The Castle and Lordship of Ḥārim and the Frankish-Muslim Frontier of Northern Syria in the Twelfth Century

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Abstract  The castle of Ḥārim in Northern Syria was a site of intense military and political scrutiny during the twelfth century. Whether under the control of the
Frankish principality of Antioch or Muslim-held Aleppo, it acted as the battleground for control of the frontier between these two powers. This article therefore seeks to examine how both sides adapted to the demands of this frontier. First, it will show how central this castle was to the balance of power in the region, a reality historians have so far often overlooked; secondly, it will demonstrate, through an examination of Ḣārim’s Frankish lordship, particularly the inheritance rights of its Latin lords, that diverse customs and relationships of power emerged to meet the challenges of defending and governing the frontier.

**Keywords:** Syria – politics; Antioch (principality); Frontiers; Harenc/Ḥārim, Syria; Lordship; Castles; Inheritance Rights.

**Word count:** 8,011.

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Introduction

The study of the role played by Frankish “crusader” castles in defining the frontier between Latin Christendom and the Muslim East has attracted a significant amount of scholarly attention in recent years. Ronnie Ellenblum has characterised castles as centres of power which defined regions (as opposed to linear boundaries), while Denys Pringle has commented that distinct borders did exist, but that “castles or fortifications on their own could not defend frontiers, and were never intended to do so”.

For the most part, however, research has been limited to the kingdom of Jerusalem, with the other powers of the Latin East largely ignored. This article aims to rectify this lacuna by examining the castle of Ḥārim (Latin: Harenc), which lay on the frontier between the principality of Antioch and Muslim-held Aleppo (see figure 1). A site of fierce military and political conflict, it was one of the most significant fortresses of twelfth-century Northern Syria, used by both sides to assert their dominance. Indeed, the intensity of the struggle for Ḥārim, even after its definitive loss to the Zengīd ruler of Aleppo, Nūr al-Dīn (r. 541–569/1146–1174), in 1164, marks it as a place of supreme territorial significance.

Yet, although the fortress’ topographical advantages have already been noted by historians, its central role in Northern Syria’s political framework, particularly in

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the period after 1130, has frequently been underplayed. Likewise, the historiography of Antiochene lordship has yet to fully engage with the emphasis placed by modern scholarship on the great variations in landholding and the exercise of authority, especially on medieval Europe’s most contested borderlands. Therefore, while Daniel Power has contended that rulers frequently needed to “appease landowners at the fringes of their territories in order to retain and cultivate their loyalties”, thus leading to fluid power structures, historians of the principality have polarised around less dynamic models. On the one hand, Claude Cahen envisaged the princes as authoritarian rulers, exercising a high level of control over the nobility, which Hans Mayer has supported in a study on the relationship between the prince of Antioch and the lords of Margat (Marqab). Conversely, Jean-Marie Martin has suggested that Antioch’s princes became steadily less inclined to intervene in aristocratic holdings during the twelfth century and Thomas Asbridge

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has contended that marcher-style lordships began to appear before 1130 which were similar to the largely independent seigneuries of the Anglo-Welsh borders.\(^5\) To accept either of the existing models of Frankish lordship in Northern Syria, however, is to ignore the great complexity of the available evidence for Ḥārim; and there is a need to show greater sensitivity to the pragmatism which would have been required to control such a contested frontier.\(^6\)

This article thus seeks to extend from current historiography and to more thoroughly assess the history of the castle and its Frankish lordship. As Ḥārim came under an unparalleled level of scrutiny during the period 1130–1191, witnessing at least thirteen different assaults, five of which led to its capture, it can reveal a great deal about how Latins and Muslims interacted with, and adapted to the frontier. That it has not yet been the subject of such a detailed historical study is a matter that suggests a need for revision. It will be argued that, although Pringle is correct that borders were not impermeable, Ḥārim was nevertheless the pivotal strategic site of the Antioch-Aleppo border and the focal point of conflict. Moreover, the challenge of security here, as on other medieval borderlands, led to the adoption of a pragmatic and dynamic relationship between central authority and local


governance, as will be particularly seen in relation to the inheritance rights of its Frankish lords during the turbulent years 1150–1164.

The Topography and History of the Castle before 1130

The castle of Ḥārim was built by the Byzantines in the tenth century, and is situated 30km east of Antioch and roughly 70km west of Aleppo. The castle lies upon an impressive partially artificial tell – four hectares in diameter – which, even today, rises 40m above the surrounding plain. Its fortifications, now ruined, cover one hectare of the mound and include a square keep, a fortified gate and a triangular curtain wall interspersed by a number of towers. The dating of these defences remains a matter for debate, but it is clear that several additions were made to the original Byzantine castle, firstly by Latin lords following its capture during the First Crusade in 1098, and then by Muslim governors in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries.⁷

Ḥārim’s importance derived from its position guarding the major road linking Antioch and Aleppo through the Jabal al-Aʿla massif, otherwise known as the Belus

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Hills. This route travelled west from Aleppo, across a flat plain surveilled by fortresses such as al-Athārib and Zardanā, through the hills, onto the ‘Amūq plain – a fertile region which held a lake rich in eel fishing – and the vital Orontes River crossing 15km east of Antioch known as the Iron Bridge (Jisr al-Ḥadīd). From here, other key frontier zones could also be accessed, including the passes into Cilicia through the Amanus Mountains which were monitored by the fortresses of Baghrās and Darbsāk, as well as the communication networks of the Jabal al-Summāq which led into Southern Syria via towns including Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān and Kafar Ṭāb. It is thus of little surprise that within a decade of the Frankish conquest, the prince of Antioch, Tancred of Hauteville (d. 1112) handed Ḥārim to Guy Fresnel (d. 1119), a figure who probably heralded from La Ferté-Fraisnel on the borders of Normandy and Perche. Given his elevated position in princely charters and his role as commander of a battle line at the Battle of the Field of Blood in 1119, he was evidently of significant social standing. There are even suggestions that he established a retinue, for a certain Roger of Florence reportedly held lands in the region of Ḥārim in 1118. The castle was also a site of financial significance; the

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9 For an overview of the entire region, see Cahen, Syrie, pp. 127–76.
11 Asbridge, Creation, p. 179.
thirteenth-century Muslim author ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285) noted that, under Islamic rule, Ḥārim was the chief town of an economic district stretching west to the Aleppan plain, south to Armenaz and the entrance to the Rūj Valley, north to the ‘Amuq plain and Artāh and east to the Iron Bridge. Although this referred to the period after Frankish rule, recent archaeological discoveries suggest a certain level of artisanal activity throughout the period. As such, while a complete lack of seigneurial charter material – undoubtedly a product of the castle’s turbulent history – precludes a clear idea of how the Frankish lordship emerged or whether it was directly comparable to the later economic district, it does appear that the area’s financial prosperity was not constrained to the time of Muslim control.

