

## Ayyubid Reception Halls in Southern Jordan: Towards a 'Light Archaeology' of Political Powers

### Introduction

The Italian archaeological mission of the University of Florence, 'Medieval Petra', celebrated, in 2016, 30 years of uninterrupted activity in Jordan; starting with the first archaeological season at al-Wu'ayra in 1986<sup>2</sup>. It was an important anniversary and an occasion to reflect on both, the lines of research developed in the last three decades, as well as on the most relevant results acquired so far<sup>3</sup>.

As to that, a constant and distinctive commitment of the mission, founded and directed by Guido Vannini, was to transfer and test Italian and European methodologies and historical-archaeological (medievalist) research issues in the Middle Eastern context, in order to contribute in an original way to the historical and archaeological debate animated by the scientific community, national and international, active in the study of the history of Jordan. Under this very perspective should in fact be read: the constant contextualization at euro-Mediterranean scale of Medieval Jordan (within the frame of

studies devoted to the "feudal" and rural society); the adoption of a historiographical-interpretative perspective linked to the experience of the French "*Les Annales*" (for the Middle Ages, the most important and influential school of European and international historiography); the selection of historical regions, namely territories (not sites), as a priority object of study and, finally, and as a result, an investigation-interpretation approach based on Light Archaeologies, again of Italian and medieval, as well as historical – archaeological origin<sup>4</sup>.

Today, 'Medieval Petra' operates, in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, on 4 of the 5 main 12<sup>th</sup> century Jordanian sites (ash-Shawbak, al-Wu'ayra, al-Ḥabīs and al-Karak) and the present contribution aims at briefly taking into consideration the application of methodological and interpretative options selected by the Italian Archaeological Mission with reference to the field of 'Archeology of power' in the Middle Ages<sup>5</sup>, using as a case study the monumental core architectures

1. Authorship of paragraphs. Michele Nucciotti: par.1,2,4,5,7 and Lorenzo Fragai: par 3,6,7.

2. Vannini *et al.* 2003.

3. Vannini Nucciotti 2009; Vannini 2011.

4. Vannini *et al.* 2003a; Vannini 2007.

5. G. Bandmann 2005 (1951), Francovich Ginatempo 2000, Lidiard 2005; Nucciotti 2010; Tabbaa 1997, for the theoretical framework.

of Ayyubid (and Mamluk) palatine complexes at ash-Shawbak and al-Karak castles.

Such an analysis elaborates on the cultural-technical processes underlying the material creation of Ayyubid reception halls, *par excellence* the space of manifestation of top governmental functions in Jordan between AD 1190s and 1260s. By comparison with 12<sup>th</sup> century ‘Crusader’ technical environments, site plans and regional/territorial organizational plans at large, the authors will address the issue and support the argument of considering Crusader Jordan and Islamic Jordan as component parts of a single, historical, “Medieval Jordan”.

### **Ayyubid Jordan and the Conservation of the Topography of Power of Crusader Epoch**

In 1189, with the successful siege started in 1187, after the landslide victory at Ḥiṭṭīn, Saladin comes into possession of ash-Shawbak, the last and, together with al-Karak, the largest settlement and administrative center of Latin Transjordan. Saladin and the Ayyubids invested considerable economic and political resources in both sites, turning them in the main governmental centers of Ayyubid Jordan. From this angle, then, the control strategy of the wide territory between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea, implemented by the Ayyubids, shows a direct continuity with the political and administrative systems developed by the first half of the twelfth century by the lords of Latin Transjordan: initially by the Kings of Jerusalem and eventually, after 1142, by the princes of ash-Shawbak and al-Karak.

The location at ash-Shawbak and al-Karak of the main Ayyubid palatine complexes in the region<sup>6</sup>, constitutes at the same time a sufficient and incontestable proof in this regard. The administrative division of southern Jordan in the 13<sup>th</sup> century in fact repeats, ‘*verbatim*’, the one documented in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by William of Tyre (lib. XIII, c. II), with an *Arabia Secunda Petracensis* seat of the metropolis of al-Karak

6. In 1214-5 a reception hall was also built on the top floor of the so-called Tower of Aybak, in Ajlun (Yovitchitch 2006).

to the north, and an *Arabia Tertia* focused on *Mons Regalis* to the south.

Such preservation of the geography of power at territorial level is further emphasized, at the site level, with the topographical and urban location of new palatine complexes: sometimes in direct stratigraphic connection with the former princely palaces of Crusader period. If, for al-Karak, this aspect of the Ayyubid building strategy is readable almost exclusively on a topographic basis, given the lack of a systematic study on the formation processes of 12<sup>th</sup> century archaeological and architectural deposits; on the other hand, at ash-Shawbak, stratigraphic analysis of upstanding buildings and archaeological excavations definitely prove that this was the case<sup>7</sup>.

### **Ayyubid Reception Halls in Jordan and in Bilād ash-Shām: An Overview**

Since the death of Saladin in 1193, al-Adil I dominated the Ayyubid scene, both through political and military means, as well as (ideologically) through expensive building programs centered on palatine architecture.

The preferred ichnographic model shows the use of 2 to 4 *iwans*, to form a cruciform plan overlooking a central and rather small patio (*durqā‘a*), and was featured with multiple variations in all residential complexes sponsored by al-Adil I and the Ayyubids.

According to Yasser Tabbaa (1997: 88) two possible modes of transmission of such cruciform plans from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century can be figured out: either through a series of quadripartite buildings, that no longer exist, built by Hamanide and Ayyubid dynasties in or around Aleppo; or through cross-plan buildings, also that no longer exist, built in Syria and the Jazira.

In this regard, however, it is necessary to highlight the strong ichnographic similarity between Ayyubid reception halls and 9<sup>th</sup> century palatine Abbasid architectures in Samarra, by

