

Frankish Adaptation to the Middle Eastern Environment: Part II

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II.

Muslim Dissention and Christian Institutions of Warfare

From the very beginning, the Crusaders demonstrated a willingness to adapt to their new surroundings that would serve them well throughout the crusading period.[1] While the armies of the First Crusade continued preparations for their journey to Jerusalem, on advice from Emperor Alexius I, its leaders dispatched an embassy to negotiate peace with the Fatimid Dynasty of Egypt, adversaries of the Seljuk Turks who occupied the majority of Asia Minor.

Taking such advice proved remarkably fortunate for the expedition since it appeared doubtful that the crusaders would have capitalized on the internal divisions that wracked the Islamic Civilization. Most likely this can be attributed to the lack of organization amongst the Christian leaders as they jostled for authority over the expedition, rather than any lack of prior knowledge about their Muslim adversaries' divisions.[2] In fact, throughout their march across Asia Minor and Syria, the Western leaders appeared surprisingly well informed of their opponents' alliances.[3] The protracted negotiations with the Fatimid rulers of Egypt, which began as early as June 1097 and lasted until May 1099, exploited Islamic internal divisions by playing rival powers off against one another. But such political schemes had a price. By becoming embroiled in the political wrangling of Near Eastern powers, the Franks would find themselves increasingly mixed in with these same powers. Indeed, to a degree, Muslim powers would accept the new "Crusading" Kingdoms as another element in the political make-up of the Near East and would even pursue policies of interaction with their Frankish neighbors.

However, for the average crusader, who generally tended to be artisans, townspersons, or peasants, the differences between "Turks," "Arabs," and "Fatimids" may not have been as apparent. Excluding the relatively rare exception for those who made pilgrimages to the Holy Land, the vast majority of Western Europeans had no direct contact with Islamic culture. By the end of the eleventh century, three of the four major "countries of origin" had been geographically separated from any Islamic contact; Raymond IV of Toulouse, representative of the knights of Provence, Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of Lower Lotharingia, and Robert II of Flanders, of the northern French. Such a lack of prior knowledge encouraged prejudices and stereotypes, adding to inter-communal frictions during the crusading state period. In fact, those earlier Franks who had been acclimated to the Near East often had to restrain newcomers from attacking the "wrong" Muslims. The only major army whose soldiers would have come into daily contact with Muslims was Bohemond of Taranto's Norman

army of southern Italy. However, not only did they incessantly fight Muslims for control over Sicily, they fought Byzantines as well, which caused problems in their march through the Roman Empire.[4]

Nevertheless, for the common crusader, the Islamic civilization that stretched from Central Asia, through the Middle East, across North Africa, and into the Iberian Peninsula would have appeared as an impressive sight indeed. To the unknowing Latin who entered this foreign land, the Islamic civilization presented a united front that under the universal power wielded of the caliph, regarded as direct successor of the prophet Muhammad, [5] threatened to encircle Western Europe.

In actuality, no caliph had wielded such widespread power since the height of the 'Abbasid dynasty during the ninth century and by 969, a minor sect within the Islamic faith known as the Shi'ites had established a rival caliphate in Egypt, the Fatimid Dynasty. The Shi'ites differed in their ideology to the 'Abbasid Sunnis in that they not only adhered to the teachings of Muhammad, but also recognized the religious guidance of his family, the Ahl al-Bayt, or his descendants known as Shi'a Imams. The Shi'ites considered these descendants as the keepers and instructors of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Furthermore, the Shi'ites believed that Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin and husband of Fatimah, was the true successor to Muhammad and thus reject the legitimacy of the first three caliphs of Islamic history.[6] While the Fatimid Dynasty's gained power and expanded into Palestine and Syria, the 'Abbasid caliphates became virtual prisoners to the Buyids, a Persian Shi'i dynasty situated in modern day Iran and eastern Iraq.

