ARAMCO WORLD
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MAY-JUNE 1970

SWORDS FOR GOD:
The Story of the Crusades

A SPECIAL ISSUE

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MAP BY JOSEPH MANOUSHAGIAN

THE CRUSADES

To most Christians—or at least to most *western* Christians—the word "crusades" evokes rather splendid images of heroic knights in chain mail and crosses cantering off to the Holy Land to throw down the gauntlet to a bearded foe who calls his God *Allah* and is inevitably treacherous, cruel and cowardly.

This view, unfortunately, neglects certain evidence which, when dredged out of the obscurity to which so much Middle East history has been consigned, often comes as a shock to trusting students. It has been suggested, for example, that instead of the Galahads that song, poetry and romantic literature has made them out to be, many crusaders were ruthless mercenaries to whom the cross they wore so brazenly was no more than a convenient shield for excesses unequalled in history. It is a view that also promotes the curious belief that the Christians of Europe somehow had a clearer title to the Holy Land than the Arabs who lived there and that suggests a holy war is good when called a "crusade" and evil when it is called a "jihad".

Such distortions are not unusual in history. Even historians cannot entirely escape the impact of their early beliefs. But in the case of the crusades they reached extraordinary proportions. To the Arabs, after all, this influx of Europeans was no more than another invasion of their territory, one that they had not only a right to repel but—by the teachings of *their* religion—a duty to fight.

In hopes of adjusting this imbalance at least slightly, if tardily, *Aramco World* is devoting this entire issue to what, in any case, was one of the most colorful, exciting and significant chapters of world history.

—THE EDITORS

ARAMCO WORLD magazine

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Cover: In 1099, nearly three years after setting out from France on the First Crusade, the crusaders hauled their lumbering siege machines to the walls of Jerusalem, their ultimate goal, to begin the climactic battle depicted in this panoramic, fold-out cover painting by artist Donald Thompson.

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BY DANIEL DA CRUZ

DEUS VULT!

"God wills it!" they cried, and so began the Crusades–that ep ic struggle of Christian and Muslim for a land sacred to both.

ILLUSTRATED BY DON THOMPSON

To medieval man, God was as near as the cross he wore around his neck. Near, too, was heaven: war, pestilence and famine combined to give medieval man so slippery a grip on life that fewer than half those born would see maturity, and 30 years was the average man's life span. With eternity so close at hand, the poor, illiterate, overworked and underfed common man, unable to satisfy his hunger for life on earth, focused his hopes on heaven. Fortunately, the path to paradise was clearly marked by the signposts of prayer, penance and pilgrimage, and in following them medieval man devoted his best energies.

Which road to heaven one took was determined mainly by geographical accident. For those born in Europe, it was that espoused by the Catholic Church of Rome. In the Byzantine Empire it was the Greek Orthodoxy of Constantinople. In the eastern Mediterranean and across North Africa into Spain it was Islam. But though the roads were different, their starting points were the same—the sanctified soil of Jerusalem. It was probably inevitable, therefore, in a world and an age when spiritual leadership derived considerable vitality from temporal power, that Christianity and Islam would one day collide over possession of a city holy to both.

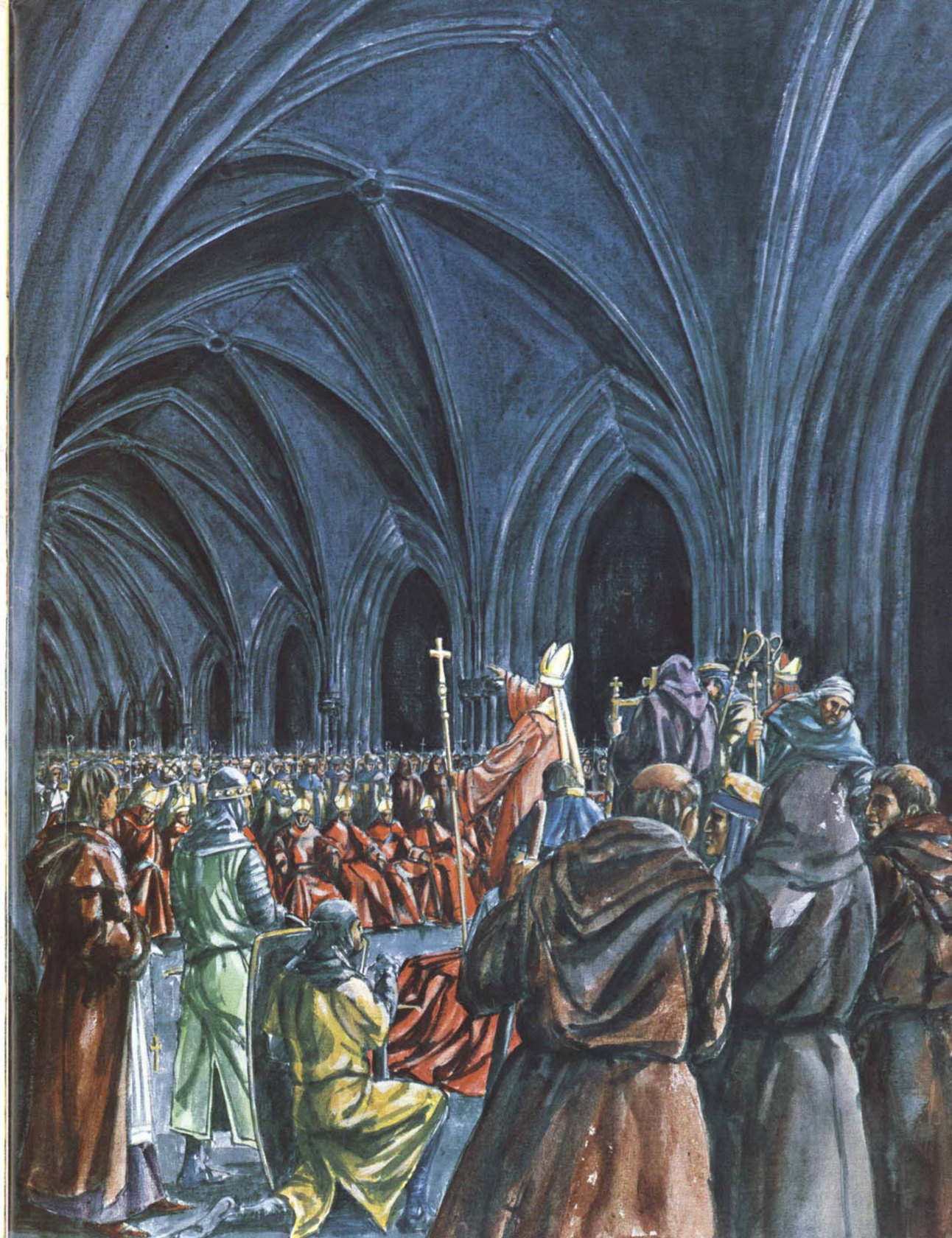
That the fateful confrontation did not occur until 461 years after the conquest of Jerusalem in 638 under Muhammad's successor, the Caliph Omar, is attributable to some extent to the moderation and tolerance of the city's Muslim rulers. For the Koran decrees that Christians, along with Jews and Zoroastrians, are with Muslims "People of the Book" who, through belief in a single omnipotent God, share His protection. It was thus that nuns, priests and rabbis tended their shrines and observed their sacred rites in Jerusalem with little interference, and that the Patriarch of Jerusalem could write of the Muslim lords: "They are just and do us no wrong nor show us any violence."

Peace in the Holy Land was a powerful inducement to Christian pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. In the eighth century, six European pilgrimages were made to Jerusalem in safety. Then as later, of course, pilgrims paid a tax in return for protection against banditry in the Holy Land, a protection few European kings could guarantee in their own dominions in the Dark Ages. The ninth century saw 12 pilgrimages, and the 10th, 16. In the 11th century the number rose to 117, including one of 11,000 worshippers. Then as the nomadic Seljuk Turks swept in from the East, captured Jerusalem in 1070 and ended the mild rule of the Fatimid caliphs, they came to an abrupt end.

Worse yet, from the standpoint of European security, the Byzantine Empire, having guarded the ramparts between the West and successive hordes of barbarian invaders from the steppes of Asia for more than 700 years, was now suffering from senile decay. Its motley mercenary army had just been annihilated at Manzikert near Lake Van by a Seljuk horde whose general was ordered by Turkish Sultan Alp Arslan to "Win, or be beheaded!"—and managed not only to keep his head, but to push the Greeks back the length of Asia Minor to the shores of the Bosphorus. Greek Emperor Alexius I Comnenus, observing with dread the Turks' progress toward his capital, already threatened on his European approaches by periodic Bulgar, Norman, Patzinak, Cuman and Russian incursions, appealed to the West for help against the invader. He urged haste, shrewdly pointing out that should Constantinople fall, all eastern Europe would be open to the Turk (a prediction borne out after the city was finally vanquished in 1453, and the Turks poured through the Balkans as far as Vienna). And he added, perhaps unnecessarily, that it is better to fight the enemy on foreign ground than wait until he is at one's doorstep.

The appeal had been made before—and ignored in the West—by Alexius' predecessor Emperor Michael VII to Pope Gregory VII immediately after Manzikert. But now a statesman of vision, Pope Urban II, occupied the throne of St. Peter, and he saw in Alexius' plea an instrument to unite Christendom under the papacy. He saw that war against the Turks would not only usefully divert the energies then expended by Christians in killing other Christians in sterile dynastic disputes, but simultaneously strengthen the Church, the only supranational power capable of directing a common European enterprise. In saving the Byzantine Empire he hoped, furthermore, that a grateful Greek Orthodox Church could be induced to reunite with Rome. Such was the bold vision of Urban II, who molded a simple appeal for troops into the basis for the climactic struggle of the Middle Ages.

Fortune favors the brave; it positively showered blessings on Urban's enterprise. The recent baptism of Slavs and Magyars had opened up a secure passage through the Balkans for Christian troops en route to the Holy Land. The predicament of Constantinople, halfway along the land route to the Holy Land, assured troops from Europe the warmest of welcomes in the Byzantine capital which was, not incidentally, the



most impregnable land and sea base in the eastern Mediterranean. Or, if an offensive by sea was deemed desirable, the powerful fleets of Genoa, Pisa and Venice, which had already cleared the western Mediterranean of Muslim shipping, were available. The arbalest, or cross-bow, firing a winch-tensioned iron arrow capable of piercing the thickest eastern armor at great ranges, was now standard European infantry equipment; a succession of popes had forbidden this genocidal weapon, but generals used it anyway. As for manpower for an army, since the year 1000 population in Europe had shot up well beyond the ability of agriculture to support it, and the cold, starving multitudes dreamed longingly of the warmth and abundance of the Middle East, the proverbial land of milk and honey. To lead them was an abundant supply of ambitious younger sons of noble rank, whom the laws of primogeniture excluded from an inherited livelihood, and whose only expectation was what they could carve out for themselves by feats of arms. The Muslim foe against whom the Europeans would pit their strength was, moreover, in sad disarray, fighting other Muslims with as much ferocity as if they were Christians. Finally, the long and so far successful Christian reconquest of northern Spain with the Church's hearty blessing had accustomed Europeans to think in terms of irredentist holy wars, particularly if they had any chance of success.

How influential were these considerations on Urban II's decision to proclaim a holy war is unknown, but they must have weighed heavily in the mind of that pontiff when in 1095 he journeyed to France to sound out national sentiment on his project. The reactions were so uniformly favorable that on November 27, speaking at the Council of Clermont, this first French pope cannily appealed to the nationalistic feelings of his audience of Roman cardinals, 13 archbishops, 225 bishops, 400 priests and unnumbered thousands of fellow Frenchmen, in the most historic speech of the Middle Ages.

"O race of Franks! race beloved and chosen by God! ... From the confines of Jerusalem and from Constantinople a grievous report has gone forth that an accursed race, wholly alienated from God, has violently invaded the lands of these Christians, and had depopulated them by pillage and fire ..." He dilated on the sacrilege and tortures of the Muslims and their defilement of the holy places, and contrasted their depravity with the bravery, determination and spirit of sacrifice of those present, and concluded with an exhortation to holy war: "Let your quarrels end. Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulcher; wrest that land from a wicked race, and subject it to yourselves. Jerusalem is a land fruitful above all others, a paradise of delights. That royal city, situated at the center of the earth, implores you to come to her aid. Undertake this journey eagerly for the remission of your sins, and be assured of the reward of imperishable glory in the Kingdom of Heaven!"

