Trade During the Crusades: The Shaping of Trade Routes, Urbanization, and Cultural Exchange

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I. Introduction

In modern depictions of the Crusades, the recurring themes of violence between various religious factions, for a number of assorted reasons, is often referenced. However, often times overlooked would be the Crusades inherent responsibility for the major shift in trade, from the eleventh through the fourteenth century[1], as it would push a cultural exchange between European Crusader and Eastern Mediterranean states. The evidence lies in the fact that between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, there was a noticeable rise in European-Mediterranean commerce, as the economy gradually became more cash based due to its rise in necessity from increased trading. While most large scale military mobilizations would naturally have some form of lasting impact on trade, by analyzing the first, third, and fourth Crusades specifically, one can examine these specific Crusades lasting impacts on shifting trade routes between the East and the West, the urbanization that takes place in Italian Crusader states where troops were being mobilized,[2] and the overall intercultural exchange of European and Eastern Mediterranean powers.

II. Trade Routes

According to Olivia Mair in *Merchants and Mercantile Culture in Later Medieval Italian and English Literature,* there are two leading events that often characterize the trade routes that began to open up between Europe and the East. The first incident would take place just prior to the First Crusade in the eleventh century, when the Normans would invade Italy. Two brothers, Robert Guiscard, the Duke of Apulia and Roger I of Sicily would capture Bari and Palermo

[1] Mair, Olivia, *Merchants and Mercantile Culture in Later Medieval Italian and English Literature*, 3, ebook.
[2] Lisa Blaydes and Christopher Paik, "The Impact of Holy Land Crusades on State Formation: War Mobilization, Trade Integration, and Political Development in Medieval Europe," *International Organization* 70, no. 3. (2016): 551-86, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818316000096.

respectively; this is significant as the brothers were meant to "re-christianize" the Mediterranean waters.[3]

The second incident to occur would be the First Crusade which took place in 1096.[4] The First Crusade meant that trade routes in the East inevitably opened to traveling Crusaders from Europe. These trade routes would soon become more permanently established during the first Crusade when Western European merchants would follow Crusader routes and establish their own markets for trade all throughout the Levant.[5] Eventually around the twelfth century, European merchants would work together with Mediterranean partnerships for safety when traveling from each port, as it was oftentimes dangerous with piracy, shipwreck, competing merchants, as it was dangerous enough, merchants often travelled to different markets for safety.[6] Through the use of primary sources written down during the First Crusade, one can follow a common Crusader route through an account given by a traveler, inadvertently giving descriptions of important trading ports.

One of the most notable examples of these accounts would be the *Gesta Francorum* or *The Deeds of Franks.* Though the official author remains anonymous, they gave accounts of Crusaders stopping at important commercial hubs as they followed their routes via "cities by the sea".[7] In Chapter Eleven: *The march on Constantinople*, an account is given of three different groups travelling via three different routes, the first group consisted of Peter the Hermit, the Duke Godfrey, as well as Baldwin, who travelled together through Hungry. Next was Raymond the Count of St. Gilles, as well as the Bishop of Puy, together they traveled through Slavonia. Lastly, the Gesta tells of a much larger group, containing Bohemund, who took the old roads of

[3] Atiya, Aziz, *Crusaders, Commerce, and Culture*, 169-170, PDF.
[4] Atiya, *Crusades, Commerce, and Culture*, 169-170.
[5] Mair, *Merchants and Mercantile Culture*, 171.
[6] Mair, *Merchants and Mercantile Culture*, 171.
[7] Krey, August C. *The First Crusade; The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants*, (Princeton University Press, 1921), 243, urn:oclc:record:1045619159.

Rome.[8] By examining accounts of the First Crusades in *The first crusade; the accounts of eye-witnesses and participants*, I was able to discern the importance of port cities on Crusader societies commerce during the time, as most travelled along trade hubs to obtain more supplies or goods.

Next, it is important to look towards the Third Crusade to examine how the commercial focus of western merchants started to shift away from Constantinople and towards Alexandria.[9] Prior to the third Crusade, Constantinople was the central point of trade, geographically located at an ideal location, the Byzantine Empire remained central to the "world market" from the fifth to seventh century after the fall of the Roman Empire.[10] After the outcome of the Third Crusade, Saladin allowed pilgrimages into Jerusalem, while he also opened the Egyptian entrepôt in an attempt to strengthen Egypt while simultaneously weakening Latin trading states, as more energy in trade was invested East, and less in the West[11]. Furthermore shifting trade focus away from the Latin West, Genoa and Venice, who we later discuss gained financially through the third and fourth Crusades respectively, would reportedly make commerce treaties with Armenian nationalists,[12] further dividing attention away from Constantinople. Furthermore, According to *Merchants and Mercantile Culture,* after the twelfth century, Syrian merchandise was being sold in England, but the merchandise itself was not associated with Syria, more so with the Crusader states selling their commercial goods, Venice and Genoese.[13] Due to the Crusades inadvertently connecting European with Eastern Mediterranean markets trade routes were able to shift away from its original commercial center Constantinople. Lastly, the Fourth Crusade solidified shifting

