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The Levant: France's Colonial Crucible

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Summer Fellows 2022

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Abstract

In the medieval era of religious and political tumult that culminated with the Crusades, (mostly) Roman Catholic Western European citizens from all walks of life committed themselves to conquer Jerusalem and wrest control of historically Christian lands from the Muslim polities that claimed the region. The historical Kingdom of France was a major contributor to the Crusades, and as such, the feudal realms established in the Levant in the wake of the First Crusade were dominated by former French crusaders and citizenry. The geographic boundaries and demography of these Crusader States are reminiscent of French hegemony in the Middle East after the First World War. Thus, this project assesses the similarities, differences, continuity, and change between French control of the Outremer as a result of the First Crusade, and the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon as seen through the colonial experiences of both French administrators, crusaders, and chroniclers, and those of autochthonous nations.

Keywords: the Crusades, the Levant, the Outremer, the French Mandate, Syria, Lebanon, France, colonialism, imperialism, paternalism

“Consider, I pray, and reflect how in our time God has transferred the West into the East, For we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank is now a Galilaean, or an inhabitant of Palestine. One who was a citizen of Rheims or of Chartres now has been made a citizen of Tyre or of Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already they have become unknown to many of us...”

- Fulcher of Chartres, 1124

“To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant. The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League.”

- Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, 1919

Introduction

The Crusades began in the 11th century. During these successive waves of migration, armed pilgrimage, and military campaigns, hundreds of thousands of Europeans over hundreds of years assailed and conquered the Levant - a rough historical and geographical region along the western coast of the Middle East comprising modern-day Israel and Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. The Crusades themselves, in retrospect were quite unsuccessful. Muslim countries retain sovereignty over much of the Middle East, and moreover the Levant has not been controlled by militant agents of the Roman Catholic Church since the last Crusader State fell in 1291. However, despite their seeming lack of success as measured by permanent conquest and suzerainty, the Crusades have nonetheless imprinted unto Western and Muslim cultures a multifaceted cultural memory. Indeed, the image of the mighty crusader king, accompanied by his loyal retinue of knights, opposing the heathens of the Levant is the sort of quintessential culmination of romanticized elements of the Middle Ages. Historical figures like Richard “the Lionheart” of England, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, and Sultan of Egypt and Syria Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Shadi (better known as Saladin) retain an aura of romanticism and heroism. In popular thought, the crusades are remembered as a scrum of heroic warriors, chivalry, and a struggle between two ostensibly diametrically opposed forces.

Of course, cultural memories take many different forms. While for some, the Crusades may embody this pinnacle of medieval warfare, they carry very different meanings for others. Within the cultural memory of more contemporary Arab nationalists and Islamic academia, the Crusades are remembered for the ruthlessness of Christian knights sweeping across land that had belonged to Muslim nations for hundreds of years. Furthermore, this cultural memory of the Crusades is considered to be the beginning of a long historical struggle between Islam and

Christianity that would permeate throughout history thereafter.¹ Contrarily, more populist, right-wing elements of European and Euro-American political thought recall the Crusades as a righteous struggle against an irredeemable great enemy: Islam. Images of the Crusade are conjured to promote the idea that Christianity is under religious and cultural assault by Islam.²

From the most romantic memories of heroism to those of antipathy and self-righteous admiration, the legacy of the Crusades embodies a diverse range of political and historical thought. But, when pondering the Crusades, what rarely comes to mind is an association with maritime colonial European empires of old. “Colonialism” is a word with which we as Americans are very familiar. After all, the United States began its history as a colony of the British Empire until it successfully won its independence in the late 18th century. This is the context most closely associated with the words “colonialism” or “colonization”: the overseas expansion of Western European powers beginning in the late 15th century that resulted in cultural, economic, and political hegemony over much of the world. However numerous other examples of colonization, and thereby modes of imperialism, exist in the crucible of the human story.

Hundreds of years after the Crusades, European hegemony resurfaced in the Middle East with the establishment of the Mandate system. The United Kingdom and France were both given dominion over great swaths of the Middle East under the guise of aiding these territories in the creation of independent states. In reality, the polities under British and French control were essentially vassals of their respective suzerain. While the Mandates for Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine were all theoretically temporary, as issued by the League of Nations, the idea of these

¹ Thomas Asbridge, *Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), 679.

² Ariel Koch, “The New Crusaders: Contemporary Extreme Right Symbolism and Rhetoric,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 5 (October 2017): pp. 13-24, 1.

states becoming independent under the supposed guiding hands of European empires was naïve and disingenuous at worst. Much like the French crusaders who captured and controlled the Crusader States of the Levant, French imperialists had no desire to give up control of the same region.³

The Outremer, the collection of Crusader States, and the French Mandate, the collection of protectorates under varying degrees of French control, share many superficial and fundamental similarities. The geographic boundaries of the Outremer are very similar to those of the French Mandate, including part of modern-day Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon (all within the Levant). Moreover, the cultural make-up of both the minority hegemonic force and the native population has remained much the same in the hundreds of years between the Crusades and the Mandate. The crusaders and administrators of the Outremer were largely made up of Roman Catholic French-speaking peasants and nobility. Likewise, the bureaucrats of the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon were also largely, if not entirely, ethnically French and Catholic. The citizenry of both the Crusader States and the Mandate contained a majority Muslim Arab population, with notable Christian minorities of non-Catholic and non-Protestant denominations, as well as Jews and Druze. Both the Crusader States and the French Mandate were melting pots of Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Alawite, Maronite, Muslim, Druze, Arab, Jewish, Assyrian, Greek, Armenian, and Circassian populations.

Thus, unique and yet parallel stories of colonialism and imperialism emerged along the western banks of the Middle East, the Levant. The Outremer and the French Mandate, despite being separated by hundreds of years, share similar fundamental historical trends and themes of colonialism, imperialism, and paternalism oft forgotten within greater scrums of cultural and

³ Charles River Editors, *The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon: The History and Legacy of France's Administration of the Levant after World War I* (Charles River Editors, 2019), 35.

historical recollection. The history of the crusades is one of bygone colonialism, a bookmark that sets the beginning of France's storied future with empire building, a story that ends with its final colonial acquisition: the Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon.⁴

I. The First Crusade

The Foundation of Holy War

The Crusades were a series of religious wars most often directed by the Roman Catholic Church. They lasted hundreds of years, beginning with the First Crusade in 1095 and ending in the 15th century. The myriad religious conflicts that counted amongst the Crusades are as diverse in purpose as they are in number; while the most famous Crusades were launched against the Muslim polities of the Middle East, there were numerous other calls to crusade against pagan Baltic peoples in Northern Europe, as well as minor crusades against Christian sects that attempted to break communion with the Catholic Church prior to the Protestant Reformation.⁵ The most salient of these Crusades for the purpose of exploring the French relationship with early forms of colonialism and imperialism will be the First Crusade. However, before such a relationship can be thoroughly explored, it is important to understand the origin of not only the First Crusade itself, but also the ethos and mythos that drove thousands of Europeans - regardless of ethnicity, language, and homeland – to take up arms and rally behind the call to crusade in the 11th century.

The impetus for the First Crusade began far from the Roman Catholic Realms of Europe. In the centuries preceding the First Crusade in 1095, the Byzantine (or Eastern Roman) Empire

⁴ The official name for the French Mandate is "The Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon." The definite article is retained when referring to the official name, but general usage of Lebanon as a country or region will not use the definite article.

⁵ Erik Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades* (Penguin Books, 1997), 287.

had been locked in numerous struggles for control of the Levant and Anatolia with multitudinous Muslim powers. Greek Orthodox Byzantine emperors and Muslim caliphs waged countless wars over this region since the rise of Islam in the 7th century. In the 11th century, the Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt captured Jerusalem from the Byzantines, isolating the region from Christian rule for the first time in centuries. The Fatimids were, however, largely tolerant of Christian pilgrims journeying to Jerusalem.⁶ Thus, the Fatimids' conquest of Jerusalem failed to spark a crusade or any sort of medieval "international incident" or large-scale controversy. A turning point in this relationship occurred when a second Muslim polity usurped Fatimid control of the Levant and annexed the region, including Jerusalem. This new usurper, the Great Seljuk Empire, originating from the steppes of Transoxiana in Central Asia, had subjugated Persia, Mesopotamia, and now the Levant by the mid-11th century. The Seljuks controlled a massive empire, stretching from Anatolia in the west to modern-day Afghanistan in the east. Unlike the Fatimid Egyptians, the Seljuk Turks were far less tolerant of Christian pilgrims. Many contemporaneous Christian pilgrims observed and recorded the change in relations after the Seljuks seized control of the Holy Land, specifically noting incidents of harassment and persecution targeting Christians.⁷ Moreover, the Seljuk Empire had ambitions to expand into the Byzantine Empire, seizing the strategically (and to many Christians spiritually) important city of Antioch as well as beginning Turkic migration into Anatolia. Byzantine Emperor Alexios Komnenos (c. 1057 – 1118), fearing future invasions from his empire's new rival to the east, sent envoys to Rome petitioning Pope Urban II (c. 1035- 1099) for aid. The stage was now set for the First Crusade.

⁶ Thomas Asbridge, *Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), 26-27.

⁷ *Ibid*, 30.