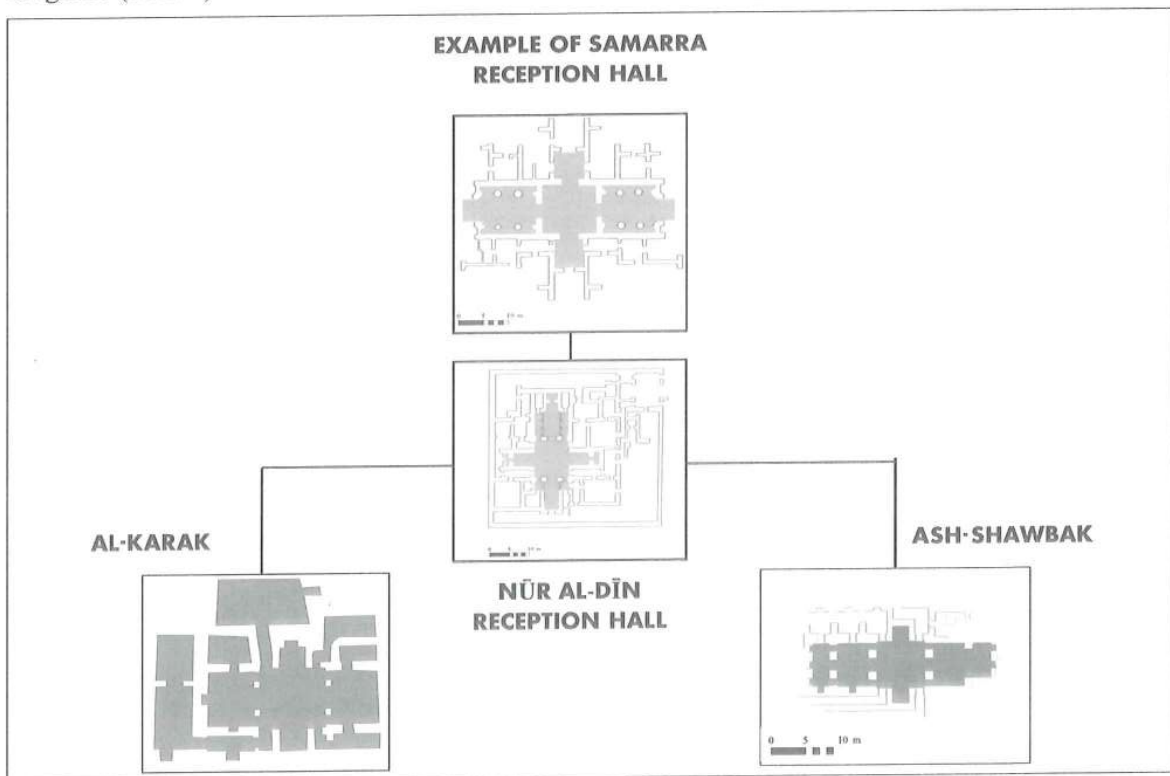
7. Nucciotti 2007 and the contribution by Pruno Ranieri in this volume.

analogy with what happened in Europe as regards the transmission of Roman architectural legacy to the middle ages<sup>8</sup>. All major components found within the Ayyubid reception halls - four *iwans* plan, tripartite elevations, ornaments, portals, *muqarnas* - repeat, in fact, well-established formal types of Early Islamic palaces<sup>9</sup>.

The fundamental difference between Early Islamic buildings and the Ayyubid ones is primarily one of size (Abbasid palaces exceeded often 1 kilometer in length); however, such difference (a sort of miniaturization process), does not impair ichnographic similarities between the two series of buildings. An aspect which seems to allude to the willing conjuring, by the Ayyubids, of a golden age – the 9<sup>th</sup> century in Samarra – which they were not able to fully reenact, although they were certainly not willing to ignore (FIG. 1).

**A Medievalist Contribution to the Historical Archaeology of Crusader-Ayyubid Jordan: Stratigraphic Building Archaeology and Light (Territorial) Analyses**

In order to analyze the technical knowledge related to building industries in medieval Jordan, the Medieval Petra mission carried out from 1997 to present<sup>10</sup> Light-archaeological studies based on stratigraphic analyses of medieval upstanding structures in the largest Crusader-Ayyubid medieval settlements of Petra region (al-Ḥabīs, al-Wu‘ayra and ash-Shawbak<sup>11</sup>) and more recently (from 2012) and with specific aims in al-Karak. The time-span covered by archaeological-architectural evidence runs from the 4<sup>th</sup> century (ash-Shawbak, building 18, phase 1)<sup>12</sup> to 1900s (ash-Shawbak, late Ottoman/Hashemite settlement). The methodology adopted by the Medieval Petra mission was developed since 1970s within Italian Me-



1. Synthesis of Reception Halls evolution from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century.

8. Bandmann 2005 (1951); Nucciotti 2010.  
 9. Fragai 2014 and 2018.  
 10. Vannini 2013; Nucciotti Pruno 2016  
 11. Vannini *et al.* 2002.

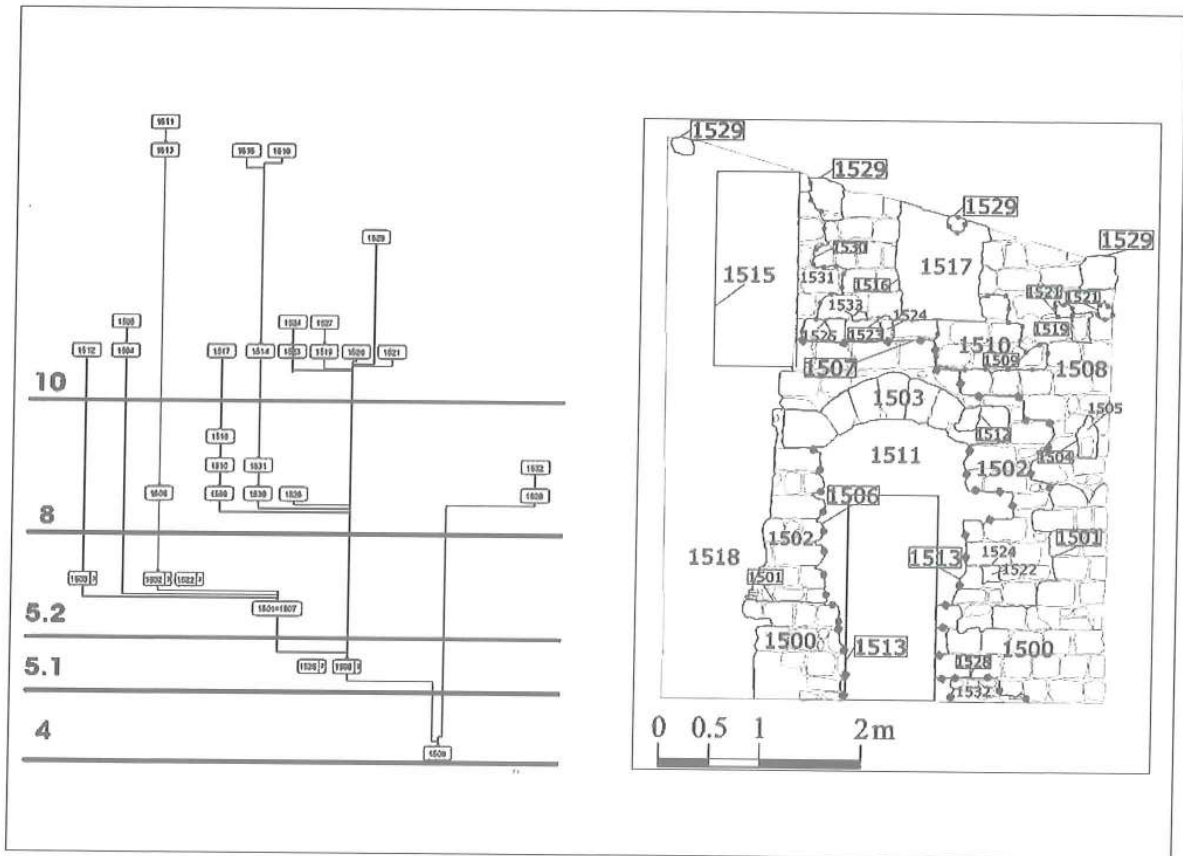
12. al-Wu‘ayra occupation phases start at least in Nabatean times, although built structures of that age (as well as those of Roman period) are generally not (or very poorly) preserved (Vanni Desideri and Sassu 2014, Pp. 95-101).

