

Nomadic Violence in the First Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Military Orders

Jochen G. Schenk

German Historical Institute, London

This present study takes its inspiration from Ronnie Ellenblum's revisionist book on crusader castles, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*.¹ In the book Ellenblum not only challenges prevailing ideas of the socio-political functions and implications of the medieval castle. Relying a great deal on Raymond Smail he also develops the view that castles marked the centres of the lordships dependent on them, that the size and shape of lordships were determined by the power radiating from these castles and that borders existed where such power ceased to be effective.² Moreover, in his previous study on patterns of Frankish settlement in the Latin East Ellenblum has described the unevenness of rural settlements in the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, a kingdom that was divided by cultural borders dating back to Byzantine and Biblical times. It was along the lines of a cultural frontier and along religious divisions, which had segregated, for example, the Samaritan population from the Byzantine Christians in Central Samaria, that the rural settlement of the Franks developed, creating wide spaces where Frankish settlers never gained a foot and where nomadic tribesmen ('wandering Turks' as well as Bedouins) made up a large percentage of the population.³ These were also the regions where the military orders of the Temple and the Hospital established some of their major strongholds during the second half of the twelfth century. This study argues that in addition to protecting the kingdom of Jerusalem against perceived enemies from without, these strongholds are evidence of the military orders' involvement in policing nomads roaming within and traversing through the kingdom.

A second outcome of Ellenblum's more recent research is his concept of 'geography of fear'.⁴ It correlates the degree of actual threat, measured by the number of reported attacks on the kingdom, with the activity of castle building over a prolonged period of time. The way he sees it, after 1099 the kingdom did not endure

in a perpetual state of emergency, as the chroniclers and many historians wanted us to believe. Rather, the roughly ninety years leading to Saladin's decisive victory over the Frankish army at Hattin in 1187, which put an end to the first Frankish kingdom, can be divided into a period of frequent military engagement between Franks and Muslims, a period of relative security, and a period of sustained Muslim offensive, which resulted in the creation of the Frankish frontier. The first of these periods, which lasted from 1099 until 1115, was defined by the frequent incursions of Fatimid armies from the south and Seldjuk armies from the east into the kingdom of Jerusalem. The second, lasting from 1115 until 1167, witnessed a sharp decline in the number of orchestrated Muslim attacks and an increase in Frankish offensive campaigns, which coincided with the establishment and re-enforcement of numerous fortresses, particularly in the south-western part of the kingdom. The third period, which lasted until 1187, saw the crusader states put under increasing pressure from a united Muslim enemy under the charismatic leadership of Nur ad-Din and Saladin.⁵

The dates for each period can be debated and would have differed from region to region, but the chronology, even in its narrowest terms, suggests that the Order of the Temple was founded, and the Order of St John became military, in the second period, and thus at a time of relative peace and security (the frequency of Muslim attacks during that period was approximately twelve times less than during the first stage, from 1099 to 1115).⁶ The creation of the Order of the Temple in 1120 happened more than a decade after the last Fatimid attack from Ascalon on Jerusalem and seven years after the last reported attack by the joint armies of Damascus and Mosul from Damascus.⁷ What the founding brothers of the Order of the Temple would have been experiencing was, in relative terms, a period of peace and Frankish expansion. Similarly, King Fulk's transfer of the castle Bethgibelin to the Order of St John in 1136, which is the earliest evidence we have for the militarization of the Order, occurred at a time when the large-scale Fatimid intrusions into the kingdom orchestrated by, and channelled through, nearby Ascalon had already decreased significantly (although Ascalon was still, correctly, perceived as a threat).⁸

The creation of the military orders was therefore also a response to a different kind of immediate threat, one that grew from within the newly created crusader states, albeit often with the support of, or influenced by, Aleppo, Damascus or Cairo. In the case of the Templars it is well documented that an important element of that perceived threat was the danger created by roaming bands of highwaymen, who preyed on pilgrims and other travellers using the old pilgrim roads. The road leading east from Acre to Rama was, according to the eleventh-century Persian traveller Nasir Khusraw, beleaguered by 'disorderly men, who set upon anyone whom they saw to

be a stranger in order to rob him of everything that he had.⁹ The same was true for a stretch of the road leading from Rames to Jerusalem, where travellers suffered from the attacks of nearby villagers who were eventually smoked out of their mountain hideouts and killed by Baldwin of Edessa.¹⁰ The pilgrim Saewulf, who toured the Holy Land in 1102-3, and Abbot Daniel, travelling the region three years later, were shocked by the violence conducted by brigands to which travellers on the roads from Jaffa to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem to the river Jordan, to Hebron, into Galilee, and in Baysan were exposed, with much of the blame being directed against 'Saracens' from Ascalon. The situation had not improved when Abbot Ekkehard of Aura was touring the Holy Land sometime between 1110 and 1115,¹¹ and, judging from other accounts, visitors to Bethlehem and travellers in Galilee did not fare much better.¹² Bedouin violence in particular was also endemic in the Sinai desert, along major Muslim pilgrim routes to Mecca, and had by the eleventh century spread into Egypt.¹³

