

# A Muslim Looks at Crusaders

## *Making inferences*

Crusaders from Europe went to the Middle East to save Christian holy places from nonbelievers. Yet to Muslims, the Christians were the "infidels," or nonbelievers. The Muslims also tended to think of the Crusaders as barbarians.

● The following passages are from records kept by an Arab gentleman named Usāmah around A.D. 1175. At that time Christians from the First Crusade held Jerusalem. Usāmah fought in several battles against Crusaders. Yet, between wars, he came to know several Europeans. Read these two pages of accounts by Usāmah.

Mysterious are the works of the Creator, author of all things! When one comes to tell of the Franks, he cannot but glorify Allah (exalted is he!), for he sees them as animals having the virtues of courage and fighting, but nothing else, just as animals have only the virtues of strength and carrying loads. Now I shall give instances of their doings and their curious way of thinking.

### AN OFFER FROM A FRIEND

In the army of King Fulk was a Frankish knight come to make the holy pilgrimage. I knew him well. He spent so much time with me that he considered me a friend and began to call me "my brother."

When he resolved to return to his homeland, he said to me: "My brother, I am leaving for my country. I want you to send with me your son (my son was then 14 years old) to our country. There he will see knights and learn wisdom and chivalry. When he returns, he will be a wise man."

Thus fell upon my ears words which would never come out of the head of a sensible man. Even if my son were to be taken captive, his captivity could not bring him a worse misfortune than carrying him into the land of the Franks.

However, I said to this man: "By your life, this has exactly been my idea. The only thing that prevents me from carrying it out is the fact that his grandmother, my mother, is so fond of him. She exacted an oath from me that he would soon return to her."

"Well," said he, "disobey her not."



*Continued on page 16.*

## A MUSLIM LOOKS AT CRUSADERS

- Continue reading Usāmah's accounts of the Crusaders. Then complete the activities on page 17.

### DANGEROUS DOCTORS

A Frankish lord wrote to my uncle asking him to send a physician to treat the sick among his people. My uncle sent him a Christian physician named Thābit. Thābit was absent but ten days when he returned. So we said to him, "How quickly has thou healed thy patients?"

He said: "They brought before me a knight in whose leg an abscess had grown. I applied medicine until the abscess opened and became well. Then a Frankish physician came and said, 'This man knows nothing about treating them.' This Frankish physician then said to the knight, "Which would you

prefer, living with one leg or dying with two?" The knight replied, 'Living with one leg.' So the Frankish physician sent for a strong man and a sharp ax.

"Then the physician laid the leg of the patient on a block and bade the strong man chop it off with one blow of the ax. He struck one blow, but the leg was not severed. He struck another, and as I watched, the patient died on the spot."

Said my uncle's physician, "I asked them if my services were needed any longer. When they said no, I returned home, having learned of their medicine what I knew not before."

### JUSTICE

Once in Jerusalem I met a blind man, a Muslim, who was young and well-dressed. His mother had been married to a Frank, whom she had killed. Her son used to practice tricks against Frankish pilgrims, and he helped his mother assassinate them. The Franks brought charges against him and tried him according to their way of justice.

They filled a huge cask with water. They bound the arms of the man

charged with the act. They tied a rope around his shoulders and dropped him into the cask.

Their idea was that in case he was innocent, he would sink in the water and they would then haul him up so that he might not die in the water. This man did his best to sink, but he could not do it. So he had to submit to their sentence against him—may Allah's curse be upon him!

### SOME LEARN OUR WAYS

Among the Franks are those who have become used to our ways and have been long among Muslims. These are much better than the recent comers from the Frankish lands. But they are not typical of the others. Here is an illustration:

I went to the home of an old retired

knight long in our land. He presented an excellent table, with food that was clean and looked delicious. Seeing what I did not eat, he said, "Eat, be of good cheer! I never eat Frankish dishes but have Egyptian women cooks. Besides, pork never enters my home." I ate, but carefully.

Continued on page 17.