The awed silence that greeted his words was suddenly broken by a thunderous cry from the crowd: *Deus Vult! Deus Vult!* "God wills it! God wills it!" Some noblemen present fell on their knees and consecrated lives and fortunes then and there to the coming battle, and thousands of the peasantry did likewise. Pope Urban, deeply moved by the spectacle, then exclaimed, "It is the will of God, and let this memorable word be forever adopted as your cry of battle ... His cross is the symbol of your salvation. Wear a cross on your breast, as a pledge of your sacred and irrevocable engagement."

For the next nine months Pope Urban II preached the Crusade throughout France, fanning the fires of popular fervor. He offered inducements hard to ignore: to kings he offered cheap land sold to them by barons joining the Crusade; to the barons, all the land they could conquer in the East; to the serfs, freedom from feudal obligations and remission of their sins; to the clergy, release from monastic discipline; to merchants, profits from provisioning the armies; to all, glory serving under the banner of Jesus Christ.

Although Urban appointed August 15, 1096, as the day for the Crusade to begin, more impatient spirits, oblivious of the logistical requirements for successful foreign campaigning, rushed headlong toward the East. Led by a barefoot old monk called Peter the Hermit, whose one asset was a powerful charisma, thousands of peasants, reportedly, dropped whatever they were doing when they heard him speak, and took to the road—men, women and children, all in a jumble. By the time he reached Cologne in April, 1096, Peter the Hermit's ragged horde had grown to 15,000. Preceded by an even more motley crowd of peasants following an ass and a goose they believed divinely inspired, Peter and his pathetic group, now 20,000 strong, set out on the usual route up the Rhine and Neckar valleys to the Danube, then down into Hungary. Despite their almost complete lack of provisioning, their mixture of the young, the old and the feeble, their total indiscipline, these ardent crusaders covered up to 25 miles a day when the roads were good, easily on a par with the best modern infantry units.

Not until they reached the Balkans did their "requisitions" on the countryside excite mass reprisals: there an argument with Hungarian merchants over a pair of shoes flared into a battle that left 4,000 Hungarians dead, whereupon the Hungarian king turned his soldiers loose with appalling effect: more than half of the Hermit's people were captured or killed.

In Constantinople, to which the survivors managed to struggle, the Emperor Alexius was understandably

upset by the noisome French and German rabble, and he wasted no time in transporting them across the Bosphorus into Asia with the advice to await regular military forces. The wise counsel was ignored. Peter's peasants ravaged the countryside and captured a Turkish citadel, thus rousing the hostility not only of the Turks who routed them, but of fellow Christians. Only 3,000 of the remaining crusaders escaped death or slavery. Still, their fate was better than that of three other People's Crusades that soon followed: of each group of more than 10,000, less than a handful survived the aroused Hungarian populations through whose midst they had to pass to reach safety in Constantinople. Thus the only result of the People's Crusades were thousands of deaths at the hands of other Christians.

The fate of the People's Crusades demonstrated to Europe that the Holy Land was not to be won by faith alone. Fortunately for its cause, though no kings stepped forth (ironically France's Philip I, England's William II and Germany's Henry IV were all under papal sentence of excommunication when the Church needed them) champions were not lacking: men like the chaste, handsome, yellow-haired Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine; his brother, the cold, luxury-loving Baldwin; the ambitious Norman Bohemond of Taranto in southern Italy; Bohemond's cousin Tancred, all knightly virtue and chivalric spirit; the easy-going Robert, Duke of Normandy, son of William the Bastard who conquered England; the saintly Adhemar, Bishop of Puy, whom Urban designated as the spiritual leader of the Crusade; and the aged Raymond, Count of Toulouse, vain and obstinate, yet also courteous and devout. The First Crusade—the first 'official' crusade—was thus almost wholly a French enterprise, so that to this day western Europeans are known in the Middle East generally as *frangis*, Franks.

Selling their lands to raise armies, the nobles moved in four great, disciplined waves through Europe to Constantinople, causing scarcely a ripple as they passed through the Balkans. But in the Byzantine capital, Alexius II and his court viewed with dismay the approach of the Europeans. Having seen the destruction of Peter the Hermit's savage mobs, with good reason the Greeks feared their better-armed, better-led countrymen. Indeed, even before they saw the city walls over the horizon, the Crusade's leaders were arguing among themselves whether it might not be wiser to forego the dangers of campaigning in Asia, and instead sack Constantinople, possibly the richest city in the world.

Alexius, ruler of a city where intrigue was a fine art, dissimulated his fears, received the nobles with extravagant ceremonies, awed them with his riches, flattered them, entertained them, bribed them, made promises he had no intention of keeping—and all the while kept their unruly troops safely outside his walls. After months of leisurely negotiation, in which the crusaders demanded material aid for the coming battles, in return for which Alexius at last wrung from them an oath of fealty, making him suzerain of their future conquests, the Frankish nobles permitted the Greeks to ferry them and their troops across the Bosporus into Asia Minor. Alexius sighed with relief at the prospect of the coming battle, the outcome of which, by weakening two powers both covetous of his empire, would benefit him no matter who won.

In Asia, the 30,000 Franks, who crossed the straits early in 1097, advanced immediately on Nicaea, the Seljuk capital, only 50 miles from Constantinople but a two-week march across rugged ground. Nicaea, with its four miles of walls and 240 stone towers, was impossible to assault, so the crusaders laid siege to it—and were themselves forthwith surrounded by a large Turkish relieving force. They turned on their foe, routed them utterly, and forced the demoralized garrison in Nicaea to surrender after only a month.

The elated crusaders pushed on southeast across Anatolia, in two detachments which in the euphoria of victory neglected to keep in communication. The leading crusading army advanced straight into an ambush by the Turkish Sultan Kilij Arslan and a large Seljuk force near Dorylaeum, and was being decimated under a rain of arrows when suddenly the second crusader army appeared over the horizon and put the startled Turks to flight. It was a significant victory against a Turkish adversary accustomed to defeating Christian armies, and the crusaders marched the 500 remaining miles through Anatolia without serious opposition except from thirst, hunger, mountains and deserts, which claimed more lives than the Turks had yet taken.

Four months after leaving Constantinople the crusaders debouched on the plain of Antioch, the great city with almost impregnable defenses that stood astride the route to the Holy Land. Antioch was a many-horned dilemma: too dangerous to be left in the crusader rear, too well-provisioned to starve into submission, too strong for frontal assault, too united to subvert. While the crusading armies settled around the city's walls in unenthusiastic siege, one Frank, the artful Baldwin of Boulogne, kept firmly in mind the reason *he* had come to the Orient. With his small but highly mobile force, he struck due east across the Euphrates headwaters to Edessa, which he conquered, and made capital of a patchwork state comprising mostly Christian Armenian administrators and artisans and Muslim vassals, with Baldwin's military caste as the new nobility. For the *seigneur* of Boulogne, now the Count of Edessa, the Crusades were over.

For the rest, they were beginning in earnest. Antioch, which the *Gesta*

Francorum calls "extremely beautiful, distinguished and delightful," was the anvil on which the First Crusade was tempered in the heat of battle and the icy winter of 1097. There, where St. Peter founded his first bishopric, the Muslims rested serenely on bulging granaries behind fortifications 10 centuries in the building, and watched with equanimity the crusading army starving outside the walls. By Christmas, stocks of food in the Christian camp were nearly exhausted, and the men were reduced to eating harness leather. One man in seven would soon die of hunger.

Fighting, meanwhile, had so far been limited to Turkish sorties from the city gates, and vain attempts by the crusaders to find a weak spot in Antioch's 12 miles of solid walls up to 60 feet high and interspersed with 400 turrets from which instantly poured a hail of missiles at the sight of a Christian face. It finally became apparent to the crusaders, indifferent siege engineers at best, that they would never take Antioch by storm, and they fell back on the tactics of intrigue which they had so heartily scorned in the Greeks. Money—not for the first time nor the last—proved stronger than arms: with the paid aid of a disaffected Syrian named Firous within the city, they ascended a remote section of the walls at night, threw open the city gates, and in a savage attack, took the city.

They were not a moment too soon. During the eight-month siege a Turkish relief force under Kerbogha and 28 emirs had been raised. It arrived under the walls of Antioch just two days after the Christians took it. For the next 25 days the crusaders, locked up in Antioch and starving once again (the Turks had used up *their* food stocks just before the Christians broke in), fought off the Turks. Fortunately, when morale was at lowest ebb, one Peter Bartholomew happened to come across the very lance head that had impaled Christ on the Cross nearly 12 centuries earlier. Inspired by this miraculous—and fortuitous—discovery, the crusaders poured out of the city gates, smashed into the Turkish center, and scattered their numerically superior enemy in panic. The most decisive battle of the First Crusade was the easiest. The way to Jerusalem was now open.

But the physically and emotionally exhausted crusaders could not march another mile. Not until January 13, 1099, did they resume their southward progress toward Jerusalem. Leaving behind Bohemund as Prince of Antioch, the crusaders toiled down the eastern Mediterranean coast, arriving before the gates of Jerusalem on June 7, with scarcely 12,000 knights and infantry left of the proud force that had left France three years before. By an irony of which history is so fond, the Fatimids had regained the city whose loss to the Turks had precipitated the Crusade, and they offered immediate free access to the city by all pilgrims provided the crusaders forswore their conquest of Fatimid territory. It was a reasonable, even generous offer, but the Christians, their nostrils full of the sweet smell of victory, rejected it. They prepared for siege.

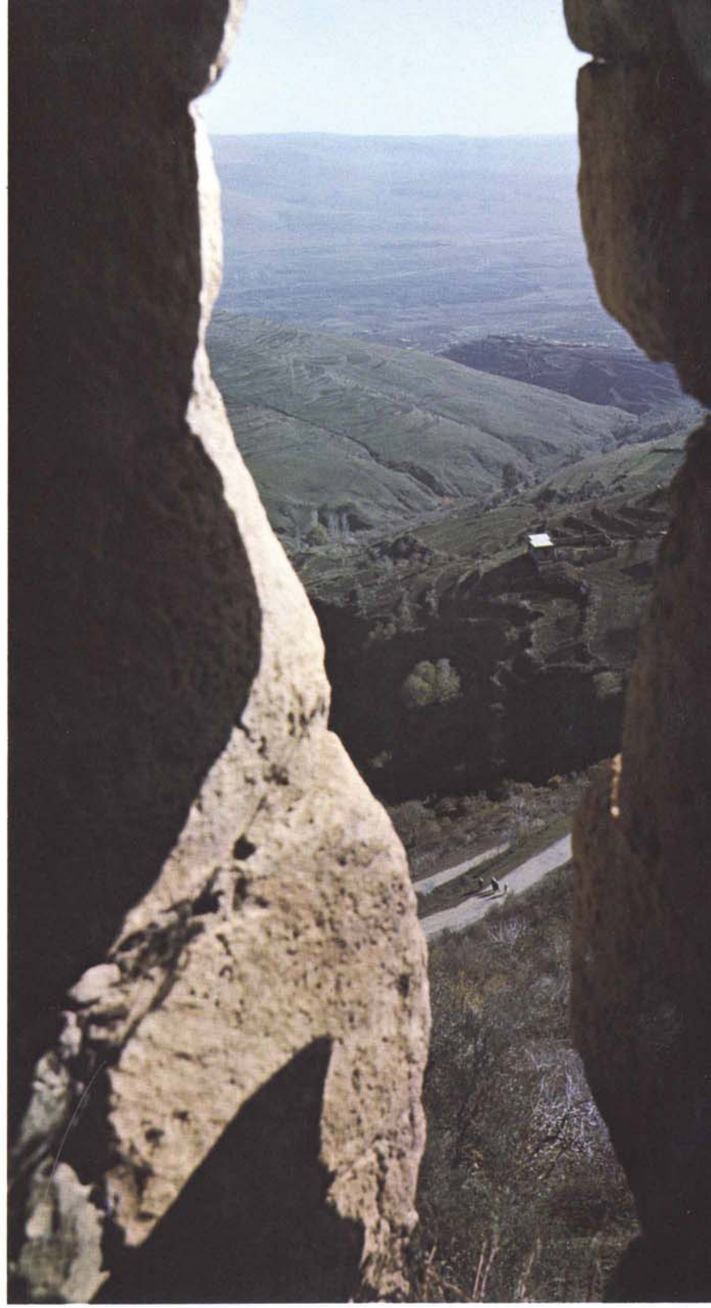
They could easily have failed, for Jerusalem was well provisioned and watered, protected by the valleys of Kedron and Gehenna and walls erected by the Roman Emperor Hadrian and improved by centuries of Muslim occupation, and surrounded on all sides by sere, rugged hills and waterholes thoughtfully poisoned. Again, however, they were saved. Two Genoese and four English ships arrived at Jaffa loaded with materials for siege machines and Italian engineers to assemble them. Spurred on by the news that a Muslim army was on its way to Jerusalem from Egypt, they built siege towers and, on the night of July 13, lumbered toward the north wall. Through the night and into the next day Christians fell beneath the missiles and Greek fire of the defenders, but by noon of the 14th, troops under Godfrey got a firm foothold atop the north wall near the Gate of Flowers, and the crusaders poured into the breach behind them, overflowed into the crooked streets of Jerusalem and, in a spirit hardly in keeping with the ideals of Christianity, slaughtered the inhabitants and took the city.

