like Rhodes³⁷⁶.

In the same article, Pillet expresses his disappointment in the French authorities for not evacuating the citadel of its inhabitants but instead let them build more construction, reaching the moat and getting close to the cathedral. From the few lines of Pillet, we

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Maurice Pillet, "L'Urbanisme en Syrie," *Urbanisme* 1, no. 1 (April 1932): 38.

can see the infiltration of crusaderism through the army into actions on the ground. We will try to examine how this approach continued in Tartus by studying the chronological development of the city under French rule to see how this policy played out on the ground.

The boulevard mentioned by Pillet seems to have been a prototype for later urban planning practices. This is probably the road French sources referred to as “Boulevard Anfré”, “Rue Anfré” and sometimes “Boulevard du Sérail de Tartous” (St. 1 on Fig. 28)³⁷⁷. It was completed in the beginning of the year 1925³⁷⁸. This must have started in the beginning of the French mandate since Lieutenant-Colonel Gaston Anfré was stationed in Tartus from September 1920 to December 1922³⁷⁹. In 1929, Anfré published a long lecture that he had given under the name “*Ce qu’est la Syrie*”, in which he repeated the common belief that French presence in the Levant dates back to the crusades³⁸⁰.

It is unclear whether this axe was used before the French who simply improved it or was completely “invented” to serve the memory. One photograph taken prior to the French Mandate initially gives the impression of having been taken on this road. It appears in the article of Jesuit priest Joseph Goudard in 1906 and it features a group of people on a road (Fig. 24). Goudard’s caption says: “*Tortose - rue des anciens remparts (vers l’est)*”³⁸¹, meaning it was taken next to a crusader wall. Since it is indicating facing east, the only candidate we have is this road that would later become Boulevard Anfré. However, upon further examination, we notice that the objects in the picture are casting a shadow to the right,

³⁷⁷ Although the name of this street is known, we will refer to it also by a number (St. 1) to maintain consistency, as the names of the other streets remain unknown.

³⁷⁸ Report, April 28, 1925, Carton 1SL/1/1844, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes (Appendices, plate 6)

³⁷⁹ Jean-David Mizrahi, *Genèse de l’État mandataire* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2002), 259.

³⁸⁰ Gaston Anfré, *Ce qu’est la Syrie* (Levant: Atelier typographique des troupes françaises du Levant, 1929), 27.

³⁸¹ Goudard, *un sanctuaire des croisades*, 715.

therefore if the photographer is facing east, the shadows are pointing to the south meaning the source of light is coming from the right side, in this case the north, which is impossible in the northern hemisphere³⁸². It appears that the picture was taken on the road the runs parallel to the eastern side of the citadel (Fig. 27) and it was actually facing north.



Figure 24. Group of people on the road next to the crusader walls. Source: Goudard, *Un sanctuaire des croisades*, 715.

Another photograph, taken in 1918, immediately after the Ottoman defeat and the French military occupation of the coast, shows French soldiers posing on the inner side of the city's crusader gate, showing the landscape extending north beyond it (Fig. 25). Through the gate, two roads appear to diverge in a V shape toward the newly developing northern suburb. The branch to the right may indicate the presence of a dirt road; however, it is unclear whether it followed the same alignment as the later French

³⁸² We ran simulations with the sites coordinates and during different times of the year on <https://shademap.app/> the results were consistent.

boulevard running parallel to the crusader wall. In the absence of further evidence, it is possible that this axis of movement was entirely a French invention, designed to expose the crusader wall.



Figure 25. The gate of the episcopal city in 1918. Source: Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD).

In any case, despite its limited length, this boulevard became central in the city's life and new role. On the boulevard and across the crusader walls, major projects were constructed. One of the earliest projects, probably simultaneous to the construction of the boulevard, was the Sérail of Tartus from which the city and the province was ruled. This was the centre from which the French practiced their authority in the southern part of the Alawite state. A report indicates that it was completed in the first trimester of 1924, covering an area of 847 m² and composed of 31 rooms and two interior courts³⁸³. It was inaugurated on the 16th of April

³⁸³ Report, first trimester, 1924, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Carton 1SL/1/1843 (Appendices, plate 7).

1924³⁸⁴. The Sérail was built facing the northeastern corner of the crusader episcopal city and it was linked with citadel/old city by Boulevard Anfré (St. 1) (Fig. 27). Therefore, the new boulevard came to connect the new centre of power with the templar citadel, stretching along the walls of the crusader city.

The report of the *Bureau politique* claims that the Sérail was built on the model of the one in Latakia, and that it was located at the entrance of the modern city created outside the walled old town³⁸⁵. As the French method to direct urban growth by establishing roads in the desired direction, it is not clear where is the location of the new modern city to which Pillet refers. New wide streets and services constructed on them appear already in the south, north and east of the old town. This pattern becomes clearer in the photographs taken in the mid 1930s (Fig. 29). While the municipality, Sérail, hospital, and school were put on the northern side, another school, college, hotel, buildings attached to the military were constructed in the south. In fact, we can notice many buildings being constructed on the main road leading south. This pattern will get clearer as public work intensifies in the 1930s.

Overall, the 1920s witnessed some major projects but the urban configuration did not differ a lot from what was described by Rafiq Bek and Bahjat Bek in 1916, prior to the French mandate. French intervention in this decade can be seen in photographs taken by the French army in 1929 (Fig. 26). By overlapping these photographs with other sources, we can reconstruct the city plan in 1929 (Fig. 27). We can see that the old agglomeration is mostly intact with its organic streets and dense urban fabric. French interventions stand out with the width of the street and its straightness. Rue Anfré stands out with its considerable width and the planted trees stretching from the Latakia-Tripoli Road in the east to the citadel in the west. It starts with the Sérail and ends with a school, while the southern side curves with the crusader wall. In the agrarian land in the middle of the episcopal city, we can still

³⁸⁴ Report, April 15–30, 1924, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Carton 1SL/1/1986 (Appendices, plate 8).

³⁸⁵ Bureau politique du Gouvernement de Lattaquié, “L’Urbanisme en Syrie (Gouvernement de Lattaquié),” 248.

identify organic paths and what appears to be irrigation channels through the cultivated fields.



Figure 26. Zenithal aerial photographs of Tartus in 1929. Source: Institut Français Du Proche-Orient.

On the southern edge of the agglomeration, a new wide road was created, linking the Latakia-Tripoli Road with the seaside. Just like Boulevard Anfré in the north, this street ran along the wall of the crusader city; this wall had long been gone before the arrival of the French except for the tower by the sea, however, the moat was still recognizable³⁸⁶.

The zenithal aerial photographs taken in 1929 were clearly intended to be used in the creation of new urban plan for the city. In the same year, architect François Anus created a plan clearly based on these photographs (Fig. 28) and soon after, as early as 1931, construction works started all over the city, transforming its layout, streetscape, and overall urban character. What is noteworthy in Anus's plan is that, despite being a plan of the modern city, we see the place names only of the crusader structures and localities. The crusader city layout is also overlapped over the modern city, even the parts that have disappeared were marked in a dashed line. This strongly suggests the layout of the crusader city played a distinguished role in the shaping of the new city. While the decision of general Anfré in the early 1920s to excavate the northern part of the crusader wall and create a boulevard adjacent seems to have been an individual endeavour, the consciousness of the French authorities to the alignments and rhythms of the crusader city was incorporated into urban management plans. This becomes evident in the plan of the city after the execution (Fig. 31).

³⁸⁶ *Syrie-Palestine, Irak-Transjordanie*, 239.

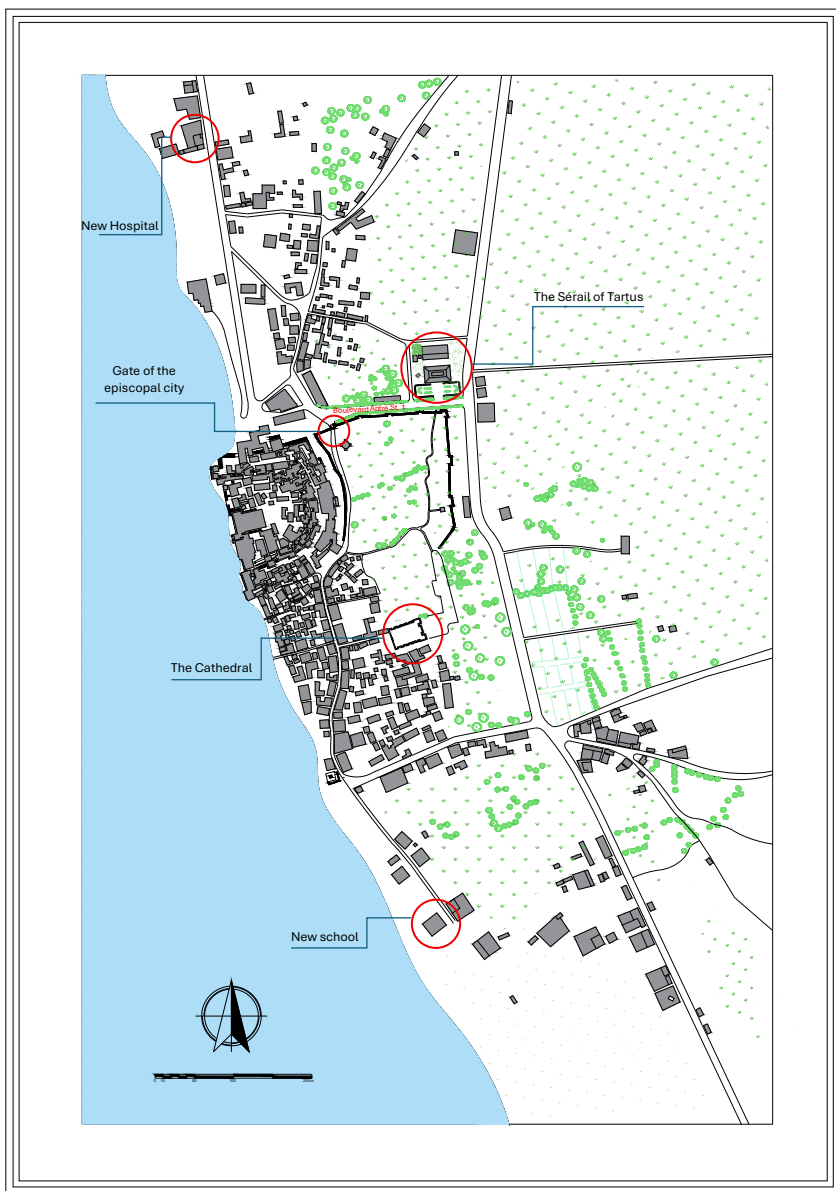


Figure 27. Tartus plan in 1929. Source: drawn by the author.

Textual sources after 1931 become scarce, however photographic ones become more available. Aerial photographs, an essential tool that has revolutionized colonial French urban planning³⁸⁷, offer great insights (Fig. 29). While some of these photographs are dated, others can only be dated approximately knowing the construction date of some prominent building that appear in them. The photographs taken some years later show that immense work had been done in such a short span of time.

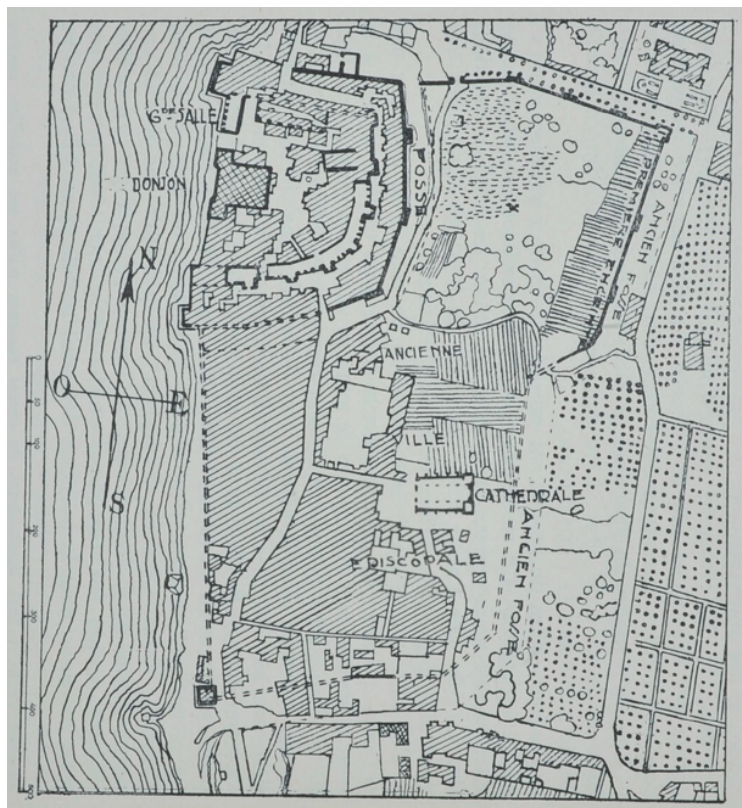


Figure 28 Plan of Tartus in 1929 by architecte François Anus. Source: Deschamps, *Les châteaux des croisés en Terre Sainte: le Crac des Chevaliers*, 60.

³⁸⁷ André Balleyguier, "La photographie aérienne au service de l'urbanisme colonial," in *L'Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, ed. Jean Royer, vol. 2 (1935), 117.

Overlapping several photographs, mostly aerial, we can reconstruct the city's plan in the mid 1930s and the major works that had taken place up until that point (Fig. 31). Unfortunately, although we see streets names in the French sources, we could not precise which name was used for which street since almost all names were changed after the independence. Some names used for the streets were: *Rue des Chrétiens*, *Rue du Général Billotte*, *Rue du Général Gouraud*, *Rue commandant Anfré/boulevard du Sérail*. To avoid confusion, we will use numbers to refer the streets as evident on the plan (Fig. 31).



Figure 29. Aerial photographs from the mid 1930s showing the major projects that had taken place in the recent years. Sources: top left: Discover Syria website; top right: Weulersse, *Le Pays des Alaouites*, fig. 141; bottom left: Tartous Madinati Facebook Page, bottom right: Tartus Lovers Facebook page.

When examining the city plan (Fig. 31), the first element to be noticed in this transformation is the introduction of boulevards into what had once been the crusader episcopal city. In this context, a boulevard is characterized by three defining features: it is wide, straight, and lined with trees. From the previously established boulevard Anfré (St. 1), two new boulevards were created. Since boulevard Anfré takes the shape of the adjacent crusader wall, both new boulevards (St. 2 and St. 3) are

perpendicular on different segments of wall but are not paralleled. St. 2 stretches north south along the eastern edge of the external citadel moat, replacing the organic road that started with the crusader city's gate in the north and merged into the main souk to the south. What is noteworthy in this case is that, since the gate is too small for the boulevard to start with, the adjacent western part of the crusader wall had to be demolished to make room for the boulevard while the gate was surrounded with sidewalks (Fig. 30). Therefore, the gate changed from the actual entrance to the city from the north to become a monument. From the other end, the boulevard diverges into two branches, one takes the curvature of the citadel and converges into the old souk, and the other continues in a straight line to the cathedral. Boulevard St. 3 parallels the eastern wall of the episcopal city, connecting the Sérail building with the site of the cathedral. Connecting these two boulevards (St. 2 and St. 3) with the one established earlier (St. 1) meant that two segments of the crusader wall were demolished.

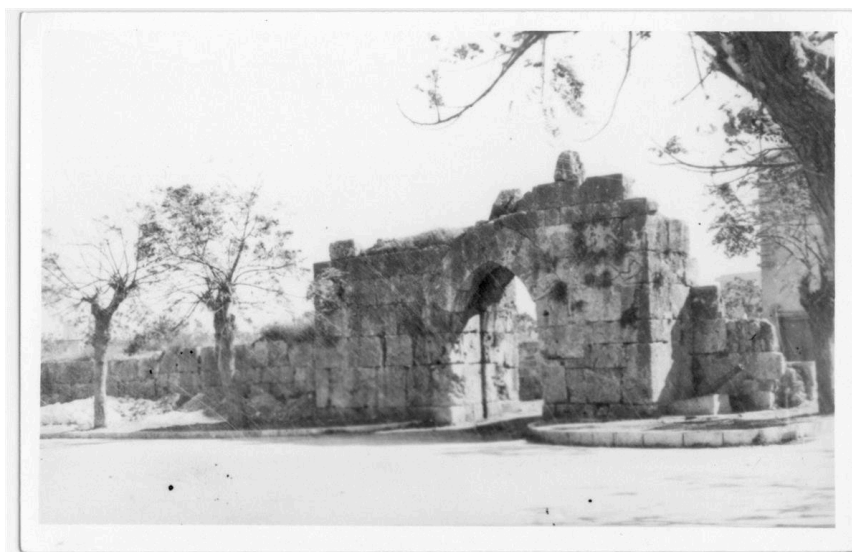


Figure 30. The gate of the episcopal city surrounded with sidewalks. Source: Abu Fares Tartoussi's Facebook page.

Parallel to St. 1 in the north and St. 6 in the south, two wide streets were added, stretching from the Latakia Tripoli road in the east,

towards the old agglomeration, without penetrating it. The one in the north, St. 4, a short boulevard replaced an older curvy narrow passage. In order to create this boulevard, the end of what had remained of the episcopal city wall had to be demolished. The other street to the south St. 5 ran from the Latakia Tripoli road to the old agglomeration passing by the cathedral. The Latakia Tripoli road was also managed; it was widened and trees were planted on both sides. While it parallels the crusader wall of the episcopal city in the north, it takes a different alignment in the south.

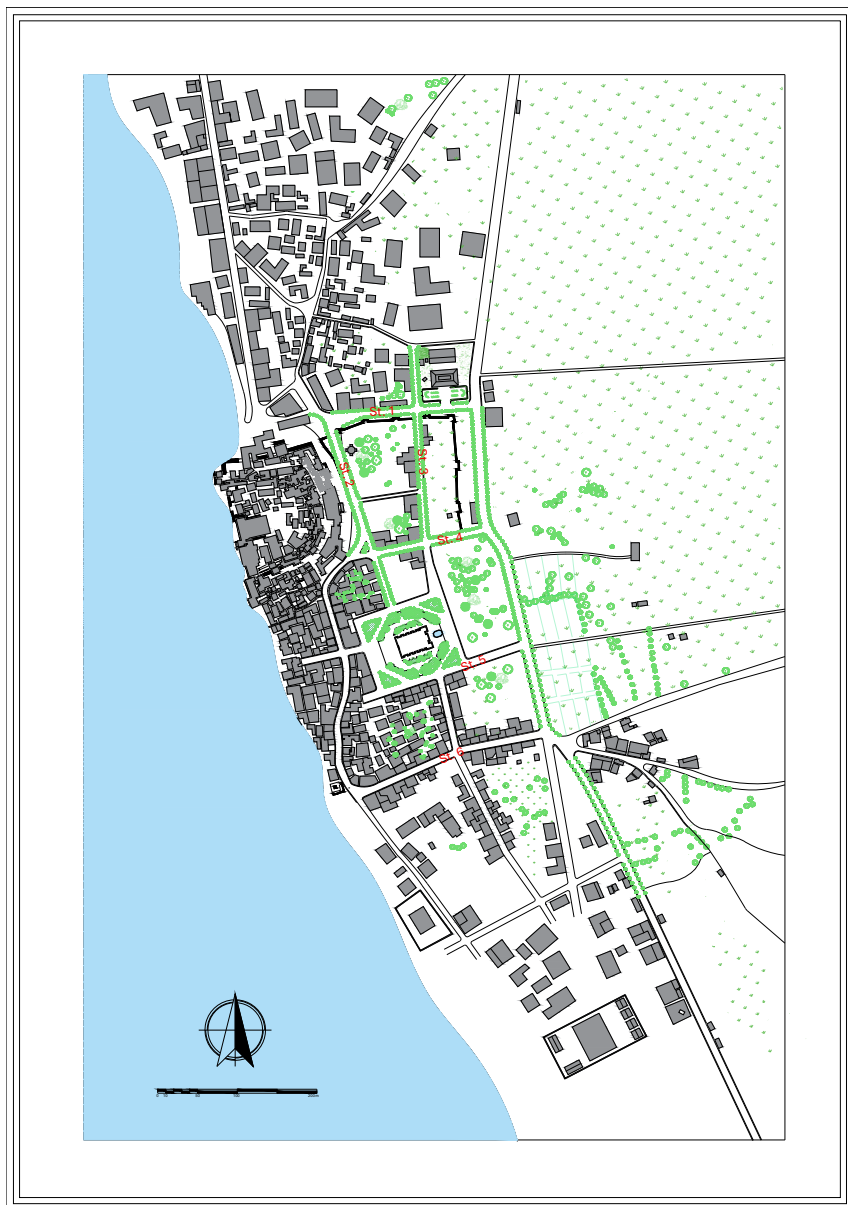


Figure 31. Plan of Tartus in 1936. Source: drawn by the author.

While in the plan of 1929 the cathedral still was “lost” in the surrounding urban fabric, there is no doubt that in the early 1930s, it was already the most outstanding monument in the city. All the houses around it were demolished and a hexagonal garden was created, surrounded with wide streets. The garden is interrupted only in front of the main façade, creating a public square in front of the monument.

As seen earlier in the article of the *Bureau politique* in the proceedings of the urbanism international congress, the North African model was followed in Tartus and it was decided to construct a new modern city outside the old town but connected to it. However, judging by the location chosen by the French for essential services, it is not possible to point to the location of this new city as was the case in North Africa³⁸⁸. Instead, in Tartus, some services were placed to the north of the old town and others were placed to the south of it. A choice that sounds impractical seems to have been a choice meant to ensure the enlargement of the city. Therefore, there is no modern city, but rather modern islands that soon got connected with a network of boulevards, making the old town a centre of a much larger city. This is in line with the vision expressed in the same article where the author predicts that big steps are taken to make the city 10 times the size of the initial town³⁸⁹. It appears that the general pattern of urban growth the French authorities sought to manage was an elongated agglomeration stretching north to south, bordered by the sea to the west and the Latakia–Tripoli Road to the east, with the crusader citadel at its centre (Fig. 32).

