Towards the end of the twelfth century, Arabic sources began to categorize the stone-throwing artillery used in the Levant. Among the various types, the *manjanīq qarābughā*, occasionally appearing in certain Frankish sources by a similar name, is the most mysterious. Although previous scholars have attempted to interpret the form and development of these engines, there appears to be room for a more thorough investigation. By exploring references to these engines more closely, it is hoped that this study will shed light on this type of siege engine as well as the other varieties of mangonels mentioned in the sources. We will examine questions such as where this type of engine originated, its mechanical form and power relative to other types of mangonels, and how this might add to our understanding of the various types of stone-throwing artillery that were employed during the thirteenth century.

To do so, we shall focus our discussion on a number of contemporary sources, supplementing their accounts with original information found in later sources when appropriate. Al-Nasawi (d. 1249), Ibn Wāsil (1208-1298), Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (1223-1292), al-Yūnīnī (1242-1326), al-Jazarī (1258-1338), Abū al-Fidā’ (1273-1331), al-Nuwayrī (1278-1332) and Ibn al-Dawādārī (1289-) are among some of the closest to the events of this period, while Ibn al-Furāt (1334-1405), al-‘Aynī (1361-1451), al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442), Ibn Urnubughā al-Zardkāsh and Ibn Taghrī Birdi (1410-1470) also contribute critical information. From the Frankish point of view, the accounts of the Templar of Tyre (fl. c. 1310s), Marino Sanudo

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1 For the variants of this term given by Frankish sources, see below.
2 Nothing is known about this figure, but he appears to have completed his manuscript about mangonels either in the 1380s or later in the fifteenth century. For a short discussion, see below.
(d. 1338), the Annales de Terre Sainte and the Chronique d’Amadi are also valuable sources.

The Manjanīq Qarābughā (Qarābughrā) in the Sources

The first mention of a qarābughā mangonel appears in the biography of Jalāl al-Dīn Mankubirtī (r. 1219/20-1231), last of the Khaţar zmian rulers, written by his secretary Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Nasawī. The engine appears at the siege of Akhlāṭ (Khilāṭ) in 1229.3 The sultan initially erected twelve mangonels, eight of which are said to have been employed against the castle. These appear to have been insufficient as later in the siege al-Nasawī, probably an eyewitness, states that Rukn al-Dīn Jahshān Shāh bin Ṭughrul, the ruler of Arzun al-Rūm, sent a large mangonel to the sultan’s camp. This engine was called qarābughrā by those who sent it.4 This name would appear to reflect an Arabic rendering of the Turkish for ‘black camel’ (kara bughra).5

Given his position and relationship with Jalāl al-Dīn, it is likely that al-Nasawī would have been familiar with contemporary siege technology. The qarābughrā would appear to have been a significant engine as he describes it as a big mangonel and its constructors evidently deemed it worthy of naming. It is possible that this mangonel was of a type unfamiliar to al-Nasawī, perhaps one developed by the Turks of Arzun al-Rūm, located in the northeast of modern Turkey, who sent it to the Khawārizmians besieging Akhlāṭ. Alternatively, this engine may have been a large example of a known engine-type. In either case, the mangonel’s Turkish name suggests that it was bestowed by the people of Arzun al-Rūm, as is stated by al-Nasawī.

The term next appears as qarābughā, closer to the Turkish for ‘black bull’ (kara buğa),6 in Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Wāṣil’s account of the siege of Homs in the winter of 1248-49. At this siege, however, the most powerful mechanized stone-thrower used by the attackers was a mangonel of the maghrībi type. Ibn Wāṣil includes Ḥusām al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Abī ‘Alī’s remark that this engine could

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3 According to al-Nasawī, the sultan acquired Akhlāṭ at the end of 626H (late 1229), al-Nasawī, Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad, Sīrat al-sulṭān Jalāl al-Dīn Mankubirtī, ed. Ḥāfiz Ahmad Ḥamdī, Cairo, Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1953, p. 320.
4 Ibid., p. 299.
6 Ibid., p. 243 n. 28.