However, by 1040, another force appeared in the political struggles of the Near East. The Seljuks, Turkish nomads from near the Aral Sea who had recently converted to Sunni Islam, conquered Afghanistan and much of the Eastern Persian Empire. [7] By 1055, Seljuk forces captured Baghdad, where they were warmly welcomed by the enfeebled 'Abbasid caliphate. The Seljuk Empire reached its height in the 1070's, when the sultan Alp Arslan defeated a Byzantine army at Manzikert, seizing control over the majority Asia Minor. [8] However, soon after the battle, Arslan died, leaving the empire to fall into a bitter civil war which fractured the empire into a number of dissident kingdoms. Members of the Seljuk family established themselves as sultans in the Western Half of Asia Minor, called Anatolia, turning Nicea into their capital. The Danishmends, a martial, nomadic people, established their own dynasty in the north and central area of the peninsula. When the armies of the First Crusade entered the western Anatolia, they found a land so divided by rivalry that not even a threat such as the Crusaders produced could yield a collective response.

So intense did the Muslims' dissension appear, which made it so favorable for an invading force to exploit, that some have questioned whether Alexius I and Urban II deliberately timed their initiative to take advantage of the situation.[9] Subsequent successes in Cilicia, at Edessa, and Antioch, in part due to the failure of competing Muslim powers to unite, can only further such a hypothesis. However, I believe there is something deeper here. By willingly coming to terms with certain Islamic groups, the Franks allowed themselves to be progressively drawn into the political spheres of the Near East. This

demonstrates that the Franks actively sought out and sustained alliances that could benefit both groups, and calls into question the defensive oriented perception that the Franks limited their contact with Muslim society to a minimum. Nonetheless, for the Franks to reach their ultimate goal, Jerusalem, they would need more than skillful political wrangling. And with the army gathering around the Islamic city of Nicaea, capital of the Seljuk sultan Kilij Arslan and gateway to one of the main routes through Anatolia, they would need to use that readiness to adjust on the battlefield.

By the end of April 1097, Godfrey and the Norman army had broken camp and begun the short march to take the campaign's first objective, Nicaea. In Christian lore, Nicaea was a famous site for a number of early Christian councils. The city was built on a good strategic position, a fertile basin at the eastern end of the Lake Ä°znik that was bounded by numerous ranges of hills to the north and south. With high walls running straight to the water and containing over two hundred towers, Nicaea defenses would prove difficult to breach, especially around its waterside. The lake was large enough that it could not be blockaded from land easily, while the city was large enough to make attempts to reach the harbor from shore-based siege weapons very difficult.

Godfrey arrived on 6 May and, although it would take another four weeks before the whole army had assembled, preparations for the siege had begun as early as 14 May.[10] The crusaders were intimately familiar with the forms of labor surrounding this military institution; the castle. For at the time of the crusades, medieval Western Europe was littered with them and their proliferation profoundly influenced the conduct of war. [11] In truth, so closely were knights associated with their castles they often referred to themselves as the homines (“Good men”) of a specific castle rather than that of a particular lord. In an age where the level of technological innovation forced men into fighting pitched battles hand-to-hand, anyone who could obtain even a minimal advantage in height and shelter was at an enormous advantage.[12] Therefore, even at their most simplistic, castles could prove formidable obstacles to overcome.

The art of surmounting such structures was a vital part of Western European warfare that the crusaders brought with them to the Near East. A successful siege depended on persistence, determination, and organization, each of which the crusaders demonstrated amply. To breach Nicaea's walls, the westerners used an assortment of siege technology that included catapults and siege towers, established a common fund for expenses, and even hired an Italian engineer.[13] However, this proved largely ineffectual as the crusaders could not entirely blockade the lake on which the city was situated, allowing supplies to slip into the city. Thus, for Franks to be successful they needed to adapt existing technology to the needs of war. This came through the help of Emperor Alexius, who allowed Greek ships to be sent overland and refloated on the lake. With the blockade finally complete and the defeat of a relief force by Kilij Arslan, the garrison surrendered on 19 June to Byzantine admiral Butumites .