After 1936, the available sources, both photographic and textual, become significantly scarcer, which leaves considerable gaps in our understanding of the city’s urban development in the late mandate period. This might be explained by the major changes in

³⁸⁸ M’hammed Idrissi Janati, “Les images identitaires à Fès: divisions de la société, divisions de la ville,” in *Les divisions de la ville*, ed. Christian Topalov (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme / UNESCO, 2013), 353.

³⁸⁹ Bureau politique du Gouvernement de Lattaquié, “L’Urbanisme en Syrie (Gouvernement de Lattaquié),” 248-249

the geopolitical situation that occurred in 1936 when a treaty was signed with the nationalists, and the State of the Alawites, by then was named the Government of Latakia, was integrated into the Syrian state. French authorities might have recalculated the investment in creating a large city on the coast.

As seen in the first chapter, Professor Giulia Annalinda Neglia argues that even though no structure can be traced back to before the crusader period in Tartus, we can still find traces of three plans from the Roman period that reoccur in the alignment and orientation of the walls built by the Byzantines and the crusaders, that had to build following the traces of the previous constructions and agrarian lands, facilitating development in a certain way and blocking it in another. In the same sense, the lines of the crusader citadel were in turn followed by those who inhabited the citadel in the Mamluk and Ottoman period, adapting their residential and public spaces, such as streets, square, mosque, hammam, with the morphology of the citadel³⁹⁰. The modern city was laid out following the same legacy as it was planned in relation to the crusader city, either by preserving its general layout and contours or by increasing the visibility of its remaining structures.

Local agency in urban planning remains difficult to define. One account we have been able to identify comes from a newspaper article dating from the 1960s, which reports the recent death of Mahmud Abd al-Razzaq, the head of the city's most influential family. The article, shared on Facebook by his grandson, attributes all urban renovation in the city to him. However, the source is certainly unreliable: the newspaper is unknown, and the account contains many contradictions and anachronisms, clearly exaggerating the deceased's role. Nevertheless, Mahmud Abdul Razzaq probably had a say in urban policy in the city. The Alawites State official newspaper mentions once that he opposed the allocation of funds for the renovation of a rural road, instead proposing that the money be redirected to the rehabilitation of the cathedral site³⁹¹. The limited evidence of local involvement in

³⁹⁰ Neglia, *The Multicultural Fabric of the Crusader Citadel of Tartous in Syria*, 41-48.

³⁹¹ *Journal officiel de l'État des Alaouites*, December 28, 1929.

urban planning decision-making suggests that the French maintained a strong grip over planning strategies, with little opposition to their authority.



Figure 32. The development of the urban fabric in Tartus, top left: the crusader city in the 12th and 13th century; top right: the urban sprawl out of the citadel in the

second half of the 19th century; bottom left: city plan in 1929; bottom right, the city plan in 1936. Source: drawn by the author.

4.2 Architecture

Following the examination of urban planning, architecture is the second key element through which we can trace the development of the built environment in Tartus before and during the French Mandate. Very little information is available on the involvement of specific architects or the existence of defined conceptual frameworks in the design of new structures, whether residential or public buildings. Therefore, just like the case in examining urban planning, the primary source of information will be photographs from the period, which will be used to discuss the development of architectural forms throughout the Mandate era.

Prior to the mandate, the houses built in the crusader citadel mostly tried to recreate the central courtyard houses common in the region. Since these houses were abutting crusader walls, they have adapted differently; unlike cities in the East, the houses in Tartus were much more opened to the outside, whether a street or a square³⁹². Typically, a courtyard was surrounded by rooms with flat, white-painted roofs, as in popular neighbourhoods of other coastal cities such as Beirut and Sidon. The new residential neighbourhood in the north had modern houses with glass windows open to the exterior, just like the modern suburbs of Damascus during the late 19th century³⁹³.

Specialized buildings included four mosques, one of which was the crusader cathedral, and two churches³⁹⁴. Major alternations occurred on the main mosque in the centre of the citadel to the

³⁹² Dimah Karfoul, *La conception architecturale de l'habitat urbain en Orient méditerranéen du XIVe au XIXe siècle: étude d'architecture domestique. L'exemple de la vieille ville de Tartous* (unpublished thesis, Université Lumière Lyon 2, 2008), 426–428.

³⁹³ Rafiq and Bahjat, *Wilayet Beirut*, II: 368-371

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

point where the original form is no longer traceable³⁹⁵. Same goes for the main church but it is visible in some old photographs (Fig. 7), and it appears to be of a simple one-nave construction. Other specialized buildings included the Mamluk hammam, and perhaps some administrative buildings, though mostly reused crusader spaces. The residences of the wealthy families can be spotted in pictures through their size and roofing, white finishing and elongated rectangular windows (Fig. 33).

The spread of tiled rooftops cannot be separated from the wide spread of a new form that was developing in Beirut and its surrounding countryside. The "*maison aux trois arcs*", or Central hall house or more popularly Beiruti house, as it would be referred to henceforth, developed as an expression of Beirut's transformation in the middle of the 19th century from a small town to one of the major urban centres in the Levant. This house form came as a physical representation of major changes that had occurred in the second half of the 19th century, simultaneous to Beirut growth and increasing connectivity with the Mediterranean trade networks³⁹⁶. It also corresponds with the broader context of Ottoman modernization, specifically Sultan Abdulhamid II's significant transformations in the infrastructure in the Levant³⁹⁷.

³⁹⁵ Neglia, The Multicultural Fabric of the Crusader Citadel of Tartous in Syria, 46.

³⁹⁶ Mollenhauer, Anne. "The Central Hall House: Regional Commonalities and Local Specificities: A Comparison between Beirut and al-Salt." In *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, edited by Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber, 275-296. Beirut: Texte und Studien. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2002, Pp. 279-280

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 276.

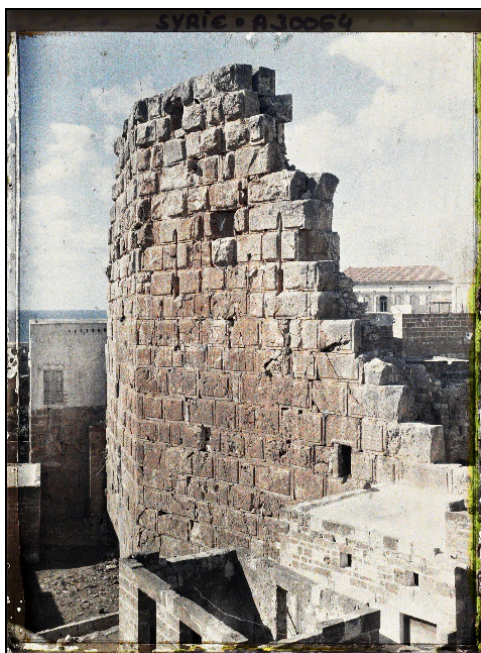


Figure 33. The only remaining full high part of the crusader inner wall. In the foreground, simple houses without finishing. In the background a house of a notable with elongated windows, white finishing and red tile rooftop, 1921. Source: Jean Brunhes et Frédéric Gadmer – Musée Albert Kahn.

Many variations exist of this house; however, the archetype consists of cubical form with a central hall, red tiled rooftops and most iconically, three arched openings, usually facing north³⁹⁸. Apart from the main building material, the sandstone, architectural and material elements were imported from Europe as colonial trade grew and as Beirut became a part of these networks and its ascending merchant class wanted to symbolise its prosperity while showcasing a modern lifestyle³⁹⁹. Despite

³⁹⁸ Michael F. Davie, "Préambule," in *La maison beyrouthine aux trois arcs: une architecture bourgeoise du Levant*, ed. Michael F. Davie (Beirut: Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts / Centre de Recherches et d'Études sur l'Urbanisation du Monde Arabe, 2003), 11.

³⁹⁹ Robert Saliba, "The Genesis of Modern Architecture in Beirut, 1840–1940," in *Architecture Re-introduced: New Projects in Societies in*

being concentrated in Beirut and its immediate countryside, the Beirut house spread all over the Levantine coast, including in present day Syria; we can see many examples of it in Latakia and Safita prior to the arrival of the French. In Tartus, however, the pictures that we managed to find before the arrival of the French show several houses with red tiles roofs but without the iconic three arches on the main façade. This certainly does not eliminate the presence of this style in Tartus, but it indicates its limit and perhaps a certain eclecticism by local notables to adopt some elements from this new design. Tiled rooftops might have started as a practical solution to avoid the impracticalities of flat rooftops, but certainly it was also a major statement for a superior social status⁴⁰⁰.

At some point, the three arched façade started to spread in Tartus, and while some scholars attributed them to the Ottoman period, we think that this model arrived in Tartus under the French mandate and not earlier. The first examples of this we managed to find was in an aerial photograph taken by the French army in 1926 (Fig. 34). The photograph is taken from the east of the city towards the sea, depicting mainly the crusader church, half of the templar citadel, and most of the southern urban extension. To the left of the picture, close to the sea, we notice a building during its construction with the three arcs on its eastern façade. To the right of the image, on the citadel's outer wall, another construction appears with the same façade. This photograph shows the entirety of the organic road, the souk, that sprung out of the citadel in the 19th century, in which the building is of simple constructions.

Change, ed. Jamal Abed (Geneva: The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 2004), 26.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 25-26.



Figure 34. Aerial photograph of Tartus in 1926. Source: *Armée du Levant, le 39^e rég. Aviat, Bibliothèque nationale de la France.*

Soon after, the Beiruti house became a dwelling of exceptional popularity among the middle and upper classes. A picture from 1932 during the management of the cathedral's site shows a part of the Ottoman souk road and a part of the citadel (Fig. 36). All the houses on this road appearing in the photographs are of the Beiruti house, in addition to some examples in the citadel. By the mid 1930s, as apparent in the aerial pictures of the time (Fig. 29), a developed form of the Beiruti house, had become the norm construction over major streets. This form consists of a building where the ground floor is an arched store and on the first floor the house with the three arcs opening with a small balcony supported by corbels. While the construction remained the local sandstone *Ramleh*, the structural frame of these houses was concrete. This

form of habitat mixing residential and commercial had developed in Beirut apparently around the same time⁴⁰¹.



Figure 35. The surroundings of the cathedral seen from its rooftop in 1919. Source : Les archives départementales de la Vendée, fond Pierre Bart, 1 Num 48-23.



Figure 36. The surroundings of the cathedral seen from its rooftop in 1932. Source: Institut Catholique de Paris, Fonds André Robert.

⁴⁰¹ May Davie, *Maisons traditionnelles de Beyrouth: typologie, culture domestique, valeur patrimoniale. Volume 1: Le secteur de Rmeil-Médawwar* (Beyrouth: APSAD / CEHVI, 2004), 36.

The three arched house developed in Beirut organically as a result of various political developments; it went through many stages before reaching its iconic shape by the late 19th century. In Tartus, despite having some elements of it like the red tiles, it seems like it was imported in the 1920s overnight by a decision rather than by slow cultural contamination from the centre, in this case Beirut. It is important here to distinguish between two occurrences of this type that differ in location and in function: the row compact building in the newly established boulevards or enlarged streets on the one hand, and purely residential units of the Beirut house that have occurred in the citadel.

Examples from the first category can be spotted all over new and enlarged places, but here we will focus on three roads: the old Ottoman souk after it was enlarged, and the new wide streets created by the French, where this form was densest. This is not an exceptional case by any means; it is perfectly in line with the *Haussmanization* of the towns adopted by the French. In this context, it is fruitful to look into another Syrian city in the opposite side of Syria. Al- Qamishli in the northeast was a city entirely invented by the French, which shortly after became one of the largest cities in Syria. When describing the architectural and urban choice of the French authorities in the city, Daniel Neep explains that:

The new houses were strictly lined up along wide streets which were positioned perpendicularly. The shape of the doors and windows was based on a well drawn model which gave the quarter a stylish feel. The edges of the balconies were made uniform by a decorative flourish in the shape of a swirl... Adopting the spatial formations of Western cities, it was implied, would gradually instil in the Levantine population the disciplined habits of the French modern⁴⁰².

It is interesting to notice that the same principle was adopted in Tartus, however, the local three arched house of Beirut was chosen as a unit, modern and elegant enough to be replicated and used to create the city's main façades. In other words, on the urban scale, the forms remained mostly imported directly from the metropole,

⁴⁰² Neep, *Occupying Syria*, 147.

while on the architectural scale it was the regional form that was used. It is worth mentioning that, while in Beirut this form developed by the rising bourgeoisie and later adopted by other classes and even state figures, in the State of the Alawites, where this form arrived later, the French had much more agency, albeit always limited. While the local notables might have had a say in the adoption of this style in Tartus, the French kept the upper hand in the urban planning choices, specifically around crusader sites. The investment in the management of the crusader cathedral was significant, and it required the demolishing of many houses and shops, the control over the church, its site and function, which we will examine in detail in the next chapter, could not be completed without the control over the long façade of houses overlooking it. We are unaware if this style was used for non-residential building in Tartus, we know however it was used in Latakia such as in the design of the modern hospital (Fig. 37).

While the choice of this form appears to be a French decision for the major roads, simultaneously it gained popularity among the local notables. Many among these notables had property in the old town, meaning in the citadel, and starting from the late 1920s, we start noticing three-arched houses appearing on prominent crusader structures. The houses that appear in photographs and that are present to this day take place on the keep, the templars hall and above the walls of the citadel. Unlike the three-arched houses over the boulevards, these houses do not represent a French policy but rather reflect the city notables' desire to showcase prestige.

In fact, the increase of the population in the citadel and the allowance for construction in it was heavily contested by French scholars. Maurice Pillet, for instance, cites three examples of poor decision-making by the French authorities in the Levant concerning the built environment: the construction of a modern souk that concealed the crusader church of Saint John in Beirut, the erection of a *Sérail* in Aleppo without any architectural style, and, in Tartous, where the ruins of the crusader period could have formed an attractive touristic centre, the building of a concrete house in 1926 in the middle of the moat of the last wall, along with

additional houses built near the old basilica⁴⁰³. In his other article in the review *Urbanisme*, Pillet expresses again his anger for allowing this concrete to be built, “instead of liberating little by little the ancient city from its poor modern houses”⁴⁰⁴.



Figure 37. The modern hospital in Latakia. Source: Facebook page of the Syrian Medical Association (syndicate).

The house referred to here by Pillet is the three story Beiruti house built by the powerful family Tayyara in 1926. The building still stands to this day, built exactly on the outer moat ending it and connecting the fabric of the citadel with the neighbouring streets (Fig. 38). Many other examples show that, despite objections from specialists and attempts, as in other cases, to depopulate the citadel, the French authorities kept a *laissez-faire* policy in the crusader citadel, even when it meant direct alternation of the major fortifications to build these houses (Fig. 39).

⁴⁰³ Maurice Pillet, “Rapport général sur l’urbanisme dans l’Orient moderne,” in *L’Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux*, ed. Jean Royer, vol. 1 (1932), 199.

⁴⁰⁴ Pillet, *L’Urbanisme en Syrie*, 38.



*Figure 38. The Beiruti house of family Tayyara, erected over the external moat.
Source: taken by the author.*



Figure 39. Examples of the Beiruti houses built on top of crusader ruins under French rule, top: houses built on the northwestern corner of the outer wall of the citadel; middle: houses built on the southern inner wall of the citadel; bottom: houses built over the keep and the western defence system facing the sea. Source: taken by the author.

Overall, the arrival of the French per se does not seem to have immediately impacted the design choices of the residential architecture. The major changes started appearing once the French started their projects to reshape the city according to the networks of boulevards in the episcopal city in the early 1930s. The introduction of new building materials during the French Mandate had a profound impact on the built environment, most notably through the widespread use of concrete⁴⁰⁵. While walls were still built with the local sandstone, concrete was used for the structural frame of new buildings, mainly foundations, columns, beams, slopes, and some architectural elements, notably balconies. This allowed for further vertical stratification over ancient ruins but also for new constructions to get introduced to the city's skyline.

Concerning non-residential architecture, the shift between the beginning and end of the mandate period is clear. The new role of Tartus as a regional centre required the establishment of new services held in new structures. The first wave, in the first five formative years from 1920 to 1925, architecture seems to be generic but also familiar to the built environment in the late Ottoman period: arcs, *mandalun*, gabled roofs. Examples of structures from this phase include the Sérail, the "Casino", the Cinema, and the new school (mission laïque) (Fig. 40).

Later in the mandate, design of major architectural projects started adopting modernist principles in projects like the new building of the Laïque school and the new hospital. One project of particular interest from this design school is the centre of the Sacrés Cœurs, a Lebanese catholic order, tightly associated with the Jesuits. There is no trace of the building in the pictures from 1936 and the earliest picture we could find it in is from April 1942, when members of the 2/15th Australian Infantry Battalion were passing in front of the building on their way from Latakia to Tripoli (Fig. 43), meaning the building was probably constructed in the late 1930s.

⁴⁰⁵ Saliba, *Genesis of Modern Architecture in Beirut*, 32.



Figure 40. Pictures of the early projects during the French Mandate. Left: School, source: ESyria website; right: the Casino, source: Tartous Madinati Facebook page.

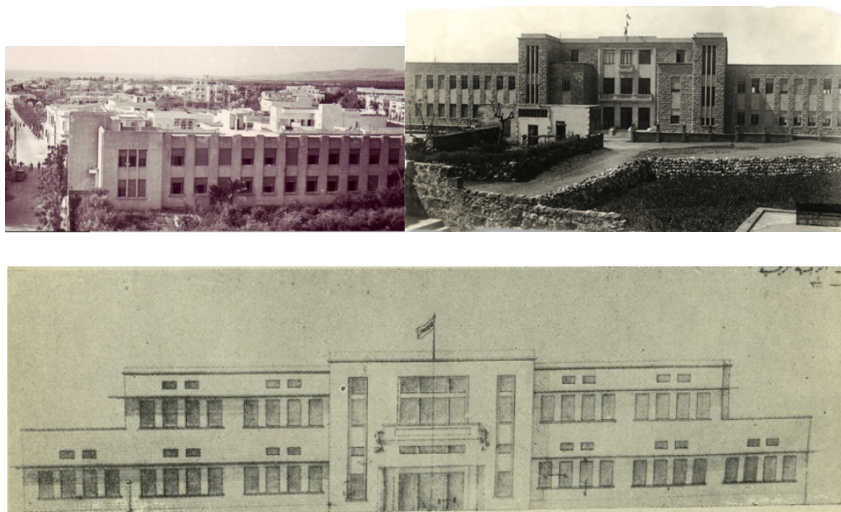


Figure 41. Pictures of the late projects during the French. Top left: The Sacré-Cœur order centre, source: Tartous Madinati Facebook page; top right: the new school of the secular mission, source: La Mission laïque française à travers son histoire 1902-2002; bottom: a plan of the preparatory school main façade, source: Syrian Modern History website.

Unfortunately, we could not find any information on the design choices made by the architects involved in these projects. With the available data, it is reasonable to argue that the shift to modernist architecture was part of the broader global trend during the interwar period, characterized by rejection of traditional forms.

These currents made their way into Syrian cities not only through the French personnel appointed by the colonial authorities, but also by individuals who have studied in Western universities and later were commissioned by the local nobility. A case in point in this context is the palace of the Abdul Razzak family that was built in the late 1930s (Fig. 42). It was designed by Lebanese architect Antoine Tabet⁴⁰⁶, who had studied in the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris and was strongly influenced by his mentor, French modernist Auguste Perret⁴⁰⁷.



Figure 42, Abdul Razzak Palace in Tartus. Source: Haykal-Tartous Facebook page.

⁴⁰⁶ Mahmoud Abdul Razzak, head of the Abdul Razzak family, interview by the author, conducted during previous research, 2018.

⁴⁰⁷ Arab Center for Architecture, “Antoine Tabet”, 2026, <https://arab-architecture.org/db/architect/antoine-tabet>

As discussed earlier, while the French authority left the citadel and its built environment with minimal intervention, they applied strict control over the space around the cathedral. While the southern side of the cathedral's site was occupied with aligned mix-function buildings, commercial and residential, in the Haussmanian way, the *Sacrés Cœurs* centre, stretching from east to west came to occupy the north side of the site. The time of its construction and its location came to translate the growing power and impact of the Jesuits in the Alawite State in the 1930s. As seen earlier, Jesuit priests have paid significant attention to the crusader narrative associating it with the Alawite people and their state. In this context, Notre-Dame de Tortose was of great symbolic significance and the control of the narrative was conditioned with the control of the cathedral and the space around it, a topic that we will be discussed thoroughly in the next chapter.



Figure 43. 2/15th Australian Infantry Battalion passing in front of the cathedral.
Source: Virtual War Memorial Australia.

4.2.1 Conclusion

The beginning of the French Mandate, marked a decisive turning point in the city's history, as Tartus was chosen to become the centre of a newly established province. This shift in status transformed the city into a testing ground for French urban planning practices, where the built environment had to be reshaped to reflect its new administrative role. From the outset, the French authorities recognized both the abundance and the significance of the crusader heritage in Tartus.

Their approach to urban planning followed patterns seen in North Africa and the Levant, where historic centres were compact and walled. What distinguished Tartus, however, was that its old city was itself a crusader citadel, one that the French administrators identified with and regarded as part of their own historical and cultural heritage. The crusader urban fabric, with its citadel, walls, and cathedral, became a determining factor in the new city plans. One could argue that the physical presence of these ruins naturally dictated the city's development, yet it is clear that across all levels of French administration, military, civil, and religious, there was a conscious intent to build upon this crusader legacy. The result was, in effect, a resurrection of the medieval city, reconstructed with modern urbanistic tools but within its historical form and limits.

