**The Crusader States (“Outremer”)**

By mid C12th Franks had taken/ consolidated most Levantine ports, & created 4 states:

1. Kingdom of Jerusalem (incl Arsuf, Acre, Tyre, Beirut, Dead Sea, Sea of Galilee, R Jordan)
2. County of Tripoli (centred on Tripoli)
3. Principality of Antioch (centred on Antioch, & incl half of R Orontes – source in Syria)
4. County of Edessa (incl part or R Euphrates)

Next 200 yrs dominated by need to settle/ develop these vulnerable “Frankish” outposts “overseas” (*Outremer*), often also called “The Latin Kingdoms” or “Crusader States”.

1. Stretched nrly 800 miles N/S – approx. same size (area) as England.
2. Hilly/ mountainous terrain predominant.
3. To West – a narrow coastal strip. To East – hills flatten into scrub/ desert.
4. Agriculturally quite rich, esp coastal strip – cereals, cane sugar, fruit & veg .
5. “Levant” (E Med coast) – trading crossroads – ‘caravans’ of silks, spice, dyes from East arrived via Syria (Aleppo & Damascus – main “hubs”) to great ports of Acre, Tyre, Beirut, Tripoli.

During C12th Franks tried extending territory eastwards, but were thwarted:

* Aleppo & Damascus remained Muslim controlled.
* 1144 – Edessa fell to Muslims.
* 1160s – Jerusalem facing continual Muslim threats.
* 1291 – Muslims retook Acre: crusader states no longer viable/ collapsed.

Key Questions:

1. How were these states created, and how did they survive for as long as they did?
2. What was the nature of the societies which evolved in “Outremer” – how did Christians & Muslims interact/ co-exist?

Historians have long argued over these questions – it’s on-going!

A number of “models” have been advanced:

1. The Assimilation Model: C19th Fre historians drew parallels b/ween C12th Outremer and contemporary (C19th) French colonialism! Crusader states were a “melting pot” in which most got along well, mingling freely & easily, to create a culturally distinct “new” society. Probably deluded, not least because it implied a French (Frankish) “civilising” influence etc.
2. The Segregation Model: 1950s/ 60s (era of decolonisation/ anti-colonialism) others (notably British & Israeli) countered that these states had, in fact, been rigidly segregated – the Franks had been a domineering elite of masters who used force, castles etc to control/ oppress the local people.
3. The “Messy Mixture” Model: more recent research, using a wider evidence base (eg archaeological, geographical, art history, modern sociological & psychological insights), suggests a far more complex/ nuanced reality.

A number of different sources (mainly re the Kingdom of Jerusalem) throw light on these debates:

1. *The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres,* c 1120 – reign of Baldwin I & formation of K of Jerus, 1100-18. F was a 40 yr old N Fr priest who joined 1st Crusade, 1096. Antioch, 1097, appt chaplain to Baldwin of Boulogne. When Baldwin cr King of Jerus, 1100, F became Royal Chaplain; lived in Jerus until 1127, where he wrote his *History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 1095-1127*; his chronicle of 1st Crusade, & reigns of Kings Baldwin I & II. Eyewitness of many events. Chronicle considered fairly reliable, but he was a servant of Baldwin, and both men had an agenda - to encourage settlement in the new states. Additionally, Baldwin’s rise to power had been extraordinary, & Fulcher’s “star” had risen commensurately in the wake of his “lord” - this does not mean God!

Fulcher describes the huge challenges Baldwin faced as K of Jerus: necessary to spend much of reign consolidating territory in face of constant, if disorganised, Muslim opposition. Early on, Baldwin’s strategic imperative was to control the crucial coastal ports, and defend the S frontier V Fatimid threats from Egypt. As Fulcher notes, had the various Muslim powers co-ordinated their attacks, they could easily have overwhelmed the vulnerable Frankish states like “a swarm of locusts”!

1101 – Baldwin’s forces, with Genoese naval support, took Arsuf (key port), and allowed the Muslims ‘quarter’ to evacuate in safety. At Caesarea (20 mi N), however, the Emir refused terms, & consequently when the port was taken all were slaughtered or enslaved & the town sacked. Corpses burned to expose gold coinage which many were believed to have swallowed. 1104 – Acre surrendered – Baldwin’s sack of Caesarea had intimidated them! Muslims & other locals allowed to stay in Acre, but were heavily taxed. Acre crucial to long-term security of K of Jerus: secure “entry port” to Holy Land, as Fulcher notes.