Nicaea's surrender and subsequent return to the Byzantine Empire re-established Eastern Roman power in Western Anatolia and alternately undermined that of the Seljuk Turks. And although it did not provide the Franks much in the way of plunder, Alexius had forbidden the crusaders to enter the city, Nicaea can be

seen as an initial testing ground for the Christian expedition. Their decisive victory over the relief attack by Kilij Arslan was a remarkable achievement for such a novice and fragmented force, even if these same problems would hinder later efforts during the campaign. It also forced, at least partially, an organization of the power structure with the leading members of the princes' council through their coordination of the siege. However, the return of the Byzantine city hints at more than just additional military experience for the crusaders. Their success may suggest an emerging pattern of confrontation that would lay the foundation for future acclimation of the Franks in the Near East. Nicaea was the first of three large sieges that dominated the First Crusade. Such gains would necessitate a garrison to remain within the city to preserve order amongst the indigenous populace and provide a ready defense against future Muslim attacks. Generally, such a garrison would institute itself as the governing body, establishing themselves at the top of the political hierarchy. If such groups wished to remain in power, they would need to adapt, at least partially, to the dominant culture. Thus, their success at Nicaea and with each successful siege would signal the arrival of a new, fixed group in Near Eastern politics. A group, as the crusaders began their march across Anatolia on 27 June, whose presence would be felt for far longer than anyone could have anticipated.

With Nicaea secure, the Franks followed the old Roman south-west into the interior of Anatolia. They found it to be a desolate place. Turkish forces had devastated the surrounding countryside before retreating to the mountains.[14] Fulcher of Chartres bemoaned:

"A land once rich and excellent in all the fruits of the earth, had been so cruelly ravaged by the Turks, that there were only small patches of cultivation to be seen at long intervals.[15]-

Food for both man and horse were scarce, straining the already limited supplies of such a large army. It was possibly for this reason, to cover greater space for foraging, that the army split into two; each a roughly equal sized column, marching parallel to one another some seven miles apart.[16] The right-column was comprised of the followers of Godfrey of Bouillon, Raymond of Toulouse, Hugh Count of Vermandois, and the majority of the French and Lotharingian contingents. While the left column included Bohemond and Tancred with their Sicilian Normans, Robert of Flanders, Robert of Normandy, and Stephen of Blois.[17]

After descending the Bithynian Mountains in late June, the two columns of the First Crusade found themselves in a broad highland plain. It was a rolling countryside that supported little in the way of strong, defensible positions. This was a serious problem for the horseless crusader that the leaders of the First Crusade were particularly aware of. In the West, the climate, geography, and topography often favored the infantryman. Large stretches of comparatively flat land, as was common across the battlefields of the Near East, were rare in the West. It had allowed foot soldiers to use any large obstacle, such as a hedge, wooded area, or steep hill, as a rallying point against both mounted and un-mounted

opponents. Nonetheless, the discrepancies of climate and topography for the crusading foot-soldier were only the beginning of an otherwise much larger problem in the crusading army's approach to warfare.

When compared to their Near Eastern counterparts, Western armies followed a more traditional style of combat with a combination of infantry and cavalry. However, these elements were sharply differentiated. Clearly, cavalry held an advantage on the battlefield; highly mobile, better trained, and well-armed, cavalry could dictate the course of battle. The king and other leading men may have possessed something similar to an armory, but usually those who followed him, whether wealthy proprietor or poor infantryman, equipped themselves. Thus, it should be unsurprising that the rich heavily invested in self-protection at the expense of other priorities; the under-use of the crossbow and lack of proper military training for the infantry being notable highlights. Both were expensive endeavors that did not correspond to the priorities of the wealthy. Thus, the resulting forces were sharply divided between well-armed, mounted men and very lightly equipped foot soldiers, with little in between.[18]

Yet, this marked dichotomy between the horseman and the horseless was driven more by medieval economic, social, and political factors than by military necessity. Land was by far the most important form of wealth in Western Europe. The economy was driven by subsistence agriculture; the lack of hard currency commonly meant that renders due from land were in part paid in kind. Even kings were essentially just larger landholders. This made the maintenance of large standing armies unfeasible.[19] Therefore, if a king wanted to raise a large army, he was forced to look toward two sources; family members and other wealthy proprietors.