By aligning new streets and public spaces with the orientation of the crusader structures, the French planners reproduced the old city's lines and rhythms to form the nucleus of modern Tartus and to establish the foundation for its future growth. The crusader episcopal city was revived; no longer defined by walls and towers, but by roads and landmarks. The boulevard, emblematic of French modernity and scientific urban planning, paradoxically became the principal instrument of this resurrection of the medieval city. It served both as a shaded promenade displaying the remnants of the Middle Ages and as a substitute for the old defensive features such as walls and moats. Most notably, the crusader cathedral reemerged as the city's most prominent landmark, a central element which will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

Yet the old city was not purely crusader. Over six centuries of Mamluk and Ottoman rule, Tartus, though marginal, had new structures and layers of history. Nevertheless, in the French vision, the crusader period was viewed as an *âge d'or*, overshadowing all other periods. A telling example is the Mamluk hammam adjacent to the keep, a well-preserved medieval monument. Despite its value and "medieval" character, it was almost entirely omitted by the French, regardless of affiliation, appearing only in two tourist guides under the label "Moorish bath" (*bain maure*), without any photograph or further detail. Despite this focus on crusader

heritage, no buildings constructed under the French appear to imitate, reproduce, or draw inspiration from crusader architecture.

This process did not end with the Mandate itself. Many of the planning principles and spatial patterns established by the French persisted well after independence. The street network they introduced continued to define urban orientations and design models, as evidenced by photographs from the 1950s: arched stores in the ground floor topped by houses with three arches on the main façade and a balcony in buildings lined up along large streets (Fig. 44). The legacy of French planning in Tartus, therefore, extended far beyond the colonial period, embedding a reimagined medieval city within the modern fabric of the post-independence era and shaping the city's identity for decades to come.



Figure 44. A new street constructed after the independence, 1950s. Source: Tartus Lovers Facebook group.



Figure 45. Mixed-use buildings, residential and commercial, with Beirut houses along a boulevard. Source: Tartous Madinati Facebook page.

5 Management of Crusader Heritage: the Cathedral

French involvement in the archaeology in Syria has been a major topic of research. Many scholars have addressed the French use of Syrian antiquity for political, economic and even military purposes highlighting the violence inherent in their heritage policies and the instrumentalization of the past as a tool of power⁴⁰⁸. French policies were not unique in this respect, as they were embedded in a wider colonial discourse that used architectural heritage to assert cultural hierarchies. In this framework, monuments became symbols through which Western powers judged and compared civilizations.

Architectural heritage has frequently been used as a metaphor for the level of civilisation in a certain geographical context. Western scholarship in the imperial era often portrayed Islamic and other non-Western architectures as inferior, derivative, and ahistorical. They were excluded from the “historical core” of architecture, reduced to stylistic curiosities, or romanticized as timeless and irrational⁴⁰⁹. In the French context, such notions were articulated and sustained by key figures within the French authorities, both in the Levant and in the metropole. During the Exposition of Beirut in 1921, Dominican priest Marie-Joseph Lagrange, founder and director of the *École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem*, gave his interpretation of Islamic “nomad” architecture as an imitation of the life in the desert:

We have said it: nomadic life and architecture are absolutely mutually exclusive. But won't the nomad, determined to build, try to express something of his old ideal in the stone house which will replace the fur house for him? This is perhaps the case with the

⁴⁰⁸ Among many, the works of Nathalie J. Bussemaker, Chiara De Cesari and Jennifer Baird.

⁴⁰⁹ Nasser Rabbat, “The Hidden Hand: Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and Architectural History,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 77, no. 4 (December 2018): 388-396.

mosque of old Cairo, spread out on the ground like a large tent, whose stakes, stuck in the sand, would have become columns⁴¹⁰.

Even for historian of art Émile Bayard, inspector general of artistic education and museums at the ministry of fine arts, all aspects of Arab architecture were traced back to the desert life where the lack of sculpture was due to the emptiness of models in the desert and the geometric forms in Islamic architecture is inspired by the clarity of the horizon line in the desert⁴¹¹.

The reception and management of classical architecture have been sufficiently studied in Syria and the rest of the Mediterranean; however, very little work has been done on the encounter between the French and the crusader heritage, a heritage more recent, more culturally familiar, and more closely intertwined with France than the classical past. To our knowledge, only the Crac des Chevalier has received academic attention as an example for colonial preservation of crusader sites⁴¹². After over a century of crusader mania in Europe, the French were now in control of these territories and crusader remnants were all what is left from this memory very cherished by the French.

With the Crac des Chevaliers, the cathedral of Notre-Dame to Tortose was one of the most captivating sites for the French in Syria. It has been presented by virtually every French scholar since the 19th century as the most beautiful crusader monument in Syria. Ceremonies were held there, priests brought it up in their conversion quest, journalists in France followed the news of its rehabilitation. The French involvement in the management of the cathedral was significant on many levels. Here, we will divide the focus on two different aspects: the use of the building and the

⁴¹⁰ Marie-Joseph Lagrange, "L'empire Palmyrénien," in *La Syrie et le Liban en 1921: La Foire-Exposition de Beyrouth. Conférences. Liste des récompenses* (Paris: Émile Larose, 1922), 58.

⁴¹¹ Émile Bayard, *L'art de reconnaître les styles coloniaux de la France* (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1931), 10.

⁴¹² See Hofman, *Le Crac des Chevaliers: Chroniques d'un rêve de pierre*, and Swenson, "Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation".

preservation work, each examining how decisions were taken, the actors involved and the effects of this management.

5.1 Contested Ownership and Function

As discussed in the historical overview, the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Tortosa enjoyed an exceptional importance during the crusader rule, being a major centre of pilgrimage. Its destiny immediately after the fall of the crusader states is not clear. Some sources indicate that it continued functioning as a Christian church and centre of pilgrimage even under Mamluk rule⁴¹³. As early as 1355, we can find a graffiti in Arabic made by a visitor containing the Islamic date: Ramadan 756 Hijri⁴¹⁴.

The first clue that confirm the conversion of the cathedral into a mosque already in the Middle Ages comes from the 19th century account of William McClure Thomson, an American Protestant missionary who worked in the Levant for 25 years. In a trip that Thomson did from Beirut to Aleppo in 1845, he passes through the Alawite region, spends time in Tartus and gives a very detailed description of the city and its surroundings. The reverend visits the cathedral expressing its beauty and the sorrow of its destiny: “It is the best specimen of its kind in Syria. Very solemn in its loneliness, very filthy and very full of fleas”. He finds two very interesting inscriptions, both documenting its conversion into a mosque but with a time gap between the two. The first, a stone above the pulpit states that “Muhammed es-Sultan” purified it and made into a mosque in the year 655 Hijri, which is the year 1257 CE. This dating is particularly doubtful since according to the traditional sources the city was fully under crusader rule. It is

⁴¹³ Both Max Van Berchem (*Voyage en Syrie* t.1, 330) and Camille Enlart (Camille Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés dans le royaume de Jérusalem: architecture religieuse et civile*, vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1928, 400) make this claim quoting medieval sources such as Marino Sanudo Torsello’s *Secreta fidelium Crucis*, or Damascene geographer Al-Dimashqi’s *Nukhbat al-Dahr fi ‘Aja’ib al-Barr wa-al-Bahr*. We consulted both original accounts but could not find this information.

⁴¹⁴ Meinecke, *Die mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, 71.

possible it was not well read by Thomson, but also, as the crusaders were losing territories exponentially quickly, perhaps they had taken control of the episcopal city of Tartus and what resisted was only the citadel.

The second Arabic inscription Thomson references also mentions the purification of the building by a certain “Furary el-Halaby”, this time in the year 782 Hijri, around 1380 CE⁴¹⁵. This is a much more plausible date, since the city had become firmly in the Mamluk hands, and it occurred right after the raids on the coast by the Latins based in Cyprus in the 1360s and 1370s. A possible sequence of events is that after the fall of the crusades in 1291 CE, even if the cathedral continued to function as a church, around 1380 it was formally converted in a mosque, which did not last for long since the city became too unsafe and it was abandoned and the population, certainly a meagre one compared to the time of the crusades, moved into the citadel. The 15th century Flemish traveller Joos van Ghistele confirms that the church is outside this city⁴¹⁶, meaning that by that time the city’s limits were confined to the crusader citadel. From then until the middle of the 19th century, the church is described as a lifeless shadow of the past by travellers, sometimes used for cattle, other times as a storage house⁴¹⁷, but always an abandoned structure out of the city.

The only source we were able to find in the present that has addressed the reuse of the cathedral in modernity after its abandonment comes from an online lecture by renowned Syrian archaeologist Dr. Michel Al-Maqdissi where he presented the milestones of the development of archaeology in Syria and heritage related services under the French mandate. Using slides of plans and photographs, he explains that in 1919 the city municipality asked the French authorities “that this building be converted into a mosque dedicated to Islamic worship”⁴¹⁸. Al-

⁴¹⁵ Thomson, *Tour from Beirût to Aleppo* in 1845, 250.

⁴¹⁶ Zeebout, *Tvoyage van Mher Joos van Ghistele*, 285.

⁴¹⁷ Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Middle Ages*, 43.

⁴¹⁸ Michel Al-Maqdissi, lecture at Columbia Global Centers Amman, YouTube video, published February 5, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R37qEW_jcII, 16:02 (in English).

Maqdissi shares a document currently in the archives of the Louvre, a report sent from the representative of the French forces in Tartus to the Haut Commissaire in Beirut on the matter in June 1919. The document states: "I have been informed that the Municipality of Tartous has requested that the old basilica of this locality be allocated to Muslim faith"⁴¹⁹. Al-Maqqdissi then continues that the French authorities refused to give the building a religious character and proceeded with its preservation as an archaeological site, commissioning Camille Enlart to study and prepare a conservation campaign.

By the end of the presentation, Al-Maqqdissi, answering a question from the audience about the conversion of the church into a mosque, he replies:

The church did not become a mosque. The building has a long history, because under the Ottomans, the building is located outside the city of Tartus. Under the Ottomans, they turned it into a mosque but nobody used to go there because it was far away, so the Ottomans wanted to sell it. And then the French came and then they [the population/municipality] asked to make it a mosque. France, or the authority in Beirut refused. After the independence, they renewed their demand to the Syrian government in Damascus, they refused too, and they made it a museum⁴²⁰.

In this view, Al-Maqqdissi was adopting the French official narrative regarding the developments leading up to the beginning of the mandate. This view was expressed between 1919 and 1922 in the French press, which we will examine later, and in the writing of the first archaeologist who studied the site under French rule, Camille Enlart. Enlart gives a very detailed study of Tartus cathedral in his study *Les Monuments des Croisés dans le Royaume de Jérusalem Architecture Religieuse et Civile*, published in 1928. Before

⁴¹⁹ « Il m'a été signalé que la Municipalité de Tartous avait demandé que l'ancienne basilique de cette localité soit affectée au culte musulman ». The next sentence continues on the next page which was not shared in the presentation. We requested access to this document from the Louvre archives in January and June 2025 but were unable to obtain it.

⁴²⁰ Al-Maqqdissi, lecture at Columbia Global Centers Amman, 1:22:00 (in Arabic).

the technical study, he gives a detailed historical overview for the city and the cathedral. Enlart states that by the beginning of WWI the cathedral was turned into a mosque which in turn was completely abandoned, when the Turks were stationed there, and then used by the French as a shelter for refugees in 1920 and then as a storage space in 1921, before the Muslims were allowed to use it for their worship in 1922⁴²¹. This decision caused controversies and was eventually annulled by the high commissioner Henri Gouraud, placing the building in the hands of the antiquity services. Enlart was perhaps the source for Al-Maqdissi, who had done immense work on the history of archaeology in Syria. However, this view does not hold up against scrutiny. It is important in this case to check the development of the use of the cathedral, prior to the arrival of the French.

At some point during the second half of the 19th century, the building was converted into a mosque. Enlart is the only source we have to precise the date of the conversion of the cathedral into a mosque in 1851, since he was the one in charge of removing the plaque commemorating the conversion⁴²². The date in the inscription is 1270 Hijri, which, according to modern conversion tools, overlaps mostly with the year 1854 rather than 1851. In any case, this date might be the beginning of a gradual process rather than a sharp and sudden conversion. We need to consult contemporary sources to spot this transition.

First, we have the studies conducted by Emmanuel Rey in the late 1850s and early 1860s, state-funded missions to explore the crusader castles of Syria and Asia Minor. In the studies published in 1866 and 1871, heavily focused on Tartus, he does not mention the conversion of the church into a mosque, meaning that by the mid 1860s it was not fully developed into a place of worship. The possibility that Rey simply did not report this conversion is very unlikely, since, like his contemporaries, he reported with great sorrow and grieve the conversion of other crusader chapels in

⁴²¹ Enlart, *Les Monuments des Croisés dans le Royaume de Jérusalem*, 402.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 401.

Crac des Chevaliers and Marqab to mosques⁴²³, so the great cathedral that he admired deeply would have deserved an indication. However, in his third study, published in 1883, he mentions that the cathedral had already been transformed into a mosque.

The fact that it is not a mosque yet is also confirmed by the account of Édouard Lockroy who accompanied Ernest Renan in his *Mission de Phénicie* in 1860. Passing through Tartus describing its main objects, he writes that “its church, so famous in the time of Saint Louis, now stands alone outside the modern city, in the middle of the cemetery.”⁴²⁴ Another travelling account mentioning the cathedral was *Voyage en Russie, au Caucase et en Perse, dans la Mésopotamie, le Kurdistan, la Syrie*, IV written by Frisian aristocrat and adventurer Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt, on his trips made from 1865 to 1868. The account mentions the great state of preservation and repeats Renan’s description of “le plus beau monument gothique de la Syrie”, without any mention of its function⁴²⁵.

In addition to literary sources, illustrations and photographs come to redefine the image we have of the cathedral in this period. Several illustrations of the church were made during the 19th century, however, mostly drawn from imagination or based on description. One of the earliest illustrations of the city of Tartus was made by French archaeologist and traveller Léon de Laborde in the 1820s (Fig. 46). In this illustration, showing the cathedral to the left, we notice that the cathedral still had the belltowers it had in the Middle Ages.

⁴²³ Rey, *Essai sur la domination française en Syrie durant le Moyen Âge*, 26-30.

⁴²⁴ Lockroy, *Voyage en Syrie*, 50.

⁴²⁵ Tinco Martinus Lycklama à Nijeholt, *Voyage en Russie, au Caucase et en Perse...*, vol. 4 (Paris: Arthus Bertrand; Amsterdam: C. L. van Langenhuisen, 1885), 344



Figure 46. Tartus in the early 19th century. In the centre: templar citadel, to the left: the cathedral. Source: de Laborde, *Voyage de la Syrie*.

One relatively accurate depiction was made by William Henry Bartlett depicting the church in a work published in 1837 (Fig. 47)⁴²⁶. This accuracy is evident in the architectural details, specifically the deterioration of some elements seen later in photographs such as the connection between the central nave and the western wall, the southern gate jamb, and the details of the inner gate leading to the northern aisle. The cattle scattered in the scene also confirms travellers' statements that the cathedral was used as a stable, so we can consider that we have one truthful visual depiction of the cathedral from the "abandonment" period.

⁴²⁶ John Carne, *Syria, the Holy Land, Asia Minor, &c.* (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1837), 57.

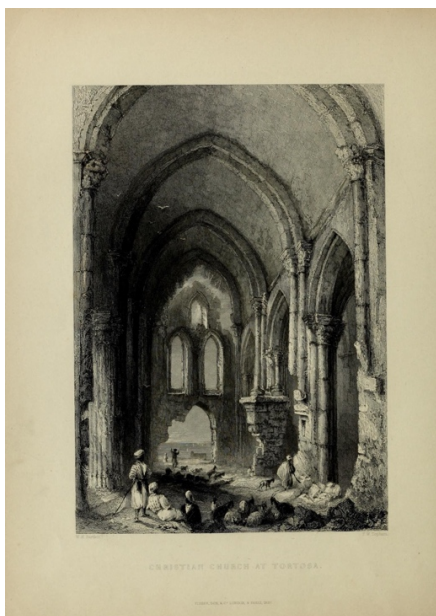


Figure 47. The interior of the cathedral, from the altar towards the entrance by William Henry Bartlett. Source: *Carne, Syria, the Holy Land*, 57.

The first photograph of the building comes from the late 1850s, when Emmanuel Rey invited photographer Louis de Clercq to join him in his mission. On his return, de Clercq published his photographs, in which plate number 13 is of the cathedral (Fig. 48)⁴²⁷. The photograph shows that the small minaret on the northwest corner was not built yet and that the gap in the roof between the central nave and the façade wall was still there. However, the gate was rebuilt and sealed completely by double arched opening and a wooden door. The intricate masonry indicates that it was being prepared for a new function, and the work looks too polished for a building with a trivial function like a stable or a storage room. However, although several years after the date of conversion mentioned by Enlart (1851-1854), the building was still missing some elements that would make it a proper mosque. Adding the testimonies of travellers above, we

⁴²⁷ de Clercq, *Voyage en Orient*, Pl. 13

can argue the inscription dates when the building was destined to become a mosque rather than the conversion date.



Figure 48. The oldest picture of the cathedral around 1859. Source: de Clercq *Voyage en Orient*, pl. 13.

Interestingly the first account we have at our disposal to testify for an Islamic function of the building does not explicitly state it was a mosque but rather of a certain religious nature. It is in the illustrated book *Picturesque Palestine, Sinai, and Egypt*, published in 1881. The first chapter of the book “Phoenicia and Lebanon” is an account by protestant missionary Reverend Henry Harris Jessup in which he describes a journey that he made with some companions from northern Phoenicia to the south, without any mention for when these trips were made but judging by the content and the date of publication, these trips must have occurred in the 1870s. Jessup writes:

South-east of Tartûs stands the Cathedral of the Crusaders, a fine edifice [...] As is usual in the Syrian cities, this grand Christian edifice is now the property of the Muslims, and we found a Muslim sheikh seated on a mat teaching a dozen little unwashed

boys to read the Koran. It is partly roofless, but not an utter ruin. It is a painful and interesting sight, yet such sights abound through this entire region from Aleppo to Tripoli. The beautiful lordly castles of the French and English Crusaders, with their Gothic chapels and spacious halls, are now turned into stables or filthy hovels, or used by Turkish mudirs and their zabties and servants⁴²⁸.

Jessup account confirms that in the 1870s, the architectural degradation of the roof was still there but the church was cleaned and is used for Islamic teaching. However, around that time, the roof was rebuilt, and the minaret was added, and the building had become officially a mosque, which is confirmed in Rey's third publication on the crusader structures in Syria when he explicitly states that it was now a mosque⁴²⁹.

Other accounts confirm that prior to the arrival of the French the building was functioning as a mosque. Jesuit priest Goudard arrives to the building expecting to find it a stable as was written in the sources he had consulted. He writes with great sorrow:

A stable would have been better than a mosque. And yet, that's what we found upon arrival. A dozen years ago, the building was put up for sale, but no buyer came forward, neither Christian nor archaeologist. So the venerable relic was topped with a small minaret; they removed the manure and introduced a wooden "mihrab." All the gold in the world won't redeem the noble Crusader now⁴³⁰.

The last account that we have from before the arrival of the French is the study by the two Arab officials Muhammad Rafiq Bek and Muhammad Bahjat Bek which took place during World War I. When describing the prominent places in Tartus, the authors write:

[...] the *monastery* of Tartus, which is now a mosque. This temple which is the most beautiful example of the 12th century style [...] It

⁴²⁸ Jessup, *Phœnicia and Lebanon*, 6.

⁴²⁹ Emmanuel Guillaume Rey, *Les colonies franques de Syrie aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Paris: Alph. Picard, 1883), 286.

⁴³⁰ Goudard, *un sanctuaire des croisades*, 719.

has been claimed that the builder of this temple is Saint Peter and that is why Christian pilgrims flocked it from all directions⁴³¹.

All of this makes the French narrative as expressed by Al-Maqdissi largely inaccurate. The French did not arrive to find an abandoned building that the locals were asking for its conversion. It had been a functioning mosque for about 50 years, without any record of an interruption in this status. Additionally, there does not seem to be any reason for this abandonment. The argument presented by the French press and Al-Maqdissi that the building was too far from the city would have been correct when the city was still confined to the crusader citadel with an entrance from the north, so further away from the cathedral. However, as demonstrated earlier, the urban fabric was already starting to spread south out of the citadel towards the cathedral (fig. 49). Pictures from the beginning of the 20th century, before and after the beginning of the mandate, show the cathedral surrounded with urban settlement (Fig. 7). This is also seen in the curvy and organic shape of the old souk that which starts from the citadel and moves south through the new constructions passing close to the cathedral. Thus, the cathedral was deeply connected to the rest of the city when the French arrived.

⁴³¹ Rafiq and Bahjat, *Wilayet Beirut*, II: 198.



Figure 49. The old souk and the cathedral in 1929. Source (of the base image): Institut Français Du Proche-Orient.

In fact, the French argument for the supposed abandonment of the mosque, adopted later by Al-Maqdissi, i.e. its distance and difficult accessibility, is built on the premise that a project of this scale in such a small town was commissioned and accomplished and only found useless after its completion.

However, what seems to have happened was exactly the opposite. As seen in the first chapter, under the Egyptian occupation of the Levant in the 1830s, some of the population started living outside the citadel; urban sprawl poured out of the citadel towards the south and continued in this direction for decades. This trend eventually ended up incorporating the cathedral into the urban space, making the building relevant again. The cathedral was no longer outside the city as it was for centuries, but within its agglomeration, making it ready for reuse. This makes more sense when considering the political context in which it has occurred; under the Tanzimat, and later the policies of Ottoman pan-

Islamism known as Hamidian reforms (1876–1909), new projects stood out with their impressive monumentality compared to the urban fabric that had developed in the pre-Tanzimat period⁴³². Therefore, the availability of such a monument in need for minimal restoration makes it the natural choice.

