A fair number of towers and larger, towered, or otherwise strengthened buildings are known from the Late Roman East. Since they offer insight into functional architecture as well as life and settlement they repay further examination. Although most of these buildings tend to come from marginal areas, namely the desert limits of imperial territory, sufficient examples exist to permit a fruitful discussion of morphology and the role of the ‘fortified’ or ‘resistant’ buildings in considering wider issues of the advancement of settlement and the character of rural exploitation.

While free standing rural towers and towered farms are common features in the material record of the ancient Mediterranean rural world, they remain somewhat enigmatic regarding their purpose and function. I wish to focus my discussion on those towers of Late Antiquity (4th through 7th centuries A.D.) that are non-military in function, meaning they do not appear to have been constructed or maintained by the Roman military, nor garrisoned by Roman authorities. Lacking official inscriptions, there is little way of knowing whether one of these common, free-standing towers were not used by the military. Unfortunately this does not allow much latitude, and there are a number of cases when small towers (interpreted variously as ‘signal stations’ or army ‘watch posts’) look exactly like their civilian counterparts. This danger aside, it is also true that the function of some civilian towers must have overlapped with their military counterparts in their essentially defensive characteristics, by which I mean that they served as lookout or refuges for individual estates or villages.

Most towers in the ancient eastern Mediterranean are components of buildings or building complexes, but numerous examples stand in isolation within villages or on the periphery of settlements. The phenomenon of tower-building was not new in the Roman Mediterranean: there are numerous examples that survive from Hellenistic Palestine, for example, from Greece and Crete, but the focus of the present study is mainly focussed on those buildings that survive in the Levant from Cilicia to Palestine. As one observer has noted, “In the East, the tower of two or three stories was one of the most common forms a building could
Evidence from the Greek mainland from the archaic and classical periods shows that the tower (πυργοί) was an early feature of the Greek landscape in Attica and beyond. Large numbers of medieval towers also survive, though they have, as elsewhere, been little studied. The Cyclades possess several on Delos and Rheneia, for example, while in the Dodecanese, Rhodes also preserves several old towers. In Palestine, Josephus mentions the pyrgos east of Beersheba owned by Agrippa I. Beyond the eastern Mediterranean, North Africa provides a host of architectural comparanda. Large numbers of them stood and were noted by the late-19th and early-20th century travelers who visited the Levant, and a significant portion of these have since been destroyed.

The unity implied by the title of this work accords with only the broadest characteristics shared by these buildings; this is their construction in durable materials (allowing for examples which surely existed in mud-brick and other more perishable fabrics) and their generally massive characteristics when compared with typical local structures. Of course it should be allowed that wall thickness and height (which I take as defining whether or not a building is ‘massive’ when compared with its peers) may well be inherent within a building design. Towers, for their example, by their ratios of height-width generally demand thicker walls than common houses. Of course the height and the wall thickness might themselves be what makes a tower. It is the advantage gained that leads to the building: either a vantage point, or security, via thicker walls. Beyond these basic advantages there were of course many other considerations, and from the material record we can recover some of the motives for construction and functional differences.

1. R. MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge, Mass. 1963, 141. I wish to thank Mr. Nick Maroulis for his kindness in generosity in sponsoring my research while investigating this topic.
Morphologically, the tower is simply a free-standing building with a disproportionate ratio of height: width. Towers also tend to have greater wall thickness than other local contemporary buildings, but they need not be particularly massive, nor occupy a larger surface area than nearby, coeval structures. Their widespread distribution along the Levantine coast (they are attested from Cilicia to southern Palestine) is attested by De Vogüé, Lassus, and Butler, and given the lack of scientific archaeological investigation to date, these early architectural studies form an important part of the present study. They are supplemented by more recent, though similar work, by Tate and Tchalenko, both of whom have briefly discussed towers within the compass of their larger regional works. From these accounts, it is clear from the published data that these towers were vital features of the agricultural landscape.

Most towers in the Roman-Byzantine east have a mixed domestic and security function, that is, they were primarily intended to serve as living spaces or storehouses, but many were also lookouts or refuges. It is possible to get a flavor the number of towers scattered throughout the ancient Roman East, as well as the variety of their size and character by looking with a brief survey in which I highlight a number of these structures.

Archaeological work in ancient Palestine has revealed a large number of towers. Several are emblematic of the form and situation of common rural types in the Levant. One of these, a 6x6 m rural tower, was discovered amongst agricultural terraces in the countryside of Lakhish in Judea and dated to the Roman-Byzantine period. Towers in Judea also occur in associations with monasteries, where they are frequent features and often a focal building of the religious house. At St. Peter’s Church another such building, 14.3 m long and 7.4 m wide, was probably built in the 5th century, while on the summit of Har Montar there is considerably smaller tower, 5 x 5 m, tentatively identified as that built by Sabas. Hirschfeld noted that such towers had a prominent place in demarcating the boundaries of the monasteries, housing monks, but especially in defense. There were also other domestic functions; some of the Judean towers had stables built into them, like the one found at Khirbet el-Quneitra.

