

## THE CRUSADES: CAUSES AND IMPACT

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### ABSTRACT

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**Abstrak:** Perang Salib dipicu oleh pendudukan beberapa kota dan situs suci Kristen oleh Islam sejak tahun 632 Masehi. Pihak militer Kristen menggunakan salib sebagai simbolisasi bahwa perang ini memiliki tujuan suci, yaitu untuk membebaskan kota suci Baitul Maqdis (Yerusalem) dari penguasaan Islam. Agar perang dianggap benar-benar suci, semua armada dan pasukan Barat yang berpartisipasi dalam perang diwajibkan mengenakan atribut salib, seperti pada layar perahu, bendera regu dan pasukan, perisai, baju besi, serta perlengkapan lainnya. Penelitian ini merupakan studi pustaka. Pendekatan yang diterapkan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif. Sumber data primer berasal dari referensi yang mendukung, sedangkan sumber data sekunder melibatkan beberapa jurnal dan buku. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode analisis konten. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Perang Salib bermula dari ekspansionisme di Eropa sebagai respons terhadap tindakan Saljuq terhadap Kekaisaran Bizantium. Terdapat beberapa faktor yang menyebabkan terjadinya Perang Salib, di antaranya adalah faktor agama, politik, sosial, dan ekonomi. Perang Salib memiliki dampak signifikan baik bagi dunia Islam maupun Barat.

**Kata Kunci:** *Perang Salib; Umat Islam; Umat Kristen*

**Abstract:** *The Crusades were triggered by the occupation of several Christian cities and holy sites by Islam in 632 AD. The Christian military used the cross as a symbol to signify that the war had a holy purpose, namely to liberate the holy city of Jerusalem from Islamic rule. To ensure the war was deemed truly sacred, all Western fleets and troops participating in the war were required to wear the cross emblem, such as on sail flags, team and troop banners, shields, armor, and other equipment. This study is a literature review. The approach applied in this research is qualitative. Primary data sources come from supportive references, while secondary data sources involve several journals and books. Data analysis is conducted using the content analysis method. The research findings indicate that the Crusades originated from European expansionism in response to the actions of the Seljuq Turks against the Byzantine Empire. Several factors contribute to the occurrence of the Crusades, including religious, political, social, and economic factors. The Crusades have significant impacts on both the Islamic and Western worlds.*

**Keywords:** *Crusades; Islamic Community; Christian Community*



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### A. INTRODUCTION

The journey of civilization is inseparable from its historical legacy. History shapes the mindset and values that form the foundation of a civilization. One notable example is the spread of Islam, which continued to flourish under the leadership of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. The expansion of Islam reached Europe, adding a new layer to the history of human civilization. For seven centuries, Islam spread to Europe through various strategies, including military force, leading to conflicts such as the Crusades. This marks a significant chapter in the history of Islamic civilization during the classical period (Yusuf, 2020).

The Crusades began in 1095 when Pope Urban II called upon Christians in Europe to join a holy war. The primary goal of this war was to reclaim control over Jerusalem, which was then under the rule of the Seljuk Turks, who imposed restrictions that hindered Christian pilgrimages to the holy city. A key trigger for the Crusades was the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, where a large Roman army suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of a much smaller Seljuk force (Basri et al., 2024). The Battle of Manzikert fostered animosity and hatred among Christians towards Muslims, prompting the Pope to call for the Crusades. Additionally, the Seljuk rulers enforced strict regulations on Christian pilgrims wishing to visit Jerusalem, further exacerbating the situation. In response, Pope Urban II in 1095 urged Christians in Europe to embark on the Crusades, initiating a series of military campaigns known as the Crusades.

The Crusades, a religious conflict lasting nearly two centuries, were a response from the Christian communities in Europe to the presence of Muslims in Asia. The wars were not confined to Syria and Asia Minor but also took place in Spain and Sicily. These conflicts represent one of the greatest tragedies for Muslims in their history, triggered by the fact that since 632 AD, several significant cities and holy sites of Christianity had fallen into Muslim hands, including Syria, Asia Minor, Spain, and Sicily. Moreover, the conquest of parts of the Byzantine Empire by Muslim forces intensified Christian hostility towards Islam. This hatred and enmity peaked when the Seljuk dynasty captured and controlled Jerusalem, a sacred site for Christians. The Seljuk rulers imposed burdensome regulations on Christian pilgrims visiting the holy city. To reclaim Jerusalem, Pope Urban II sought to incite the anger of Christians and kings in Europe, leading to the launch of the holy wars known as the Crusades (Tangngareng, 2017). The issues discussed here are the history of the Crusades, the factors that led to them, and their impact on the world.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the Crusades, one of the greatest tragic events for Muslims in history, focusing on its causes and effects on the world. Additionally, the Crusades are considered a crucial topic that must be explored in Islamic historical studies. It is hoped that

this paper will enrich the understanding of Islam in general, particularly in the field of Islamic history studies.

