

CRUSADER REMAINS IN THE MURISTAN, OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM: A DECADE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL GLEANINGS

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Over the past decade (1990–2000) several construction projects have taken place in the area known as the Muristan and its vicinity in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem (map ref. NIG 22180–270/63155–70, OIG 17180–270/13155–70; Fig. 1). These works revealed random ancient remains, mostly dated to the Crusader period (marked in Roman numerals on Fig. 1). Most of the data was retrieved through inspection during construction; excavation was not always possible.¹ In order to give meaning to disjointed pieces of information, it was decided to publish them together. The dating of the structures and finds to the Crusader period is based on the analysis of the building techniques and architectural elements, such as diagonal tooling, mason's marks, groin vaults and pointed arches, as well as identification of the structures in contemporary Crusader sources (on Crusader building techniques, see Pringle 1981; Ellenblum 1992; Boas 1999:217–225).

Conrad Schick surveyed most of the remains of the Muristan during the years 1889–1900, and published them in a comprehensive article in the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly (Schick 1902). It is widely accepted that Schick's plan represents the Muristan during Crusader times (marked in gray on Fig. 1).² Our work primarily re-exposed the architectural remains discovered by Schick (marked in black on Fig. 1), providing the opportunity to document and examine them again using modern methods and knowledge, while revealing new Crusader remains on David Street (Fig. 1:VI).

As shown in Fig. 1, the discrepancies between Schick's survey and our finds can be

explained by the fact that Schick did not use accurate surveying tools, as noted in his own words, foreseeing our work: "...These are as accurate as I can make them, knowing that further excavations will complete and correct them where any mistake may have been made" (Schick 1902:43).

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The Muristan is in the heart of the Christian Quarter, directly south of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is bounded by Christian Street (the Crusader-period 'Street of the Patriarch') to the west, David Street on the south, Harat el-Dubbaghin on the north (the Crusader 'Street of the Palm-Sellers') and the bazaars to the east (the Crusader 'Street of the Latin Gold-Smith'). The name 'Muristan' is derived from the Persian and Turkish word for hospital, given by Saladin after it was taken from the Crusader knights (Schick 1889:113).

The earliest known remains date to the Iron Age. At that time, the Muristan was outside the city limits, with the 'Broad Wall' passing south of the site (Avigad and Geva 2000:45–58). The excavations in the Muristan (Kenyon's Site C and the Church of the Redeemer) and in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre uncovered quarries, burial caves, ceramics and other sporadic remains from that period (Lux 1972:191–194; Kenyon 1974:227–231; Broshi and Barkay 1985; Vriezen 1994:97–126).

Burial caves dating to the Second Temple period were found inside the Holy Sepulchre (Kloner and Zissu 2003:306–307), following