Family ties were important because they created a core group of followers that would be the largest supporters of the king. Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lotharingia and future King of Jerusalem, was not only accompanied by his younger brother Baldwin and wife on Crusade,[20] but Godfrey's butler, Ruthard,[21] seneschal, Baldric,[22] and chamberlain, Stabelo.[23] However, Godfrey needed other wealthy proprietors' support, which filled out his army with their own retainers, just as much as his direct family's. However, bonds of obligation to a lord could be vague at best. So to keep minor lords support, Duke Godfrey repeatedly bestowed important military and diplomatic missions toward the leading lords of the Lower Lotharingian contingent. Peter of Dampierre accompanied an embassy to King Coloman of Hungary during the expedition's initial march through Europe while Rainald of Toul was placed in charge of a reserve division at the Battle of Antioch in 1098.[24] But, even such high honors could not keep some lords in check. In fact, two Lower Lotharingians, Baldwin of Hainaut and Henry of Esch, broke traditional military discipline by moving ahead of the main army in Thrace in order to reach Constantinople and share in Alexius's generous welcoming ceremony.

In summation, large Western armies, such as the ones that left for Jerusalem in 1096, were little more than an amalgamation of smaller armies, centered on a core group of knights that were intimately bound to their leader, and a large, loosely obligated following.[25] The wealthy, adhering to contemporary culture's belief in military

individualism, invested their money in self-protection, for obvious reasons, instead of developing an infrastructure focused on war that would be capable of imposing unity and discipline amongst their troops. Thus, the common foot-soldier and cavalryman alike rarely received enough cohesive training to be fully capable on the battlefield. However, cavalymen could make up for this slightly through their mobility and individual training while infantry, who relied on mass and cohesion more than cavalry, could not. It is hard to imagine how an amalgamated army could present itself on the battlefield.

A loose command structure, little to no group experience, and a sharp dichotomy of training between cavalry and infantry made even the simplest maneuvers difficult, if not impossible. The tactical consequences were that western commanders actively avoided pitched battle and, in some cases, even sieges. Instead, a war of destruction, razing the precious land that was so vital to Western economy, was the preferred method to victory. However, for the First Crusade, pitched battles could not be avoided when faced with a well-motivated and highly mobile enemy army.

An hour

after breaking camp on July 1st some miles (find) north of the Thymbres, the left division, under the general charge of Bohemond I, began receiving reports of a Muslim host in vast numbers. The prince quickly ordered the tents to be pitched and the baggage unladed by the side of a marsh to provide cover.[26] As the infantry went about their task, Bohemond assembled his battle line made exclusively of cavalry, leaving the foot soldiers to guard the camp.[27]

Neither the camp was completely pitched, nor the battle line in complete order when the first waves of Seljouk horsemen archers appeared from all directions. Within minutes, the Christians became completely enveloped in the swarms of mounted horse archers. Fulcher of Chartres spoke of the novelty of not seeing a single foot soldier amongst them. Yet, the Muslims did not engage the heavily armored knights in hand-to-hand combat. Instead, they let loose a barrage of arrows from horseback to harass their enemy before riding off to the flanks, only to be replaced by fresh troops with fully laden quivers.

Fearing

that his battle line would fall into disorder against such a highly mobile enemy, Bohemond held back from ordering a general charge. This quickly frustrated the Franks, who could only sit and watch as the Seljuks continued to fire arrows upon them, and groups of Christians launched themselves at the enemy. The heavy horsemen could not catch their lighter Islamic counterparts as they hurriedly withdrew from the charging knights. These groups became easy targets for the skilled horse archers, who shot the horses out from underneath the Franks. The mail-clad knights initially suffered much less than might have been expected. But when they turned to make their way to their own lines, the Muslims would ride in, surrounding the Latins before slaughtering many of the groups wholesale. The rest, watching from the relative safety of their own battle line, saw the futility of such a course and resolved to tighten ranks and hold firm. After several hours of near constant barrage, the line became loose and disorganized. Soon the flanks collapsed in on the center and the remaining Franks gave up the field, falling back towards the camp in mass.