Ḥārim was thus significant on a number of levels. Given that the aforementioned road through the Jabal al-A‘la was the most direct route by which a Muslim army might seek to attack Antioch from Aleppo, Claude Cahen and Paul Deschamps have argued that Ḥārim, along with nearby Artāh and ‘Imm, formed an important line of defence for the Latins. Thomas Asbridge, moreover, has argued that, while fortresses further east on the Aleppan plain were vital to early Antiochene efforts at containing the threat of their Muslim neighbours before 1130

(by establishing enough of a stranglehold to extract financial tribute from the city’s governors), those of the Jabal al-Aʿla helped to prevent a surprise invasion of Frankish territory.\textsuperscript{15} This was most acutely demonstrated when Ġl-Ghāzi of Mardin (d. c. 516/1122) defeated the forces of Prince Roger of Antioch at the Battle of the Field of Blood in 1119, as he used this victory not to threaten the principality’s existence, but rather to reassert Muslim control over the frontier by seizing al-Athārib, Zardanā, and Artāḥ, although Ḥārim appears to have remained in Frankish hands.\textsuperscript{16} As Asbridge has convincingly argued, Ġl-Ghāzi sought not only to relieve the military pressure on Aleppo, but also to prevent a surprise Antiochene attack from this direction.\textsuperscript{17} In this regard, Muslim victory in 1119 had only short-term consequences, as King Baldwin II of Jerusalem (r. 1118–1131) was able to re-assert Frankish authority along the frontier by 1123, a situation which endured into the 1130s.\textsuperscript{18} Whether Ġl-Ghāzi’s inability to take Ḥārim contributed to this is unclear, and it is possible that the fortress’ pivotal importance to the area, as will be demonstrated below, only developed over time. It is nevertheless evident that, even at this point, control over the Jabal al-Aʿla helped to shape the balance of power. For the Latins, it ensured their dominance and Antioch’s protection, while for

\textsuperscript{15} Asbridge, \textit{Creation}, p. 50; Asbridge, “Field of Blood”, pp. 301–16.


\textsuperscript{17} Asbridge, “Field of Blood”, pp. 309–316.

\textsuperscript{18} Asbridge, \textit{Creation}, pp. 81–90.
Muslim powers it offered the opportunity to prevent unrestricted movement across the Orontes from the west and to help turn the tide of Frankish aggression that had begun with the First Crusade.

Ḥārim and the Changing Military Frontier, 1130–1146

The situation facing the principality of Antioch at the start of 1130 was bright. It was ruled by Prince Bohemond II (r. 1126–1130), the vigorous young son of the First Crusade veteran and the principality’s founder, Bohemond of Taranto (d. 1111), and control over al-Athārib helped to keep Aleppo in check. However, the Latins were plunged into crisis by Bohemond II’s death later that year, which resulted in a six-year *inter-regnum* as the Antiochene nobles sought a husband for Constance (d. c. 1164), his infant heiress. In response to this instability, the *atabeg* of Aleppo and Mosul, Zengī (r. 521–541/1127–1146), began to probe at Antioch’s eastern defences, attacking al-Athārib, Kafar Ṭāb, Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān, Zardanā, and Ḥārim. By 1139,

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19 Ibid., pp. 89–90.
he had successfully captured most of the region east of the Orontes, despite the accession of the western nobleman Raymond of Poitiers (r. 1136–1149) as prince of Antioch, and a military campaign launched against Muslim Syria by the Byzantine Emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118–1143). Added to this, the Aleppo-Antioch frontier was irrevocably pushed back to Ḫārim and Artāḥ following al-Athārib’s destruction in an earthquake in 1138, although some additional security was provided further south by the retention of sites such as Afāmiyyā (Apamea) and al-Bāra.

The strategic importance of the area around Ḫārim was to be demonstrated in late 1139, when Zengī’s lieutenant, Sawār (fl. twelfth century), invaded Antiochene territory. In response, Prince Raymond gathered forces on the ‘Amuq plain in order to monitor enemy movements before launching a successful counter attack against the Muslim force. A similar tactic had less positive results in 1142, when an Aleppan army ambushed Latins camped at the Iron Bridge, which certainly supports


Pringle’s belief that castles could not prevent invasion.\textsuperscript{25} Fortunately for the Antiochenes, Zengī was only infrequently concerned with the principality, often prioritizing events in Mosul, Mesopotamia, Damascus, or Edessa.\textsuperscript{26} However, on Zengī’s death in 1146, his empire was divided in two: his eldest son, Sayf al-Dīn (r. 541–544/1146–1149), now ruled at Mosul; and his youngest, Nūr al-Dīn, took Aleppo. This split resources, but it also meant that Aleppo’s attention could be focused more intently on Antioch and Northern Syria, with Nūr al-Dīn soon becoming the figurehead of Muslim resistance.\textsuperscript{27}

As the military frontier evolved, the lordship of Ḥārim seems to have retained its importance within the principality’s political structures. In 1140, William Fresnel (d. c. 1149) witnessed two charters of Raymond of Poitiers, and was placed only behind the principality’s constable and some of its other premier nobles.\textsuperscript{28} Interestingly, William was not described as \textit{dominus Harenc} (lord of Ḥārim) or even \textit{de Harenc} (of Ḥārim), but distinct titles were rarely afforded to Antiochene nobles in princely charters or early Latin narratives – Guy Fresnel himself had only been described as “holding the city of Harim” by Albert of Aachen and was not affiliated

\textsuperscript{25} Al-ʿAẓīmī, p. 150; Ibn al-Adīm, \textit{RHC Or.}, III: 684; Pringle, ‘Castles’, p. 139.
\textsuperscript{27} Elisséeff, \textit{Nūr ad-Dīn}, II: 389–95.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{CCSSJ}, 178–83.
with a lordship by Walter the Chancellor. Likewise, the lack of a toponymic signifier was not unknown in the principality, especially in relation to those who retained their Western family names. William’s privileged position is nevertheless enough to demonstrate his family’s continued prominence and position within the landholding elites, as well as Ḥārim’s elevated status in Antioch’s power hierarchy. With Nūr al-Dīn’s rise to power after 1146, this was to become even starker.