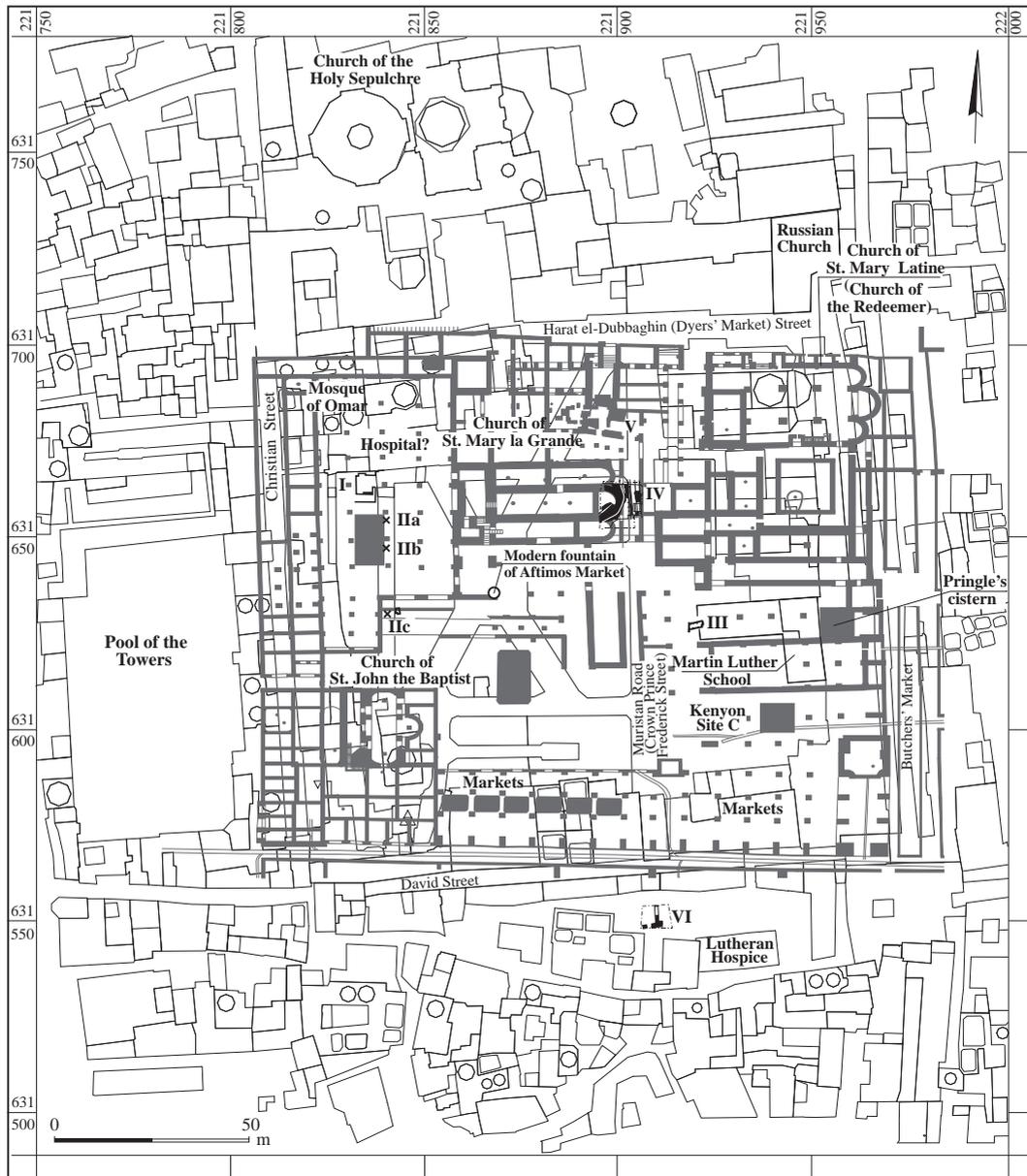


Fig.1. Map of present-day Muristan (thin lines) superimposed with Schick's survey (gray) and the new remains (black).

the tradition that identifies Golgotha with the rocky outcrop within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These are evidence that the Muristan area, or part of it, was at that time outside the city and was used as a cemetery. The 'Third Wall', built by Agrippas I in the first half of the first century CE, incorporated the Muristan area

within the walls. Under Roman rule, the site was near the junction between the *Cardo* and the *Decumanus* and was probably the location of the Forum. A temple dedicated to Aphrodite and a basilica were built in its northern part; the remains of a monumental arch, probably leading to the Forum, can still be seen in the Russian

Church (Vincent and Abel 1926:40–70). Various other remains from Roman times were uncovered beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre complex (Patrich 1999:361–367).

The area was redefined during the Byzantine period as ecclesiastical, with Constantine building a huge memorial church at the site identified as the Tomb of Christ. Little is known concerning the area south of Constantine's Church. The best preserved remains dating to the Byzantine period are in the Church of St. John the Baptist located in the southwestern corner of the Muristan (Mar Hanna Church). The lower part of the edifice dates to Byzantine times (Dickie 1899; Vincent and Abel 1926:652–668). Area C in Kenyon's excavation also revealed some ambiguous remains that date to Byzantine times (Kenyon 1974:227–231; see Fig. 1).

The same area, excavated by Kenyon (1974:275), revealed Early Islamic structures built above the Byzantine layer; however, their function in the Early Islamic city plan is not clear.

In the ninth century, as Bernard the Monk tells us, the emperor Charlemagne erected a center for Christian pilgrims in the quarter (Wilkinson 1977:142). This center included a hospice, a library and a church, named after St. Mary. No archaeological evidence of these buildings has been found; they were probably destroyed by the Caliph al-Ḥakim in 1009 or by later Crusader construction works. De Vogue (1860:62) tried to identify them with some of the Crusader churches located in the Muristan. During the eleventh century, a group of Amalfitan merchants erected a monastery at the site of the Muristan, known as St. Mary of the Latins, along with a hospital and convent for nuns, southeast of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Nicholson 2001:2–3).

The twelfth century—the time of Crusader rule—was a turning point in the development of the site. The area was given to the Hospitaller Order of St. John, who built new buildings, renovating or rebuilding the former Amalfitan and Byzantine structures. The Crusader enclosure included the following major buildings:

The Hospital.— According to Schick's map, in the northwestern part of the Muristan there was a large building containing underground halls—eight bays long and four bays wide—supported by several massive square piers. Piers I and II are probably part of that complex. Schick (1902:49) identified these vaults as the Hospital of the Knights of St. John. His assumption is widely accepted, based mostly on Crusader historical sources, such as John of Wurzburg and Theoderic, who note a large, busy hospital south of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Conder 1896:192; Wilkinson 1988:266, 287).

Ecclesiastical Buildings.— Three churches erected in the Muristan can clearly be seen on Schick's map. In the south is the clover-shaped, two-story church of St. John the Baptist. As mentioned above, it was built above a Byzantine church, which was renovated by the Crusaders.

In addition, two Romanesque basilicas were constructed, one in the center of the enclosure and another in the northeastern corner of the site. Both are tri-apsidal basilicas with central naves, two aisles, cruciform piers, engaged pillars, an entrance at the north wall and a belfry. The churches were lavishly decorated, with Schick reporting that the one in the center contained large carved capitals, marble pillars and beautifully carved stones. The northeastern church had a decorated gateway with figures representing the signs of the zodiac and a cloister to its south (Folda 1995:274–282).

Contemporary sources, such as Fretellus of the twelfth century, thirteenth century La Citez (de Vogue 1860:412, 437) and the cartographic maps (Brussels, Hague, Paris and Cambrai—Levi 1991:431, 443, 455, 461, 449), mention two churches that were Benedictine convents for men and women: St. Mary la Grande (Major) and St. Mary Latin (Minor). It is debatable which is St. Mary la Grande and which is St. Mary Latin, as they are close to one another and have the same form and dimensions. One of the churches was named after the ninth century CE Church of St. Mary Latin that stood in the area, but whose exact location is unknown,

making the already obscure historical sources difficult to interpret (on the churches and their problematic identification, see de Vogue 1860:246–265; Schick 1902:42–56; Enlart 1925:182–189; Vincent and Abel 1926:953–965; King 1931:64–65; Patrich 1984; Bahat 1991:86–92; Boas 2000:85–88, 158). Today, the widely held opinion is that the church marked on Schick's plan at the heart of the Muristan (in what is today known as the fountain of the Aftimos Market) is St. Mary la Grande. The remains marked in Fig. 1 as IV are part of one of the church apses (see below).

