

Name:

## Legacy of the Crusades

The Crusades had profound and lasting historical impacts.



### Europe

The Crusades have been remembered relatively favorably in Western Europe (countries which were, at the time of the Crusades, Roman Catholic countries). (Nonetheless, there have certainly been many vocal critics of the Crusades in Western Europe since the renaissance.)

### Politics and culture

The Crusades had an enormous influence on the European Middle Ages. At times, much of the continent was split into smaller kingdoms united only under a powerful Pope, but by the 14th century the development of centralized bureaucracies (the foundation of the modern nation-state) was well on its way in France, England, Burgundy, Portugal, Castile, and Aragon partly because of the dominance of the church at the beginning of the crusading era. As kings levied taxes and raised armies, nobles joining the Crusades sold their lands and freed their serfs. As the nobles lost power, the kings were able to create stronger central governments. As kings used this new power to tax the new trade with the East, their wealth and power only grew more.

Although Europe had been exposed to Islamic culture for centuries through contacts in Iberian Peninsula and Sicily, much knowledge in areas such as science, medicine, and architecture, was transferred from the Islamic to the western world during the crusade era.

The military experiences of the crusades also had their effects in Europe; for example, European castles became massive stone structures, as they were in the east, rather than smaller wooden buildings as they had typically been in the past.

In addition, the Crusades are seen as having opened up European culture to the world, especially Asia:

"The Crusades brought about results of which the popes had never dreamed, and which were perhaps the most, important of all. They re-established traffic between the East and West, which, after having been suspended for several centuries, was then resumed with even greater energy; they were the means of bringing from the depths of their respective provinces and introducing into the most civilized Asiatic countries Western knights, to whom a new world was thus revealed, and who returned to their native land filled with novel ideas... If, indeed, the Christian civilization of Europe has become universal culture, in the highest sense, the glory redounds, in no small measure, to the Crusades." [Catholic Encyclopedia [8]]

Along with trade, new scientific discoveries and inventions made their way east or west. Arabic advances (including the development of Algebra, optics, and refinement of engineering) made their way west and sped the course of advancement in European universities that led to the Renaissance in later centuries.

### Trade

The need to raise, transport and supply large armies led to a flourishing of trade throughout Europe. Roads largely unused since the days of Rome saw significant increases in traffic as local merchants began to expand their horizons. This was not only because the Crusades prepared Europe for travel, but rather that many wanted to travel after being reacquainted with the products of the Middle East. This also aided in the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy, as various Italian city-states from the very beginning had important and profitable trading colonies in the crusader states, both in the Holy Land and later in captured Byzantine territory. Increased trade brought many things to Europeans that were once unknown or extremely rare and costly. These goods included a variety of spices, ivory, jade, diamonds, improved glass-manufacturing techniques, early forms of gun powder, oranges, apples, and other Asian crops, and many other products.

### Fall of the Byzantine Empire

The achievement of preserving Christian Europe must not, however, ignore the eventual fall of the Christian Byzantine Empire, which was in large part due to the Fourth Crusade's extreme aggression against Eastern Orthodox Christianity, largely at the instigation of the infamous Enrico Dandolo, the Doge of Venice and financial backer of the Fourth Crusade. The Byzantine lands had been a stable Christian state since the fourth century. However, the Venetians, jealous of the economic prosperity of Constantinople had long sought a way to weaken its power and found it in the Fourth Crusade, even though it meant Christians fighting Christians. After the Crusaders took Constantinople in 1204, the Byzantines never again had as large or strong a state and finally fell in 1453.

### Islamic world

The crusades had profound but localized effects upon the Islamic world, where the equivalents of "Franks" and "Crusaders" remained expressions of disdain. Muslims traditionally celebrate Saladin, the Kurdish warrior, as a hero against the Crusaders. In the 21st century, some in the Arab world, such as the Arab independence movement and Pan-Islamism movement, continue to call Western involvement in the Middle East a "crusade". The Crusades were regarded by the Islamic world as cruel and savage onslaughts by European Christians.

### Jewish community

Crusaders, caught up in the fervor of their movement, often made attacks on Jews within Europe who they saw as opposing the Crusades and being anti-Christian. The Crusaders' atrocities against Jews in the German and Hungarian towns, later also in those of France and England, and in the massacres of Jews in Palestine and Syria have become a significant part of the history of anti-Semitism, although no Crusade was ever declared against Jews. These attacks left behind for centuries strong feelings of ill will on both sides. The social position of the Jews in Western Europe was distinctly worsened, and legal restrictions increased during and after the Crusades. They prepared the way for the anti-Jewish legislation of Pope Innocent III and formed the turning-point in medieval anti-Semitism.

“Many of the Crusaders were pious [very religious]; but there can be no question that many also were runaway serfs, ambitious business men, adventurers and criminals. As they passed through Germany on their way to Jerusalem this motley crew killed thousands of “infidel” Jews in the larger cities such as Speyer, Worms, Mayence and Cologne. In May, 1096 a band of Crusaders led by Emico, a German noble, forced its way into the city of Mayence and finally into the archiepiscopal palace where the Jews had taken refuge.” All the Jews were killed and many resorted to suicide.

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>

How should we remember the Crusades?