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Rural towers in Samaria have been studied by Dar, who studied more than 1,200 towers, 45 of which were excavated. He classified these towers into six types. These ranged in size from small towers with exterior walls about two meters in length, to large, two-storeyed towers measuring six meters on a side. Most of the Samarian towers were apparently constructed in the Hellenistic period, though several of the large examples are probably Roman. On the whole, few of the Samaritan towers were well-sited for lookouts and their primary purpose does not seem to be related to defense. They served for storage of tools and crops and on occasion may have provided temporary shelter for workers and herdsmen. Typically these buildings were about 3 meters high with exterior dimensions of 3-4 meters, like the one found at Um Rihan (Fig. 1). Nearly all are built of a single course of rather large (0.6 x 0.4 x 0.8 m) limestone or dolomite quarried for the purpose and finished on-site. While Dar linked the towers of the Samarian countryside with wine production during the Hellenistic, only a handful were found in association with wineries. Many, however, were found near diverse ancient agricultural installations including sheepfolds, threshing floors, ‘cup marks’, oil-presses, and cisterns. In the ancient village of Qarawat Bene Hassan 170 towers were surveyed, a number of which exhibit strong evidence for their agricultural role as storehouses or lookouts. Tower 80 was found in association with a wine-press, a threshing floor and components from multiple oil-presses, while Tower 73 was part of an assemblage that included two livestock pens and a threshing floor. A few of the large towers (with exterior dimensions of 5 meters or more) were apparently *pyrgoi* whose main purposes were defensive and possibly residential.10

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During the Archaeological Survey of Israel buildings identified as ‘watch-towers’ or ‘watch-booths’ were found frequently such as that found in the northwestern Negev around Hirbet Be’er Shema.\textsuperscript{11} Southwest of Oboda in the central Negev Highlands a tower lies on a hilltop above the Wadi el-‘Asli, measured 9 x 8 m. Iron Age II and Byzantine pottery were found within the structure, which was constructed of roughly cut stones.\textsuperscript{12} In the wadi Nahal Besor near Sede Boqer several towers have been noted: a square (6 x 6 m) Byzantine example on a spur stands beside a rock-cut cistern and nearby drainage channels. Another tower lay beneath the northern spur of Har Boqer, 7 x 7 m wide, embellished apparently with decorated lintel and capitals which were found on the site. Two other structures and a cistern were associated with the second tower.\textsuperscript{13} Watch-booths were commonly found in the Har Hamran survey in the eastern central Negev, described as oval structures of 1-2 x 3-5 m in dimension.\textsuperscript{14} These complexes indicate a central agricultural or domestic purpose for these towers rather than a strictly defensive role.

There were also towered columbaria. The Herodian farm at Ramat Hanadiv had a large tower dovecote, nearby the main dwelling to it (Fig. 2)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{dovecote.png}
\caption{Dovecote at ‘Ein Tzur reconstruction (Boaz, “The Dovecote at Horvat ‘Eleq”, fig 1.).}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item[12.] M. Haiman, Map of Har Hamran Southwest, Jerusalem 1986, 131.
\item[13.] R. Cohen, Map of Sede Boqer West, Jerusalem 1985, Site 34, 8; Site 53, 13.
\item[14.] Haiman, Map of Har Hamran Southwest (above note 11), 21.
\end{itemize}
and dated by the excavators to the 1st century.\textsuperscript{15} The building of columbaria in the form of towers was commonplace throughout the Roman Near East: mud-brick towered columbaria were common especially in Egypt.\textsuperscript{16}

Towers were also used as dwellings. In the hinterland of Antioch and Apamea in north Syria, towers were built in considerable numbers throughout Late Antiquity. Many of those examples found in Syria seem to have been self-contained or attached domestic structures, having nothing to do with any official military or ecclesiastical buildings. One such example is that at Kfellusin (Fig. 3), where a lintel inscription provides a building date of A.D. 492 or 522. One of the finer preserved towers that survives, Kfellusin stood to a height of 15 m. On the groundfloor, a staircase in the north-east corner provided access to the upper storey while the room itself was divided by two transverse arches carrying the stone slab ceilings, a common feature of Syrian domestic architecture, as we have seen. The upper floors were undivided and measured approximately 5.5 m on a side. Light entered the ground- and first-floors via loopholes only, while the upper storeys were lighted by windows windows. Large stone slabs roofed the building. The architecture of Kfellusin was thus distinctly Syrian in many

