

GLASS FROM THE CRUSADER CASTLE AT MONTFORT

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The ruined Crusader castle of Montfort or Starkenberg (the modern name is Qal'at al-Qurain) is about 20km north-east of Acre (modern Akko) in northern Israel. It stands on the crest of a prominent ridge: hence its name, which in both French and German means 'strong mountain'. In the late 12th century the ridge and much of the surrounding countryside belonged to the French de Courtenay family; but in 1220 the site was purchased by Hermann von Salza, the head of the Teutonic Order. In 1226 the Teutonic Knights began to construct a castle, and a document of 1228–1229 mentions the 'new fortress called Montfort'. This fortress was the headquarters of the Teutonic Order until 1271, when it was attacked with siege engines and captured by the army of the Mamluk sultan, Baybars. The castle was left in ruins and the site was never reoccupied (Pringle 1986, 52–5). Most of the finds, therefore, belong to the period between 1226 and 1271, and were used by the Teutonic Knights and their retainers.

In 1925 Bashford Dean of the Department of Arms and Armor at The Metropolitan Museum of Art asked the Department of Antiquities of Palestine for permission to excavate a Crusader castle in the hope of recovering medieval weapons and armour. The Department granted Dean a permit to excavate at Montfort. The excavation took place in 1926, directed by W.L. Calver. In the course of a single month, Calver's workmen removed some 2000 cubic metres of earth and rubble from the ruins (Dean 1927). Despite these efforts, the excavators discovered few fragments of arms and armour. The other finds included carved stonework, coins, pottery, stone moulds apparently used for embossing leather (Nickel 1989, 36) – and 'countless fragments' of glass. At the end of the excavation, the Department of Antiquities selected outstanding finds for retention in Palestinian museums and at the same time presented a generous sample to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The sample was received by the Metropolitan Museum in 1928 as the gift of the sponsors of the expedition, Clarence Mackay, Archer M. Huntington, Stephan H.P. Bell and Bashford Dean.

The finds at the Metropolitan Museum include more than 600 fragments of glass, most of which are small. They fall into two categories: window glass, some of which is painted, and glass vessels. The window glass, together with some of the carved stonework, came from Room J, which the excavators identified as the chapel. The glass as a whole was the subject of three presentations at the 2003 congress. Timothy Husband described the window glass and showed that the artist who decorated the window had been trained in France, while Lisa Pilosi and Mark T. Wypyski reported

on the chemical composition of both the window glass and the vessel glass, and showed that the window panes and most of the vessels were made in the same general location. I described and discussed the typology of the fragmentary vessels. Unfortunately, Mr Husband was unable to submit his presentation to these *Annales*; the other contributions appear here and in the following paper.

The great majority of the vessel glass is transparent and it varies in colour from light green to pale yellowish green. A small minority is colourless or almost colourless but with a brown or purple tint. A somewhat larger minority has been softened by intense heat, which caused distortion and the accretion of pebbles. This may be evidence of a fire and, if so, it may indicate that the objects were in use when the castle was destroyed in 1271.

Most of the objects fall into three functional groups: drinking vessels, bottles and lighting devices. The drinking vessels include a gilded and enamelled beaker (in the possession of the Israel Antiquities Authority: Brosh 1999, 266) and fragments of several pruned beakers (which are at the Metropolitan Museum). The latter (COLOUR PLATE 42) are barrel-shaped, with a horizontal trail at the top and the bottom of the wall, three or more rows of prunts and a kick. The fragments of drinking vessels at the Metropolitan Museum also include a tiny piece of gilded and enamelled glass – probably another beaker – with an Arabic inscription.

Most of the bottles have a long, narrow neck, sometimes with a bulge near the top (COLOUR PLATE 43), and an onion-shaped body, a folded foot-ring and a kick (COLOUR PLATE 44). Some are plain, while others have an overall pattern of ribs produced by inflating the paraison in a dip mould. The glass is thin and one of the necks is decorated with a blue spiral trail (COLOUR PLATE 45). There are also three exceptional pieces (COLOUR PLATE 46): two are represented by the necks of smaller vessels with one or more bulges, and the third is a cylindrical neck of relatively thick glass, with a continuous horizontal trail.