In the kingdom of Jerusalem, it is difficult to discern who the perpetrators were who caused travellers, and eventually the Frankish government, such trouble. The sources mention 'Turks' or 'Turcomans', 'Saracens' and 'Bedouins'. Since the second century the term 'Saracen' (*Saracenus*) was used as a synonym for the Bedouin Arab, including Arabian tribesmen who by the eleventh century had settled in Palestine and Syria.¹⁴ 'Turk' and 'Turcoman' would refer to tribesmen from the Seljuq empire who were again pouring into Northern Syria and Palestine from Persia in the eleventh century. Roaming freely around the countryside they were, to quote Carole Hillenbrand, 'something of a loose canon': unreliable, war prone, and loyal only to their own tribe.¹⁵ The term 'Bedouin', would refer to Arabic-speaking pastoral nomads in general, Christians as well as Muslims, who inhabited the deserts to the east and south of the Latin kingdom.¹⁶ Among the tribes who had migrated to Palestine and Syria since the sixth century and who were still present in the Latin kingdom at the time of the crusades were the Banū Kilab in northern Syria, the Banū Tayy in southern Syria and the Banū Kalb in central Syria (around Damascus).¹⁷

As recently as 1993 the French geographer and historian Xavier de Planhol described the 'population bédouine' as 'fondamentalement agressive' and concluded that 'les nomades constituent une immense force de frappe potentielle pour qui saura les grouper et les discipliner.'¹⁸ But the terms Bedouin, Saracen and Turk were (and are) easily mixed up. Syriac writers customarily described Saracen rulers as Bedouins, and Ellenblum has proposed the possibility that local Christians in general may have 'regarded the Muslim occupation as equivalent to a nomadic incursion'.¹⁹ The anonymous author of the *Tractatus de locis et statu sancta terre ierosolimitane*, writing in 1168-87, and the anonymous author of the *Historia Peregrinorum*,

recalling an event that occurred on 25 April 1190, both mention 'Bedouin' marauders who were commonly known as 'free-roaming' or 'wild' Turks (*silvestres Turci*, *agrestes Turci*), and who in the case of the *Historia Peregrinorum* seem to have been Turcoman tribesmen living in the mountains of Anatolia.²⁰ Possessing neither homeland nor home and forever living together in campsites in tents made of hides, the 'Bedouins' sought permission to graze their animals from Christians and Saracens alike. In the eyes of the author of the *Tractatus* they were traitors (*proditores maximi*) and thieves (*latrones insignes*) since they acted as friends and brothers of the Christians one day, helping them to fight the Saracens, but aided the Saracens the next if it seemed opportune to them, selling captured Christians to the Saracens and Muslim captives to the Christians as they saw fit.²¹ The author of the *Historia Peregrinorum* recalled that 'Bedouins' (or 'wild Turks') descended 'in hordes' from the mountains when the army of Frederic Barbarossa entered Anatolia. '[A]lways in arms and willing and ready to fight', they were brave (or foolish) enough to provoke a professional Frankish army.²² Writing in the 1280s, the Dominican Bourchard of Mount Sion made the distinction between the 'Saracens', whom he remembered as sinful yet hospitable, courteous and kind, and the 'Medianites, who are now called "Bedouins" or "Turcoman"'. They were herdsmen with no fixed dwellings and, in Bourchard's memory, 'exceedingly warlike'.²³ The important distinction made here is between a friendly sedentary population (Saracens) within the kingdom of Jerusalem and a war prone nomad one (Turcoman nomads and Bedouins). William of Tyre, however, writing a century before Bourchard, singled out the 'Saracens' within the borders as having posed the greatest threat to the nascent crusader kingdom, but he seems to have used the term as a general denominator. Recalling the first year of the kingdom he informs the reader:

The cities which had come under our power were but few, and these were so situated in the midst of the enemy that the Christians could not pass from one to another, when necessity required, without great danger. The entire country surrounding their possessions was inhabited by infidel Saracens, who were most cruel enemies of our people. These were all the more dangerous because they were close at hand, for no pest can more effectively do harm than an enemy at one's very doors. Any Christian who walked along the highway without taking due precaution was liable to be killed by the Saracens, or seized and handed over as a slave to the enemy. Moreover, they refused to cultivate the fields, in order that our people might suffer from hunger. In fact, they preferred to

endure famine themselves rather than furnish anything to the Christians, whom they looked upon as enemies.²⁴

The research undertaken by Ellenblum in particular has helped a great deal to clarify the rather bleak picture described by William of Tyre.²⁵ But one should note that the 'enemy at the door' to which William was referring was not lurking in Cairo or Damascus. The threat was created by Muslims within the realm whom William, writing with hindsight, suspected of collaboration with the enemy outside. The danger they posed was twofold. On the one hand, and this accusation would have been directed against the sedentary population, they were capable of putting the economic survival of the Frankish lords at risk by refusing to produce their crops. On the other, and this would have applied to the nomadic population, they were prone to thievery and murder and therefore posed an imminent physical threat to the Christians.²⁶ To continue with William,

Nor was it on the highways alone that danger was feared. Even within the city walls, in the very houses, there was scarcely a place where one could rest in security. For the inhabitants were few and scattered, and the ruinous state of the walls left every place exposed to the enemy. Thieves made stealthy inroads by night. They broke into the deserted cities, whose few inhabitants were scattered apart, and overpowered many in their own houses.²⁷

William of Tyre does not specify the identity or origin of these marauders but considering the long history of alleged Bedouin violence in Syria it is reasonable to assume that they may have included Bedouins from the old Arab tribes who were reported to have harassed the population of Rome's Syrian provinces in the sixth century, who had swept in waves over Syria during the early Islamic conquest and again in the tenth and early thirteenth centuries -- penetrating deep into the countryside, devastating large parts of southern Syria and dominating northern Syria in the late tenth and eleventh century -- and of whom some had stayed behind, merged with the local tribes and established themselves in the hills and mountains of Syria, whence they were accused of habitually harassing travellers on nearby roads.²⁸