Various Large Secular Buildings.— In his survey, Schick noted streets and lanes with buildings alongside them, such as shops and magazines. Some of them—especially in the south and east of the enclosure—are large-spaced buildings, roofed with vaults that are supported by piers. These structures must have been utilized by the pilgrims or by the members of the Order of St. John, and can be understood as markets, stables, a dormitory or yet another hospital.

In 1216, after Jerusalem had fallen to the Ayyubids, al-Afdal, son of Saladin, built a mosque dedicated to Omar (Conder 1875:78) opposite the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Apart from the mosque, the entire quarter became an area where debris accumulated over a long period, until Ottoman times.

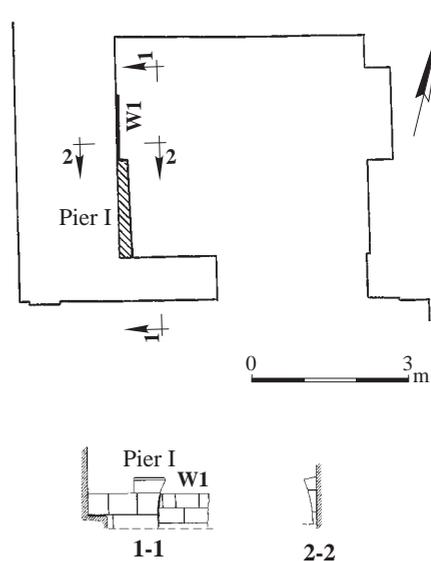
In 1867, Charles Warren dug trenches and shafts in the Muristan on behalf of the Palestine Exploration Fund, hoping to find remains dating to the time of Jesus (Wilson and Warren 1871:269–274). Three years later, the Turkish sultan handed part of the Muristan to Kaiser Wilhelm I of Prussia. Soon after, the Prussians decided to build a church in the eastern part of the Muristan, and thus, the accumulated debris was evacuated. This presented Schick with an opportunity to map the site. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, to whom the western part of the Muristan belonged, followed suit and began clearing the area,

exposing Crusader architectural remains that were also documented by Schick.

THE PHYSICAL REMAINS

Architectural Remains from the Hospital (Fig. 1:I, II; Plan 1; Figs. 2, 3)

During the renovation of the Greek Patriarchate in September 1998, the wing of a nineteenth-century building, located in the northwestern corner of the Muristan, was cleaned. Directly under the modern southern wall of the building, the upper part of a massive pier (Pier I) was discovered. Only three courses of its southern face were documented to a height of 1.2 m (Figs. 2, 3). The pier is built of well-dressed, rectangular stones (0.5×0.7 m on the average), bearing typical Crusader diagonal tool marks. The beginning of a vaulted opening was exposed on the western part of the pier. The opening was blocked by a 1.3 m long segment of wall (W1), built of rectangular stones (0.35×0.60 m on the average), which were different in size and drafting technique than those of the pier. It seems that the blockage belongs to a later medieval phase, possibly the Ayyubid period. Another bay or vault opening



Plan 1. Pier I, plan and sections.



Fig. 2. Pier I, vaulted opening, looking west.



Fig. 3. Pier I, vaulted opening, looking south.

to the north can be observed from the spring stones in the northern face of the pier. There is no doubt that we documented the apex of the

pier, where it joined the groin-vaults that did not survive. The floor of the Crusader building should be sought below the accumulation of debris.

Ashlar Blocks and Piers (Figs. 4–8)

In June 1991, work was conducted in the northwestern part of the Muristan as part of the installation of a new drainage pipe. During inspection, 1.4 m below the level of Muristan Lane (the lane along which are the remains labeled II on Fig. 1), large hewn blocks and three Crusader piers were discovered. Blocks were found in the debris of infrastructure work of an unknown date and in the accumulation below the pavement of the street. While their original location is unknown, one can assume that they came from the Crusader buildings that stood in that location. Two types of ashlar were noted. The first is a relatively small ashlar (0.3×0.5) with margins and hammer-dressed bosses (Fig. 4), recalling stones from the Hasmonean and Herodian periods, but also typical of the Crusader/Ayyubid towers along the southern and western flanks of the city (Tsafirir and Broshi 1977; Broshi and Gibson 1994; Seligman 2001). The second type is an enormous ashlar ($0.5 \times 0.7 \times 1.5$ m), beautifully dressed, and bearing Crusader diagonal tool marks (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. Ashlar blocks with hammer dressed margins.