Had the gentle Adhemar, Bishop of Puy, survived to witness the capture of Jerusalem, there is small doubt that he would have been chosen to rule. But Adhemar had died during the siege of Antioch, and Godfrey of Bouillon was elected by his peers to govern Jerusalem. Had he wished, he could have called himself king, but he modestly declined the title on the grounds that it would be sacrilege to wear a crown of gold in the city where the Savior had worn a crown of thorns. Instead, he called himself Godfrey, *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri*—"Defender of the Holy Sepulcher."

The good tidings of the conquest of the city where Christ had lived and died was at once despatched to Rome, to the man who had conceived the Crusade. Too late. Two weeks after the decisive battle, but before the news could arrive in the Eternal City, Pope Urban II died.

Later, the massacres at Jerusalem would rise up to haunt the crusaders; by their savagery, meant to crush the Muslims, the crusaders indirectly were to unify a fragmented Muslim world under a brave and statesmanlike leader. For the moment, however, supremely confident and heady with the wine of victory, the crusaders anchored a fragile ship of state in a vast sea of sand, heat, and implacably hostile Arabs. How long would it stay afloat? God, Who willed its final fate even as He willed its immediate destiny, alone knew.

Daniel da Cruz, author, teacher, correspondent and free-lance writer, contributes regularly to Business Week *and* Aramco World Magazine.



THE MOUNTAIN OF THE KNIGHTS

There it was, a brooding shadow against the sky, the formidable, impregnable Krak des Chevaliers.

BY ROBIN FEDDEN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN SMITH AND KHALIL ABOU EL-NASR

The castles built by the crusaders are the most imposing military works of the Middle Ages and the Krak des Chevaliers is the most imposing of the castles.

The Krak, which held out for over 150 years, stuck—in the words of a contemporary chronicler—like a bone in the throats of the Muslims, who surveyed with dismay the monstrous 80-foot-thick wall on its south side, and christened it "the Mountain." On at least 12 occasions the Saracens beseiged the castle without success and when, with a depleted garrison, it fell in 1271 to the Sultan Beibars, it fell not by assault but by cunning. A forged letter was conveyed into the castle, purporting to come from the Grand Commander at Tripoli, instructing the knights to surrender. They did so, and on April 8th the garrison marched out under safe-conduct to the coast.

Krak is a measure of the defensive skill of the Franks. It embodies in supreme fashion every protective device then known, and it epitomizes the rapid development of military architecture in the Holy Land. One of the first medieval castles with fully concentric fortification, Krak was immensely strong. Substantial towers provided complete flanking fire along the outer curtain. The wall top, moreover, was furnished with the earliest known example of continuous machicolation. The walls of the inner ward were strengthened by a massive talus, and at the point of greatest danger was set a formidable keep-fortress composed of three linked towers. All the masonry was the finest ashlar, and the stone blocks of the inner ward are often a yard long and average $1\frac{3}{4}$ feet in height. Reference has already been made to the cunningly-defended entrance. The vaulted passage, which was the only means of access to the inner ward, contained three "elbows" and was defended by machicoulis, by four gates, and at least one portcullis. Yet the Krak was as elegant as it was strong. Its Romanesque chapel, its traceried Gothic arcading, and the vaulted and pilastered chamber of the Grand Master embodied the genius of the medieval masons who built the cathedrals of France. No wonder that Lawrence of Arabia pronounced Krak to be "the most wholly admirable castle in the world."

MEMORIES OF A MUSLIM PRINCE

BY VIOLA H. WINDER/ILLUSTRATIONS BY PENNY WILLIAMS

The story of Usamah, a warrior, a poet, a hunter and a diarist to rank with Pepys.

At the age of 90, a 12th-century lord from central Syria sat down at his desk, surrounded by books and memorabilia, to write his autobiography. This man, Usamah ibn Munqidh, the Emir of Shayzar, who had lived through nearly the entire first century of the Crusades in times of both fierce conflict and extended truce, recorded his exciting epic from a point of view quite unfamiliar to most western readers. Centuries later, working from a unique manuscript, the noted Middle East historian Philip K. Hitti of Princeton University brought the unusual record to life again in English as An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah ibn Munqidh (Kitab al-I'tibar), *New York, Columbia University Press, 1929. His daughter, Viola H. Winder, consulting her father's published translation, prepared the following article.*

Between the Mediterranean Sea and the Syrian Desert, in central Syria, the Orontes River perversely wends its way northward along the flanks of the coastal mountain range, contrary to the southward flow of neighboring streams. Thus, the local populace calls it al-'Asi, the Rebel. Along the river's edge, the mellow murmur of the ancient Roman waterwheels magnifies the stillness as they lift clear, cold water to the thirsty soil.

On the high banks of the river, some 15 miles northwest of Hama, one of Syria's principal inland cities, stands what remains of the castle of Shayzar—silent witness to days long past. Its crumbling brown stones conjure the ghosts of crusading warriors and Muslim knights, sometimes at war, often at peace, who, clad in coats of mail, with banners flying and silver-tasseled horses a-gallop, rode the length and breadth of this same countryside.

The once-mighty citadel is perched on the very edge of a rock-strewn spur called *'Urf al-Dik*, the Cock's Comb. Strategically situated on this promontory, which rises 40 yards and is washed on three sides by the winding river, Shayzar looks over the deep gorge of the Orontes and the plain beyond. Tumbled ruins of vast vaults, arches, capitals and bases of columns suggest a well-fortified bastion. The entrance, constructed of huge stone blocks, its projecting towers scarred by arrow slits, is reached by a drawbridge suspended over a precipitous ravine. Above a broken arch a long Arabic inscription, carved into the facing, reminds us of the glory that was once Shayzar. From the entrance towers, a dark underground passage leads across an immense open courtyard to a dungeon built with special care and more finished than the entrance chambers. Separated from the surrounding area by a deep moat cut into the rock, the dungeon once included two enormous shooting rooms whose sharply-pointed vaults rested on large columns. Now on chunks of the solid stone walls sleepy lizards lie basking peacefully in the sun.

During the 11th and 12th centuries, the Muslim princes of the Munqidh family made the castle of Shayzar their stronghold. From it they governed the Hama district. So well did they defend their fortress that the crusaders, with their outposts only a few miles west towards the sea, were never able to capture it. It was in this castle that Usamah ibn-Murshid ibn Munqidh was born on July 4, 1095.

Just three months before Usamah's birth, Pope Urban II had given a speech which, if judged by its results, was perhaps the most effective in history. For this oration struck the first spark of the Crusades, a war between West and East which was to last for two centuries.

Religious beliefs alone did not motivate this strange medieval military venture. Although European Christians of the Middle Ages did feel fervently that their religious honor demanded the wresting of the Holy Places from the hands of the "infidels," other factors—such as the oppression of the lower classes by feudal nobles, the lure of adventure in distant lands and severe famine—also contributed their influence.

Usamah's father, Murshid, scion of a distinguished family whose masters were referred to by Arab chroniclers as kings of Shayzar, was a man of great physical strength who loved fighting and hunting but was at the same time so devout that he dutifully copied the Koran 43 times each in black, red, and blue ink with gold initial letters. His life, as would that of his son later, exemplified Arab culture and the code of chivalry. Although he was a faithful Muslim, believing in the omniscient power of almighty Allah, he seriously studied the "science of the stars" and trusted in the efficacy of astrology in the affairs of man. Once in the midst of a fierce battle, he told his son, "It is not in my horoscope that I should feel fear."

Petty politics bored Murshid. Furthermore, he believed that power corrupts, and on the eve of taking over the rule of the Shayzar castle in 1098, this honorable emir wrote to his youngest brother, Izz-al-Din, "I shall not, by Allah, accept the lordship, for I would rather make my exit from this world in the same condition as I made my entrance into it." And so it happened that Usamah's uncle became the lord of Shayzar and thereafter assumed responsibility for the supervision of Usamah's education.

Because, as Usamah wrote in his memoirs, they "never felt secure on account of the Franks, whose territory was adjacent," this education stressed the arts of war. In his memoirs Usamah tells how he mastered the sword, lance, bow, and arrow—but not to the exclusion of the academic side. For 10 years he pursued formal learning under the best private tutors, at night by the light of a smoky clay oil lamp poring over manuscripts, memorizing the Koran, studying grammar, and reading poetry. With his teacher he sometimes rode along the edge of the Orontes—which he called the Shayzar River—the two singing together until they reached a large spreading oak tree where they dismounted and recited poetry by the hour. His love of literature lasted all his life.

Of Murshid's four sons, Usamah was the favorite, but the father never let himself become overly protective; rather, he urged Usamah to face peril bravely and overcome it, an attitude fostered by the medieval concept that God determined the length of a person's life, and that nothing in man's power could change it by one second. Usamah observed, "I never saw my father (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!) forbid my taking part in a combat or facing a danger, in spite of all the sympathy and preference he cherished towards me and of which I was cognizant." Once some Frankish and Armenian hostages, released from Shayzar according to an agreement, ran into an ambush of Muslim brigands as soon as they left the castle. Hearing their cries for help, Murshid swiftly leapt on his horse and ordered those in the courtyard to ride at a full gallop to the rescue shouting to his son, "Pursue the marauders with thy men, hurl yourselves on them and deliver your hostages." The words "hurl yourselves" startled Usamah and kept popping into his mind. "I spent the rest of that hot dry day," he wrote, "racing my lathered and sweating horse over dusty roads before catching up with the hostages, freeing them, and capturing some of the brigands."

Murshid felt no hesitancy in allowing Usamah, even when he was still a mere lad, to accompany him to the battlefield where he saw the flowing blood and broken bones of the dying, and witnessed the harsh treatment often meted out to prisoners. The first time the young man saw actual fighting was at the end of a year's truce, when Tancred, the Norman leader of the First Crusade, advanced from Antioch at the head of an army. Seated on his chestnut mare near his father, Usamah noticed one of the men of Shayzar, Hasanun, a dashing young Kurd, galloping into battle. Suddenly a Frank drove his lance into the shoulder of Hasanun's charger. The horse stumbled and threw him—behind the Frankish lines. He was taken prisoner and tortured. The Christians were about to pluck out their prisoner's left eye when Tancred himself intervened and said, "Rather put out his right eye, so that when he carries his shield, his left eye will be covered, and he will be no longer able to see anything." This they did, and then demanded a ransom of 1,000 dinars as well as a black horse, which belonged to Usamah's father. The horse was the pride of Shayzar, but Usamah records that his father readily gave him in return for Hasanun.

The days of Usamah's youth were made up of more than the forays and skirmishes of battle. Hunting was a favorite sport in 12th-century Syria. In those days lions, panthers, jackals, and hyenas still roamed freely over the Syrian countryside. The Hama region was a hunter's paradise, Usamah wrote, and his father was an expert hunter. "As soon as my legs grew long enough to reach over the sides of a horse, he let me join the hunting parties." Hunting also gave the youth a chance to play with the hounds and their puppies which were bred and trained with such care at Shayzar. To obtain the finest breed of bird dog, his father used to send as far as the land of the Byzantines which at that time was overrun by Franks who had seized it from the Seljuk Turks.

For gazelle hunting, the most fun of all, swift lean salukis were bred. Once, after a long, pelting rain, Murshid rode out to the sugar fields on the banks of the river and set the salukis on the gazelles. Soon all the horses had sunk in above their fetlocks in the mud, but because of Usamah's lighter weight, his horse did not bog down. As a large tan blur streaked by, his father called to him to pursue the gazelle and hold it by its legs until the rest could get there. The young man raced as fast as he could, his hair blown straight back, his eyes barely open, until at last he caught up with the animal, jumped off his horse, struggled, and wrestled with the quarry until, exhausted and breathless, he forced it over on its back. "I could not have held it for another second," he admitted, "when my father leapt from his horse to tie the legs of the small graceful antelope. Dizzy with fatigue, I could hardly ride back to the castle; my father as usual seemed not the least bit weary."