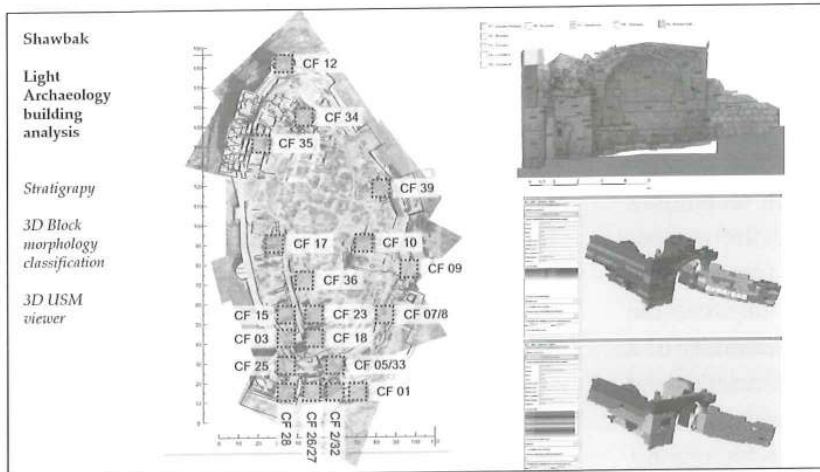
dieval Archaeology, with a strong historical-archaeological approach, in the realm of non-destructive urban and territorial analyses. Such was indeed the (successful) attempt to embed the stratigraphic theory in the study of historical buildings (FIG. 2), extending the principles of site-formation-process to the architectural-formation-process<sup>13</sup>.

In the light of the methods so far used for the study of Ayyubid reception halls in Jordan (based on written sources, architectural-historical and historical-topographic interpretation, with a limited contribution of archaeological excavations and a more substantial one of typological pottery analysis), the contribution of Light Archaeology appears be able to add further, and hitherto not considered, elements of historical interpretation.

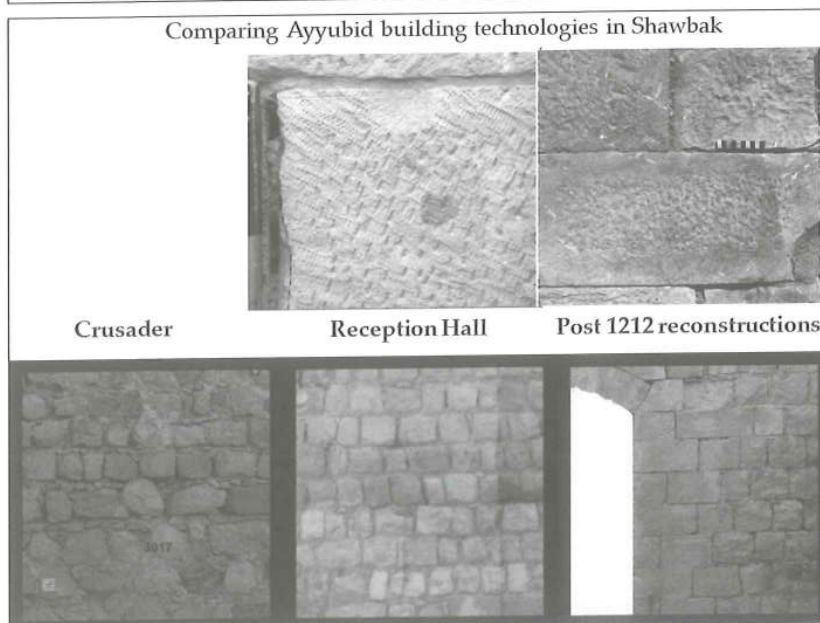
**The Ayyubid Reception Hall in ash-Shawbak: Between Light Archaeology and ‘Great and Little’ Architectural Traditions**

The Ayyubid reception hall in ash-Shawbak (CF 34) was first historically and archaeologically investigated (through a series of soundings) in 1986 by Robin Brown, who provided the first extensive and still fundamental reference study for the architectural complex<sup>14</sup>, which was then assigned to al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa (lord of ash-Shawbak between 1208 and 1227). The study was further implemented by our mission between 2006 and 2010 on stratigraphic building archaeology basis and the very structure was re-dated, in 2010, between 1189 – 1208 AD. The correction was grounded on stratigraphy, masonry technology and ichnographic composition<sup>15</sup>, all pointing towards an architec-





3. Upstanding buildings investigated through stratigraphic analysis in ash-Shawbak castle.



4. Main Ayyubid coarse masonry typology from ash-Shawbak in comparison with common Crusader masonry types.

tural patronage of the first Ayyubid generation: Saladin and/or his brother Al-Adil I (lord of ash-Shawbak between 1193 and 1208)<sup>16</sup>.

In particular: as to stratigraphic analysis of upstanding buildings, a phase of restoration following *post* 1212 earthquake was identified

16. Robin M. Brown published recently (2016) an updated study on Jordanian Middle Islamic Palaces with a detailed and insightful analysis of early Ayyubid political situation in the Bilad al-Sham, restating, on that ground, the very likely possibility that Al Mu'azzam 'Isa was in fact the original patron of ash-Shawbak Ayyubid palace (ibid. pp. 549-552). Although accepting Brown's reconstruction of the assets of power in the areas of Transjordan and Palestine during the time of Al-Adil and Al-Mu'azzam 'Isa, based on available written sources, further discussion of such a conclusion is needed when taking into consideration the analysis of ash-Shawbak upstanding masonry stratifications and masonry typologies of early Ayyubid epoch (1189-1212, see *infra*). Furthermore, the apparent inconsistency of a patronage of the ash-Shawbak palace by Al-Adil, suggested by Brown on the basis of Al-Adil's political-administrative priorities and the location of his main residences (ibid. p. 551), risks to create a major inconsistency: in that Saladin and Al-Adil would appear to have left ash-Shawbak castle 'architecturally marked' by the pre-

vious Crusader palace, for almost 20 years after the site had been taken from the hands of the Latin lords. That seems quite unlikely. On the contrary, the substitution of the 12th century Crusader palace with an Islamic one, albeit its infrequent use by early Ayyubid sultans, seems to fit better in the picture of territorial re-appropriation of Transjordan carried out by the new ruling dynasty. As to that, the results of medieval palace studies carried out in Europe show that royal/princely palaces often acted 'in loco regis', specifically to counter the structural absence of the lord from politically relevant sites. As Annie Renoux puts it, with reference to the 'architectural foundations' of princely power in 9th-13th century France, royal/princely architecture worked mostly as a 'remote lord' "perpetuating and commemorating at local level the appearance of the prince; fixing and strengthening the dynastic memory and occasionally providing a material setting for the public display of the prince himself" (Renoux 1992, p. 172, English translation mine).