That the threat posed by bands of marauders was taken seriously by the early crusader settlers can be seen by some of the barons' brutal reactions to it. Baldwin of Edessa smoked hundreds of suspected robbers out of their mountain caves near the Jaffa-Jerusalem road, and in 1139 Thierry of Flanders, taking the army of Jerusalem with him, successfully besieged the most notorious of the fortified castles in the

mountains of Gilead, which was used by bandits as a rallying point for raids into the plains of Judea and Transjordan.²⁹

The areas of Nazareth and Baysan were described as two particularly lawless regions by Abbot Daniel, who visited both places in the early years of the twelfth century.³⁰ But the lawlessness he describes was indicative of a larger problem, which affected the former Roman province of Samaria, north of Jerusalem, in which the town of Baysan was situated, and the eastern part of Galilee on which the town of Nazareth bordered. Ellenblum's own archaeological survey of the Latin Kingdom illustrates that throughout the crusader period Eastern Galilee was almost completely void of Frankish rural sites and no attempts seem to have been made by the Frankish regime to collect tithes or conduct other administrative activities in this region.³¹ Violent resistance against foreign government had a long tradition in particular in the region around Baniyas, which under Byzantine rule had developed into a hotbed of Jihad activity. Holy warriors were recruited partly from among the refugees who had fled the cities conquered by Byzantium and partly among Arab Bedouin tribes, who, attracted by the promise of pillage and by jihadist ideologues, would often travel long distances to partake in raiding campaigns against Byzantium, thus provoking Constantinople to retaliate brutally.³²

According to Ellenblum, it was not only Latins, but Jews and Muslims living in Eastern Galilee who could be 'harassed by nomads and criminal elements'.³³ Nomads in general and Bedouins in particular made up a large proportion of the population. They were particularly numerous in the Golan, the Hawran and the Jordan valley, and thus in areas from which much of the violence in Eastern Galilee spread. William of Tyre, reporting on the construction of the fortress of Vadum Jacob on the eastern fringe of Galilee in 1178, relates how even then bands of robbers (*latrunculi*) occupied villages and were terrorizing the inhabitants of Eastern Galilee without any notable interference. Eventually their holdout at modern Peqi'in was overthrown by King Baldwin, although a large number of robbers allegedly managed to escape to Damascus whence they continued their attacks.³⁴

If a seigniorial government existed in Eastern Galilee at the time but was too weak to subjugate the robbers and suppress the violence relying on its own resources, this may help to explain why the castle of Vadum Jacob, built on the request of the Templars, was deemed necessary.³⁵ The district of Nazareth, which lay at the northern fringe of Eastern Galilee, would have faced many of the same problems caused by a largely nomadic population under weak governmental oversight.

The case for Baysan in Central Samaria seems to have been similar. Situated in a region that had violently resisted Byzantine settlement, Baysan, which Tancred had occupied in 1099 and which fell to Saladin in 1183, was the only mixed community

in a twenty-kilometres radius of land that the Byzantine repression of previous revolts had otherwise left 'almost totally deserted'.³⁶ The plains of Baysan provided excellent pastures for Bedouins who would enter the kingdom in large numbers to graze their animals. Albert of Aachen, who once was considered a poor source but now is thought to have relied on the eyewitness testimony of returning crusaders, reports that in spring 1119,

...certain Saracens from the realm of Arabia, and certain people of the race of the Idumei, whom people nowadays call Bedouins, were leading out of their land and region herds of camels, over thirty thousand, ten thousand oxen, flocks of sheep, and countless thousands of goats, and driving them to the pastures on the flanks of the realm of Damascus, where they attacked the ample grass by permission and consent of the prince of the land of Damascus, in return for an agreed sum of bezants which the lord of the land himself was going to receive from them. With so many thousands of beast, over four thousand cavalry and infantry went along to guard the herds, from the lands of Egypt, Arabia, and the Bedouins, taking bow and quiver, lance and sword, and a great abundance of food supplies.³⁷

According to Albert, attracted by the abundance of spoil a band of sixty Frankish infantrymen and hundred and sixty cavalry under the command of Joscelin of Courtenay, lord of Tiberias, and William and Geoffrey of Bures, attacked the unassuming herdsmen but were soundly defeated by a much stronger Bedouin guard.³⁸ A Frankish retaliation army under the command of the king soon arrived to confront the Bedouins, but intimidated by the nearby presence of Damascus the king instead agreed to settle the issue with a payment of blood-money and a tax from the Bedouins.

The demand of blood-money and taxes may serve as evidence for the king's royal authority over the Bedouins as his special subjects (on which more later). More than anything else, however, in this case it exemplified the power vacuum that existed in Eastern Galilee and Central Samaria at the time, as well as the amount of authority that Damascus still managed to hold in the region of Baniyas. The political situation not only encouraged Bedouin tribesmen eager to use the region's fertile pastures to rely on support from the rulers of Damascus (who, albeit suspicious of them, had a history of employing Bedouins and Turcomans for their causes);³⁹ it also may have tempted bands of brigands to terrorize the outskirts of Frankish towns with large Muslim populations such as Nablus.⁴⁰

The direct correlation between weak governance, an increasing nomadization (or Bedouinisation) of the population and brigandism, which has been pointed out by Ellenblum, is well proven, as is the correlation between internal political conflict and an increase in Bedouin violence.⁴¹ One consequence of the process of nomadization that most regions in the Near East underwent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries⁴² was that disputes swept easily across political boundaries, which made them difficult to solve with the rigid tools of Frankish government. The Frankish laws were hardly suited to deal with a population of itinerant tribesmen, who, unlike sedentary peasants, entered and exited the spheres of authority of different political and ecclesiastical bodies, Muslim and Christian alike, at apparently free will.