Nevertheless, comparing the accounts of Enlart, the French press and French reports on the matter, we are left with a seemingly inconsistent timeline. According to all these sources, the French arrived in 1918 to find an abandoned building, then, according to the report shared by Al-Maqqissi, dating to the 9th of June 1919, the local municipality asked for the building to be used for Islamic worship. It appears that within less than two months, a decision was taken to approve the attachment of the building to the Muslims because in late July of the same year, two French newspapers published some highly critical pieces on the matter firmly rejecting this decision. The first is *L'Écho de France* which reported that the building was classified as a historic monument simultaneously as it was attached to the Muslim faith. The author argued that the inner planning was well suited for the catholic offices there instead, asking eventually whether it was wise, in order to keep the French influence in Syria, to replace belltowers with minarets⁴³³. A few days later, another similar article published in *La Lanterne*, criticizing this decision to attach to the Muslim what the Catholics have built, this time arguing that it would have been much wiser to turn it into a museum⁴³⁴.

Enlart on the other hand mentions that it is in 1922 that the decision to attach the building to the Muslims was made, not 1919. His claim is further confirmed by another wave of protests in the French press. In August 1922, conservative newspaper *La Croix*, published an article under the provocative title “A Crusader Church Handed Over to the Muslims”. The article states with great sorrow that archaeologist Enlart had recently declared that the cathedral of Tartus would be handed to the Muslims to make

⁴³² Yenişehirlioğlu, *Urban Texture*, 503.

⁴³³ “Échos,” *L'Écho de France*, July 26, 1919, 2.

⁴³⁴ Fredo de Valay, “Monuments historiques en Syrie,” *La Lanterne*, July 30, 1919, 3.

it a mosque, sharing many false claims about the art that is about to be destroyed in the cathedral. Claiming that Tartus has the same history as any other French sanctuary of the Middle Ages, the author states that it is highly inappropriate that the French abandon what *their fathers have built* and give it away to the *foreigners*⁴³⁵. Other articles of the same nature were also published in 1922 in other French newspapers such as *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* and *L'Alsace Française*.

Enlart, however, had done extensive work on the cathedral the previous year and had dug four meters deep into its ground, meaning it could in no way be used as a mosque in 1921. All of this means that the decision to agree on the conversion was taken at least twice, in 1919 and in 1922, in both cases annulled soon afterwards. This might start to make sense if we introduce the element absent in the French record: local agency. Since the building was a functioning mosque, decisions to take over it certainly did not pass unchallenged. We can deduce that these back and forth decisions and inconsistent policies towards this building during the early years of the French mandate were part of a negotiation process and a battlefield of some sort between the French functionaries, clergy, military figures and journalists on one hand, and local notables and community leaders on the other, over the use and interpretation of crusader heritage in Syria.

On the ground, the local ambitions to continue using the site as a mosque never came to fruition and the building was stripped out of any religious character from 1922 to this day. However, despite the scarcity of local sources, we have some indications that far into the French mandate some Muslims, whether in Tartus or outside, continued their claim to the mosque. Two Arab scholars have observed the building during the French mandate. The first is the prominent Syrian scholar Muhammad Kurd Ali who wrote a highly influential encyclopaedic description of the Levant *Khitat al sham*. It took Kurd Ali 25 years to finalise his work, from 1925 to 1950, published in 1952. This makes it difficult to pinpoint the date of his descriptions; however, we can observe that most detailed

⁴³⁵ C. M. B., "Une église des croisés livrée aux musulmans," *La Croix*, August 13, 1922, 2.

events were described in the mid 1920s, and instances that have occurred afterwards are included as brief mentions, sometimes out of context. Thus, it is safe to assume that the account was written around the year 1925 or shortly afterwards. Interestingly, the cathedral of Tartus is mentioned in the section on the Mosques of the Levant, under the subsection *Mosques of the Coast*. Kurd Ali writes: "... and in Tartus a congregational mosque which was under the crusader rule a cathedral church."⁴³⁶ It is important to note that while the word "mosque" is usually used under different forms in European languages to refer to an Islamic place of worship, the Arabic language distinguishes between "masjid" and "jami'", both meaning a mosque, but the latter means a congregational mosque, used for the Friday prayer, which is the term used by Kurd Ali.

The other account comes from Egyptian renowned scholar Abdel Wahhab Azzam in an article published in the *Risala magazine* in 1945. The article describes a trip that Azzam did from northern Syria to Damascus during the celebration of the day of medieval Arab philosopher Al-Ma'arri in the autumn of 1944. Azzam writes:

[...] we reached Tartus at half past eleven. We stopped in a small park there next to an ancient church some European writers call Notre-Dame of Tartus for its resemblance to Notre-Dame of Paris. We entered the building, it is malfunctioning, and it requires restoration. It was taken for a mosque and a *mimbar* was added to it. It is undoubtful that it alternated between the hands of the Muslims and the crusaders during the wars of the crusades. After visiting this mosque, we sat for a bit next to a basin in the garden and then we rode [our cars] after half an hour after our stop⁴³⁷.

Both accounts were written during the French mandate, well after the cathedral was stripped of its religious function as a mosque. This may indicate a parallel narrative developing among Syrians in which the building was still considered a mosque, regardless of

⁴³⁶ Muhammad Kurd Ali, *Khitat al-Sham*, vol. 6 (Damascus: Nuri Library, 1952), 52 (in Arabic).

⁴³⁷ Abdel Wahhab Azzam, "In the Anniversary of al-Ma'arri," *Al-Risala*, no. 615 (April 16, 1945): 9.

its official status. Therefore, the building status might be regarded by the locals as an ephemeral phase before it would be returned into a functional mosque.

This might explain a curious and seemingly paradoxical occurrence. In 1929, Mahmud Abd al-Razzaq, head of the most powerful family in Tartus, during his mandate in the representative council representing the Sunnis in Tartus, proposes that an amount decided for the improvement of the road between Tartus and Homs to be deployed for the restoration of the cathedral⁴³⁸. Sunni families in the coast and Abd al-Razzaq in particular were strict opposers of French policies, mainly the separation of the Alawite region, in which they form a minority, from the central state in Damascus⁴³⁹. Additionally, they were the first to adopt pan-Arabism and to dismiss French claims of historic presentence in the Levant. Therefore, seeing the head of a family deeply involved in anti-French politics aligning with a project whose purpose is expressing French historic dominance was unexpected. It is reasonable to speculate that Abd al-Razzaq considered it a matter of time before this majestic building would be reused as a mosque. We could not rule out the possibility that his priorities were purely pragmatic; a restored historic monument in the centre of the city could reflect positively on the Abd al-Razzaq family's assets in the city.

Reading French source, one might have the impression that the second annulment of the conversion that took place in 1922 closed the door for the conversion once and for all. However, secret correspondence between the French intelligence services reveal that the question was far from over. Islamic institutions and community leaders were clearly determined to regain possession of the building and restoring its Islamic religious title. In 1928, the case seems to be mobilized all over again on many levels. Several confidential reports were sent to the *Service du Renseignement*, the French intelligence service, between September and December 1928. First, a report dated to the 13th of September informing on the content of the Sunni newspaper *The Echo of Latakia*. The article

⁴³⁸ *Journal officiel de l'État des Alaouites*, December 28, 1929.

⁴³⁹ van Caldenborgh, *Savage human beasts*, 133.

that appears in the newspaper is titled “Basilica of Torose” and in it, the author thanks the French high commissioner for “upholding the legitimate claims of the Muslim community of Tartous” by handing them over a mosque that had previously been assigned to a “storage facility (dépôt) for materials of the Agricultural Services and Public Works”⁴⁴⁰. The intention of the French authorities to use the building as a storage was never attested elsewhere, nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine the article talking about any other building than the crusader cathedral. What is being celebrated, according to other reports that will be examined hereafter, is a transition in property of the cathedral from the French authorities to the Islamic public property *Waqf* service, without restoring its religious nature.

In a report sent on the 17th of September, the Qadi of the city of Tartus and head of the Islamic public property, or *Waqf* service in the province of Tartus was summoned by the French head of the intelligence service bureau⁴⁴¹. The accusation was that he had received a telegram which he did not reported to the French authorities. The telegram was sent by the head of the waqf services in Beirut, concerning the evacuation of the crusader cathedral in Tartus. The report does not give any further detail.

On the 6th of November of the same year, another report was written concerning the suspicious activity of a young Sheikh by the name Abdul Haq Mansour, a graduate from Al-Azhar University of Cairo and an author in newspapers in Beirut, Damascus and Latakia. The report states that Mansour was circulating a petition, appealing for the notables to sign, demanding the return of the crusader basilica in Tartus to Muslim worship and the creation of a Muslim charity society. The reports claims that many wise notables rejected to signed it and even warned of Mansour’s activity which may cause disturbances⁴⁴².

⁴⁴⁰ Report, September 16, 1928, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Carton 1SL/1/V/1986 (Appendices, plate 9).

⁴⁴¹ Report, September 17, 1928, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Carton 1SL/1/V/1986 (Appendices, plate 10).

⁴⁴² Report, November 6, 1928, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Carton 1SL/1/V/1986 (Appendices, plate 11).

In a report sent on the 11th of December states that the Beirut office of the Muslim Association sent a letter to its correspondent in Tartus Aouad Adaoui, who delivered it to the Qadi of Tartus⁴⁴³. The letter states that the French authorities have accepted that the Waqf take over the crusader basilica and soon its keys will be handed to the Qadi or the Mufti of Tartus. The letter then requests the effective taking of possession but without any public demonstrations or use of the building for worship. Another report, this time dated to the 29th of December, states that another letter was sent from the Muslim Association to the Sunni Qadi of Tartus confirming the French authorities' approval regarding the effective takeover by the Waqf of the crusader Basilica of Tortose⁴⁴⁴. The Qadi was instructed, if he had not yet received the key to the monument, to request it from the local authority. The report also informs that the previously mentioned Sheikh Abdul Hak Mansour was continuing his activism in Beirut for the sake of transforming the cathedral into a mosque.

These reports make clear that local Islamic institutions continuously sought to challenge French policy, whether through official channels like the Waqf administration or through ordinary initiatives led by figures such as Sheikh Abdul Haq Mansour. The eventual transfer of the basilica's property to the Waqf, without restoring its religious function, suggests the outcome of tense negotiations aimed at preserving a fragile balance between local claims and colonial authority. By allowing Muslim ownership while prohibiting worship, the French sought to defuse potential unrest, contain activism, and symbolically acknowledge local demands without ceding full control over the monument's meaning or function.

This solution, however, does not seem to be definitive for the French. Both the function of the building and its ownership would soon change. As seen earlier, in 1933 Paul Deschamps's lobbying resulted in the French purchase of the Crac des Chevaliers, making

⁴⁴³ Report, December 11, 1928, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Carton 1SL/1/V/1986 (Appendices, plate 12).

⁴⁴⁴ Report, December 29, 1928, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Carton 1SL/1/V/1986 (Appendices, plate 13).

it officially a French historic monument. Some time around the year 1942, director of antiquities at the French high commission in Syria Maurice Dunand managed to obtain the cession to France of three of the most important crusader sites in Syria: the castles of Sahyoun and Margat, and the cathedral of Tartus. The context in which this cession happened is unclear. The only source we have is an article in *Le Figaro* published on 24 April 1946, meaning exactly one week after the French evacuation of Syria, in which the authors wonder what the destiny of these French possessions would be⁴⁴⁵. It is probable that the ownership of the site went to the Syrian State after the Syrian independence, together with Crac des Chevaliers. The French tried desperately to keep the latter during the negotiations between the two countries, provoking the Syrian representatives to ask whether the French would accept that the Mont-Saint-Michel would belong to a foreign power⁴⁴⁶.

Regarding the building's function, the church came to become a museum. The date for this conversion is debated, with some putting it as late as the 1970s⁴⁴⁷. According to Michel Al-Maqdissi, it was made into a museum soon after the independence in 1946. The French had already established a small museum in Tartus in the same building as the Sérail, as early as 1926⁴⁴⁸. This little museum was used a deposit to host some Phoenician objects found in Amrit with the intention to transfer them to Latakia once a museum is created there⁴⁴⁹. In the mid 1920s, Muhammad Kurd Ali, describing the museums in the Levant mentions the museum of Tartus stating that it is recently established with a small collection without major significance⁴⁵⁰.

⁴⁴⁵ Tharaud, "Souvenir d'épopée au Liban," 1.

⁴⁴⁶ Pénicaud, "Quand la France achète le Crac," 77.

⁴⁴⁷ Mathilde Ayoub, "Les musées syriens au XXe siècle, perpétuels processus de colonisations et de décolonisations ?," *Gradhiva* 34 (2022): 132

⁴⁴⁸ *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban (année 1926)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1927), 126.

⁴⁴⁹ *Journal officiel de l'État des Alaouites*, December 28, 1929.

⁴⁵⁰ Kurd Ali, *Khitat al Sham*, 178.

Interestingly, the earliest evidence of the French intention to make the building a museum comes from around the same time the building ownership was passed to the Islamic Wakf, so late 1920s. The *Guides Bleus* tourist guide notes, in its description of the cathedral, that “l’installation d’un musée [...] y est projetée”⁴⁵¹. Although published in 1932, the use of the administrative division of the State of the Alawites, abolished in 1930 to become the Government of Latakia, means that this information is from the late 1920s.

Pictures taken from the building show that already in 1934, even though the building was empty, the tip of an ancient sarcophagus is visible on the right edge of the picture (fig. 50, right). Pictures from 1936 show clearly that statues and archaeological objects were put on display (Fig. 51). One might argue the space was used as a storage room; however, some other elements might indicate otherwise. On a pillar of the nave we can see framed panels that might have held texts or maps (Fig. 51, right). Interestingly, one of the photographs show on the northern wall what appear to be shelves with books.

⁴⁵¹ Syrie-Palestine, Irak-Transjordanie, 237.

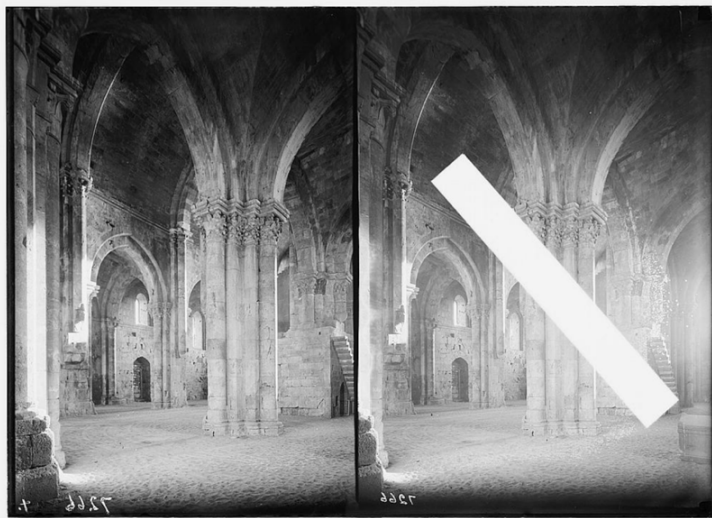


Figure 50. The interior of the cathedral in 1934. Source: Matson photograph collection, Library of Congress.



Figure 51. The interior of the cathedral in 1936. Source: Matson photograph collection, Library of Congress.

It is important to remember that around the same period, the Jesuits were quickly gaining power in the State of the Alawites, leading to the first Alawite conversions to Catholicism in 1931, as seen earlier. In the narrative promoted by the Jesuits, the cathedral was of most importance. Several Jesuit priests expressed their

desire to reestablish it as a centre for Marian pilgrimage as it was in the Middle Ages. Clearly such a step would have been too provocative, especially since the vast majority of Christians in the city are Greek Orthodox, unless the Jesuits were counting on the growth of the “Catholic Alawite” community. It is reasonable to think that the French authorities’ plans to museify the building was decided as a “neutral” position between the various conflicting actors. This decision might have been influenced by the contemporary case of Hagia Sophia where a museum can be introduced as a middle ground solution for contested heritage⁴⁵².

5.2 The restoration of the cathedral

The cathedral of Tartus and the Crusader citadel of Sidon marked the first French interventions in archaeological sites in the Levant under French rule in 1919. Under the authority of the first High Commissioner François Georges-Picot, a small team led by two inspectors was dispatched to conduct assessment campaigns, one at each site⁴⁵³.

As mentioned above, Camille Enlart was the first archaeologist to excavate the cathedral and conduct architectural surveys of the building during his six weeks stay in Tartus in October and November 1921. He was appointed to the High Commission by the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*. In a letter to the Académie, he briefly describes his work in the cathedral⁴⁵⁴. In addition to documenting the excavations, he tried to undo the earlier restoration of the gate carried out in the previous century when the cathedral was being prepared for conversion into a mosque, what he described as a “mutilation”, in order to restore harmony to the façade. Enlart also lamented the lack of funds for urgent preservation measures caused by the previous exploitation of the building by the locals for its stones.

⁴⁵² Tarhan, Tonga Uriarte, and Catoni, “Embodied Ideologies,” 526.

⁴⁵³ Al-Maqdissi, lecture at Columbia Global Centers Amman, 14 :40.

⁴⁵⁴ Camille Enlart, letter, in *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* (1922): 50-52

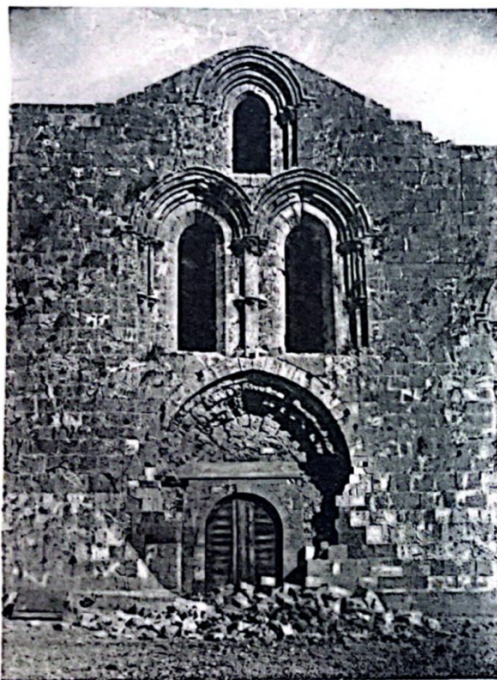
In his previously mentioned study on the crusader structures in the East, published in 1928, a year after its author passed away, Enlart gives a much more detailed report of his intervention. He enlists his excavation work, finishing with the removal of the main gate. He then regrets that the results would have been much more interesting if the ground hadn't been dug for a long time by the inhabitants looking for hidden treasures⁴⁵⁵, a complaint repeated by Western scholars, travellers and archaeologists since the 18th century. Enlart describes in great details the elements of the cathedral, referencing similar ones in French churches, occasionally to churches from the Latin East. After the thorough examination, he goes back to the history of the cathedral to fill up the gaps with knowledge he acquired on the field. Enlart was not exactly keen on hiding his ideology in his writings as he uses the words Muslims and "*infidèles*" interchangeably. He lobbied continuously in Paris for the annulment of the concession of the cathedral to the Muslims as evident in the accounts of the French press.

In addition to the gate, the main Muslim interventions were the minaret, *Mihrab* (prayer niche) and *Mimbar* (podium). Enlart dedicates a lot of effort to undo the Islamic work on the gate but leaves the other elements intact. The original marble pieces on the gate, as well as in other places in the citadel, were gone when Enlart had arrived. While he believes they were taken off in order to make lime, he outlines some reports that were spread in the city at the time that around 1840, the marbles were dismantled and taken away by the British⁴⁵⁶. The undoing of the Islamic interventions in the gate was justified by reasons of safety, since the work is poorly made according to him, and harmony, since the work shifted the entrance off the axis of the church. He removes all the "uninteresting" modern parts and reveals the mutilated origine (Fig. 52). With the help of an indigenous Christian, he manages to remove the unsafety, and takes down the tympan which had the inscription commemorating the conversion of the building into a mosque. He describes some iconography in the

⁴⁵⁵ Enlart, *Les Monuments des Croisés dans le Royaume de Jérusalem*, 403.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 414.

apse that were “savagely mutilated”⁴⁵⁷, though not clear if medieval or modern.



82 — Cathédrale de Tortose - Partie Centrale de la façade.

Figure 52. The cathedral's façade immediately after Enlart removed the Ottoman gate. Source: Enlart, Les Monuments des Croisés Album, pl. 26, Fig. 82.

He argued that in the first half of the 19th century, the cathedral still had its towers, and they were demolished only to erect the minaret⁴⁵⁸. He provides an imagined reconstruction of the cathedral (Fig. 53). Interestingly, this illustration of the cathedral in its “original” form was the one used by the Jesuits in the late 1930s in the map they published representing heritage sites of Syria (Fig. 23). The action of “replacing belltowers with minarets” was frequently used by various lobbyists as metaphor against the attribution of the cathedral to the Muslims. Enlart notices that the

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 414-423.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 416.

ground was dug recently, which he interprets as the search for lime to whiten the building in order to make it a mosque, while he reports the locals' tales that around the year 1870, there were some excavations, perhaps looking for marble, where skeleton of priests holding golden crosses were found there⁴⁵⁹.