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[8] Krey, *The First Crusade,* 57.
[9] Gerald Day, "The Impact of the Third Crusade on Trade with the Levant," *The International History Review* Vol. 3, no. 2. (1981): 159-168, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40105123.a
[10] Atiya, *Crusades Commerce, and Culture,* 163.
[11] Day, "The Impact of the Third Crusade," 3.
[12] Day, "The Impact of the Third Crusade," 4.
[13] Mair, *Merchants and Mercantile Culture*, 171.

trade routes away from Constantinople when Crusaders started trading with other "principalities" through out the Aegean Sea[14]According to *Crusades, Commerce and Culture*, European and Eastern Mediterranean trade lasted through the fourteenth and fifteenth century.[15]

III. Urbanization in Italian Crusader States

During the age of the Crusades, it took a lot of income to supply the ongoing fight in the East, oftentimes the Crusader states would instill taxes to fund the Crusades.[16] By looking to outside sources to pay and supply for the Crusades, European powers were able to fund their army, as well as put themselves in debt, as we see during the fourth Crusade with the Venetians. Indebted to the Venetians, the Doge Dandolo of Venice was able to convince the mobilized Crusaders to invade other Christian states like Zara and Constantinople, helping Venice further expand their trade and increase their wealth dramatically.[17]

The Crusaders, who gathered together in Venice in sight of the Holy Land, were officially unable to pay for transport and supplies provided by the Venetians, after not enough Crusaders arrived as anticipated. The finalized agreement allowed Venice to regain its losses, and then some, by receiving half of all the territories conquered.[18] Launching an attack on Zara was significant as they were a fellow Christian state, but they were commercial competitors with Venice.[19] On the grounds that Zara had done harm to the Venetian people, the Doge of Venice

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[14] Atiya, *Crusades, Commerce, and Culture*, 173.
[15] Atiya, *Crusades, Commerce, and Culture*, 173.
[16] Blaydes, "The Impact of Holy Land Crusades," 552.
[17] John Julius Norwhich, *A History of Venice* (Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), 262, Ebook.

[18] Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople,* trans. Edgar McNeal (Columbia University Press, 1969), 44, PDF.

[19] Norwich, *A History of Venice*, 294.

launched an invasion on Zara where its loot was divided in half between the Venetians and the Crusaders.[20]

Looking at the sack on Constantinople is another example of the Venetians using the Crusades for economic gain. It is important to note that after Zara the Crusaders had suggested invading Babylon, Syria, or Alexandria but the Venetians had insisted upon Constantinople.[21] It has been suggested that Venice had ambassadors in Cairo discussing trade agreements, but there is no documentation[22]. Venice's insistence on going to Constantinople, a commercial opponent of Venice, is noted by Gunther of Paris, Gunther gives an account of how the Venetians, who he characterizes as greedy, wanted to expand its naval power over the entire sea, something that was not lost on the Crusaders.[23] We see the Venetians, again, focus their attention on expansion via maritime trade when Robert of Clari describes the sack of Constantinople, and how the Venetians secured the harbor with iron chains.[24]

Though Constantinople was not the original target of the Fourth Crusade, by pushing the Crusaders to invade, Venice was able to fill their coffers via looted goods from Constantinople. In a detailed account on the sack of the city, it is noted that a lot of the wealth being distributed amongst the Crusaders were things found in the temple. The author goes into detail explaining how the fine "workmanship" that was originally to ornament the church, was not being carried off with everyday items and distributed amongst the Venetians and the Crusaders.[25] The Venetians, using their impending debt to strong arm the Crusaders into invading other Christian

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[20] Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople,* 42 and 44.
[21] Gunther of Paris, *The Hystoria Constantinopolitana,* trans. Andrea Alfred (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 77-78, PDF.

[22] Norwich, *A History of Venice,* 269-270.

[23] Gunther of Paris, *The Hystoria Constantinopolitana,* 90-91.
[24] Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople,* 69.
[25] Munro, D.C., *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, ser. 1, vol. 3, 16.

kingdoms, like Zara and Constantinople, is just a singular example of how Crusaders and other powers could use the mobilization of troops to their advantage so as to stimulate their own economy, as the Venetians got half of everything, as per their agreement with the Crusaders.

