

The Challenge of State Building in the Twelfth Century: the Crusader States in Palestine and Syria

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According to the chronicler Roger of Howden, in September 1188, Henry II of England and Philip II of France met on the borders of Normandy with the intention of negotiating at least a temporary peace in their apparently interminable wars. However, matters did not turn out well:

Then, having convened a conference between them at Gisors, when they were unable to agree on the terms of peace, the king of France, aroused to rage and indignation, cut down a certain very beautiful elm tree between Gisors and Trie, where it had been the custom of the kings of France and the dukes of Normandy to hold conferences, swearing that from now on they would never have conferences there.¹

The point is not so much Philip II's tantrum, but the fact that this had been a traditional place for holding such meetings, until then respected by both sides. In the twelfth century, the rulers of Latin Christendom governed through established laws and accepted conventions; they knew what they were supposed to do, even if they did not always do it, because they understood the context within which they had gained power and in which they were thereafter obliged to operate. In contrast, the Latins who settled in the East after the capture of Antioch in 1098 and of Jerusalem in 1099 had no such framework. Past structures to which they could turn, such as the Byzantine diocesan system, were well out of date by the late eleventh century,² while the only functioning Latin institution was the Benedictine monastery of St Mary of the Latins, situated to the south-west of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, which provided two hospices to care for pilgrims.³ In short, the Latins who settled in Syria and Palestine after the First Crusade were faced with the immense challenge of creating states almost *de novo*, knowing that they themselves, having been drawn from many different parts of the West, lacked

any homogeneity, and that they did not even have any idea how many of them would remain in the East on a permanent basis.

These problems were greatly complicated by the nature of the expedition which had brought them there. Promoted by the papacy to bring help to their eastern brethren and to recapture the holy places, the lands acquired as a result could never belong entirely to the conquerors themselves, for in a very important sense they were the patrimony of Christendom as a whole. Antioch was the see of St Peter, seen as the first bishop, and the site from which Christianity transformed itself from an obscure Jewish sect into a missionary religion. The leaders of the First Crusade were well aware of this. 'For it is here', they wrote in September 1098, that the word 'Christian' originated. After St Peter was enthroned in the church which we see here every day, those who were previously called Galileans were here first and foremost to be called Christians.' This was part of an appeal to Pope Urban II to join them in Antioch, because it was proper for him 'to come to the place of your fatherhood, and as vicar of St Peter to sit on his throne and have us as your obedient sons in all legitimate actions, eradicating and destroying all types of heresy with your authority and our valour. In this way you will complete the expedition of Jesus Christ which we began and you preached. Thus you will open the gates of both Jerusalems, liberate the Sepulchre of the Lord and exalt the Christian name over every other one. If you do come to us to complete with us the expedition you began, the whole world will obey you.'⁴ Moreover, those who had died capturing these places were no ordinary soldiers, vassals of a secular lord or mercenaries, but holy martyrs whose souls were being carried to Heaven even as they fell. They knew this because when they fought battles, they were joined by a 'countless host of men on white horses, whose banners were all white', which, according to the author of the *Gesta Francorum*, who took part in the expedition, was succour sent by Christ and led by the three great soldier-saints, George, Mercurius and Demetrius.⁵

Of course, no twelfth-century state was sovereign in the modern sense, especially as the Roman see claimed to be head of the earthly hierarchy and emperors in both East and West presented themselves as the successors of Rome, but the circumstances of their foundation made the crusader states quite unique in their relations with the rest of Christendom. In an appeal to Louis VII, King of France, sent at the beginning of 1164, King Amalric of Jerusalem called on him to hurry to bring help, 'because you will not come to a foreign land', and assured him that, 'All of us, including ourselves, will obey your commands.'⁶ Participation was not confined to the famous and the powerful. Pilgrims began to stream towards the Holy Land as soon as the capture of Jerusalem became known, for nowhere else were there so many sites so central to the Christian faith, nor was there a better place to end one's days.⁷ They did not come alone for, in addition, exceptionally large numbers of those who hoped to survive on the charity of pilgrims and the institutions created to cater for the needy were also drawn there.

In a letter of 1173, Amalric of Nesle, Patriarch of Jerusalem, described to Louis VII how 'a multitude of infirm and poor congregate from all corners of the world in this place', including lepers 'who are condemned to live permanently outside the walls of Jerusalem in the shackles of their infirmity'.⁸ During the summer months, the ports of Jaffa, Acre and Tyre, as well as Jerusalem itself, were heaving with visitors from every western land, who came not as outsiders, but as fellow Christians for whom the holy places were both their responsibility and their heritage.

They were encouraged to do so by the Latin inhabitants themselves who, unlike more conventional states, could not survive without long-term commitment from the West. By the 1120s Warmund of Picquigny, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was offering spiritual privileges to those who were prepared to give their services, a situation which further strengthened the sense of Christian communal responsibility. 'Come, come over here. With the help of God we will undo the chains of all the sins of anyone who comes to our aid as long as he undertakes to do penance, and we will place him on the shoulders of the Lamb who removed the sins of the world.'⁹ Even those who could provide only indirect help would receive benediction, an idea which, sixty years later, had developed into a detailed tariff of remissions. Patriarch Eraclius offered full remission of sins even 'if your worldly occupations or pursuits prevent you from coming personally to our immediate aid', in return for a substantial financial contribution, while the provision of a horse, mule, weapons, armour, ecclesiastical ornaments, books or vestments, brought remission of a third of the penance imposed. On top of this, Aimery of Limoges, Patriarch of Antioch, and seventeen archbishops and bishops all offered forty days of absolution. It was a short step to provide the means of buying release from crusade vows as a way of raising much needed cash. 'Since in various parts of the world many bind themselves to visiting the Lord's Sepulchre but cannot undertake the long overland route or the dangerous sea journey because of illness, infirmity or some other serious reason, in their own homes they should hand over to our brothers the money they have put aside for the visit in exchange for absolution from their vow, just as if they had obtained it by putting their hands on the Sepulchre of Jesus Christ itself.' In addition, anyone who joined the confraternity of the church of the Holy Sepulchre would gain a quarter remission of the penance imposed on him.¹⁰ As Nikolas Jaspert has put it, the canons were constructing a network of patrons throughout Latin Christendom.¹¹

