

Effects of the Crusades

Foremost among the effects of the Crusades was the final fatal weakening of the Byzantine Empire. The Crusades failed to recover Anatolia from the Turks, and the sack of Constantinople in 1204 destroyed Byzantium as a first rate power. Henceforth, it would exist only as a convenience to the Turks. Initially it served as a buffer state against the Turks. By the late 1300's the Byzantines were encouraging the Turks to invade the Balkans to create a buffer to protect the Byzantines from rival Europeans. For a while longer Byzantium was useful to the Turks as a point of contact with the West; when it had outlived its usefulness, they took it in 1453.

Perhaps the most significant effect of the Crusades was a vast increase in cultural horizons for many Europeans. For every European who went on a Crusade (let alone the minuscule fraction who returned) there were hundreds who knew someone who had gone, or who had seen the Crusaders march by. Palestine was no longer a quasi-mythical place that people knew only from Bible readings in church; it was a real place where real people went. Once Crusader kingdoms, however fragile, were set up in Palestine, they traded with their kin in Europe, sending finished goods to Europe and importing raw materials. The result was a stimulus to Mediterranean trade. The need to transfer large sums of money for troops and supplies led to development of banking and accounting techniques. If the combatants in the Crusades came mostly from France, Germany and England, the middlemen tended to be merchants from northern Italy. The Crusades launched the economic dominance of cities like Genoa and Venice. The financial burdens of the Crusades, coupled with the need to borrow money to finance them, weakened the power of the nobility and strengthened the merchant classes and the independence of cities.

A number of cultural institutions we think of as characteristically medieval came into being during the Crusades. Crusader knights, almost all of them illiterate, soon began using emblems and geometric designs to identify themselves. This practice later evolved into a complex code of heraldic emblems and coats of arms. Romantic and imaginative literature also blossomed during the Crusades. Although we typically picture the Middle Ages in terms of stone castles, a great deal of Europe's knowledge of heavy stone masonry, and construction of castles and stone churches was returned from the Middle East. So were improved techniques of siege technology, tunneling, and sapping. Although tunneling technology would later be of great use in mining, its purpose in warfare was to undermine or sap enemy fortifications. (Engineers, often called "sappers", have been considered a completely different branch of the military from the Army itself in many countries.) European churches also began to include spires or steeples at about the time of the Crusades, possibly inspired by minarets.

The cultural and technological enrichment was primarily from East to West; Europe was underdeveloped by Middle Eastern standards and had little to give in return. The principal effects of the Crusades on the Moslem world were negative. Europe lost prestige and military status in the eyes of Moslems, perhaps encouraging the later Turkish incursions into the Balkans. The Moslem world was already becoming more intellectually and theologically conservative; the Crusades accelerated the process and further undermined the long tradition of tolerance in the Moslem world. However, while the Crusaders were making minor nuisances of themselves pecking away at the Moslem world from the West, the Moslem world was about to receive a sledgehammer blow from the East: [the Mongol invasions](#)

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CONSEQUENCES AND CONCLUSION

When judged by narrow military standards, the Crusades were a failure. What was gained so quickly was slowly but steadily lost. On the other hand, to hold territory under a Christian banner so far from home, given the contemporary conditions of transport and communication, was impressive. The taking of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade had been just short of fatal to the Byzantine Empire, and it cast a blemish on the movement in the West, where there were critics of the whole concept of armed Crusades. While Constantinople was not taken by the Turks until 1453, the Byzantine Empire after the Fourth Crusade was but a shell of its former self.

For many years, scholars were inclined to give the Crusades credit for making Western Europe more cosmopolitan. They believed the Crusades had brought Western Europe higher standards of Eastern medicine and learning, Greek and Muslim culture, and such luxuries as silks, spices, and oranges. Extreme statements of this view held that the Crusades brought Europe out of the provincialism of the Dark Ages.

Scholars no longer accept this assessment. It is too simple. It ignores the larger trends of population growth, expanding trade, and the exchange of ideas and cultures that existed long before 1095. These trends would have encouraged East-West exchange without military expeditions or the taking of Jerusalem. The Crusades, while an exciting and integral part of the Middle Ages, merely served to hasten changes that were inevitable.

The most important effect of the Crusades was economic. The Italian cities prospered from the transport of Crusaders and replaced Byzantines and Muslims as merchant-traders in the Mediterranean. Trade passed through Italian hands to Western Europe at a handsome profit. This commercial power became the economic base of the Italian Renaissance. It also provoked such Atlantic powers as Spain and Portugal to seek trade routes to India and China. Their efforts, through such explorers as Vasco da Gama and Christopher Columbus, helped to open most of the world to European trade dominance and colonization and to shift the center of commercial activity from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic.

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Source: <http://history-world.org/crusades.htm>

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Effects of the Crusades

Effects of the Crusades

The Crusades kept all Europe in a tumult for two centuries, and directly and indirectly cost Christendom several millions of lives (from 2,000,000 to 6,000,000 according to different estimates), besides incalculable expenditures in treasure and suffering. They were, moreover, attended by all the disorder, license, and crime with which war is always accompanied. On the other hand, the Holy Wars were productive indirectly of so much and lasting good that they form a most important factor in the history of the progress of civilization. The effects of the crusades influenced:

- The role, wealth and power of the Catholic Church
- Political effects
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Effects of the Crusades on the Catholic Church

The Crusades contributed to increase the wealth of the Church and the power of the Papacy. Thus the prominent part which the Popes took in the enterprises naturally fostered their authority and influence, by placing in their hands, the armies and resources of Christendom, and accustoming the people to look to them as guides and leaders.