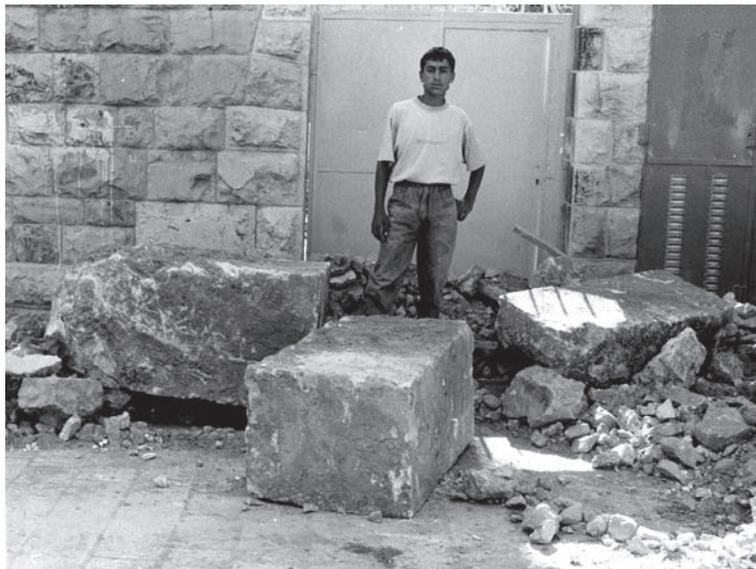


Fig. 5. Large ashlar blocks.

Further along the street, three piers were found; unfortunately, their exact location is unclear, because the remains were immediately covered after their discovery, thus preventing

the use of accurate surveying equipment. One was found in the northern part of the street—IIa (Fig. 6), and the other two in the middle and southern side of the alley—IIb (Fig. 7) and



Fig. 6. The northern pier (IIa).



Fig. 7. The middle pier (IIb).



Fig. 8. The southern pier (IIc).

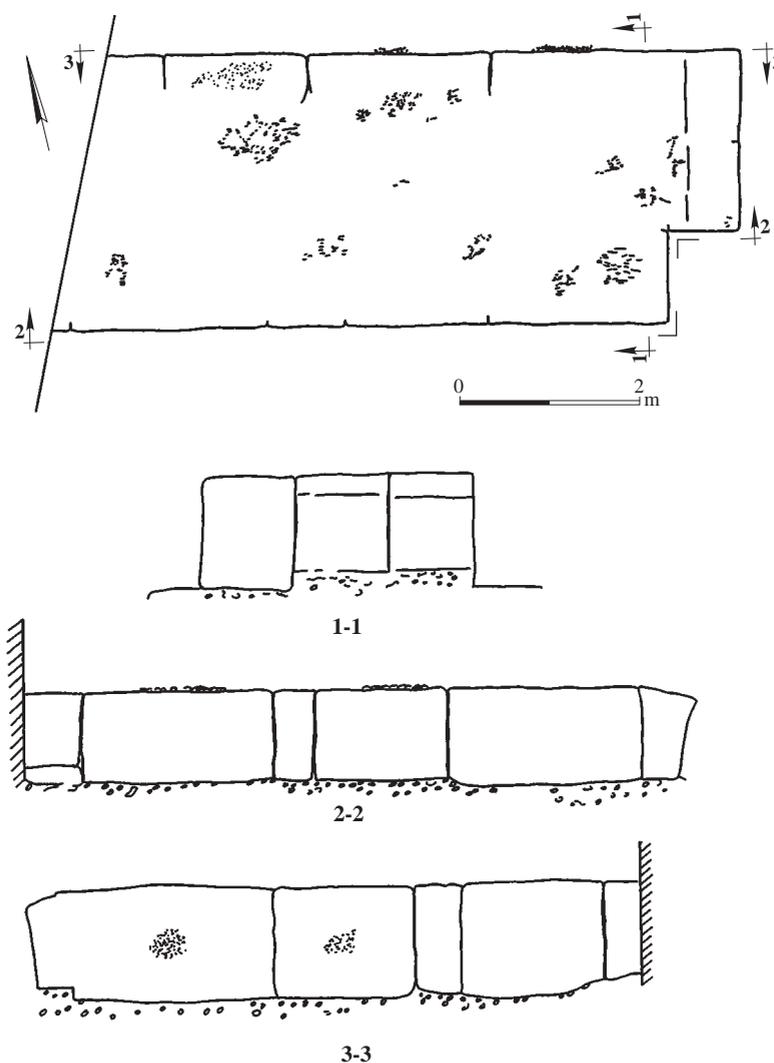
IIc (Fig. 8), as shown in Fig. 1. The piers are simple squares, built with well-dressed square blocks, bearing diagonal tool marks. The blocks were accurately placed and bonded with a thin layer of grayish cement. A spring

stone can be seen on Pier IIb (Fig. 7). Each one of the piers supported four groin-vaulted bays on each of their sides, although it was difficult to ascertain the building to which they belonged.

A Pier from a Large Building (Fig. 1:III; Plan 2; Fig. 9)

In September 1998, one course (0.5 m height) of a wall was uncovered while building a room for an electrical transformer in the courtyard of the Martin Luther School, south of the Church of the Redeemer (probably the former Crusader Church of St. Mary Latin). The wall is quite thick (1.5 m wide, 4 m long), with well-dressed stones on the outer facing, differing in size and built in the header-stretcher fashion. The core is composed of soil and small stones. Between

the ashlars is a thin layer of grayish mortar. The eastern side of the wall has two spring stones, with the third missing. These stones mark the beginning of a vault that opened eastward, indicating that the original level of the building is lower. Remains of delicate plaster could be seen on the wall. Most of the stones were again dressed with typical Crusader tool marks. On the southern face, two mason's marks were observed, one in the shape of a hook and the other, an inverted S (for similar mason's marks, see Pringle 1981, esp. p. 187, Types 10/11–21).



Plan 2. Pier III, plan and sections.