1105, 1107, & 1111 – Baldwin faced 3 major Fatimid (Egyptian) attacks from S. + 1109-1115 – attacks on N frontier by Syrian forces from Damascus & Aleppo! But these offensives were not properly co-ordinated, and were generally poorly executed. Constant war – K of Jerus a “war state” – clearly mil force/ intimidation essential to its survival. After 1115, B took control of area S of Dead Sea – control crucial trade routes b/ween Egypt & Syria.

Baldwin also ensured his own personal power base was secure – he did not want internal threats from his own lords/ knights. Royal domains estab at Jerus, Acre, Arsuf – run entirely by Baldwin’s people. Barons had v ltd territorial power – their rewards tended to be “money fiefs”, and very few new barons were created. The balance of internal power lay v much in the King’s favour: nobility had little real autonomy, and acted only on the Royal will – subservient to the Crown.

Succession was, however, an issue: Baldwin married, but never produced an heir (some, *not* Fulcher, thought he was gay).

1118 – while campaigning V Fatimids (an expeditionary raid on R Nile area) one of Baldwin’s old wounds reopened/ infection developed – died. Barons asserted themselves – Baldwin’s cousin elected as Baldwin II, K. of Jerus – rapid transition of power was crucial for security. Fulcher eulogised Baldwin as creator of an integrated, multicultural, Kingdom of the West (Occident) in the East (Orient) in which “faith unites those whose forefathers were strangers”, and asserted that “For those who were poor…here God makes rich.” Hmmm…maybe, but…?!

1. Al-Sulami, *Book of Holy War,* 1105 – initial Muslim reaction to 1st Crusade & estab of crusader states.

Al-Sulami taught at the Great Mosque in Damascus. A well-informed, perceptive lawyer/ imam. Delivered a series of public lectures (fragments of which survive as his book) in which he analysed how/ why the Franks had established themselves in Muslim territory/ taken Jerusalem. Like Fulcher he noted the lack of a unified/ co-ordinated Muslim response to this invasion. He noted the vulnerability of the Frankish states - open borders, weak lines of supply, lack of sufficient troops etc. Al-Sulami was very perceptive in other ways: 1st Crusade had exposed Muslim disunity in Near East; revealed the strong spiritual impulses of the Franks (“Holy war”; the importance of Jerusalem *to Christians*), but he also noted how lucky they had been. He saw “the bigger picture” – linked the Frankish invasion of Syria/ Palestine to the Norman Conquest of Islamic Sicily (1060-91), and the on-going Christian “reconquest” of Moorish Spain. In short, a coherent Islamic response was imperative.

Al-Sulami provides a fascinating insight into how an early C12th Muslim religious ldr saw events. To him they were a divine punishment of Muslims who’d neglected “Lesser Jihad” (the duty of all Muslims to defend Islam by war, if necessary) whilst pursuing “Greater Jihad” (inner/ personal striving, in faith). It was a call for Muslim ldrs to unite and drive out the “infidels”.

Fortunately for the Franks, Al-Sulami’s lectures had ltd impact at the time: few attended his sermons. “Lesser Jihad” had yet to resonate with Muslim ldrs in the Near East – only later (1140s) did they start to harness the power of a concept not much applied (outside theological circles!) since the Arab Conquest era.

1. William of Tyre, *Historia*,1184 – formation of Knights Templar, 1118.

W of Tyre born c1130 *in* Palestine: studied in Paris & Bologna; returned to K of J as Bishop of Tyre, 1175. Completed his history of Kingdom of Jerus, 1184. A reasonably reliable account of Outremer from 1st Crusade on containing v useful info/ insights re the Military Orders (Templars & Hospitallers), a crucial element in the defences of the Crusader states, esp Jerusalem, but about whom he felt some disquiet. Not only were these “warrior monks” a formidable military force who did much to secure borders, build/ run/ garrison crusader castles, but they were also economically and politically influential. W of Tyre describes much of this, emphasising how important their formation was to the security of Outremer. He also, however, describes their “arrogance”, and how, in some ways, they undermined the authority of Church leader (esp the “Patriarch of Jerusalem”) via their control of key sites (eg Temple Mount), their associations with rich nobles & mercantile interests, and their overarching loyalty to the Pope in Rome. William of Tyre, an Outremer born Churchman, provides an “insider’s” perspective on the internal politics of the C12th crusader states. V useful, altho’ care is needed – W inevitably defended local Church interests against other influential agents (like the Templars), and like many “Men of God” was uncomfortable about monks who killed.