In the years leading up to Pope Urban's call to crusade, one might expect that Western Europe was abuzz with a ravenous religious fervor, a desire to launch their hordes of armed pilgrims into Jerusalem without a second thought, especially considering the Seljuk's conquest of the Holy Land. This could not be further from the truth. While Turkish control of the Levant resulted in some euro-centric consternation, this alone was not enough to spark interest in a crusade amongst the populations of Europe. Contrary to what might be easily imagined with the benefit of historical hindsight, before the First Crusade, Christians and Muslims did not view each other with irretrievable animosity. Neither Roman Catholic nor Greek Orthodox Christians perceived Muslims as a sort of religious "nemesis" to be vanquished and vice versa.⁸ Even the Byzantine Empire, which had waged war with Muslim states for centuries viewed them with no more animosity than their Slavic, Christian rivals in the Balkans against whom the Byzantines had also had numerous conflicts.⁹

The seeds that would soon blossom into the call to the First Crusade were sown by Pope Gregory VII (c. 1015 – 1085). Gregory was a strong advocate for the supremacy of the Papacy over all matters spiritual and secular in Western Europe, which unsurprisingly made him an opponent of the feudal lords of Europe who wished to retain primacy in (secular) matters of the state. Beginning in 1075, Pope Gregory VII butted heads multiple times with his foremost political rival, Holy Roman Emperor Heinrich IV. In the Middle Ages, church and state were intrinsically linked, and there was no better exemplar of this relationship than the Holy Roman Emperor. Heinrich's political station as Holy Roman Emperor was inexorably linked with the Papacy, as it was traditional for the Pope to crown newly anointed Holy Roman Emperors. Heinrich's predecessor was heavily involved in the election of new Popes, which Heinrich IV

⁸ *Ibid*, 26.

⁹ Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 42.

tried to replicate, attempting to depose Gregory VII from the Papacy. In response, Pope Gregory excommunicated Heinrich, beginning a power struggle of back-and-forth excommunications and illegitimate Popes that lasted years. This conflict ultimately cemented the Pope's supreme authority in spiritual matters (e.g., the appointment of bishops and papal election by cardinals), but it also left the Catholic Church in a weakened position. While Western Europe was still steeped in devotion to the Christian faith, the people of Western Europe's trust in the institution of the Papacy had waned amidst Gregory VII's petty bickering with Heinrich IV.¹⁰

Before dying in 1085, Gregory VII lamented the recent Great Schism between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches, as well as the Seljuk conquest of Jerusalem. Pursuant to his firm belief in inalienable papal supremacy, Gregory VII wished to bring the Greek Orthodox Church back into communion with the Roman Catholic Church (the two churches formally split in 1054) and sought to reclaim Jerusalem for Christendom. While he was successful in ameliorating relations between the Papacy and Byzantium, he failed to excite Western Europe into a Holy War. Gregory VII began planning a Christian military campaign to "liberate" Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Seljuk Turks, but this was never realized. Both Gregory VII and Urban II faced difficulty in rallying any significant numbers of Christians to engage in Holy War or Crusade. Medieval Catholic knights ironically considered acts of bloodshed one would commit in a war to be inherently sinful. Moreover, medieval knights and commanders had very little experience launching long, protracted military campaigns which would inevitably be required for an invasion of the Levant.¹¹ Gregory VII proclaimed a call to arms in 1074, citing the need for the Catholics to defend their Christian brothers-in-arms against the Seljuk Turks, but this was ultimately unsuccessful. The reasons behind the lack of success are somewhat unclear,

¹⁰ Joseph Reese Strayer, *The Middle Ages 395-1500*, 4th ed. (Bell: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1959), 215.

¹¹ Thomas Asbridge, *Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), 15-16

although it has been suggested that Gregory VII's desire to personally lead and direct the war was to blame, his personal and political ambitions getting the better of him.¹² While Gregory VII failed to coalesce the political and religious realities of his time into a crusade, he nonetheless laid the theoretical foundation for such a call to arms. It would be Pope Urban II who perfected Gregory VII's rhetoric and made manifest the First Crusade.¹³

The Call to Crusade

In March of 1095, Pope Urban II received a message from Byzantine Emperor Alexios Komnenos. Alexios requested financial and military aid for a campaign against the Seljuk Turks, whose empire had recently annexed many former Byzantine territories in Anatolia and the Levant.¹⁴ Pope Urban II's response came several months later, in November of that same year when he delivered in the French town of Clermont a formal call to crusade. His speech would rouse the crowd, inspiring Europeans across the continent. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children were galvanized to engage in armed pilgrimage, the First Crusade. But what changed? Why was Pope Urban's speech at Clermont infinitely more successful than previous attempts by his predecessors?

The answer to that question is ironically somewhat indicative of modern views and misunderstandings about the Crusades, particularly the First Crusade. To simply call the Crusades military campaigns, wars, or efforts of forced evangelism would be inaccurate, each term failing to grasp the full scope of what the Crusades actually meant to the contemporaneous participants thereof. Pope Gregory VII, in trying to hone his vision of Holy War, made the

¹² *Ibid*, 16.

¹³ Frederic Duncalf, "VII. The Councils of Piacenza and Clermont," *A History of the Crusades* 1 (1958): pp. 220-252, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9781512818642-017>.

¹⁴ Edward Peters, *The First Crusade* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 1998).

mistake of over-politicizing the concept. Christian theologians and philosophers had theorized for centuries about the concept of a theoretical war to defend and protect the interests of Christendom, although such a concept is anathema to the peaceful teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. A 4th century bishop, St. Augustine of Hippo, theorized that a war waged by Christians could be fought under “lawful” or “just conditions,” however this theory fell short of sanctioning a former declaration of a Holy War or a Crusade.¹⁵ Gregory VII was unable to refine the views of St. Augustine. Instead, his call for a Holy War against the perceived enemies of Christianity was rhetorically based on constructing a military arm of the Papacy. His radical approach to a *casus belli* alienated Christian population of Europe, thus his rallying cry failed to garner any meaningful support. Pope Gregory wanted a war, a massive military campaign under battlefield Papal command against the Muslim world, but such a desire was simply not shared by Europeans of the time.

Where Pope Urban II succeeded where Gregory VII failed was in how he contextualized the Crusades, not only in religious doctrine, but also the greater milieu of Europe at the time. Urban II, much like his predecessor, lamented the disunity of Christendom, both within the Roman Catholic Church and without. They both sought to repair the Great Schism which had irrevocably split the Catholic and Orthodox churches, and Pope Urban II also sought to quell the petty infighting of feudal lords within the realm of Roman Catholic Europe. Moreover, Europe in the 11th century was deeply entrenched in a culture of fire-and-brimstone superstition. The 11th century marked one millennium since the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth, which infused Western Europeans with a seemingly omnipresent dread of an impending apocalypse. Europeans felt a palpable anxiety, fearing that the “End of Days” had arrived. Peasant and noble

¹⁵ Thomas Asbridge, *Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), 15.

alike feared that they would be judged as sinful and unworthy to enter Heaven upon death. This fear was so tangible in 11th century Europe, that even the most notorious, violent, and maniacal feudal warlords sought pilgrimage to Jerusalem to cleanse their souls of sin.¹⁶ Pope Urban II's rhetoric at his speech of Clermont thus took advantage of two things: the failures of Gregory VII and the fear of damnation that held Catholic Europe in a strangle-hold.

Urban II framed his call to crusade before the crowd at Clermont as such: this armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land would sanctify the souls of its participants. While no transcript of Urban's speech survives, eyewitness testimony recalls a transfixed crowd as Pope Urban lamented that Christianity itself was threatened by the invasion and oppression of the Muslims. He demonized the Muslim Turks and other non-Christian inhabitants of the Middle East, citing their occupation as a brutally oppressive regime, committing ritual torture upon native Christians and Christian pilgrims alike.¹⁷ His demonization of Muslim civilizations was a unique fixture of this call to arms, which served as a deeply resonant clarion call to persuade Catholic Europeans that a holy struggle against Muslims was preferable to fighting a fellow Christian.¹⁸ Furthermore, Pope Urban pleaded with the people of Europe to unite, to band together to protect and answer the call of Emperor Alexios Komnenos, to defend their Greek Orthodox brethren of the Byzantine Empire who had fallen under the dominion of the Seljuk Turks. Finally, Urban concluded that the reclamation of the Holy Land for Latin Christendom would purge any participants' souls of sin. When Emperor Alexios solicited aid from Pope Urban II, he expected perhaps a small force of knights and peasant militias. Instead, he received tens of thousands of armed pilgrims, or crusaders, prepared to rout the Seljuk Turks.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 4-5.

¹⁷ Frederic Duncalf, "VII. The Councils of Piacenza and Clermont," *A History of the Crusades* 1 (1958): pp. 220-252, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9781512818642-017>.

¹⁸ Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York, NY: Schocken, 1984), 49.