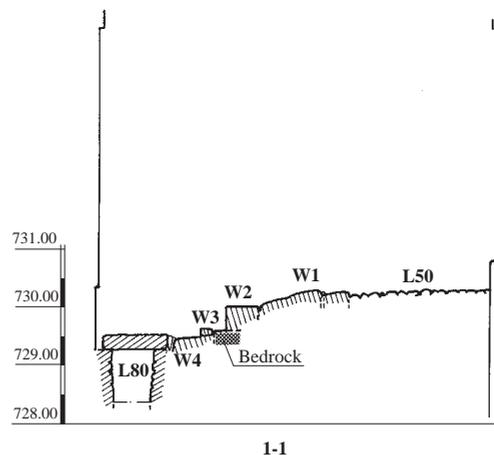
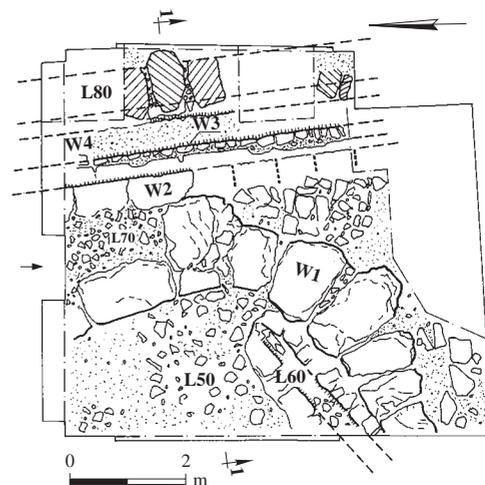
Fig. 9. Pier III, looking north, showing vault opening toward the east.

According to Schick's plan, this is one of many piers and vaults forming a large structure occupying the space between the cloister, south of the probable Church of St. Mary Latin, and the markets along David Street. Some of the piers are still clearly visible in the courtyard of the Martin Luther School, while others are incorporated in the walls of the school.

The purpose of this building is unknown, but it was clearly an important one. It may have been the dormitory of the knights or pilgrims, the palace of the Grand Master or yet another hospital, possibly for women (Boas 2000:160).

The Apse of St. Mary la Grande (Fig. 1:IV; Plan 3; Figs. 10–12)

In January 1999, during renovation works in a fabric shop opposite the entrance of the Church of the Redeemer, in the street running west from the main street of the Muristan (Crown Prince Frederick St.), limited remains of the central apse of what was probably the Church of St. Mary la Grande were found beneath the floor of the shop. Once the area was cleared of rubbish and debris, only a thin layer was left to excavate above the antiquities. The remains were documented; however, no further excavation was undertaken.



Plan 3. Apse IV, plan and section.



Fig. 10. Church of St. Mary la Grande (IV): the foundation of the apse (W1), looking north.



Fig. 11. Remains of a ceramic pipe (L60) in the core of the apse (L50).

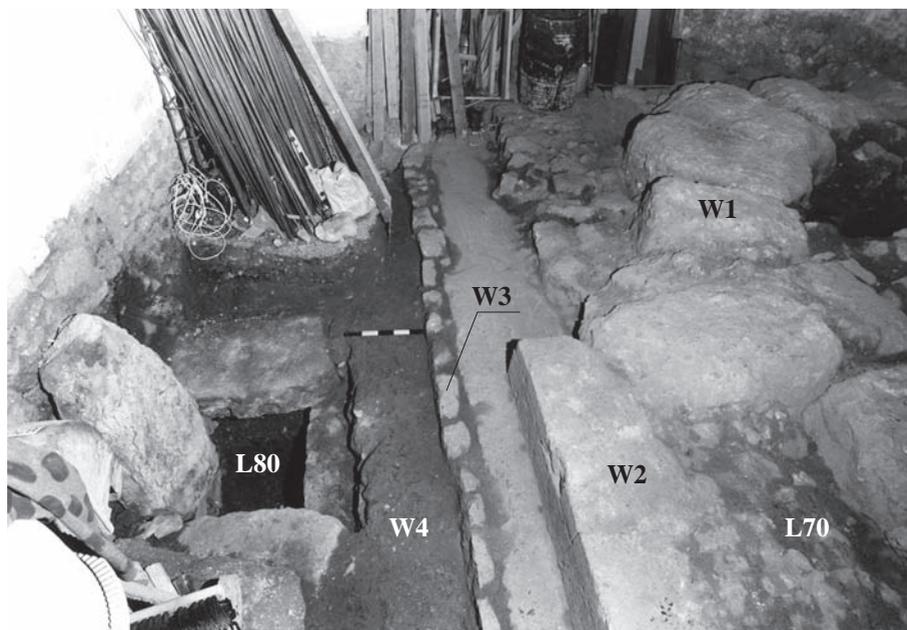


Fig. 12. Wall 3, looking south, attached to the apse, the walkways (W4) and the drainage channel (L80).

The apse (W1), facing east, was a curvilinear wall, built of a single course of large fieldstones (1.0×1.5 m average size) coarsely hewn into rectangular blocks; this was probably the foundation of the apse (Fig. 10). The floor makeup within the inner part of the apse (L50) was composed of small fieldstones mixed with soil. A few centimeters beneath the core, we observed a cistern and a channel, as well as ceramic pipes that fed the cistern (L60; Fig. 11). As it was not fully excavated, accurate details of this feature cannot be presented. In their survey of the church, Schick and Wilson mentioned a series of cisterns and reservoirs underneath the naves and apses of the Church of St. Mary la Grande (Wilson and Warren 1871:272; Schick 1902:47).

