Beyond doubt the location of the spur castle Montfort in northern Galilee is one of the most difficult places to explain in history of the kingdom Jerusalem, because „no other Crusader fortress was similarly located at such an unfavorable site“ (p. 2) and had such remarkable shortcomings. It has no courtyard and the southern part lacks any defensive buildings. But on the other hand it is one of the few places in the kingdom of Jerusalem, where the situation „probably remains much as they were left in 1271“ (p. 42) without later changes. This opens up the chance to get intimate views of the besieges of this castle in 1266 and 1271. The volume, edited by Adrian J. Boas with the assistance of Rabei G. Khamisy, claims to be the „first major examination of Montfort Castle since the 1927 publication by Bashford Dean.“ (p. 302). It contains 28 papers in five sections written by Boas, Khamisy and different researchers who are among the best in their fields.

The first section „The History of Montfort Castle“ (pp. 15–58) discusses the general context of the castle’s situation as well as the development of ownership, the Mamluk sieges and the dismantling. Kristjan Toomaspoeg (pp. 15–23) offers a reliable summary regarding the research and the contexts of the castle for the Teutonic Knights and introduces most of the primary sources (his list lacks the current four volumes of the crusaders charters1). Rabei Khamisy (pp. 24–27) takes a closer view on the western sources and offers an overview of the Arab sources (pp. 28–40). In his third article he finally summarizes the processes of besieging and dismantling the spur castle (pp. 41–58).

In the second section „Montfort Castle after the Crusader Period“ (pp. 59–94) Rabei Khamisy takes into account the „Travellers’ Descriptions and Illustrations“ (pp. 59–72) up to the 19th century. Again Adrian Boas expands this overview with details on „The Survey of Western Palestine Report on Montfort“ in 1877 (pp. 73–74) and the very important account on the famous „Metropolitan Museum of Art Expedition to Montfort“ in the year 1926 (pp. 75–94) which shows the very hard conditions and problems Dean Bashford had to deal with to gain financial support for his exploration (p. 81).

The third section „Architecture, Function, Design and Construction of Montfort Castle“ (pp. 95–159) assembles six papers concerning different details of the castle’s architecture. Adrian Boas and Rabei Khamisy show their current views in „Initial Thoughts on the Architectural Development of the Castle“ (pp. 95–101) and offer further „Interpretation of the Parts“ (pp. 102–119) regarding the construction of the outer and inner moat, the keep, the eastern vestibule, the domestic range and it’s upper level domestic apartments, the west range and the great hall as well as the fortification buildings. Laura Aiello and Cecilia Luschi are focusing especially at „The Building below the Castle“ (pp. 120–127), while Rabei Khamisy deals with the „History and Archaeology of the Frankish Village of Tarphile“ (pp. 128–136). In their geological survey Vardit Shotten-Hallel, Dorit Korngreen and Lydia Perelis Grossowicz focus on the question, where the „Sources of Stone for Montfort Castle“ (pp. 137–149) lay. In the last paper of this section Rabei Khamisy looks at the details of „Masonry and Masons’ Marks“ (pp. 150–159) and is able to hereby identify at least five basic masonry styles, ashlers with drafted margins, ashlers with various styles of tooling, ashlers without noticeable tooling, partly worked fieldstones and un-worked fieldstones. There is a clear difference between the tooling of the dolostone, the limestone and the kukar. At least 60 types of masons’ marks were found in the castle.

There has been a long need for the papers of the fourth section which present the „Finds from the 1926 Metropolitan Museum of New York Expedition to Montfort“ (pp. 160–226).