**The Rise of Nūr al-Dīn and the Battle of Ināb, 1147–1149**

The potential problems posed for Antioch by a Zengī Aleppo ruled by a lord whose focus was not drawn away by matters in Mesopotamia became apparent between 1147 and 1149. Indeed, many historians have identified the events of these early years as proof of Nūr al-Dīn’s complete dedication to the jihād and a desire to push south towards Damascus, as well as being a turning point for the fortunes of the Latin East. Conversely, Carole Hillenbrand has questioned the reality of Nūr al-

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Dīn’s focus on holy war, and Mallett has argued that the Aleppan ruler remained a relatively weak and junior player in Syria until the 1150s. Of greater importance here is the central part played in this conflict by the region around Ḥārim, a fact which has been largely overlooked.

Hostilities began in 1147, as Nūr al-Dīn attacked – and potentially captured – Artāḥ, probably in retaliation for Antiochene raids. He then moved south to assault smaller fortresses, such as Mābūlā, Hāb, Kafr Lātha and Baṣarfūt, which lay near to the vital river crossing of Jisr al-Shughūr. Nūr al-Dīn’s junior political position may have caused him to baulk at attacking so formidable a fortress as Ḥārim, yet this campaign struck at the heart of the principality’s eastern frontier. By isolating Ḥārim from Artāḥ as well as drawing military resources further south to protect Jisr al-Shughūr, he likewise succeeded in weakening the castle’s protection. This continued into 1148, as Nūr al-Dīn assaulted two southern sites of great

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importance: Afāmiyyā and al-Bāra – the latter may even have been captured.  

These formed the mainstay of the principality's south-eastern defences, and were crucial to governing lines of communication with Southern Syria. In addition, the Zengīd ruler then travelled north to attack Yaghrā, a small fortress on the north-eastern tip of the ‘Amuq plain. Raymond may have gained a small military victory here, which indicates that Nūr al-Dīn’s power was not yet at its height, as well as Ḥārim’s continued importance to preserving Latin dominance west of the Jabal al-A‘la. Nonetheless, it is clear that attempts were being made to draw attention away from Ḥārim and to weaken the surrounding region’s defences.

The threat posed by Nūr al-Dīn came to a head when he besieged Ḥārim in June 1149. There are suggestions that his attack, perhaps more of a plundering expedition than a full assault, was motivated by Antiochene raids launched in conjunction with the Nizārī leader ‘Alī Ibn Wafā’ (d. 544/1149), and it was said to

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have been carried out with ruthless efficiency.\textsuperscript{38} The danger to such an important fortress quickly drew Prince Raymond into battle. News of the Zengīd force, which then moved south to Ināb (a small castle a short distance from Jisr al-Shughūr), forced Raymond to abandon his efforts and rush to the fortress with only a small retinue, probably in the hope of coercing a Muslim withdrawal. This was initially successful, but soon proved to have been a disastrous decision, as Nūr al-Dīn used the cover of darkness to surround the Antiochenes and inflict a devastating morning assault which left no survivors. A decisive Zengīd invasion followed, which captured sites on the principality’s eastern and northern frontiers, including Ḥārim, Afāmiyyā, Marash (Mar’ash), and perhaps Artāḥ and al-Bāra – if they were not already in Muslim hands. Nūr al-Dīn even raided Latakia (al-Lādhiqiya) and laid siege to Antioch. A Latin relief force eventually arrived under the leadership of King Baldwin III of Jerusalem (r. 1143–1163) with support from the Knights Templar, which attempted to recover Ḥārim. However, they were repulsed by the strength of the Muslim garrison and a truce was agreed.\textsuperscript{39}


The totality of this victory and its territorial implications has established the battle of Ināb as one of the most significant events in the twelfth-century Near East.40 In particular, a recent debate has emerged regarding the exact nature of the events preceding and following the conflict. Asbridge has urged for greater sensitivity to Northern Syria’s topography, suggesting that Nūr al-Dīn’s primary focus had been Afāmiyyā – followed by Ḥārim – and formed part of a grand scheme to open the road towards Damascus.41 On the other hand, Mallett viewed it as purely reactive, arguing that the Zengīd ruler simply sought to stem Antiochene aggression and lacked the power to implement such a far-reaching strategy.42 There are certainly merits to Mallett’s approach, particularly in relation to Nūr al-Dīn’s still burgeoning political authority and ambitions, but he has nevertheless wrongly downplayed the strategic skill of Muslim tactics. As Asbridge correctly noted, the

40 See notes 31 and 32.
events of 1147–1149 showed a leader astutely aware of the topographical pressure points of Northern Syria.\textsuperscript{43}

Indeed, the weakening of the southern areas near to Jisr al-Shughūr, as well as the attacks on Artāḥ and Yaghrā to the north, isolated Ḥārim and drew away martial resources before the attack in early June 1149. That the initial raid on Ḥārim was only expressly mentioned by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 628/1233) and Ibn al-Adīm (d. 657/1262) has seemingly caused Asbridge to emphasise Afāmiyyā’s importance.\textsuperscript{44} A number of other authors, including William of Tyre and William of Newburgh, alluded to Muslim raids preceding the siege of Ināb, however, and there is little need to mistrust the Arabic accounts.\textsuperscript{45} Moreover, Nūr al-Dīn’s decision to move south instead of pressing the siege of Ḥārim need not make us assume that Afāmiyyā was the more valued target; rather, it demonstrates that the ‘Amuq plain was not the ideal setting for a battle. Although it was open ground, and had proved a useful site for an ambush in 1142, Nūr al-Dīn faced a pitched battle with the Jabal al-Aʿla and Ḥārim’s garrison to his rear, which may have limited his ability to retreat. Additionally, as Raymond was raiding to the south, a swift Latin response needed to cross the Orontes at Jisr al-Shughūr rather than taking the longer coastal road to the Iron Bridge via the port of Saint Simeon.\textsuperscript{46} Ināb therefore afforded the Zengīd ruler a

\textsuperscript{43} Asbridge, \textit{Crusades}, pp. 239–45.
\textsuperscript{44} See note 38.
\textsuperscript{45} William of Tyre, 17.9 (II: 770–72); William of Newburgh, I: 67–68; John Kinnamos, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{46} On these roads, see Cahen, \textit{Syrie}, pp. 153–60.
much greater opportunity to catch the Antiochenes by surprise or, if needed, to withdraw through the al-Rūj valley or the Jabal al-Summāq. I would argue, therefore, that Ḥārim served as the main target, not Afāmiyyā, as it was the threat to this castle which Nūr al-Dīn used to draw Raymond into open conflict.