The artery through which this stream of people and goods flowed was provided by the fleets of the merchant republics of Genoa, Pisa and Venice, whose ships arrived in the East each spring. As states with no substantial shipping of their own, Jerusalem, Tripoli and Antioch relied upon the Italians not only to provide these vital links with the West, but also to blockade the coastal emirates and thus force them into submission. In the early years the Genoese were the most prominent, appearing as early as 1098 in Syria to help the crusaders at

Antioch, and enabling the kingdom of Jerusalem to gain control of the coast from Jaffa to Acre between 1101 and 1104.¹² When Tyre fell in 1124 with the help of the Venetians, the Latins had effectively closed the eastern Mediterranean to the Muslims, since without access to a port for water and shelter Egyptian ships could not sail far enough north to intercept fleets coming from the West along their usual route to the north of Cyprus.¹³ Moreover, the chronic shortage of wood, which had characterised most Islamic countries in the early Middle Ages, now became especially acute for Fatimid Egypt, cut off from the Lebanon, Cyprus and Crete. The Fatimids were left dependent on contraband trade with the Venetians and limited supplies along the Red Sea route from India.¹⁴ In these circumstances there was no chance of building a fleet which could seriously challenge the Latins.

However, just as military help from the West involved the rulers of the crusader states in compromises over its control, so too did the provision of naval assistance. In 1104 Baldwin I's charter to the Genoese set the pattern, conceding them a third of all cities captured with their help, as well as monetary compensation and commercial and legal immunities sufficiently generous for them to be able to set up their own colonies within the coastal cities.¹⁵ This has often been seen as a weakness of the crusader states, which in several ways it was, but its advantages are manifest.¹⁶ Medieval government was, in part, a balance between privilege and service, and in this the crusader states were little different from the West.

These relationships with the pope, prelates, secular rulers, Italian merchants and the pilgrim crusaders themselves, essential as they were, made the process of state building difficult enough, but at the same time the Latins had not intruded into virgin territory. This was no Slavic wilderness, inhabited by people who had barely left a mark on the landscape, but an ancient land which had developed some of the earliest civilisations, had produced three world religions, and had been an integral part of the Roman and Byzantine empires. So often a frontier between great powers or a staging post for migratory peoples, it had been fought over more times than anywhere else in the known world. One discerning visitor, the Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, described the city of Jerusalem around 1170 as 'full of people whom the Mohammedans call Jacobites, Syrians, Greeks, Georgians and Franks, and of people of all tongues'.¹⁷

Signs of the past were palpable, despite frequent damage by earthquakes over the centuries. One example was Byblos or Gibelet (Jubail) as it was known after the crusaders captured it in 1103. This had been one of the most important ports in Phoenicia, a great maritime and commercial centre, set in woodlands which had long attracted the Egyptians. Like other Phoenician city-states of the Lebanon, it had itself been created from a fusion of cultures, in origin Semitic, but Hellenized after Alexander's conquests in the fourth century BC. It had declined by the time of the crusaders - indeed, most of the timber had gone - but there were many reminders of the past. Benjamin of Tudela was deeply interested in the

evidence of Israel's past, and when he visited Gibelet he believed that he had seen the remnants of the Ammonite civilisation. 'Here was found a temple belonging to the children of Ammon in olden times, and an idol of theirs seated upon a throne or chair, and made of stone overlaid with gold. Two women are represented sitting, one on the right and one on the left of it, and there is an altar in front before which the Ammonites used to sacrifice and burn incense.'¹⁸

In these circumstances, Constantinople, so recently the major Christian power in Syria, could hardly be expected to refrain from intervention; indeed, ideally the Byzantines would have liked to have used these new entities as vassal states, even as buffers against an encroaching Islam in the manner they had done in the past in this region.¹⁹ Attitudes towards the Byzantines in the crusader East were therefore ambivalent, for the crusaders were carving out their states in lands seen by Constantinople as Greek territory, yet the vulnerability of the Latins meant that they could not afford to reject Byzantine 'protection' or alliance unequivocally. Both sides were conscious of this as the tussle over the oaths required from the crusaders by Alexius Comnenus in 1097 had demonstrated, but the problem became more overt when Bohemond actually seized Antioch in 1098. The letter of the crusade leaders in September of that year, which called on the pope to travel to Antioch himself was in that sense disingenuous, in that it was, among other things, an attempt to circumvent Byzantine claims to overlordship, and evidently promoted by Bohemond.²⁰

The problem persisted throughout the Comnenian period. Whenever the Byzantines felt strong enough, notably in 1137-8 and 1158-9, they forced the princes of Antioch into submission. Not surprisingly, letters from the kingdom of Jerusalem in the 1160s aimed at persuading Louis VII to mount a crusade to support the invasion of Egypt by King Amalric, attempt to play on the anti-Greek prejudices of the French king by presenting Constantinople as an enemy equal to that of Baghdad or Cairo. At the beginning of 1164, Amalric warned Louis that 'every day brings us the news that the emperor [Manuel] is about to arrive, and when that happens, all the Christians of the East with us fear that he will certainly take Antioch, as it has fallen into such a weak state'.²¹

Ultimately, however, the basis of a medieval state was the possession of territory; very few could emulate the Venetians, whose wealth came not from their limited mainland possessions, but from sea power and trade. During, and immediately after, the First Crusade the Latins had begun to create four states. At Antioch Bohemond had successfully resisted the opposition of Raymond of Toulouse, while Baldwin of Boulogne had been allowed to leave the main army and push north-east across the Euphrates to Edessa. Baldwin's great rival, Tancred, had seized Bethlehem, even before the fall of Jerusalem, and during the next twelve months added Samaria and Galilee, as well as a condominium over some of the Damascene lands beyond the Jordan. When, in August 1100, he captured Haifa, he added a port to what was already a considerable landed base.

