

Crusades Primary Source Quest

The scenario:

About 30 years ago, a group of archeologists discovered excerpts of texts written by people who had witnessed the Crusades, buried inside the tomb of a scholar who died in the late 13th century. The archeologists hired Bernard, an archivist at the Museum of the Middle Ages, to analyze the texts and determine just exactly what these documents were and who wrote them. Unfortunately, before Bernard had finished his task, aliens had abducted Bernard and the team of archeologists who discovered the documents. No one heard from any of these people again, and the discovery was forgotten until today, when these documents, along with Bernard's rudimentary notes, mysteriously turned up at your school.

It appears that Bernard had already deciphered the content and authorship of the documents, but forgot to label the specific documents with these details. Your task is:

- A) to match the list of authors and descriptions to the five documents
- B) to draft a statement of 2-3 paragraphs explaining what new conclusions about the Crusades you can draw from these documents

Part A should be completed as a whole class.

For part B, you will be divided into four different groups. Each group will be responsible for addressing one of these themes below:

- i. Religion and intercultural contact
- ii. Politics and intercultural contact
- iii. Everyday life and intercultural contact
- iv. Warfare and intercultural contact

You will be asked to appear at a press conference to read your statement.

Rules for completing the task:

1. This is to be a collaborative effort. Everyone must contribute.
2. You must use the details of the documents as clues for determining what the sources are. (No Googling!)
3. Part A: you must discuss 3-4 details from each document. Your discussion should include 1-2 questions for each document.
4. Part A: you must also determine what specific time period of the Crusades each document is related to (First Crusade, in between Second and Third Crusade, Fourth Crusade, etc.)
5. Each student should annotate his or her own copy of the documents
6. Please appoint 2-3 people as scribes to take notes on your discussions for Part A.
7. Part B: Students in each of the four subgroups must work as a small team to draft the press statement
8. Part B: Each group must select one representative to present the statement at the press conference. During the press conference, the rest of the students will act as reports. This means you should all pay attention to the statements, and come up with thoughtful questions for each presenter.

Part A to be completed during the first class period.

Part B to be completed during the second class period.

Bernard's Notes:

Possible Author #1: usmah ibn Munquidh, *Memoirs of an Arab-Syrian Gentleman* (his autobiography)

- usmah ibn Munquidh was born in Syria in 1095, the son of a prominent Arab nobleman. In 1140, he became an ambassador to Jerusalem, representing Muslim forces from Damascus in negotiations with crusaders. Later, during the Second Crusade, he fought for the Muslim armies against the crusaders. During a course of 50 years, he also served in the court of the Fatimids and the Ayyubids (under Saladin). He died in Damascus in 1188. His autobiography was written around 1175. Source: Paul M. Cobb, "Infidel Dogs: Hunting Crusaders with Usama ibn Munquidh," *Crusades* 6 (2007), 57-68.

Possible Author #2: Aymeric, Patriarch of Antioch (one of the Crusader States in the Levant) – his Letter to King Louis VII of France

Possible Author #3: Account of the Siege of Jerusalem (1099) by Fulcher of Chartres.

- "Fulcher was born in 1059 and was present at the Council of Clermont in 1095 when Pope Urban preached the Crusade. Fulcher, a cleric, left Europe with the army of Robert of Normandy, Stephen of Blois, and Robert of Flanders, accompanying it probably as far as Edessa, where he joined Baldwin, brother of Godfrey of Buillon. In 1099, after the capture of Jerusalem, Fulcher visited the city and returned to Edessa, where he remained until Baldwin became King of Jerusalem in 1100." From *The Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, 2nd Edition, ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 47.

Possible Author #4: Another text by Fulcher of Chartres about crusaders who had settled in the Levant

Possible Author #5: Nicetas Choniates (1155-1215), Byzantine historian writing about the crusaders' sack of Constantinople

Document A

. . . How shall I begin to tell of the deeds wrought by these nefarious men! Alas, the images, which ought to have been adored, were trodden under foot! Alas, the relics of the holy martyrs were thrown into unclean places! Then was seen what one shudders to hear, namely, the divine body and blood of Christ was spilled upon the ground or thrown about. They snatched the precious reliquaries, thrust into their bosoms the ornaments which these contained, and used the broken remnants for pans and drinking cups, -precursors of Anti-Christ, authors and heralds of his nefarious deeds which we momentarily expect. Manifestly, indeed, by that race then, just as formerly, Christ was robbed and insulted and His garments were divided by lot; only one thing was lacking, that His side, pierced by a spear, should pour rivers of divine blood on the ground.