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{tower.png}
\caption{Tower at Kfellusin (Butler, Princeton Expedition, \textit{II.B. ill. 228}).}
\end{figure}


\textsuperscript{16} E.M. Husselman, “The Dovecotes of Karanis”, \textit{Transactions of the American Philological Association} 84 (1953) 81-91.
ways: the finely quadrated stone arches and corbelling is prominent in from the Hauran to the northern regions. Its all-stone construction and size made it a rather compact, but formidable building. Distinct though it is, Kfellusin was not unique. At Serjible on the Jebel Sim’an, Butler recorded a large tower over 17 m in height, comprising five storeys. The Serjible tower was thus both higher and more spacious than that at Kfellousin, but built from the same limestone ashlar materials in one course that gave it a wall thickness of about 0.70 m. The interior of the Serjible structure differed from the former example, with each floor divided into two rooms. The ground floor contained a stable, and like Kfellusin, was lit only by slit windows, while the second storey contained several windows and a corbelled latrine. Despite the presence of a monastic complex at Serjible, Peña’s belief that the tower there served a religious purpose is uncertain. The tower stands in isolation some 50 m from the monastery, and in light of the place’s context and character, Butler’s belief that the place was a ‘tower-house’ is probably correct.

While the tower-houses are domestic dwellings first and foremost their defensive characteristics are apparent. The presence of loop windows in the lower storeys, while the windows are found in the upper storeys, suggests that the builders cared little that the ground floor received light (entirely possible since it seems to have been a stable), and more for limiting access. Anyone attempting to gain entry to the upper storeys would have had to push their way through a heavy door, probably one of the ubiquitous stone doors that still litter the landscape, then force entry to the dwelling space above.

For whom and against whom were these dwellings fortified? Considering the total floor area of the upper storeys of Kfellusin, it could have temporarily sheltered about a hundred people, and this implies about one meter of space per person and that there were no active defenders attempting to strike at any attackers below; their being packed into the shelter in such numbers would have offered them no freedom of movement. Kfellusin could have served for such an emergency refuge and it has certain advantages over the conventional refuges known from the epigraphic record described below. For one, towers required considerably less effort to build than any sizeable open fort. The tower at Kfellusin, for example, required on the order of 900-1200 man-days of labor to complete. A crude estimate would put the labor required to finish a modest pyrgos, such as Tower C at

Qasr al-Mharram described below, on the order of 1,800-2,400 man hours to complete. Open forts with extended circuits would have required many times this amount of labour. Beyond this fact, the brigands or nomads that menaced those that sought refuge in a tower like Kfellusin, whether a handful of civilians or an entire village, stood little chance of breaching the defenses. Their climbing over the walls, which was certainly a concern in open refuges, was out of the question in the case of towers.

Clearly a tower like Kfellusin or Serjible was not intended to form part of a coherent defensive network. Similar towers scattered throughout the territory of the former diocese of Oriens bear no official inscriptions attesting a military function. Often multiple towers stood in each village, and they were thus first and foremost dwelling spaces, lookouts or, in times of emergency, refuges for families and clans. When the Jews opposed to Muhammad in Medina fled to their strongholds we must probably consider the mud-brick equivalent of the Kfellusin and Sergible towers, still found today in the Arabian Peninsula. In the latter case, the assailants were light-armed Arab tribesmen without siege equipment; in this they were similar to the ‘Saracens’ famously described by Procopius, who, we are told, were kept at bay by a small wall. Indeed, the circuit wall of the Byzantine city of Aqaba was little more than a screen to keep out such raiders or wild animals; its thickness of only about 1.6 m was certainly not intended to withstand any kind of determined siege.

While relations between semi-nomads and sedentary dwellers along the Syrian steppe were largely peaceful, there were certain episodes of raiding at which time towers would have provided the only refuge. The villagers would have simply waited out any raid within the safety of the tower, but unless only individual families were sheltered inside, there would have been

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no room for their possessions or cattle. These must have been hidden away, removed from the village, or simply given over to plunder.