Interestingly, Mallett and Asbridge have both downplayed the prince’s speedy reaction, questioning the reliability of reports that he rode to Ināb with only a limited retinue. This is in part due to Ibn al-Qalanīsī’s (d. 555/1160) suggestion that the Latin army had numbered around 4,000 men, but also the report sent to the West by the Templar, Andrew of Montbard (fl. twelfth century), which described the prince’s death “alongside all of his barons and men”. Yet both authors had reason to exaggerate the extent of Nūr al-Dīn’s victory: the former to boost Muslim prestige; the latter to promote renewed western intervention in Outremer. Furthermore, almost all other narrative reports emphasised Raymond’s hasty move to Ināb, and the lack of wider martial support for the prince’s actions is also demonstrated by the appearance of most of the principality’s great nobles in a charter issued at Antioch in 1153. That William Fresnel was not present here, with Tancred Fresnel (d. c. 47


49 William of Tyre, 17.9-10 (II: 770–74); William of Newburgh, I: 67–68; John Kinnamos, p. 97; Michael the Syrian, III: 289–90; Anonymous, *Chronicon*, II: 115–16; Gregory the Priest, p. 257; *Urkunden zur*
1164) taking his place, suggests that he, like Renaud of Marash, died during the Ināb campaign. The Latin army does nevertheless appear to have been of limited size, which other historians have suggested was a result of the prince’s rash spirit— a characteristic undoubtedly influenced by William of Tyre’s comment that he was “a man of courage and impetuousness and ruled by the counsel of no one in these matters [of war]”. The more probable cause was the threat to Ḥārim. Although Asbridge is correct that control of Afāmiyyā allowed Nūr al-Dīn easier access to Damascus, this could not have been countenanced without first neutralising Antioch by establishing control of the Jabal al-Aʿla – a hypothesis supported by the fact that, when Baldwin III of Jerusalem launched a counter offensive in late 1149, he led the remaining Latin strength to Ḥārim, not Afāmiyyā.

**The Height of Conflict: 1150–1164**

Nūr al-Dīn’s victory at Ināb did not end the struggle for Ḥārim; rather, the 1150s and early 1160s marked a period of intense fighting, and the frequency with which the fortress changed hands, although largely overlooked by historians, is testament to its central importance to the balance of power between Antioch and Aleppo. It also


poses a number of significant questions regarding the principality's internal structures.

Clashes began in 1153, as the French chronicler Robert of Torigni (d. 1186) reported that Constance’s second husband, the western nobleman Renaud of Châtillon (r. 1153–1161), launched an immediate attack against Muslim territory upon his accession, capturing three fortresses.⁵¹ Although Ḥārim was not directly named, there is reason to believe it was amongst those taken. Firstly, any invasion of Zengid lands would have been severely hampered without securing control of this castle; and, more importantly, both Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn al-Adim reported that Nūr al-Dīn laid siege to Ḥārim in 1156 in retaliation for Latin aggression.⁵² Such an attack would not have been warranted if he retained control, and the delayed response to its loss can be explained by preoccupation with Damascus, which he successfully entered in 1154.⁵³ Nūr al-Dīn’s attack proved unsuccessful, but the fortress was recovered by 1157, during which year a further Latin siege was enacted in conjunction with Baldwin III of Jerusalem and Count Thierry of Flanders (r. 1128–1168). The fortress was captured in early 1158, perhaps because an illness left Nūr al-Dīn close to death, and Ḥārim had changed hands for the fourth time in nine years.

⁵² Ibn al-Adim, *ROL* 3, p. 528; Ibn al-Athīr, II: 79. The Latin attacks were also recorded in Ibn al-Qalanīsī, p. 325; Abū Shāma, *RHC Or.*, IV: 83.
years.\textsuperscript{54} These events have not gone unnoticed by historians – although Robert of Torigni’s account has hitherto been ignored – and Jonathan Phillips has noted that “the Christians [had] secured an important defensive outpost for the principality”.\textsuperscript{55} What has been overlooked is that Ḥārim was now the battleground for Northern Syria: the linchpin upon which rested both Antioch’s hopes for security and Zengād ambitions of territorial dominance.

Conflict continued into the 1160s, and at the start of this decade Joscelin III, titular count of Edessa (d. c. 1190), used Ḥārim as a base for raiding Muslim territory.\textsuperscript{56} Nūr al-Dīn then enacted a siege in 1162, probably in response to his capture of Renaud of Châtillon in November 1161. Despite the prince’s incarceration, the fortress was defended by a formidable garrison – which perhaps denotes the financial strength of the lordship even at this point – and so Zengād forces were repelled, and Nūr al-Dīn’s withdrawal was ensured by the arrival of a large relief force, most likely led by Baldwin III of Jerusalem, who had come to aid


\textsuperscript{56} Ibn al-Adīm, ROL, III: 533; Michael the Syrian, III: 316; Anonymous, Chronicon, II: 119; Gregory the Priest, p. 277. For a discussion on his position here, see below.
the principality. Yet, the danger to this frontier was such that a letter was sent to King Louis VII of France (r. 1137–1180) by the young Bohemond III (r. 1163/1164–1201), Raymond of Poitiers’ son and heir apparent to the principality, declaring the immediate threat to Antioch. Meanwhile, Baldwin III and the Antiochenes refortified the Iron Bridge, a place William of Tyre described as “of great use in holding back hostile incursions and the covert invasions of bandits”.