As to the wealth of the churches and monasteries, this was augmented enormously by the sale to them, often for a mere fraction of their actual value, of the estates of those preparing for the expeditions, or by the out and out gift of the lands of such in return for prayers and pious benedictions.

Thousands of the crusaders, returning broken in spirits and in health, sought an asylum in cloistral retreats, and endowed the establishments that they entered with all their worldly goods

Besides all this, the stream of the ordinary gifts of piety was swollen by the extraordinary fervor of religious enthusiasm which characterized the period into enormous proportions. In all these ways, the power of the Papacy and the wealth of the Church were vastly augmented.

Effects of the Crusades on Commerce

One of the most important effects of the crusades was on commerce. They created a constant demand for the transportation of men and supplies, encouraged ship-building, and extended the market for eastern wares in Europe. The products of Damascus, Mosul, Alexandria, Cairo, and other great cities were carried across the Mediterranean to the Italian seaports, whence they found their way into all European lands. The elegance of the Orient, with its silks, tapestries, precious stones, perfumes, spices, pearls, and ivory, was so enchanting that an enthusiastic crusader called it "the vestibule of Paradise."

Effects of the Crusades on Feudalism

The crusades could not fail to affect in many ways the life of western Europe. For instance, they helped to undermine feudalism. Thousands of barons and knights mortgaged or sold their lands in order to raise money for a crusading expedition. Thousands more perished in Syria and their estates, through failure of heirs, reverted to the crown. Moreover, private warfare, which was rife during the Middle Ages, also tended to die out with the departure for the Holy Land of so many turbulent feudal lords. Their decline in both numbers and influence, and the corresponding growth of the royal authority, may best be traced in the changes that came about in France, the original home of the crusading movement.

Political Effects of the Crusades

As to the political effects of the Crusades, they helped to break down the power of the feudal aristocracy, and to give prominence to the kings and the people.

Many of the nobles who set out on the expeditions never returned, and their estates, through failure of heirs, escheated to the Crown; while many more wasted their fortunes in meeting the expenses of their undertaking.

At the same time, the cities also gained many political advantages at the expense of the crusading barons and princes. Ready money in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was largely in the hands of the burgher class, and in return for the contributions and loans they made to their overlords, or suzerains, they received charters conferring special and valuable privileges.

And the other political effects of the Crusades was that in checking the advance of the Turks the fall of Constantinople was postponed for three centuries or more. This gave the early Christian civilization of Germany time to acquire sufficient strength to roll back the returning tide of Mohammedan invasion when it broke upon Europe in the fifteenth century.

Social Effects of the Crusades

The Social effects of the Crusades upon the social life of the Western nations were marked and important. The Crusades afforded an opportunity for romantic adventure. The Crusades were therefore one of the

principal fostering influences of Chivalry. Contact with the culture of the East provided a general refining influence.

Effects of the Crusades - Intellectual Development

The influence of the Crusades upon the intellectual development of Europe can hardly be overestimated. Above all, they liberalized the minds of the crusaders. The East at the time of the Middle Ages surpassed the West in civilization. The crusaders enjoyed the advantages which come from travel in strange lands and among unfamiliar peoples. They went out from their castles or villages to see great cities, marble palaces, superb dresses, and elegant manners; they returned with finer tastes, broader ideas, and wider sympathies. The crusades opened up a new world. Furthermore, the knowledge of the science and learning of the East gained by the crusaders through their expeditions, greatly stimulated the Latin intellect, and helped to awaken in Western Europe that mental activity which resulted finally in the great intellectual outburst known as the Revival of Learning and the period of the Renaissance.

Effects of the Crusades - Material Development

Among the effects of the Holy Wars upon the material development of Europe must be mentioned the spur they gave to commercial enterprise, especially to the trade and commerce of the Italian cities.

During this period, Venice, Pisa, and Genoa acquired great wealth and reputation through the fostering of their trade by the needs of the crusaders, and the opening up of the East. The Mediterranean was whitened with the sails of their transport ships, which were constantly plying between the various ports of Europe and the towns of the Syrian coast.

In addition to the effects of the crusades on material development various arts, manufactures, and inventions before unknown in Europe, were introduced from Asia. This enrichment of the civilization of the West with the "spoils of the East" can be seen in the artifacts displayed in modern European museums.

Effects of the Crusades - Voyages of Discovery

Finally, the incentive given to geographical discovery led various travelers, such as the celebrated Italian, [Marco Polo](#), and the scarcely less noted Englishman, Sir John Mandeville, to explore the most remote countries of Asia. Even that spirit of maritime enterprise and adventure which rendered illustrious the fifteenth century, inspiring the voyages of Columbus, Vasco de Gama, and Magellan, may be traced back to that lively interest in geographical matters awakened by the expeditions of the crusaders.

Source: <http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/effects-of-crusades.htm>