In central Syria, around the ancient city of Epiphania (Hama) in the village of Kerratin (ancient Taroutia) a *pyrgos* (Fig. 4) dated by inscription to 509/510 measures about 12 m square and had 1.80 m thick walls and slit windows.\(^{21}\) The Kerratin tower has a strong (about 3 m in breadth) glacis at its base, implying that this tower’s primary intent was defensive. At Qasr al-Mharram (about 20 km NE of Hama) Lassus recorded three towers built in the mid-6th century.\(^ {22}\) One of these (called Lassus ‘Tower B’) has a lengthy inscription that dates the building to 551 and states that the structure is a tower of refuge. Tower B measures 7.55 x 8.55 m and has a glacis on the north and east sides only. Within it is divided into two by a partition. The second tower at Qasr al-Mharram, ‘Tower C’ (9.7 x 9.4 m) bore traces of attached buildings, and thus may not have originally been isolated. Like that at Kerratin, the glacis of Tower C encompassed the entire base of the building. Probably in 574, the three towers at Qasr al-Mharram were joined by a fourth, then walled together to complete a *tetrapyrgon*. The date strongly suggests a building erected in response to the Persian threat that struck the region in the devastating invasion of 573. At al Burj (about 40 km north of Hama), a nearly identical structure, including the battering wall, was noted by Butler.\(^ {23}\) Dated by its lintel inscription to

\(^{21}\) Butler, *Princeton Expedition* (note 16 above), II.B., 75.


A.D. 526, the tower measures approximately 11 m with an interior space of approximately 5.60 x 5.20 m. The inscription calls this building a *pyrgos* and *metaton* built in honor of Sts. Michael and Longinus, but offers no names of the builders responsible.\(^{24}\)

This cursory survey of the Syrian landscape shows that buildings which are called ‘*pyrgos*’ in the epigraphy are not obviously the work of the state or its proxies (the Church, titled individuals) rather than private citizens and were intended for community defense rather than the protection of individual families or clans. Some however, replete with scriptural references and patron saints may belong to monastic or other ecclesiastic establishment, as I believe to be the case at Qasr al-Mharram. There does seem to be a regional variation in patronage, with private individuals responsible for the tower building in the limestone hills of the north, while the central Syrian examples offer more frequent attestation to officials.\(^{25}\)

Alongside the *pyrgoi*, there were other, larger installations in Syria that existed outside of permanently manned limes forts that provided some kind of protection. Although the word *phourion* is often interpreted simply as a ‘fort’, these structures in some instances seem to have been fortified refuges rather than military strong points with permanent garrison. Justinian built a *phourion* at Mokissos, and here, in the center of largely demilitarized Anatolia, it seems more than likely that Procopius was referring to a rural place of refuge rather than a hardened permanent garrison.\(^{26}\)

At Ma’an in north central Syria, a lengthy inscription attributes the building of the phourion there to John, lamprotatos and Theodore, *asekretis* for the emperor Justinian, who ‘preserves all cities’.\(^{27}\) Archaeologically, such buildings are again attested on the ground in central Syria, in the al-Al’a. In form, phouria were generally rectangular and open; the walled court was where the citizenry found safety along with their animals. Examples are known from epigraphic evidence from Taroutia, where a phourion was built in 509 by John, who gave not titles but was apparently in imperial service.\(^{28}\)


\(^{27}\) *IGLS*, 1809.

Unlike the free-standing and attached towers of the Syrian and Palestin-
ian countryside described above, the pyrgoi and phouria are more massive
and sometimes indicate state involvement. They seem to be reflexive, built
in response to specific threats. Although the context is urban, there are use-
ful paralles in the high steppe of North Africa at Sbeitla, where a scatter
of blockhouses or ‘fortlets’ occupies the former center of the Roman city.29
While substantially larger than those of North Syria, the structures at Sbeitla
were enclosed, roofed ‘fortlets’ to which the town dwellers repaired during
the swift raids of Moors, which were certainly not uncommon local distur-
bances in the 6th and 7th centuries.30 These structures have space within
for cattle, and at least one example possessed livestock troughs (Fig. 5).
Contemporary olive presses lie next to the Sbeitla towers, indicating that
they offered cover to the inhabitants as they processed their harvests. The
defensive nature of the Sbeitla blockhouses can be inferred not only by
their massive construction, built as they were from robbed-out ashlars of
earlier Roman work, but also from their position within the inhabited center
of a town whose circuit was too large to be defensible.

29. The structures at Sbeitla are referred to by Duval and Baratte as ‘fortlets’: N. Duval - F. Baratte, Les ruines
de Sufetula (Sbeitla), Tunis 1973, 92-97. I use the term ‘blockhouse’ in addition to tower here to denote the rather low height and broadness along with their
enclosed nature.
30. Corippus, Iohannidos seu De bellis Libycis libri VIII, ed. J. Diggle - F. Goodyear,
Although security must have been the dominant concern that led to the construction of these buildings, they frequently had additional functions. Many towers formed either part of a domestic living space, like those in the Hauran southeast of Damascus at Subhiya and al Safiya, or those found in Umm el-Jimal in modern Jordan.\footnote{Butler, Princeton Expedition (note 16 above), II.A., 137-142; 123.}