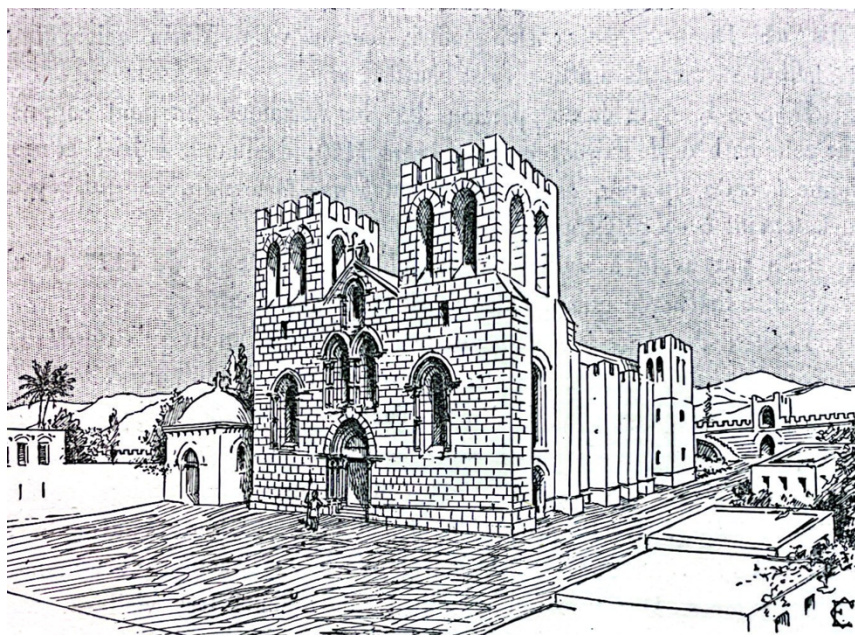


Figure 53 The cathedral in its original form as imagined by Enlart. Source: Enlart, *Les Monuments des Croisés*, 407.

In 1926, architect Maurice Pillet was commissioned with the first restauration to the basilica. Unfortunately, his restoration work has not been published⁴⁶⁰. He only published a lecture he had given in the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* in December 1926 on the church where he contributes to a hot debate on the function of an arched gate placed under one of the main pillars of

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 418.

⁴⁶⁰ We have tried to reach out to Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée where his collection is kept, but we did not get an answer.

the nave (Fig. 54)⁴⁶¹. The paper does not offer much insight in anything other than the debate it is tackling; however, it offers some invaluable pictures of the basilica's interior, exterior and surroundings.

In the same article cited earlier from the French monthly *Urbanisme* Pillet offered valuable insights into how the French incorporated crusader heritage in urban planning in Syria. He criticized the authorities for permitting poorly constructed modern houses in the old city of Tartus, which encroached on the basilica's immediate vicinity, once surrounded by gardens⁴⁶². The article was published in 1932, six years after Pillet finished his work in the cathedral. What he did not know is that in May 1927, soon after his departure, a decree "arrêté 1441" was announced prohibiting any construction within 50 meters around the cathedral⁴⁶³. This later resulted in a campaign to demolish all construction surrounding the cathedral. Examining photographs, we can see the transition happen somewhere between 1929 and 1932, as a part of the project to reshape the city (Figs. 35 and 36).

⁴⁶¹ Maurice Pillet, "Notre-Dame de Tortose," *Syria* 10, no. 1 (1929): [page] (note read before the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres on December 3, 1926).

⁴⁶² Pillet, *L'Urbanisme en Syrie*, 38.

⁴⁶³ Arrêté no. 1441, May 1927, *Journal officiel de l'État des Alaouites*.



Figure 54. The “gated pillar” inside the cathedral. Source: Pillet *Notre-Dame de Tortose*, pl. XI.

After Enlart and Pillet, it is unclear who took over the work in the cathedral. Al-Maqdissi argues the work on the cathedral was finished in 1926 with the work of Pillet, which might be the case for the archaeological work. Nevertheless, the restoration of the building continued throughout the years of the mandate. As in January 1928, the high commissioner sent an amount of money to the State of the Alawites, for the consolidation of the cathedral⁴⁶⁴. From 1926 to 1928, several reports documented the ongoing repair works at the basilica. Despite limited funds, urgent measures were undertaken, such as cementing cracks, reinforcing terraces, and addressing the most damaged sections of the structure, mainly the southeast tower. The Archaeology Service of the High Commission oversaw the works, which advanced steadily, with

⁴⁶⁴ Arrêté no. 1484. *Journal officiel de l'État des Alaouites*. January 7, 1928.

progress regularly noted in official correspondence and intelligence reports⁴⁶⁵.

The scale of the investment in this project was evident in the funds allocated to it. In addition to occasional donations from the French High Commission in Beirut, the annual budget of the State of the Alawites consistently demonstrated financial commitment to the works on the cathedral specifically between 1929 and 1933. In the annual budget published in the final 1929 issue of the *Journal Officiel* of the State of the Alawites, funds were allocated to the state's main urban centres, with each entry briefly noting the major needs of a given city or town. In Tartus, the budget was dedicated for demolishing modern constructions around the cathedral as part of a broader project to beautify the city⁴⁶⁶. In April 1930, the authorities allocated funds for public works across the Alawite territories. Tartus alone received about 27% of this budget for the restoration of the area surrounding the cathedral⁴⁶⁷, an amount nearly equal to the budget dedicated for the public works in the capital of the State, Latakia⁴⁶⁸.

In the municipality budget of Tartus for 1931, published in February, 40% of the public works budget was allocated to the development of the cathedral, representing about 15% of the city's total budget⁴⁶⁹. Later that year, the budget was revised and republished in November. In the updated version, the funds dedicated to the restoration and maintenance of the basilica more than doubled, accounting for 60% of the public works budget and approximately 28% of the entire municipal budget, while

⁴⁶⁵ Various reports, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Cartons 1SL/1/V/1986 and 1SL/1/V/1845 (Appendices, plates X–Y).

⁴⁶⁶ *Journal officiel de l'État des Alaouites*, December 28, 1929.

⁴⁶⁷ We chose not to mention the monetary amounts, as the French authorities used multiple currencies (livre, piastre, franc). Expressing the allocations in percentages provides more clarity and consistency.

⁴⁶⁸ Arrêté no. 5481, April 19, 1930, *Journal officiel du Gouvernement de Lattaquié*.

⁴⁶⁹ "Budget de la municipalité de Tartous, 1931," *Journal officiel du Gouvernement de Lattaquié*, February 28, 1931.

allocations for other projects were mostly reduced⁴⁷⁰. In the municipality budget of Tartus for 1932, a similar pattern is repeated, where the allocations doubled by the end of the year⁴⁷¹.

By the mid-1930s, the cathedral had emerged as the city's most prominent landmark, as shown in aerial photographs taken by the French army (Figs. 29). The clearance of its surroundings made possible the creation of an octagonal garden, encircled by boulevards as seen earlier (Figs. 55).

Going back to the cathedral's gate, visiting the building today, one finds that it has been restored to resemble that of a typical French Gothic church, with its iconic colonnettes. However, in a photograph published in the French magazine *Sciences et Voyages* in 1954 (Fig. 56), so eight years after independence, we can see that the gate of the cathedral was still how Camille Enlart had left it over 30 years earlier when he removed the plaque commemorating the modern conversion of the building to a mosque to reveal the deteriorated original. The article states clearly that the photos were taken by the author during a trip that he made to Antioch and the Syrian coast⁴⁷². This means that the iconic gothic colonnettes gate in place today was not added under French rule, but afterwards. It is not clear when these changes took place; pictures from the early 1960s show the gothic gate was already restored by this time (Fig 57), meaning it was resorted somewhere in the late 1950s. Additionally, the mihrab of the mosque, still visible in 1934 (Fig. 50), was also removed at some point.

⁴⁷⁰ "Rectificatif no. 4378/I," *Journal officiel du Gouvernement de Lattaquié*, November 7, 1931.

⁴⁷¹ The revised budget of 1932 lists a much higher figure; however, a closer look reveals it was likely a typographical error. The amount is recorded as 2,862.34 P.L.S. (Piastre Libano-Syrienne), but removing an extra zero makes all the calculations align perfectly, making the actual number 612,34 PLS.

⁴⁷² Bernard Quris, "D'Antioche aux monts des Assassins," *Sciences et Voyages*, no. 100 (April 1954): 34.



Figure 55. Aerial photograph showing the cathedral in the Mid 1930s. Source: Armée du Levant, la 39e Escadrille aérienne.

The context in which these restorations were executed is not entirely unclear. It is most probably related to the work of Syrian archaeologist Salim Abdulhak who was appointed Director-General of Antiquities and Museums in 1950⁴⁷³. He launched a wave of interventions in all the major heritage sites in Syria, and he is credited with the establishment of the museum in the cathedral of Tartus⁴⁷⁴, even if this was a French decision as established earlier. Details of this intervention in the cathedral are not available, but since the fate of the cathedral under the French

⁴⁷³ Andrée Abdulhak and Samir Abdulhak, “De la Direction des Antiquités syriennes à la Direction du Patrimoine mondial,” in *Pionniers et protagonistes de l’archéologie syrienne, 1860–1960: D’Ernest Renan à Sélim Abdulhak*, ed. Michel Al-Maqqissi (Damascus: Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées, 2008), 300.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

resembled that of the Crac des Chevaliers, we could try and fill the gaps by what we know about the latter. Abdulhak was very enthusiast for the Syrian regain of ownership of the Crac des Chevalier⁴⁷⁵.

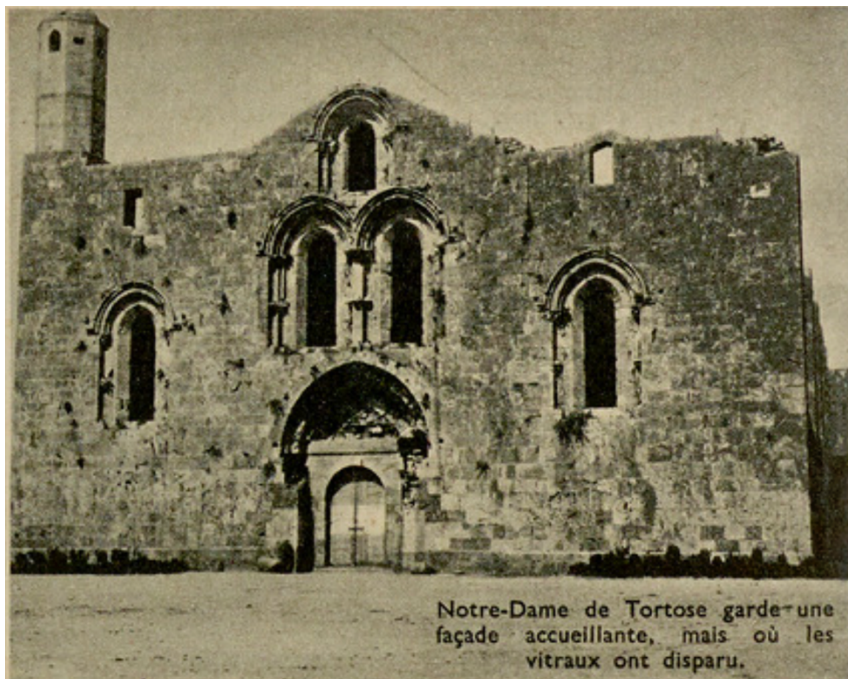


Figure 56. The cathedral in the early 1950s. source: *Quris, Sciences et Voyages*, 40.

Around the same time, meaning early 1950s, the Directorate-General of Antiquities commissioned Syrian Armenian architect Georges Kalamkarian to take over the work that had been done by François Anus and Pierre Coupel in the Crac des Chevaliers⁴⁷⁶. Since Anus was also active in Tartus, it is plausible to suggest that the restoration of the Gothic gate of the Cathedral of Tartus occurred within the same

⁴⁷⁵ Pénicaud, “Quand la France achète le Crac,” 77.

⁴⁷⁶ Michel Al-Maqdissi, “Le Crac des Chevaliers, ou la question incontournable de notre existence archéologique,” in Jean-Marc Hofman and Emmanuel Pénicaud, eds., *Le Crac des Chevaliers: Chroniques d'un rêve de pierre* (Paris: Hermann Éditeurs, 2018), 111.

framework, under the direction of Salim Abdulhak and carried out by Kalamkarian during this period.



Figure 57. The cathedral in the early 1960s. Source: private collection.

Going back to Al-Maqdissi, he reports that the locals reached out to the central government in Damascus after the independence asking for the conversion of the cathedral into a mosque, a request that Damascus refused and declared the building a museum.

This means that the change in the political discourse and the transmission of ownership from the French State to the Syrian one did not translate in the use of the building, despite local pressure, nor in the restoration plans that what the French had set up. While very often the change in the political structure leads to changes in the management of heritage sites, specifically in symbolically charged monuments⁴⁷⁷, the fact that the cathedral got its most gothic feature after the independence while keeping it from being a mosque shows continuity with the French vision.

⁴⁷⁷ Hakan Tarhan, Yesim Tonga Uriarte, and Maria Luisa Catoni, "Embodied ideologies: Hagia Sophia contended status between mosque and museum / Ideologie incarnate: Hagia Sophia contesa tra moschea e museo," *Il capitale culturale*, no. 25 (2022): 521.

Conclusion

The management of the crusader cathedral in Tartus demonstrates that the French authority was never absolute and their politics were frequently contested and negotiated. The little minaret that was erected in the 19th century when the building became a mosque can be a convenient way to demonstrate this. Almost every French author who wrote about the cathedral emphasized that it has been mutilated by the later addition of the minaret; yet, there is no evidence, textual or otherwise, that any plan was ever made to remove it. The French administration would have not hesitated for a second to remove it, had they possessed full agency. It was only removed in illustrations such as the one by Enlart which later appears in the Jesuit Journal (Figs. 23 and 53). Even the most significant act of “de-Islamisation”, the removal of the Ottoman gate and its commemorative plaque, had to be officially justified on grounds of safety concerns rather than ideology. Even when reporting the matter in the annual report to the League of Nations on the situation in Syria and Lebanon, the tone appears apologetic and justificatory for this attention, as it states:

For the Frankish period, priority has been given above all to carrying out the restoration project of the cathedral of Notre-Dame of Tortosa, which is threatened with partial collapse, since the inhabitants have removed stones from several of its corners and buttresses. This church, which is not only the most remarkable that the Crusaders built in Syria, but also one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture, deserves particular attention, and it is highly desirable that the concerned authority, that of the Alawites, will very soon find the necessary resources, if not for its complete restoration, at least for the most essential consolidation works⁴⁷⁸.

Since the cathedral was used as a mosque, and also taking into account the high level of preservation that scholars have contested, we see that these safety concerns are clearly exaggerated and the reason behind the urgency is stated as purely its artistic value.

⁴⁷⁸ *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban (année 1925)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1926), 85.

Additionally, the cathedral is an example of *historic inertia* where past patterns continue shaping the present, even when conditions have changed. This appeared first after the French closed the building for Muslim worshippers. The pressure did not come from religious institutions in Damascus, but from Beirut, which was the capital of an independent country since 1920. It can be argued that the involvement of the Wakf in Beirut was not only the religious concern of a Muslim body over a mosque, but also a legacy of the institutions that had developed in the Ottoma-era Wilayet of Beirut, when the Wakf was responsible for the restorations and management of Islamic public buildings⁴⁷⁹, a continuity of institutional structures that persisted into the new political context.

Similarly, the early years of the independent Syrian Republic witnessed a continuity in the restoration method and building use, despite protest. One might argue that this continuity is simply technical, as Syrian architects were following plans originally established under the French. However, the possibility of a deliberate continuation of an ideology shaped during the mandate cannot be dismissed. As noted earlier, from the early days of the mandate, the French administration invested considerable effort in transmitting its understanding of the East to local populations, primarily through education. This process contributed to the emergence of a Francophone elite that continued to occupy key positions within the State well beyond the end of the mandate.

This complexity might indicate that the issue cannot simply be reduced to a dichotomy of “colonial vs. local.” French and Western culture in general were viewed by certain segments of the local population as superior and an association with the West meant modernism and progress. This was particularly popular in the Christian community in addition to Alawite elite figures who had struggled to disassociate with Islam and Arabism, sometimes even associating with the crusades, as seen in the third chapter. Therefore, the debate over whether the building should function as a museum or a mosque was not only a colonial vs. native matter,

⁴⁷⁹ Yenişehirlioğlu, *Urban Texture and Architectural Styles after the Tanzimat*, 489.

but also reflected tensions between modern and traditional, and, to a certain degree, between Sunni Muslims and religious minorities. In this sense, the introduction of a Gothic gate can be understood as part of a broader continuity in the effort to reframe the building according to an “original” form aligned with the city’s so-called golden age under crusader rule, making it a physical embodiment to French colonial ideology executed after independence.

Conclusion

Through the examination of crusader heritage and its management under the French, we can conclude that the colonial experience in the Syrian coastal region was an anomaly within the French Empire. It goes without saying that no two colonies have the same experience. However, the Levant, and the Alawite State in particular, were certainly a special case in the resurrection of history to legitimize colonisation. The French maintained the rhetoric of the *mission civilisatrice* that had become the slogan of French imperialism worldwide. Yet, over a century old fascination with the crusades eventually led to a constant gaze into the past. This paradox between a will to modernize on the one hand and the obsession with a medieval event on the other was solved with the notion of the “glorious past”. The crusades had to be reproduced to be in line with the contemporary French colonial mindset of the 19th and early 20th century, and the brutality of the event in addition to any other inconvenient aspect had to be swept under the rug.

Orientalist scholars starting with Emmanuel Guillaume Rey in the 1860s developed a framework in which the Latin states were portrayed as a society that mirrored what the French had deemed a perfect colony. This was later picked up by French officials who saw in the crusades the beginning of French imperialism and the start of their domination and civilising effort in the East. This was expressed in the Syrian coastal region repeatedly, as French military and civil officers always claimed a revival of a French tradition of domination. This was also reflected in the charitable work of the Jesuit fathers during their interaction with Alawite villagers who converted to Catholicism. The miserable conditions were viewed as result of accumulated ignorance and persecution to an essentially Christian crusader population. Therefore, in the Alawite region in particular, the French kept their eyes on the past and the future at once. The acceptance of French domination and assimilation to French culture were simultaneously a move forward and a return to the past.

This ideology was reflected on the interpretation of the crusader architectural heritage in the Levant. Starting with Rey, crusader

citadels and churches started to get depicted as the result of coordination between French authorities and the local populations in a perfectly harmonious society. French officers treated crusader sites as material evidence of French long-standing hegemony in the Levant. After the creation of an independent state on the coast, these sites became symbols of the *âge d'or* and emblems used on every occasion to promote the state's exceptionalism, hence its independence. Although these ideas started as a colonial narrative, it was later picked up by some individuals from the Alawite nobility and intellectuals to defend their independence against annexation to Syria.

The interventions in the built environment were the main physical embodiment of the crusader ideology on the ground. Tartus represents the ideal case study to follow this strategy for two reasons: it has different well preserved crusader structures, and it was chosen by the French authorities to become a major city, which required many interventions. Tartus was well known for its exceptional crusader heritage which was admired and documented by French scholars from Ernest Renan and Emmanuel Guillaume Rey in the mid 19th century, to Weulersse by the end of the French mandate.

Examining the French urban planning strategies in Tartus, we can see the paradox, i.e. simultaneous attention on the modernisation mission and revival of the crusader past, at full play. The boulevard, the main "scientific" tool used in French planning was deployed to resurrect the crusader medieval city. These boulevards ran along the crusader city walls, which were cleared and made visible. Intervention within the templar citadel appears to have been limited, yet the citadel itself was made visible through the creation of a boulevard running along its eastern moat. The main attention, however, was given to the crusader cathedral Notre-Dame de Tortose. Major boulevards converged into the site of the cathedral where all surrounding constructions were demolished and a garden and a public square were created, making the cathedral stand out as the most prominent monument of the city.

The management of building of the cathedral itself was not less significant. Conflicting interests and visions between the local Muslims, Islamic institutions, notably in Beirut, French officers and the Jesuits priests led the building to fluctuate in possession and use between the municipality, the Islamic Wakf, the French government and eventually the Syrian government. The function of the building also reflected this conflict; the high commissioner had to intervene to prohibit Islamic worship. Interestingly, an ironic modern use of the cathedral was the revival, perhaps unintentionally, of the medieval use of the building for military purposes. Just like when the eastern towers in the back of the cathedrals were equipped with arrow slits in the 13th century, in the early 1920s, the French authorities equipped the apse with machine guns during the Alawite rebellion⁴⁸⁰. Its concession to the Islamic Wakf in the late 1920s at the condition of prohibiting it for Islamic worship was a compromise between the conflicting agents involved in this matter. Eventually, it was made a museum and then appropriated by the French in the early 1940s with other crusader sites.

The cathedral management also shows the approach of simultaneous modernisation and medieval revival. The symbolic importance of the cathedral to the French authorities led them to firmly reject its use as a mosque. The preservation efforts tried to partially de-Islamise it, mainly through the removal of the Ottoman gate and the plaque commemorating its conversion to a mosque. These efforts were placed in the context of public safety on one hand, and the restoration of the building's harmony on the other, and the choice of a museum was in line with this modernisation rhetoric.

The management of the built environment in Tartus also provides an example of historical and institutional inertia and how previous political regimes continue to shape and influence decisions, well after their dissolution. Two examples can be found in the research: the first instance is how Beirut continued to function as a centre and to, whether directly or indirectly, shape Tartus. When the

⁴⁸⁰ Enlart, *Les Monuments des Croisés dans le Royaume de Jérusalem*, 409.

French arrived, Tartus had been part of the Ottoman Wilayet of Beirut for 30 years. The continuous influence is clear in the intervention of the Islamic institutions in Beirut in the debates over the use and possession of the cathedral. Additionally, under French rule, the Beirut house gained significant popularity among the middle and upper classes, meaning it was Beirut rather than Latakia or Damascus where the local elite looked for design trends. Finally, one of the channels modernist architecture arrived in the city was through Western educated Lebanese architect Antoine Tabet. The other example for historic inertia is the management of the cathedral after independence. The Syrian authorities continued the French policy regarding the function of the building and its restoration; the local municipality's request to relist the building as a mosque was denied in 1946 and in the late 1950s, the "original" gothic gate was installed.