At this point, Nūr al-Dīn returned to his former tactic of diverting attention away from Ḥārim by attacking targets further south, reportedly capturing the river port of Arzghān, just to the north of Jisr al-Shughūr, later in 1162. This loss was only recorded by the contemporary Armenian chronicler Gregory the Priest (d. c. 1162), so caution must be exercised. Nonetheless, the growing threat to this region, as well as the fact that it was no longer in Latin hands, was confirmed when Bohemond III sold it to the Hospitallers along with a number of other nearby fortifications in 1168. The weakening of Jisr al-Shughūr through the loss of

57 William of Tyre, 18.30-32 (II: 854–858); Ibn al-Athīr, II: 134; Ibn al-Adīm, ROL 3, p. 534; Abū Shāma, RHC Or., IV: 105; Michael the Syrian, III: 319–20; Gregory the Priest, p. 279. On Renaud’s capture, see Mayer, Varia, pp. 45–54.
59 “utiliter satis ad cohibendos hostium discursus et latrocinantium introitus occultos”, in William of Tyre, 18.32 (II: 858).
60 Gregory the Priest, p. 279. On Arzghān, see Cahen, Syrie, pp. 158–59.
Arzghān was undoubtedly a catalyst for this, as Nūr al-Dīn’s capture of the bridge would have allowed him unrestricted access into the heart of the principality. Such danger perhaps served to draw defensive resources away from Ḥārim, until this point formidable, which potentially also accounts for Nūr al-Dīn’s – ultimately unsuccessful – attack on the Buqay’a valley in 1163. Nikita Elisséeff explained this as an attempt to damage the Latin county of Tripoli and “forge an outpost by the sea”, and it is certainly true that victory would have prevented Count Raymond III of Tripoli (r. 1152–1187) from offering his support to Antioch, and provided the Zengīds with access to the coastal road linking the county and the principality via Tortosa (Ṭartūs), Maraclea (Maraqīya), and Margat. Although Nūr al-Dīn suffered a reverse at Buqay’a, his actions in 1162 and 1163 fit well with his earlier efforts during the late 1140s, and show his shrewd and often underplayed awareness of topography and tactics.

Following the defeat of 1163, Nūr al-Dīn was reportedly so incensed that he vowed not to rest until vengeance was exacted. His decision then to then attack Ḥārim is thus testament both to his overarching aims in Northern Syria during the early 1160s, but also this fortress’ central significance to the balance of power. A

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sieg began in August 1164, and in response, Bohemond III, now prince, gathered a conglomerate of allies, including the count of Tripoli, the Hospitallers and Templars, Byzantine forces under Coloman (d. c. 1173), the *dux* of Cilicia, and even Armenians led by the warlord Thoros (d. 1168). Although care must be exercised in accepting medieval estimates of army sizes, the sources converge on a number close to 10,000 – one of the largest Christian armies seen in Northern Syria. The strength of this reaction indicates the strong desire to combat Nūr al-Dīn, and also Ḥārim's central importance. Indeed, in addition to a relief force, the castle garrison's valiant defence intimates that its numbers remained formidable.

Nūr al-Dīn then withdrew to the plain of Artāḥ, but whereas in 1162 the Latins were content to consolidate their position, William of Tyre claimed that “our men nonetheless pursued them, misusing that which had been gained by their success and fortune”. For the Latin chronicler, therefore, the Christians were over confident, although the loss of Arzghān in 1162, the victory at Buqay’a in 1163, as well as the support from Byzantium and Cilician Armenia, provided an opportune moment to make a powerful strike, especially as Ḥārim was severely threatened.

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67 “*nostri vero nichilominus eis insistentes, dato successu et prosperis abutentes*”, in William of Tyre, 19.9 (II: 874–75).
The result was disastrous, with thousands killed and all of the leaders taken into captivity – save Thoros. Ḥārim soon fell: the castle's definitive loss.\(^{68}\) Nūr al-Dīn’s actions crippled the principality’s eastern defences, and to compound this he heavily garrisoned the fortress, reportedly placing a beacon atop its fortifications. ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād believed this acted as a guiding light for Muslims escaping Latin captivity, but, if true, it would also have served as a permanent reminder to the Antiochenes that their movements across the Orontes were under surveillance.\(^{69}\)

The invasion of the principality likely served another purpose, as the battle of Artāḥ coincided with a joint invasion of Egypt by King Amalric of Jerusalem (r. 1163–1174) and Emperor Manuel Komnenos, neither of whom could afford to ignore matters to the north.\(^{70}\) By severely weakening the northern Frankish states, Nūr al-Dīn effectively diverted Christian attention away from North Africa. Although there are suggestions that he refrained from attacking Antioch itself for fear of provoking Byzantium, the principality was nevertheless reduced to the status of a weakened buffer state against imperial intervention – a position strengthened by a Zengid alliance with the Armenians in the late 1160s.\(^{71}\) It is, however, noteworthy that

\(^{68}\) See note 65.

\(^{69}\) ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, p. 36.


Hārim again acted as the conduit through which Northern Syria’s balance of power was decided, thus confirming its importance as the linchpin of the entire region.

Significantly, the level of military scrutiny and instability between 1150 and 1164 affected the Frankish lordship, which proves a crucial signifier into how the changing nature of the frontier impacted upon internal frameworks of power. Initially, though, and despite the losses after Ināb, the Fresnels continued to appear at Antioch. Indeed, as already noted, while William Fresnel seemingly had no further involvement in princely governance, Tancred Fresnel attested Renaud of Châtillon’s first charter as prince in 1153. Tancred’s slightly diminished position in the witness list in comparison to William Fresnel’s 1140 appearance perhaps indicates that this document was produced before Hārim was recovered, but his presence alone is enough to suggest that the family retained importance. There are suggestions, however, that the lordship passed to two different figures in the later 1150s: the western nobleman Renaud of Saint Valery (d. 1166/1167), who reportedly received it following Baldwin III’s siege of 1157/1158, and Count Joscelin III of Edessa, who is said to have either governed Hārim or used it as a raiding post between 1159 and 1160. The situation is complicated by the fact that Tancred

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72 *Urkunden Venedig*, I: 133–35.

Fresnel then appeared in a highly prominent position in the witness list of a princely charter in 1160, by which time Renaud of Saint Valery was in the kingdom of Jerusalem and Joscelin III had been imprisoned by Nūr al-Dīn.74 Historians have nevertheless accepted that both Renaud and Joscelin held Ḥārim in fief, and as such have maintained that Antioch’s prince held enough power to freely distribute lordships, despite the existence of a male heir.75 This view fits with research relating to other medieval authorities, such as the Anglo-Norman kings or the Jerusalemite monarchy, but problems arise in unreservedly accepting the evidence for either of these figures, or in assuming that central authority extended so far.76 Indeed, such a stance cannot be sustained when viewed in relation to Antioch’s other noble families.

