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052184455X - Medicine in the Crusades: Warfare, Wounds and the Medieval Surgeon

Piers D. Mitchell

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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 The book presents a radical reassessment of many outdated misconceptions concerning medicine in the crusades and the Frankish states of the Latin East.

PIERS MITCHELL is Research Fellow at the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at University College London and Honorary Lecturer at Imperial College London. He is the author of numerous articles on disease in the crusades.

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[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>List of tables</i>	vii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
Introduction	I
1 Medical practitioners in the Frankish states	II
2 Hospitals on the battlefield and in the towns	46
3 Archaeological evidence for trauma and surgery in the medieval period	108
4 Torture and mutilation	124
5 Injuries and their treatment	137
6 The practice of elective surgery and bloodletting	184
7 Exchange of medical knowledge with the crusades	205
8 Frankish medical legislation	220
Frankish Medical Licensing and Negligence Regulations from the <i>Livre des Assises de la Cour des Bourgeois</i> <i>Translated by Vivian Nutton</i>	232
Conclusion	237
<i>Bibliography</i>	245
<i>Index</i>	284

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Illustrations*

1	Map of the Frankish states in the Latin East	<i>page</i> 3
2	Pharmacy jars excavated from thirteenth-century Acre	13
3	Map of twelfth-century Jerusalem, marked with the location of several Frankish hospitals	62
4	Plans of the hospital of St John in Jerusalem (after Schick 1902)	72
5	Plan of the hospital of St Mary of the Germans in Jerusalem (after Ovadiah 1993), with possible bed layout options added	77
6	Southern bay of the hospital of St Mary of the Germans in Jerusalem, looking east	78
7	Map of thirteenth-century Acre, marked with the location of several Frankish hospitals	81
8	Blade injury which cleaved the frontal bone of the skull into two	119
9	Blade injury which amputated the arm through the elbow joint	120
10	Compression fracture of a lumbar vertebra in the spine	121
11	Fracture to left side of the mandible, probably due to a blow on the chin	122
12	Arrow heads excavated from the siege of Jacob's Ford castle in 1179	146
13	Mace head from Jacob's Ford castle, Galilee (1179)	147
14	Dagger from Jacob's Ford castle, Galilee (1179)	148
15	Application of a splint for an injury to the lower leg	229

Cambridge University Press

052184455X - Medicine in the Crusades: Warfare, Wounds and the Medieval Surgeon

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Tables*

1.1 Further medical practitioners who may possibly have participated in a crusade	<i>page</i> 28
1.2 Medical practitioners in Frankish Cyprus, from Lamberto di Sambuceto	32
1.3 Salary given by King Louis IX to his crusading medical staff (1250–61)	43
2.1 Foods forbidden to the sick in medicomilitary orders and medical texts	100
2.2 Foods encouraged for the sick in medicomilitary orders and medical texts	101

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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.