Although their itinerant life rendered the nomads suspicious in the eyes of many Christian and Muslim rulers – the anonymous thirteenth century author of the *Memoria Terre Sancte* and Saladin were equally wary of the notorious disloyalty of Bedouin auxiliaries and their habit of salvaging from the defeat of others – it also made them potentially very valuable sources for information and helpful allies.⁴³ To keep them in check and in order to profit from their natural dependence on pastures the Bedouins were given special legal status in the kingdom of Jerusalem in that they were put under the special protection and jurisdiction of the king as the only legal body who could, in theory, exercise overall authority over them in all parts of the realm and to whom they paid tributes in return for grazing rights.⁴⁴ To facilitate the government of Bedouin tribes the royal administration made attempts to collect data on the names, sizes (measured in ‘tents’) and locations of individual tribes within the kingdom with the aim in view to create assessable financial values in form of taxes which could be transferred, bought and sold. That the administration had some success in this endeavour is obvious from the fact that in 1138 the canons of the Holy Sepulchre received the village of Thecuas with its land, peasants and the right to collect tribute from Bedouin tribes grazing their livestock there, and that some time before 1161 Queen Melisende enfeoffed the viscounts of Nablus with a Bedouin tribe consisting of 103 individually named and listed families (tents).⁴⁵

In practice, however, the Bedouins, much like the Turcomans,⁴⁶ remained almost impossible to control and were always likely to switch sides if the opportunity for more lucrative alliances presented themselves. Travelling in large treks guarded by armed warriors their numbers and aggressive nature marked them as potentially destabilizing factors wherever they went. The Bedouins from the Banū Khālid and Banū Rabi’ah branches of the Tayy confederation who arrived at Baysan in 1119 to graze their animals may not have counted four thousand warriors, as Albert of Aachen would like us to believe, but they brought more than enough men-at-arms with them to defeat a high profile Frankish raiding party.⁴⁷ Twelve years earlier King

Baldwin had to abandon his plan of a full-front assault with sixty knights on a merchant caravan from Egypt heading for Tyre, Sidon, Beirut and Damascus for similar reasons.⁴⁸ Baysan and the plains surrounding it were too close to Damascus for the Frankish king to exercise his authority effectively. It was to Damascus that the Bedouins had paid tribute in exchange for grazing rights and it was the military might of Damascus that prevented the king and his army from retaliating against them.

In the light of all this, the question arises how the experience of insecurity, or helplessness, that prevailed in some parts of the kingdom and that was stirred further by a high level of brigand activity in regions with large nomadic populations relates to the spread of the military orders in the kingdom before the rise of Saladin.

The pressing problem to which the military orders presented a solution at the time when the kingdom experienced only limited external threat was twofold. On the one hand increased efforts needed to be undertaken to secure pilgrim sites and major routes of communication and traffic from marauders; on the other a way had to be found to deal with the more general - and underlying - problem of handling, controlling and monitoring the Bedouin tribes and other nomads who lived in the kingdom or were traversing through it.

The first point is well researched. The Order of St John had its origin in a pilgrim hospital and, after the Templars had set the example, it seemed for a substantial fraction of the brothers like a logical step that the Order should add military service to its work for the frail and poor.⁴⁹ The Order of the Temple was founded later but for the explicit purpose to ease the plight of pilgrims by use of the sword. Very likely, its foundation was an immediate reaction to the major onslaught on a large pilgrim caravan near the river Jordan that had occurred at Easter 1119 and for which Albert of Aachen held Saracens from Tyre and Ascalon responsible. On that day, three hundred pilgrims had been killed and sixty captured.⁵⁰

For a while the Templars seem to have organised their patrols of the pilgrim sites from Jerusalem, but within a few decades they and the Hospitallers had set up strongholds across the country. With the notable exception of Gaza, given to the Templars after its restoration by King Baldwin IV 1149-50 but before 1153, and Bethgibelin, built and given to the Hospitallers already in 1136, which both were intended to effectively stave off the Fatimid garrison of Ascalon, most military fortifications which the two military orders had created or taken over in the Latin kingdom before c.1168 fulfilled the double purpose of guarding a pilgrim site and protecting the road leading to, from or through it.⁵¹ Along the road to the River Jordan the Templars had manned strongholds at the red cistern (a location associated with the parable of the Good Samaritan)⁵² and on Mount Qarantene, the site of

Christ's temptation in the wilderness.⁵³ The fortified tower of Beit Jubr at-Tahtani was another likely early Templar fortification along the road to the river Jordan,⁵⁴ as was the small Templar stronghold on the river bank at the Place of Baptism itself.⁵⁵ Near Emmaus, where Christ had appeared to two of his disciples, stood the Templar castle of Latrun (Toron des Chevaliers), which kept watch over the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem.⁵⁶ Le Saffran (Shafa 'Amr), which the Templars held since before 1172, allowed them to control the road from Nazareth to Acre and also to guard the birthplace of saints James and John.⁵⁷ At Haifa they fortified St Margaret's Castle on Mount Carmel, thus offering protection to the visitors to the cave of the prophet Elijah, further down the mountain.⁵⁸ The Hospitallers held Belmont (Belvoir) near Emmaus on the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem⁵⁹ and by 1168 had fortified Aqua Bella (Khirbat 'Iqbala) on the same road opposite Emmaus.⁶⁰

Most of these early fortifications were firmly situated within the perceived borders of the kingdom of Jerusalem. But by 1170 the military orders in the kingdom of Jerusalem had started establishing new castles and towers in regions that were at the fringes of Frankish authority, notably Eastern Galilee and the valley of the River Jordan, which were more than ever exposed to Muslim attacks since Nūr ad-Dīn had taken Baniyas and destroyed the castle at Châteauneuf in 1164.⁶¹ Even the idea of a Hospitaller lordship in Upper Egypt had at one point been on the table.⁶²

