

MEDICINE IN THE CRUSADES

This is the first book to be published on any aspect of medicine in the crusades. It will be of interest not only to scholars of the crusades specifically, but also to scholars of medieval Europe, the Byzantine world and the Islamic world. Focusing on injuries and their surgical treatment, Piers Mitchell considers medical practitioners, hospitals on battlefields and in towns, torture and mutilation, emergency and planned surgical procedures, bloodletting, analgesia and anaesthesia. He provides an assessment of the exchange of medical knowledge that took place between East and West in the crusades, and of the medical negligence legislation for which the kingdom of Jerusalem was famous. The book presents a radical reassessment of many outdated misconceptions concerning medicine in the crusades and the Frankish states of the Latin East.

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MEDICINE IN THE CRUSADES

Warfare, Wounds and the Medieval Surgeon

PIERS D. MITCHELL



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Preface

It is rather unusual for someone normally labelled as an osteoarchaeologist to write on medical history. However, this multiskilling became necessary as a consequence of my palaeopathological research on crusader period excavations from the eastern Mediterranean. I was both surprised and frustrated to find that there was very little relevant historical work with which to compare my findings. In order to properly interpret the signs of a weapon injury or disease on a crusader skeleton a sound knowledge of contemporary history and medical practice is immensely helpful. As no one has yet undertaken the kind of historical work I was hoping to find, I ended up having to do it myself. This required exchanging my academic second home of Jerusalem for the Wellcome Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL in the University of London. In my time as a research fellow there I have benefited greatly from the expertise to be found within its walls. Over the years the evidence that accumulated became so large that instead of publishing just the one book covering all my findings, the work has had to be divided into several more manageable sections. A proportion of this has also formed my University of London doctoral thesis. I would like to thank those friends and colleagues who gave opinions on sections of this work or helped with certain translations, especially Vivian Nutton whose translation of Frankish medical legislation forms an invaluable section of the book.

The topics discussed here focus on weapon injuries and surgery, the fundamentals of military medicine. This is not only of interest to me as I am a practising trauma and orthopaedic surgeon, but also because for many people the crusades are synonymous with medieval warfare. I hope that these core topics, together with the range of complementary chapters, will give the reader a view of Frankish life that will both interest and provoke a change in the conventional opinion that many historians hold on the crusades and the Latin East.