To the east of the apse, an additional wall (W2) was found (Fig. 12). The eastern face of the wall consisted of rectangular stones with diagonal tooling. Only one course (height 0.45 m) of the wall (two blocks of 0.5×1.0 m on the average) remained, but the impression left in the bedrock indicates that the wall continued in a straight line toward the south. The space between the outer face of the wall and the apse was filled with small stones and soil (L70). The bedrock upon which the wall was built had been hewn and leveled. It seems that the apses of the church—constructed and integrated into the thickness of W2—were not projecting out, but rather enclosed by a thick or polygon wall (chevet). This technique is common in Crusader churches, such as St. Anne in Jerusalem and the church at Abu-Ghosh (Kühnel 1991:311–315).

Parallel to W2, adjoining and alongside the cut edge of the bedrock, 4.5 m of a thin wall (W3) was exposed. The wall (width 0.3 m) is built from small rectangular stones (0.15×0.30 m on average) and bonded by gray mortar. It seems that W3 is the western edge of a walkway, delineating a street that crosses the area from north to south, exactly along the course of the present street. Indeed, on Schick's plan, the apex of the apse abuts an ancient street (Schick 1902:52–53).

Wall 3 was most likely built upon another wall (W4), running parallel to W2, between the bedrock and the channel to its east. In the present documentation project, we were not able to clean and excavate it; thus, its nature and function are unknown.

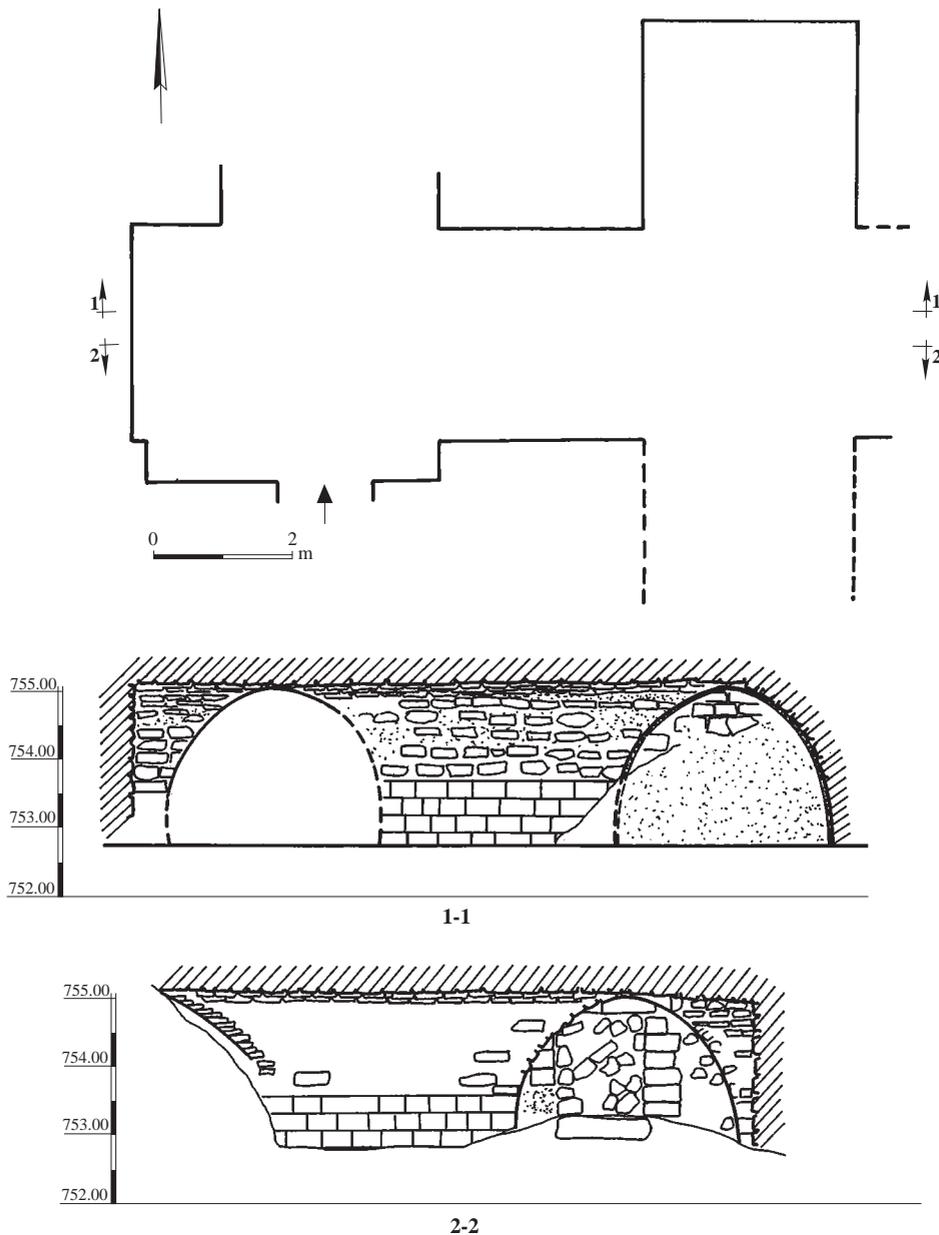
East of W3, a water or drainage channel was uncovered (L80; Fig. 12). Its walls were built of coarse fieldstones held together by gray mortar. The channel was roofed using flat slabs that probably made up the above-mentioned Crusader street pavement. The channel was filled with a fine earth fill, probably the sediment of the running water. The fill was not excavated, so its depth and exact date is unknown. We suggest a Crusader date, in accordance with the channel's location relating to the Crusader Church of St. Mary la Grande and its position in the general plan of the Hospitallers' Quarter.