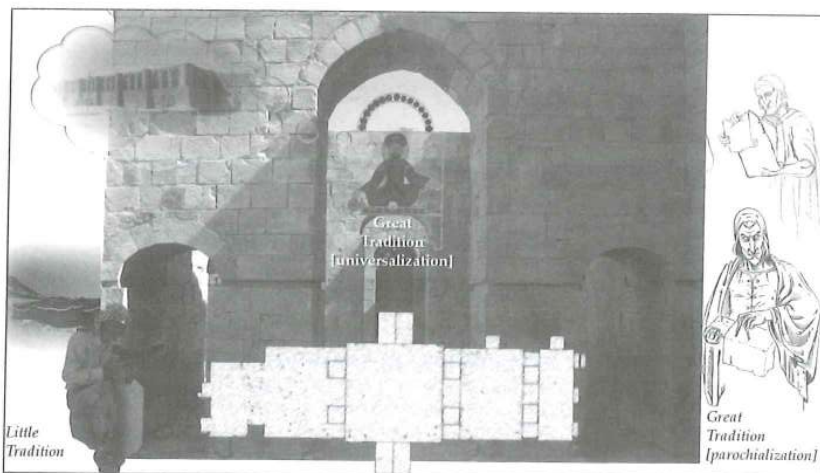
and assigned to al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa as *ante quem* dating for the building (the restoration was connected to changes in the hall plan, hardly conceivable in a seemingly newly built palace); concerning masonry technology, the similarity between 1180s Crusader epoch techniques from the fortified gate CF 3 and the masonries of the Ayyubid reception hall (outer walls) highlights both a short time-span between the two architectures, as well as the continuity of a same building tradition between Crusader and (*pre* 1212) Ayyubid epoch, and was therefore assigned to local builders; as to ichnography, the reference to Abbasid architectures from Samarra’s Qaşr al-Ashiq was interpreted as a willing selection of dignified architectural elements from the Early Islamic Caliphate, linked to the elaboration of a ‘new’ royal style, in line with the needs of the first Ayyubid generation.

More recently, in 2012-2015, further studies have been carried on in order to integrate Oystein La Bianca’s Great and Little traditions’ methods (originally developed for the interpretation of the multi millennial archaeological site of Ḥisbān) into the interpretation of medieval architectures of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century in Petra and ash-Shawbak<sup>17</sup>, providing further insight into ash-Shawbak Ayyubid palace history and its historic meaning. In particular Great and Little

Traditions were used as a means to interpret the interaction between local (Little) and imported (Great) architectural knowhow. Stratigraphic analysis was used to identify the continued use of local (Little) technologies in connection both with 12<sup>th</sup> c. Crusader and 1189-1208 Ayyubid imported (Great) technical traditions.

In a ‘building archaeology’ translation of Robert Redfield’s theory of the “Structure of Tradition”<sup>18</sup>, specialized groups of builders were considered as ‘cultural agents’ enabling *parochialization*<sup>19</sup> of imperial great traditions and, on the other hand, local (folk) communities were considered as cultural groups owning specific sets of little traditions<sup>20</sup>, including basic elements of architectural production.

Finally, Ayyubid Sultans of the first generation could be seen as cultural agents promoting the *universalization* of selected (ideologically meaningful) architectural forms taken from a long past architectural tradition, whose revival (albeit in a miniature scale) was instrumental to the construction of a suitable new royal public image. In analogy with European medieval *bauherren*<sup>21</sup>, who embedded Ancient Roman ‘architectural abbreviations’ into Romanesque constructions of cc. 8-13<sup>th</sup>, with the explicit function of backing (politically and ideologically) the claimed direct derivation of their



5. Scheme of interaction among Great and Little building traditions in the making of the Ayyubid reception hall in ash-Shawbak (bottom: plan of the reception hall).

17. Nucciotti Pruno 2016.

18. Redfield 1947, 1962; discussed in La Bianca 2007.

19. That is, the downward spread to the villages of a specific knowhow from the network of transmission centers belonging to a Great

Tradition (La Bianca 2007 Pp. 276).

20. La Bianca 2007, Pp. 283.

21. Bandmann 2005, for the definition.

powers from the ancient Roman Empire.

Read in this perspective, the ash-Shawbak palace may therefore appear as a consistent political and architectural statement, with the Ayyubid sultan presenting himself as a cultural mediator between, on the one hand, the political tradition of the Caliphate, and, on the other, local communities of farmers and nomads, formerly acknowledged crucial social-political players already in Crusader Transjordan<sup>22</sup>.

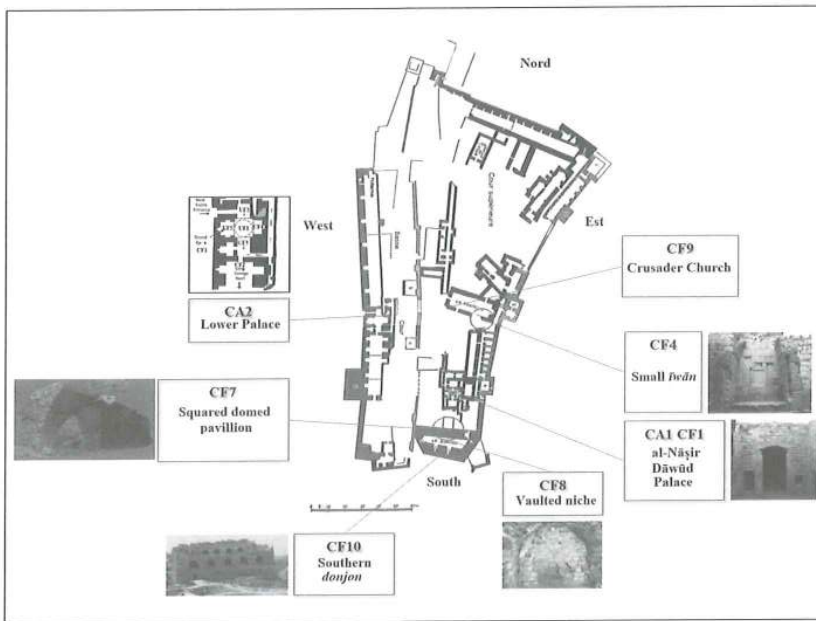
**Light Archaeology of the Islamic Palace in al-Karak: Formation and Characters of a Princely Architectural Complex Between 13th and 14th Century**

The Ayyubid and Mamluk palaces of 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> centuries located in the citadel of al-Karak represented a place of power and authority of the sultans of both dynasties. Historical sources

recorded the construction in al-Karak of at least four palatine complexes (or reception halls) during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, two by prince al-Nasir Dawud (1229-1249), the others by the early Mamluk sultan al-Nasir Muhammad.