There was

no help to be found at the camp. In the several hours that the knights had stood against the shower of arrows, Seljuks had assailed the camp from the rear. The infantry, taken aback by such a maneuver, appeared to have been routed almost instantly. When the fleeing knights finally made their way back to camp, they found it already being pillaged and the non-combatants slain by the Muslims. Fulcher described the desperation of the scene:

“...crushed one against another like sheep penned up in a fold, helpless and panic-stricken, we were shut in by the Turks on every side, and had not the courage to break out at any point. The air was filled with shouts and screams, partly from the combatants, partly from the multitude in the camp. Already we had lost all hope of saving ourselves, and were owning our sins and commending ourselves to God’s Mercy. Believing themselves at the point to die, many men left the ranks and asked for absolution from the nearest priest. It was to little purpose that our chiefs... kept striving to beat back the Infidels, and sometimes charged out against them. The Turks had closed in, and were attacking us with the greatest audacity.” (275)

It appeared as if the Christian army would face a catastrophic defeat, but in the critical moment of battle, momentum swung back to the Crusaders. Messengers had ridden out prior to battle, trying to track down the missing right column, finding them some six to seven miles away.[28] Once alerted, Duke Godfrey and the other chiefs led their host of knights at full gallop to aid their beset companions, leaving their own infantry behind to guard the camp. The Turks appeared to have wholly neglected to address the possible arrival of Godfrey’s column and the Crusaders entered the field unopposed at an optimal position, on the left flank and rear of the Turkish host, which had concentrated into a small space as it attacked Bohemond’s camp. Godfrey and his men charged straight into the enemy, striking the Seljuks unaware, rolling up their left flank and striking the center from their rear. The Turks had no time to mount a defense and the shock of Godfrey’s charge sent a wave of panic throughout the enemy army and almost immediately routed the Seljouk. In the aftermath, the victorious Crusaders pursued the Muslims off the field, scattering their forces and seizing the enemy’s camp. For three days’ journey from the field, the bodies of horses could be seen, ridden to death by their fleeing Turkish riders.[29]

The possession of light cavalry and particularly horse archers gave Islamic commanders options in the approach to battle unknown in the West.[30] Throughout the Middle East, large plains for grazing made the rearing of light horses relatively easy. [31] This contrasted with the congested topography of western farming: Europeans lacked such vast plains and therefore focused its horse-raising on stall-fed larger animals.[32] The natural consequence was that Near Eastern light horses were very easily available and with the establishment of Turkish tribes in authority, a continual supply of effective horse archers could be brought into Islamic armies. Such tribesmen were natural soldiers. The anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* speaks of being struck by the swirling Turkish horsemen and their tactics. However, this is not to say that the light cavalryman monopolized Muslim armies. Turkish armies in Asia Minor were atypical in their nearly complete dependence on them. Heavy horsemen, such as Saladin’s ghulams nearly a century later, and common infantry filled specific roles throughout other Islamic armies. But, the maneuverability of light cavalry gave Islamic armies an edge that the rigid battle lines of the West could not initially match. Yet, as undeserved as the victory at Dorylaeum was, it granted the Christians a free passage throughout the rest of Asia Minor. They would not be forced to fight another pitched battle until they had reached Antioch.

For the sake of our study, we must quickly pass over the latter stages of the First Crusade. It is not that the sieges of Antioch and Jerusalem or the Battle of Antioch are any less important. It is a truth barely worth making the point that such events are significant in the First Crusade, having been the focuses of numerous later studies. Their stories only serve to reiterate my earlier concepts. The labor and suffering involved in taking fortified cities, especially at the siege of Antioch, would almost certainly have set in the Frankish mind a feeling of the conquerors right to govern. Added to this was Emperor Alexius's failure to aid the Latins. Under false information, which detailed the entire expedition meeting their doom at the gates of Antioch, Alexius decided to reverse the march of his army, leaving the Latins to finish the siege and the subsequent battle by themselves. This drove a deep wedge between Frank and Roman that served as verification for the Latins that their control over such cities would become permanent. Hence, the only question would be who would rule such a magnificent city? In the end, Bohemond won out, but the most important fact for our study would be that finally, after a year marching through Muslim controlled territory, the Crusaders had taken a major city in which they could use as a base of operations to extend Christian power. Jerusalem's capture confirmed that Franks were here to stay. But, if they wanted to maintain their foothold, they needed to adapt their rigid structure of warfare to compete in the new environment.