Towered farmhouses, the primary dwellings of agrarian owners (and perhaps wealthier tenants) are depicted in North African mosaics and ubiquitous in the archaeological record of the Roman East. They should, however, be distinguished from ‘fortified farms’.\footnote{I know of no precise Greek term for such a fortified farm; the closest is perhaps baris, of uncertain origin, used to describe several rural fortified compounds in the Hellenistic period, relics of which remain as placenames in Anatolia; L. Robert, Noms indigènes dans l’Asie-Mineure gréco-romaine, Paris 1963, 15; C. Schuler, Ländliche Siedlungen und Gemeinden im hellenistischen und römischen Kleinasiens, Munich 1998, 72-73.}

The latter I restrict to buildings where defensive features not only appear, but dominate the aspect of the building. Some of the best examples of these buildings are known from the eastern limes. Examples are known from Palestine in the Nahal Sa‘adon described below and al-Tuba in northern Syria. In addition, a strongly probable case exists at Stabl Antar in the eastern territory of Apamea in central Syria, near the late antique village of Androna (al Andarin).

Androna occupied a large basin that occupies the space between the Palmyrene hills to the southeast, the Jebel al-Ala to the south, the Jebel Bishri far to the east, and the Jebels Hass and Sbeit to the north. Within this broad swathe of steppe lie numerous Roman-Byzantine settlements. Androna preserves impressive remains, including a 6th-century kastron. The kastron lies in the middle of the village and is a well-built, daunting edifice, measuring 80 m square. The fort is constructed of well-cut basalt interspersed with bands of brick with an exterior wall-thickness of about one m of well-dressed basalt. A portico runs on all sides of the interior of the structure, and a chapel dominates the interior space of the barracks. Recent excavation has uncovered surprising archaeological pretension, including the remains of wall paintings, mosaics, and marble revetments.\footnote{C. Strube, “Excavations and survey at el Anderin/Androna, Syria: The work of the German team”, in XXe congrès international des etudes Byzantines: Préactes, 3.217, Paris 2001.}

Although there is no record of the military garrison stationed there, Trombley suggests that an arithmos of 300-400 men may have been barracked there. The final publication of the Heidelberg team will provide the final

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31. Butler, Princeton Expedition (note 16 above), II.A., 137-142; 123.
32. I know of no precise Greek term for such a fortified farm; the closest is perhaps baris, of uncertain origin, used to describe several rural fortified compounds in the Hellenistic period, relics of which remain as placenames in Anatolia; L. Robert, Noms indigènes dans l’Asie-Mineure gréco-romaine, Paris 1963, 15; C. Schuler, Ländliche Siedlungen und Gemeinden im hellenistischen und römischen Kleinasiens, Munich 1998, 72-73.
answer to this question. Whatever the nature of the soldiers stationed there, the presence of the _kastron_ and the outer defenses of the substantial circuit walls would have presented, if properly manned, a substantial, defensible refuge for the inhabitants of the village and its environs. The position of Androna, on one Roman route linking the _dux_ at Chalcis with the _dux_ of Phoenicie Libanensis at Palmyra, was strategic, but not vital in the scheme of defense against the Persians, as the Sasanian army never approached the _limes_ through the Syrian desert, although their Lakhmid allies did.\footnote{Malalas _Chronographia_, ed. L. Dindorf, Bonn 1831, 441; translated E. and M. Jeffreys - R. Scott, Melbourne 1986.}

The fort at Androna (Fig. 6) was erected over a period of one year and five months in 558-559 through the patronage of the locally-born (though perhaps not locally resident at the time of construction) wealthy notable named Thomas.\footnote{Trombley, “War and Society” (note 25 above), 170-172.} The lintel of the chapel within the fort was laid by a certain John. An inscription recovered within the chapel at Stabl Antar also preserves the name John.\footnote{IGLS, 1645.} Possibly this John was none other than the _technites_ who laid the lintel in the church in the _kastron_ at Androna.

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36. _IGLS_, 1645.
The most devastating incident for the limes region around Apamea and Chalcis occurred in 573. Apamea was sacked, and the captives from the territory and the city were said to have numbered 292,000.\(^{37}\) An early Roman census recorded a population of 117,000 at Apamea, and given the size of the city, a city whose remains occupy approximately 3 km sq, with a vast territoria that supported an urban and sub-urban population of 400,000-500,000, the figure of captives in 573 is not impossible. Whatever the exact number of prisoners, the sack of one of the greatest cities of the east and the deportation of thousands of captives to Persia was a tremendous blow to the region’s social and economic fabric. Trombley’s astute survey of the epigraphic evidence points to severe trauma in city and countryside due to the Persian incursion: only four building inscriptions in Syria II are dated 574-591.\(^{38}\) One of those inscriptions is from Stabl Antar (577/578).