Comparing the French mandate in the Levant with the colonisation of North Africa provides a clear pattern in the French policies and their tendency to single out the "Western element" and integrate it in their policies. While references to the classical period and attempts to identify with Rome was common throughout the French Mediterranean colonies from the Levant to Morocco, these claims remained rather generic, poetic and metaphorical. The crusades and the "thousand years old French tradition" in Syria, on the other hand, were embedded in official communication and strategies on the highest diplomatic levels from Georges Clemenceau to Charles de Gaulle. They contributed to shaping policy decisions and maps and, in some cases, were legally appropriated. As seen in the second chapter, this came after a century old fascination in the crusades and their heroic stories of chivalry and honour and an increasing appropriation of the crusades by European powers, in which France was the most active.

Rome and Greece were always relevant and brought to the foreground by the French authorities, whether in North Africa or the Levant; however, crusader history offered a memory that was far more immediate, intimate and familiar. Even after the independence, standing in front of Notre-Dame de Tortose French traveller Bernard Quris writes:

The impression felt before the old church is that which one experiences upon encountering the face of a friend again. Not that the building has the proportions of a cathedral; its weathered stone is neither humble nor arrogant: one might say it is maternal. Surmounted by three bays, the entrance opens, utterly simple, welcoming and familiar⁴⁸¹.

What came to be called “medievalism” in Europe is better described in the Levant as “crusadism”, because the fascination in the Middle Ages was exclusive to the crusades. The other “medieval” structures such as the pre-crusader Sultan Ibrahim Mosque in Jableh or the Mamluk hammam in Tartus are almost entirely absent from image communication. If we are to accept that the French avoided highlighting Islamic sites in the State of the Alawites in an attempt to preserve it as a West-oriented agent state like Lebanon, the “non-Muslim” past chosen to be highlighted was not arbitrary; it was the crusader past at the expense of all other layers. The city of Ugarit, the Phoenician temple of Amrit, the Hellenistic temple of Baetocaece, and the Roman amphitheatre in Jableh, to name a few, are almost nowhere to be seen in the images used to communicate the past of the Alawite region. Only Assassin castles appear sometimes; however, their history is seen as complementary to that of the crusades.

Images of the crusader sites of Crac des Chevaliers, the cathedral of Tartus, the Sahyoun castle, and the Margat Castle, among others, were present on stamps, on touristic posters and models in colonial expositions and French museums (Figs. 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 58). They were the backgrounds in pictures of French officers in their official visits, imbedded in their stories on superiority and submission. They were a metaphor for the Jesuits in their effort to create an Alawite-crusader identity and to equate these sites with the Alawites whom they were trying to convert: Christian crusaders lost in the land of Islam. By the final years of the mandate, these sites had become French territories, treated, at least legally, like any heritage site in the metropole. It is in this context that Tartus’s built environment and its management become an exceptionally telling case. It is where this narrative could take shape in an urban setting rather than distant and isolated castles.

⁴⁸¹ Quris, “D’Antioche aux monts des Assassins,” 39.

Nevertheless, when comparing these sites with the Roman sites in North Africa, the interventions in the State of the Alawites seem to have remained relatively limited. The ancient Christian remains in Carthage in Tunisia were partially rebuilt and used in Christian rituals. In Tartus, the crusader cathedral was not *a* church but *the* church, known for its artistic quality, level of preservation and its importance as a pilgrimage site in the Middle Ages. We can be confident to assume that the dominant desire among the French was to “de-Islamise” it completely and bring it back to its “original state”, at least physically. Yet their interventions were often contested and had to be calculated and negotiated.



Figure 58. A sample of stamps from 1925, all images from the State of the Alawites are crusader sites. Top right: Notre-Dame de Tortose, bottom left Crusader Keep in Safita, bottom right: Crac des Chevaliers. Source: private collection.

Although the French claims of medieval influence in Syria dating back to the crusades was a convenient invented tradition, French presence and influence were in fact much older than the French mandate. After all, they did not arrive to an entirely unfamiliar terrain; there had already been French archaeological missions, military campaigns, religious missionary activity, and diplomatic presence. This involvement occurred in the modern period, mainly with the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt and Syria. This coincided with the Ottoman reforms of the 19th century and the project to modernize the State. Another channel of modernization from around the same time was the emergence, in the Levant and Egypt, of a growing educated elite, trained in Western institutions,

which contributed to the cultural movement later known as the Arab *Nahda* (Arab Awakening). Therefore, these methods of modernization, whether in the built environment or elsewhere, were not the products of direct colonial rule alone. The continuity of the urban planning and heritage preservation methods after independence was also the result of long exposure to Western modernization that intensified under French rule. These were the “correct” and “scientific” approaches to restore national heritage of a rising nation-state like Syria. In this context, the French mandate was at times, in fact, a force of modernization and progress supported by the educated and resisted by traditionalists.

The aim of this analysis is not to glorify colonial rule, but to shed light on the complexity of the colonial experience in Syria. Without proper understanding of the particularity of the power (im)balances during the mandate system in the Levant, the case could be reduced to increasingly popular historical clichés of pure oppressed-oppressor narrative, equating the Syrian case with far more brutal colonial experiences worldwide. The growing global movement of “decolonisation” poses a serious challenge for the Syrian context, as the “pre-colonial” period will inevitably be ideologically determined.

It is fruitful in this context to examine the fate of the crusader heritage after the Syrian independence. The Arabist regimes that came afterwards had one solution to reclaim the crusader history: Saladin. By associating crusader sites with Saladin, who had become the crusader defeater par excellence already in the 19th century as seen in the second chapter, these sites became a reminder of Western defeat rather than glory. The Sahyoun castle was renamed the castle of Saladin. In 1977, a banknote was issued featuring Crac des Chevaliers with the portrait of Saladin (Fig. 59), celebrating him as the conqueror and liberator, although he could never conquer the castle. In Tartus, the street surrounding the crusader citadel was renamed Street of Saladin. This is in addition to many statues and cinematic productions of the hero, all while completely neglecting his Kurdish origin. Therefore, this “decolonising” efforts were not any less selective and manipulative than the methods deployed by the French.



Figure 59, Crac des Chevalier with the portait of Saladin on the 25 Syrian pounds banknote. Source: private collection.

On the other hand, a reading of the Syrian colonial experience without its nuances and complexity can lead to the complete and uncritical adoption of the French narrative as a force of civilisation and progress. Even renowned Syrian scholars such as Dr. Michel Al-Maqdissi have expressed such views. After a presentation he gave about the development of heritage services in Syria under French rule, I asked him whether he noticed the colonial dimension of French treatment of Syrian heritage. He answered that there was no coloniality in the French heritage policies in Syria, arguing that the French paid attention to Islamic and Western sites equally. This research does not argue that the French neglected Islamic heritage. Rather that the French had a vision for the Levant that required different heritage policies depending on the region and the perception of the colonial apparatus. Therefore, the Islamic heritage was pushed to the foreground in its “proper” place, in cities like Damascus, Aleppo, and Hama, yet it was pushed to the margins in Lebanon, Sandjak of Alexandretta and the State of the Alawites.

While this research focuses on the first half of the 20th century, many questions remain unanswered about the interpretation and management of crusader heritage in the second half of the century and the early 21st century, i.e. under the rule of the Assad family. It is worth asking how politics were reflected on these sites in a country where the crusaders came to be increasingly identified

with the Israelis. Across the Arab world, dictators competed to present themselves as the next Saladin, who had come to be the unmatched medieval hero. This image of crusader brutality and Saladin's nobility gained international visibility through the widely successful film *Kingdom of Heaven*, spreading this narrative far beyond the Arab-Muslim world. It is only amusing to wonder how the Jesuit priests would have reacted to the fact that, from across the Arab-Muslim world, the role of Saladin was given to actor Ghassan Massoud, an Alawite from a village in Tartus located in the heart of their missionary activity, where their effort to promote an Alawite-crusader identity was the most intense.

Plate 1. Report on Italian interests in Syria on 27.07.1928.

DECLASSIFICATION
VICE DES RENSEIGNEMENTS
- - - - -

N° I.678/B.R.

REVUE DE LA PRESSE

Période du 16 au 31 Juillet 1928

- - - - -

L'ÉCHO DE L'ATTAQUE (Sunnite)

Rien à signaler dans le N°294 - II9 du 16 Juillet 1928

Dans celui du N°295-III0 du 23 juillet, sous le titre " La Colonisation des côtes - gagnent les hommes par les femmes " ce journal reprenant un article paru dans le " EL WAKH " attira l'attention sur la création à Damas de 2 écoles, 1 pour garçons et pour les filles dans le but d'avoir une jeunesse saine, en mesure de suivre l'évolution sociale du siècle et ne plus recourir aux établissements d'enseignements étrangers néfastes aux croyances et aux mœurs .
Chaque ville de Syrie, devrait s'occuper d'un projet semblable dans la limite de ses ressources

LA MODERATION . N°17 du 27 Juillet écrit :

Les espoirs des Italiens en Syrie .

Un mouvement, ayant à sa tête Génior Véra tend à prendre part, avec la France, dans la tâche du Mandat en Syrie . IL conçoit que le centre du Mandat français serait à Deir el Kama et Tripoli et Damas Mandat italien . Beyrouth servirait de port à la Région où il établirait la zone du mandat italien .

Le journal des Débats a répondu aux ambitions exprimées par l'Italie, que la volonté de la nation syrienne sera respectée et que le sort de la Syrie est remis entre les mains de la Constituante à qui appartient de décider . Cette réponse devait suffire pour apaiser l'entrain des journaux italiens .

Un autre journal français a déclaré " Si la l'Italie veut un mandat en Syrie, qu'elle paie à la France, ses frais et aux Syriens un prix satisfaisant, mais les Syriens n'acceptent pas la présence d'étrangers chez eux . "

IL répugne à la Nation syrienne d'être traitée en objet marchandable . Déjà les Italiens ont pu le constater par le refus catégorique des Syriens et le démenti de la Puissance Mandataire .

Que le Génior Véra sache que le différend qui s'est élevé entre les Syriens et la France n'avait pas pour but de remplacer le régime mandataire français par un autre, mais d'arriver à une entente et cette entente est atteinte . La Syrie n'a pas besoin d'autre puissance et ce dont elle se plaignait par le passé n'existe plus maintenant . Les événements de Damas en sont la meilleure preuve, la Constitution qui s'élabore et la préparation d'un traité avec la Puissance Mandataire . Enfin la sagesse du Haut-Commissaire ainsi que ses collaborateurs ne laisse pas de doute qu'on arriverait à une entente satisfaisante .

Une nation comme la Syrie qui a des élites et des hommes actifs n'accepte pas qu'elle devienne un champ de manœuvres ambitieuses de la politique .

LE KHARE . du 6 au 19 Juillet 1928 N°22 (Grec-Orthodoxes)

Rien à signaler .

Lattaquié, le 31 Juillet 1928

Source : Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder: 1SL/1/V/1986.

Transcription:

LA MODERATION . N°17 du 27 Juillet écrit :

Les espoirs des Italiens en Syrie.

Un mouvement, ayant à sa tête sénior Véra tend à prendre part, avec la France, dans la tâche du Mandat en Syrie. Il conçoit que le centre du Mandat français serait à Deir el Kama et Tripoli et Damas Mandat italien. Beyrouth servirait de port à la région où il établirait la zone du mandat italien.

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Que le sénior Véra sache que le différend qui s'est élevé entre les Syriens et la France n'avait pas pour but de remplacer le régime mandataire français par un autre, mais d'arriver à une entente et cette entente est atteinte. La Syrie n'a pas besoin d'autre puissance et ce dont elle se plaignait par le passé n'existe plus maintenant. Les événements de Damas en sont la meilleure preuve, la Constitution qui s'élabore et la préparation d'un traité avec la Puissance Mandataire.

Enfin la sagesse du Haut-Commissaire ainsi que de ses collaborateurs ne laisse pas de doute qu'on arriverait à une entente satisfaisante.

Une nation comme la Syrie qui a des élites et des hommes actifs n'accepte pas qu'elle devienne un champ de manœuvres ambitieuses de la politique.

Translation:

LA MODERATION. No. 17 of 27 July writes:

Italian ambitions in Syria.

A movement, headed by Signor Véra, tends to take part, alongside France, in the task of the Mandate in Syria. It conceives that the centre of the French Mandate would be at Deir el Kama, and that Tripoli and Damascus would fall under an Italian Mandate. Beirut would serve as the port for the region where it would establish the zone of the Italian mandate.

The *Journal des débats* responded to the ambitions expressed by Italy that the will of the Syrian nation will be respected and that the fate of Syria is placed in the hands of the Constituent Assembly, to whom it belongs to decide. This response should suffice to calm the enthusiasm of the Italian newspapers.

Another French newspaper declared: "If Italy wants a mandate in Syria, let it pay France its expenses and offer the Syrians a satisfactory price; but the Syrians do not accept the presence of foreigners in their country."

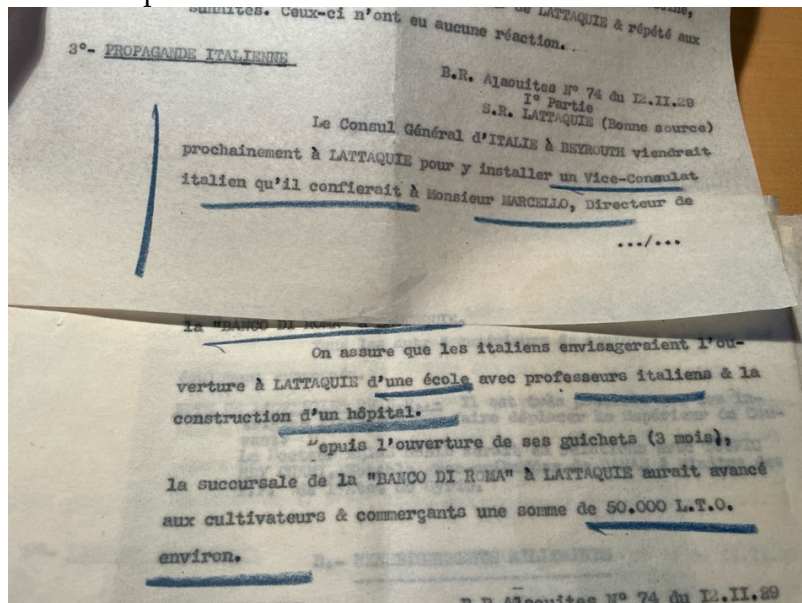
It is repugnant to the Syrian Nation to be treated as a tradable object. The Italians have already been able to observe this through the categorical refusal of the Syrians and the denial by the Mandatory Power.

Let Signor Véra know that the dispute which arose between the Syrians and France did not aim to replace the French mandatory regime with another, but to reach an agreement, and this agreement has been achieved. Syria does not need another power, and what it complained of in the past no longer exists now. The events in Damascus are the best proof of this, as well as the Constitution being drafted and the preparation of a treaty with the Mandatory Power.

Finally, the wisdom of the High Commissioner, as well as that of his collaborators, leaves no doubt that a satisfactory agreement will be reached.

A nation like Syria, which has elites and active men, does not accept becoming a field for the ambitious maneuvers of politics.

Plate 2. Report on Italian activities in Latakia on 12.11.1929.



Source : Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder: 1SL/1/V/1987.

Transcription

3°- PROPAGANDE ITALIENNE

B.R. Alaouites n° 74 du 12.II.29

1° Partie

S.R. LATTAQUIE (Bonne source)

Le Consul Général d'ITALIE à BEYROUTH viendrait prochainement à LATTAQUIE pour y installer un Vice-Consulat italien qu'il confierait à Monsieur MARCELLO, Directeur de

.../...

La "BANCO DI ROMA" à LATTAQUIE

On assure que les italiens envisageraient l'ouverture à LATTAQUIE d'une école avec professeurs italiens & la construction d'un hôpital. Depuis l'ouverture de ses guichets (3 mois), la succursale de la "BANCO DI ROMA" à LATTAQUIE aurait avancé aux cultivateurs & commerçants une somme de 50.000 L.T.O. environ.

Translation

3° – ITALIAN PROPAGANDA

B.R. Alawites no. 74 of 12.II.29

1st Part

S.R. Latakia (Good source)

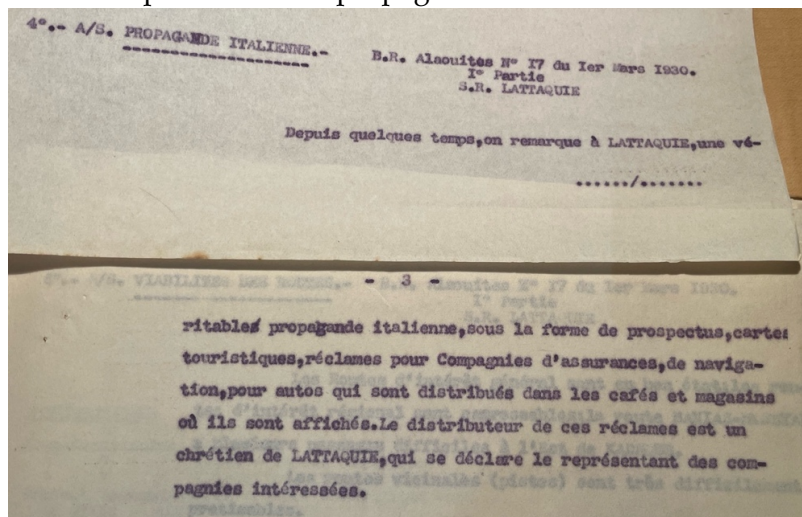
The Consul General of ITALY in BEIRUT would soon come to Latakia to establish there an Italian Vice-Consulate, which he would entrust to Monsieur MARCELLO, Director of

.../...

The "BANCO DI ROMA" in Latakia

It is reported that the Italians are considering the opening in Latakia of a school with Italian teachers and the construction of a hospital. Since the opening of its counters (3 months), the branch of the "BANCO DI ROMA" in Latakia is said to have advanced to farmers and merchants a sum of approximately 50,000 L.T.O.

Plate 3. Report on Italian propaganda in Latakia on 01.03.1930.



Source : Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder: 1SL/1/V/1987.

Transcription

4°.- A/S. PROPAGANDE ITALIENNE.--

B.R. Alaouites N° 17 du 1er Mars 1930.

1° Partie

S.R. LATTAQUIE

Depuis quelques temps, on remarque à LATTAQUIE, une vé-
...../.....

ritable propagande italienne, sous la forme de prospectus, cartes touristiques, réclames pour Compagnies d'assurances, de navigation, pour autos qui sont distribués dans les cafés et magasins où ils sont affichés. Le distributeur de ces réclames est un chrétien de LATTAQUIE, qui se déclare le représentant des compagnies intéressées.

Translation

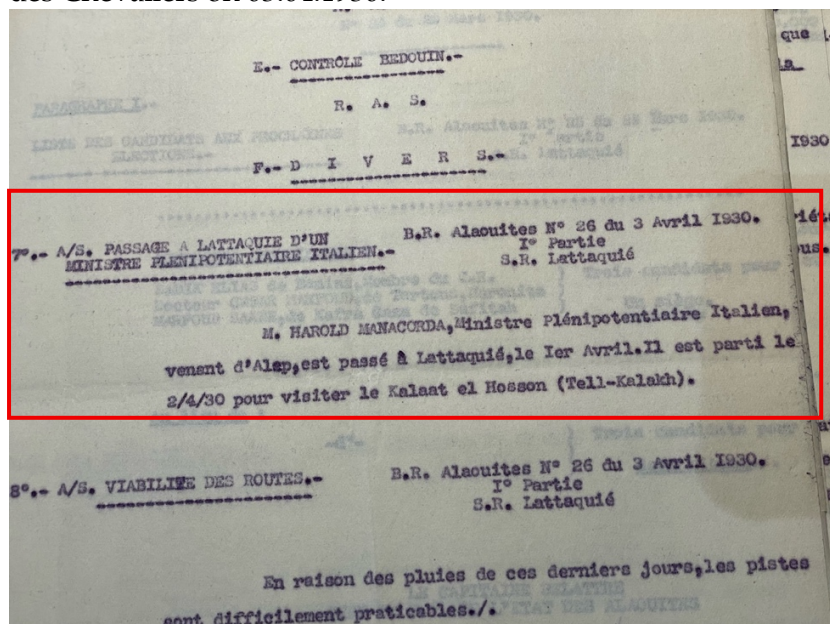
4° – RE: ITALIAN PROPAGANDA

B.R. Alawites No. 17 of 1 March 1930

1st Part
S.R. Latakia

For some time, one has observed in Latakia a genuine Italian propaganda, in the form of brochures, tourist maps, advertisements for insurance companies, for shipping, for automobiles, which are distributed in cafés and shops where they are displayed. The distributor of these advertisements is a Christian from Latakia, who declares himself the representative of the companies concerned.

Plate 4. Report on the visit of Italian diplomat Manacorda to Crac des Chevaliers on 03.04.1930.



Source : Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder: 1SL/1/V/1987.

Transcription

7°.- A/S. PASSAGE A LATTAQUIE D'UN MINISTRE PLENIPOTENTIAIRE ITALIEN.--

B.R. Alaouites N° 26 du 3 Avril 1930.

1° Partie
S.R. Lattaquié

M. HAROLD MANACORDA, Ministre Plénipotentiaire Italien, venant d'Alep, est passé à Lattaquié, le 1er Avril. Il est parti le 2/4/30 pour visiter le Kalaat el Hossn (Tell-Kalakh).