Baldwin's possessions were landlocked, but for Bohemond, Tancred and Godfrey of Bouillon, elected ruler of Jerusalem in July 1099, the conquest of the littoral was the highest priority, so the early years of the twelfth century were characterised by sieges of the coastal emirates. In fact, Tancred's embryonic state proved to be stillborn for, in March 1101, he left to take over the regency of Antioch after Bohemond had been captured by the Danishmend Turks the previous year. A fourth state was indeed created, but it was the work of Raymond of Toulouse, who established himself between what became the kingdom of Jerusalem and the principality of Antioch to form the county of Tripoli. Although this was the smallest of the states, it was of vital importance for it secured links between Antioch and Jerusalem and acted as a screen against Muslim attacks from Hama, Homs and Baalbek through the passes of the Lebanese mountains.

Territorial expansion and consequent occupation needed men and money. After the victory over the Egyptians on 12 August 1099, the majority of the survivors did indeed return home, leaving Godfrey of Bouillon with an ambiguous title, variously described as *princeps* or *advocatus*, very little money and no currency of his own, and without an army or a fleet, although the core of his own household and close vassals remained.²² Alan Murray's calculations suggest that, thereafter, under Godfrey and his successor, Baldwin I, the ruler of Jerusalem seldom had more than the 500 knights and 2,000 foot, plus other mounted non-knightly participants, which were mustered at the battle of Ascalon against the Egyptians in August 1105.²³

Some of the non-knightly mounted warriors may have been Armenian, but the contribution of the Frankish non-noble freemen should not be underestimated. Although the peasants and townsmen who took part in the First Crusade suffered disproportionately during the expedition, nevertheless there had been so many of them at the outset that sufficient numbers survived for the Franks to begin to establish new villages. In 1099-1100, north of Jerusalem, Godfrey granted twenty such settlements to the canons of the Holy Sepulchre, while in 1103 Raymond of Toulouse established a church, mill and *casa* or village around his new castle of Mount Pilgrim, near Tripoli.²⁴ Ronnie Ellenblum has identified c.235 Latin or mixed Christian villages from a total of c.1,200 known in the kingdom of Jerusalem in the twelfth century, which suggests substantial rural settlement by the immigrants.²⁵ Indeed, although Urban's sermon had not been primarily an appeal for settlers, colonisation seems to have been assumed. There is a telling passage in the letter of Symeon, Greek Patriarch of Antioch, and the Latin bishops on the crusade, in January 1098, in which they appeal for further recruits. 'However, it is not a case of dying or even fighting a great deal, since we have, in fact, endured the hardest times, but the burden of holding the fortresses and cities has caused us many losses in the army. Come, therefore, hurry to be paid a double reward, that is the land of the living and the land flowing with milk and honey and abounding in all good things. Behold, men, by the shedding of our

blood all the ways lie open. Bring only what will be of use to us. Only the men should come; for the moment (*adhuc*) women should be left behind.’²⁶

Even so, it had not been possible to make more than very general plans, for no one had known in advance how many would survive the expedition, or how many of those who did would stay in the East. In fact, it soon became evident that the crusader states needed more defenders. Writing to the prelates, princes and people of Germany in April 1100, Daibert of Pisa, Patriarch of Jerusalem, set out the position in uncompromising fashion. ‘Because the holy city of Jerusalem has been captured by the right hand of the Most High, and many thousands of Saracens and Turks were killed both during the long siege and also inside the city after its wonderful capture, not long afterwards many of our men returned home....We are only just managing to keep some from leaving, but at great cost in money and gifts.... Dearest brothers, since you are followers and proven lovers of God’s commands, and have received more wealth from God than any other peoples, come quickly to the aid of God whose sanctuaries are in danger of being destroyed. Without your help and that of other good men we cannot continue to distribute the large sums of money and gifts that are necessary as promised.’²⁷ This appeal does not seem to have had much effect. Around 1165, a German priest, John of Würzburg, visited Jerusalem and complained that the whole city was occupied by other nations, leaving not the smallest space for the Germans. This was because, even though the first ruler was Godfrey of Bouillon, ‘few of our race remained with him. Many others went home to their native land with longing and with haste’. As a result, ‘the liberation of the Holy City was ascribed to the Franks and the Germans’ name passed over in silence’.²⁸

Four patriarchs later, in the same letter in which he offered spiritual benefits to those who responded, Warmund of Picquigny made a hugely emotional appeal to Diego Gelmírez, Archbishop of Compostela. ‘Most illustrious archbishop, we throw ourselves at your feet, weeping copiously, and implore you to come to our aid. O most glorious champion of God, may our prayers move you, may this tearful cry of monks and canons move you, may the tears of widows and orphans move you. Hear the groans of the prisoners; may the tearful complaints of the poor who lie in the streets of Jerusalem reach your ears. May the incomparable efforts of the knights – alas too few – touch the depths of your heart.’²⁹ The problem persisted throughout the twelfth century. After the failure of the Second Crusade it was Antioch which was particularly threatened. In 1149/50, Andrew of Montbard, Seneschal of the Order of the Temple, told Everard des Barres, the Master, that they were ‘in desperate straits through lack of knights, sergeants and money’, following the defeat and death of Raymond of Poitiers, Prince of Antioch, at the battle of Inab on 29 June 1149. As a consequence, the Parthians, as he calls the Turks, ‘invaded and captured the whole territory of Antioch’, obliging Baldwin III, King of Jerusalem, to send a relief army of 120 knights and 1,000 squires and sergeants.³⁰ In the mid-1160s, after the disastrous defeat at Artah and the fall of