Stabl Antar (Fig. 7) must have been built in reaction to the Persian attack of 573, while the kastron at Androna (A.D. 558) was perhaps part of a long-term response to the attacks in 540-44 and continual unease along the frontier. If this is the case, what was Stabl Antar supposed to protect? The settlement of Androna seems the obvious answer, but why create another fort, less than 10 km, when the village already possessed a new and

\[\text{Fig. 7 Stabl Antar Plan (Butler, Princeton Expedition, II.B., Plate XI).}\]


\(^{38}\) Trombley, “War and Society” (note 25 above), 178.
well-built stronghold? There is also the issue of location. Stabl Antar, on the shoulders of the jebel, does not even command a view of Androna. It is not in visual communication with the town, though signal fires probably could have been seen from one place to the other. Lying as it does, south and west of the kome, it is difficult to see in Stabl Antar a fort meant to safeguard Androna from the west, should the Persians come by way of Apamea, an unlikely scenario even five years after the sack of Apamea. Two approaches along the Androna-Apamea axis were proposed by Mouterde and Poidebard.39 The northern route passed around the edge of the escarpment and was safeguarded by a post at Abu Hanatej. The second route, which branched to the south passed around the jebel below Stabl Antar and was guarded by another proposed fort at Tell Halawa. Both of these positions lay on the Apamean side of the jebel. Stabl Antar lay between them, on no known road, which makes its defensive purpose even more ambiguous in relation to communications routes and settlement. If Apamea was ultimately to benefit from the fort at Stabl Antar, one would perhaps expect the place to have been placed at a position nearer to the road running from Apamea to Androna which any Persian force would be expected to make use of in the event of invasion. Thus, Stabl Antar lay in a spot seemingly ill-chosen to mount a defence of the approaches to Androna in the event of a Persian attack on the limes of Chalcis from the north or the west, the two most likely invasion routes. In the event a Persian army advanced to Androna and proceeded to Apamea (or vice versa), Stabl Antar was little of an impedence, situated as it was approximately five km from any road.

There are similarities in plan between Stabl Antar and the kastron at Androna. Both have churches within, and interior porticos, though that at Androna is smaller than the kastron at Androna. For Stabl Antar to have accommodated a full-strength arithmos with their mounts is possible as there would have been room for the men, but the horses and equipment would have been another matter. A full-strength cavalry unit would have required at least 300 horses and that is an extreme minimum, allowing for no remounts. The horses would have to have been kept elsewhere. Secondly, while projecting towers were not a universal feature of forts of this period in Syria, the lack of corner towers at Stabl Antar is puzzling. With the models of Idjaz, al-Habbat and Androna close to hand, all of which possessed projecting corner towers that rendered them substantially more defensible, why did the builders of Stabl Antar eschew their use?

It seems that Stabl Antar was not a garrison at all, but rather meant as a place of refuge for a powerful local landowner, his dependents, and probably local villagers as well. The building and its environs offers a number of clues about its function. Mouterde and Poidebard noted three long parallel galleries, which they interpreted as either stables or granaries. These were not visible to me 1999-2000 during my surface prospection of the site. Mouterde and Poidebard further noted a walled enclosure surrounding a ‘vast’ zone of land, which they interpreted as intensively cultivated gardens. Similar enclosures were found at the nearby grand estate center of Qasr Ibn Wardan (built 561-564) and at Qubet Able, and Rasm el-Ahmar, all sites visited by the Princeton Expedition. Butler noted that the upland west of the fortress at Stabl Antar flattens out over approximately five miles (~ 8 km), and his assessment that much of this upland could have been cultivated was borne out by my visit to the site. Traces of ancient terraces immediately to the south of the site survived in 1999-2000, but they were being rapidly destroyed by modern agriculture. In light of the lack of scientific survey, the relationship of the fort to the remains of these agricultural systems is uncertain, but given the frequently good state of preservation of Late Roman-Early Byzantine remains around Hama, there is a fair degree of probability that the terraces of 1999-2000 and the agricultural enclosure noted by Mouterde and Poidebard belonged to the establishment at Stabl Antar. These agricultural installations are inconclusive. Such a place was presumably manned by limitanei, but by the late 6th century, their ranks were seriously depleted or perhaps even disbanded by Justinian. Isaac has debunked the notion of the limitanei as soldier-farmers (or farmer-soldiers). Those soldiers garrisoned at Nessana certainly owned land, but it was as landowners that they functioned in society, not as georgoi working the land themselves.