Pope Urban II's call to crusade, by all accounts, checked all the boxes. His sermon at Clermont was the primary catalyst for the First Crusade, and the key to this success was framing the Crusade in a religious context. Unlike Gregory VII, Urban II did not construe the First Crusade as a military campaign overseen by the Pope. Urban II's demonization of Muslims, and appeal to the prevalent superstitious fear of damnation ensured that this "just war" would be viewed by contemporary Europeans as a war of salvation, a pilgrimage to cleanse their souls. This is especially important to note. The terms "crusade" and "crusader" are somewhat anachronistic. Urban II, and even the participants of the First Crusade, did not refer to themselves as such. Gregory VII and Urban II's projects for "Holy War" were so novel at the time of their inception that no contemporary word existed at first to describe them. The first crusades were known in their eras as an *iter* or *peregrinatio*, meaning journey and pilgrimage respectively. The term "crusader" (from the French word *croisade*, meaning "way of the cross") only emerged at the end of the twelfth century, almost a century after Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont. The retroactive application of the word "crusade" or "crusader" to the First Crusade can result in somewhat misleading phraseology, particularly in the forthcoming context of colonialism and imperialism. The participants of the First Crusade committed undeniably violent acts of warfare on their campaigns across the Levant. Unlike future Europeans who knowingly waged wars of conquest for the acquisition of wealth and imperial gains – perhaps exemplified by the Spanish conquest of the Americas, the establishment of colonial estates therein, and the mass seizure of gold thereafter – those who fought in the First Crusade did so with the irretrievable ethos of religious salvation. The participants of the First Crusade included soldiers and non-combatants; Pope Urban II's sermon at Clermont imbued an ontological aspect of pilgrimage, as opposed to evangelism or scorched earth campaigns, into the First Crusade. The

goal of the First Crusade was the same for those who were armed and those who were not: the promise of a transcendent penance to consecrate the spirit.¹⁹

The Outremer

The First Crusade effectively ended in 1099 with the siege and subsequent capture of Jerusalem by the crusading forces. The Kingdom of Jerusalem was established shortly thereafter, although not before the wanton massacre of the city's inhabitants. Upon entering the city, the assaulting force of Crusaders slaughtered Jerusalem's former defenders, as well as indiscriminately murdering Muslim and Jewish citizens.²⁰ Although there would be minor battles and skirmishes after the Siege of Jerusalem, the First Crusade was essentially over. No united Muslim counterattack (or *jihad*) was launched to reclaim Jerusalem or the territories captured by the crusaders. The Islamic world of the late 11th and early 12th centuries was far too disunited to organize a response akin to Pope Urban II's rally at Clermont, but contemporary Muslims also viewed the Crusades much differently than their Christian neighbors. There is little evidence to suggest the First Crusade was seen by the Muslim world at the time as a significant event or that Muslim leaders even recognized the religious motivations of the crusaders. 12th century accounts of Muslim writers instead suggest that the Arab and Turkic authorities of the region simply viewed the crusaders as merely a mercenary force employed by the Byzantine Empire attempting to reclaim lost territories.²¹

The Levant was now firmly in the hands of the crusaders and the Crusader States they had established: the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the County of Edessa, and the Principality of

¹⁹ Thomas Asbridge, *Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), 39-41.

²⁰ Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2008), 157-159.

²¹ Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades, Islamic Perspectives* (Oxford: Routledge, 1999), 61.

Antioch.²² Collectively, the Crusader States are referred to as the *Outremer*, a French term meaning “overseas.” Although governed by Catholic Western Europeans, this new administrative class was a minority. The autochthonous majority population were Muslim Arabs, with sizable minorities of Greek Orthodox Christians, Syriac Christians, and Jews. The establishment of the realms of the Outremer and informal end of the First Crusade marked a turning point for the former crusaders. The vast majority of crusaders and armed pilgrims, believing their sacred duty complete and their souls cleansed of sin, returned to Europe; according to 12th century chronicler William of Tyre, only about 2,000 infantrymen and knights remained in the Kingdom of Jerusalem.²³ The new Outremer also marked a change in historiographical recollection of the crusaders. Those who remained to settle or defend the new Crusader States are often referred to as “Franks,” reflective of contemporary Muslim sources in the Middle East. Muslim accounts of the First Crusade and its participants, much like their Christian counterparts, did not use the term “crusaders.” Rather, Muslim sources also refer to the participants of the crusades as “Franks,” as many of the now former crusaders originated from France or otherwise former territories of the antecedent Frankish Empire of Charlemagne (which would have also included Germanic and Italian peoples). Chronicles of the First Crusade, written in the early 11th century, referred to the Catholic Western European crusaders as *Franci* regardless of actual ethnicity or national origin. Byzantine Greek sources likewise use the term *Frangoi*, and Arabic sources referred to the crusaders as *al-Ifranj*. An alternative term, *Latini* or Latins, was also sometimes used by medieval historians and chroniclers. These medieval exonyms serve to distinguish the settlers from the indigenous population by language

²² A fourth Crusader State, the County of Tripoli, was established several years after the end of the First Crusade.

²³ Christopher Tyerman, *The World of the Crusades: An Illustrated History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 115-116.

and faith. A shift in identity thus occurred; no longer purported with the ethos and myths of Holy War, regardless of origin, the “settled” crusader had become the “Frank” in the historiographical record.²⁴

The lack of a united Muslim response to the First Crusade allowed Frankish control of the Outremer to quickly cement. Feudal hierarchies like those in Western Europe were established, with the monarch residing at the top of this hierarchy much like in Europe. A key difference between the feudal hierarchies of the Outremer and those of Europe is additional stratification based on Frankish or indigenous identity. Beginning in the early 12th century, the title of “King of Jerusalem” became styled in addition as “king of the Latins in Jerusalem.” This new epithet is indicative of a stark division between the Frankish settlers and indigenous population.²⁵

Exact information about the codified legal status or social standing of non-Frankish populations within the Outremer is difficult to ascertain. Unsurprisingly, the Muslim inhabitants of the Crusader States rarely appear in Roman Catholic sources. The Franks “had a natural tendency to ignore these matters as simply without interest and certainly not worthy of record.”²⁶ What is certain, however, is that the Franks did not overhaul indigenous institutions and entirely supplant them with their own feudal institutions from Western Europe. The populations of the Outremer did not fully assimilate into the culture of the crusaders, nor did the Franks fully integrate into the culture of the Levant. From this cross-cultural contact emerged a hybridized society wherein crusaders retained existing institutions and introduced their own customs from

²⁴ Andrew D Buck, “Settlement, Identity, and Memory in the Latin East: An Examination of the Term ‘Crusader States,’” *The English Historical Review* 135, no. 573 (2020): pp. 271-302, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/ceaa008>, 274-279.

²⁵ Hans Eberhard Mayer, “Latins, Muslims and Greeks in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,” *History* 63, no. 208 (1978): pp. 175-192, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-229x.1978.tb02360.x>, 175.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Europe. Muslims, as well as Jews and Eastern or Greek Orthodox Christians, had virtually no rights in rural towns and villages, where they were essentially serfs of the crusader lord who owned the land. However, this is more indicative of continuity rather than change. Orthodox Christians, Syriacs, and Jews in rural communities saw little change in their day-to-day lives. The key difference upon the establishment of the Outremer is that the former Muslim overlords of these non-Muslim populations were simply replaced by the crusaders; the main change was therefore that Muslim Arabs and Turks now found themselves at the lowest rung of the crusaders' feudal hierarchy.²⁷ Agricultural production in the Levant was regulated by the *iqta*, an indigenous Muslim system of land ownership and tithe somewhat to the feudal hierarchies of Europe, and this system was not heavily altered by the new Frankish overlords.²⁸ Indeed, many indigenous forms of governance were retained by the crusaders. For example, the *ra'is*, the leader of native Muslim and Syriac communities, and a kind of vassal (or intermediary between the landlord and the serfs) to whomever owned an area of land, was retained by many indigenous communities.²⁹

Indigenous Muslims and Orthodox Christians comprised the majority of the Outremer's population in the countryside, but Frankish (mainly French and Italian) colonists arrived to settle in rural and urban areas alike.³⁰ A fully accurate account of the demography of the Outremer after the First Crusade is virtually impossible, however scholars Joshua Prawer and Meron Benvenisti estimate that there were at most 120,000 Franks living in the cities of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, with another 250,000 Muslim and Orthodox Christian serfs in the countryside. According to this estimate, the Franks accounted for 15–25% of the total population of the

²⁷ *Ibid*, 177.

²⁸ Joshua Prawer, *The Crusaders' Kingdom: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (Praeger, 1978), 197.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 206.

³⁰ Joshua Prawer and Nahon Gérard, *Histoire Du Royaume Latin De Jérusalem* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001), 498.

Crusader States.³¹ From its inception, the Catholic Western European hegemony had always comprised a minority of the Outremer. However, after the First Crusade, a constant flow of settlers and new feudal lords continually arrived in the Levant, while most of the original crusaders who fought in the First Crusade returned to Western Europe as aforementioned. The Frankish populations of settlers who were not feudal lords, nobles, or kings constituted little more than a colonial frontier exercising rule over the native Jewish, Muslim, Greek Orthodox, and Syriac populations, who were more far numerous.

The feudal hierarchies and methods of governance of the Crusader States were undoubtedly mixed systems with characteristics of Western European norms and their autochthonous counterparts. However, the extent to which the actual cultural milieu of the Outremer was similarly hybridized is much more nebulous and is still debated by historians.