Banyas in 1164, Amalric of Nesle, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in an encyclical to the West, wrote that 'we have lost through capture and slaughter many times more men than the whole of Christendom can now muster in the kingdom of Jerusalem'.³¹

As this sample of letters shows, there is abundant evidence that the crusader states were in need of fresh manpower most of the time. Losses in warfare could be horrendous. Two examples from battles in which the Latins were actually victorious illustrate this point. In September 1101, less than a year after his accession, Baldwin I lost a third of his knights in his defeat of the Egyptians near Ramla, only to face another attack the following May.³² At the battle of Mont Gisard in November 1177, Brother Raymond, the Hospitaller left in command of the house in Jerusalem during this time, reported that 1,100 Christians had been killed, while another 750 were being treated for their wounds in the Order's hospital in the Muristan at Jerusalem. The bearer of the letter containing this information was a Hospitaller who had been so badly injured in the battle that 'his mutilated, lacerated body has left him incapable of working and useless for combat', so that all he wished for was death, enabling him to join 'the community of martyrs'.³³ This situation had evident social effects, since the relatively small Frankish aristocracy needed replenishment from the West on a regular basis. In the mid-1150s, in the wake of the death of Raymond of Poitiers at Inab, Reynald of Châtillon, Regent of Antioch, was obliged to write to Louis VII of France explaining that 'two beautiful well-formed daughters of Prince Raymond have reached marriageable age', and entreating him 'to find some suitable husbands of their class in your country, because the harshness of this country and the problems of consanguinity rule out marriage here'.³⁴

The fact was that while the crusader states were confined to such a limited territorial area, the disparity in numbers between the Latin Christians and the Muslims would remain a perennial problem. Geoffrey of Donjon, Master of the Hospital, put his finger on this in 1201, when describing the situation in neighbouring Egypt. While acknowledging the huge problems there resulting from a terrible famine, he nevertheless points out that al-Adil, Saladin's brother, had combined the rulership of Syria and Egypt. 'Since the whole population of the Promised Land was hardly able to defend itself from one single kingdom, whether Babylon or Damascus, the two kingdoms united under the same ruler are inspiring terror with their threats on the small number left here'.³⁵ The comment is particularly significant coming from the leader of one of the two great military orders. Ever since the 1130s the Temple and the Hospital had contributed significant support to the crusader states, as well as offering strategic insights on wider policy.

Preoccupation with Egypt is understandable. Throughout the twelfth century Egypt was both a threat and a temptation and perhaps represents best of all the dilemma faced by those struggling to build viable states in the East. No

contemporary ruler saw his territories as static; they were all predatory when they had the opportunity. However, it is arguable that for the crusader states expansion was literally a matter of survival. They were too small to support the forces needed to defend themselves and the holy places entrusted to them, especially after the loss of Edessa in 1144 and the substantial reduction in the size of the principality of Antioch over the two subsequent decades. This was widely acknowledged. John of Würzburg, irritated by Frankish domination, knew the answer. 'But this province of Christianity would very soon have extended its frontiers southwards beyond the Nile and northwards beyond Damascus, if there had been as many Germans here as there were of them.' [i.e. Franks].³⁶ Indeed, serious attempts had been made to take Damascus in 1129 and again in 1148, both of which had been preceded by the assembly of large western armies, but neither had succeeded, despite the presence of Conrad III's Germans in the latter campaign.³⁷

However, as early as the reign of Baldwin I, the conquest of Egypt seemed to offer a possible solution, for control of the Nile Delta would bring a large increase in revenue, both from trade and agriculture, which could be used to pay soldiers, provide new areas for lordships and peasant colonisation, and end the continued attacks on the southern part of the kingdom of Jerusalem. Here, too, was an opportunity to consolidate the economic success of the crusader states in which local and regional trade had flourished and Frankish entrepreneurial activity had promoted the development of sugar refining, textiles and glass, the products of which were exported to the West.³⁸ Alexandria was the greatest trading city in the Eastern Mediterranean, the fulcrum upon which rested the commerce between East and West. William, Archbishop of Tyre in the 1180s, called it 'a public market for both worlds'.³⁹ Most importantly, conquest of the Egyptian ports would have enabled the Franks to control the highly profitable spice trade from India, which was channelled along the Red Sea, beyond the reach of the kingdom of Jerusalem.⁴⁰

Moreover, there were powerful religious reasons for invading Egypt. More than sixty years ago, the art historian, Adolf Katzenellenbogen, basing himself on the programme of the great tympanum in the narthex of the abbey-church at Vézelay, argued that the taking of Jerusalem in 1099 was seen not as an end but as a beginning, in that it was intended as the starting point of a new 'mission of the Apostles', which would encompass all those lands formerly Christian.⁴¹ One such country was Egypt, as James of Vitry, Bishop of Acre, explained at the time of the Fifth Crusade in 1218. 'Our Lord Jesus Christ lived there for a while with his mother, the Blessed Mary. Indeed, in the very spot that the Holy Virgin is said to have rested because of the fatigue of the journey, was built a church that is greatly venerated by the Saracens. In that land were many holy fathers, more than in any other, so that the Christians outnumber the Saracens. However, they are farmers not fighters and live in slavery under the pagans. From here, eastwards to the end

of the earth there are Christians everywhere, so that if God in his mercy granted us to take Egypt we would establish Christianity from the West to the East.⁴²