From 1098 to 1099, the crusaders embarked on a series of minor sieges, culminating in the capture of Jerusalem and massacre of its populace during mid-July.[33]

"if you had been there you would have seen our feet colored to our ankles with the blood of the slain...[before all the] clergy and laymen, went to the Sepulcher of the Lord and His glorious temple, singing the ninth chant. With fitting humility, they repeated prayers and made their offering at the holy places..."[34]

It was not until August 1099 that another pitched battle was waged upon open ground. However, this time the Crusaders did not face their accustomed Turkish enemy. Instead, the Franks looked across the battlefield to observe the banners of El-Mustali Abul-Kasim Ahmed, caliphate of the Fatimids. Since the beginning of the First Crusade, the Crusaders had been in negotiations with the Fatimid Empire to exploit Islamic political divisions. The Egyptians were more than willing to tolerate Christian authority over Seljuk Syria,[35] but no satisfactory concession could be reached regarding the control of the Holy City, which was under Fatimid control. When the Crusaders finally wrested control of the city away from the Egyptians, El-Mustali quickly dispatched his general, vizier al-afdal Shahanshah, and a large army, estimated at some twenty thousand men[36], north into Palestine. But, unlike the Turks, the Egyptian army used a far more traditional style of warfare, relying on a combination of mercenary troops that included; massed formations of

Sudanese light infantry, who used both bow and iron mace, Moorish and Bedouin light horsemen, armed with only spears, and the partially mailed troopers of the Caliph's regular army.[37] And unlike the Seljuks, whose mounted archers had for so long frustrated the Franks in battle, the entirety of the Egyptians mounted troops were spearmen.[38]

Surprisingly, the Franks marched out of Jerusalem on August 13, intent on meeting the Muslims in the open field with some twelve hundred knights and nine thousand foot soldiers. Such aggressiveness is an early example of Frankish military adaptation. Two years of near constant war had given the army great experience in fighting together. Therefore, when the Franks marched out of their newly conquered city, they were already a more disciplined and cohesive army than those of the West. This flexibility is demonstrated by the crusaders's style of march as they drew within the vicinity of the enemy. Fearing the surprise assault that had been such a common ploy in Syria, the Franks formed their army into nine smaller corps, each a combination of cavalry and foot. The corps marched three abreast, creating a front of three divisions from each sides. This "fighting march" allowed the Franks to absorb the shock of a sudden assault with the initial three corps, sustain the line with the three behind that, and use reserves when needed with the final three corps behind that. Sustaining a formation on the move could only have been achieved by well-disciplined and cohesive troops. However, it wasn't so much that the infantry and cavalry cooperated as that the army as a whole was capable of working together in a manner unknown or even possible in the West.[39] Ironically, so far were the Crusaders from a Muslim assault that they unknowingly stumbled across the flocks and herds of the Fatimid Army, surprising the enemy instead.

It was the survivors of this surprise assault that brought the location of the enemy army to Vizier Al-Afdal, who then prepared his men for battle the next morning. The Egyptian vizier positioned his army on the shore north of the town of Ascalon; resting the left wing against the coast and the right wing with a stretch of hills running parallel to the shore two miles inland. His line was made up of Sudanese archers, which doubled as his infantry, with regular cavalry behind them. A corps of Bedouin horsemen had been placed on the extreme right flank in an attempt to turn the enemy's flank. By situating his much larger army across this wide topographical corridor, al-Afdal not only forced the Crusaders to stretch their own battle line, thereby weakening it, but maintained an ability to envelope their right flank.

On August 14 the crusaders came into sight, marching into the corridor deployed in the same three-corps columns as the day before. When the Crusaders drew near the Egyptians, the first line under Robert of Normandy halted to allow the following two lines, under Raymond of Toulouse and Godfrey of Bouillon respectively, to file off to the left towards the coastline and right towards the hills. Thus, when battle was about to be joined, the Crusaders came in one continuous line, with infantry in the front and cavalry to the rear, which held no reserves behind them.

The battle began when the Sudanese archers "fell" on one knee to shoot, according to custom[40] as the rest of the Egyptian army began to yell and insult the Crusaders, attempting to taunt their opponents in so the Bedouin's could turn their flank. Godfrey's knights easily suppressed the attempt before joining in the general Christian advance. Despite numerical superiority, it appears that al-Afdal's army began to route early and quickly. The massed cavalry charge employed by the

Franks effectively pushed back the infantry into the second line, causing massed confusion throughout the Egyptian battle line. Dubbed the "famous onslaught" or their "famous charge" by Muslim sources, the massed cavalry charge was tactical innovation virtually unheard of in the west.[41] To be successful, this disciplined onslaught required precision time, engaging the enemy at their weakest moment; when the highly mobile Muslim cavalry became clogged within a small area. Hints to its effectiveness can be drawn from one of the earliest battles of the First Crusade, the Battle of Dorylaeum, where Godfrey's timely charge into the left rear of the Turkish host won the day for the Franks and saved Bohemund's column from total annihilation.