The most elegant form of the chase, falconry, also involved the most skill. In search of the finest falcons, messengers traveled as far as Constantinople. Sometimes, on the homeward voyage, if rough seas delayed the ships, the falcons had to eat fish when their supply of pigeons ran out, a diet which made their feathers brittle. Luckily an expert falconer named Ghana'im lived in Shayzar, a man who knew everything about birds of prey and who could mend the broken parts of the wing so that soon the falcon would again be fit for hunting. Thanks to his efforts, Shayzar boasted the largest collection of falcons in all Syria.

In Usamah's mind, the strongest, swiftest and cleverest of all falcons was al-Yahshur, a bird who lived for 13 years and became almost a member of their family. Unlike most birds of prey, which hunted for their own sakes, al-Yahshur always hunted for his master. Although it was customary for a falconer to starve his falcons all night to make them hunt better, al-Yahshur performed well even when fed. Perched on Usamah's father's gauntleted wrist, he would flush out five or six partridges, one after the other. "In return my father treated him like his own child," Usamah wrote. "When we entered the house, my father would say, 'Fetch me a bowl of water,' They would fetch him one and he would offer it to the falcon while it was still on his wrist (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!). The falcon would drink from it. In case it wanted a bath, it would shake its beak in the water ... My father would then order that a big basin full of water be brought and would offer it to the falcon ... It would then beat its wings in the water until it had a sufficient bath ... My father would put it on a large wooden perch especially made for it and would bring near it a brazier of live coal; and after it was combed and rubbed with oil until it was dry, a folded piece of fur would be placed by it. The falcon would go down to it and sleep ... And the falcon would be carried as it lay sleeping on the fur until it was placed near the bed of my father (may Allah's mercy rest upon his soul!)"

When Murshid organized a hunting party, no one dared talk. Everyone was supposed to concentrate on the chase, on scanning for a bird or a hare. Nets, hatchets, spears, all the needed gear, was packed in richly-decorated saddlebags and carried by mules. Forty of the most experienced hunters, two masters of the hounds, ten or more hooded falcons placed in wooden frames suspended from the shoulders of horsemen would all ride into the marshes tracking wild boars. Then they would hunt on, riding as far as the mountain top where they would feed the falcons and let them bathe in the mountain pools, returning to the castle at dusk.

Usamah's courage was put to the test almost every day. Once, riding wearily back from battle with a wounded retainer he spotted eight crusaders in their green and yellow silk tunics posted at a turn of the road before the castle. His retainer suggested an ambush, but Usamah answered, "That would not be fair. Rather we should make an open assault on them, thou and I." They did and were routing the knights when a small footman climbed up to a ledge and began shooting arrows down on them. They could do nothing except run as fast as the horses could go. Not until they had cantered wildly through the meadow, driving great herds of buffaloes, cows, and sheep before them, did they bring their horses to a walk. Then, shame-faced, they talked about the irony of defeating eight knights only to be chased by one footman.

In such an environment Usamah grew to manhood. The years of his long lifetime never tarnished his high standards of honor, honesty, courage, and kindness. He recorded in his autobiography that he felt a special responsibility for the more than a hundred persons domiciled in the castle. The same nanny who had cared for his father in his grandfather's house, and then in turn had raised him, held a particularly warm spot in his heart. As she grew older he gave her an apartment of her own and tried to visit her at least once a week. As long as she lived (and she lived almost a hundred years) he called her "Mother."

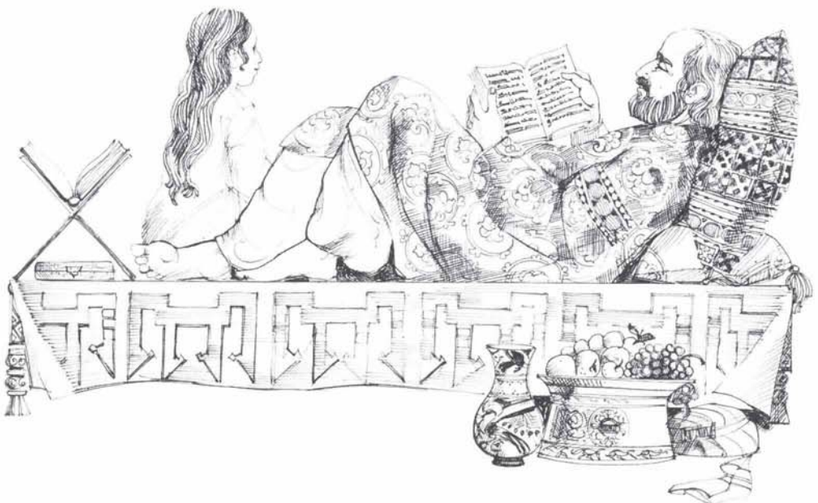
Usamah came to have the bearing, manners, and the sense of tact of a true aristocrat. Once in later life he became close friends with a European knight who had come to make the pilgrimage and stayed in Syria for several months. In the traditional way of the Arabs, they called each other

"my brother". When the knight decided to set sail for his homeland, he asked to take Usamah's 14-year-old son to spend the summer with his family. Such a thought upset Usamah, who feared letting his son travel so far, and especially to the land of the Franks. But not wishing to hurt his friend's feelings, he answered diplomatically. "By thy life, this has exactly been my idea. But the only thing that prevents me from carrying it out is the fact that his grandmother, my mother, is so fond of him."

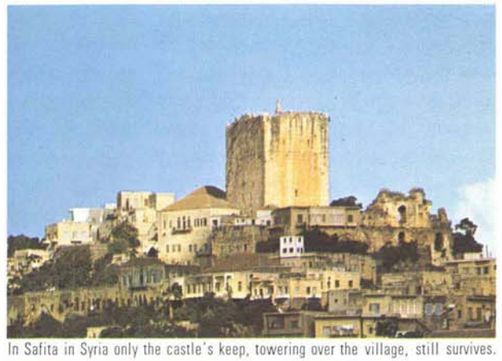
In time, after his youth of daring and adventure, the Emir of Shayzar came to be a scholar and a distinguished man of letters. In fact, Usamah's biographers knew him mostly through his collected poetry. Saladin is reported particularly to have appreciated his verse and to have treasured his own copy of it. A Damascene historian goes so far as to refer to Usamah as "the poet of the age." In all, 12 books written by him have been found, and his prose has as much style as his poetry. He valued his own library so highly that on one occasion when the Frankish prince of Acre—despite a promise of safe-conduct—ordered the pillaging of his ship coming from Egypt with 4,000 of his precious books on board, Usamah wrote, "Their loss has left a heartsore that will stay with me to the last day of my life."

Happily, before that last day of his adventuresome life, at the age of 90, the gallant gentleman wrote his autobiography —and inadvertantly recorded for posterity the day-to-day castle life of 12th-century Syria. In concluding his memoirs, Usamah reflected in poignant verse on his old age:

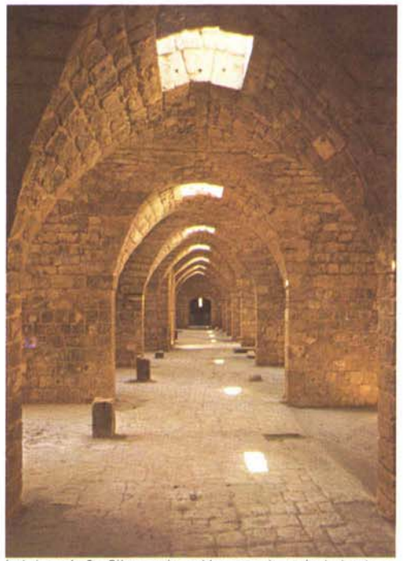
But now I have become like an idle maid who lies
On stuffed cushions behind screens and curtains.
I have almost become rotten from lying still so long, just as
The sword of Indian steel becomes rusty when kept long in its sheath.
After being dressed with coats of mail, I now dress in robes
Of Dabiqi fabric.



Key links in the chain of fortifications were two castles in Corycus, one on an island, the other on shore.



In Safita in Syria only the castle's keep, towering over the village, still survives.



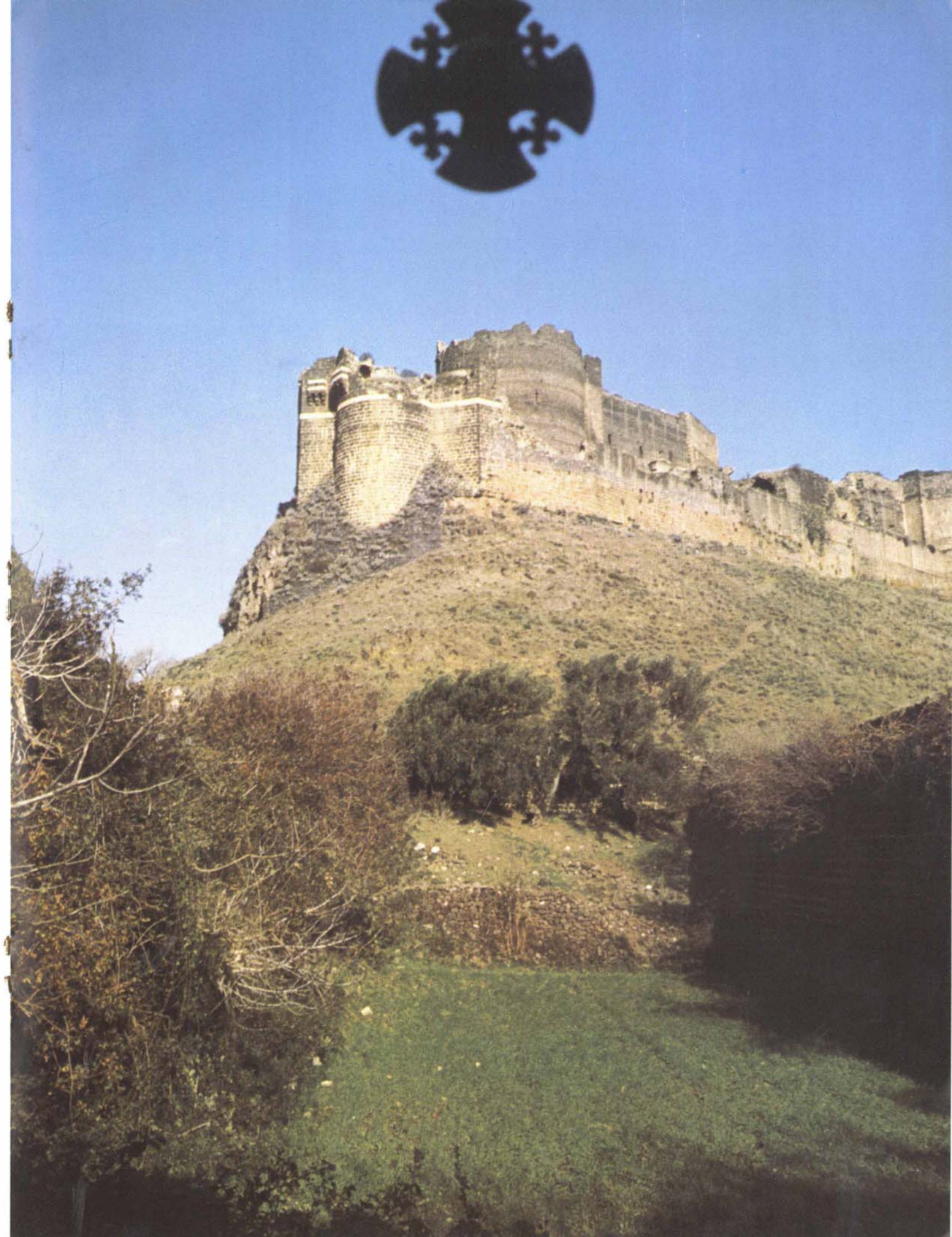
In Lebanon's St. Giles castle stables were in vaulted chambers.

Anamur once defended the Armenian coastal plain in Turkey. Margat (opposite) in Syria was a Hospitalers' stronghold.

THE CASTLES OF THE CRUSADERS

At every pass they stood—vital links in a chain of massive fortresses stretching from the Taurus Mountains to the Judean Hills.

BY ROBIN FEDDEN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM TRACY AND KHALIL ABOU EL-NASR



The dark basalt outer wall of Margat castle dominates a great moat cut into the steep hillside.