Of the principality’s aristocratic dynasties, the most significant were the Masoirs, who held the castle of Margat and other possessions to the south, as well

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as half of the al-Rūj valley; the lords of the castle of Saone (§ahyūn), who also controlled Zardanā until the 1130s; the Sourdevals of Laitor, a site on the coast between the ports of Latakia and Saint Simeon, who also had possessions in Latakia and Jabala; and finally the lords of Marash, who may have held the title of ‘count’ and ruled over that city and nearby Kesoun (Kaisūn).\textsuperscript{77} Regarding noble succession, clear familial descent can be identified for the Masoirs, the lords of Saone, and the Sourdevals, although Walter II Sourdeval (d. c. 1187) was made to reconfirm possession of a money fief at Jabala by Bohemond III in 1179.\textsuperscript{78} The situation at Marash was rather different because, whether through bad luck – for the lords of Marash were almost as famous for dying in battle as were the rulers of Antioch – or princely power, the lordship frequently changed hands before its eventual disintegration after Ināb in 1149.\textsuperscript{79} More importantly, it was often placed in the hands of one of the prince’s relatives, including Richard (d. 1114), kinsman of Tancred of Hauteville and father of Prince Roger of Antioch; and Baldwin (d. 1146) and Renaud of Marash, who appear to have been brothers (or half-brothers) of Raymond of Poitiers.\textsuperscript{80} The case of Marash, coupled with the Sourdeval’s money


fief, thus demonstrate that noble succession rights were not so independent as to warrant unreserved comparisons with the Anglo-Welsh marches, and the princes were certainly not as disinterested as Martin has suggested. Yet, there is also little evidence to suggest that the ruler exercised the sort of authoritarian intervention known in the West or in the kingdom of Jerusalem, and which has been proposed for Ḥārim; particularly the practice of charging a fine for an heir to come into their inheritance. Consequently, there is a need to closely analyse the evidence for Ḥārim’s succession – especially in the fluid years of 1150s and 60s – in order to assess how the princes of Antioch and the castle’s lords adapted to the frontier’s changeability.

Considering Joscelin III, although a number of texts mentioned his use of the castle as a base for raiding in 1159/1160, perhaps in the hopes of recovering fortresses in the former county of Edessa, the only source to actually describe him as its governor is the thirteenth-century anonymous Syriac *Chronicon ad A. C. 1234 Pertinens*, which, despite its general usefulness for the narrative history of Northern Syria, cannot be securely relied upon for the principality’s internal mechanisms. The evidence for Renaud of Saint Valery is harder to refute, particularly as the same Syriac text described an *Arugad* (the accepted transliteration of Renaud) leading Ḥārim’s defences in 1164, which has been considered explicit support for Robert of

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81 Reynolds, *Fiets*, p. 49.
However, as already noted, Renaud had left for the kingdom of Jerusalem by 1159, and, more significantly, was back in the West in 1163, attesting an agreement made between Count Philip of Flanders (r. 1168–1191) and Henry II of England (r. 1154–1189) at Dover. Mayer has suggested that the Renaud at Dover may actually have been the elder Renaud’s son, but his argument relies on an inaccurate transcription of the witness list of a charter issued by Henry II, probably in 1166. In reality, it is difficult – perhaps even impossible – to link Renaud of Saint Valery with the aforementioned Arugad, but this does not clarify the situation in 1158. To do so, we must consider why Renaud was accompanied at Jerusalem by Bishop Gerard of Latakia (fl. twelfth century), an Antiochene prelate who seemingly left his See in response to Manuel Komnenos’ visit to Antioch in 1158. The nobleman had thus departed the principality in the company of an exile.

and so it is likely that changing political circumstances also accounted for his departure.

The most plausible justification for this is that a Fresnel lord reclaimed the fief. A possible explanation as to why this had not simply happened in early 1158 is provided by the Damascene chronicler Ibn al-Qalanīsī, who recorded that amongst a party of Latins captured by Muslim forces near to the Jerusalemite city of Sidon (Ṣaydā) some time before the month of *Rabi’ al-awwal* 553 (April–May 1158) was “the son of the commander who was in charge of the castle of Ḥārim”.87 There is no evidence that Renaud of Saint Valery had a son with him in the East, while Joscelin III remained unmarried until at least 1176, and had only daughters.88 Ibn al-Qalanīsī’s comment probably referred instead to either Tancred Fresnel or an unknown son of his. The former remains the most likely, in which case the epithet “son of the commander” was simply a mistake, although it is also possible that Tancred was captured when Nūr al-Dīn recovered the castle in 1156/1157, and that his son was accordingly taken captive as well. Nevertheless, the question remains as to why an Antiochene lord was in the kingdom of Jerusalem, especially at a time when Ḥārim was under Latin control. As has been argued elsewhere, the principality’s enfeoffed nobles rarely, if ever, departed from Northern Syria into the other Latin states, even to provide military service to the prince, and so Ibn al-

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87 Ibn al-Qalanīsī, pp. 346–47. This story was also recorded in Abū Shāma, *RHC Or.*, IV: 98.

Qalanisi’s account raises difficulties. The picture becomes clearer if we were to move the dating of the capture from Rabi’ al-awwal 553 (April–May 1158) to Rabi’ al-awwal 552 (April–May 1157), as Renaud of Châtillon brought Antiochene forces south into support of King Baldwin III’s defence of Bānīyās during this month. This was a number of months before Baldwin and Thierry of Flanders came north to aid in the recapture of Ḥārim, which helps to explain why an Antiochene nobleman had accompanied the prince on an expedition he might otherwise have not participated in. By accepting that Tancred Fresnel was captured in 1157, it is also possible to understand why Renaud of Saint Valery would then have been placed in control of the fortress.

Despite this, Renaud’s departure alongside the bishop of Latakia requires explanation. As such, we should turn again to the arrival of Manuel Komnenos, as during his stay, the emperor forged an agreement with Nūr al-Dīn for the release of a sizeable number of Latin prisoners, probably in early 1159. Renaud’s exit soon after this appears to suggest that amongst those freed was Tancred Fresnel, a figure the Antiochene would certainly have been keen to recover during discussions for this accord. This not only clarifies the western nobleman’s departure, but also explains Tancred’s prominent position in a princely charter of 1160, in which he

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90 William of Tyre, 18.15 (II: 832–33); Ibn al-Qalanisi, pp. 330–32.
91 William of Tyre, 18.25 (II: 849); Johannes Kinnamos, p. 144; Michael the Syrian, III: 316; Anonymous, Chronicon, p. 119; Gregory the Priest, pp. 274–75; Sempad the Constable, pp. 45–47.
appeared higher in the witness list than at any other point in his family’s history.\textsuperscript{92} That an \textit{Arugad} defended Ḥārim in 1164 need not challenge this assertion; it merely suggests either that the anonymous Syriac chronicler was wrong, or that Tancred had subsequently died. Renaud of Saint Valery should therefore be viewed not as an enfeoffed noble, but rather as a temporary castellan, placed in charge of a highly important fortress while its lord was incarcerated – a role Joscelin III, without a domain of his own after Edessa’s fall, may even have contributed to.