## **B. METHOD**

This study is library research, which generally refers to research that reviews literature such as books, articles, and other writings that support the research topic. The approach applied in this study is a qualitative approach.

The data sources in this study are divided into two types, namely primary and secondary data sources: a) Primary data refers to information obtained from authoritative literature that serves as the foundation for analysis in this paper. The primary data sources used by the author include the Qur'an along with its translations and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW); b) Secondary data refers to information gathered from library research, research reports, books, literature, and other sources relevant to the topic of this paper.

The data collection method used is the documentation method. Once the data is collected, the researcher then analyzes the data using descriptive techniques, interpretative steps, and the decision-making process.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The Crusades**

The Crusades were a series of religious conflicts lasting nearly two centuries, representing European Christianity's response to Islam in Asia. Triggered by the conquest of numerous Christian cities and holy sites by Muslims since 632 AD, the Crusades were marked by the Christian forces' use of the cross symbol, signifying the sacred nature of the war aimed at liberating Jerusalem from Muslim control (Amin, 2010). Additionally, the Crusades were fueled by Europe's growing expansionist zeal, reflected in the Seljuk efforts against the Byzantine Empire. The Crusades were also a consequence of the destruction of Jerusalem's holy church by al-Hakim, a Fatimid Caliph, in 1009 AD. Furthermore, there was a strong motivation driven by material gain, honor, territorial expansion, and promises of redemption and dedication to God (Amrullah, 2022).

The Crusades began in 1095, involving church forces known as Crusaders against Muslim forces throughout Europe. This military movement was initiated by the Roman Catholic Church to regain Christian access to the holy lands in Jerusalem, starting around 1095 by Pope Urban II. Following the First Crusade, there were battles for 200 years to determine control over the holy lands, including six major wars and several minor conflicts. By 1291, the conflict ended with the fall of the Christian fortress at Acre, after which European Catholic forces ceased their eastward assaults. Some historians view the Crusades as the Church's defensive war

against Islamic occupation, while others see it as a frontier conflict for Europe, or an aggressive and confident expansion by Western Christianity (Hillenbrand, 2005).

From the beginning, the Crusades played a crucial role in the interlinked histories of the East and West. According to Carole Hillenbrand, cited by Aniroh in her article, the Crusades are considered a pivotal point in the evolution of Western European civilization during the Middle Ages. However, for Eastern societies, especially Muslims, the Crusades had significant implications, affecting the overall psyche of the Muslim community (Aniroh, 2021). To assert that the war was sacred, all Western fleets and troops participating in the battle were required to bear the symbol of the cross. This symbol appeared on their ships' sails, banners of regiments or troops, shields, armor, and various other equipment. The Crusades, which began around Jerusalem, eventually spread to a wide range of regions, occurring between 1096-1291 AD (Nilawati & Syukur, 2024).

Le Bon recounts that after the initial assault by the Crusader armies, there were massive attacks led by princes and kings from various European countries. Anckonim, the daughter of the Roman Emperor, noted that the Crusaders were most interested in slaughtering children, mutilating their bodies, and roasting them like kebabs. Dissatisfied with their cruelty, they even held meetings to plan the total extermination of Jerusalem's inhabitants, including all Muslims, regardless of age or gender. Guillaume de Tyr described the Crusaders as individuals who had lost morality and faith in God. If a writer attempted to document their atrocities and savagery, it would be challenging to remain neutral and not condemn them (Mahfud, 2020).