At one point Baldwin I grandiosely styled himself 'king of Babylon and Asia', but, in fact, he did not live long enough to undertake more than a preliminary foray for, in 1118, he was taken ill while on an expedition to al-'Arīsh and died on the way back to Jerusalem.⁴³ His immediate successors were preoccupied with events in Syria and it was only after the Second Crusade had broken up in 1148 that the kings of Jerusalem returned to the question of Egypt. Ascalon was taken in 1153, the last Muslim city on the littoral to fall, depriving the Egyptians of a base from which they could attack Jerusalem and Jaffa. It seems probable that only his premature death in 1163 prevented Baldwin III from organising a full-scale invasion.⁴⁴ His brother and successor, Amalric, spurred on by the known interest of his greatest enemy, Nūr al-Dīn, ruler of both Aleppo and Damascus, took this very seriously indeed. He undertook five major campaigns between September 1163, and December 1169, taking advantage of a series of crises at the heart of an enfeebled government in Cairo, and climaxing in the surrender of Alexandria in August 1167.

His agreement with the Order of the Hospital in October 1168 gives an idea of the scale of the king's ambition. In return for the provision of 500 knights and 500 turcopoles (in short, a small army in itself), the Order would be granted a series of cities, worth 150,000 'old besants' annually. Bilbais was the most important of these, providing an income of 100,000 dinars, while another ten cities would make up the other 50,000. The geographical range of these cities shows how Amalric envisaged his conquests, for they extended from the mouth of the Delta to Upper Egypt and encompassed Cairo, Tinnis, Damietta, the island of al-Mahallah, Alexandria, Qūs, Aswān, al-Bahnasā, Itfīh and Fayyūm.⁴⁵ The distance from the Nile Delta in the north to the First Cataract at Aswān in the south is over 500 miles.

The ultimate failure of the Egyptian invasion was partly due to the fierce competition offered by the Shīrkūh, Nūr al-Dīn's Kurdish general, whom he sent to combat Amalric and to seize Egypt for the Zengids, and partly because the Franks simply did not have the resources to accomplish the task at the same time as defending the northern states. In October 1164, Amalric had to rush back from Egypt on the news that, on 10 August, Nūr al-Dīn had inflicted a massive defeat on the Christians at the battle of Artah. They had lost 600 knights and 12,000 foot, and all the other major leaders in the crusader states had been captured.⁴⁶ Two days later Nūr al-Dīn took Harim, which commanded the Iron Bridge over the Orontes and was only a day's march from Antioch and then, moving south, on 18 October, had seized Banyas, weakened by poorly repaired defences and lack of manpower. Banyas was of fundamental importance. Amalric of Nesle, the

Patriarch, called it 'the key, the gate and the shield of the whole kingdom of Jerusalem'.⁴⁷

Throughout the 1160s both the king and the leaders of the military orders had sustained pressure on Louis VII, but had been unable to persuade him to undertake a second expedition to the East.⁴⁸ With evident reluctance they were obliged to turn to the Byzantines, culminating in an unprecedented visit to Constantinople by Amalric himself in 1171, although the failure to co-ordinate their attacks meant that, ultimately, this too proved fruitless.⁴⁹ On their own, the Franks could not do it. As Bertrand of Blancfort, Master of the Temple, explained in 1164: 'Although our King Amalric is great and magnificent, thanks to God, he cannot organise a fourfold army to defend Antioch, Tripoli, Jerusalem and Babylon...'⁵⁰

Although operating within the many constraints and ambiguities imposed by the complex relationships with outsiders, nevertheless by Amalric's time the Jerusalem monarchy was firmly established as the leading secular power in Palestine and Syria. An inability to produce male heirs had initially hindered the creation of a dynastic tradition. Baldwin of Bourcq had gained the throne in 1118 after the death of the childless Baldwin I and, although William of Tyre, who was a great believer in the virtues of hereditary succession, described him vaguely as a 'kinsman' (*consanguineus*) of Duke Godfrey, it was difficult to disguise the fact that the throne had passed to a different family.⁵¹ Even so, by 1174, the hereditary principle had taken root. Baldwin IV, the eldest son of Amalric, succeeded without opposition even though he was only thirteen years old, was manifestly suffering from a serious disease, and was the child of Agnes of Courtenay, whom his father had been obliged to repudiate eleven years before.⁵²

Initially, however, there had been no monarchical tradition with which Godfrey of Bouillon could claim continuity, a problem which was particularly acute in a world in which longevity was in itself prestigious. None of the leaders of the First Crusade had the aura of kingship, nor undisputed authority during the expedition itself. The task of the first rulers was to create such a cult despite the instability of the first conquests.⁵³ Godfrey died within a year, but his brother, Baldwin, aided by Godfrey's Lotharingian vassals, seized power on the basis of hereditary right and was crowned king at Bethlehem at Christmas 1100. Whatever the reason for Godfrey's doubts, secular kingship in Jerusalem seems to have been quite acceptable to the wider world. When Anselm of Bec wrote to congratulate Baldwin, he did not question his title. His main concerns were that the new king should protect the liberty of the Church, and that he should, given his position, rule in an exemplary fashion.⁵⁴