Although the Krak des Chevaliers (see p. 12) is the most striking crusader fortification, it was still only one of many such castles that in strength, number and disposition are unique.

From Arabia to the Taurus Mountains almost every strategic pass and coastal anchorage was fortified. On the island of Graye their masonry is washed by the waters of the Red Sea; at Petra it rises above the scorched rocks and the Nabatean temples; at Le Moinestre their mountain eyrie, at over 6,000 feet, is under snow for half the year; at El Habis Djal Djaldak the very caves in the great rock face were fortified; at Beaufort their castle dizzily overhangs the gorges of the Litani River; at remote Saone 170,000 tons of rock were carved from the mountain to strengthen their defenses; and at Tortosa they erected a cathedral within their fortification.

Many of the castles were built to guard the long and dangerously exposed flank of this new kingdom that the crusaders carved out of Islam.

It was a curiously shaped kingdom, between 400 and 500 miles long but, except in the extreme north, dangerously narrow. Rarely more than 50 to 70 miles separated the seaboard from a hostile Muslim hinterland and at Tripoli the crusader's hold shrank to a bare 25 miles.

If the First Crusade, at a time when the Franks possessed both the military initiative and a large army, had swung east to capture Aleppo and Damascus on the fringe of the Syrian Desert, history might have been different. The Latin Kingdom would have effectively separated the Muslim capitals of Cairo and Baghdad, and the crusader flank would have rested on the parched lands that stretch eastward to the Euphrates. In these deserts a hostile force could operate only during the winter months and even then with difficulty. But instead the First Crusade pressed on to capture Jerusalem—and for psychological reasons any other course would have been difficult—and the opportunity to capture Aleppo and Damascus vanished. Consequently the shape of the Latin Kingdom for defensive purposes remained highly vulnerable.

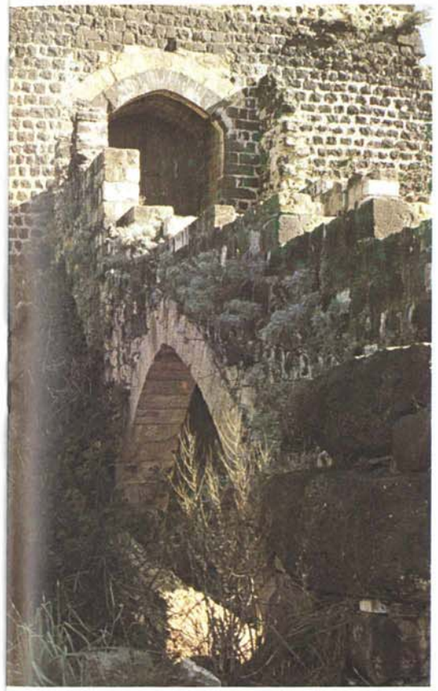
Another reason for the immense fortifications was a shortage of manpower. Although the army that the crusaders assembled at Nicaea in 1097 was very large by the standards of the time, crippling losses sustained during the long summer march across Anatolia and at the battle of Dorylaeum, left them with not more than 25,000 men to attack mighty Antioch. Then, after the siege and fall of Antioch, the commanders began to drop out at an alarming rate. Bohemund of Sicily established himself at Antioch. Baldwin of Boulogne set off with his contingent across the Euphrates to capture Edessa. And as the main army moved south other commanders detached themselves to carve out domains in attractive territory. By the time the crusaders reached Jerusalem in 1099, they could count no more than 1,500 knights and perhaps 10,500 foot-soldiers and neither the relief expedition of 1101 nor the Second Crusade helped. Even the Third Crusade brought only temporary relief. In the absence of men, in short, there was no alternative to massive fortification. Stones had to do the work of men.

Architecturally, the crusader castles were an extension of the architectural concepts of 12th and 13th century France, —the Franco-Burgundian genius that was giving the world Mont St. Michel, Chartres and Rheims. In addition, however, the crusaders, by combining current European practice with the Byzantine and Arab precedents that they found in the East, not only produced castles that have remained the architectural wonder of succeeding centuries, but revolutionized military fortification.

When the crusaders arrived in the Levant at the end of the 11th century, fortification was neither elaborate nor subtle. Based on the recently introduced Norman keep, it was essentially *passive* in conception. Though a keep was so solid that it might be defended by a single man, it could be besieged by two, one standing on either side of the gateway. The crusaders made castles *offensive*.

The first step was to substitute the less vulnerable round keep for the square keep which eventually developed into a linked strongwork of two or more towers. By furnishing the curtain walls with round towers of deep salient, they enabled defenders to provide flanking fire. In the 12th century, as the archer increased in importance, the crusaders also provided for two or three tiers of fire in the curtain wall. Lastly they brilliantly developed the concentric fortifications which presented two or more successive and concentric lines of defense, the inner lines always dominating the outer.

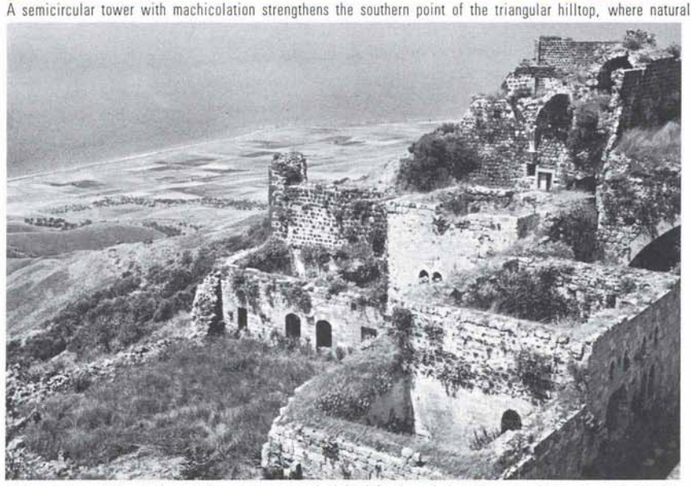
An attention amounting to genius was given to detail. Every military device was exploited and improved. The curtain walls were liberally furnished with posterns to enable the garrison to play an offensive role. These posterns were so placed that men fighting their way back to the shelter of the castle would expose only their left or shield side to the ennemy. To defend the main gate—always a point of weakness—they elaborated the bent-entrance. To penetrate the castle, attackers had to make a number of blind, right-angle turns which effectively



Margat's gateway tops a flight of stone steps which bridges the moat.

A semicircular tower with machicolation strengthens the southern point of the triangular hilltop, where natural defenses are weakest.

Narrow windows and stone corbels overlook the gate.



Although the castle dominated the narrow coastal plain defensive-minded Margat seldom mounted attacks.

In 1188 Saladin's forces breached Saone's defenses with stones hurled from six catapults, then scaled the walls and burst into the castle.

Saone's spectacular 90-foot rock pillar.

discouraged charges. The crusaders also reintroduced the forgotten Roman portcullis —an iron grating hung over the entrance and dropped during an attack. They also developed machicolation —a series of overhead apertures through which missiles or hot liquids could be dropped from a castle's parapet on attackers—later a feature of 13th-century English castles.

Not least, the Franks carefully sited their castles, not only with reference to the defensive character of the immediate terrain, but with a view to signaling. There was often inter-communication between castles over a wide area. The Krak des Chevaliers, guarding the vulnerable waist of the kingdom, was one of a network of seven major castles linked by signal. When Saladin was besieging Kerak of Moab in 1183, the commander was able to transmit messages every night by signal fires to King David's Tower at Jerusalem 50 miles away.

The Franks had begun to construct fortifications almost as soon as they arrived in the Holy Land. But as time went on, and the period of expansion gave way to the period of retreat (which ended with the fall of Acre in 1291) the character and purpose of the castles changed.

In the first period the Franks took over and carefully strengthened existing works of Byzantine and Arab origin. At the same time they built castles for the purpose either of reducing Saracen strongholds or of extending their rule eastward into Muslim territory. It is a curious fact that the crusaders marched 400 miles from Antioch to Jerusalem without capturing a single castle. After the fall of Jerusalem their first objective was the reduction of the fortified towns which they had bypassed. To achieve this they built their earliest castles. They were primarily strongworks for the blockade of such towns as Tyre, Tripoli, and Ascalon. At the same time, to exert control over the lands beyond the Jordan, they built offensive castles such as Subeiba on the slopes of Mount Hermon, and Montreal and Kerak of Moab across the Dead Sea. These castles marked the height of Frankish power and the greatest extent of the crusader kingdom.

It was in the second period, however, the period of retreat, as the Franks were forced to rely more and more on their outstanding skill as military architects, that the most splendid crusader castles were built.

As manpower progressively declined and the Saracen pressure increased, there arose such superb fortifications as Chastel Pelerin and Margat. These bastions were planned on a vast scale. Within the concentric fortifications of Margat for instance, the undercrofts were designed to hold provisions for 1,000 for a five-year siege, and at Chastel Pelerin, constructed on more conventional principles, the first of the gigantic rusticated walls which separated the marine peninsula on which the castle stood from the mainland was 20 feet thick. One of the towers of the second line of defense still raises its ruinous bulk 110 feet above the surrounding desolation.

Though initially held as feudal fiefs by the nobility, as the 12th century progressed and Muslim pressure increased, the burden and expense of manning and maintaining castles was more than most rulers could support. One by one they were sold or given away. By the middle of the 12th century it was exceptional to find a major castle in private hands. Fortunately by this date two kindred organizations had developed well able to assume responsibility for the castles: the Military Orders of the Hospital and the Temple. As the feudal lords relinquished them, the military orders took over and until the fall of Acre, a century and a half later, the orders were primarily responsible for the defense of the Latin Kingdom.

The castles could not have been entrusted to better hands. The military orders enjoyed vast wealth from their religious endowments in Europe and the Levant; their direct responsibility to the papacy gave them authority and independence; their vows of chastity, obedience, and poverty, accorded well with the dour life of remote fortresses. Not least they were empowered to raise their own taxes, they possessed their own navy, and they could negotiate on equal terms with the courts of Europe through their own diplomatic service. As it turned out, of course, even these advantages were not enough. Despite epic stands and almost fanatic heroism they—and the castles committed to their care—succumbed to what, in retrospect, was probably inevitable.

Robin Fedden is the author of Crusader Castles, *an authoritative survey of the crusaders' great fortresses, and of* Syria and Lebanon, *a social and historical study.*

The sea castle at Corycus has been sometimes called "the Sea Maiden."

From this castle in Sidon Lebanon, the Latin Kingdom's last defenders fled to Cyprus after the crusaders' defeat at Acre in 1291.

SALADIN: Story of a Hero

Into the Holy Land he rode, to lead the Arabs in their Crusade.

BY ELIAS ANTAR / ILLUSTRATIONS BY PENNY WILLIAMS

In the year 1095, Alexius Comnenus, Emperor of Byzantium, sent a series of frantic messages to Pope Urban II in Rome. Couched in the elaborate style of the time and dwelling at length on Comnenus' troubles, the messages could have been summarized in one word: "Help." Asia's fierce Seljuk Turks had conquered the vast Anatolian reaches of the Emperor's domain and were almost at the gates of Constantinople. Without help, Comnenus told the Pope, Byzantium's undermanned army could not hold out and Constantinople, the bastion of Christendom in the East, would surely fall to the Turks.

Urban went Comnenus one better. At the Council of Clermont in France in November, 1095, in what historian Philip Hitti has called "probably the most effective speech in history," he not only rallied troops to save Constantinople but set in motion a series of "holy wars" to free the Holy Land and Jerusalem from 400 years of Muslim rule. They were wars that would later be called Crusades and which would call forth onto the stage of medieval history some of that period's most remarkable figures, One of them, a hero to both Islam and Christianity, was Al-Malik al-Nasir al-Sultan Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub, better known as Saladin.

By the time Saladin made his appearance, Urban's exhortations had succeeded beyond his most extravagant hopes. The crusaders had saved Constantinople, conquered the Holy Land, and had ruled what they called the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem for 70 years. The crusaders being a tiny minority in a sea of hostile Muslims, their rule was not an easy one. On the other hand, with Islamic power fragmented among the Seljuk-dominated caliph of Baghdad, the rival Fatimids of Cairo and a semi-independent warlord in Syria called Nur al-Din, crusader rule also seemed permanent.

Saladin, son of a high-ranking Kurdish officer in Nur al-Din's army, was an Arab by culture, language and inclination. Born in Tikrit, Iraq, in 1138, he was called Yusuf ibn Ayyub (Yusuf son of Ayyub) but later assumed the additional name of Salah al-Din (Rectifier of the Faith). From these beginnings, he became one of the few Muslims of the times famous enough to win a westernized version of their names. The crusaders, and later all of Europe, shortened Salah al-Din to Saladin—the name under which he was later romanticized in the West in countless poems and legends.