Amidst the harsh and tense war, there is a profoundly moving story illustrating the high civilization of Islam at the time. During the Third Crusade, a meeting occurred between two kings and war commanders: Salahuddin al-Ayyubi and King Richard I of England, known as "Richard the Lionheart." From their meeting emerged a deeply touching humanist story. When news spread that King Richard I had fallen seriously ill during the battle, Salahuddin al-Ayyubi halted the warfare and proposed a ceasefire. During the truce, Salahuddin sent skilled physicians and impressive gifts to King Richard, requesting that he accept treatment from the Muslim doctors. King Richard accepted the offer and recovered from his illness days later. This legendary tale highlights Salahuddin al-Ayyubi's noble character, demonstrating extraordinary tolerance and care for humanity, regardless of religion or nationality, driven by Islamic teachings. King Richard, filled with romantic idealism, even proposed a marriage alliance between his sister and Salahuddin's brother, al-Malik al-Adil. This event ended the conflict between Christians and Muslims.

Peace was achieved on November 2, 1192 AD, with an agreement that the coastal areas would belong to the Latin Christians, while the interior would remain under Muslim control. Pilgrims visiting the holy city were allowed without interference. A month after signing the peace treaty, Salahuddin fell ill and died at the age of 55 in Damascus. His tomb, located near the Umayyad Mosque, remains a popular tourist destination in the Syrian capital. Historically, the Crusades can be seen as part of the long interaction between East and West, reflecting the ancient conflict between the Trojans and the Persians, with Western European imperial expansion marking the period's end.

The Crusades ended with significant changes in the political and religious climate of Europe during the Renaissance. Fundamentally, the Crusades were not religious wars but battles for territorial control, evidenced by the exchange of knowledge and science between Crusaders and Muslim forces.

## **2. Factors Leading to the Crusades**

Several significant factors contributed to the occurrence of the Crusades:

### **a. Religious Factors**

The loss of freedom for Christians to worship in Jerusalem was due to the policies implemented by the Seljuk government, which had ruled Jerusalem since 1076 AD. Christians were highly enthusiastic and believed that the pilgrimage to the Tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem was a very noble act and greatly rewarded. The Seljuks had enacted measures that hindered their access to the holy site.

This disadvantageous policy for Christians became widely known and drew attention in Europe, sparking outrage, anger, and sorrow among the European populace. However, from this arose a religious fervor and solidarity among Christians to provide protection and advocacy. They united to avenge the loss of their freedom to practice their religion. They shared a common vision to reclaim Jerusalem from Muslim control (the Seljuks) following the call of Pope Urban II as the highest religious leader of Christians. They believed that undertaking a pilgrimage to the holy land would bring great rewards, making the liberation of Jerusalem from Muslim control even more rewarding. In this context, every Christian joining the war was considered to receive absolution of their sins, making the war regarded as a Holy War for them (Nofrianti, 2021).

### **b. Political Factors**

After facing defeat in his efforts to defend Constantinople, Emperor Alexius I Comnenus felt compelled to turn to Pope Urban II for assistance. Constantinople, the magnificent capital of the Byzantine Empire, had been the target of continuous attacks by Muslims. The threatened Emperor saw that his only hope of reclaiming the territories that had fallen to the enemy

was to seek help from Pope Urban II, the spiritual leader of Christians in Europe.

Pope Urban II, who held significant moral and political sway over the Christian world at the time, listened sympathetically to Emperor Alexius' plea. Seeing an opportunity to extend the influence of the Roman Church to the East, Pope Urban II agreed to the request of Emperor Alexius. They then made an agreement, in which Emperor Alexius agreed to submit under the authority of the Pope in Rome. While there were clear political objectives behind this agreement, such as uniting the Greek Church with the Roman Church and strengthening the papal position, the more highlighted reason was the desire to protect Christians and reclaim the holy lands from Muslim control. After the agreement was signed, Pope Urban II took the initiative to mobilize Christians in Europe. Using a strong religious narrative, Pope Urban II motivated Christians to join what he described as a holy war, a struggle to reclaim Jerusalem and the holy lands from the Muslim "invaders." This narrative successfully ignited a war spirit and religious pride across Europe, leading to a massive wave of participation in the upcoming Crusades (Pulungan et al., 2022).