The most significant studies about palatine complexes in al-Karak are due to Robin Brown<sup>23</sup> and Marcus Milwright<sup>24</sup>. Results from the 1987 archaeological investigation in the well-preserved palace complex at the southern end of the upper castle, with its four *iwans* plan and tripartite elevations of his *durqā'a*, suggested a Mamluk foundation date, but this interpretation has been re-evaluated and an Ayyubid foundation seems now more likely<sup>25</sup>.

Light archeological surveys carried out in al-Karak started in 2012 and have focused so far on 7 buildings (FIG. 6), 5 of which are relevant



6. Light Archaeology in al-Karak castle: stratigraphic investigation of upstanding buildings.

22. Few elements, although very significant, point towards a strong alliance between Crusader lords and local sedentary/nomadic communities in Latin Jordan: a) The territory would have been simply impossible to be military controlled without the positive support of Arab Bedouins; b) Crusader sources mention 'the king's Bedouins' in a number of occasions (Tibble 1989, Pp. 93-94); c) Crusaders and Bedouins together fought against the Egyptians in 1154. Husama ibn Mumqid recalls the event in his diary and names two tribes or Bedouin confederations allied of the Franks that he had to escape from or deal with in the vicinity of Petra/ash-Shawbak. They were called Banu Fuhayd and Banu Tayy (Hitti 1984, Pp. 53); d) The allegiance between Crusaders and Bedouins allowed Reynold of Châtillon, lord of ash-Shawbak, to set up the military exploit against

Ayyubid Ayla and Meccan armies in 1183 (La Viere Leiser 1977, Ligato 2012). Moreover strategic shared interests linked tightly Crusaders and Bedouins. From an economic point of view the need to leave the road open for nomadic agro-pastoralism between Transjordan and Palestine, as well as for trading along the same track, was a relevant mutual interest. After the conquest of Jerusalem and of Palestinian coastline around 1099, the king of Jerusalem became, then, key stakeholders for the Jordanian tribes.

23. Brown 1989 - 2016.

24. Milwright 2008; he follows the first attribution to the Mamluk period.

25. Brown 2013.

for the present discussion. They are:

- CF1: the reception hall located in the southern area of the castle and ascribed by Robin Brown<sup>26</sup> to the Ayyubid prince al-Nasir Dawud;
- CF8: a vaulted niche incorporated at the ground level of the southern *donjon* CF10, dated *ante* 1263;
- CF7: a square plan domed pavilion, stratigraphically set against CF8 and coeval with the north elevation of the *donjon* CF 10. Dated *post* 1263;
- CA2: a palatine complex located in the lower court, recently identified by Robin Brown<sup>27</sup> as an Ayyubid building;
- CF4: the so-called “*small īwān*», located south of the Crusader church CF9; assigned by Robin Brown<sup>28</sup> to the 14th century by stylistic comparison;

#### Synthesis of the Results of Topo-Stratigraphic Analyses

The stratigraphic reading of CF1 shows a masonry technique with organogenetic limestone ashlar, dressed with a plain blade (perhaps a small axe), used for the pillars and architectural elements in the *durqā‘a*<sup>29</sup>.

Similar materials were recorded in the inner elevations of the vaulted niche CF8, which is therefore technologically (and chronologically?) comparable to the *durqā‘a* CF1. Besides, CF8 predates stratigraphically the north eleva-



7. CA1 CF1: Inner view of *Qā‘at an-Nāṣirī* Reception Hall.

26. Brown 2013, Pp. 316.

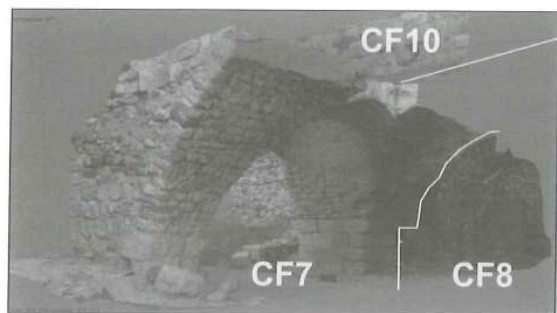
27. Brown 2013, Pp. 316.

tion of CF10, whose foundations were laid out against the back wall of the niche, originally plaster coated on the outside. CF8 was in fact spared, not de-functionalized nor dismantled, by the builders of the keep’s north wall. CF8 was therefore considered an important space in Mamluk epoch, such that it had to be preserved from destruction. Its privileged *status* (ideological, if not material) is confirmed by the construction of the pavilion CF7, typologically and stratigraphically coeval to the north elevation of CF10, which incorporated and monumentalized CF8 by connecting it to a new and sumptuous *qā‘a* (FIGS. 8, 9).

CF7 is a cross-vaulted pavilion supported by four corner pillars, with a square central eye decorated with *muqarnas*, of which only the lower register survives. It is characterized by large square blocks of limestone, in the base of the pillars. The cross vaulting is composed of small blocks, although the vaulting overlapping to CF8 is instead built in ashlar quoins. Similar quoins are used, inside CF10, in the lithic chains of the chamber vaulting, as well as in the alcove of the access corridor at the ground level of this latter building (FIGS. 10, 11).



8. CF8: vaulted niche and masonry techniques (Type 3).



9. CF7, typologically and stratigraphically coeval to the north elevation of CF10, incorporated and monumentalized CF8.

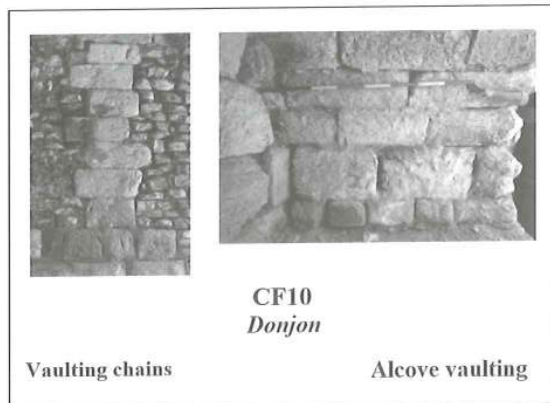
28. Brown 2013, Pp. 317.

29. USM 220, 301, 304, 3190 *etc.*; see Fragai 2014.





10. The pavilion CF7.



11. CF10: the type of ashlar used in the lithic chains of the chamber vaulting, as well as in the alcove of the access corridor at the ground level, are the same of those used in the basement of the pillars in CF7.