Nor can the violation of the Great Church be listened to with equanimity. For the sacred altar, formed of all kinds of precious materials and admired by the whole world, was broken into bits and distributed among the soldiers, as was all the other sacred wealth of so great and infinite splendor.

When the sacred vases and utensils of unsurpassable art and grace and rare material, and the fine silver, wrought with gold, which encircled the screen of the tribunal and the ambo, of admirable workmanship, and the door and many other ornaments, were to be borne away as booty, mules and saddled horses were led to the very sanctuary of the temple. Some of these which were unable to keep their footing on the splendid and slippery pavement, were stabbed when they fell, so that the sacred pavement was polluted with blood and filth.

Nay more, a certain harlot, a sharer in their guilt, a minister of the furies, a servant of the demons, a worker of incantations and poisonings, insulting Christ, sat in the patriarch's seat, singing an obscene song and dancing frequently. Nor, indeed, were these crimes committed and others left undone, on the ground that these were of lesser guilt, the others of greater. But with one consent all the most heinous sins and crimes were committed by all with equal zeal. Could those, who showed so great madness against God Himself, have spared the honorable matrons and maidens or the virgins consecrated to God?

Nothing was more difficult and laborious than to soften by prayers, to render benevolent, these wrathful barbarians, vomiting forth bile at every displeasing word, so that nothing failed to inflame their fury. Whoever attempted it was derided as insane and a man of intemperate language. Often they drew their daggers against anyone who opposed them at all or hindered their demands.

No one was without a share in the grief. In the alleys, in the streets, in the temples, complaints, weeping, lamentations, grief, the groaning of men, the shrieks of women, wounds, rape, captivity, the separation of those most closely united. Nobles wandered about ignominiously, those of venerable age in tears, the rich in poverty. Thus it was in the streets, on the corners, in the temple, in the dens, for no place remained unassailed or defended the suppliants. All places everywhere were filled full of all kinds of crime. Oh, immortal God, how great the afflictions of the men, how great the distress!

Document B

In the army of King Fulk, son of Fulk, was a Frankish reverend knight who had just arrived from their land in order to make the holy pilgrimage and then return home. He was of my intimate fellowship and kept such constant company with me that he began to call me "my brother." Between us were mutual bonds of amity and friendship. When he resolved to return by sea to his homeland, he said to me:

My brother, I am leaving for my country and I want you to send with me thy son (my son, who was then fourteen years old, was at that time in my company) to our country, where he can see the knights and learn wisdom and chivalry. When he returns, he will be like a wise man.

Thus there fell upon my ears words which would never come out of the head of a sensible man; for even if my son were to be taken captive, his captivity could not bring him a worse misfortune than carrying him into the lands of the Franks. However, I said to the man:

By thy life, this has exactly been my idea. But the only thing that prevented me from carrying it out was the fact that his grandmother, my mother, is so fond of him and did not this time let him come out with me until she exacted an oath from me to the effect that I would return him to her.

Thereupon he asked, "Is thy mother still alive?" "Yes." I replied. "Well," said he, "disobey her not."

Among the Franks are those who have become acclimatized and have associated long with the Muslims. These are much better than the recent comers from the Frankish lands. But they constitute the exception and cannot be treated as a rule.

Here is an illustration. I dispatched one of my men to Antioch on business. There was in Antioch at that time al-Ra'is Theodoros Sophianos, to whom I was bound by mutual ties of amity. His influence in Antioch was supreme. One day he said to my man, "I am invited by a friend of mine who is a Frank. Thou shouldst come with me so that thou mayest see their fashions." My man related the story in the following words:

I went along with him and we came to the home of a knight who belonged to the old category of knights who came with the early expeditions of the Franks. He had been by that time stricken off the register and exempted from service, and possessed in Antioch an estate on the income of which he lived. The knight presented an excellent table, with food extraordinarily clean and delicious. Seeing me abstaining from food, he said, "Eat, be of good cheer! I never eat Frankish dishes, but I have Egyptian women cooks and never eat except their cooking. Besides, pork never enters my home." I ate, but guardedly, and after that we departed.