Not surprisingly, Baldwin employed the practices of western European rulers. Even before his coronation he had obliged all fief-holders to account for their possessions and then to receive them back in return for an oath of fidelity.⁵⁵ The one exception was Tancred, who would not acknowledge him as king nor

answer his summons. At the third time of asking he did agree to 'speak to him between Jaffa and Arsuf, from the other bank of the river which divides the two towns' in a process strikingly similar to the meetings at the famous elm-tree on the Franco-Norman frontier. Even then the result was not decisive; only when Tancred left for Antioch in March 1101, did Baldwin receive his fealty for the Galilean lands.⁵⁶ Although the degree of control the king could exercise over his vassals has been disputed by historians, since at this time he had no institutional means to call them to account, he had clearly established himself as the monarchical head of a feudal hierarchy, just like other western monarchs.⁵⁷ In June 1109, he was strong enough to take this a stage further when, in a great assembly, held near Tripoli, and prepared by his staff, he handed down judgements on disputes between the rulers and claimants in all three of the other states of Tripoli, Antioch and Edessa, even though two of the four parties involved were not his vassals.⁵⁸

Such practices were familiar to the aristocracy of Western Europe, where rulers were increasingly seeking to strengthen the ties that bound their most prominent subjects to them by oaths and public judicial procedures. Relations with the ecclesiastical authorities had the potential for greater difficulties, especially as the crusade had been called by a papacy intent on presenting itself as God's chief representative on earth responsible for the souls (and therefore the conduct) of seculars and clergy alike. Under Baldwin this did not translate into rule by the patriarch of Jerusalem, despite a challenge from Daibert, Archbishop of Pisa, and erstwhile papal legate, who became patriarch shortly before Baldwin's accession. Indeed, it is unlikely that Daibert ever envisaged a state governed by the Church, unknown in the West except for the Papal State, but instead was engaged in a personal power struggle with the king which he did not live to complete.⁵⁹ Daibert was as turbulent a priest as Thomas Becket, but most laymen had a fairly straightforward view of the priestly function, even if it was not always achieved in practice. Anselm of Ribemont, whose own overlord was the archbishop of Reims, expressed this in a letter written from outside Antioch in 1097. Your duty, he told the archbishop, is 'to provide for our land in such a way that the nobles live in a mutual state of concord, the lesser people toil in safety on what is theirs, [and] the ministers of Christ have a quiet and peaceful life to enable them to devote themselves to the Lord'.⁶⁰

Baldwin's end was as significant as his beginning. Although his cook was obliged to eviscerate him in order to preserve his body on the journey back from Egypt, nevertheless he was buried in a manner befitting a great king. His remains were borne into Jerusalem through the Golden Gate on the eastern side and he was buried in an elaborate marble tomb next to Godfrey in the Calvary Chapel of the church of the Holy Sepulchre.⁶¹ His tomb was deliberately designed to impress, predating by a generation the same approach by Roger II, the Norman

ruler of Sicily, another parvenu king who sought to create a cult around his person.⁶²

It had taken the Capetians centuries to establish themselves as 'natural' rulers of Francia, but necessity demanded that the process be greatly accelerated in the East. The Norman chronicler, Ralph of Caen, asserted that Baldwin, who had originated in Lotharingia, had descended from Charlemagne, while the hardships they had endured helped to forge a common identity among all the settlers. This coalesced into what Alan Murray calls an 'origin myth', in which they saw themselves as new Israelites, achieving Maccabean victories against the apparently infinite numbers of the godless enemy.⁶³ When, in the 1180s, William of Tyre suggested three reasons for the difficulties experienced in the contemporary struggle with Saladin, the first two he set down emphasised the moral and military inferiority of his own generation in comparison with what he calls 'our fathers'.⁶⁴ By William's time the first settlers had already become the legendary denizens of a heroic age.

The crusader states in the twelfth century do not conform to the stereotypical constructs of historians and economists; instead they present a series of paradoxes. They were independent entities, yet for profound historical, religious and economic reasons they were insolubly linked to both Western Christendom and Byzantium. They imposed themselves on the multi-layered culture of the Middle East, but they did not establish a colonial society, a passive purveyor of raw materials, lacking industrial development, and suffering regular haemorrhaging of capital. They were in constant need of additional manpower, yet their territories could hardly support the population that they did have, which ranged from great kings to some of the most afflicted people in Latin Christendom. In the end, if there was a crucial turning point in their fortunes in the twelfth century, it was the failure of the two most far-sighted kings of Jerusalem, Baldwin I and Amalric, to seize control of Egypt. It may be that this was always beyond their resources, but this was not because they lacked the perception to understand its importance.

Notes

The translations in this paper are taken from a book that has been published since this article was completed: M. Barber and K. Bate, *Letters from the East. Crusaders, Pilgrims and Settlers in the 12th - 13th Centuries*, Crusade Texts in Translation 18 (Farnham, 2010).

¹ Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. W. Stubbs, Rolls Series (RS) 51 (London, 1869), II, p.345.

² See B. Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States. The Secular Church* (London, 1980), pp. 19-20.

³ See A. Luttrell, 'The Earliest Hospitallers', in *Montjoie: Studies in Crusade History in*

Honour of Hans Eberard Mayer, ed. B. Z. Kedar, J. Riley-Smith and R. Hiestand (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 37-54, and R. Hiestand, 'Die Anfänge der Johanniter', in *Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas*, ed. J. Fleckenstein and M. Hellmann. Vorträge und Forschungen, 26 (Sigmaringen, 1980), pp. 31-8.

⁴ *Epistolae et Chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes. Die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088-1100*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck, 1901), no. XVI, pp. 164-5.

⁵ *Gesta Francorum*, ed. and tr. R. Hill (London, 1962), p. 69.