More importantly, the ground plan of Stabl Antar does not suggest that it possessed a primarily military role. Anastasian-Justinianic forts in Syria-Palestine are known in some number. Qasr Hallabat in Jordan (Palestine II), for example, was an Anastasian foundation. Neither Androna, nor the fort at Idjaz (546/547) nor that at al-Habbat (556) have much in common with Stabl Antar. The plan of Stabl Antar, with its tower-flanked entrance and L-shaped interior portico bears little resemblance to other eastern forts.

40. Butler, *Princeton Expedition* (note 16 above), II.B., 64.
It does, however, bear a strong resemblance in both size and interior organization to the Late Roman fortified farm site of Tel Nador in modern Algeria. Like Stabl Antar, Nador is has a massive façade with exterior walls constructed in ashlar. Nador also possesses towers on each corner of the façade and a gateway flanked by two towers and is of roughly comparable size. The interior arrangement (Fig. 8), with the L-shaped portico on two sides, strongly-resembles that of Stabl Antar. Nador was itself thought to have been a fortress, but excavation has revealed that Nador was a largely agricultural building, which in the 4th-century formed part of a farming estate belonging to M. Cincius Hilarianus.44

Without scientific survey and excavation, it is impossible to draw any firm conclusion about the function of Stabl Antar. In view of the position, form of the structure and comparanda from the region, it seems that Stabl Antar was probably part of the estate of a local wealthy individual, who probably resided elsewhere, perhaps Apamea. The building of Stabl Antar was likely a reaction on the part of the magnate to the sack of Apamea in 573 that sparked concern for his lands lying around Stabl Antar as well as for the local inhabitants, many of whom were likely to have been his tenants. The presence of Stabl Antar offered both a stronghold for those attached to the landholder personally, a safeguard for the products of his estate, and also likely a refuge for those living around in times of crisis.

Conclusion

Thousands of free-standing towers were built in antiquity in the Levant. Although their presence has been widely noted, the range of uses and the potential that a thorough study of these structures has in elucidating settlement patterns, land use, and security, has yet to be fully developed. From two synthetic studies it has been demonstrated that a burst of tower building activity was associated with the colonization efforts of Hellenistic kingdoms.\textsuperscript{45} The vast majority of towers seem to have been private, and hundreds or even thousands dotted the villages of the late antique east; Butler noted that the small settlement of Umm al-Kutten had seven towers alone, all built of well-dressed basalt. In some cases these towers, whether they were free-standing or part of an ensemble, were simply storehouses, secure centers for keeping equipment, wine, oil, or grain. In other instances towers were multi-purpose, with bottom floors for stables and upper storeys devoted to living space. That these towers were intended as permanent or long-term residences rather than simply seasonal shelter is indicated not only by the tremendous effort expended in building them, but also by the fact that many possess latrines and occupy a space sufficient for a large family to have lived indefinitely.\textsuperscript{46} Other civilian functions that towers possessed were as houses for oil and wine presses or as columbaria. Finally, civilians used towers as refuges during bandit raids or as lookouts. This was particularly the case in the plains, as in the Syrian Hauran, where many villages had multiple towers that served this lookout function along with any one or more of the others just noted.

Scale does tell something of the nature of these buildings. Small towers, those of just two meters or so on each side, were often simply lookouts or small storehouses. They lack the space to be full-time residences and almost never have lighting. Large towers of six or seven meters on a side were relatively common, and these tended to be permanent residences that could offer vantage points to overlook crops and herds, often had their own stables on the ground floor, and gave the inhabitants considerable security. This type of free-standing tower is found both in private contexts, as at Kfellusin, or ecclesiastical, as at Qasr al Banat or Qasr


\textsuperscript{46} Butler, \textit{Princeton Expedition} (note 16 above), II.B., 234.
al Deir.\textsuperscript{47} Many similar examples were incorporated into churches (Burj Haidar) and farm houses (Behyo and Dalloza).\textsuperscript{48}

It is interesting to note that none of the towers from north Syria dated on epigraphic grounds are earlier than the 5th century. If towers were structures on which the vanguard of settlement into insecure country existed, this evidence is difficult to reconcile with what we know of the frontier districts, particularly around Chalcis and Antioch. One would expect that these buildings, with their defensive elements, would have formed the backbone around which settlement fleshed out. Although these towers may have replaced earlier, less durable structures, they may reflect a growing concern for safety in the 6th century. But there is at first glance little correlation to settlement expansion and the need to secure these villages in a hostile frontier zone. Rather, the dated towers suggest, unsurprisingly, I think, that security was always a paramount concern. Thus, we find towers erected in the 5th and 6th centuries, which is fairly late in the settlement history of the region. It seems that these free standing stone rural towers were part of the fabric of village life from at least the Iron Age onward.\textsuperscript{49}