The Fresnels’ enduring claim to Ḥārim is further supported by the fact that Prince Bohemond III took as his wife a certain Orgueilleuse (d. c. 1175), who the thirteenth-century \textit{Lignages d’Outremer} described as “daughter of the lord of Harim”.\textsuperscript{93} That Orgueilleuse was of marriageable age in the 1160s precludes her being Joscelin III’s daughter, and that she was considered of suitable prestige to become princess of Antioch suggests she came from a family deeply entrenched in the principality’s political history – which Renaud of Saint Valery was not. Consequently, it is difficult to propose any conclusion beyond accepting that Orgueilleuse was a Fresnel. This also has important implications for our understanding of female inheritance rights in the principality. For, alongside

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Codice Diplomatico}, I: 206–07.

Orgueilleuse, we are able to note the presence of Hugh Darenc at Antioch in 1166, John de Herenc in a charter of King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem (r. 1174–1185) in 1179, as well as a Robert Fresnel amongst the Templar Order in 1183.94 This implies that male heirs existed for Ḥārim’s lordship, although it must also be noted that a Gunfridus de Freisnel who witnessed a charter of King Fulk of Jerusalem (r. 1131–1142) in 1138 could indicate that other elements of the Norman family from whom the Antiochene lords originated also migrated to the East.95 Nevertheless, the opportunity for female succession was included within the thirteenth-century legal customs of the principality known as the Assises d’Antioche, and that the rights to Ḥārim appear to have passed to a woman shows the diverse inheritance customs which evolved in the Latin East.96

94 For Hugh, see CGOH, I: 251–52. For John, see Tabulae Ordinis Theutonici, ed. Ernst Strehlke (Berlin: Weidmann, 1869), pp. 10-11. For Robert, see Chartes de Terre Sainte provenant de l’Abbaye de Notre-Dame de Josaphat, ed. Henri-François Delaborde (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1880), pp. 89–90. It has also been suggested that the Sylvester consanguineus principis who appeared in a number of Antiochene charters of the 1160s–1180s was a Fresnel relative of Orgueilleuse, but there is no real evidence for this. See Wipertus-Hugo Rudt de Collenberg, “A Fragmentary Copy of an Unknown Recension of the ‘Lignages d’Outre-Mer’ in the Vatican Library”, English Historical Review 98, no. 387 (1983), pp. 311–27.

95 This is made especially possible given that Guy Fresnel was one of eight brothers. See Asbridge, Creation, pp. 163–64.

Interestingly, the thirteenth-century Muslim chronicler Ibn al-Athīr suggested that Ḥārim was actually handed to Bohemond III in 1158.\textsuperscript{97} This was correctly described as “impossible” by Cahen, given that the prince would have been only eight-years old, but in light of the present discussion it is conceivable that the author instead referred to the fact that an Antiochene ruler – in this instance Renaud of Châtillon – took responsibility for the castle before handing it to a suitable custodian.\textsuperscript{98} A place of supreme territorial and political significance, it is unsurprising that the prince would seek to protect it, and so there are suggestions of wardship rights similar to the western practice of the escheat – the temporary guardianship of a fief while an heir was in their minority.\textsuperscript{99} Such a custom was listed under the term “bailliage” in the \textit{Assises d’Antioche}, where it was noted that a liege lord could oversee a property until a successor came of age.\textsuperscript{100} Yet, there is no demonstrable evidence for the sort of fines western monarchs sought to impose on heirs, nor the level of fief confiscation or alteration that has been identified in Anglo-Norman England and the kingdom of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{101}

The complicated nature of Frankish lordly possession of Ḥārim during this dynamic period thus proffers a complex picture of seigneurial inheritance. Like the lordships of Margat and Saone, aristocratic dynastic succession can be seen to have

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{97} Ibn al-Athīr, II: 79.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Cahen, \textit{Syrie}, p. 395. n.1.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Reynolds, \textit{Fiefs}, p. 296.
\item \textsuperscript{100} \textit{Assises d’Antioche}, p. 16.
\end{itemize}
had safeguards protecting noble rights, even after a castle fell out of Latin control. However, like Marash, and to some extent the Sourdevals, the prince had certain rights of interference, particularly in order to protect a lordship or castle when its lord could not. Therefore, an examination of lordly succession rights at Ḥārim, and in the principality as a whole, does not readily fit with either of the two existing historiographical trends. Antioch’s rulers could, and did, intervene, but this was not uniformly implemented, and there is little to no evidence for authoritarian control. Conversely, uniformly crystallised inheritance rights similar to those claimed by the lords of the Anglo-Welsh Marches cannot be identified, despite evidence for fief protection. The case study of Harim thus demonstrates that holding castles and lands on contested borderlands required a level of pragmatism which belies suggestions of standardised regulation or customs. Just as the frontier was fluid, so was its administration.

Conflict Continued: 1165–1191

Significantly, Ḥārim’s importance endured even beyond Nūr al-Dīn’s victory at Artāḥ in 1164, as it continued to act as the central goal of Antioch’s military activities – perhaps driven by Bohemond III’s marriage to its heiress (which seemingly provided him with a legitimate right to claim this fortress and probably accounts for the underlying motive behind the union) – and a significant tool in Aleppan politics. This
was especially the case in the years of disruption which followed Nūr al-Dīn’s death in 1174, during which Šalāḥ al-Dīn (r. 570–589/1174–1193), the Ayyūbid Sultan of Egypt and Damascus, sought to impose his will over the Zengīd Empire and Bohemond III made no fewer than four attempts to recover the fortress.\(^\text{102}\)

Initially, Aleppo was governed by advisors acting on behalf of Nūr al-Dīn’s son and heir, al-Ṣāliḥ (r. 569–577/1174–1181), and control of Ḥārim was handed to one such supporter, Gumushtegin (d. 1177). A former servant to Ḳūṭb al-Dīn of Mosul (d. 565/1170), Gumushtegin appears to have quickly won al-Ṣāliḥ’s favour, acting as his sole regent in the face of Ayyūbid interference.\(^\text{103}\) Ḥārim was thus held by a powerful and trusted servant, which is further testament to its significance. Relations between al-Ṣāliḥ and Gumushtegin soon soured, though, and some time before 1177 the latter offered to surrender the fortress to Bohemond III in return for protection. Al-Ṣāliḥ responded by having his former advisor captured and executed, but Šalāḥ al-Dīn still took advantage of this instability to raid the Jabal al-Summāq.\(^\text{104}\) The speed of the Zengīd reaction, and the Ayyūbid intervention, demonstrates both Northern