⁶ *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed. M. Bouquet et al (RHG), Vol. 16 (Paris, 1878), no. 126, pp. 39-40. In the case of the county of Tripoli, there are good grounds for believing that the house of Saint-Gilles regarded its Oriental patrimony as a kind of 'annex' to the county of Toulouse, see J. Richard, 'Les Saint-Gilles et le comté de Tripoli', in *Islam et chrétiens du Midi (XIII-XIVe s.)*, *Cahiers de Fanjeaux* 18 (1983), 65-75.

⁷ This sometimes created a bias towards the kingdom of Jerusalem. In 1148, King Louis VII chose to make his pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre before considering the plan of Raymond of Poitiers, Prince of Antioch, to attack Aleppo, a decision which led to the abortive siege of Damascus, more relevant to the security of Jerusalem than Antioch. See J. Richard, 'Le pouvoir franc en Méditerranée orientale', in *La France et la Méditerranée: vingt-sept siècles d'interdépendance*, ed. I. Malkin (Leiden, 1990), p. 81.

⁸ RHG, Vol. 16, no. 492, p. 168.

⁹ *Historia Compostellana*, ed. E. Falque Rey. Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis, 70 (Turnhout, 1988), p. 272.

¹⁰ N. Jaspert, 'Zwei unbekanntes Hilfsersuchen des Patriarchen Eraclius vor dem Fall Jerusalems (1187)', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 60 (2004), no. 1, 508-11. This letter should be set in the context of the intense diplomatic efforts of this period, pp. 484-9.

¹¹ As early as 1155, Patriarch Fulcher had offered the opportunity both to set aside vows and to participate in the fellowship of prayer of the canons of the Holy Sepulchre, see Jaspert, pp. 494-5.

¹² See S. Epstein, *Genoa and the Genoese 958-1528* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996), pp. 27-31. In contrast to the Genoese, both Pisa and Venice had commercial interests in Egypt, which explains Genoa's particular interest in the crusader states, see D. Jacoby, 'The Economic Function of the Crusader States of the Levant: a New Approach', in *Europe's Economic Relations with the Islamic World, 13th-18th Centuries*, ed. S. Cavaciocchi (Florence, 2007), p. 179.

¹³ See J.H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology and War. Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 112-34.

¹⁴ M. Lombard, 'Une carte du bois dans la Méditerranée musulmane (VIIe-XIe siècle)', *Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 14 (1959), 234-54.

¹⁵ *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani* (RRH), ed. R. Röhrich (Innsbruck, 1892), no. 43, p. 8.

¹⁶ There are considerable differences in emphasis on this question. M. Balard, 'Communes italiennes, pouvoir et habitants des états francs de Syrie-Palestine au XIIIe siècle', in *Crusaders and Muslims in twelfth-century Syria*, ed. M. Shatzmiller (Leiden, 1993), pp. 43-64, stresses the attempts by the Latin rulers to reduce the extent of the Italian privileges, while J. Riley-Smith, 'Government in Latin Syria and the Commercial Privileges of Foreign Merchants', in *Relations between East and West in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. Baker (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 109-32, points to the increase in trade, which offered rulers opportunities for additional taxation from those with whom the Italians traded.

¹⁷ *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela. Travels in the Middle Ages*, introd. M.A. Signer, M.N. Adler and A. Asher (Malibu, CA, 1983), p. 82.

¹⁸ Benjamin of Tudela, p. 77. Probably from its most prosperous period under the Assyrians

between the late eighth century and late seventh century BC, although he does not say so.

¹⁹ See Richard, 'Le pouvoir franc', pp.84-5.

²⁰ *Epistulae et chartae*, no. XVI, p. 162. Although ostensibly from the leaders of the crusade, at one point the senders change from 'we' to 'I' (*ego Bohemundus*). Bohemond's subsequent 'crusade' against Byzantium in Dalmatia was defeated in 1107, emphasising how difficult it was to sustain a claim to lands which the Byzantines had no doubt lay within their jurisdiction.

²¹ RHG, vol.16, no.126, pp.39-40. See also the letter of Bertrand of Blancfort, the Master of the Temple, in August of the same year, RHG, Vol. 16, no. 244, pp. 79-80.

²² Deficiencies in currency were partially made up by the importation of billon *denarii* from Lucca and *deniers* from Valence, see D.M. Metcalf, 'East Meets West, and Money Changes Hands', in *East and West in the Crusader States. Context- Contacts- Confrontations*, III. Acta of the congress held at Hernen Castle in September, 2000, ed. K. Ciggaar and H. Teule (Leuven, 2003), p. 231.

²³ A.V. Murray, 'The Origins of the Frankish Nobility in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, 1100-1118', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 4 (1989), 282-3.

²⁴ *Cartulaire de l'église du Saint-Sépulchre de Jérusalem*, ed. E. de Rozière (Paris, 1849), no. 29, pp. 54-5; J. Richard, 'Le Chartier de Sainte-Marie-Latine et l'établissement de Raymond de Saint-Gilles à Mont-Pèlerin', in *Mélanges d'histoire du Moyen Age dédiés à la mémoire de Louis Halphen* (Paris, 1951), pp. 610-12.

²⁵ R. Ellenblum, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1998), Map 1, for the location of the villages, and pp. 213-76, for the spatial distribution.

²⁶ *Epistulae et chartae*, no. IX, p. 148.

²⁷ *Epistulae et chartae*, no. XXI, p. 177.

²⁸ *Peregrinationes Tres. Saewulf, John of Würzburg, Theodericus*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens. Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis 139 (Turnhout, 1994), p. 124; *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099-1185*, ed. J. Wilkinson with J. Hill and W.F. Ryan. The Hakluyt Society, Series II, Vol.167 (London, 1988), p. 265.