There seem to be two reasons for this shift of emphasis from the centre to the periphery and they are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand the military orders, like the Frankish barons, needed to react to the increasing military pressure exercised by Nūr al-Dīn and his allies on their defences; on the other, the orders were aware of the need to consolidate Frankish authority in regions where it had been lacking and where an uncontrolled influx of wandering tribesmen from neighbouring territories was most likely to create a melange of people living within the kingdom whose reaction to a new war could not be predicted. This was a justified concern and one that was still voiced in the thirteenth century. According to the anonymous author of the *Memoria Terre Sancte* the Bedouin and Turcomans on the borders of the kingdom, but not only they, would always support the strongest power in the region and would continue to be a threat to the kingdom unless they were guarded by a strong force, such as might be provided by a military order.⁶³ Still in 1157 the Hospitallers had recanted on their offer to help Humphrey of Toron fortify the city of Baniyas, widely regarded as the 'key to the kingdom of Jerusalem', against Muslim attacks after such an attack had promptly hit the Hospitallers' supply train when it was approaching the city. With many of the escorting knights and sergeants killed or imprisoned and all supplies lost, the Hospitallers retreated from Banyias, 'fearing the cost of similar incidents'.⁶⁴ By 1172, however, they had fortified the castle of Belvoir

high above the Jordan Valley and overlooking the road from Tiberias to Baysan and two fords across the river south of the Sea of Galilee,⁶⁵ whereas the Templars had established themselves at the castles of La Fève in the Jezreel valley and of Safad in Eastern Galilee, where the influence of Damascus and Aleppo was still strong. According to the German pilgrim Theoderich, writing in 1172, Belvoir was built to defend the kingdom against the assaults of Nur al-Din and Safad to check the incursions of the Turks; a similar purpose can be assumed for La Fève.⁶⁶ Six years after Theoderich completed his travel account the Templars gained royal permission from Baldwin IV to build a further castle at the strategically important Vadum Jacob, which they completed within six months, fortified with a strong garrison, and stocked with weapons and supplies.⁶⁷

To consolidate Frankish authority effectively, these forward castles functioned as centres of a new administration that extended its power into the landscape and exerted its authority over the nomadic tribes by binding them to the land or the law. They were also effective instruments to repel bands of bandits and marauders who, according to William of Tyre, were still roaming freely in the mountain ranges of Upper Galilee at that time.⁶⁸ Moreover, just like the castles and fortified towers built by the Romans six centuries earlier, castles like Safed allowed the occupant to watch tribal movements, dispatch patrols and skirmishers and provide guards for caravans and travellers if required.⁶⁹ The castles of the military orders were, in short, exactly what Raymond Smail believed crusader castles to be: economic-administrative centres that allowed their owners or keepers to control and exploit the rural population, to police the surrounding landscape and to control nomadic tribes.⁷⁰ Just how effectively a castle could order a landscape is illustrated in the thirteenth-century description of the reconstruction of Castle Safad by the Templars in 1240-1.⁷¹

Once completed the castle of Safad controlled the whole of Galilee, 260 villages in all, and provided protection for travellers and farmers between the Jordan and Acre.⁷² It served as a basis for attacks launched against Damascus, but also as a deterrent against marauders, Turcomans as well as Bedouins, who terrorized the land between Acre and Damascus. The robbers mentioned in the description of Bishop Benedict's second visit to Safed were very likely the same as the nomadic bands of brigands who William of Tyre had described seventy years earlier as living undisturbed in the centre of Galilee.⁷³ With the re-construction of Safad their terror had abated. As a consequence many pilgrim sites in Eastern Galilee were again safely accessible for pilgrims, for example the cistern in which Joseph was thrown by his brothers; the city of Capernaum, home to the apostles Peter, Andrew, James and John; the mountain near Tiberias where Jesus had fed the masses; the place near the Sea of Galilee where Christ had revealed himself to his disciples; the place of the last

supper; and Magdala, birth place of Mary Magdalene.⁷⁴ It is reasonable to believe that the threat that these bandit communities posed to villagers, travellers and pilgrim sites and which the Templars were able to deter with the reconstruction of the castle in the thirteenth century, was another motivation why the castle of Safad needed to be built in the first place.

The Hospitaller castle of Belvoir would have made a similar impression on the landscape. Like Safad or Crac des Chevaliers in the county of Tripoli (which, according to Bourchard of Mont Sion, served as a deterrent to the Bedouins and Turcomans inhabiting the plains surround it)⁷⁵ Belvoir was most powerful as an instrument for governmental oversight. Moreover, it was an instrument to get a tighter grip on the Bedouins, who, if they were local tribes, had until then been living under royal and not a particular lordship's protection, but who were also roaming outside the perceived borders of the kingdom in great numbers. The right to charge them pasture taxes and annual fees if they crossed into Frankish territory was a lucrative financial asset which, however, also gave the recipient a duty to monitor them. The Templars and Hospitallers took on these responsibilities after 1160 and probably before. In November 1160 King Baldwin granted the Hospitallers legal possession over fifteen Bedouin households (referred to as 'tents') who had never belonged to him and whom the Hospitallers were free to draw from 'wherever they can.' These households, it was agreed, should 'serve the Hospital without hindrance'.⁷⁶ In 1179 the viscount of Nablus, whose lordship had suffered badly from nomad attacks, was able to sell the Hospitallers an entire tribe of Bedouins, consisting of 105 tents. One year later King Baldwin IV granted the Order the right to assemble another hundred Bedouin households from outside the kingdom at Belvoir, thus empowering the Order to make the families accountable for their actions.⁷⁷