On the other hand, in the context of the political and power dynamics of the time, Islam was experiencing a significant decline. This provided an opportunity for Christians in Europe to partake in the Crusades more boldly. At that time, the Seljuk dynasty in Asia Minor was facing internal divisions that undermined their stability. In Egypt, the Fatimid dynasty was in a state of paralysis, causing significant political instability in the region. In Spain, Islamic rule was also shaken by internal conflicts and power struggles among various local rulers who claimed the title of Caliph. Meanwhile, complex conflicts were occurring between the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, and the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba, who claimed the title of Caliph for themselves. These conflicts created deep political instability in the Islamic world, with each party trying to maintain and expand its influence. This condition encouraged Christian rulers in Europe to take aggressive action in gradually conquering Islamic territories. They saw an opportunity to reclaim the holy lands from Muslim hands, perceived as "invaders." Territories such as the small principality of Edessa (ar-Ruha') and Jerusalem became primary targets in their efforts to expand Christian influence and power in the East (Zubaidah, 2016).

### c. Social Factors

During the Middle Ages in Europe, social structure was highly segmented, and social classifications were evident. Society at that time could be divided into several main groups, each with well-defined roles and statuses. One of the highly respected and powerful groups was the clergy. The clergy, including priests, monks, and bishops, held important roles in the feudal society. They were responsible not only for the spiritual aspects of

the community but also had significant influence in political and social matters. The power of the Roman Catholic Church was immensely dominant, and religious leaders had strong authority in determining societal policies and moral norms.

In addition to the clergy, the warrior class was also highly respected and powerful. Cavalry and infantry soldiers, who were part of the military aristocracy, held high social status. They were knights well-trained in the art of combat and ready to defend honor, territory, and power in the name of their rulers. Military prowess was highly valued, and skill in battle became a symbol of honor and bravery (Arief, 2022).

However, on the other hand, there was the peasant class, which was widespread and often oppressed. These peasants were the backbone of the feudal economy, working hard to cultivate the land and produce food for the entire community. Despite their crucial role, they often lived in harsh economic conditions with limited resources and lacked significant political or social power. They frequently had to pay tribute to nobles and clergy as a form of appreciation for the use of land or protection (Priyanto, 2017).

#### d. Economic Factor

Western powers aimed to control the trading system in the region, establishing it as the center of Western trade in the East, which held strategic value as a gateway for trade expansion eastward across the Red Sea. Economic factors also played a significant role, as the lower classes in Europe often lived under pressure and were burdened by various taxes from the government, the church, and other obligations. Consequently, when they were promised greater freedom and prosperity if they won the Crusades, they also hoped to gain economic benefits from the territories conquered by Islam. This economic motivation encouraged the lower classes in Europe to support and voluntarily participate in the Crusades.

Based on the explanation above, the emergence of the Crusades can be attributed to several factors:

##### 1) Weakness of Islamic Unity

Before the Crusades, the Islamic world appeared to be experiencing weakness. The Seljuk dynasty lost power after the death of Malik Shah in 1092 AD. The battle between the Seljuks and the Fatimids over Syrian territory was inevitable, and hostilities continued between these two Islamic kingdoms. As a result, Islamic dynasties, especially the Seljuks and the Fatimids, fell into weakness due to internal conflicts that undermined their military and financial strength. This weakness provided an opportunity for the European world to attack the Muslims.

##### 2) The emergence of New European Kingdoms

The rise of new kingdoms in Europe, such as Venice and Genoa, and the Norman conquest of Southern Italy and Sicily in the 1090s, provided

opportunities for the European world to launch attacks against the Islamic world (Aniroh, 2021).

### **3. Influence of the Crusades**

The Crusades, as a significant and unforgettable event, had a substantial impact on both the Islamic and Western worlds. The contact between these two civilizations allowed them to understand each other's cultures more deeply. Although the impact was more beneficial for the West than the East, the event brought about significant changes in various fields. Some of these changes include:

#### **a. Economic Sphere**

In the realm of trade and economy, the Western world experienced significant economic growth compared to the Islamic world. This was primarily driven by the Western desire to expand their trade reach and import luxury goods from the East. The Western world was highly interested in spices, perfumes, and other tropical products long known to the Islamic world. These goods were considered highly valuable and attracted the Western market. This interest encouraged the Western world to bring and introduce these products to their territories.

The import and export trade between the West and the East flourished. Luxury goods such as carpets, rugs, and fine fabrics like silk and satin became highly sought after by the Western world. Returning Crusaders brought these items back as a result of their contact with the Eastern world. This entire trade activity not only provided economic benefits for the West but also resulted in significant social and cultural impacts. The Western world became more open to the cultural and material wealth of the East, while the Eastern world gained greater access to Western markets and increased the value of their goods' sales (Styawati & Sulaeman, 2020).