### Interpretation

In the light of stratigraphic readings and on the basis of Ayyubid and Mamluk written evidence (epigraphic, archival and literary sources), CF1 was identified with the reception hall of al-Nasir Dawud mentioned by al-Zahir as *Qā'at an-Nāṣirī*<sup>30</sup>; a building similar (though smaller and, architecturally less refined) to the reception hall at ash-Shawbak, which constituted almost certainly its archetype, in turn derived from Samarran palatine models of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

CF8, stratigraphically and technologically dated to *pre*-1263, was assigned to the Ayyubid epoch. It very likely is a fragment of the *Dār al-Sulṭāna*<sup>31</sup> mentioned by al-Maqrizi<sup>32</sup> as the first residence of al-Nasir Dawud in al-Karak. The recent discovery (during the preparation of this paper) of a second niche, mirroring CF8 from across CF7, also technologically consistent with Ayyubid masonries, may confirm it (FIG. 12). This “sultan residence” could possibly have been located at the heart of the palace of al-Adil or of al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isa (dating to 1192-1227), although it is not yet clear which (pre-Mamluk) building phase is actually preserved in the upstanding structures. In any event, CF8 provides sound evidence of the presence of a second Ayyubid reception hall, coeval or pre-dating Nasir Dawud’s CF1.

The primary role of the latter, possibly the *Dār al-Sulṭāna*, is confirmed by the monumental sumptuous pavilion CF7, that in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was connected to CF8, and that could be assigned to al-Nasir Muhammad<sup>33</sup> recalled around 1311 as a major architectural patron of al-Karak<sup>34</sup>.

Moreover, the construction of CF7 relates topographically to the dismantling of previous structures both to the East and to the West of the pavilion. The result of such a re-planning seems to highlight the setting up of a huge reception hall (*Dār as-Sa‘āda*), more than twice the size of CF1. A Mamluk imperial residence where the Ayyubid remains of the *Dār al-Sulṭāna* had been architecturally enshrined as a monumental relic (FIGS. 13, 14).

Finally, technological similarities with CF7 (dome and masonries) are recorded for CA2, which should be dated to the Mamluk

30. Sadeque 1956, Pp. 179; Brown 2013, Pp. 316.

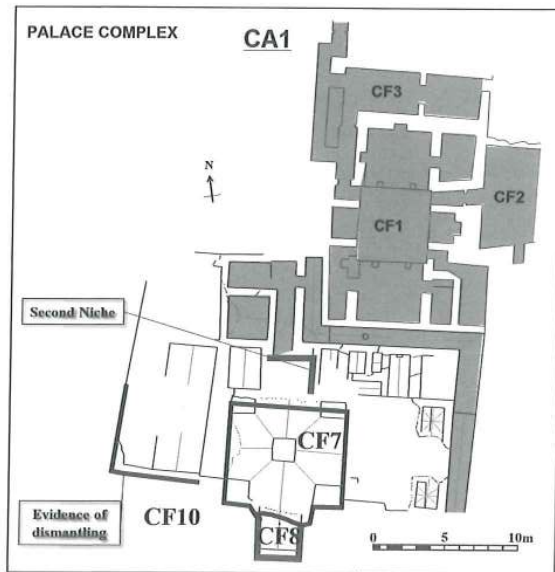
31. The illusory lack of buildings in al-Karak before al-Nasir Dawud is, at the very least, peculiar; given that “minor” sites, such as ash-Shawbak and ‘Ajlun, used to own one palace before 1229. ash-Shawbak’s building has been built by al-Adil before 1212 and reused by his son Isa; in ‘Ajlun, the reception hall on the top of the tower of Aybak, was already built between 1214 and 1215. It’s unlikely, then, that al-Karak, the biggest crusader Transjordan’s site, didn’t have a place where the Ayyubids could stay once they got in town, before Dawud arrived. If we consider the fact that 40 years

had passed between 1189 (when al-Adil took al-Karak) and 1229, when Dawud arrived, it might be possible that the *Dār al-Sulṭāna* is an al-Adil or his son al-Mu‘azzam Isa’s palace. In this case, Dawud would have taken care of the restoration of such building once he got to al-Karak (repairs were perhaps needed because of the two earthquakes of 1202 and 1212). The actual building’s name is a clear reference to its own builder (al-Adil o Isa, Damascus’ sultan).

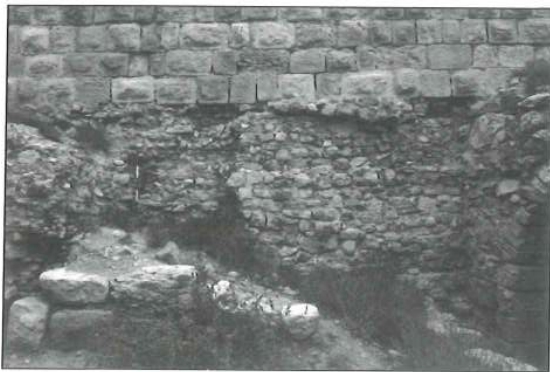
32. Ghawanimah 1979, Pp. 219; Walker 2011, Pp. 87.

33. Ibn Taghribirdi 1963-1971.

34. Walker 2011, Pp. 89.



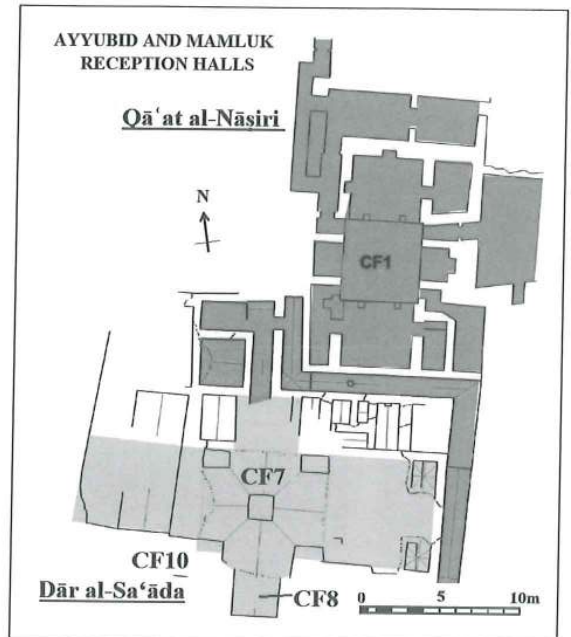
12. CF8 and the new niche provides sound evidence of the presence of the second Ayyubid reception hall, coeval or predating Nasir Dawud's CF1 (Dār al-Sulṭāna).



13. Traces of the dismantling of previous structures to the East of CF7 pavilion.

period and possibly identified with the *Qā'at an-Naḥḥās* (Al-Maqrizi 1936, Pp. 632; Ibn Taghrībirdī 1963-1971, Pp. 328) described by al-Furat (Al-Furat 1936, Pp. 107, 137) as looking towards Hebron and Jerusalem, exactly as CA2 does.