The large scale sale and transfer of Bedouin households into the control of the Hospitallers, and doubtless also into that of the Templars, occurred at a time of heightened military activity between the kingdom of Jerusalem and its Muslim neighbours. All economic considerations aside, given the reputation the Bedouins enjoyed as perpetrators of violence and unrest these actions should also be regarded as precautionary measures to draw them into the sphere of influence of the military orders, who constituted the only institutions beside the king whose secular authority transgressed seigniorial boundaries and who could thus exercise control over them effectively. This benefited the Order's primary task, which remained the protection of pilgrims, who in the past had suffered from nomadic violence. In so doing, but more so by establishing a network of strongholds along the roads and effecting governmental control in the periphery and among the ethnic and social groups most prone to seemingly erratic violence the Templars and the Hospitallers were essential

in creating and maintaining a level of stability within hitherto neglected parts of the kingdom that would have allowed other elements of statehood to emerge. In that the military orders, until the rise of Saladin, were not so much a product of the period of relative quietude and peace but important maintaining factors of it.

Notes

¹ R. Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories* (Cambridge, 2006).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 134-45.

³ R. Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1998), in particular chapter seventeen: 'The boundaries of Frankish settlement in western Galilee and Samaria', pp. 213-21.

⁴ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, part iii: 'Geography of fear and the spatial distribution of Frankish castles', pp. 105-86.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-64. Ellenblum then continues to relate the military history of the crusader kingdom in the twelfth century to the chronology of castle building or re-fortification. Although the dates he gives for a number of the castles are debatable, the results of his survey are interesting. In the initial conquest stage twenty-one castles or cities were taken over by the Franks and another eight established. During the second phase, when the kingdom was relatively peaceful, some ten castles were built by 1124 and another forty-five by 1167. They were built mostly in relatively secure areas, rather than in regions of military confrontation. Only during the third period, when the military threat was growing and the military initiative began to pass to the Muslims, were castles in the frontier regions constructed or refortified on a grander scale. See *ibid.*, pp. 165-86.

⁶ As Martin Rheinheimer has demonstrated, for example, the period of expansion of the lordship of Galilee ended in 1124 and was followed by four decades of frequent military action outside the lordship but focusing on Baysan, and then, after the fall of Baysan in 1164, by a period of defensive warfare conducted increasingly within the lordship of Galilee and characterised by the building of additional fortifications. See M. Rheinheimer, *Das Kreuzfahrerfürstentum Galiläa* (Berlin, 1990), pp. 83-91.

⁷ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana. History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, ed. and trans. S. Edgington (Oxford, 2007), book x:33-8, pp. 748-52; Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. H. Hagenmayer (Heidelberg, 1913), book ii, ch. xlv:11-12, pp. 572-3.

⁸ Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, pp. 155-6.

⁹ Nasir Khusraw, 'A Journey through Syria and Palestine', *PPTS* iv, pp. 13-14 (1047).

¹⁰ William of Tyre, *Chronica*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (2 vols., Turnholt, 1998), book x:3, p. 462.

¹¹ *Peregrinationes tres: Saewulf, John of Würzburg, Theoderich*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, with a study of the voyages of Saewulf by John H. Pryor (CCCM 139, Turnholt, 1994), 59-77, pp. 63-4; 'The Life and Journey of Daniel, Abbot of the Russian Land', trans. W. F. Ryan, in: *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099 - 1185*, ed. J. Wilkinson (The Hakluyt Society ser. 2:167, 1988), 120-71, pp. 126, 145, 162-3, 165; *Ekkehardi Hierosolymita*, ed. H. Hagenmayer (Tübingen, 1877), p. 309.

¹² See generally A. Davids, 'Routes of pilgrimage', *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations*, ed. K. Cigaar, A. Davids, H. Theule (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, Leuven, 1996), 81-103.

¹³ See e.g. *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al al-Kamil fil-Ta'rikh*, ed. and trans. D.S. Richards (3 vols., Aldershot, 2006-08), vol. ii, pp. 136, 195, and generally A. R. Lewis, *Nomads and Crusaders A.D. 1000-1368* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988, reprint 1991), pp. 95-6; N. A. Faris, 'Arab Culture in the Twelfth Century', *A History of the Crusades, vol. 5: The Impact of the Crusades on the Near East*, ed. N. P. Zacour, H. B. Hasard (Madison, Wisc., 1985), 3-32, p. 6, and Barber, *New Knighthood*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴ O. Schmitt, 'Rome and the Bedouins of the Near East from 70 BC to 60 AD: 700 Years of Confrontation and Coexistence', *Shifts and Drifts in Nomad-Sedentary Relations*, ed. S. Leder, B. Streck (Wiesbaden, 2005), 271-88, p. 276.

¹⁵ C. Hillenbrand, *The Crusades. Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999. Repr. 2006), pp. 441-2.

¹⁶ B. Hamilton, *The Leper King and his Heirs: Baldwin IV and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 79-80; B. Ulrich, 'Bedouin', *The Crusades. An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, 2006), pp. 159-60.

¹⁷ Ulrich, 'Bedouin', p. 159; C. Picard, *Le monde musulman du XIe au XVe siècle* (Paris, 2000), pp. 22, 34; C. Cahen, 'Nomades et sédentaires dans le monde musulman du milieu du moyen âge', *Islamic Civilisation, 950-1150*, ed. D.S. Richards (London, 1973), 93-104, p. 97.

¹⁸ X. de Planhol, *Les nations du prophète* (Paris, 1993), p. 43.

¹⁹ Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, p. 246.