As I was passing in the market place, a Frankish woman all of a sudden hung to my clothes and began to mutter words in their language, and I could not understand what she was saying. This made me immediately the center of a big crowd of Franks. I was convinced that death was at hand. But all of a sudden that same knight approached. On seeing me, he came and said to that woman, "What is the matter between you and this Muslim?" She replied, "This is he who has killed my brother Hurso." This Hurso was a knight in Afiimiyah who was killed by someone of the army of Hamah. The Christian knight shouted at her, saying, "This is a bourgeois (i.e., a merchant) who neither fights nor attends a fight." He also yelled at the people who had assembled, and they all dispersed. Then he took me by the hand and went away. Thus the effect of that meal was my deliverance from certain death.

Document C

It would be fitting that we should always write joyful tidings to his royal majesty and should increase the splendor of his heart by the splendor and delight of our words. But the reverse has ever been our lot. The causes for tears, forsooth, are constant, the grief and the groaning are continuous, and we are unable to speak except of what concerns us. For the proverb says: "Where the grief is, there is also the tongue and hand." The deaths of the Christians are frequent and the captures which we see daily. Moreover, the wasting away of the church in the East afflicts with ineradicable grief us who, tortured internally even to our destruction, are dying while living in anguish of soul, and, leading a life more bitter than death, as a culmination of our miseries, are wholly unable to die. Nor is there anyone who turns his heart towards us and out of pity directs his hand to aid us. But not to protract our words, the few Christians who are here cry out to you, together with us, and implore your clemency, which with God's assistance is sufficient to liberate us and the church of God in the East.

And now we will tell you of all the events which have happened to us. In the Lent which has just passed, a certain one (Nur al-Din) of the men who are about us, who is held as chief among the Saracens (the Seljuk Turks), and who oppresses our Christian population far more than all who have gone before, and the leader of his army (Shirkuh). Having gotten possession of Damascus, the latter entered Egypt with a great force of Turks, in order to conquer the country. Accordingly, the king of Egypt, who is also called the sultan (the ruler of the Fatimid dynasty), distrusting his own valor and that of his men, held a most warlike council to determine how to meet the advancing Turks and how he could obtain the aid of the king of Jerusalem (Amalric). For he wisely preferred to rule under tribute rather than to be deprived of both life and kingdom.

The former (reference here is to Shirkuh), therefore, as we have said, entered Egypt, and favored by certain men of that land, captured and fortified a certain city. In the meantime the sultan made an alliance with the lord king (Amalric of Jerusalem) by promising to pay tribute each year and release all the Christian captives in Egypt, and obtained the aid of the lord king. The latter before setting out, committed the care of his kingdom and land, until his return, to us and to our new prince, his kinsman Bohemond, son of the former prince, Raymond.

Therefore, the great devastator of the Christian people (Nur al-Din), who rules near us, collected together from all sides the kings and races of the infidels and offered a peace and truce to our prince and very frequently urged it. His reason was that he wished to traverse our land with greater freedom in order to devastate the kingdom of Jerusalem and to be able to bear aid to his vassal fighting in Egypt. But our prince was unwilling to make peace with him until the return of our lord king.

When the former saw that he was not able to accomplish what he had proposed, full of wrath, he turned his weapons against us and laid siege to a certain fortress of ours, called Harrenc, twelve miles distant from our city. But those who were besieged - 7000 in number including warriors, men and women-cried loudly to us, ceasing neither day nor night, to have pity on them, and fixed a day beyond which it would be impossible for them to hold out. Our prince having collected all his forces, set out from Antioch on the day of St. Lawrence and proceeded as far as the fortress in entire safety. For the Turks in their cunning gave up the siege and withdrew a short distance from the fortress to some narrow passes in their own country.