Schick (1902:52) noted similar drainage channels under what is today the main entrance from David Street to the Muristan, along the same axis of the channel we uncovered.

In his plan of the Muristan, at the location of the shop we excavated, Schick marked a church with two surviving apses—the central and southern apses. He noted that in both apses, two courses of masonry had been preserved (Schick 1902:47). Our excavation seems to have re-exposed the central apse. Part of this apse is now visible beneath the glass floor in Abu-Khalaf's fabric shop in the Aftimos Market.

An Underground Chamber (Fig. 1:V; Plan 4; Figs. 13–15)

An underground chamber was accidentally unearthed in June 1991, in the northeastern corner of the Muristan. The chamber is in the form of a cross, with the main hall running on an east–west axis (3.1×11.0 m; Fig. 13). The side walls are built of four courses (height 1 m) of solid ashlar masonry (0.25×0.45 m on average), joined by a pointed-arch vault, which was built of large, roughly cut, vertically placed stones bonded with gray mortar and rubble. Three square rooms comprise the eastern end of the hall. All three have pointed-arch vaults,



Plan 4. Underground Chamber V, plan and sections.

and, other than the northern room, were found full of debris (3.0×3.1 m). The northern wall of the northern room is set on bedrock. The interior vault of this room was covered with a thick layer of white plaster (Fig. 14), suggesting that it was probably used as a reservoir.

At the western end of the hall is another room to the north. A built entrance facing south was

found blocked with stones (Fig. 15), probably in a later phase.

The connection between the chamber and the surrounding medieval complex is unclear, but the proximity to the other remains of the church indicates that it must be one of the church's subterranean chambers. Numerous underground chambers and cisterns, which

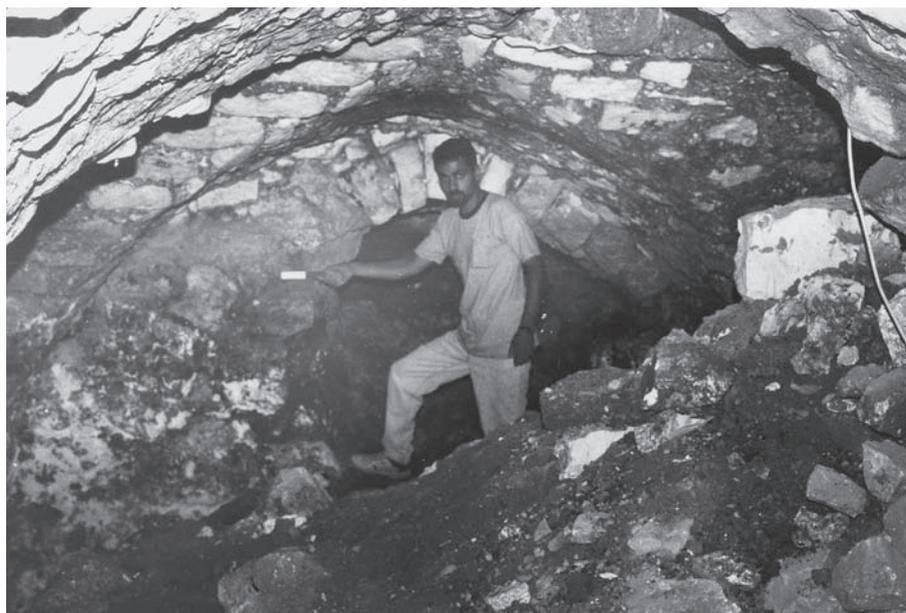


Fig. 13. The underground chamber (V), looking west.

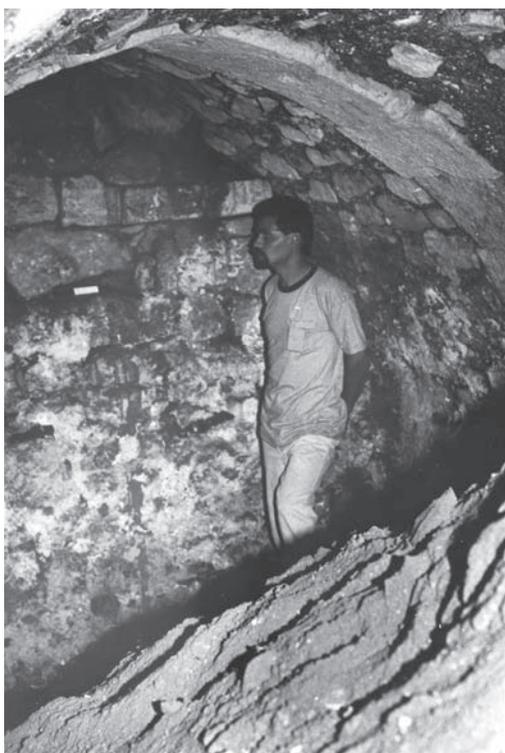


Fig. 14. The northern room and plastered vault, looking north.



Fig. 15. The blocked entrance in the underground chamber, looking south.

served the public structures built above them, are visible on Schick's and Warren's plan of the Muristan. A few of these features are marked in gray squares on Fig. 1. One such cistern was documented near Remain III (see Fig. 1) and republished by Pringle (1997).