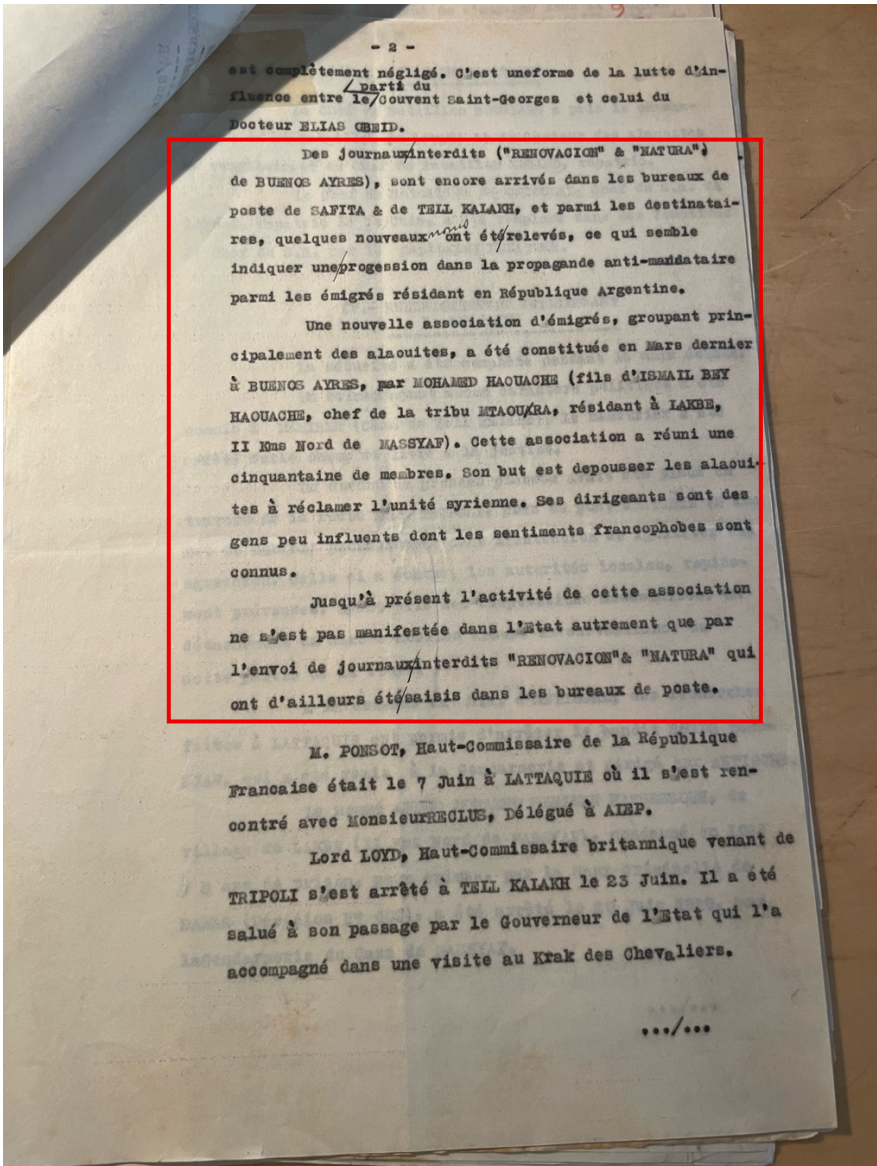
Translation

7° – RE: VISIT TO LATTAKIA OF AN ITALIAN
PLENIPOTENTIARY MINISTER

B.R. Alawites No. 26 of 3 April 1930
1st Part
S.R. Latakia

Mr. HAROLD MANACORDA, Italian Plenipotentiary Minister, coming from Aleppo, passed through Latakia on 1 April. He left on 2/4/30 to visit the Kalaat el Hossn (Tell-Kalakh).

Plate 5. Report on Alawite diaspora lobby for Syrian unity on 29.06.1929.



Source : Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder 1SL/1/V/1837.

Transcription

Des journaux interdits ("RENOVACION" & "NATURA") de BUENOS AYRES, sont encore arrivés dans les bureaux de poste de SAFITA & de TELL KALAKH, et parmi les destinataires, quelques nouveaux noms ont été relevés, ce qui semble indiquer une progression dans la propagande anti-mandataire parmi les émigrés résidant en République Argentine.

Une nouvelle association d'émigrés, groupant principalement des alaouites, a été constituée en Mars dernier à BUENOS AYRES, par MOHAMED HAOÛACHE (fils d'ISMAIL BEY HAOÛACHE, chef de la tribu MTAOURA, résidant à LAKBE, 11 Kms Nord de MASSYAF). Cette association a réuni une cinquantaine de membres. Son but est de pousser les alaouites à réclamer l'unité syrienne. Ses dirigeants sont des gens peu influents dont les sentiments francophobes sont connus.

Jusqu'à présent l'activité de cette association ne s'est pas manifestée dans l'état autrement que par l'envoi de journaux interdits "RENOVACION" & "NATURA" qui ont d'ailleurs été saisis dans les bureaux de poste.

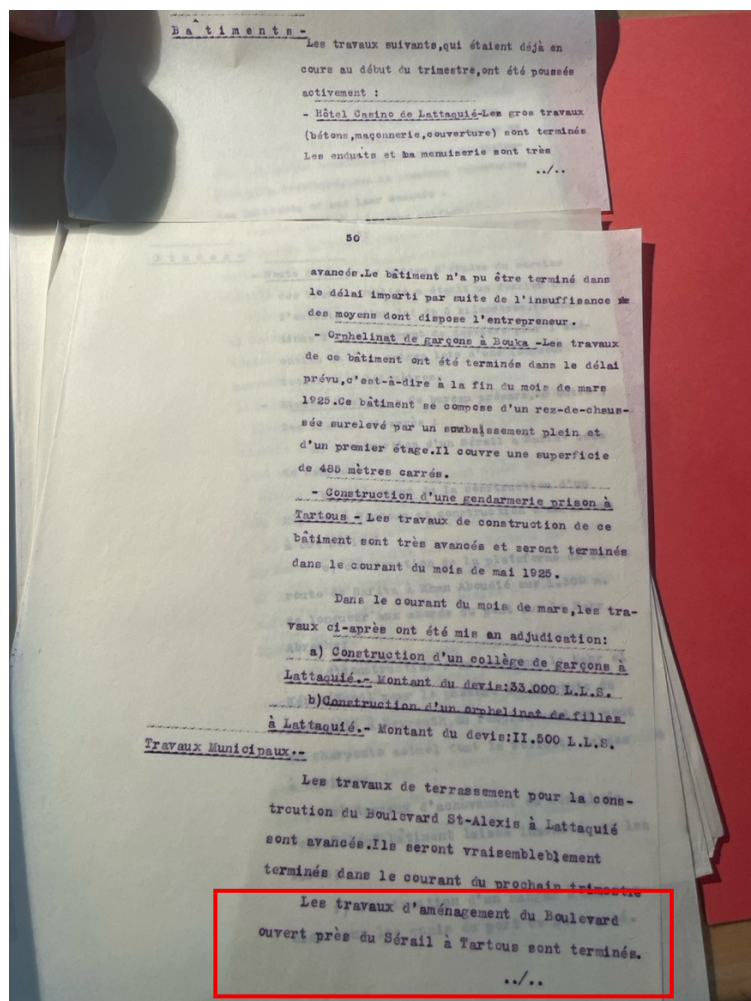
Translation

Prohibited newspapers ("RENOVACION" & "NATURA") from BUENOS AIRES have again arrived at the post offices of SAFITA and TELL KALAKH, and among the recipients, several new names have been identified, which seems to indicate a progression of anti-mandate propaganda among émigrés residing in the Argentine Republic.

A new association of émigrés, composed mainly of Alawites, was established last March in BUENOS AIRES by MOHAMED HAOÛACHE (son of ISMAIL BEY HAOÛACHE, chief of the MTAOURA tribe, residing in LAKBE, 11 km north of MASSYAF). This association has gathered around fifty members. Its aim is to encourage the Alawites to demand Syrian unity. Its leaders are individuals of little influence whose Francophobic sentiments are known.

Up to the present, the activity of this association has not manifested itself in the state otherwise than through the sending of prohibited newspapers "RENOVACION" & "NATURA," which have moreover been seized in the post offices.

Plate 6. Report on the completion of the boulevard of the Sérail in Tartus on 28.04.1925.



Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatique de Nantes. Folder : 1SL/1/1844

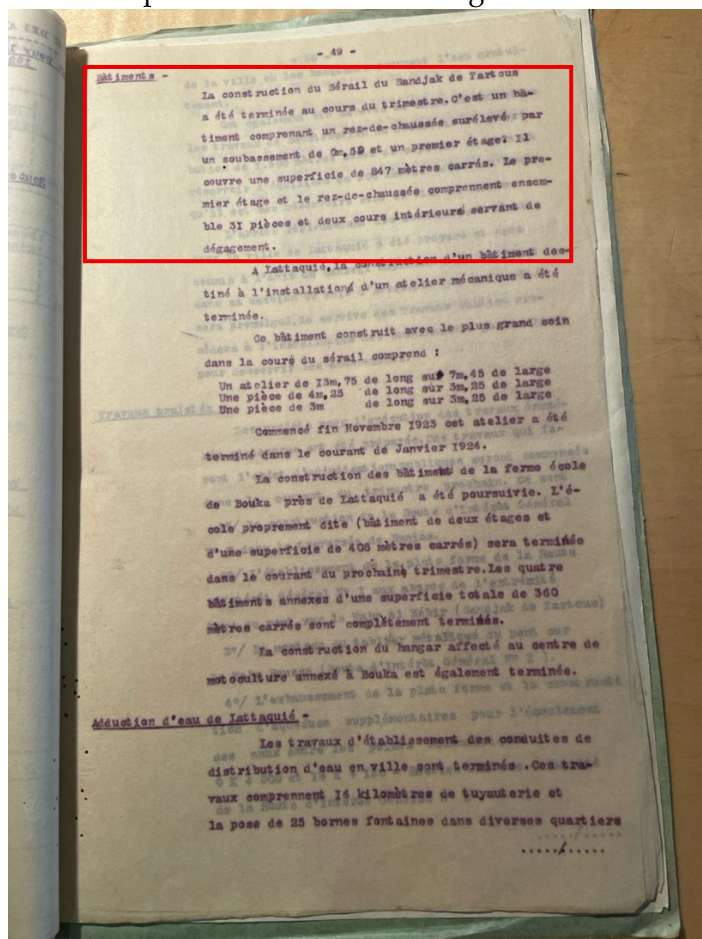
Transcription

Les travaux d'aménagement du Boulevard ouvert près du Sérail à Tartous sont terminés.

Translation

The development works of the boulevard opened near the Sérail in Tartus have been completed.

Plate 7. Report on the Sérail building in Tartus on 06.11.1924.



Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatique de Nantes. Folder: 1SL/1/1843.

Transcription

Bâtiments -

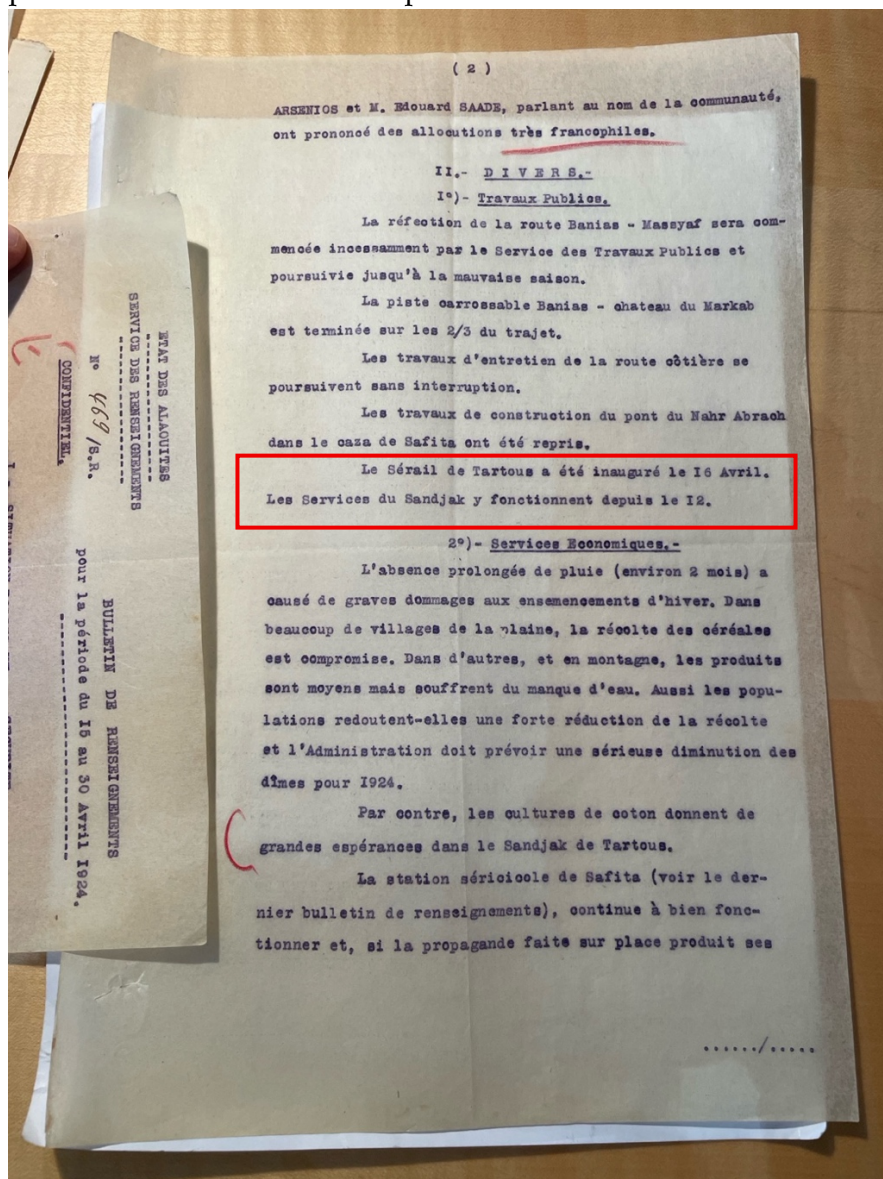
La construction du Sérail du Sandjak de Tartous a été terminée au cours du trimestre. C'est un bâtiment comprenant un rez-de-chaussée surélevé par un soubassement de 0 m. 50 et un premier étage; il couvre une superficie de 847 mètres carrés. Le premier étage et le rez-de-chaussée comprennent ensemble 31 pièces et deux cours intérieures servant de dégagement.

Translation

Buildings –

The construction of the Sérail of the Sanjak of Tartus was completed during the quarter. It is a building comprising a ground floor raised by a base of 0.50 m and a first floor; it covers an area of 847 square meters. The first floor and the ground floor together comprise 31 rooms and two interior courtyards serving as open spaces.

Plate 8. Report on the inauguration of the Sérail of Tartus, from the period between 15 and 30 of April 1924.



Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatique de Nantes, Folder : 1SL/1/1986.

Transcription

Le Sérail de Tartous a été inauguré le 16 Avril. Les services du Sandjak y fonctionnent depuis le 12.

Translation

The Sérail of Tartus was inaugurated on 16 April. The services of the Sanjak have been operating there since the 12th.

Plate 9. Report on the article « Basilique de Tortose » in *The Echo of Latakia*, on 16.09.1928.

L'ECHO DE LATAQUIE (Summite) N° 302-126 du 6 Septembre 1928

ETAT DES ALAOUITES
DELEGATION
SERVICE DES RENSEIGNEMENTS
-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-

Lattaquié, le 16 SEPTEMBRE 1928

N° 2.036/S.R.

REVUE DE LA PRESSE

CONFIDENTIEL

L'ECHO DE LATAQUIE (Summite) N° 302-126 du 6 Septembre.

Critique le Comité de Lattaquié chargé d'envoyer les secours aux sinistrés de l'incendie de Damas.

Nous avions, écrit-il, dans un de nos numéros précédents fait ressortir qu'une somme assez importante avait été recueillie et remise au Comité de Lattaquié organisé à cet effet, pour être envoyé au Comité Central de Damas. Mais ayant suivi de près la publication de la liste des secours de ce genre envoyés à Damas, nous n'avons vu aucune indication de l'arrivée de la sus dite somme à Damas.

Nous prions donc, M.L., les Membres du Comité de Lattaquié de s'expliquer par une déclaration ou communiqué, comment et pourquoi la somme des secours donnée par les Lattaquiotes n'est pas encore parvenue à Damas.

Dans son Numéro 302-127 du 13 Septembre 1928, sous le titre de "BASILIQUE DE TORTOSE" il adresse ses remerciements au Haut-Commissariat, qui faisant droit aux justes revendications de la Communauté musulmane de Tartous, a remis entre les mains de cette dernière une Mosquée qui avait été affectée à un dépôt de matériel des Services Agricoles et des Travaux Publics.

Autour des fonctions du Haut-Commissaire (Du Journal EL ANBAR)

Les milieux politiques français sont ne s'accordent pas sur le choix d'un militaire pour remplir les fonctions du Haut-Commissaire en Syrie. Dans une réunion d'hommes d'état, plusieurs nous ont été cités dont le sénateur Lémarcy, le député Bénatet, Sénateur de Jouvenel, mais l'attitude générale est en faveur de Monsieur ROBERT.

LA MODERATION (Summite) N° 22 du 7 Septembre 1928.

Rien à signaler, à part un article critiquant la Municipalité de Tartous.

LE: PHAROS (Grec-Orthodoxe)

Dans son Numéro 29 du 6 Septembre 1928, sous le titre "La Banque Agricole" son but est d'améliorer l'agriculture du pays" ce journal écrit :

Pour chacun des pays du monde entier, il existe une source économique qui est la base fondamentale de la vie économique de ce pays.

Pour nous, nous n'avons autre source économique que celle de la culture que nous sommes appelés à améliorer par tous nos moyens.

Le Gouvernement s'a organisé une Banque Agricole et l'a dotée des crédits pour venir en aide à nos cultivateurs ; mais malheureusement la plupart de ces derniers, utilisent les sommes empruntées à cette Banque pour différents autres besoins, sans en dépenser le sou pour l'amélioration de l'agriculture.

Ce qui fait que le procédé de la Banque Agricole finirait ainsi par nuire au lieu d'être utile au pays. Il serait donc préférable que la Banque Agricole s'occupe elle même de l'achat des outils et appareils agricoles, qu'elle cède aux cultivateurs ainsi que les semences et plantations.

Dans son même Numéro, sous le titre "L'Italie et l'Allemagne ambitionnent la Syrie - Jusqu'à quand cette comédie continuera-t-elle ?.. le rédacteur fait ressortir comment l'Italie manifeste son ambition pour la Syrie, sous le prétexte qu'elle n'a pas été justement récompensée pour les sacrifices de la Guerre ; d'autre part, l'Allemagne également désire s'attribuer la Syrie, sous prétexte que que 10% sont écoulés depuis la Guerre et qu'elle fait partie de la Société des Nations.

L'Angleterre exprime le désir de céder à son amie l'Italie, la Palestine, prétextant ainsi une justice à appliquer.

Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN),
record carton : 1SL/1/V/1986

Transcription

Dans son Numéro 302-127 du 13 Septembre 1928, sous le titre de "BASILIQUE DE TORTOSE" il adresse des remerciements au Haut-Commissariat, qui faisant droit aux justes revendications de la Communauté musulmane de Tartous, a remis entre les mains de cette dernière une Mosquée qui avait été affectée à un dépôt de matériel des Services Agricoles et des Travaux Publics.

Translation

In its issue no. 302-127 of 13 September 1928, under the title "BASILICA OF TORTOSE" it addresses thanks to the High Commission, which, granting the legitimate claims of the Muslim community of Tartus, returned to it a mosque that had been used as a storage depot for equipment of the Agricultural Services and Public Works.

(2)

Au cours de cette réunion avec le chef de Bureau du S.R. du Sandjak, les torts furent établis de part et d'autre et la réconciliation fut opérée sans grande difficulté, tandis que les plaintes étaient retirées . Ces résultats ont été obtenus rapidement grâce à l'esprit de conciliation de CHEIKH MOHAMMEDINE EL AHAMAD, élément modéré et pondérateur parmi les Ismaélites .

SOURCE : S.R. TARTOUS

III/- CONTRAIRE BÉDOUINS

Les fractions bédouines du Sandjak de Hama, qui s'étaient répandues au cours de la dernière période, dans toute la région sud ouest du Sandjak de Tartous, devant l'insuffisance des paturages et d'eau d'abreuvoir, se sont dispersées . Une forte portion de HAJI KHAKED, campé au nord de HAMA EL KESER, sur territoire libanais ou dans le royaume de SAFAWET (Casa de Safita) . Seules quelques OUEIDIES s'étant entendus avec les propriétaires du village de AIN EL ZAOKA (17 kms environ sud de Tartous) campent, avec leurs troupeaux, sur les terrains de ce village .

B.R. ALAOUITES N° 12 du 17 SEPTEMBRE 1928
SOURCE : S.R. TARTOUS

III/- BANILIQUE DE TORTOGE.

Le Cadi de Tartous, Chef du Service des Waftes du Chef lieu du Sandjak, a raconté qu'il avait même reçu un télégramme du Contrôleur des Waftes de Beyrouth, relativement à l'évacuation de la Banilique des Croisés . Convocqué par le Chef du Bureau du S.R. du Sandjak, le 12 septembre, pour faire connaître les motifs de son objection à rendre compte au l'autorité de cette nouvelle aux répercussions possibles, il a répondu qu'il n'y attachait aucune importance .

B.R. ALAOUITES N° 12 du 17 SEPTEMBRE 1928
SOURCE : S.R. TARTOUS

V/- DÉFACIEMENTS DE CHIEF POLITIQUE .

JABER ABBAS, Président du Conseil Représentatif, accompagné de son cousin BRAHIM EL MOUSTAFA de ELST EL KHODER (25 kms environ sud de ELST Casa de Safita) et de son deuxième fils MOHAMMED CHACOUKAT, élève du Collège d'ANTOURA (Liban) est passé par Tartous, le 10 septem., pour se rendre avec ABDOUD BEY ABDEL REZZAK, membre du Conseil Représentatif, en visite chez M. le Gouverneur, de retour de France . Ce groupe est rentré de Lattaquié, le 13 septem., très favorablement impressionnés par les déclarations de M. le Gouverneur, sur l'attention spéciale qui sera portée aux questions économiques du pays et spécialement à l'agriculture .