Part of this debate stems from revisionist histories of French imperialism. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, French historians such as E. G. Rey, Gaston Dodu, and René Grousset argued that the Franks, Muslims, and indigenous non-Catholic Christians co-existed in a completely integrated society. Historian Ronnie Ellenblum claims this view was greatly influenced by French imperialism and colonialism; if French crusaders could fully integrate themselves into the local milieu of the Middle East, then naturally the contemporaneous French Mandate could be just as harmonious.³² After World War II, scholars such as Joshua Prawer, R. C. Smail, Meron Benvenisti, and Claude Cahen argued that the crusaders lived totally segregated from the autochthonous inhabitants. They argued that the Franks were under constant threat of Arabization, Islamification, and Turkification by the native population and Muslim polities that

³¹ Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Subjected Muslims of the Frankish Levant," *Muslims Under Latin Rule, 1100-1300*, 1990, pp. 135-174, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400861194.135>, 148.

³² Ronnie Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4.

surrounded the Outremer. Prawer specifically argued further that the Crusader States were an early attempt at colonization, in which the Franks were a small ruling class, dependent on the native population for resources, goods, and services but made no attempt to integrate therewith. According to Prawer's theory, the feudal and rural European society to which the crusaders were accustomed was instead replaced by a segregationist, perhaps apartheidist urban society in the ancient cities of the Levant.³³ Historian Ronnie Ellenblum takes issue with this argument. She posits instead that the Franks were neither totally integrated with the native populations, nor segregated in the cities isolated from rural native communities, rather they settled in both urban and rural areas, specifically, in areas traditionally inhabited by Greek and Syriac Christians. Conversely, areas with large, traditionally Muslim populations had very little crusader settlement.³⁴ The Outremer undoubtedly contained multicultural societies which produced syncretic systems of governance, but the true extent to which the Frankish lords and settlers assimilated into the culture of the indigenous Muslims, Jews, and Christians (and vice versa) is still unknown.

Crusade and Colony

With the motivations of the first crusaders laid bare, and context into their governance of the Outremer given, it comes time to introspect. Can the First Crusade be considered a form of early colonialism? Can one say that the Crusader States of the Outremer were colonies? The topic of whether or not the Crusades can be considered a sort of early colonialism or proto-colonialism is hotly debated by historical scholars. The aforementioned historian Joshua Prawer

³³ Joshua Prawer, *The Crusaders' Kingdom: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (Praeger, 1978), 60.

³⁴ Ronnie Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10-11.

strongly believed that the Crusades represented a “trial run” of sorts for European colonialism and imperialism in the Americas. On the other hand, American author John Green believes that such a view is misguided. Green argues that “the crusades were not an example of early European colonization of the Middle East... that’s a much later post- and anti-colonialist view that comes at least in part from a Marxist reading of history.”³⁵ Much like the extent to which the Franks integrated and assimilated with the indigenous populations of the Levant, the connection between the crusades and colonialism is similarly nebulous in academia and is thus the subject of ongoing debate. The link between crusade and colony is not as definitive as a “yes or no” answer, but instead requires introspection into more theoretical aspects of colonialism.

It seems that part of the reason why the classification of the crusades as an early form of colonialism is so controversial is because of how we perceive colonialism. The word itself can mean many different things to many different people based on their own experiences and cultural memories. An American, for example, will probably associate colonialism with the European conquest and settlement of ostensibly empty land in the New World and the replacement of its native population with European settlers. While this is undoubtedly an example of colonialism, one to which the Outremer and the crusades do not conform, it would be illogical to claim that the crusades cannot represent *any* form of colonialism simply because they do not align with one’s pre-conceived notions of colonialism.

Is it possible to construct a more neutral definition of colonialism? Certainly, the word itself is not bound by the cultural mores and implicit biases of the nations which participated therein or benefited therefrom. *Collins English Dictionary* defines colonialism as “the practice

³⁵ CrashCourse. “The Crusades – Pilgrimage or Holy War?: Crash Course World History #15.” YouTube Video, 11:32. May 3, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0zudTQelzI>

by which a powerful country directly controls less powerful countries and uses their resources to increase its own power and wealth.”³⁶ *Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary* defines colonialism as “the system or policy of a nation seeking to extend or retain its authority over other people or territories.”³⁷ The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* provides several germane definitions, including “something characteristic of a colony” and “control by one power over a dependent area or people.”³⁸ Aiming for a definition that specifically applies to European history, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* defines colonialism as “the process of European settlement and political control over the rest of the world, including the Americas, Australia, and parts of Africa and Asia.” Lastly, German historian Jürgen Osterhammel arrived at the following definition, which will be the most salient: “[c]olonialism is a relationship between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonised people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonised population, the colonisers are convinced of their own superiority and their ordained mandate to rule.”³⁹

There is key differentiation in methodology between the settlement of the Outremer and the colonization of the Americas (the form of colonialism with which most are likely familiar). The colonization of the Americas was largely state-sponsored. Specific companies like the Virginia Company, alongside European monarchies, financed voyages and settlement. Such

³⁶ “Colonialism Definition and Meaning: Collins English Dictionary,” Colonialism definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd). <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/colonialism>.

³⁷ *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (1989), 291.

³⁸ “Colonialism Definition & Meaning,” Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/colonialism>.

³⁹ Osterhammel Jürgen, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, trans. Shelley L. Frisch (Princeton: Markus Wiener Pub, 2010), 16.

economic sponsorship, as well as state involvement evidently requires advanced economies with a burgeoning middle class and a centralized state. Medieval European polities (including the Outremer) at the time of the crusades were still entrenched in the economics of feudalism; there was no true middle-class or framework for privately-owned institutions that could sponsor colonial enterprises nor was there a centralized state whose governance was based on feudal obligations and hierarchies rather than a central bureaucracy for administrative governance.⁴⁰

It would however be folly to deny the fact that settlement and colonization of the region, by any definition, occurred in the Outremer. The Franks who settled in the Outremer occasionally created new settlements rather than settling in cities or villages that had already been inhabited for centuries. One example of this is the village of Bethgibelin, which former crusaders founded around 1136. Bethgibelin was established about one or two generations after the First Crusade; much like the familiar stories of settlers in Jamestown and Plymouth in North America, there were Europeans who were born in the Outremer and founded new settlements therein. While individual countries and feudal polities were unable to organize colonies in the Middle Ages, there were organizations that acted as surrogates for the colonial companies and enterprises of later centuries: military orders. These military orders (e.g., the Knights Hospitaller, the Knights Templar, the Teutonic Knights) were very wealthy organizations which received funding from European nobles to protect pilgrims and participate in the crusades. The wealth and resources that these military orders accumulated even surpassed those of some European monarchs and so were more than capable of establishing colonies in the Outremer. Bethgibelin, for example, received funding by the Knights Hospitaller to facilitate Frankish settlement.⁴¹ The

⁴⁰ Marwan Nader, *Burgesses and Burgess Law in the Latin Kingdoms of Jerusalem and Cyprus (1099-1325)* (Ashgate, 2006), 90.

⁴¹ Jean Richard, *The Crusaders c1071-c1291* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 140.

Frankish settlers originated from “Auvergne, Gascony, Flanders, Lombardy and Catalonia. Generally, the largest number of European settlers...were from the central, southern and western parts of France, and a few also from northern Spain and regions in Italy. In Bethgibelin the other settlers were from nearby Latin villages [in the Outremer].”⁴² Whole generations of Franks were born in the Levant. For many of the Franks and crusaders who settled in the Crusader States, towns such as Bethgibelin were meant to be a new permanent home. Much akin to rhetoric one would expect to see when describing 19th century New York or Boston, chronicler Fulcher of Chartres in 1124 described the settlement of the Outremer as such:

Consider, I pray, and reflect how in our time God has transferred the West into the East, For we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank is now a Galilaeen, or an inhabitant of Palestine. One who was a citizen of Rheims or of Chartres now has been made a citizen of Tyre or of Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already they have become unknown to many of us, or, at least, are unmentioned. Some already possess here homes and servants which they have received through inheritance. Some have taken wives not merely of their own people, but Syrians, or Armenians, or even Saracens who have received the grace of baptism. Some have with them father-in-law, or daughter-in-law, or son-in-law, or stepson, or step-father. There are here, too, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One cultivates vines, another the fields. The one and the other use mutually the speech and the idioms of the different languages. Different languages, now made common, become known to both races, and faith unites those whose forefathers were strangers. As it is written, “The lion and the ox shall eat straw together.” Those who were strangers are now natives; and he who was a sojourner now has become a resident, Our parents and relatives from day to day come to join us, abandoning, even though reluctantly, all that they possess. For those who were poor there, here God makes rich. Those who had few coins, here possess countless besants; and those who had not had a villa, here, by the gift of God, already possess a city. Therefore why should one who has found the East so favorable return to the West? God does not wish those to suffer want who, carrying their crosses, have vowed to follow Him, nay even unto the end. You see, therefore, that this is a great miracle, and one which must greatly astonish the whole world. Who has ever heard anything like it?⁴³

⁴² Marwan Nader, *Burgesses and Burgess Law in the Latin Kingdoms of Jerusalem and Cyprus (1099-1325)* (Ashgate, 2006), 94.

⁴³ August. C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants* (Princeton: 1921), 280-281.