Document D

Consider, I pray, and reflect how in our time God has transferred the West into the East, For we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank is now a Galilaeen, or an inhabitant of Palestine. One who was a citizen of Rheims or of Chartres now has been made a citizen of Tyre or of Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already they have become unknown to many of us, or, at least, are unmentioned. Some already possess here homes and servants which they have received through inheritance. Some have taken wives not merely of their own people, but Syrians, or Armenians, or even Saracens who have received the grace of baptism. Some have with them father-in-law, or daughter-in-law, or son-in-law, or stepson, or step-father. There are here, too, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One cultivates vines, another the fields. The one and the other use mutually the speech and the idioms of the different languages. Different languages, now made common, become known to both races, and faith unites those whose forefathers were strangers. As it is written, "The lion and the ox shall eat straw together." Those who were strangers are now natives; and he who was a sojourner now has become a resident, Our parents and relatives from day to day come to join us, abandoning, even though reluctantly, all that they possess. For those who were poor there, here God makes rich. Those who had few coins, here possess countless peasants; and those who had not had a villa, here, by the gift of God, already possess a city. Therefore why should one who has found the East so favorable return to the West? God does not wish those to suffer want who, carrying their crosses, have vowed to follow Him, nay even unto the end. You see, therefore, that this is a great miracle, and one which must greatly astonish the whole world. Who has ever heard anything like it? Therefore, God wishes to enrich us all and to draw us to Himself as His most dear friends. And because He wishes it, we also freely desire the same; and what is pleasing to Him we do with a loving and submissive heart, that with Him we may reign happily throughout eternity.

Document E

When the Franks saw how difficult it would be to take the city, the leaders ordered scaling ladders to be made, hoping that by a brave assault it might be possible to surmount the walls by means 'of ladders and thus take the city, God helping. So the ladders were made, and on the day following the seventh, in the early morning, the leaders ordered the attack, and, with the trumpets sounding, a splendid assault was made on the city from all sides. The attack lasted till the sixth hour, but it was discovered that the city could not be entered by the use of ladders, which were few in number, and sadly we ceased the attack.

. . .When the tower had been put together and had been covered with hides, it was moved nearer to the wall. Then knights, few in number, but brave, at the sound of the trumpet, took their places in the tower and began to shoot stones and arrows. The Saracens defended themselves vigorously, and, with slings, very skilfully hurled back burning firebrands, which had been dipped in oil and fresh fat. Many on both sides, fighting in this manner, often found themselves in the presence of death.

. . . On the following day the work again began at the sound of the trumpet, and to such purpose that the rams, by continual pounding, made a hole through one part of the wall. The Saracens suspended two beams before the opening, supporting them by ropes, so that by piling stones behind them they would make an obstacle to the rams. However, what they did for their own protection became, through the providence of God, the cause of their own destruction. For, when the tower was moved nearer to the wall, the ropes that supported the beams were cut; from these same beams the Franks constructed a bridge, which they cleverly extended from the tower to the wall. About this time one of the towers in the stone wall began to burn, for the men who worked our machines had been hurling firebrands upon it until the wooden beams within it caught fire. The flames and smoke soon became so bad that none of the defenders of this part of the wall were able to remain near this place. At the noon hour on Friday, with trumpets sounding, amid great commotion and shouting "God help us," the Franks entered the city. When the pagans saw one standard planted on the wall, they were completely demoralized, and all their former boldness vanished, and they turned to flee through the narrow streets of the city. Those who were already in rapid flight began to flee more rapidly.

This may seem strange to you. Our squires and poorer footmen discovered a trick of the Saracens, for they learned that they could find byzants [*note: a gold coin*] in the stomachs and intestines of the dead Saracens, who had swallowed them. Thus, after several days they burned a great heap of dead bodies, that they might more easily get the precious metal from the ashes. Moreover, Tancred broke into the temple of the Lord and most wrongfully stole much gold and silver, also precious stones, but later, repenting of his action, after everything had been accounted for, be restored all to its former place of sanctity.

The carnage over, the crusaders entered the houses and took whatever they found in them. However, this was all done in such a sensible manner that whoever entered a house first received no injury from any one else, whether he was rich or poor. Even though the house was a palace, whatever he found there was his property. Thus many poor men became rich.