Late in the year 1168, Saladin took part in an expedition commanded by his uncle and sent to Egypt by Nur al-Din to head off a Frankish take-over. Nur's soldiers eluded the Franks and entered Cairo as liberators. Saladin's uncle died two months later and in March, 1169, Saladin, at 31, was appointed Sultan of Egypt. Arab chroniclers relate that at this time Saladin gave up wine and other pleasures and made a vow to deliver the Holy Land from the Franks.

Two years later, the last Fatimid caliph died (Aramco World, September-October, 1969) and Saladin founded his own dynasty, the Ayyubids. Using Egypt as a power base, he also began the long task of unifying Islam in order to fulfill his vow.

There followed an 18-year period during which Saladin put his Egyptian base in order, his two chief rivals—King Amalric of Jerusalem and his erstwhile suzerain, Nur al-Din—died, and Saladin unified the country between the Nile and the Tigris under his rule. This was a period of sporadic clashes with the forces of the Leper King, Baldwin IV of Jerusalem and his successor, King Guy of Lusignan, of truces almost invariably broken by the Franks and restored, thanks to Saladin's legendary tolerance. But open warfare was carefully avoided. Then, in 1186, the treacherous Reginald of Chatillon, bandit-knight and master of the Castle of Kerak in Jordan, who had previously made it known that he intended to conquer Mecca itself, attacked a large caravan traveling through the desert beneath his mountain eyrie. For Saladin this was the last straw. He proclaimed a holy war against the crusaders and vowed to kill Reginald with his own hand.

On July 4, 1187, a vast force under Saladin's banner defeated the Frankish army in the battle of the Horns of Hattin—in which Saladin struck down the captured Reginald as promised. Then on October 2, almost 90 years after the first crusaders took the Holy City, came the supreme moment of Saladin's career—the capture of Jerusalem.

This momentous event, however, sent ripples of indignation across Europe and brought on the Third Crusade, led by Richard the Lion Hearted and King Philip II of France. Five years later, after a period of battles, sieges, counter-sieges and diplomatic negotiations, Saladin and Richard signed a peace treaty under which the Muslims kept Jerusalem and the interior and the crusaders were permitted to retain, for a short while longer, their tenuous hold on the coastal towns. Saladin, having fulfilled his oath, withdrew to Damascus where, at the age of 55, he died, already a hero and soon to be a legend.

The legend, of course, was embellished after his death with such myths, half-truths, superstitious beliefs and romance, that the real Saladin nearly vanished. Fortunately, Arab historians who were his contemporaries and the Latin chroniclers who lived in the Holy Land preserved a more realistic picture.

It seems that Saladin was a slender man of medium height with a dark complexion, dark hair, eyes and beard, and a rather melancholy expression. He had tremendous endurance and simple tastes in food. He liked fresh fruit and sherbet, drank barley-water when he was suffering, and enjoyed boiled rice. When not in the field he liked nothing better than an evening surrounded by scholars, friends and poets, discussing theology and law or listening to readings of the Koran, which if well rendered could move him to tears. He kept a small book in his pocket in which he wrote down quotations from his favorite authors, and he would often read aloud from it to illustrate a point in his conversation. Saladin liked chess,

but his favorite pastime was polo—largely because it involved horses. Horses were his weakness and he offered them frequently as special gifts. He could reel off the pedigree of an Arabian mare without a moment's hesitation.

Although Saladin had all the wealth of Egypt and Syria at his disposal, the trappings of power had no attraction for him. When he became supreme ruler of Egypt after the death of the Fatimid caliph, for instance, he preferred a small simple house to the caliph's fabulous palace (4,000 rooms, a 120,000-volume library and sackfuls of jewels). Knowing that others liked ostentation, however, he gave away most of the contents of the palace.

Unlike the colorfully-dressed crusaders, Saladin usually wore a simple wool or linen cloak. As a youth, as a concession to the treachery that lurked behind every Egyptian curtain, he wore a coat of mail under his robes. His personal retinue—loyal men who were willing to die for him, and often did—followed his example. In his later years he wore a padded coat while on horseback to keep off the chill.

In contrast to the deference shown to other autocrats, there was no need to fawn in Saladin's presence. Ignoring protocol, he commanded loyalty by his personal bearing and example, his gentle character and his magnanimity. During audiences for example, the jostling petitioners often trod on the very cushion where the Sultan sat smiling.

More important, perhaps, was his relationship with his officers and principal emirs. During one long tour of inspection, his friend Baha al-Din, who later wrote a history of Saladin, was riding in front of the Sultan and inadvertently splashed mud all over him, ruining his clothes. "But he only laughed and refused to let me go behind," the historian related. Discussion was free and unrestrained by any need for flattery. At one officers' meeting the Sultan asked for a drink but nobody paid any attention. He had to repeat his request several times, a secretary recounted, before he was served. For his followers to have felt so free in his presence, Saladin must have inspired a trust which was unthinking.

Little is known about Saladin's wife, except that he married her in Egypt and that she stood by him through thick and thin and gave him 16 sons. There is no record that Saladin ever took on the four wives allowed by Islam. It is evident that his campaigns were a personal sacrifice, since he had to leave his wife and children for long spells, and it was well known that nothing pleased him more than sitting in the cool gardens of his palace in Damascus, playing with his younger children. His eldest son, al-Afdal, became one of his principal lieutenants, but there is more than one hint in the chronicles that his favorite was his third eldest, al-Zahir.

If Saladin was an unusual sovereign, he was a more unusual—even unique—general. In addition to his talents as commander, strategist and planner, Saladin was chivalrous to a fault, a trait that made him famous in the West.

Although he could be inflexible and even cruel when the occasion demanded, he genuinely disliked bloodshed. In fact, the only stain on his record was the execution of about 300 knights of the two main military orders, the Templars and the Hospitalers, at Tiberias a few months before he captured Jerusalem. And even that act when considered in the context of those unsettled times, was no awful crime. When the crusaders first occupied Jerusalem in 1099 they killed thousands, including women and children. When Saladin recaptured the city, there was no killing and no desecration of holy places, and Christian pilgrims were allowed free access to their places of worship.

The Sultan, far from becoming drunk with power, seemed to feel that his new responsibilities demanded more and more restraint. At the famous siege of Acre several years later the most colorful of Saladin's adversaries, Richard the Lion Hearted, violated an agreement and slaughtered the city's entire 3,000-man garrison. Saladin apparently forgave Richard this villainy: during a later skirmish in front of Jaffa, Richard's horse was killed under him and Saladin sent him a steed to replace it, with the message: "It is not right that so brave a warrior should have to fight on foot."

Saladin always preferred negotiation and diplomacy to fighting. War to him was a necessary means of reaching certain objectives—a last resort when arbitration had failed. Over-lenience to his enemies and a somewhat naive faith in their oaths were considered faults, and he repeatedly found himself in difficulties because of his efforts to wage a humane war. Although he was pictured in the West as the death knell of Christendom and its worst enemy, he appeared to have a two-level approach to the Christians. He never wavered in his zeal to drive the Franks out of the Holy Land and restore the banner of Islam over Jerusalem. But when dealing with individual Christians he showed respect and even admiration for their beliefs, as can be seen in his decision not to tear down the Church of the Holy Sepulchre but, on the contrary, to allow priests to hold prayers there and receive pilgrims from across the sea.

Saladin was especially chivalrous towards women and children. Once he was besieging a castle near Aleppo and after protracted and costly efforts, managed to capture it. Then, a little girl, the sister of Aleppo's ruler, came to his camp and Saladin received her with gifts and kindness. As all little girls will, she asked for one thing more: the castle which he had just captured. Without a moment's pause, Saladin gave her the fortress which had cost him a siege of 38 days.

During one of his periodic attacks on the Castle of Kerak, Saladin learned there was a wedding party underway inside. He politely inquired in which wing it was being held, and then directed his catapults elsewhere. (The bride sent out cakes and other samples from the wedding feast.) After the capture of Jerusalem, the widow of his treacherous enemy, Reginald of Chatillon, asked Saladin to release

her imprisoned son. He agreed, providing she ordered the garrison of Kerak to surrender the castle, which had so far remained out of his grasp. To show his good faith, Saladin released the prisoner and returned him to his mother—in advance. The widow failed to persuade the garrison to surrender, and sent her son back to Saladin. When the garrison of Kerak was finally starved into surrendering, Saladin returned the son to his mother, and to top it all rewarded the garrison for its bravery in fighting without its commander: he bought back their wives and children from the Bedouin of the area who had taken them in exchange for food.

French romances of the 14th century try to make out Saladin as being in love with the Lady Sibylla, wife of the Prince of Antioch, Bohemond III. In fact, there is no evidence that Saladin ever actually met the lady, but there was at least indirect contact. Some chroniclers say she acted as Saladin's spy in the crusader camp, providing him with valuable information about internal rivalries and disputes among the Frankish kings and barons. Her motives remain obscure. She was a native daughter of the land and her reputation was said to have been less than spotless; there is a suggestion that Bohemond was forced into marrying her after divorcing his first wife. Perhaps she had more sympathy for the Muslims than for her husband's people. Imad al-Din, an historian of the times and the Sultan's chancellor, reports that Saladin rewarded her information with beautiful presents.

The use of such a highly-placed female spy indicates Saladin's good generalship, but there is further proof of this quality. Although he was supreme commander of the Muslim armies, which at times counted up to 70,000 men, he was often overruled in the councils of war by his officers and had to bow to their will. Such free discussion gave scope for initiative, and Saladin was always open to suggestions. A humble coppersmith from Damascus once came forward and claimed he had discovered a chemical compound which could destroy the supposedly fireproof Frankish siege-towers near the walls of Acre. Saladin allowed the young man to try out his discovery, and sure

enough, to the surprise of the Franks, the discovery—a preparation of naphtha—brought the towers down.

Besides providing a focal point for Islam at a time when it was threatened from without and within, Saladin helped his people in more fundamental ways. He encouraged the establishment of institutes of higher learning in Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem. He also set up courts of law. Unlike other potentates, before and since, Saladin did not set himself above the law. A merchant once filed a lawsuit against the Sultan, claiming Saladin had seized the property of a former slave of his on the pretext that the slave actually belonged to him. The merchant produced documents in support of his claim, and demanded that Saladin give back the property. If Al-Malik al-Nasir al-Sultan Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub were not the man he was, the merchant would have disappeared from the face of the earth for such seeming impudence. But Saladin hired a lawyer and himself appeared in court, where he sat beside the merchant and testified that the slave had always belonged to him until he had been freed, and that therefore the property had passed on to his heirs. Then the lawyer took over and produced witnesses who proved the merchant's documents were forgeries, and the merchant lost the case.

Saladin, as usual, took pity on the defeated. He gave the merchant a robe and enough money to cover the expenses of the trial and his journey home—just to show there were no hard feelings.

After peace with the Franks was achieved Saladin gave up plans for a pilgrimage to Mecca to turn his attention to affairs of state which had been neglected during the wars. This champion of Islam never had the supreme satisfaction of performing the hajj to Mecca, which countless thousands of his subjects had been able to enjoy, thanks to his protection.

When all the accounts of the Sultan's life and times are weighed, it seems that in his own sphere of activity, Saladin was a man of real greatness, with nothing low or vain or petty about him. All his life he had impressed others by his example and even his enemies the crusaders (who often praised him) could console themselves that they had been vanquished by no ordinary adversary.

Saladin's epitaph might well have been his parting words to al-Zahir shortly before his death. "I commend thee to Almighty God," he said, placing his hand on his son's head. "He is the source of all good. Do the Will of God, which is the Way of Peace. Beware of bloodshed; do not trust in that, for spilled blood never sleeps. Strive to gain the hearts of thy subjects and watch over all of their interests, for thou art appointed by God and by me to look after their welfare. I have become as great as I am because I have won the hearts of men by gentleness and kindness. Never nourish ill feeling toward any man, for Death spares none. Be prudent in thyself. God will pardon the penitent, for He is gracious."

Elias Antar is a veteran correspondent for the Associated Press in the Middle East.

END OF A VISION

For two centuries the invincible crusaders held their foes at bay. Now Islam was ready...