One vital difference between the Outremer and its colonial counterparts of the Early Modern Era is the lack of a metropolis. The Thirteen Colonies, for example, clearly belonged to Great Britain. The British Empire was financially and politically responsible for its ownership, maintenance, and defense. Likewise, the colony of New Spain in modern day Mexico was clearly a colony of Spain. The Spanish Empire owned its colony in full and its colonial holdings were unquestionably under the Spanish Crown. European colonies in the Americas, Africa, and Asia were in turn expected to provide their mother country or metropolis with materials, raw resources, etc. Conversely, the Outremer had no metropolis. There was no expectation that the Kingdom of Jerusalem provide the Kingdom of France with anything. In the Outremer, the colony and the metropolis were one and the same. The colonies of the Crusader States, by nature of Europe's feudal system, were not sponsored by any one country. The colony-metropolis relationship that emerged after the 15th century simply did not exist in the Middle Ages. Rather, colonization was driven by individuals and the wealth of crusader military orders. Wealth extraction was certainly expected; Muslim and Christian peasants alike were still bound by feudal obligations to farm the land upon which they resided. Similarly, the Crusader States engaged in extensive trade with the wealthy merchant republics of Italy. These city-states (such as Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Amalfi) had their own quarters in cities of the Outremer and established trading colonies to amplify their own wealth.⁴⁴

Another important distinction between the Outremer and the colonies of the Americas, Africa, and Asia is the motivation of the colonizers and settlers. European colonialism in these continents was driven by explicit paternalism and greed. No matter the continent, European powers in the 15th century and beyond were clear in their goals of acquiring land and colonies.

⁴⁴ Joshua Prawer, "Colonization Activities in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *Revue Belge De Philologie Et D'histoire* 29, no. 4 (1951): pp. 1063-1118, <https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.1951.2115>.

The early modern maritime empires sought only to expand their reach throughout the world, enhance the wealth of the nation, and perhaps most saliently bring “civilization” to what was perceived as “uncivilized” regions of the world. The crusaders did not share these desires in their establishment of the Outremer. Even motivators that seem to be shared between the crusaders and their future colonial counterparts, such as religion, are quite different. The Europeans who established colonies in the New World and elsewhere sought to forcibly convert the indigenous populations to Christianity. Conversely, the crusaders had no evangelist design; converting the indigenous Muslim population of the Levant to Christianity was *not* amongst even the most fanatic crusader’s agenda.⁴⁵ Likewise, the crusaders had no paternalist concept of the “white man’s burden,” the drive of European colonists to engage in “civilizing missions” to brutally force native populations to adapt to the culture of the colonizers. Unlike future colonists, the crusaders did not delude themselves into thinking that the land which they were invading was “virgin land” or “uncivilized.”⁴⁶

Is the Outremer a form of colonialism then? The answer is dispositive: the Outremer established a civilization wherein a non-native, minority administrative class arrived to govern the larger majority population. The majority, native population was granted fewer rights than the incoming colonists, while the conquerors or “colonizers” established their own settlements and through various means funded the further settlement of the Outremer with more non-native populations whose ideology and national identity most closely conformed to that of the colonizers. As demonstrated by Fulcher of Chartres, settled crusaders or Franks who did not share a national or religious identity with the native populations came to think of themselves as “natives” and cast-off affiliation with their former homes. The fact that this form of colonialism

⁴⁵ Thomas Asbridge, *Crusades: The War for the Holy Land* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), 4-5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

differs in one or two significant ways from its more iconic forms of colonialism in the Americas, Africa, and Asia is a non-issue. The Outremer and the Crusader States were undoubtedly examples of early European colonialism. This does not mean that the Outremer contributed to European colonization elsewhere, nor does it mean that the colonization of the Americas, Africa, and Asia was a direct continuation of the colonialism of the Outremer. Recall Osterhammel's definition of colonialism (see page 21). The Outremer does not neatly fit into this definition. It contained instances of syncretic compromise in the creation of its feudal hierarchies. The Crusader States furthermore were neither beholden to a distant metropolis nor to one European power. Yet the most fundamental aspect of colonialism is true of the Outremer: a relationship between an indigenous majority and a minority of foreign invaders wherein these invaders are driven to settle and colonize new land for their own interests. The Crusader States certainly fit the definition of "colonialism" as we in the 21st century understand it, but this definition would certainly be unknown to 11th century Europeans. A colony by any other name is still a colony, thus the issue and aforementioned controversy amongst historians in classifying the Crusades as "colonial" is a matter of semantics. Rather than retroactively applying terms such as "colonialism" to medieval phenomena, perhaps a more inclusive term is needed to account for biases acquired via historical hindsight.

Unfortunately for the Franks and successive waves of crusaders, the Outremer was not to last. Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt and Syria, restored Muslim rule to much of the Levant in the mid-late 11th century. The Franks of Jerusalem suffered a decisive defeat in 1187, which marked a turning point for the Outremer. The realms therein continued to lose territory to encroaching Muslim states and were also riven by petty disputes among the Frankish nobility. Year after year did the Outremer slowly decay until it finally collapsed in the 13th century. The Principality

Antioch and the County of Tripoli had both ceased to exist by the 1290s. In 1291, almost 200 years after Pope Urban II's sermon at Clermont, the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt put an end to the Crusader States. The Mamluks swept across the Kingdom of Jerusalem in a series of victories; important cities such as Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut quickly capitulated to the Egyptian Sultanate without resistance. In 1298, the last Crusader State fell as the Mamluks captured Edessa. To solidify their hold over the Levant, the Mamluks sought to eliminate any physical trace of crusader settlement and rule. Ports and towns established by the Frankish settlers were sought out and destroyed, and descendants of those who settled in the region centuries earlier were forced to flee to Western Europe or nearby Cyprus.⁴⁷ Uncontested Muslim rule had been restored to the Levant after centuries of on-and-off struggles with the Franks and would-be crusaders. Yet the dismantling of the Outremer was not the end of European hegemony in the Levant.

II. The Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon

The Sykes-Picot Agreement

In the 20th century, Western European influence once again came to dominate the Middle East, centuries after Pope Urban II's sermon at Clermont had faded from the memories of Europeans, cemented by the dismantling of the Crusader States by Muslim empires. This time, however, the form of conquest and control was quite different. Following the Crusades, centuries of economic, political, and social development had led to new concepts of nationalism and imperialism in Europe, whereas the notion of launching a religious "crusade" had long since been lost. The Mandate System was now the primary institution driving European hegemony in the Middle East.

⁴⁷ Andrew Jotischky, *Crusading and the Crusader States* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 240-244.

The Mandates that granted France and Great Britain control over the Middle East were created after the First World War, but their origins are far more clandestine. World War I famously saw Europe embroiled in a conflict of its own making, the culmination of decades of political tensions, entangled alliances, and rampant military build-up. The Mandates were originally conceived during the war as France and Britain campaigned against their enemy in the conflict: the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans had sided with Germany against France and Britain, so as the war was ending the governments of both countries plotted to carve-up the Ottoman Empire upon its defeat and occupy its former territories. Thus, French and British diplomats engaged in a long series of backroom deals beginning in 1915. French diplomat François Georges-Picot and British diplomat Mark Sykes were instrumental in orchestrating the eventual framework for the French and British Mandates. The British and French governments finalized their agreement to divide the Middle East between themselves in 1916, under the famous Sykes-Picot Agreement. The agreement promised control of Palestine, Jordan, and Mesopotamia (now Iraq) to the British and France would be allocated Syria, Lebanon, and part of southeastern Turkey.⁴⁸ While no territorial exchange was official until the end of World War I in 1918, the League of Nations ultimately gave the French and British control of what was outlined by the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

The Sykes-Picot agreement and the Mandatory territories that resulted therefrom did not occur without controversy. Arab nationalists were outraged that the British had reneged upon previous agreements made during the war.⁴⁹ Indeed, in exchange for Arab military support against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, the British had promised that they

⁴⁸ Alexander Mikaberidze, *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2011), 860.

⁴⁹ Inside Story Team, "Sykes and Picot's Lasting Legacy," Al Jazeera America, June 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/inside-story/articles/2014/7/1/sykes-and-picot-slastinglegacy.html>.

would sponsor the creation of an independent Arab state. Instead, the Arabs who had fought alongside the British against their Ottoman hegemony now found themselves under British and French hegemony. In the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Mandates thereafter, both France and Great Britain ignored previous promises to Arab leaders.

Unsurprisingly, French and British authorities did not take the will of the native peoples of the Levant into account whilst formulating their secret agreements. Before the Mandates were finalized by the League of Nations, the United States launched an independent investigation to determine the best course of action for governing the region after dismantling Ottoman authority. This investigation was referred to as the 1919 Inter-Allied Commission on Mandates in Turkey but is more informally known as the King-Crane Commission. The commission sent its members to Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Anatolia to investigate popular sentiment regarding the impending Mandates. Published in 1922, the results of the King-Crane Commission found that the population of the Middle East overwhelmingly opposed the Mandates.⁵⁰ According to the results of the commission, independence was the most preferred choice followed by American occupation as a second choice, British occupation as a third choice, and French occupation was the fourth, least popular choice.⁵¹ The King-Crane Commission was not totally impartial; the commission's leaders Henry King and Charles Crane believed that the nations of the Middle East were not ready for *de facto* independence. However, Henry King also recognized that dividing the region into protectorates under the suzerainty of colonial empires like France and Great Britain would also not be beneficial for the region.⁵² King believed that the most amiable

⁵⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "King-Crane Commission," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/King-Crane-Commission>.