#### **b. Architecture Sphere**

The impact of the Crusades on art and architecture was evident in various regions, particularly in Egypt, Palestine, and other places. The Crusades brought intense contact between the West and the East, which in turn influenced local art and architecture. Buildings in these regions began to adopt Western architectural elements considered beautiful and charming. Designs that were previously uncommon in Islamic architecture, such as more characteristic Western ornaments and motifs, began to appear in the construction of mosques, madrasas, and even hospitals.

One interesting example is the use of doors taken from churches in Acre and then installed in the al-Nasir Mosque. This reflects the direct adoption of Western architectural elements into Islamic architecture in the region. These changes not only created a new atmosphere in the aesthetics



of local buildings but also created a unique blend of Western and Islamic cultural elements in their art and architecture (Fauziyah, 2013).

#### c. Knowledge Sphere

Syria became a transition point where Arab knowledge transferred to the Christian culture of the Europeans. Through the presence of the Crusaders, this cultural influence was directly absorbed by Western society. This process occurred alongside ongoing trade interactions.

However, there was a difference in approach between the Franks and the local inhabitants. The Franks tended to interact more frequently with the rougher local populace than with the intellectual circles in the area.

Some evidence of knowledge interaction between these two civilizations includes:

1. Adelard of Bath, a scholar, visited Antioch and Tarsus in the early 12th century. He also translated several books from Arabic into other languages.
2. Leonardo Fibonacci, a mathematician, traveled to Egypt and Syria. He established a good relationship with Frederick II, who had a great interest in knowledge and facilitated dialogue between Islam and Christianity. Frederick even facilitated the translation of works from Arabic.
3. Stephen translated one of al-Majusi's important medical works in Antioch in 1127 AD.
4. The idea of public baths was reintroduced in Europe, an institution previously maintained by the Roman Empire but neglected by Christianity.
5. Philip translated an Arabic manuscript titled "Sirr al-Asrar" into Latin with the new title "Secretum Secretorum." This work contained practical wisdom about the occult and became very popular in the Middle Ages.

#### d. Racial Mixing

An inevitable consequence of the Crusades was the racial mixing that occurred in the areas involved in the conflict. Although it could be seen as having either positive or negative effects, this ethnic blending created a unique social landscape where the Frankish populace became more accustomed to the presence of children with physical traits similar to their own.

Amid cities and settlements inhabited by the Franks, a more ethnically diverse scene began to emerge. Children with physical characteristics reflecting a mix of various ethnic groups became increasingly common. The local inhabitants, particularly the Franks, began to sense a change in the ethnic composition of their environment.

The sense of familiarity with the presence of children who exhibited Frankish physical traits became more common. This indicates that despite

the conflicts and tensions brought by the Crusades, they also created opportunities for integration among the various ethnic groups involved. Over time, this racial mixing would shape a society more diverse in ethnicity yet still share commonalities in identity and culture.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the presented exposition, the Crusades were a significant historical event involving conflict between Christians and Muslims. The Crusades were wars with a strong religious dimension, wherein European Christians sought to reclaim control over the holy land of Jerusalem from Muslims. However, beyond the religious factors, these wars were also influenced by political, economic, and social motivations. Several factors caused the Crusades, including religious, political, social, and economic aspects. The loss of Christian access to the holy land of Jerusalem, hostilities between Christians and Muslims, and the political and economic interests of European nations were the primary triggers of these wars. The Crusades had significant impacts on both the Islamic world and the West. The intense contact between these two civilizations brought about changes in the fields of economy, architecture, and knowledge. While these wars provided opportunities for the West to expand its influence, there were also substantial losses for Muslims, particularly in terms of destruction and human suffering. Thus, the Crusades are not only an important historical event within the context of European and Islamic civilizations but also a crucial foundation for understanding the dynamics of the relationship between these two civilizations.

This research can serve as a significant reference for the study of Islamic Civilization History, particularly in the context of the Crusades. Further research is necessary to understand the causes and impacts of the Crusades on social and cultural changes. Additionally, the findings of this research can be utilized to create popular books or articles, develop Islamic education curricula, and organize seminars to enhance public understanding. With more in-depth research and follow-up actions, it is hoped that greater contributions can be made towards comprehending the history of the Crusades.

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