In the case of the \textit{pyrgoi}, and \textit{phrouria}, and fortified farms, possible links between regional outbursts of violence and their construction is somewhat easier to correlate. As Tchalenko noted, the villages of the hill country around there fronted the steppe and thus were exposed to nomadic raids, however infrequent. The Persian Wars may have in fact sparked the building of the \textit{pyrgoi} at Kerratin in 509/10, since Anastasius’s Persian War had ended in 506, while that at Al Burj, built in 526 may well reflect insecurity around the time of the First Persian War under Justinian, in 526-32. The danger of attacks by ‘Saracens’ would have certainly been obvious after Mundhir’s dramatic raid of 529 which carried him to the walls of Antioch, very near many of the structures examined above. The \textit{phrouria} seem also to reflect the troubles of warfare between Rome and Persia; that at Ma’an was built in 547/8, just after the cessation of the Second Persian War (540-545).

If the towers in the eastern Mediterranean are of fundamentally two types, the one organic to settlement in an agro-pastoral landscape and the second a rising in reference to external and internal threats to the security


\textsuperscript{49} See discussion in Dar, \textit{Landscape and Pattern} (note 9 above), 120-125.
of the population, then the fortified farms appear to belong to two broadly similar sets of circumstances. The fortified farm is not an altogether unknown in the late antique east, but it is a rare creature. Only a handful of structures in the material record have been identified as fortified farms and these, as with my arguments for Stabl Antar, are circumstantial and relatively tenuous. We are on firmer ground in this identification with a group of farms in the western Negev around Sa‘adon have a tower at the core, at least one of which is strengthened by a glacis, the best of preserved of which measures 7.4 x 8.6 m (Fig. 9). Clumped around the fortified dwell-

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tings near Sa‘adon are dwellings and farm outbuildings, such as sheds and folds. These Negev farms resemble the Tripolitanian fortified farms (*gasr*, pl. *gsur*). *Gsour* typically possess a solid, heavy-walled closed building. They are generally surrounded by ancillary agricultural and pastoral structures, and many have traces of domestic settlement grouped around them. The *gsur* seem to represent a considerable shift in both the density of settlement, the agents controlling the land, and, in some cases, a chronological divide between the earlier farms of the Roman period and the later fortified farm settlements, which tended toward nucleation and probably indicate a resurgence of non-Roman elites on the soil.51

In Syria-Palestine there is at present no evidence to suggest such a chronological gap, but the question of ethnicity and changes in land tenure raised in discussion of the Libyan *gsur* is valid to consider for Syri-Palestine as well. The remains of farms like those from Nahal Sa‘adon are interesting in part because of their location at the limits of settled life, and we cannot rule out the arrival of new landholders from neighboring Arabia, where the *qasr*, a towered compound and enclosed courtyard, were ancient and durable parts of settled life. We see the coming of Arabic speakers into the fringes of Syria and Palestine where they began to settle in some number in Late Antiquity, and the fortified farms in the Negev, in particular may reflect the influence of landowners recently arrived from the Arabian Peninsula or Syrian desert.52

In other instances, it seems to me that the fortified farms in the East represent pioneer settlement in the Late Roman period by an elite seeking new lands to exploit in an area far beyond the traditional territory of the larger cities, and removed from most of the apparatus of state control and security. I am inclined to accept Mouterde and Poidebard’s dating of the fortified farm at al Tuba (3rd century?), which would make this compound an outlier of settlement. In other words, I envision Aurelios Bellichos as characterizing an elite opening of the steppeland to settlement around this time. Within an underpopulated landscape along the ‘Barbarian Plain’, it is easy to see the need for defensive structures of the sort at al Tuba, if for nothing more than to keep out wild animals and to shelter livestock at night. In all likelihood, al Tuba represents what, to my mind, is the paradigm fortified farm: a remote estate center controlling a large rangeland in open, relatively wild country.

Finally, some fortified farms were built later in the settlement history of the eastern frontier. They are represented by Stabl Antar, which, assuming my identification of its function is correct, seems to reflect prominent landowners’ concerns about major specific threats in the form of enemy raids. Although the date of the building in 577/78 reflects the reaction of the Apamean rural population to the devastating invasion of the Sasanians in 573, the impetus was apparently local and unofficial. In the future, archaeological work on these structures will iron out the issues of frontier settlement and security, but there are a number of other questions that such study will repay, such as the semiotics of elite control as expressed in architecture, and the little explored but probable bridge between the form and expression of these late antique compounds and later architectural expression, such as the Umayyad Desert Castles.

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