In the ensuing chaos, the Egyptian army fled in all directions; running back towards the heavily fortified city of Ascalon, diving into the Mediterranean waters to swim for the Egyptian fleet that had moored off shore, or hiding near by atop palm trees. The crusaders spent the night in the enemy's abandoned camp, preparing for another attack, but in the morning they learned that the Fatimids were retreating back to Egypt. After taking as much plunder as they could, which included the army standard and al-Afdal's personal tent, the crusaders burnt the rest. They return to Jerusalem amidst celebration and only afterwards did Godfrey and Raymond claim Ascalon for the Christians. But, even after the Muslim garrison heard this claim, they refused to surrender. Therefore, Ascalon remained under Fatimid control and was quickly re-garrisoned. It became the base of operations for future Egyptian raids and invasions into the Kingdom of Jerusalem every year afterwards until it was finally captured by the crusaders in 1153. After the Battle of Ascalon, the majority of the remaining crusaders returned home to Western Europe, their vows of pilgrimage having been fulfilled.

The Franks who would make up the crusading states learned that they had to be aggressive if they were to survive in the Near East; depending on their readiness to meet their enemies on the battlefield. The Frankish mindset had to be utterly convinced of their military superiority. And although this may at times have led Latin commanders into acts of recklessness, in 1101 Baldwin I charged an Egyptian army of 15,000 with no more than 200 knights.[42] it only serves to demonstrate their readiness to accept battle to a degree unknown in the west. Furthermore, the armies of the crusader states were more disciplined and cohesive than those of the west because they had to be. A lack of sufficient manpower forced the Franks to develop a flexible army with the ability to perform difficult maneuvers, such as the fighting march, or tactical innovations, such as the mass cavalry charge. Therefore, warfare was an inlet for and an expression of Frankish acclimation to Near Eastern culture; its ultimate example developing in the late twelfth century. At the battle of Hattin on 3-4 July 1187, the army Jerusalem fielded a large number of light horsemen, called "Turcopoles." John of Ibelin tells us that the Franks could raise upwards of 5,000 of these mounted sergeants. Used as light cavalry, probably mounted archers, they typically found themselves in the role of reconnaissance. Latin Turcopoles may have come from the settled Frankish populations that had settled throughout the countryside with their eastern Christian cousins. Their presence on the battles of the Middle East signals the considerable adaptation of Frankish military methods, profiting from an availability of light horses in the Near East.

[1] France,
J. Crusading Warfare and Its
Adaptation to Eastern Conditions in the Twelfth Century

[2] It is a
persistent myth that all western Christians possess either no knowledge of or a
universal hostility toward Islam and its Muslim rulers. Chroniclers who accompanied the expedition
to Jerusalem knew full well the lack of political unity within the Muslim world
and painstakingly distinguished not only different Islamic groups, but Eastern
Christian ones as well (i.e. Greek, Armenian and Syrian).

[3] Tyerman,
Christopher. God's War. pp. 126

[4] Bachrach, Bernard S. & David S. The Gesta Tancredi of Ralph of Caen : a history of the Normans on the
First Crusade. Publication Info. Burlington,
Vermont : Ashgate, 2005.

[5] Muhammad is
continued to be considered by the Islamic faith to be the last true restorer of
the original
monotheistic faith of Adam

[6] Corbin,
Henry. History of Islamic Philosophy. Translated
by Liadain Sherrard with the assistance of Philip Sherrard.
Publication Info. London ; New York : Kegan Paul International, 1993.

[7] For a brief
overview of Islamic history, see section Islam Divided by Riley-Smith, Jonathan. The Atlas of the Crusades. pp. 26-27

[8] Mehmed Fuad Köprülü. The Seljuks of Anatolia:
Their History and Culture According to Local Muslim Sources. Translated and
edited by Gary Leiser. Publication Info. Salt Lake City :
University of Utah Press, c1992.