⁵¹ James L. Gelvin, "The Ironic Legacy of the King-Crane Commission," ed. David W. Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States*, 1999, pp. 15-32, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429492778-2>, 16.

⁵² *Ibid*, 17.

solution to the issue of governance in the Middle East was for the United States to oversee the region, but this notion was naturally rejected by the British and French, as well as the dominant political discourse of isolationism within the United States.

Both France and Great Britain “furthermore ignored ethnic and religious realities for the sake of their strategic interests; the possibility that any newly created Arab country could be independent was beside the point. In fact, the dominant racial discourse at the time certainly made it ridiculous for Europeans to entertain such independence. The belief that “the Arab nations were incapable of governing themselves” was the norm.⁵³ And so were the French and British Mandates built on lies and deep-seeded patronization of the indigenous Arabs.

The Mandates and the League of Nations

The Mandate System was not unique to the Middle East. After the First World War, the League of Nations established Mandates throughout the former colonies and overseas possessions of the empires who lost the war: Germany and Turkey. When the League of Nations was first created (by the victors of World War I), Article 22 of the League’s charter called for the creation of the Mandates in order to classify territories and peoples who were no longer ruled by their former imperial sovereigns but were also not “able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world.” Article 22 further called for these territories to be “entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility.”⁵⁴ The process to establish these Mandates laid out by the League of Nations charter was quite simple: removing the authority of

⁵³ Charles River Editors. *The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon: The History and Legacy of France’s Administration of the Levant after World War I*. (Charles River Editors, 2019), 13.

⁵⁴ Richard Hacken and Jane Plotke, “World War I Document Archive,” Peace Treaty of Versailles | Articles 1 - 30 and Annex | The Covenant of the League of Nations. <https://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa1.html>.

the former imperial power and supplanting it with that of one of the Allied Powers. The Mandates were divided into three classes: The territories in the Middle East formerly controlled by the Ottoman Empire were designated Class A Mandates, those who "... have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory."⁵⁵ The Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon falls under this category. All former German colonies in West and Central Africa became Class B Mandates, formerly referred to as *Schutzgebiete* (protectorates or dependencies) by the German Empire, and were deemed to require a greater level of oversight and control by their new Mandatory overseer: "the Mandatory must be responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion."⁵⁶ Class C Mandates were a sort of "miscellaneous" category, which included former German colonies in Southwest Africa and various islands in the Pacific.

Just as with the Crusades, it is equally essential to understand the motivations and underlying ethos of those who established the Mandates. Unlike the Crusades, which ultimately began because of the politicking and theological charisma of one man, Pope Urban II, the Mandates were not influenced by one sole person, but rather driven by the prevailing myth of the inherent superiority of European civilizations. From quoted sections of the League of Nations Charter which established the Mandates, it is more than evident that the Allied Powers and their agents believed that the people of the Mandates were simply unable to create and sustain functioning countries. For these non-European peoples are supposedly unable to "stand alone."

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Thus, from the beginning, the Mandates were rife with a sort of nefarious paternalism: the belief that only Europe could serve as the guiding hand for these “dark” continents and countries. These pseudo-sociological ideas were the norm in European academic and political thought in the 19th and 20th centuries and subordinated non-European natives to “uncivilized” peoples who *needed* the enlightening light of Europe. Until the decolonization of the Mandates, in the eyes of European scholarship and hegemony, these regions lacked true civilization. Common historical thought on this matter is exemplified by the British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, who wrote in 1963: “perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness... and darkness is not the subject of history.”⁵⁷

Despite the clear pejorative and patronizing view of the autochthonous nations placed under the Mandates, there were attempts by League of Nations officials to limit the extent to which these Mandates could become colonies. For example, the League forbade Mandatory powers to both construct military fortification in the Mandates and to raise an army. The Mandatory powers were also required to submit annual reports on the status of their respective Mandate(s) to an overseeing council within the League of Nations, the Permanent Mandates Commission. While it seems as though the bureaucrats within the League of Nations did not view the Mandates as true colonies, the same could not be said for the governing powers.⁵⁸

French and British administrators and government officials in the Levant viewed the Mandatory territories exactly as colonies and conquered territories.⁵⁹ The French and British also often

⁵⁷ Adebayo Oyeade, *African History Before 1885*, vol. 1 (Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press, 2003), 11.

⁵⁸ Norman Bentwich, *The Mandates System* (London, UK: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), 172.

⁵⁹ Idir Uahes, *Syria and Lebanon Under the French Mandate: Cultural Imperialism and the Workings of Empire* (London, UK: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 195.

failed to cooperate with the Permanent Mandates Commission and other League of Nations officials. French officials in Syria and Lebanon were known to simply refuse requests by the League of Nations for specific information about the region.⁶⁰ With the benefit of historical hindsight, it is more than apparent that the French and British had colonial and imperial ambitions in their new Mandatory territories, however, there seems to have been a great deal of cognitive dissonance at the time of the Mandates' establishment. The French and British bristled at the prospect of directly ruling the Mandates, both believing this to be too expensive. Moreover, direct rule was very unpopular, not only amongst the populations of the Mandates but also within the metropolis as well.⁶¹ The Mandates came to resemble military occupation and indirect rule via protectorates rather than true settler colonies. The only exception to this was the British Mandate for Palestine, as Great Britain sponsored Jewish immigration and the suppression of indigenous Palestinian Arabs.⁶² There were many within the League of Nations, France, and Great Britain who opposed colonialism and did not wish to see the Mandates become settler colonies, despite the prevailing views of paternalism toward non-Europeans. Unfortunately, obligations placed upon France and Great Britain to encourage local autonomy and statehood by the League of Nations meant very little in actuality. France, perhaps more than Britain, held that Lebanon and Syria were simply the latest additions to France's already expansive empire. No effort was made to facilitate the development of new laws and certainly no effort was made to nurture the institutions of autonomy and self-sufficiency.⁶³

⁶⁰ Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 84.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Charles River Editors. *The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon: The History and Legacy of France's Administration of the Levant after World War I*. (Charles River Editors, 2019), 34-35.

The most elemental basis of the Mandates was outlined in Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant as a “sacred trust of civilizations.” The initial design for the Mandates, whether by the naivete of the League or its own hubris, was for these Mandates to be temporary institutions to “guide” burgeoning civilizations who were judged as not yet worthy to become independent. Yet authority over these ostensibly ephemeral Mandates was granted to two countries who maintained global empires and overseas colonies, both of which have had historically poor reactions to the loss of territory and notions of self-government overseas. France and Great Britain had no desire to relinquish control of the Mandates.

The Mandate for Syria

France’s control of its Mandatory territories began almost immediately on rocky ground. Before officially organizing Syria and Lebanon into new protectorates, France first demanded that Great Britain evacuate all its soldiers who remained in Syria and Lebanon after Ottoman authority collapsed. Second, the French government had to deal with what were essentially new colonial acquisitions whose inhabitants had already proclaimed independent governments despite the ostensibly legitimate French Mandate for the region. The French government immediately took to dismantle Arab nationalist states (mostly created in Syria) whose independence was obviously not recognized by the French. This naturally led to a great deal of consternation in Syria, and riots broke out in Aleppo and Damascus. Furthermore, religious tensions in Lebanon also contributed to unrest in the region. Muslim inhabitants of Lebanon feared that France would proclaim the creation of a Christian state. These fears were not unfounded, as France had historically claimed that it was the rightful protector of Christians in the Middle East under suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. While the Ottomans were gone, France maintained this

historical claim as the basis for their control of the Mandate, specifically Lebanon with its larger autochthonous Christian population.⁶⁴

The nationalist tensions in Syria came to a boiling point in 1920, when Arab nationalists in Syria declared the creation of an independent Arab Kingdom of Syria. The goals of the nationalists were to secure the promises that the British and French had made to them during World War I: the creation of a truly independent Arab state. The French government, seeking to quell the rampant revolts throughout the region and crush nationalist sentiments, went to war with the Arab Kingdom. The war only lasted a few months, ending in the capitulation of the Syrian Arab nationalist government. While the Franco-Syrian War ended in 1920, the French military spent the next three years fighting against other insurgencies. The end of the Franco-Syrian War led to the formal establishment of the French Mandate's territorial make-up. France established several client states to allow the French government to indirectly rule the region: Greater Lebanon, the Alawite State, the State of Aleppo, the State of Damascus, and Jabal al-Druze. Greater Lebanon laid the foundation for the modern country of Lebanon, whereas the latter four states would later consolidate into one protectorate: the Syrian Federation (1922-1924), followed by the State of Syria (1924-1930) and later Syrian Republic (1930-1958).⁶⁵ Parts of the French Mandate notably overlapped with the bygone Outremer. Cities such as Beirut, Tripoli, Latakia, and briefly Antioch (now Antakya), which centuries earlier fell under the domains of the crusaders, were now controlled by Mandatory French authority.