The lighting devices include fragments of a gilded and enamelled hanging lamp with an Arabic inscription (now owned by the Israel Antiquities Authority: Dean 1927, 34–6, fig. 50) and (at the Metropolitan Museum) fragments of hanging lamps with a funnel-shaped neck, a globular or roughly globular body, three or more vertical handles and presumably a base with a folded foot-ring. The neck is decorated with a bright blue spirally wound trail and the handles are either very pale green (like the body) or bright blue (like the trail). On four of the six handles at the Metropolitan Museum the lower attachment was dragged

down the wall with a tool that created a broad rectangular depression (COLOUR PLATE 47). This immediately sets them apart from the familiar gilded and enamelled lamps of Syria and Egypt, which never have handles shaped like this.

The location of Montfort in a region with a very long history of glassmaking (Sidon is only 60km away) and the identity of its occupants (Crusaders in a largely Moslem country) raise questions about the source of the glass. The three gilded and enamelled objects are clearly Islamic (i.e. decorated in a manner associated with craftsmen in the Islamic world) and so, I suggest, is the bottle with a horizontal trail on the neck (the form has parallels among gilded and enamelled vessels of the 13th century, such as Jones and Michell 1976, 142, no. 135). Equally clearly, most of the other objects fall outside the repertoire of Islamic glass as we currently understand it. Few parallels exist among the large quantities of glass excavated at Hama in Syria (Riis and Poulsen 1957, 30–116) and Fustat in Egypt (Scanlon and Pinder-Wilson 2001), and those that occur are of the simplest forms. Good parallels for some of the fragmentary bottles, the prunted beakers and the distinctive handles of the hanging lamps, on the other hand, were found in 13th-century (i.e. Crusader) contexts at Acre (Gorin-Rosen 1997, who notes additional parallels from other sites in the region as well as evidence for glassmaking at Acre itself). Parallels for the prunted beakers and some of the bottles, for example, were excavated from the remains of a 13th-century glass workshop at Somelaria, which is 5km from Acre and 20km from Montfort (Weinberg 1987). Similar material, of course, is familiar to us from excavations much farther afield: in Greece (for example, at Corinth: Davidson 1952, 107–22), on the Dalmatian Coast (Križanac 2001) and in Italy (Newby 2000). Indeed, many of the forms found at Montfort would fit comfortably into assemblages of 13th to 14th-century glass from Italy, such as the finds from Tarquinia (Whitehouse 1987).

Thus, the Teutonic Knights of Montfort used glass vessels of types which occur widely in the central and eastern Mediterranean, but had very few objects which are recognizably Islamic. The chemical analyses tell us that most of these vessels were made by local suppliers, who seem to have produced the kinds of objects that appealed to the Europeans because they were popular at home. Similarly, the painter of the French-style stained glass window used panes that had been made locally. It is interesting to contrast this local production of glass with the importation of ceramic tablewares from Italy and elsewhere in the same period (Pringle 1982).

This emerging pattern of glass production and consumption is not the whole story. It is clear today that, at least until the 13th century, the glass industry in the Levant continued to function in the way it functioned in the Roman period, when a small number of large workshops supplied raw glass to a larger number of small workshops, where the raw glass was made into objects (Freestone *et al.* 2000). In the Middle Ages, Tyre (27km north of Montfort) was the site of at least one large workshop where raw glass was produced, sometimes in spectacular quantities. A document from the Cairo Genizah, written in 1011, records the export of about eight tonnes of (presumably) raw glass from Tyre to Egypt (Carboni *et al.* 2003, 141–4, 148) and it has been

calculated that the last time it was used, one of the early medieval or medieval furnaces uncovered at Tyre produced approximately 37 tonnes of raw glass (Aldsworth *et al.* 2002, 66). (The famous glass slab at Bet She'arim weighs approximately nine tonnes: Freestone *et al.* 2000, 66.) According to William of Tyre, high-quality glass, suitable for making vessels, was still exported from Tyre in the late 12th century (Carboni *et al.* 2003, 146–7) and it is reasonable to assume that the production of raw glass continued there in the 13th century. (Jacques de Vitry, who was bishop of Acre between 1217 and 1227, reported that fine glass was made at both Tyre and Acre, but he did not indicate whether he was referring to raw glass or finished objects: Carboni *et al.* 2003, 147.)

The evidence from Montfort and the other Crusader sites mentioned above suggests that, in the 13th century, the local glass industry consisted of at least one major supplier of raw glass (at Tyre) and a number of small workshops, where vessel glass of 'European' and 'Islamic' type, and window glass were made (Somelaria was one such workshop). The vessels and window glass from Montfort may have been produced in more than one workshop, but most of it seems to have been made with raw glass from a single source.

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