[9] Tyerman,

Christopher. God's War. pp.

[10] Mayer, Hans
Eberhard. The Crusades.
pp. 49-50

[11] France,
J. Crusading Warfare and Its
Adaptation to Eastern Conditions in the Twelfth Century

[12] France,
J. Crusading Warfare and Its
Adaptation to Eastern Conditions in the Twelfth Century

[13] Tyerman,
Christopher. God's War. pp. 124

[14] Mayer, Hans
Eberhard. The Crusades.
pp. 50

[15] Fulcher of
Chartres V.

[16] The
deliberateness of separating the army into two columns is up for debate. Fulcher states in Chapter V that the parting was accidental, owing to the divergence of the first column at a crossroad without reporting back to the next.
While Albert of Aix, reports that it was a deliberate act to procure addition supplies from foraging.
William of Tyre says that it was uncertain whether or not it was deliberate.

[17] Battle as
summarized by Oman, Charles. A
History of The Art of War in the Middle Ages; Volume One: 387-1278 AD. Pennsylvania: Stackpole Books, 1991.
Using Fulcher of Chartres and Albert of Aachen.

[18] An attempted summation of the dichotomy between infantry and cavalry in John Frances article France, John. Medieval Warfare 1000-1300. pg. 454-55. and his book Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades, 1000-1300. Cornell University Press; New York. pp. 1-15.

[19] Prestwich, J.O. "War and Finance in the Anglo-Norman State." Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4 (1954) Pgs. 19-43.

[20] Found in Murray, Alan V. The Army of Godfrey of Bouillon, 1096-1099: Structure and dynamics of a contingents on the First Crusade. But sourced to Albert of Aachen. Historia Hierosolymitana pg. 358.

[21] Sourced to Albert of Aachen. Historia Hierosolymitana pg. 481.

[22] Sourced to Albert of Aachen. Historia Hierosolymitana pg. 300,412, 481.

[23] Sourced to Albert of Aachen. Historia Hierosolymitana pg. 300,481-2, 593.

[24] Murray, Alan V. The Army of Godfrey of Bouillon, 1096-1099: Structure and dynamics of a contingents on the First Crusade.

[25] France, J. Crusading Warfare and Its Adaptation

[26] Fulcher,
Chapter V.

[27] Gesta
Francorum, Chapter 6.

[28] Oman,
Charles. A History of The Art of War
in the Middle Ages sourced to
Albert of Aix.

[29] Fulcher. i.
5. Raymond d'Aguiles, 239.

[30] France,
John. Adaptations In Crusading Warfare
in the Twelfth Century.

[31] Lindner,
R.P. "Nomadism, Horses, and Huns": Past
and Present, 92 (1981). Pgs. 3-19

[32] Davies,
R.H.C. The Medieval Warhorse: Origins,
Development, and Redevelopment (London, 1989)

[33] Summary of
battle given by Oman, Charles. A
History of The Art of War in the Middle Ages.

[34] Fulcher

[35] France,
John. Medieval Warfare 1000-1300. pg. 50.

[36] Medieval numbering should always be taken with a grain of salt (revise). Almost all are highly exaggerated. The Gesta Francorum places the Egyptian army at 200000-300000 men and the Crusaders at 20,000. Both are exaggeratingly high; the Egyptians relied primarily on mercenary troops and combined with a long-time war with the Seljouks, could not have afforded to concentrate such a large amount of forces in one area. While Franks could not have achieved such a large army at such a late stage in the Crusades.

[37] France,
John. Adaptations In Crusading Warfare
in the Twelfth Century.

[38] According to most accounts (both crusader and Muslim), the Fatimids were caught unprepared and the battle was short, but Albert of Aix states that the battle went on for some time with a fairly well-prepared Egyptian army.

[39] France,
John. Adaptations In Crusading Warfare
in the Twelfth Century.

[40] Albert of
Aix.

[41] France,
John. Adaptations In Crusading Warfare
in the Twelfth Century.

[42] Oman,
Charles. A History of The Art of War
in the Middle Ages. pp. 294.