

Frankish Adaptation to the Middle Eastern Environment: Synopsis

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This article is an attempt to reassess modern conceptions of the Franks within the Middle Eastern environment during the early Crusading period.

For the past forty to fifty years, historians have considered such Franks as an alien elite, indifferent or even hostile to its indigenous subjects. Shut away in their castles and cities, the Franks were thought to be content ruling their heterogeneous society by absentee landownership, control of trade, and military coercion. A high level of segregation was applied to all forms of control using a Latin power structure that was entirely western. In 1110, Baldwin I affirmed to Tancred during a land dispute that "we (The Franks) shall hold nothing among us by gentile law in all those towns which God subjects to our authority."^[1] Possibly meaning that the crusader states would follow western laws. Moreover, Baldwin I had begun instituting an administration reminiscent of Christian Europe, which modern historians understood to be a blue print for all "crusader states." Modern historians look to these contemporary accounts and examples as proof to intentional Frankish segregation. But, if we take a closer look into Frankish society, we would see something different. Latin aristocrats and settlers alike began using Near Eastern concepts and adapting them to their institutional framework. Whether in diplomacy, war, or administration, the Franks were forced to adapt their own structure of power to better fit the one already in existence throughout the Middle East if they hoped to maintain their Christian foothold. I hope that you enjoy the read as much as I did researching it! If you have any questions, comments, or complaints please don't be shy and PMing me. I would love to answer/debate anything that I've written. It's what historians do!

[1] Albert of Aachen Xi 22.