BY DANIEL DA CRUZ / ILLUSTRATED BY DON THOMPSON

Conquests, like promises, are easier made than kept. The exhortations of Pope Urban II sent army after army of Christian warriors thundering eastward toward the Holy Land at the end of the 11th century, to wrest Jerusalem from the Turks. Three years it took to reach and capture the city where Christ was crucified, and the lives of countless Christians—along with those of other thousands who also worshipped one God, but called Him Allah. Christian and Muslim alike believed that the deliverance of Jerusalem was an expression of God's will, so when the battle flag bearing the cross fluttered from the ramparts of Jerusalem on July 15, 1099, restoring the city to Christian rule after 460 years, it seemed history had turned full circle. Who could have guessed that this was not the end, but the beginning, that war would drag on for two centuries more and consume the fruit of seven future generations of man?

Had the Holy Land been the lush land of milk and honey the men of the First Crusade expected to find, history would have been very different. But the dreamy vision vanished in the reality of geography: brutal heat, jagged hills, unforgiving stone, rimmed by a stingy, miasmal strip of verdant coastline. The impoverished land could not possibly support the huge army necessary to defend it from the encircling Muslims, thirsting for justice. And so, their souls redeemed, Jerusalem restored, their saddle bags heavy with loot, and the dark cool forests of Europe beckoning, many of the victorious Christian warriors trickled away, like sand through an hour glass.

Left to defend Jerusalem was an insufficient force of 11,000 soldiers led by a handful of Frankish nobles, who proceeded to institute the most iron-bound feudalism of the Middle Ages. At the top of a caste system were the knights and nobles, and in descending order the burgesses, strangers, peasants and slaves. Laws were inflexible and punishments for infractions severe, and stratified Frankish society was so distasteful to the egalitarian East that even the indigenous Christians spoke wistfully of the more tolerant "good old days" under the Muslims.

Since martial prowess was exalted as an outstanding virtue among the conquerors, the gentler callings were inevitably affected. The Hospital of St. John, established in 1048 during Fatimid rule to aid poor and ailing pilgrims, rapidly disintegrated under the Kingdom of Jerusalem into a brotherhood of militant, disciplined soldier-priests. Another monastic group, headquartered near the site of Solomon's ancient temple, became the Knights Templar, praised by St. Bernard as being "most learned in the art of war." In 1180 the Templars numbered but 300, the Hospitalers only 600, but both accomplished prodigies in battle. In 1190 the two priestly orders, both immensely wealthy from the spoils of war, became three with the foundation of the Teutonic Knights of Acre, which centuries later would migrate and become the Prussian aristocracy of North Germany.

The fighting skills of the military orders and control of the coastal seas—insured by granting commercial monopolies of the coastal cities to Pisa, Venice, Genoa and Amalfi in return for their sea power—were the two slim pillars on which survival of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the early years of the 12th century was precariously poised. A third was the Muslim weakness for fratricidal disunity, and the habit of committing their forces piecemeal against the united Christians. Still, they remained an implacable threat, as the capture of Edessa on Christmas day, 1144, by the Muslim Atabeg of Mosul, Prince Zengi, proved and in Europe it was soon necessary for St. Bernard of Clairvaux to launch a new crusade to save the Holy Land.

Like the First Crusade, St. Bernard's call for a crusade was astonishingly successful. The Emperor Conrad III of Germany and King Louis VII of France took the cross in 1147, and so many countrymen followed that Bernard wrote to Pope Eugenius III that "cities and castles are emptied, leaving not one man to seven women, widows to still-living husbands." Following the route of the First Crusade, the Second passed into Asia Minor encumbered with chests of cosmetics for the ladies of the court who came along with troubadours and foppish courtiers, but with precious little tactical wisdom. At Dorylaeum, where exactly half a century earlier the first Crusade defeated Sultan Kilij Arslan, Conrad's army was cut to pieces by the Turks, with fewer than one in 10 of the army, computed by the Greeks with typical exaggeration at 900,566 soldiers, surviving. Behind them hastened the French army, deceived by false news of a German victory, into the same Muslim trap.

Conrad and Louis eventually made their way to Jerusalem—minus their armies. Together with Baldwin III of Jerusalem, they attempted to take Damascus with an improvised army, were repulsed with ease, and returned to a stunned Europe in disgrace. To many, the collapse of the Second Crusade was plain evidence of God's displeasure, a punishment for Christian sins, and from that time onward the simple faith that fired the soldiers of the First Crusade was never wholly recaptured.

Despite the failure of the Second Crusade, however, Christians in Jerusalem won a reprieve of 40 years when, in 1146, Prince Zengi was killed. In the meantime, the Kingdom of Jerusalem continued to undergo a profound metamorphosis. Arabic became the Christian rank-and-file's first language, intermarriage with Syrian women was frequent, commerce with Muslims constant, and eastern garb almost universal. In fact, until Reginald of Chatillon decided on his outrageous effort to conquer the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina, open warfare had begun to subside. With the threat of attack on the holy places, however, there came to the scene a leader who would thereafter dominate the history of the Crusades: Saladin.

At the time of Reginald's impious foray into the Muslim holy land, Saladin, a chieftain of Kurdish extraction, by capturing Syria and Egypt, had unified the Muslims, but had allowed Jerusalem to subsist in peace. Now, enraged, Saladin proclaimed a *jihad* —holy war—and swore to kill Reginald personally.

The decisive battle of the Crusades was fought at Hattin, west of the Sea of Galilee, on July 4, 1187. The Christians foolishly abandoned the impregnable castles that had been their salvation through the years and advanced against Saladin, who had put the Sea of Galilee at his back. To reach him, the Christians, numbering 3,000 horse and 10,000 foot, had to march across a waterless plain. Too late they realized that Saladin's force of some 20,000 cavalry stood between them and their next drink of water. On the night of the 3rd, the parched Christians camped, held at bay by flights of Muslim arrows, suffocating from smoke of fires built upwind by the enemy to blind them, sleepless and choked by the dust. At sunrise, retreat impossible, they attacked and were repelled, and threw themselves again and again in futile sorties against the Muslim foe who stood between them and the shores of Galilee. It was fight or die of thirst, so they fought—futilely. Most fell in battle and the rest were made captive or given the choice of acknowledging Muhammad the Prophet of God. Only Reginald was given no choice as Saladin, with a single stroke of his sword, fulfilled his oath.

The Crusades would never recover from the defeat at Hattin, but dreams die slowly. When Saladin advanced on Jerusalem, took it with little loss of life on either side and magnanimously freed thousands of his prisoners, and released the King and his nobles on their parole never to bear arms again against him, Europe still entertained the hope that Jerusalem could be recaptured. William, Archbishop of Tyre, prevailed on the 67-year-old Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa to take the field. He did, but never reached his goal, tragically drowning while fording a river in Asia Minor, with only a pitiful remnant of his army straggling into the Holy Land where the Christians, from their redoubts of Tyre, Antioch and Tripoli, supplied their army besieging the Muslims at Acre.

Luckier—for a time—was King Richard I of the Lion Heart. This Christian hero, one of the last of the fighting monarchs, matched his opponent Saladin in courage, zest for battle, courtliness, ruthlessness, and generalship. Together the two men gave to the world a rare vision of war in an age of chivalry, by men whose characters could be painted only in primary colors.

Richard set out on the Third Crusade in 1190 with his Normans —few Englishmen ever marched in the Crusades—in company with the French King Philip Augustus, at 23 only eight years his junior. Richard captured Cyprus, gave it to the deposed King of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan, and joined the siege of Acre already 19 months old. A few weeks later the Muslims agreed to surrender; when they were slow to pay the ransom, Richard had 2,500 captives beheaded to hasten compliance.

Richard advanced from Acre as sole leader of the Crusade, Philip having fortuitously fallen ill and returned home, fought and won a battle at Arsuf. Now began a long series of inconclusive battles and skirmishes which served only to illustrate the chivalry of the leaders. During one battle Richard's horse was shot from under him; Saladin ordered a cease-fire while he sent him another. Richard, during a lull in the fighting, proposed to end the Crusades by a marital alliance of his sister Joan with Saladin's brother; the Church denounced the idea, and war went on. When Richard was felled by a fever, Saladin sent his personal physician, along with fresh fruits and cooling snow from the mountains. Alternately savage and suave, the leaders fought a frustrating war in which neither gained a clear advantage, and the restless Richard finally turned homeward, vowing to return and recapture Jerusalem. A crossbowman's arrow put an end to Richard's resolve and his life in Aquitaine, in 1199. Already, one year after Richard's departure for Europe, Saladin had died, aged only 55. He left a legacy of one dinar, and the reputation for courage, wisdom and magnanimity.

None of these attributes can be applied to the Fourth Crusade, which was to begin within a decade following Saladin's death. Repeating the now-familiar excoriations of the Muslims, Pope Innocent III proclaimed the Fourth Crusade, but with a vital difference: having observed the folly of marching by land through an Asia Minor swarming with Turks, Innocent proposed a flanking movement against Jerusalem, using Egypt as a base. To capture Egypt first required a fleet, which Venice pretended willingness to provide. In fact, however, Egypt was Venice's valuable trading partner, and the island republic had no intention of losing this profitable connection. Instead, pocketing a rich bribe from Egypt for diverting the force—as usual, largely French—the Venetians conspired to used French arms against its own enemies, in one of the most cynical, not to mention most successful, coups in the history of power politics.

The Doge of Venice, the blind 94-year old Henry Dandalo, cannily set

a price for transporting their troops to the Holy Land well beyond the ability of the French to pay, and then generously agreed to forego the difference if the French land forces would assist Venice in the recovery of Zara. This maritime city, second only to Venice itself in Adriatic trade, was Hungary's sole outlet to the sea. It had once been a Venetian satrapy, had fought for and gained its independence, and now threatened Venice with unwelcome competition. Pope Innocent III denounced the vicious perversion of the Fourth Crusade into an attack against the eastern Christian state, but his words were lost in roars of greedy approval by the majority of French.

Zara was overwhelmed in five days. An emissary to the Pope begged forgiveness and absolution, which he gave, and the Venetians accepted. They retained the loot, and turned their talents for intrigue to the destruction of a second enemy, the first Christian power, Byzantium itself. In this city Venice had long maintained privileges, which the Emperor Manuel had incautiously abrogated by the arrest and imprisonment of thousands of ambitious Venetian businessmen who had attracted the jealousy of local merchants. This act was reason enough for Venice to strike, but the island-city needed a plausible excuse. It found one in the plea of deposed Emperor Isaac's son, Alexius, to the Venetians to restore his father to the throne of Constantine. Dandalo and his willing allies, the French barons, squeezed from the youth the promise that, if Isaac was put back upon his throne, Byzantium would hand over to the crusaders 200,000 silver marks, equip an army of 10,000 for service against the Muslims and (as a sop to the papacy) submit the Greek Orthodox Church to Roman rule. The intended bribe didn't deceive Innocent, who threatened excommunication to all who participated in the unholy war against Christians; predictably, the warning was smothered in the clouds of dust raised as most of the crusaders scrambled aboard the 480 ships of the Venetian fleet, and, on October 1, 1202, sailed to Constantinople, where they quickly rolled up the Greek defenses, set a conflagration that spread through three miles of the city, and sacked the city more thoroughly than the vandals and Goths did Rome. The dazed Greeks cursed their impotence and wished aloud that their conquerors had been the moderate Saracen enemy instead of their rapacious Christian friends.

An uneasy peace settled upon the smoking ruins. Henry Dandalo took the title "Doge of Venice, Lord of One-Fourth and One-Eighth of the Roman Empire," and lived very nearly a full century, full of dubious honors. His newfound Latin Kingdom of Constantinople did not survive so long, staying only long enough to weaken the city's social and military organization irremediably, so that in two centuries it would fall, too easily, to the Ottoman Turks. Of the crusaders, only the few denied their share of spoils reached Palestine; the others dispersed, replete with riches, to their homes in Europe.

In 1212 still another crusade began when a German youth named Nicholas announced that God had commissioned him to lead a Children's Crusade to the Holy Land. Despite the fulminations of the Church and parental opposition, some 30,000 children swarmed after him down the Rhine and up over the Alps, succumbing to hunger and wild animals, but actually reaching Genoa where they hoped to find ships to take them to Jerusalem. Disillusioned when they found none, they straggled back the way they had come.

It was a year of visions. About the same time in France, a 12-year-old

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EUROPE'S ORIENTAL HERITAGE

To a God-centered medieval Europe, which for two centuries flung successive waves of crusaders against the Muslim powers of the East with ever-diminishing effect, the final expulsion of the Christians from the Holy Land in 1291 was proof that the Lord does not automatically look with favor upon every enterprise undertaken in His name. Great armies, bulging treasuries and the faith of nations had been consumed with nothing to show for it but a trail of whitening bones of brave men winding through the Balkan forests across Asia Minor to Jerusalem.