The division of the Mandatory territories based partly on religious and ethnic identity (e.g. the Alawites and Druze gaining their own state) was done so in response to the initial

⁶⁴ Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 88-90.

⁶⁵ While the States of Aleppo and Damascus were unified by the Syrian Federation and later State of Syria, Jabal al-Druze and the Alawite State were only incorporated into this union by the Syrian Republic in 1936.

dissent against French rule. The French sought to prolong their rule in the Middle East indefinitely, despite the supposedly ephemeral nature of the Mandate System, and moreover sought to limit future revolts.⁶⁶ However, France's willingness to give local autonomy to the different ethnic groups of their new Mandate was quite limited. In the 1930s, the French government refused petitions from non-Arab minority groups in Syria (Syriacs or Assyrians, Kurds, and Circassians) to be granted special autonomy. These ethnic groups tended to be cooperative with French authorities, as local leaders of these communities were wary of retaining sovereignty living under a majority Arab Muslim state. These concerns fell on deaf ears.⁶⁷

Just five years after the Franco-Syrian War, the French military would once again find itself intervening in the region. In 1925, Syrian nationalists and local leaders regardless of ethnicity and religion fought to expel French governance. Sunni Muslims, Druze, Alawite, and Christian Syrians united under the banner of immensely popular Syrian nationalist Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, who sought Syrian unity and independence. Al-Atrash condemned France's decision to divide the region into smaller client states, the extreme economic hardships that befell Syria after France linked Syrian and Lebanese currency to the French franc, anti-Arab biases demonstrated by French military officials and administrators, and perhaps most importantly: the popular sentiment in the region that France's supplantation of indigenous local leaders with those from the French metropolis was an attempt to "de-Arabize" the region.⁶⁸ French officials had been inserted at every level of Syrian society, disrupting systems of local government which had remained undisturbed for decades if not centuries. The French expected French to be spoken, and

⁶⁶ William Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 5th ed. (Westview, 2012), 217.

⁶⁷ Jordi Tejel Gorgas, "Les Territoires De Marge De La Syrie Mandataire : Le Mouvement Autonomiste De La Haute Jazira, Paradoxes Et Ambiguïtés d'Une Intégration « Nationale » Inachevée (1936-1939)," *Revue Des Mondes Musulmans Et De La Méditerranée*, no. 126 (2009), <https://doi.org/10.4000/remmm.6481>, 221.

⁶⁸ Philip S. Khoury, "The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy, and the Nationalist Movement in Syria between Two World Wars," *Middle Eastern Studies* 18, no. 2 (1982): pp. 180-193, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263208208700504>, 184.

when this was impossible, translators were used. Thus, only the most imperfect understanding of local norms was imparted to the French.⁶⁹ The French had a pattern of assuming that indigenous people lacked both the structures and the competence for self-government, and that part of their civilizing mission was to impart that knowledge and gift those institutions. Thus, al-Atrash declared the need for a revolution to free Syria from the French yoke.

The Great Syrian Revolt was initially a success, as the French were caught off guard by the revolution and the fact that al-Atrash was able to unite such disparate groups across Syria.⁷⁰ The French temporarily lost complete control over important cities such as Damascus, but the French soon turned the tide in their favor. The French military was better equipped and trained than the Syrian revolutionaries.⁷¹ Cities captured by al-Atrash's forces were quickly retaken by the French and eventually the rebels were pushed into the countryside. The French committed numerous atrocities during the war, notably the aerial bombardment of civilian targets in both cities and more rural areas. Bombing was so intense that some parts of Jabal al-Druze were depopulated, and Damascus itself was bombed for 24 continuous hours.⁷² After two years, in 1927, the Great Syrian Revolt came to an end. French authority was reaffirmed, the leaders of the revolt including al-Atrash either fled the country or were captured and sentenced by French officials. In 1930, France unified all of the Syrian client states in the Mandate under the First Syrian Republic, which would be its final form under French authority.

By the late 1920s and into the 1930s, it was more than apparent to the population of Syria that the French had no intention of upholding the "sacred trust of civilization" outlined by the

⁶⁹ Charles River Editors, *The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon: The History and Legacy of France's Administration of the Levant after World War I* (Charles River Editors, 2019), 36-37.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Mazen Mohammad Fayez Al-Shaheen, *History of Deir Ezzor Governorate* (Deir ez-Zor, Syria: Dar Alturath, 2009), 753.

League of Nations. French Mandatory officials frequently rejected attempts to draft a constitution for a theoretically independent Syrian state. One such draft for a constitution was rejected in 1928 by the French because it contained language pertaining to Syria's geographic unity and did not sufficiently safeguard French authority and special privileges vis-à-vis governance and economic intervention.⁷³ Furthermore, the administration of the Mandatory governments was heavily dominated by the French. Non-French Syrian authorities were given very little power and did not have the authority to independently effect political change within the Mandate. The small amount of power that local leaders had was ephemeral and could easily be overruled by French officials. The French spared no expense to ensure that the people of the Mandate would lack all political efficacy and have no self-sufficient, independent government.⁷⁴ Indeed, after France had recaptured Damascus toward the end of the Great Syrian Revolt, the Prime Minister of France at the time, Alexandre Millerand declared that Syria would be under French control "the whole of it, and forever."⁷⁵

The Mandate for the Lebanon

French rule in Lebanon (or Greater Lebanon) saw far fewer conflicts than Syria. Part of this is certainly due to the relative size of the two countries. Syria is far greater in terms of both population and geographic size than Lebanon, which inevitably would lead to more conflict with sudden occupation and rule by an imperial power. Perhaps the key difference between the Lebanese and Syrian Mandates was the religious demography of each. A 1932 population census

⁷³ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "The French mandate." Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.). <https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria/The-French-mandate>

⁷⁴ William Cleveland, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 5th ed. (Westview, 2012), 223.

⁷⁵ Charles River Editors, *The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon: The History and Legacy of France's Administration of the Levant after World War I* (Charles River Editors, 2019), 30.

found that the population of Lebanon was almost evenly split between Muslims and Christians. According to the census, the number of Lebanese Christians actually outnumbered Lebanese Muslims (each religious group comprising approximately 51.2% and 48.8% of the population respectively).⁷⁶ By contrast, the population of the Syrian Mandate was overwhelmingly Sunni. The French were greeted by some Christian groups in Lebanon as heroes and liberators, having abolished the yoke of the Muslim Ottoman Turks. Conversely, the reception of French governance in Syria was hostile from the outset. The Syrian population always viewed the French as foreign invaders, but the Maronite Christians in Lebanon viewed the French as allies. Such an alliance however greatly alienated the Muslim Lebanese population, who felt a greater affinity with pan-Arabism rather than a strictly national Lebanese identity.⁷⁷ It was this alienation that contributed to the participation of some Lebanese Muslim sects (including Druze) in the Great Syrian Revolt in 1925.

Due to its relatively large Christian population and the French mythos of serving as the defenders of Middle Eastern Christians, the French government saw in Lebanon the perfect opportunity to create a client state dominated by Christians. The French considered the local Maronite Christian clergy to be their closest local allies in the region and so sought to give them disproportionate influence in the Lebanese government.⁷⁸ The first High Commissioner of the Levant (the foremost representative of the French government in Syria and Lebanon), Henri Gouraud created an Administrative Council to oversee governance in Lebanon. The members of the council were chosen based on religious affiliation and sect. 66% of the seats were reserved

⁷⁶ Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): pp. 219-241, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530199908705684>, 222.

⁷⁷ Charles River Editors, *The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon: The History and Legacy of France's Administration of the Levant after World War I* (Charles River Editors, 2019), 32-33.

⁷⁸ Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 89.

for Maronite Christians.⁷⁹ Although Maronite Christians represented less than 30% of the Lebanese population when the council was created, the alliance between France and the Maronite clergy guaranteed this portion of the population disproportionate influence in the government.⁸⁰ It is nonetheless important to note, however, that although the French considered their Maronite allies, the French administration did not view them as equals. Feelings of imperial paternalism were ever-present in Lebanon. Henri Gouraud decreed at the time of the creation of France's Mandate for Greater Lebanon:

Insofar as France, in coming to Syria, has pursued no other goal than that of allowing for the populations of Syria and (the) Lebanon to realize their most legitimate aspirations for freedom and autonomy... That Greater Lebanon, thus fixed within its natural limits, will be able to pursue as an independent state, to the best of its political and economic interests, with the help of France, the program it has mapped out.⁸¹

The bedrock of the Mandate System, the League of Nations' "sacred trust of civilization," as exemplified by the French, was anything but. The French government and its agents in the Levant certainly did not consider their responsibilities to be "sacred" and trust between any party in the region and France was rare. Even Christians who aligned with the French mythos as defenders of Christians in the Middle East were not trusted with independent self-rule. Syria and Lebanon are simply not European. To the French government, that could only mean that the nations of the region could not support their own civilizations independent of the French Empire.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 90.

⁸⁰ Rania Maktabi, "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): pp. 219-241, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530199908705684>, 222.

⁸¹ Hyam Mallat, "Comprendre La Formation Des États Du Liban Et De La Syrie à L'aune Des Bouleversements Actuels Dans Le Monde Arabe," *L'Orient-Le Jour* (lorientlejour.com, March 19, 2012), https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/750571/Comprendre_la_formation_des_etats_du_liban_et_de_la_syrie_a_l_aune_des_bouleversements_actuels_dans_le_monde_arabe.html.