As for the 'small iwan' CF4, we agree with Robin Brown (Brown 2013, Pp. 317) on its function as a vestibule access to the al-Karak palace proper, albeit its chronological position (Ayyubid or Mamluk) remains dubious. However, waiting for the final results of al-Karak investigation (in 2018), we would propose for CF4 a date to *ante* 1311, since ashlar similar to

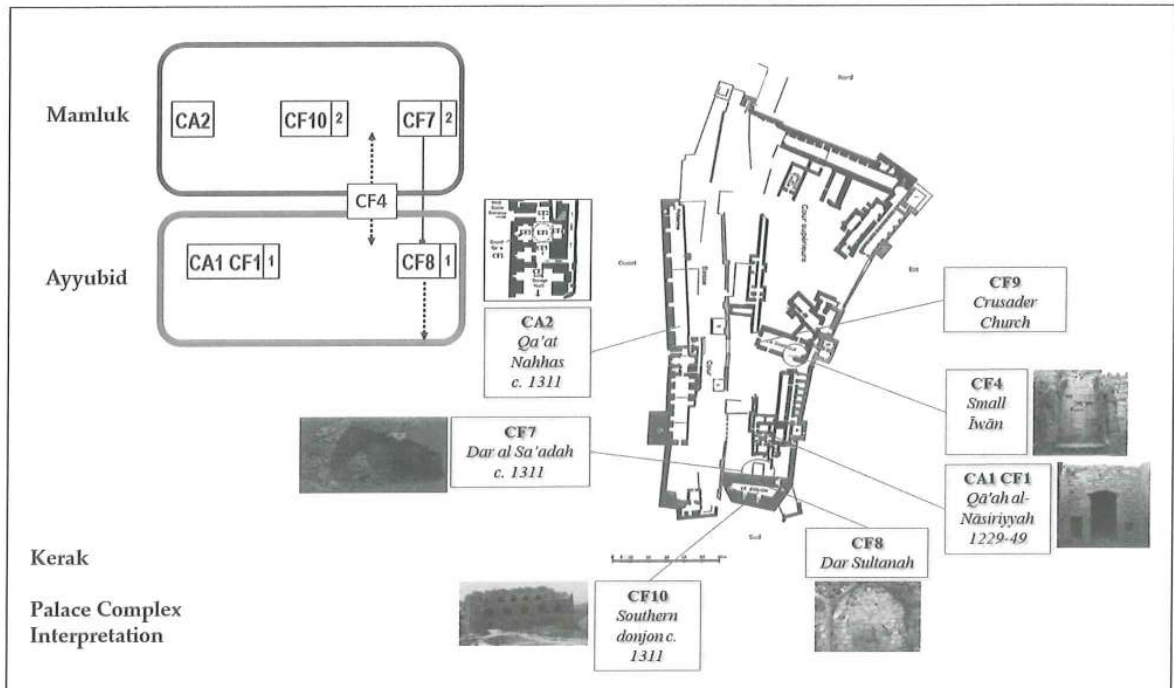


14. Reconstructive hypothesis of the area occupied by the Mamluk Dār al-Sa'āda, ca. 1311.

those of this latter building were reused in the pillars of CF7, the lofty pavilion of the imperial palace of al-Nasir Muhammad.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of stratigraphic building archaeology as a dating method, in connection with historical-archaeological (and territorial) Light Archaeology, may appear an effective tool in order to improve (to a certain extent) present day knowledge of medieval Jordan, in both Crusader and Islamic periods. In fact, thanks to the possibility of elaborating fully stratigraphic readings at territorial and site levels without resorting to excavations, on the one hand, and to the inner connection of Light Archaeology to historiographic hermeneutics, on the other, a number of gaps in our understanding of 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century Jordan could be bridged. The study of al-Karak palace seems to demonstrate that this can be done, for instance evidencing the use of masonry techniques (when recorded in a stratigraphic framework) as chronological markers for defining the development stages of the Ayyubid-Mamluk palatine complex. There the architectural-stratigraphic dataset constitutes



15. Light Archaeology in al-Karak castle: chrono-stratigraphic interpretation of upstanding buildings.

a new, direct and independent historical source, to be compared against and considered together with other available historical records (written, archaeological and art-historical), in order to interpret the available material and non-material remains. The case study from ash-Shawbak, in this regard, shows even further possibilities, helping clarifying how Light Archaeology can be used to investigate also broader cultural issues, beyond chronology, including aspects of ideological relevance for the past societies and historic phenomena at large. In this regard, if for al-Karak more data would be needed, especially regarding the 12<sup>th</sup> century structures, in order to draw additional conclusions for instance on the composition of medieval building teams as well as on the specific roles of their components (local/non local, specialized/non specialized, 'Little'/'Great') and their degree of integration/non-integration, such data are available for ash-Shawbak. Here, the interpretation of the Ayyubid reception hall, dated through stratigraphic building archaeology, extends further into the search for the 'historic meaning' of the palace, or, to put it more plainly, for unveiling the political-

ideological message conveyed by ash-Shawbak palace's architecture. The considerations drawn from anthropological-archaeology, as well as from the field of Medieval Studies, in this case broaden the cultural context and setting of the palace construction. On the one hand, considering the patron as a *bauherr* in the Bandmann's (2005) sense and not only as a mere *sponsor*, the building process is enriched by an 'ideological' planning phase, when specific and meaningful architectural features are selected by the patron to be included in the conceptual design of the work. Through this process the palace is being given a role within the very public discourse that the lord broadcasts to his subjects, peers and overlords. Without resorting to a developmental theory of 'style', then, architecture (and particularly public architecture) is seen as a product of willing and self-aware manifestation of 'the state' and thus re-introduced among the objects of historical research and not just among those of art-history and architectural-history. With stratigraphy providing a physically-consistent dating method in order to validate and limit the field of possible speculation.