1. *Queen Melisende’s Psalter* , *1143* – polit power in K of Jerus, & crusader art/ culture. Melisende was one of the 4 daughters of King Baldwin II & Morphia (his Armenian wife) who had no sons: consequently Melisende was married to Count Fulk of Anjou, and arrangements put in place for their joint succession after Baldwin’s death. This happened in Aug 1131. Fulk unhappy re joint monarchy (which ensured Baldwin’s bloodline wld continue thro’ Fulk & Melisende’s son, Baldwin) – wanted to be sole King of Jerusalem, and had given up his powerful domain in France to marry Melisende. Much turmoil followed as Fulk sidelined Melisende and packed key positions with his own Angevin liegemen. Rumours abounded – Melisende suspected of adultery with Hugh of Jaffa. 1134 Hugh & his followers (determined to preserve M’s inheritance, & the power of the local nobility) accused of conspiracy to murder Fulk: convicted of treason – exiled for 3 yrs – leniency because there was a real risk of civil war. Hugh was then subject to an assassination attempt, which failed, and left Fulk in a difficult position. Fulk had to win Melisende’s forgiveness and rebuild trust in order to stay in power, albeit ruling jointly with his hitherto estranged wife. It is thought that the psalter (a decorated book of religious texts) was a gift to woo her.

The psalter (held in the British Library) is a small (size of a modern paperback) but beautifully decorated text held between elaborately carved ivory covers. Probably produced by 7 different people: fusion of European, Islamic, & Byzantine styles which suggests to many art historians not only a distinct “Crusader Art”, but also a collaborative artistic community which borrowed readily from many different traditions. This distinct “style” is also evident in many buildings from the period in Jerusalem, notably Melisende’s project to rebuild the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Some argue, therefore, that much of the art and architecture of the crusader states reflects a relatively tolerant and integrated society (if not the “multicultural melting pot” of C19th French historians!) which was not brutally determined to extirpate all Islamic influences in “The Holy Land”.

1. The ruins of *Castellum Regis* – crusader settlement in early C12th.

Castellum Regis – sited nr Mi’ilya, W Galilee, 6 miles NE of Acre. Researched/ excavated by Prof Ronnie Ellenblum (Hebrew Univ, Jerusalem) in 1990s. Documents & extensive excavations revealed that this had been an elaborate farming village (prob owned by the Bishop of Acre) centred on a fortified house on a hill above, but clearly well connected with, pre-existing local communities. The Franks had built 17 houses, a road network, gardens, terraced fields & vineyard, leper house, and a new church to replace the earlier crusader church. This had been a new rural settlement – it had big walls, but clearly was more than simply a “fortress”. The Franks who’d settled here in the early C12th were not “assimilating” with the locals, but nor had they been trying overly hard to dominate them. It suggests that the Franks of this period felt relatively confident and secure; very much at ease with their neighbouring communities.

1. Usama bin Munqidh , *Book of Contemplation,* 1180s – Muslim/ Frankish relations. Usama came from a Syrian noble family – born 1095. A warrior/ diplomat/ scholar & poet who served many notable Muslim leaders, incl Saladin. Lived to 90. In retirement he wrote an anecdotal “memoir” aiming to demonstrate Allah’s control over human destinies.

He had many Frankish contacts, and often writes about Muslim- Frankish encounters. His book is entertaining and instructive, but should be treated with some caution because he often regales the reader with tales of unusual or obscure events (interesting, but not necessarily typical of regular Frankish-Muslim encounters), and he sometimes stereotypes non-Muslims. What it does suggest, however, is that the Muslim-Frankish “interface” could often be friendly, mutually respectful, and quite funny. It’s the perspective of a member of the social elite, but nevertheless still very interesting…

He also reveals a lot about religious affairs, esp the nuanced attitudes of many Franks; notably the tolerance of/ respect for Muslims displayed by the Templars, with whom Usama enjoyed good relations. He comments on the different, often starkly contrasting, tolerant attitudes to Muslims evident in locally born Franks as opposed to the hostility & ignorance of “incomers” recently arrived in Outremer from Europe. This highlights that whilst Muslims were often maltreated, esp in the early years during/ shortly after the 1st Crusade (eg massacres; Decrees of Nablus, 1120, banning sex b/ween Christians & Muslims; conversion of mosques to churches), in fact, often thereafter there was a wide measure of tolerance – eg thro’out all crusader states most mosques contd to function, and there is virtually no evidence of attempts forcibly to convert Muslims to Christianity. Usama visited the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem in the 1140s – with his Templar mates, and these Christian “Monks of War” were very protective of his right to pray facing Mecca.