First Adrian Boas gives an „Introduction to the Finds“ (pp. 160–162) overall, to the „Ceramic Finds“ (pp. 163–167) and especially the oil lamps, glazed tableware, cooking vessels, storage jars, and water pipes. Then Rafael Frankel shows that the „The Winepress at Montfort“ (pp. 168–175) is of the simplest type of only two elements: treading floor and collecting vast. The winepress is larger than other rock-cut samples in the region, but almost identical to those of Crusader castle Belmont. Most notably are the more than 600 sherds of „Glass Finds in the Metropolitan Museum of Art from the 1926 Expedition“ (pp. 176–194) which are analyzed and presented by David Whitehouse †, Timothy B. Husband, Lisa Pilosi, Mary B. Shepard and Mark T. Wypysk. Apart from a small number of hanging lamps, most of the diagnostic glassware was used for storing liquids. Other finds result from prunted beakers, bottles, and around 164 fragments are undecorated and painted window glass. Once more Adrian Boas offers interesting details about „Stone, Metal, Wood and Worked Bone Finds from the 1926 Expedition“ (pp. 195–220). The stone objects contain whetstones, mould stones, vessels, and projectiles; the metal objects surgical instruments, dress articles, horse trappings, fragments of armour and weapons, mostly arrowheads, but also carpentry nails or cramps; the wooden objects are tent pegs, arrow shafts, combs, spoons or spindles. In the last paper of this section Tamar Backner approaches the „Roman Imperial Wine Vessel“ (pp. 221–226) made of marble, which leads to the question of the original provenance and the reason for the presence of a Roman basin in a thirteenth century crusader fortress.

The fifth and last section titled „New Research“ (pp. 227–301) contains the analysis of newly discovered material. An overview of the work of the last years is given by Adrian Boas (pp. 227–241). After four years of surveying, including mapping, photographic studies and examination of the physical condition of the architectural remains, the archaeological excavations started in 2011 in the Great Hall of the castle. In the following years the outer fortifications and outer ward, as well as the north wall of the central wing but also the castle stables were focused. A very notable paper is the up-to-date presentation by Robert Kool about the “Coin Finds (1926–2012) and the Use of Money at Montfort” (pp. 242–255). The total sum of traceable coins since 1926 is only 21 coins out of about 4.500 tons of removed earth. Today at least 36 coins related to the crusader period are known (so hopefully the hundreds of medieval coins yielded in Arsur (p. 242) will be published soon). In her short article Nili Liphschitz (pp. 256–257) can show that a lot of the used wooden finds were introduced from other Middle East regions into the area. Nativ Dudai and Zohar Amar (pp. 258–265) pose the question whether the crusaders coming from Western Europe introduced new plant species. This fresh view – here with the example of the Tree Wormwood – needs further systematic investigation of the flora (and maybe the fauna) in the environment of crusader castles. Andrea Währing offers inside views on the noteworthy stone matrices (pp. 266–272). Nurith Kenaan-Kedar takes a fresh look on „The Architectural Sculpture of Montfort Castle Revisited“ (pp. 273–281), especially on the key-stone bosses, some fragments of leaf capitals, three sculptured heads and fragments of human images on capitals. Rafael Lewis asks „How Strong was Strong Mountain?“ and makes some „Preliminary Remarks on the Possible Location of the Mamluk Siege Position at Montfort Castle“ (pp. 282–286). A very brief overview on „Two Board Games and Some Graffiti from Montfort“ (pp. 287–288) is given by Adrian Boas, which are identified as two Nine Men’s Morris boards and a ship (lacking regrettably a photograph of the graffiti). Jonathan J. Gottlieb offers some „Brief Preliminary Remarks on the Sampling and Analysis of Mortars Used in the Construction and Conservation of Montfort Castle“ (pp. 289–301), which will hopefully be extended in the next volume.

The book contains two appendices (pp. 305–310), a bibliography (p. 311–326) and an index (pp. 327–339). The bibliography lacks some cited works, for example the Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani (p. 15)2 as well as a

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volume edited by Thomas Biller (cited on the flyleaf, and p. 72)\(^3\).

In conclusion, it is to stress out that most of this book is based on newly discovered archeological finds. Boas’ fundamental collection offers a lot of new material and fresh views and will stimulate upcoming discussions in the scientific community.


\(^3\)Daniel Burger / Thomas Biller / Timm Radt, Montfort und der frühe Burgenbau des Deutschen Ordens, Petersberg 2015.