

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF BRITAIN

MODULE: MEDIEVAL SOCIAL FORMATIONS



CRUSADES (1095-1291)

I SEMESTER

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- Series of Christian military expeditions fought against Muslims for the Holy Lands, especially Jerusalem, between the years of 1095-1291.
- There were eight crusades fought between Christians and Muslims.
- The word Crusade came from the Latin word crux meaning cross, to take up the cross meant to become a crusader.
- To identify themselves, crusades sewed symbols of the cross of Christ onto their clothing and painted crosses on their shields.
- Three major religious groups(Christianity, Islam, Judaism) claimed Jerusalem, in the land of Palestine as their holy city.



- To Christians, Jerusalem was the place where Jesus was crucified, arose from the dead, and ascended to heaven.
- To Jews, Abraham was given this land by God.
- To Muslim , it was from Jerusalem Prophet Muhammad ascended into heaven to meet God.



- Muslims had occupied Jerusalem in 638 CE, during the time of Caliph Umar, after strong battle with Byzantine Empire.
- By the time of First Crusade (1095), Muslims had tremendous territorial possessions throughout the middle East, North Africa, and even in the Europe itself.
- The Muslim rulers had allowed Christians and Jews to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem and they enjoyed religious freedom.



- But by the end of 11th century , a new group of Muslim called Seljuk Turks took control over the Holy Lands including Jerusalem and closed it to all Jewish and Christians pilgrims.
- The closure of Jerusalem for the Christian pilgrims by Seljuk Turks had profound impact on Christian world.
- It was against this backdrop that Byzantine ruler Alexius I Comnenus appealed for help against the Seljuk Turks to Pope Urban II in 1095 CE.

First Crusade (1095 -1099)



- In Nov 1095 at Council of Clermont in France, Pope Urban II gave a public speech calling on western Christians to give aid to their Eastern Christian Brethren.
- Pope exhorted for the liberation of the Holy Lands, which had been under Muslim control for 400 years.
- One of his letter says “ *we know you have already heard from the testimony of many that frenzy of the barbarians devastated the churches of God in the east, and has even shame to say- seized into slavery the holy city of Christ, Jerusalem. Grieving in pious contemplation of this disaster , we visited France and strongly urged the princes and people of that land to work for the liberation of the Eastern Church.*”

- In August 1096, a vast Crusader army began the journey from Europe to Constantinople.
- The Army was led by prominent leaders like Godfrey of Bouillon (Duke of Lower Lorraine), Raymond (Count of Toulouse), Robert (Duke of Normandy) and Robert II (count of Flanders).
- In 1097, Crusader army captured Nicaea, Capital of Seljuk Sulthan Qilji Arslan.
- They captured Antioch and much part of Syria in 1098.
- In 1099, they captured Jerusalem.
- In the first crusade, the Western forces could achieve crucial victory over the Muslims.
- After this victory, the Crusaders established four Christian Kingdom in the Holy Lands

Second Crusade (1145-1148)



- The immediate reason for the second crusade was the recapture of the lost territories in the First crusade by Muslim forces.
- On December 24, 1144, the Turkish army seized the city of Edessa and murdered all of the inhabitants.
- It was the first major loss of a territory won by the Crusader armies in the First Crusade.
- In 1145, Pope Eugenius III appealed for the second crusade.
- But the response from western world was not promising one.
- However , Bernard of Clairvaux, the greatest churchman of his era, began preaching and writing in favour of the new Crusade.



- Up to 50,000 volunteers responded to the call from France alone.
- What the pope couldn't do, Bernard was able to
- The Second Crusade was born
- The two important military leaders of the second crusade were Louis VII of France, and Conrad III Germany.
- Due to the disunity between them, they couldn't achieve victory in this war.
- Their army was thoroughly beaten in 1147 and 1148.