(\* Even the brutal Decrees of Nablus – castration for male offenders; facial mutilation for females – imply extensive, and intimate, relations b/ween Muslims & Christians; “the powers that be” probably decreed a ban on sex b/ween them precisely because such intimacy was commonplace!)

**Crusader Castles**

“Crac Des Chevaliers” dominates the valley connecting the Mediterranean Coast and the town of Homs, 25 miles to its east. Strategically vital area – 1144, Raymond II, Count of Tripoli, gave this site (a more basic castle stood there) to the Hospitallers (orig called “Krak d’Ospital”) to hold his Eastern frontier. They developed it into the most formidable castle in Outremer; it stands largely intact today.

Many such “classic” crusader castles *were* mighty defensive bastions built in strategically dominant positions – eg Beaufort, Lebanon, proved a considerable obstacle to Gen Ariel Sharon’s forces when the Israelis invaded the Lebanon, 1982 – even modern firepower took 2 days to subdue its defenders!

The trad view, therefore, of such castles was that they were used to defend the frontiers of Outremer, and impose delays on invaders by dominating key routes etc. Their influence on the military architecture of Medieval Europe (eg the castles built by Edward I to control Wales) was elucidated by TE Lawrence (“of Arabia”) – *Crusader Castles,* 1936.

More recent research (Ronnie Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern History*, 2007, Cambridge Uni Press) presents a rather different picture, which highlights the extent to which the structure, location, and purpose of crusader castles varied considerably over time, generally reflecting the shifting dynamics of Frankish-Muslim relations.

Ellenblum points out that:

1. The frontiers/ borders such castles allegedly defended did not really exist in C12th/13th – boundaries were porous/ flexible/ not clearly defined. Rigid interstate “borders” are an invention of the C19th.
2. Most of the 165 castle sites known were much smaller/ less spectacular than Crak or Beaufort, which were atypical, “3rd Generation” crusader castles.
3. Many castle sites were in fact “hubs” of a wide range of activities involving much interaction b/ween Franks and others, rather than defensive bastions per se. It is erroneous to view these castles as fixed military centres whose main purpose was to defend frontiers and dominate other strategic points. Of course, that *was* the main purpose of some of the biggest castles, but probably not true of the majority.

Ellenblum suggests 3 phases of crusader castle building during C12th:

1. 1099-1115: 25+ castles either captured or newly constructed. 21 of these were on pre-existing defensive sites. Probably no more than 8 were totally new builds. Essentially, Franks built/ re-built forts in conquered areas, or estab a few new sites in areas of value to them.
2. 1115-69: K of Jerusalem relatively calm/ secure. Intensive castle building – new fortifications in remote/ rural areas. Generally, relatively small/ simple castles (usually only had single walls); not particularly located in confrontation zones; most probably built as farming settlements/ centres of local admin – Castellum Regis is typical. These “second Generation” castles reflect the largely peaceful, flourishing rural economy of Outremer in this period.
3. 1168-87: early 1160s – balance of power shifting in favour of Muslims. By mid 1160s Muslims starting to retake territory – Outremer under threat. From 1168 onwards Franks, therefore, built or reinforced castles in areas under threat in East, NE, SW. “Third Generation” castles – bigger & heavily fortified. Crak des Chev is v typical of this type – the formidable fortress we see today was largely constructed after 1202 (when an earthquake damaged the walls of the original castle) and when the direct Muslim threat was becoming very great.

Ellenblum has demonstrated convincingly that for much of the early period of the Crusader States most castles were built for economic and administrative reasons rather than as military defences per se. Only later did it become necessary to construct vast, concentric ring fortresses (often incorporating, as TE Lawrence observed, “Eastern” design features) to function as defensive bastions dominating strategically vital locations/ routes. Understanding “Crusader Castles” helps to inform understanding of the shifting relations b/ween Franks and Muslims in the Near East during the period.

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