III. Conclusion – Crusade and Mandate

Despite being separated from each other by over 800 years, the First Crusade and the French Mandate share striking similarities. There is much overlap in territory between Crusader States and the Syrian and Lebanese Mandates; both included cities such as Tripoli and Beirut. The French Mandate and the Crusader States were also quite demographically similar. The majority native population in both polities was Sunni Muslim and ethnically Arab. Likewise, there were noticeable Christian and non-Arab minority groups who fell under the lordship of the Mandate and the Crusader States. Lastly, the social and political hierarchy of both the French Mandate and the Crusader States was dominated by French administrators who left the French metropolis to oversee governance in the Levant. However, these similarities between the Crusader States and the French Mandate are simply this: superficial. At first glance, one might think that the Mandate and Crusade were similar institutions of conquest, imperialism, and colonialism, but this is simply not true. The differences in motivation and governance in each era are far more complex than overlapping demography and geography.

The difference in motivation of the First Crusade and French Mandate are best understood in the context of religion. Those who participated in the First Crusade were motivated by religious superstition and fear. The first crusaders considered themselves to be armed pilgrims who had engaged themselves with the sacred duty to defend their Christian kin in the Holy Land and restore that same territory to Christian rule. In so doing, the crusaders believed that their souls would be sanctified and cleansed of sin. Conversely, for those in the League of Nations and French government, the French Mandate was not necessarily a matter of religion and certainly not a matter of religious salvation. The motivation of the French and their counterparts in the League of Nations was paternal in nature, based on faux ideals of the

Enlightened European and the backward native. According to the League and French government, the people of the Levant were simply not capable of self-governance. It can be said that there is some similarity how in both eras Christian Europeans looked down upon the Muslim natives. Pope Urban II's sermon at Clermont was so successful in rallying Europeans behind the idea of a Holy War because it demonized Islam and the Muslims of the Levant. While such fiery demagoguery is largely absent from the French Mandate, the French of the 20th century looked down upon the indigenous Muslims as well. However, as aforementioned, the French also considered the native Christians to be "junior partners" in the Mandatory hierarchy.⁸² Furthermore, neither the French Mandate nor the Crusades had grand design of religious conversion or evangelism.

In terms of governance, there is some resemblance between the Crusader States and the French Mandate. The Franks of the Crusader States established a hierarchy in the region with its Muslim population at the lowest rung but did not do so out of such condescending and pseudoscientific paternalism, rather because it was the oppressive feudal system with which they were most familiar. Muslim administrators and more upper-class lords were ousted from positions of power in both the Crusader States and the Mandate, but in the case of the former it was so that the settled crusaders could gain new feudal estates amongst the spoils of their conquests.⁸³ Despite settlers coming from Europe, Muslims and non-European Christians still comprised most of the population in the Crusader States and so were obligated by feudal contract to work the land of their Frankish overlord. In the Syrian and Lebanese Mandates, autochthonous

⁸² Hyam Mallat, "Comprendre La Formation Des États Du Liban Et De La Syrie à L'aune Des Bouleversements Actuels Dans Le Monde Arabe," L'Orient-Le Jour (lorientlejour.com, March 19, 2012), https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/750571/Comprendre_la_formation_des_etats_du_liban_et_de_la_syrie_a_l%2527aune_des_bouleversements_actuels_dans_le_monde_arabe.html.

⁸³ Joshua Prawer, *The Crusaders' Kingdom: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (Praeger, 1978), 190.

leaders were supplanted by the French because the French sought total control over the region and did not believe the population to be ready for independent rule. These concepts were foreign to the Franks and crusaders, even though they also rendered autochthonous peoples subordinate to themselves.

The actual inner workings of the Crusader States and French Mandate were evidently quite different as well. The Crusader States were truly *de facto* independent countries. The Kingdom of Jerusalem, for example, was vassal to no other country and managed its own affairs both domestic and international. Conversely, the states within the French Mandate were not independent countries. France was always the ultimate suzerain of the Mandate. Greater Lebanon could not manage its own foreign policy, nor could it manage its own domestic affairs without intervention and significant oversight by its hegemon abroad. Likewise, the economies of Lebanon and Syria were tied to France's own, the French government linked the currencies of each to the franc. Conversely, the Crusader States coined their own currencies and managed their own economies and created independent markets for the exchange and consumption of goods.⁸⁴

Language plays a key difference in Frankish and French governance as well. The crusaders (and later the Franks) despite being dominated by the French were quite linguistically diverse. According to chronicler Fulcher of Chartres:

And whoever heard such a mixture of languages in one army? There were present Franks, Flemings, Frisians, Gauls, Allobroges, Lotharingians, Alemanni, Bavarians, Normans, English, Scots, Aquitanians, Italians, Dacians, Apulians, Iberians, Bretons, Greeks, and Armenians. If any Breton or Teuton wished to question me I could neither reply nor understand.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 391-393.

⁸⁵ Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem 1095 - 1127*, ed. Harold S. Fink, trans. Francis Rita Ryan (Columbia University Press, 1969).

The exact language used by the crusaders and the Franks as a lingua franca to overcome these language barriers is not known for certain, however it likely would have been a descendant of Vulgar Latin, specifically an early dialect of modern French.⁸⁶ The Kingdom of France had quite a prestigious royal court, whose culture was admired throughout medieval Europe. Many of the crusaders, even if not ethnically French, would also have come from countries controlled by French-speaking or *langue-d'oil*-speaking peoples such as the Normans in England and Sicily. Most of the native population in the Crusader States spoke Arabic in addition to minorities of Armenian, Greek, and Shaz Turkic speakers, however French remained a language of the nobility. In order to communicate with non-French speakers in the Levant, the Franks relied upon interpreters and translators (who also served Muslim lords prior to and following the Crusades) referred to as a “dragoman.”⁸⁷ Neither the Franks nor the Crusaders impressed French language upon the local populace. Conversely, a significant factor in the French governance of the Mandates was the forced use of the French language. The French expected that their language, and not Arabic, be used as much as possible in day-to-day life.⁸⁸ Part of the anxieties and unrest that caused the Great Syrian Revolt was the fear that the French were attempting to subvert the Arabic culture of Syria and supplant it with their own.⁸⁹

The crusaders and Franks were neither evangelists nor settler colonists, however the sponsored settlement of the Levant by the Franks marks another key difference. Agents of the Crusader States, whether they were independent citizens or wealthy military orders, funded the creation of ports and new settlements within the Levant. While the Franks of the 11th century had

⁸⁶ Laura K. Morreale and Nicholas L. Paul, *The French of Outremer: Communities and Communications in the Crusading Mediterranean* (Fordham University Press, 2018), 216.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 232.

⁸⁸ Charles River Editors, *The French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon: The History and Legacy of France's Administration of the Levant after World War I* (Charles River Editors, 2019), 35.

⁸⁹

no concept of colonialism (certainly not as we understand it), there was no over-arching goal to replace the population of the Levant with Christian Europeans. The Crusader States exemplified the workings of a colony, but not a *settler colony*. This distinction is very important, as in the latter case, a settler colony is indicative of the genocide and replacement of indigenous groups that occurred in the Americas. In the 20th century, neither France nor the League of Nations sought to sponsor colonial enterprises akin to those that occurred in the Americas. The League of Nations explicitly sought to avoid colonialism in the creation of the Mandate System, and France did not fund the settlement of French citizens in the Levant. Recall the earlier quote from Fulcher of Chartres (see page 23). No such colonial phenomena occurred during the French Mandate. 20th century France knowingly acted in shaping the French Mandate with the quintessence of empire-building and paternalism, but the crusaders did not. For instance, the Franks did not seek to convert or alter the culture and language of the indigenous nations to fit more closely that of the Europeans because no such concepts of nationalism or “the nation” yet existed. It is because of the French Mandate, not the Crusades, that Lebanon and perhaps Syria are considered francophone countries. The Mandate certainly occurred much more recently however the French Mandate actively sought to “francize” the region, a motivation which the crusaders did not share.

Herein lies the crux of the differences between the Franks of the Crusader States and the French of the Levantine Mandates. Separated by more than 800 years, there were simply concepts and ideas that would be alien and strange to each party despite sharing a religion and (in most cases) ethnicity. The crusaders and later the Franks had no formalized concept of colonialism, imperialism, or nationalism. With the benefit of historical hindsight, it is a simple exercise to point at an institution of the Franks’ Crusader States and call it “colonialist” or “imperialist” and it may very well be so, but these are modern theories. Does this contradict the

idea that the Crusader States were a form of colonialism? No, however referring to the Crusades as simply a form of proto-colonialism or early European colonization fails to consider how contemporaneous people had no such concept thereof. More nuance is required.

The concepts of Crusade and Mandate are so fascinatingly similar and yet so different for this reason; in tandem, the First Crusade and the French Mandate are somewhat of a dyad whose similitudes tempt overlapping comparative historical themes and narratives, yet also resist comparison by nature of the ontological anachronisms of the meaning we place on historical schemata relative to those of contemporaneity.

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