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Syria’s fragile politics and Ḥārim’s potential influence. More importantly, the promise of the fortress’ recovery spurred the Latins into action, and a coalition force led by Bohemond III, Raymond III of Tripoli and Philip of Flanders began a siege in the final months of 1177. Without Gumushtegīn to fulfil his promise, the Muslim garrison held out into early 1178, when al-Ṣāliḥ was able to convince the aggressors to withdraw by offering a sizeable pay off and alluding to the mutual benefit of forestalling Ṣaḥal al-Dīn. The fortress was then placed under the care of another experienced military leader, Sarhak (d. 1183), formerly a mamlūk of Nūr al-Dīn. Bohemond’s willingness to settle suggests that the principality’s diminished resources, and the decreased chance of Byzantine intervention after the battle of Myriokephalon in 1176, meant outright control of Ḥārim could be relegated in the face of political and financial benefits. Even so, the castle’s political prominence is obvious.

A similar situation arose when al-Ṣāliḥ died in 1181, as Ṣaḥal al-Dīn took the opportunity to again push his claims in the north, despite armed opposition from the Zengīds. Possession of Aleppo was initially disputed between ‘Īmād al-Dīn of Sinjar (d. 594/1198) and ‘Īzz al-Dīn of Mosul (d. 589/1193), and with his Muslim

neighbours in disarray, Bohemond III reportedly launched a fresh attack on Ḥārim in late 1181 or early 1182.\textsuperscript{108} Such was the danger this posed to hopes of forestalling Ayyūbid encroachment, ‘Īmād al-Dīn was said to have offered the Antiochene prince an eleven-year truce to withdraw.\textsuperscript{109} Malcolm Lyons and David Jackson have suggested that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn fabricated news of the attack on Ḥārim, as well as the truce, to offer a pretext for a move on Aleppo and to discredit the Zengīds in the eyes of the Caliph, but it is difficult to know if such arguments are correct.\textsuperscript{110} For Bohemond III to exploit Muslim instability by putting pressure on Ḥārim in the hope of gaining an advantage fits with earlier tactics, while the castle’s use as a political tool is further evidence of its strategic significance. Sarhak was even to emulate Gumushṭegīn’s attempted act of treachery in 1183, when he proposed the fortress’ surrender to the Latins as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s influence at Aleppo grew. However, the hostility of the Muslim garrison prevented this, allowing the Ayyūbid Sultan to seize control and hand it to one of his trusted amīrs, Ibrāhīm ibn Shirwa.\textsuperscript{111}

The failure of Sarhak’s plot appears to have ended Antioch’s hopes of capturing Ḥārim, despite suggestions that Bohemond III raided its surrounding area


\textsuperscript{109} Abū Shāma, \textit{RHC Or.}, IV: 222–27. The agreement of an unstipulated peace was also mentioned in Ibn al-Adīm, \textit{ROL}, IV: 157–60, while it was limited to two years in Gregory Bar Ebroyo, \textit{Chronicon}, ed. and trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge, \textit{The Chronography of Gregory Abū’l-Faraj 1225-1286}, volumes I-II (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), II: 311–12.

\textsuperscript{110} Lyons and Jackson, \textit{Saladin}, pp. 162–63, 175.

in 1184 and in the process recovered the Iron Bridge, which had been lost some time earlier.\textsuperscript{112} The prince also continued to use Ḥārim as a political weapon following the loss of the majority of the principality to Ṣalaḥ al-Dīn in 1188, using the distraction of the Third Crusade to attack the fortress in 1191.\textsuperscript{113} This was probably little more than a raid, yet the Antiochene prince’s activities here – and elsewhere at Latakia and Jabala – were enough to convince the Ayyūbid ruler to agree to a truce and the return of the ‘Amuq plain and Arzghān to the Latins in 1192.\textsuperscript{114} Thus, while this wider period had failed to ensure the return of Ḥārim to Latin hands, military pressure around the Jabal al-Aʿla had continually garnered rewards.

Conclusion

During the twelfth century, particularly between the years 1130 and 1191, the castle of Ḥārim was the subject of intense military and political scrutiny. The frequency with which it came under attack, changed hands or became a diplomatic tool, and the lengths to which both Latin and Muslim rulers went to retain control,

\textsuperscript{112} The capture of the Iron Bridge is recorded only in Gregory Bar Ebroyo, II: 317. Although troubles at Ḥārim are noted in Abū Shāma, \textit{RHC Or.}, IV: 236–37.


demonstrates its central importance to the Antioch-Aleppo frontier, and Northern Syria as a whole. Ḥārim was the territorial linchpin, and is thus on a par with other region-defining borderlands and fortresses, such as the Norman Vexin, the castle of Carreghoфа on the Anglo-Welsh marches, and the fortress-city of Bāniyās in the kingdom of Jerusalem.115 This case study also indicates that, while Pringle’s assertion that no castle could prevent an invasion is to some extent supported, Ellenblum is nevertheless correct that fortresses acted as centres of power and even defined regions.116 Indeed, the fact that Ḥārim was never handed to the Military Orders, despite widespread sales throughout the rest of the principality, is testament to its vital significance to the principality’s political and defensive framework.

In addition, the evidence for Ḥārim’s Frankish lordship shows that existing historiographical models of the relationships of power between the princes of Antioch and the noble elites of the principality stand in need of revision. Whereas historians have identified polarised structures – either in favour of the ruler or the aristocracy – we instead find diverse customs which protected both sides, particularly in relation to inheritance rights. This reflects a level of pragmatism that would have undoubtedly developed from the challenges of adapting to the

changeable nature of Antioch’s fortunes, as can be seen during the years 1150–1164. The medieval frontier was, after all, a dynamic place, governed by geography, peoples, and power, with each region subject to its own unique concerns. To understand this fully, we should be sensitive to both consistent patterns and distinctive intricacies which undermine broad theories. Through a careful and thorough examination of Ḥārim’s complex, and occasionally convoluted history, much is therefore revealed about how Latin and Muslim powers adjusted to the Near East’s changing political climate.

Figure Captions

1) Figure 1: Northern Syria in the twelfth century