Another example worth examining would be Genoa during the Crusades, and how it was able to use the Crusades to gain wealth and expand power, similar to Venice. Under distant German authority, this self-governed city was able to use the Crusades as an opportunity for economic growth. "Twelfth century it blossomed into a powerhouse of commercial and civic advancement, trade, travel and holy war came, largely via sea, to the citizens of Genoa."[26] This was all recorded in the Annals of Genoa, which was written after the capture of Jerusalem and the first Crusade had spurred peoples of the "LatinWest" to record the deeds of their kingdoms. In the Annals, we see how the Genoese people were able to use their annual consulates against Pisan for gain. "It is truly astonishing to me that throughout the war the Genoese continually captured galleys, ships, men and treasure from Pisan territory."[27]

Due to the wealth accumulated by Genoa, it is debated whether Genoa had primarily religious or financial motivations during the first Crusade. As it is recorded, "let it be known therefore to contemporaries and to men of the future, that the consols I have named managed Genoese interests in a way which greatly added to its wealth, as was right and proper."[28] Both Genoa and Venice were able to urbanize their cities by taking advantage of the mobilization of troops.

IV. Intercultural Exchange

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[26] Martin Hall and Jonathan Phillips, *Caffaro, Genoaand the Twelfth-Century Crusades,* trans. Martin Hall (Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 1.
[27] Hall, *Caffaro*, 63.
[28] Hall, *Caffaro*, 74-75.

Despite Saladin opening the Egyptian and Syrian ports after the Third Crusade, there had been peaceful trade and cultural exchanges happening since the very first Crusade was taking place.[29] By taking European powers and bringing them East under the notion of a pilgrimage, many non-Crusaders and Crusaders alike were able to trade with different local populations that they had been traveling through or even invading. William of Tyre gives examples of how the Crusaders could enter Egypt to trade with the East, while they were Crusading. He goes into detail to describe the great riches the people of Egypt have, and how the Crusaders do not fear travelling into Egypt, though the land is not conquered by Crusaders.

Beyond trading with opposing territories, William is able to give an example of how the Crusaders would have interacted with citizens of those fighting against the Crusaders. William of Tyre gives an account of how the Greeks had come into the Crusader camp to trade. After their trading, he notes how the Crusaders had, "tore down the engines of war and burned them.[30] The two groups could come together for trade and an unintentional cultural exchange, yet the Crusaders would still attempt to get the tactical advantage. This is why the opening of Alexandrian and Syria entrepôts was fundamental for the intercultural exchange between the Crusader and Muslim states.[31]

However, there are accounts of more peaceful exchanges recorded by Usāmah ibn Munqidh. Munqidh provides extra detail regarding the cultural exchange that was happening between Merchants during the age of the Crusades, "We had with us at Shayzar two brothers from Kafartab, the oldest named Muzaffar, the other Malik ibn ʿAyyad. As merchants, they both traveled to Baghdad and other lands."[32] This story is significant as Munqidh shows an exchange

[29] Day, "The Impact of the Third Crusade", 3.
[30] William of Tyre, A History, 368.

[31] Day, "The Impact of the Third Crusade", 3.

[32] Usāmah ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation*: Islam and the Crusades, 360

between Muzzafar and some Nomadic Arab tribes in the desert of Bagdad, as they fixed a boil found on Muzzafar's skin by cooking young ravens. Muzzafar had investigated this occurrence, once back in Baghdad, and yet it had no effect on the patients there. "The director sent word and obtained some young ravens and fed them to whomever was afflicted with this same malady, but it was of no benefit and had no effect whatsoever."[33] By looking at writers like William of Tyre and Usāmah ibn Munqidh, one can examine the impact the Crusades had on cultural exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean.

V. Conclusion

Into the fourteenth century a series of trading codes was established, with guidelines involving international trade, due to the consistent and lasting commerce that continued after the Crusades.[34]

The lasting effects on trade due to the Crusades was not short lived, as trade continued on in the Mediterranean well into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[35] Though, of course, the original intention was not to have a direct impact on trade; the Crusades non the less ae widely attributed with the growth of commerce, through growing trade between the East and West.[36] The Age of the Crusades is considered an economic revolution that took place in the Middle Ages, due to the economic fortunes that came from it, with the evidence of societies relying more on a cash based system in lieu of skills or goods. This was largely due to a population increase from mobilized Crusaders, as rent started to be collected in place of skills, a higher supply of coins circulated through Europe and the Mediterranean.

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[33] Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation*, 360.

[34] Atiya, *Crusaders, Commerce, and Culture*, 193.
[35] Atiya, *Crusaders, Commerce, and Culture*, 193.
[36] Atiya, *Crusaders, Commerce, and Culture*, 162-163.

Nowadays, there is a lasting legacy of continually shifting trade routes to the Eastern Mediterranean, the urbanization of certain Italian cities that mobilized Crusaders, and turned a profit because of it, and the constant cultural exchange that would happen due to constant commerce between Western Europe and the East.

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