²⁰ B. Kedar, 'The *Tractatus de locis et statu sancta terre ierosolimitane*', *The Crusades and their Sources*, ed. J. France, W. G. Zajac (Aldershot, 1998), 111-33, p. 131 (and p. 120 for information on the author); 'Historia Peregrinorum', *Quellen zur Geschichte des Kreuzzuges Kaiser Friedrichs I.*, ed. A. Chroust, MGH, *Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum*, 5 (Berlin, 1928), 116-72, pp. 155-6.

²¹ Kedar, 'Tractatus', p. 131: 'De Bedewinis. Alii sunt Bedewini, homines agrestes, quos vulgus silvestres Turcos appellat. Semper in campestribus habitantes, nullam habentes patriam neque domum. Precudibus et cunctis animalibus abundant, que nunc in terra Christianorum nunc Saracenorum accepta licencia pascuntur. Isti plurimi sunt et caprinis vestiuntur semper sub nudo aere cubant, nisi nimia pluvia ingruente. Tentoria viribus prevalere adiuvant, proditores maximi, latrones insignes. Pilleos rubeos portant et peplum circa pilleos circumatum. Quando nos prevaleremus adversus Saracenos, tunc fratres et amici nostri sunt. Si vero Saraceni prevaluerint tunc ipsos adiuvant, furantes Christianos vendunt Saracenis, et similiter Saracenos Christianis. Fides eorum nulla est nisi quam timor fecerit. Maometh de ipsis dicitur fuisse. Litteram habent saraceniam sed valde corruptam.'

²² *Historia Peregrinorum*, pp. 155-6.

²³ Bouchard of Mount Sion, 'A description of the Holy Land', ed. A. Stewart, *PPTS* xii:1, pp. 105-6.

²⁴ William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book ix: 19, p. 445, as translated by E. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey in William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* (New York, 1943), pp. 408-9. His view would have been supported by the pilgrim Saewulf, who held 'Saraceni' responsible for the devastation of Bethlehem and Nazareth. See *Peregrinationes tres*, pp. 71, 73-7.

²⁵ Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, passim.

²⁶ As Schmitt, 'Rome and the Bedouins', p. 271, has already pointed out, contemporary authors, unlike modern-day anthropologists, did not distinguish between nomadism in its proper sense and, for example, semi-nomadism, semi-sedentary pastoralism and herdsmen husbandry.

²⁷ William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book ix: 19, pp. 445-6, as translated in Babcock, Krey, *A History of Deeds*, pp. 408-9.

²⁸ K. Salibi, *Syria under Islam. Empire on Trial, 634-1097* (Delmar, 1977), pp. 11-12; T. Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie sous la domination fatimide (359-469/969-1076). Essai d'interprétation de chroniques arabes médiévales* (2 vols, Damascus, 1986-9), vol. ii, pp. 481-4.

²⁹ William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book xv: 6, pp. 681-4.

³⁰ See n. 12.

³¹ For the discussion of the spatial distribution of Frankish settlements in Eastern Galilee see in particular Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, pp. 213-14.

³² Bianquis, *Damas et la Syrie*, vol. I, p. 7.

³³ Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, p. 217.

³⁴ According to William of Tyre, the robbers originally came 'de partibus Damascenis' and had established their stronghold at *Bacades* in the 'montes Acconensos'. William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book xxi:25 (26), pp. 997-8 and Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, p. 217.

³⁵ Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, pp. 217-19

³⁶ Ibid., p. 225; D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. A Corpus*. (4 vols., Cambridge, 1998-2007), vol. i, p. 93.

³⁷ This is Susan Edgington's translation of Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, book xii: 31, pp. 874-5.

³⁸ Albert's numbers are certainly exaggerated. In early medieval times even larger Bedouin clans seldom counted more than 500 warriors. See Schmitt, 'Rome and the Bedouins', pp. 283-4.

³⁹ See e.g. N. Elisséeff, *Nūr ad-Dīn, un grand prince musulman de Syrie au temps des croisades (511-569H/1118-1174)* (3 vols., Damascus, 1967), vol. i, p. 341.

⁴⁰ Evidence for a Muslim bandit assault on a village outside Nablus is recorded in Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation. Islam and the Crusades*, trans. P. M. Cobb (London, New York, 2008), p. 151. Raids from Damascus were conducted in 1137 and 1184. See Pringle, *Crusader Churches*, vol. ii, pp. 94-5.

⁴¹ Schmitt, 'Rome and the Bedouins', pp. 274-6; Cahen, 'Nomades et sédentaires', p. 98; Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, pp. 268-70.

⁴² See e.g. C. Cahen, *La Syrie du Nord à l'époque des Croisades* (Paris, 1940), p. 192.

⁴³ 'Memoria Terre Sancte', ed. C. Kohler, *ROL*, x (1903-4), pp. 443-7 and also A. Leopold, *How to Recover the Holy Land* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 174. Saladin was suspicious of the Bedouin tribes of Transjordan and the Hijaz, and rightly so, after his defeat by the Frankish army at Mont Gisard in 1177 it was the Bedouins of eastern Sinai who raided his base camp. See William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book xi:23, p. 629 (for the raiding of his camp after the defeat at Mont Gisard) and M. C. Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin. The Politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 156-7. For Bedouins fighting in Saladin's army see e.g. Imad ad-Din al Isfahani, *Conquête de la Syrie et de la terre de Palestine par Saladin*, trans. H. Massé (Paris, 1972), pp. 303, 330, 352-3, 387.

⁴⁴ J. Prawer, *Crusader Institutions* (Oxford, 1980), p. 214.

⁴⁵ *Regesta regni Hierosolymitani 1097-1291*, ed. R. Röhrich (2 vols., Innsbruck, 1893-1904), nos. 174 (1138), 562 (1178); *Cartulaire général*, vol. i, no 530 (1178). See also H. E. Mayer, *Die Kreuzfahrerherrschaft Montréal*, pp. 198-200.