A B/ RENSEIGNEMENTS ECONOMIQUES.

B.R. ALAOUITES N° 12 du 17 SEPTEMBRE 1928
SOURCE : S.R. TARTOUS

I/- ERRETS DE LA BANQUE AGRICOLE .

L'imminence de la répartition des prêts consentis par le crédit agricole d'Algérie - Tunisie a coïncidé avec des visites nombreuses, principalement de la part des personnes aux tendances politiques suspectes qui sont venues exprimer de bons sentiments à l'égard des Représentants du Mandat ./.

DESTINATAIRES.
H.C.(S.G.) Beyrouth
Direction S.R. Lev. (2 ex)
S.R. DAMAS
S.R. ALEP
S.R. Gouvern. Liban. (Beyrouth)
ARCHIVES.

1-1-1-1-1-1-1 LATTAKIY, le 17 SEPTEMBRE 1928

Le Capitaine de CAUDOUAL, Chef du Service des Renseignements de l'Etat des Alaouites .

Caudoual

240

Transcription

B.R. ALAOUTES N° 12 du 17 SEPTEMBRE 1928

Source : S.R. TARTOUS

IV / - BASILIQUE DE TORTOSE.

Le Cadi de Tartous, Chef du Service des Wakfs du Chef lieu du Sandjak, a raconté qu'il avait reçu un télégramme du Contrôleur des Wakfs de Beyrouth, relativement à l'évacuation de la Basilique des Croisés. Convoqué par le Chef du Bureau du S.R. du Sandjak, le 12 Septembre, pour faire connaître les motifs de son abstention à rendre compte à l'autorité de cette nouvelle aux répercussions possibles, il a répondu qu'il n'y attachait aucune importance.

Translation

B.R. ALAWITES No. 12 of 17 SEPTEMBER 1928

Source: S.R. TARTUS

IV – BASILICA OF TORTOSA

The qadi of Tartus, head of the Wakf Service of the chief town of the Sanjak, stated that he had received a telegram from the Controller of Wakfs in Beirut concerning the evacuation of the Crusaders' Basilica. Summoned by the head of the S.R. office of the Sanjak on 12 September to explain the reasons for his failure to report this information to the authorities, given its possible repercussions, he replied that he attached no importance to it.

Plate 11. Report on the activity of Sheikh Abdul Haq Mansour on 06.11.1928.

(2)

4°/- NIVALITES ENTRE GRECS ORTHODOXES . B.R. Alaouites - Ire Part.
N° 25 du 6/11/28

Source : S.R. TARTOUS

Le Dr OBEID, de Mechtaya (1 Km environ N.E. MECHTAYA et de ZOUREINE (Wadi Ennassara) revendiqués comme biens du couvent, appartenant, en réalité, aux cultivateurs qui ont main - mise sur ces terrains, ces cultivateurs en assez grand nombre, mais sans grande ressource, demanderaient l'appui des autorités gouvernementales pour traiter cette question qui ne peut pas, selon lui, recevoir une solution équitable devant les tribunaux, par suite de l'importance des moyens du couvent et de son influence sur la mg magistrature, comparés à la pauvreté des défenseurs .

5°/6 COUVENT St GEORGES . B.R. Alaouites N°25 - I re Partie
du 6/11/28

Source : S.R. TELL KALAH

La nouvelle du départ du Supérieur du Couvent St Georges s'est répandue très vite, non seulement dans le nahie du Wadi Ennassara, mais encore dans le casa . Ce départ aurait été demandé par Mgr ARSENIOS Evêque de Lattaquié ? Le Patriarche aurait répondu qu'actuellement il ne pouvait enlever son poste au Supérieur mais que dès que les affaires de terrains seraient réglées celui-ci serait remplacé .

Il y aurait deux archimandrites au Couvent ; l'un comme Supérieur du Couvent et l'autre comme économe . Le premier serait le Secrétaire actuel du Patriarche et le second l'Archimandrite OURAKHI ABIAD d'Alep .

6°/- CATHEDRALE DE TARTOUS .- B.R. Alaouites N° 25 - I re Partie
du 6/11/28

Source : S.R. TARTOUS

Le jeune Cheikh ABDUL HAQ MANSOUR, venant de l'Université d'EL AZHAR (Le Caire), auteur d'articles dans le "ABDUL GDI" de Damas, le "CHARQ" de Beyrouth, l'"ITTIDAL" de Lattaquié, concernant le retour au culte musulman de la basilique de Tartous et sur l'organisation d'une société de bienfaisance musulmane, ferait circuler une mabata par laquelle il serait réclamé à nouveau le retour à la disposition du culte musulman de la Basilique des Croisés.

Plusieurs notables connus par leur sagesse se sont abstenus de signer cette pétition et se sont même portés à protester contre l'activité néfaste du jeune Cheikh qui peut entraîner des perturbations . Ils souhaitaient, d'autre part, que l'autorisation de la création de cette société de bienfaisance ne fut pas accordée aux organisateurs, jeunes gens sans valeur morale et tendances subversives ?

Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder : 1SL/1/V/1986.

Transcription

6°/- CATHEDRALE DE TARTOUS .- B.R. Alaouites N° 25 - Ire Partie du 6/11/28.

Source : S.R. TARTOUS

Le jeune Cheikh ABDUL HAQ MANSOUR, venant de l'Université d'EL AZHAR (Le Caire), auteur d'articles dans le "ABDUL GDI" de Damas, le "CHARQ" de Beyrouth, l'"ITTIDAL" de

Lattaquié, concernant le retour au culte musulman de la basilique de Tortose et sur l'organisation d'une société de bienfaisance musulmane, ferait circuler une mazbata par laquelle il serait réclamé à nouveau le retour à la disposition du culte musulman de la Basilique des Croisés.

Plusieurs notables connus par leur sagesse se sont abstenus de signer cette pétition et se sont même portés à protester contre l'activité néfaste du jeune Cheikh qui peut entraîner des perturbations. Ils souhaitent, d'autre part, que l'autorisation de la création de cette société de bienfaisance ne fût pas accordée aux organisateurs, jeunes gens sans valeur morale et à tendances subversives.

Translation

6° – CATHEDRAL OF TARTUS – B.R. Alawites No. 25 – 1st Part of 6/11/28

Source: S.R. TARTUS

The young Sheikh ABDUL HAQ MANSOUR, coming from the University of AL-AZHAR (Cairo), author of articles in "AHDUL GDID" of Damascus, "CHARQ" of Beirut, and "ITTIDAL" of Latakia, concerning the return of the Basilica of Tortose to Muslim worship and the organization of a Muslim charitable society, is said to be circulating a mazbata by which it would again be demanded that the Basilica of the Crusaders be returned to the use of Muslim worship.

Several notables, known for their wisdom, have refrained from signing this petition and have even come forward to protest against the harmful activity of the young Sheikh, which may lead to disturbances. They further wished that authorization for the creation of this charitable society not be granted to its organizers, young men without moral standing and with subversive tendencies.

Plate 12. Report on the activity of the Beirut office of the Muslim Association on 11.12.1928.

ETAT DES ALAOUITES
DELEGATION
SERVICE DES RENSEIGNEMENTS
- - - - -
N° 3.707/S.R.
CONFIDENTIEL

BULLETIN DE RENSEIGNEMENTS N° 35
- - - - -
I re Partie du 11 Décembre 1928
-0-0-0-0-0-

APERÇU GÉNÉRAL .

Rien d'important à signaler, au point de vue politique, au cours de la période .

A.- RENSEIGNEMENTS POLITIQUES .-

I°/- **MAZBATA EN FAVEUR DE L'UNITÉ SYRIENNE .-** B.R. Alaouites N°35
I re Partie.
Source : S.R. TARTOUS. *de Tel. Kalah* du 11/12/1928

Le Service des Renseignements signale que le nommé **ABDUL KHALED RESTOURI**, Dendachlé, domicilié à HQMS et qui a déjà pris, à maintes reprises, une part active à toutes les manifestations politiques des DENDACHLES, serait l'auteur d'une mazbata qui aurait pour but de recueillir des signatures en faveur de l'Unité Syrienne, dans le Casa de MASSYAF, commençant par la région de MARIAMINE. Ce personnage qui vient souvent à TELL-KALAH chez ses parents les DENDACHLES, tenterait d'étendre ce mouvement dans le casa .

II°/- **LA BASILIQUE DES CROISES .-** B.R. Alaouites N° 35 -
du 11/12/28 - I re Partie
Source : S.R. TARTOUS

Une lettre du Bureau de BEYROUTH de l'Association Musulmane du 1 er Jour de l'année Hégirienne parvenue à TARTOUS le 7 Décembre, au nommé AOUAD ADAOUI, correspondant de cette Association au Chef lieu du Sandjak, aurait été présentée par ce dernier au Cadi de TARTOUS, qui était considéré naguère encore comme fonctionnaire non rétribué des Wakfs . Dans cette lettre, il serait question de l'agrément donné au service des Wakfs par les Autorités du Mandat, en faveur de la restitution de la Basilique des Croisés . Il y serait dit en outre, que la clef de ce monument serait remise, sous peu, soit au Cadi, soit au Mufti de TARTOUS . Il y aurait été conseillé, d'autre part de s'abstenir de toutes démonstrations et de n'y pas célébrer le culte; mais d'affirmer la prise de possession effective .

Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes, Folder : 1SL/1/V/1986.

Transcription

11°/- LA BASILIQUE DES CROISES .- B.R. Alaouites N° 36 - du 11/12/28 - Ire Partie
Source : S.R. TARTOUS

Une lettre du Bureau de BEYROUTH de l'Association Musulmane du 1er Jour de l'année Hégirienne parvenue à TARTOUS le 7 Décembre, au nommé AOUAD ADAOUI, correspondant de cette Association au Chef lieu du Sandjak, aurait été présentée par ce dernier au Cadi de TARTOUS, qui était considéré naguère encore

comme fonctionnaire non rétribué des Wakfs. Dans cette lettre, il serait question de l'agrément donné au service des Wakfs par les Autorités du Mandat en faveur de la restitution de la Basilique des Croisés. Il y serait dit en outre, que la clef de ce monument serait remise, sous peu, soit au Cadi, soit au Mufti de TARTOUS. Il y aurait été conseillé, d'autre part, de s'abstenir de toutes démonstrations et de n'y pas célébrer le culte, mais d'affirmer la prise de possession effective.

Translation

11° – THE BASILICA OF THE CRUSADERS – B.R. Alawites No.

36 – of 11/12/28 – 1st Part

Source: S.R. TARTUS

A letter from the BEIRUT office of the Muslim Association of the first day of the Hijri year, received in TARTUS on 7 December by one AOUAD ADAOUI, correspondent of this association in the chief town of the Sanjak, is said to have been presented by him to the qadi of TARTUS, who until recently was still considered an unpaid official of the Wakfs. In this letter, mention is made of the approval given to the Wakf service by the Mandate authorities in favour of the restitution of the Basilica of the Crusaders. It is further stated that the key to this monument would soon be handed over, either to the qadi or to the mufti of TARTUS. It is also said that it was advised to refrain from any demonstrations and not to hold religious services there, but to affirm effective possession.

Plate 13. Report on the Wakf takeover of the cathedral, on 29.12.1928.

ETAT DES ALAOUITES
DELEGATION
SERVICE DES RENSEIGNEMENTS
-:-:-:-:-
N° 2.634/S.R.

BULLETIN DE RENSEIGNEMENTS N° 40

1 ère Partie
du
29 DECEMBRE 1928
-:-:-:-:-

CONFIDENTIEL

APERÇU GENERAL .

Sans changement, au point de vue politique . Il me semble que le retour du Haut-Commissaire correspondra avec une reprise de l'activité politique dans le Sandjak de TARTOUS, en liaison avec les mouvements envisagés en Syrie et au Liban . Situation de sécurité toujours favorable .
Au point de vue économique, rien d'important à signaler .

A .- RENSEIGNEMENTS POLITIQUES .

1°/- AU SUJET DE LA BASILIQUE DES CROISES . B.R. Alaouites N° 40
----- I re Partie - du 29.12.28
Source : S.R. TARTOUS .(Source:sûre)

Dans une lettre à l'adresse du Cadi Sunnite de TARTOUS et provenant de l'Association Musulmane du 1 er Jour de l'année Héjrienne de Beyrouth, parvenue le 26 Décembre, il était précisé que l'Autorité Mandataire avait confirmé son agrément relativement à la prise de possession effective par les Wakfs, de la Basilique de TORTOSE .
En conséquence, suivant cette lettre, il était enjoint au Cadi s'il n'avait pas encore reçu la clef de ce monument ancien, de la réclamer à l'Autorité locale .
Suivant un indicateur, généralement bien renseigné, le Cheikh ABDUL HAK MANSOUR, de Tartous, qui avait déjà été signalé dans le mouvement favorable à la réintégration au Culte Musulman, de la Basilique de TORTOSE, aurait poursuivi secrètement ses démarches à BEYROUTH et serait l'animateur d'un groupe de musulmans peu important et peu influent, de la ville qui tendrait à transformer le monument en Mosquée.

2°/- BRUITS AU SUJET DE LA RECTIFICATION DE LA FRONTIERE SYRIENNE .

B.R. Alaouites N° 40 - I ère Partie - du 29.12.28
Source : S.R. TEL-KALAH (Source : sûre)

Dans les milieux sunnites du Casas de nombreuses discussions ont lieu en ce moment au sujet de la rectification de la frontière syrienne . Certains notables de TEL-KALAH prétendent que la France céderait aux Turcs une partie des territoires de la région d'ALEP et vantent les qualités de l'armée de MUSTAPHA KEMAL .

3°/- AUTOUR DE LA CONSTITUTION SYRIENNE. B.R. Alaouite N° 40
----- I re Partie du 29.12.28
Source : S.R. LATTAKIE. (Bonne Source)

Sur instructions venues de DAMAS, la famille musulmane ALI ADIE, fait circuler à DJEBEL depuis le 28 Décembre, une masbata réclamant le maintien des 6 articles dans la Constitution Syrienne .

-:-:-:-:- Lattaqué, le 29 DECEMBRE 1928

DESTINATAIRES:
C. (Cabinet civil)
Section S.R. Levant (2 ex.)
DAMAS - ALEP - ALEXANDRIE.
République Libanaise.
TRIPOLI
Coup. Rég. Liban et Alaouites
-- des Alaouites .

Le Chef de Bataillon De CADODAL, Chef du Service des Renseignements de l'Etat des Alaouites

Pro, famille Lattaqué
Uddmaly

Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder: 1SL/1/V/1986.

Transcription

1°/- AU SUJET DE LA BASILIQUE DES CROISES .- B.R. Alaouites
N° 40 - Ire Partie - du 29.12.28
Source : S.R. TARTOUS (Source sûre)

Dans une lettre à l'adresse du Cadi Sunnite de TARTOUS et provenant de l'Association Musulmane du 1er Jour de l'année Hégirienne de Beyrouth, parvenue le 26 Décembre, il était précisé que l'Autorité Mandataire avait confirmé son agrément relativement à la prise de possession effective par les Wakfs, de la Basilique de TORTOSE.

En conséquence, suivant cette lettre, il était enjoint au Cadi, s'il n'avait pas encore reçu la clef de ce monument ancien, de la réclamer à l'Autorité locale.

Suivant un indicateur, généralement bien renseigné, le Cheikh ABDUL HAK MANSOUR, de Tartous, qui avait déjà été signalé dans le mouvement favorable à la réintégration au Culte Musulman, de la Basilique de TORTOSE, aurait poursuivi secrètement ses démarches à BEYROUTH et serait l'animateur d'un groupe de musulmans peu important et peu influent, de la ville qui tendrait à transformer le monument en Mosquée.

Translation

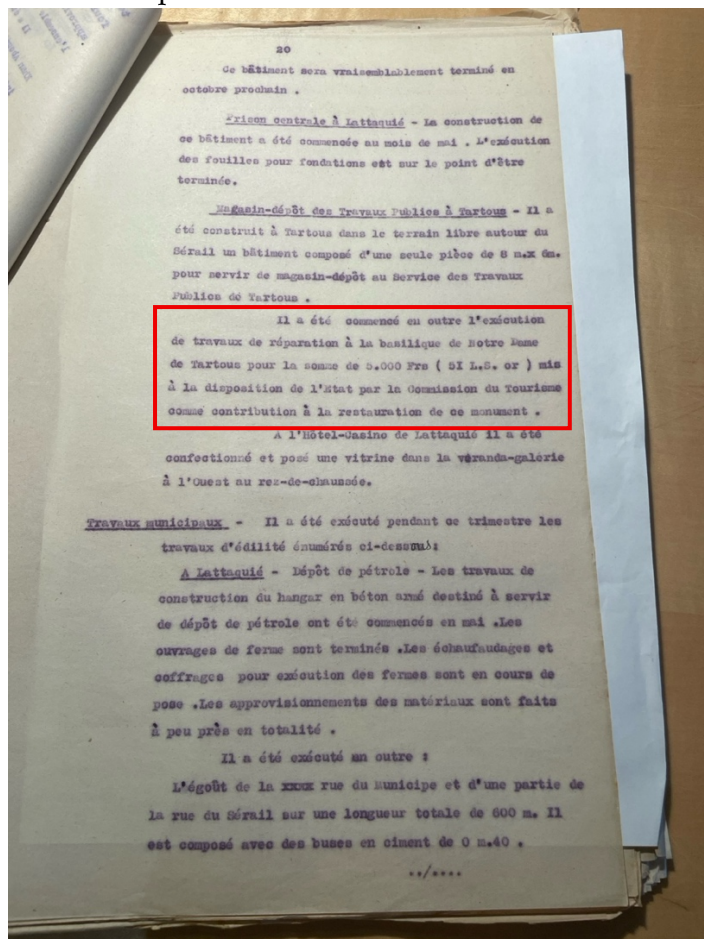
1° – REGARDING THE BASILICA OF THE CRUSADERS – B.R.
Alawites No. 40 – 1st Part – of 29.12.28
Source: S.R. TARTUS (Reliable source)

In a letter addressed to the Sunni qadi of TARTUS and originating from the Muslim Association of the first day of the Hijri year in Beirut, received on 26 December, it was specified that the Mandatory Authority had confirmed its approval regarding the effective taking of possession of the Basilica of TORTOSE by the Wakfs.

Consequently, according to this letter, the qadi was instructed, if he had not yet received the key to this ancient monument, to request it from the local authority.

According to an informant, generally well informed, Sheikh ABDUL HAK MANSOUR of Tartus, who had already been noted in the movement favorable to the reintegration of the Basilica of TORTOSE into Muslim worship, is said to have secretly continued his efforts in BEIRUT and to be the driving force behind a small and not very influential group of Muslims in the city, which would seek to transform the monument into a mosque.

Plate 14. Report on the restoration of the cathedral on 04.11.1926.



Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes. Folder : 1SL/1/V/1845.

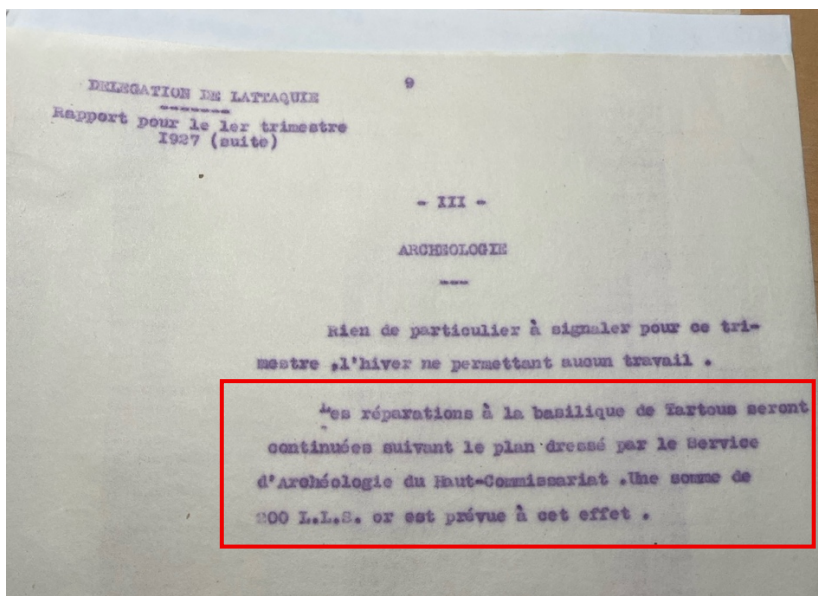
Transcription

Il a été commencé en outre l'exécution de travaux de réparation à la basilique de Notre Dame de Tartous pour la somme de 5.000 Frs (51 L.S. or) mis à la disposition de l'État par la Commission du Tourisme comme contribution à la restauration de ce monument.

Translation

Moreover, repair works have been initiated at the Basilica of Notre-Dame of Tartus for the sum of 5,000 francs (51 gold Syrian pounds), made available to the State by the Tourism Commission as a contribution to the restoration of this monument.

Plate 15. Report on the restoration of the cathedral, the first trimester of 1927.



Source : Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN),
record carton : 1SL/1/V/1845

Transcription

Les réparations à la basilique de Tartous seront continuées suivant le plan dressé par le Service d'Archéologie du Haut-Commissariat. Une somme de 200 L.L.S. or est prévue à cet effet.

Translation

The repair works at the Basilica of Tartus will be continued according to the plan drawn up by the Archaeological Service of the High Commission. A sum of 200 gold Syro-Lebanese pounds is allocated for this purpose.

Plate 16. Tartus in the mid 1930s.



Source: Weulersse, *Le Pays des Alaouites*, fig. 141

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