²⁹ *Historia Compostellana*, p. 271. At the council of Nablus (January 1120), canon 20 deemed that clerics who bore arms for defence should not be considered culpable, see B. Z. Kedar, 'On the Origins of the Earliest Laws of Frankish Jerusalem: the canons of the Council of Nablus, 1120', *Speculum*, 74 (1999), 324-5, 334. This contradicted the canonical prohibition on carrying arms which was universally applied elsewhere in Latin Christendom, but gives some sense of the immediacy of military needs in the East.

³⁰ RHG, Vol. 15, pp. 540-1.

³¹ *Cartulaire général de l'Ordre des Hospitaliers de Saint-Jean de Jérusalem, 1100-1310*, ed. J. Delaville Le Roulx, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1894) (*Cart*), no. 404, p. 280.

³² *Fulcheri Carnotensis Historia Hierosolymitana (1095-1127)*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913) (FC), Vol. 2.10-14, pp. 404-24.

³³ R. Röhrich, *Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kreszüge*, Vol. 2 (Berlin, 1878), note 45, pp. 127-8.

³⁴ *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, Vol. 155 (Paris, 1855), pp.263-4.

³⁵ *Cart*, Vol. 2, no. 1131, pp. 1-3.

³⁶ *Peregrinationes Tres*, p. 126; *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, p. 265.

³⁷ The decision to attack Damascus in 1148 has been almost universally condemned by historians, but the flaw lay not in the idea but in the execution.

³⁸ See Jacoby, 'Economic Function', pp. 170-6.

³⁹ Guillaume de Tyr, *Chronique*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens. Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis, 63, 63A (Turnhout, 1986) (WT), 19.27, p. 903.

⁴⁰ See Jacoby, 'Economic Function', pp. 166-7.

⁴¹ A. Katzenellenbogen, 'The Central Tympanum at Vézelay: Its Encyclopedic Meaning and its Relation to the First Crusade', *Art Bulletin*, 2 (1944), 141-51.

⁴² *Letters de Jacques de Vitry (1160/1170-1240), évêque de Saint-Jean d'Acre*, ed. R.B.C.Huygens (Leiden, 1960), no. IV, pp. 102-3.

⁴³ FC, 2.64, p. 610. The titles are used in 1103 in a patriarchal grant to the canons of the Holy Sepulchre, *Cartulaire de l'église du Saint-Sépulchre de Jérusalem*, no. 36, p. 71; RRH, no. 40, p. 7.

⁴⁴ In 1161 Baldwin had attacked al-'Arīsh and extracted a tribute from the Egyptians. See also M. Hoch, 'The Crusaders' Strategy against Fatimid Ascalon and the "Ascalon Project" of the Second Crusade', in *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. M. Gervers (New York, 1992), pp. 119-28.

⁴⁵ *Cart*, Vol. 1, no. 402, pp. 275-6.

⁴⁶ RHG, Vol. 16, no. 195, pp. 60-1. Letter of Geoffrey Fulcher, Preceptor of the Temple.

⁴⁷ *Cart*, Vol. 1, no. 404, p. 280.

⁴⁸ See J. Phillips, *Defenders of the Holy Land. Relations between the Latin East and the West, 1119-1187* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 140-9.

⁴⁹ Phillips, *Defenders*, pp. 154-9, 208-13.

⁵⁰ RHG, Vol. 16, no. 244, pp. 79-80.

⁵¹ WT, 12.1, p. 547.

⁵² WT, 21. 1-2, pp. 961-3.

⁵³ Eighteen months after the fall of Jerusalem none of the four original territories had the same ruler, and one had disappeared altogether. The major fiefs changed lords and composition just as rapidly.

⁵⁴ See J.F.A. Mason, 'Saint Anselm's Relations with Laymen: Selected Letters', in *Spicilegium Beccense, I. Congrès international du IXe Centenaire de l'arrivée d'Anselme au Bec* (Paris, 1959), pp. 556-9. On the various descriptions of Godfrey, see J. Riley-Smith, 'The Title of Godfrey of Bouillon', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 52 (1979), 83-6. None of these suggest that contemporaries saw him merely as a servant of the Church.

⁵⁵ The same process was repeated by Baldwin II, Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed. and tr. S. Edgington (Oxford, 2007) (AA), 12.30, pp. 872-5.

⁵⁶ AA, 7.44-5, pp. 550-5.

⁵⁷ For differing views see S. Tibble, *Monarchy and Lordships in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem 1099-1291* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 6-65, and J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades. A History*, 2nd ed. (London, 2005), pp. 90-4.

⁵⁸ AA, 11.10, pp. 780-3; FC, 2.41, p. 53; WT, 11.9, pp. 507-8, who does not mention that these agreements were presided over by Baldwin.

⁵⁹ Daibert died in June, 1105, in the course of returning from Rome, where the pope had upheld his appeal against his deposition in 1102. For the deposition, see AA, 9.16, pp. 656-9.

⁶⁰ *Epistulae et chartae*, no. VII, p. 144.

⁶¹ AA, 12.29, pp. 870-2.

⁶² See E. Hallam, 'Royal Burial and the Cult of Kingship in France and England, 1060-1330', *Journal of Medieval History*, 8 (1982), 359-80.

⁶³ A.V. Murray, 'Ethnic Identity in the Crusader States: The Frankish Race and the Settlement of Outrem', in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. S. Forde, L. Johnson and A.V. Murray (Leeds, 1995), pp. 59-73. See also J. M. Powell, 'Myth, Legend, Propaganda, History: the First Crusade, 1140-ca.1300', in *Autour de la Première Croisade*, ed. M. Balard (Paris, 1996), pp. 127-41.

⁶⁴ WT, 21.7, p. 969. The phrase he uses is *pro patribus nostris*.