



CRUSADES

CRUSADES, in relation to Persia. The term “crusade” refers to a series of Christian holy wars fought in the Middle Ages against the Muslims in Syria and Palestine and subsequently elsewhere in the Near East and, by extension, to wars against other enemies, both within and outside Christendom, that were put on the same spiritual footing by the popes. In this article the Near Eastern conflicts are considered only insofar as they affected Persia.

In the early 12th century

(This discussion is based on the following general sources: Ebn al-Aṭīr, X; Ebn al-Qalānesī; Sebṭ b. al-Jawzī; Cahen, 1940; Sivan).

The First Crusade, summoned by Pope Urban II in 1095, was designed to aid the Byzantine emperor against the Saljuqs. There seem to have been small grounds for reports of Muslim persecution of eastern Christians and western pilgrims to Jerusalem and other holy places; the phenomenal response to the pope’s call should be attributed rather to developments in the West itself (see Cahen, 1954). The early successes of the First Crusade, which led to the establishment of a Frankish presence along the Syrian littoral, resulted above all from the profound disunity of the Islamic world at a time when *jehād* (religious war) had largely lost its meaning. It is arguable that the death of the Saljuq prince Totoš b. Alp Arslān (488/1095) had removed the one Syrian Muslim ruler capable of halting the Frankish advance, as his two sons Rezwān and Doqāq, ruling respectively in Aleppo and Damascus, lacked their father’s dynamism. Their cousins in western Persia, representing the so-called “great



Saljuqs,” were engaged in constant internecine strife and were in any case barely affected by Frankish operations. They were not totally heedless of appeals for help from Muslim Syria, however; it was in response to such a call that Sultan **Barkīāroq** (485-98/1092-1105), in 491/1098, summoned the faithful to take up arms and expel the infidel (Ebn al-Jawzī, *Montażam* IX, p. 105). But it was not until Barkīāroq’s death and the undisputed succession of his brother Moḥammad (498-511/1105-18) that the Saljuq government was free to intervene militarily in Syria. A number of expeditions were sent westward, directed against the two most northerly Frankish states, the principality of Antioch and the county of Edessa (Rohā, now Urfa). Most of these campaigns were headed by the atabeg of Mosul, Šaraf-al-Dīn Mawdūd, who mounted several attacks upon the Franks between 504/1110 and his murder in 507/1113. His successor, Āqsonqor Borsoqī, made another attempt in 508/1114. The composite nature of the sultan’s armies, which included contingents under such amirs as Soqmān Qoṭbī of Mayyāfāreqīn (modern Silvan) and the Artuqid rulers of Dīārbakr (modern Diyarbakır), undermined their effectiveness, however; furthermore, they aroused the well-founded suspicion of the Syrian Muslim rulers that the aim was to subject or eliminate them also. These princes were consequently ready on occasion to sink their differences with the infidel and to collaborate against the sultan’s forces. One notable instance was the Frankish victory, at Tell Dāneṭ in 509/1115, over the last of Moḥammad’s armies, commanded by Borsoq b. Borsoq, amir of Hamadān, which was won with the aid of the Saljuq rulers of Aleppo and Damascus. This campaign marked the end of Moḥammad’s attempts to assert his authority in Syria. After his death and the outbreak of fresh disputes among members of the Saljuq dynasty in Persia, the burden of reducing the Frankish position was eventually assumed by the ruler of Mosul, Zangī (521-41/1127-46), acting autonomously.

The Il-khanid period and after

The subjugation of Persia by the Mongol prince Hülegü (Hülāgū), followed by his advance into northern Syria, once more brought residents of the Persian world into direct contact with the crusaders but on very different terms. It is possible that during their brief occupation of Syria the Mongols acted with comparative restraint toward the Frankish possessions from fear of provoking a new European crusade (Jackson, pp. 496-99), but, in any case, the confrontation effectively ended with Hülegü’s withdrawal in the spring of 658/1260 and the overthrow of his general Ketbuqa by the Mamluks of Egypt at ‘Ayn Jālūt in the autumn. Dissension within the Mongol world over the next



few years induced Hülegü to make friendly overtures to the French king, Louis IX, in 660/1262, in the hope of avenging 'Ayn Jālūt while the Mamluks' energies were absorbed by a Frankish seaborne attack (Meyvaert, pp. 249, 259). His son and successor, [Abaqa](#) (663-80/1265-82), dispatched a series of embassies to the popes from 665/1267 onward, notably the mission that attended the second Council of Lyons in 1274; he also made an abortive attempt to invade Syria during the crusade of the future Edward I of England in 1271. Under [Arğūn](#) (683-90/1284-91) the il-khans' efforts to secure military collaboration against Egypt reached their peak. One of Arğūn's envoys was the celebrated Nestorian cleric Rabbān Ṣawma, who visited Rome and the French and English courts in 1287-88 and has left an account of the mission (Budge, pp. 165-97). In another letter, to Philippe IV of France in 688/1289, Arğūn proposed to take the field early in 690/1291, to rendezvous with a crusader army, and to restore Jerusalem to the Franks. After Arğūn's death contacts lapsed until the reign of his son [Ġazan](#) (Ġāzān; 694-703/1295-1304), whose victory over the Mamluk army and brief occupation of Syria and Palestine in 699/1300 caused a great stir in western Europe (see Schein). It was only after his second Syrian campaign that Ġazan resumed his father's policy, writing in 701/1302 to Pope Boniface VIII to propose a military collaboration. The diplomatic contacts with Europe initiated by his successor, Öljeitü (Ūljāytū), in 705-07/1305-07 were the last such exchanges. The obstacles had included not merely distance but also residual Western distrust of the Mongols, dating from the devastation of Poland and Hungary in 1241-42, and papal concern (at least before the conquest of Frankish Syria by the Mamluks in 690/1291) that the il-khan should be baptized in advance of any joint operations. In the 15th century Western powers engaged in spasmodic diplomatic exchanges with various Persian potentates, with a view to cooperation against the rising empire of the Ottoman Turks. Examples include the opening of relations between the Castilian king Enrique III and Tīmūr through the mission of [Ruy González de Clavijo](#) in 804/1404 and the more sustained negotiations between Venice and the [Āq Qoyunlū](#) sovereign Uzun Ḥasan (857-82/1453-78). Again, however, these contacts produced no concrete result. In the following century the Safavid shahs Esmā'īl I (907-30/1501-24) and Ṭahmāsb I (930-84/1524-76) were in turn considered as possible allies against the Turks; but by that time Western crusading endeavors had effectively terminated.



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