**Bibliography**

- Al-Furat, M. 1934-1936. *Tarīkh ad-Duwal wal-Mulūk*, Vol. 9: 107-110, 137-138. Beirut.
- Al-Maqrizi, T. 1936. *as-Sulūk fī Ma'rīfat Duwal al-Mulūk*, Vol. 2-3: 537; 655-657. Cairo.
- Ibn Taghribirdi, M. 1963-1971. *an-Nujūm az-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣra wal-Qahira*, Vol. 11: 345-350; Cairo.
- William of Tyre, *Historia Rerum in Partibus Transmarinis Gestarum*, online: <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/williamtyre.html>.
- Bandmann, G. 2005. (1951) *Early Medieval Architecture as Bearer of Meaning*. New York: USA.
- Brown, R.M. 1988. Summary Report of the 1986 Excavations: Late Islamic Shobak, *ADAJ* 32: 225-245.
- 1989. Excavations in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century AD Mamluk Palace at Kerak, *ADAJ* 33: 287-304.
- 2013. The Middle Islamic Palace at Karak Castle: a New Interpretation of the Grand Qā'a (Reception Hall), *ADAJ* 57: 309-335.
- 2016. Palaces in Middle Islamic Transjordan: Reflections of the Royal Tradition of Bilad ash-Sham, *SHAJ* 12: 543-560.
- Brogio, G.P. and Cagnana, A. 2012. *Archeologia dell'Architettura*. Florence: Italy.
- Fragai, L. 2014. *Al-Kerak: il Palazzo Ayyubide e il Castello. Un Rapporto Topografico, Architettonico, Culturale*, Master's Thesis (Offprint), University of Florence, Florence, Italy: Research Director Prof. Guido Vannini.
- 2018. *I Complessi Palatini Islamici della Giordania tra XIII e XIV Secolo. Origine, Ruolo e Storico, Politico, Ideologico di un Tipo Edilizio Monumentale alla Luce Dell'archeologia Leggera. Il Caso di Kerak*, PhD Thesis (Offprint), University of Rome 'La Sapienza', Rome, Italy: Research Tutor Prof. Guido Vannini, Scientific Consultant prof. Maria V. Fontana.
- Francovich, R and Ginatempo, M. 2000. *Castelli, Storia e Archeologia del Potere nella Toscana Medievale. Volume I*. Florence: Italy.
- Ghawāmah, Y.D. 1979. *Tārīkh Sharqī al-Urdun fī 'Asr Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Ūlā: al-Qism al-Haḍārī*. Amman.
- Hitti, P.K., 1984. (1929) *An Arab-Syrian Gentlemen and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades*, Princeton (USA, NJ), Princeton University Press.
- Bianca, O.L. 2007. Great and Little Traditions: A Framework for Studying Cultural Interactions through the Ages in Jordan. *SHAJ* 10: 275-289.
- 2011. Tall Hisban: Palimpsest of Great and Little Traditions. Pp. 9-27; in R.C. Douglas, G Herr, L. Øystein, S. LaBianca and W.Y. Randall (eds.), *The Madaba Plains Project: Forty Years of Archaeological Research into Jordan's Past*. Sheffield (UK).
- Viere Leiser, G. La 1977. The Crusader Raid in the Red Sea in 578/1182-83, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 14: 87-100.
- Liddiard, R. 2005. *Castles in Context. Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066 to 1500*. Oxford, UK.
- Ligato, G. 2012. Rinaldo di Chatillon, Signore dell'Oltregiordano, Pp. 145-158 in G. Vannini and M. Nucciotti (eds.), *La Transgiordania nei Secoli XII-XIII e le Frontiere del Mediterraneo Medievale*, BAR, International Series 2386. Oxford: UK.
- Milwright, M. 2008. *The Fortress of the Raven. Karak in the Middle Islamic Period (1100-1650)*. Leiden: Brill.
- Nucciotti, M. 2010. Paesaggi dell'Impero nella Toscana del X secolo. Il Palatium di Arcidosso: Senso Storico di un Tipo Edilizio Europeo, *Archeologia Medievale* XXXVII: 513-527.
- Nucciotti, M. and Pruno, E. 2016. Great and Little Traditions in Medieval Petra and Shawbak: Contextualizing Local Building Industry and Pottery Production in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries, *Archeologia Medievale*, XLIII: 309-21.
- Nucciotti, M. and Vannini, G. Forthcoming. Light Archaeology and Territorial Analysis: Perspectives and Experiences of the Italian Medievalist School, *Archeologia Polona*.
- Redfield, R. 1947. The Folk Society, *The American Journal of Sociology* 52/4: 293-308.
- 1962. *Human Nature and the Study of Society*. Chicago: USA.
- Renoux, A. 1992. *Les fondements Architecturaux du Pouvoir Princier en France (fin IXe - début XIIIe siècle)*. Pp. 167-194, in Actes des Congrès de la Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'enseignement Supérieur Public, 23<sup>e</sup> Congrès, Brest, 1992. Les princes et le pouvoir au Moyen Age, [online [www.persee.fr/doc/shmes\\_1261-9078\\_1993\\_act\\_23\\_1\\_1617](http://www.persee.fr/doc/shmes_1261-9078_1993_act_23_1_1617)].
- Sadeque, S.F. 1956. *Baybars I of Egypt*, Dacca. Oxford University.
- Tabbaa, Y. 1997. *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo*, Pennsylvania State University, USA.
- Tibble, S. 1989. *Monarchy and Lordships in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1099-1291*, Oxford (UK), Clarendon Press.
- Vanni Desideri, A. and Sassu, M. 2014. Prolegomena to the Preservation of the Site of al-Wu'ayra (Petra, Jordan) and to the Restoration of the North-East Tower, *Restaurio Archeologico*, 1/2014: 95-107.
- Vannini (a c.), G. 2007. *Archeologia dell'insediamento Crociato-Ayyubide in Transgiordania. Il Progetto Shawbak*, Firenze, Insegna del Giglio.
- 2011. A Medieval Archaeology Experience in Jordan. The 'Medieval' Petra Mission of University of Florence. *ADAJ* 55: 295-312.
- Vannini, G. Tonghini, C. Vanni Desideri, A. and Nucciotti, M. 2003. Medieval Petra. Archaeology of the Crusader-Ayyubid Fortified Settlements in Trans-Jordan. Archaeological Mission of the University of Florence, Pp. 181-199, AA. VV., *Civilisations of the*

- Past, Dialogue of the Present: Italian Research Missions in Jordan*, Ministero degli Affari Esteri.
- Vannini, G. Donato, E. Leporatti, S. and Nucciotti, M. 2003a. Archeologia dell'edilizia Storica e Costruzione del Documento Archeologico. Problemi di Popolamento Mediterraneo. *Arqueologia de la Arquitectura*, 2/2003: 249-273.
- Vannini, G. and Nucciotti, M. (a c.), 2009. *From Petra to Shawbak. Archaeology of a Frontier*. Florence: Italy.
- 2012. Da Petra a Shawbak: Archeologia di una frontiera. La Missione in Giordania dell'Università di Firenze. Pp. 55-73, in S. Lusuardi Siena, C. Perassi (eds.), *La Giordania che Abbiamo Attraversato. Voci e Immagini da un Viaggio*. Milan: Italy.
- Walker, B.J. 2011. *Jordan in the Late Middle Ages: Transformation of the Mamlük Frontier*, Oxford: 73-88.
- Yovitchitch, C. 2006. The Tower of Aybak in 'Ajlun Castle: An Example of the Spread of an Architectural Concept in Early 13<sup>th</sup> Century Ayyubid Fortification. Pp. 225-242 in H. Kennedy (ed.), *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria: From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*. Leiden: Brill.
-