Or so it seemed then. In the perspective of history the end of the Crusades signaled a new era in European civilization, many of whose elements can be traced directly to the restless energies liberated by that collision between two faiths with but a single God. The West had sent armies to capture and hold Jerusalem; instead they themselves fell victim to a host of new ideas and subtle influences which left their mark on the development of European literature, chivalry, warfare, sanitation, commerce, political institutions, medicine, even the papacy itself. They had sown the wind, and reaped a whirlwind—of social revolution.

Nowhere is the influence of the Arab East more obvious and incontrovertible than in the speech of Europe today. Some of it, of course, is attributable to Muslim Spain, but the impact of the Crusades was still important. Many of the fruits and plants introduced into Europe in crusader times, for instance, brought with them their original Arabic names, often little modified through the ages: **sesame, carob, rice, lemon, ginger, scallion, myrrh, apricot, carraway, basil, sumac, saffron and orange** are the better known. More numerous are words relating to the refinements of raiment, cuisine and household furnishing unknown in the West until the crusaders adopted them: **mohair, gauze, sash, sofa, attar, carafe, alcove, amulet, jar, syrup, marzipan, elixir, sherbet, candy, julep, masquerade, gypsum, mattress, ottoman, talisman,** and **damask, baldachin, cotton, muslin** and **satin** fabrics dyed **aniline, lilac, carmine, crimson** or **azure.**

Perhaps the majority of these words entered European languages through commercial **traffic** originating in Pisan, Genoan and Venetian ports of the Eastern Mediterranean, which with the Crusades began to dominate the carrying trade between Europe and the Orient. The Italian merchants figured their risks on the basis of **tares** and other shipping factors such as **tariffs,** and while waiting for the ships to come home to port conceivably filled idle hours with **checkers** or **chess,** whose final move **checkmate** is derived from Arabic **shah maat**—"the king is dead."

Another product of the East coveted in Europe was the fighting prowess of such military orders as The Hospitalers who in 1310 captured Rhodes from the Muslims and became first the Knights of Rhodes, later the Knights of Malta; and the Templars, who took their riches to France, became money-lenders and in consequence of their wealth eventually threatened the monarchy and led Philip the Fair to exterminate them. Only the Order of Teutonic Knights maintained their warlike disposition. After pausing temporarily in Venice and Hungary, they joined a Polish duke fighting pagan Prussians who threatened his land. The Teutonic Knights quickly swallowed Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and East Prussia as well as the estates of the luckless duke, and established the militaristic traditions for the **junker** caste which was to lead Germany in future wars.

The dispersion of the militant priestly orders through Europe merely added impetus to the social innovations brought back by the veterans of the long wars, who found much to imitate in Middle Eastern manners. It was the European custom of the time for men to go unshaven, but the crusader influence affected by contact with the Arabs revived the habit, forgotten since Roman times, of periodically shaving the face.

As the shock of having lost the Holy Land irrevocably to Islam wore off, the harsh tones of violent death and man's suffering were gradually softened and romanticized, and the Crusades became a durable subject for song and literature. Basic sources like the anonymous **Gesta Francorum** and Fulcher of Chartres' **Historia Hierosolymitana** chronicled the battles and intrigues of the period, and William, Archbishop of Tyre, carried forward the theme with his 23-volume **History of Things Done in the Parts Overseas.**

Analysts of literary movements have also traced Arabic themes in, among other works, **Aucassin et Nicolette** (the name Aucassin probably comes from the Arabic al-Qasim), **Count Robert of Paris,** Chaucer's **The Squire's Tale** and some of the stories of Boccaccio's **Decameron,** itself a landmark in Italian vernacular literature. The book often described as the world's first novel, Cervantes' 17th-century **Don Quixote,** was written to ridicule the literary rubbish of preceding centuries which had carried crusader themes to outrageous extremes.

Closely allied with the romantic tradition is the institution of chivalry, which blended warfare, noble manners and sentiments and selfless devotion to a lady (never one's wife, since this love was pure), an improbable mixture which at least established the concept of sacrifice and a higher loyalty among individualistic barons, who would in time transfer that loyalty to regional leaders as the first faltering steps of European nationalism. To the crusaders is owed the refinement of the tournament, long practiced in Syria and imported into Europe along with the Syrian custom of identification by armorial bearings and heraldic devices. The two-headed eagle of Germany is a direct descendant of a similar device in pre-Christian Sumeria, and is thought to have been used by Saladin himself. The fleur-de-lis, symbol of **la belle France,** is likewise a borrowing from Arabs. The blazoning of shields, banners, coat-of-arms with heraldic designs was a Mameluke custom avidly adopted by the crusaders, whose countrymen with pretensions of nobility immediately copied it.

Other effects of the Crusades on Europe were less visible but more lasting. Pope Urban's inspiring call to the Crusades was a masterstroke of imagination by which he hoped to strengthen the papacy; it did so in a subtle but effective manner, for support of the Crusades by the nobility of Europe was tacit admission that the Pope was their de facto leader. The success of the First Crusade enhanced Rome's position immeasurably. But the failure of the crusaders to hold the Holy Land despite repeated calls by the incumbent pope to war against the Muslims slowly eroded the papacy's reputation as an instrument of the Holy Will. By the time the Crusades collapsed in the late 13th century an undercurrent of skepticism and distrust in Church policy had penetrated the halls of the European mighty, and because the papacy had injected its will into the affairs of man and war, no longer was it immune to criticism as a purely religious institution. The clear-cut distinction between the sacred and the profane was smudged, and pretensions of the Church to being above the battle could no longer be maintained.

From the Crusades, too, arose a feeling of kinship among Europeans that had been sorely missing since Roman times, although Charlemagne had achieved an evanescent unity some centuries earlier. Though the individual states continued to quarrel bitterly among themselves, and feudal barons made warfare against their nominal suzerains, the kings, a way of life, a truly European identity gradually began to take form. It was basically a **Christian** identity, and it was to this Christian element, common to all, that appeals for common action against the infidel—the Turk, the Mongol, the Cuman—were directed.

With the decline of Byzantium, Europe had, moreover, assumed the mantle of protector of the True Faith, with the French who had fought the major battles achieving eminence not only in the East as warriors, but in Europe as the most cosmopolitan, most courtly, most Catholic of men. It is no accident that down to the present day the French have closely identified themselves with the affairs of the Middle East, which they have conceived to be a special sphere of influence. Their concern has been shown in the foundation of Jesuit schools in the Holy Land, the protection of the Maronite Church in Lebanon, the mandate over Syria following World War I, and, more recently, in the provision of aircraft to Libya.

Before the Crusades Europe was so ignorant of the world outside that when the First Crusade reached Asia Minor, it wandered for weeks in the Anatolian wilderness searching for the best route south to Antioch, at one point actually heading due north. That Crusade opened Europe's eyes to the size of the world, and a quickening interest spawned pilgrims' guides, maps, ethnographic descriptions and military reconnaissance reports. These were seized upon by traders eager to expand their horizons and their fortunes. Marco Polo was in the court of Kublai Khan before the Crusades had quite expired, and in the same era a Genoese company explored the dark waters of the Caspian Sea and a Venetian consul was installed in Tabriz to regulate his countrymen's commercial relations. Soon the conversion to Islam of the Mongols, who then ruled most of northern Asia, would close the land routes to the inquisitive, acquisitive Italians, but by then the travel bacillus had infected them and spread its exciting contagion to the rest of Europe.

If the land routes to the East were interdicted, they reasoned, and the air was for the birds, then that left them only the sea, and they set out to conquer it with the same zeal they had so conspicuously wasted on the Muslims. The insularity of Europe quickly succumbed as first the Portuguese, then the Spanish, Dutch, French and British embarked in their frail ships and sailed into the uncharted waters to build empires for God and country. To their countrymen, history's longest, least necessary and most futile war had been the end of a dream; now, brave captains would demonstrate that it was really the beginning of bright, liberating reality. ———

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shepherd named Stephen reported the same command from heaven, and started south with 20,000 young of both sexes at his back. Arriving in Marseilles, they boarded ships whose owners promised to transport them free to their destination. For two of the shiploads of children, this proved to be the bottom of the sea when their ships went aground off Sardinia; for the rest, it was the slave markets of Tunisia or Egypt.

And still Europe was not sated with crusades. Pope Innocent III lived to preach another, in 1217, which proceeded with King Andrew of Hungary at its head to employ the discarded battle plan of the Fourth Crusade. Troops from Germany, Austria and Hungary besieged and took Damietta at the mouth of Nile after a year's hard campaigning, and all Egypt, it seemed, lay defenseless before the Europeans. The Sultan of Egypt and Syria, al-Malik al-Kamil, sued for peace with an offer that embraced the major goals of the crusaders: surrender of most of Jerusalem, repatriation of Christian prisoners-of-war, and the return of the True Cross. Greed triumphed over reason, and the Christians demanded in addition a stiff indemnity which al-Malik al-Kamil refused to pay, and the war went on. It went disastrously for the Christians, who finally traded Damietta and evacuation of Egypt for the True Cross.

The failure of Frederick II, Emperor of Germany and Italy, to come to his countrymen's rescue was the self-serving excuse of the defeated crusaders, and the Pope promptly excommunicated him. Denied the sacraments of the Church, Frederick II set out for Palestine on the Sixth Crusade, but the good Christians there shunned the excommunicate like a leper. Unable to win enough adherents to give battle, Frederick turned to diplomacy, entered into a correspondence with al-Malik al-Kamil that soon became cordial as the Sultan saw the extent of Frederick's understanding of and appreciation for the Arabic language, culture and traditions.

Gentle persuasion succeeded where the battle-axe had failed. To the consternation of the Christian world, the excommunicated Emperor in 1229 concluded an even more advantageous peace with the Muslims than King Andrew had been offered at Damietta. The treaty called for the return to Christendom of Acre, Jaffa, Sidon, Nazareth, Bethlehem, and all of Jerusalem but the Dome of the Rock. Prisoners on both sides were to be released, and hostilities were to cease for 10 years and 10 months. In the Holy Land, both sides hailed the end of strife, but Pope Gregory IX repudiated it as an insult to the Christians, and after a brief interval of Christian rule, Jerusalem fell in 1244 to the Muslims, this time for good.

The sesquicentennial of the First Crusade saw the astonishing spectacle of Pope Innocent IV preaching a crusade against—not the Turks or Syrians, but the hero of the Sixth Crusade, Emperor Fredrick II. It was symptomatic of the political purposes to which the crusades were increasingly subjected; when nothing came of it, the Pope sent the friar Giovanni de Piano Carpini to the Great Khan suggesting a union of Mongols and Christians against the Turks. Carpini returned sheepishly with the Khan's counter-proposal: the papacy's submission to the Khan.

One last figure of faith and dignity was to stride across the canvas of the Crusades. King Louis IX of France embarked on the Seventh Crusade, captured Damietta, and then was stranded in the city for six months by the annual Nile floods. Enforced idleness, much eating, disease and indiscipline weakened the troops to a degree that when the next battle was fought at Mansura, the Christians were roundly defeated and 10,000 prisoners, including King Louis himself, were taken by the Muslim enemy. King Louis purchased his freedom for a ransom and the surrender of Damietta.

In his old age, with heaven close at hand no matter which way the issue turned, King Louis tried once again. But this Eighth Crusade was doomed from the start. Europe was finally too bored with crusades to lend the slightest support, and Louis launched his totally inadequate forces in Tunisia—rather vaguely hoping to convert the Bey of Tunis to Christianity—only to be taken ill with dysentery. He died soon after, in 1270. His last word was—"Jerusalem."

Although at intervals in the next two decades futile sorties, dignified by their leaders as "crusades," were launched against Muslim power in the Middle East, nothing resulted except the progressive exacerbation of relations between the two religions. The Christians retained their tenuous grip on the principal ports of the eastern Mediterranean, but in 1291, even they succumbed and the Kingdom of Jerusalem was no more.

The "Great Debate" between Christianity and Islam was primarily a dialogue between sword and scimitar, and yet in its sanguinary way it provided first contact, then familiarity, and finally a measure of understanding to bridge the wide gap between two cultures, two religions, two worlds. Warfare did not cease between Islam and Christianity with the end of the Crusades—far from it—but in the intervals when peace and reason reigned, the commerce of goods and ideas brought them into permanent involvement with one another, and the pursuit of their expanding horizons would carry them out of the Middle Ages into modern times.

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