

## Original Article

# The Crusades and the Socio-Economic Transformation of Medieval Europe

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**Abstract:** This article examines the Crusades (1096–1291 AD) as an armed conflict that was not only motivated by religious motivations, but also driven by geopolitical, economic, and social factors. Using historical research methods and qualitative descriptive analysis, this article analyzes the background, dynamics, and impact of the Crusades on economic, social, and political conditions in Europe and the Islamic world. The results of the study show that the Crusade acted as a bridge between the two civilizations that triggered the exchange of knowledge, technology, and commodities. On the one hand, this conflict strengthens the awareness of religious identity and triggers the political consolidation of Muslims. On the other hand, the Crusades accelerated the transformation of the European economy through increased trade, the weakening of the feudal system, and the emergence of trading cities such as Venice and Genoa. This article concludes that the legacy of the Crusades lies not only in the memory of the conflict, but also in its contribution to the intellectual and economic revival of Europe that prepared the way to the Renaissance era.

**Keywords:** Crusades, Jerusalem, European economy, feudalism.

## Introduction

The Crusades were one of the longest and most complex events in the history of interaction between the Christian-European and Islamic worlds. For nearly two centuries (1096–1291 AD), this conflict not only fought over the City of Jerusalem which was considered sacred by the three heavenly religions but also reflected the intersection between political ambitions, economic interests, and religious sentiments. The background of the Crusades is often attributed to Pope Urban II's appeal at the Council of Clermont (1095 AD), which promised forgiveness of sins for those who participated in the "holy war". Behind this

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religious narrative, however, there were more complex impulses: the military pressure of the Seljuk Dynasty on Byzantium, the political fragmentation of the Islamic world, and the need for Europe to channel the military energy of the knights who were often involved in internal conflicts. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the Crusades by focusing on three main aspects: (1) the background and chronology of the three main waves of the Crusades; (2) its impact on European economic conditions; and (3) the socio-political dynamics on both sides before, during, and after the conflict. Through a historical approach and a study of the literature, this article is expected to provide a balanced perspective on how the Crusades became not only an arena of conflict, but also a medium of exchange of civilizations that changed the map of European and Islamic history.

## Method

This study uses a historical research method with a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach to examine the Crusades as a multidimensional phenomenon. The research design is non-experimental, focusing on the reconstruction of historical events based on primary and secondary sources. The research subjects cover key events in the Crusades (1096–1291 AD), including the background, driving factors, key figures (such as Shalahuddin al-Ayyubi and Richard the Lionheart), and their impact on the economy, politics, and society.

The data collection procedure begins with heuristic identification through the study of literature from reliable sources, both primary (such as historical documents, travel records, and manuscripts) and secondary (academic journals, books, and scientific articles). Data are systematically collected from academic databases and digital libraries with inclusion criteria: relevant, credible, and published sources in the time frame 2000–2025. Data analysis is carried out through narrative interpretation and causality to understand the relationship between events, contexts, and long-term impacts.

## Discussion

### Background and Chronology of the Crusades

The Crusades were motivated by the accumulation of tensions between the Christian and Islamic worlds, especially after the Seljuk Dynasty took control of Jerusalem in 1078 AD and imposed restrictions on Christian pilgrims. The defeat of Byzantium at the Battle of Manzikert (1071 AD) prompted Emperor Alexius I Comnenus to ask Pope Urban II for help. The Pope's appeal at Clermont (1095) triggered the First Crusade (1095–1144 AD), which succeeded in establishing four Latin states in the Middle East: Edessa, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Tripoli. The Second Crusade (1145–1148 AD) was launched after the fall of Edessa to Imaduddin Zengi, but failed to capture Damascus. The rise of the Muslims was spearheaded by Nuruddin Zanki and reached its peak under Shalahuddin al-Ayyubi, who managed to recapture Jerusalem after the victory at Hattin (1187). This event triggered the Third Crusade (1189–1192 AD), which ended with the Treaty of Ramlah (1192) which allowed Christian pilgrims to visit Jerusalem without regaining control of the city. The Crusades officially ended after the fall of Acko (1291) to the Mamluk Dynasty.

### The Impact of the Crusades on the European Economy of Aceh

The Crusades brought about a significant transformation in the economic structure of Europe. Interaction with the Islamic world that has advanced in trade and technology opens up access to new commodities such as spices, textiles, and fragrances. Port cities such as Venice and Genoa are taking advantage of their strategic position as logistics and transportation providers, thus experiencing rapid economic growth. The circulation of the Arabic currency (silver coin) also began to be known in Europe, encouraging the development of a more complex financial system. In addition, the need for supplies for the Crusaders encouraged an increase in domestic production, particularly in the textile, armaments, and shipping sectors. The weakening of the feudal system due to the large number of nobles who died without heirs also accelerated the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the king and the merchant class. Thus, the Crusades not only changed trade patterns, but also encouraged a transition to a more integrated and capitalistic economy.

### Socio-Political Dynamics in Europe and the Islamic World

11th-century Europe was characterized by political fragmentation, a strict feudal system, and the dominance of the church in all aspects of life. Meanwhile, the Islamic world, although culturally and scientifically advanced, experienced political divisions between the Abbasid, Fatimid and Seljuk dynasties, which weakened its defensive capabilities. In Europe, the Crusades accelerated the decline of church power and feudalism. The king's authority increased as territory and wealth consolidated. On the other hand, the Islamic world experienced political consolidation under the leadership of Shalahuddin al-Ayyubi and his successors from the Ayyubid and Mamluk Dynasties. The war also strengthened religious identity and the spirit of jihad in response to foreign invasions. However, the social impact is paradoxical: on the one hand, there is an exchange of science and technology between Islam and Christianity; On the other hand, sectarian violence leaves a deep trauma that is still influential to modern times.

### Conclusion

The Crusades were not just religious conflicts, but historical phenomena that reflected the complex interactions between politics, economics, and culture. Although it left behind a legacy of violence and identity polarization, the Crusades also served as a bridge of civilizations that accelerated the economic transformation of Europe, weakened the feudal system, and sparked the exchange of knowledge and technology. In the Islamic world, this conflict strengthens collective consciousness and political consolidation, although it also results in infrastructure damage and resource drainage. An in-depth understanding of the Crusades is important not only as a historical study, but also as a reflection on the dynamics of interreligious and intercultural relations that continue to be relevant today.

### Suggestions

Further study of the cultural and intellectual impact of the Crusades on the development of science, art, and philosophy in Europe and the Islamic world is needed. In addition, it is important to integrate multidisciplinary perspectives—such as political

economy, peace studies, and anthropology in analyzing the legacy of the Crusades. History education should not only emphasize aspects of conflict, but also highlight the values of dialogue, knowledge exchange, and intercultural understanding as the basis for building more harmonious relations in the future.

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