⁴⁶ Cahen, 'An Introduction', p. 9 describes the Turcomans of the eleventh century as '[u]sed to a wandering life, impatient of all the restrictions of the central government and of the rights of private property, still half savage and accustomed to pillage and bloodshed.'

⁴⁷ This seems an incredibly high number of warriors (Albert of Aachen is notoriously unreliable on numbers), considering that at least in the sixth century even larger Bedouin clans would seldom have counted more than five hundred warriors. See Schmitt, 'Rome and the Bedouins', p. 284. The identity of the Bedouins as members of the Banū Khālid is suggested in Rheinheimer, *Das Kreuzfahrerfürstentum Galiläa*, p. 71.

⁴⁸ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, book x:36, pp. 751-2.

⁴⁹ The foundation and eventual militarization of the Order of St John are discussed in R. Hiestand, 'Die Anfänge der Johanniter', *Die Geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, ed. J. Fleckenstein, M. Hellmann, Vorträge und Forschungen, 26 (Sigmaringen, 1980), 31-80.

⁵⁰ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, book xii:33, pp. 880-1.

⁵¹ For Gaza see William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book xx:20, p. 938, for Bethgibelin *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem (1100-1310)*, ed. J. M. A. Delaville Le Roulx (4 vols., Paris, 1894-1906), vol. i, no 116.

⁵² A. Boas, *Archaeology of the Military Orders* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 111-12.

⁵³ Theoderich noted in 1172 that 'the crest of Mount Quarantana and its subterranean caves are full of victuals and arms belonging to the Templars, who can have no stronger fortress or one better suited for the annoyance of the infidels'. 'Theoderich' in: *Peregrinationes tres*, 143-97, pp. 176-8. For the translation see Theoderich, *Guide to the Holy Land*, trans. A. Stewart (London, 1897, 2nd ed. New York, 1986), chapter xx, p. 47.

⁵⁴ Boas, *Archaeology*, pp. 102-3; Pringle, *Crusader Churches*, vol. i, pp. 101-2.

⁵⁵ Boas, vol. i, p. 112.

⁵⁶ Boas, pp. 101, 102, 103, 111, 114, 115, 116, 150, 151, 169, 179, 187, 221; Pringle, *Crusader Churches*, vol. 2, pp. 5-9.

⁵⁷ Boas, pp. 221, 252; Pringle, vol.ii, pp. 301-4.

⁵⁸ Boas, p. 254; Pringle, vol. ii, p. 248.

⁵⁹ Boas, p. 228; Pringle, vol. i, pp. 119-20.

⁶⁰ Boas, p. 224; Pringle, vol. i, pp. 239-50.

⁶¹ Rheinheimer, *Das Kreuzfahrerfürstentum Galiläa*, p. 76.

⁶² *Regesta*, nos. 452, 466. See also R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare, 1097-1193* (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1995), p. 96 and H. Prutz, *Die Geistlichen Ritterorden. Ihre Stellung zur kirchlichen, politischen, gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1908), pp. 50-1.

⁶³ 'Memoria Terre Sancte', ed. C. Kohler, *ROL*, 10 (1903-4), pp. 443-7. See also Leopold, *How to Recover*, p. 174.

⁶⁴ William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book 18:12, p. 826-8; Riley-Smith, *Order of St. John*, pp. 72-3; Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, pp. 142-3.

⁶⁵ Boas, *Archaeology*, p. 229; Rheinheimer, *Das Kreuzfahrerfürstentum Galiläa*, pp. 76-7.

⁶⁶ *Peregrinatores Tres*, p. 189, and also Ellenblum, *Crusader Castles*, p. 179.

⁶⁷ William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book xxi:25 (26), pp. 996-7; xxi:28 (29), pp. 1001-2; xxi:29 (30), pp. 1003-4. *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir*, vol. ii, pp. 264-6; R. Röhrich, *Geschichte des Königreichs Jerusalem (1100-1291)* (Innsbruck, 1898), p. 359; Rheinheimer, *Das Kreuzfahrerfürstentum*

Galiläa, p. 78. For a Muslim account of the siege of Vadum Jacob see Abu Shama, 'Le livre des deux jardins', *RHC Or.* iv, pp. 203-11;

⁶⁸ William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book xxi: 25 (26), pp. 997-8.

⁶⁹ B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 186-213, as discussed in Schmitt, 'Rome and the Bedouins', p. 285.

⁷⁰ Smail, *Crusading Warfare*, pp. 60-2.

⁷¹ R. B. C. Huygens, *De constructione castris Saphet: Construction et fonctions d'un château fort franc en Terre Sainte* (Amsterdam, Oxford, New York, 1981) (= Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde, Verhandelingen, Nieuwe Reeks, 111).

⁷² Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, pp. 215-17.

⁷³ *De constructione castris Saphet*, pp. 42-3; William of Tyre, *Chronica*, book xiv: 8, pp. 639-40. See also Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement*, pp. 218-19.

⁷⁴ *De constructione castris Saphet*, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Bouchard of Mount Sion, 'A description of the holy land', p. 18 (Midianites settled in the territory east of the Jordan (Tobit 1:14) and also much of the area east of the Dead Sea (later occupied by Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites), and southward through the desert wilderness of the Arabah).

⁷⁶ *Cartulaire général*, vol. i, no 296.

⁷⁷ *Cartulaire général*, vol. i, no 582. The Templars also owned Bedouins, as we know from a settlement of disputes between the Templars and the Hospitallers from the same year, which ended the quarrel that had arisen over an attack of the Templars' Bedouins by the turcoples of Gibelin (Beit Dschiblin). *Ibid.*, no 558.