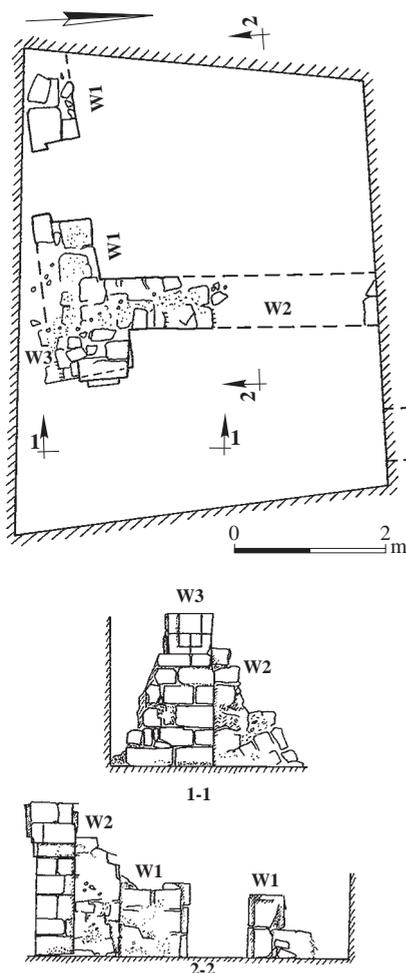
Remains of a Crusader Building (Fig. 1:VI; Plan 5; Fig. 16–18)

At the main entrance to the Muristan from David Street, on the southern side of the market, under the Lutheran Hospice, is the antiquities shop of the Barakat family. In June 1999, the shop was renovated, resulting in the discovery of part of a medieval building.

Only the southern and eastern walls (W1, W2) and a pier survived, forming the southeastern corner of what was a vaulted room that belonged to a much larger complex. The walls, built of three exposed courses

(height 1 m) of rectangular ashlar (0.3×0.4 m on average) are bonded with whitish cement, with a core of rubble and gray mortar. The entrance to the room is located along W1; the jambs are made of well-dressed stones (Fig. 16). The finely built pier integrated in the corner of Walls 1 and 2 is squarish (0.7×0.8 m), and its eight courses are preserved to a height of 2 m (Figs. 17, 18). It is built of carved blocks (0.25×0.40 m on the average) bonded with white mortar. No diagonal tool- or mason's marks were reported. On top of the pier, there are spring stones emphasized by a molded, flat rib arch opening to each side of the pier. This type of arch is typical of the twelfth century, and is particularly common in the ceiling of the bazaars, such as the 'Cardo' market and the Cotton Market on the eastern side of el-Wad Street. A wall (W3) with a north–south axis was attached to the southern face of the pier. It is cut by the modern building.

Prior to the discovery of Feature VI, no Crusader remains had been reported on the southern side of David Street. The building uncovered in the present excavation is not part of the medieval market parallel to David Street, as the pier is less massive than the market piers and the walls and jambs do not support the general orientation of the bazaar. While we do not have enough data to determine if this was part of a Crusader structure, it is a strong possibility. Contemporary sources note that the Monastery of St. Sabas once stood south of David Street. The Crusader pilgrims, John of Würzburg and John Phocas, mentioned the monastery on the right-hand side of David Street, that leads from David's Gate towards the *Templum Domini* (Temple Mount; Wilkinson 1988:267, 324). This is also the approximate location on the Cambrai map dated to the twelfth century (Levy 1991:425–433). Based on the location of the finds, the limited information provided by the historical sources and the quality of the building techniques and the relative delicacy of the pier, we suggest that the building could be part of the Monastery of St. Sabas, built in the days of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.



Plan 5. Building VI, plan and sections.



Fig. 16. The doorjambs of the Crusader Building VI, looking south.



Fig. 17. The pier set in the corner between W2 and W3, looking south.



Fig. 18. Close-up view of the pier set in the corner between W2 and W3.

AFTERWORD

Although Schick carried out an extremely important survey exactly at the crucial time when the Muristan was cleared of debris, his plan is inaccurate and requires modern

refinement. Unfortunately, the buildings of the Aftimos Market and of the Church of the Redeemer cover much of the area, making it necessary to rely on limited documentation

of the finds as they are exposed. Individually, none of the very small excavations provide much information concerning the massive structures that formed the Hospitaller Quarter of Jerusalem during the twelfth century, but slowly collating the data over the years will

eventually provide us with a much more accurate picture of this important area of the city during Crusader rule and its demise. Further documentation of exposed remains at the site will surely enhance the data presented here and should be encouraged.

NOTES

¹ Excavation Permit No. A-3171. Remains I and IV were documented by Amit Re'em; Pier III, by Jon Seligman and Amit Re'em; Pier II and the underground Chamber V, by Rafeh Abu Raya; the remains of Structure VI, by Zubair 'Adawi and Rafeh Abu Raya. The various reports were collated by Amit Re'em. The surveying was conducted by Vadim Essman, Mark Kunin, Viatcheslav Pirsky and Amit Re'em; architectural plans were prepared by Natalia Zak and Elizabeth Belashov; photography, by Tsila Sagiv, Rafeh Abu Raya, Zubair 'Adawi and

Amit Re'em. Some of the plans that appear in this report have no elevations due to the fact that they were documented immediately after their discovery and then covered again, thus preventing us from taking accurate levels.

² It is important to note that our attempt to synchronize our data with Schick's plan, as shown in Fig. 1, is difficult and uncertain. Wherever possible, we tried to locate remains that appear on Schick's plan at the site, and to connect them with a modern map and our finds.

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